



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**‘For a better Spain and a fairer Europe’:  
a re-examination of the Spanish Blue Division in its  
social, cultural, and political context, 1941-2005.**

1 volume

by

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## Summary

With the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany on 21 June 1941, an immense ideological war began that ultimately affected the lives of millions of Europeans and shaped the global political landscape following the conclusion of the Russo-German War in May 1945. But in this brutal war of extermination, Germany did not fight alone. Various countries within the sphere of German political influence helped sustain and assist in the war effort by sending forces to fight in the East. Spain, whose political allegiances varied throughout the Second World War, also contributed an entire ‘volunteer’ division to fight on the Eastern Front. These Spaniards fought in the *División Española de Voluntarios* (D.E.V.) or as they are more popularly known, the *División Azul*, or Blue Division because of their Falange shirts. The DEV essentially was ‘volunteer’ in name only as it would not have been able to maintain itself on the Eastern Front without the indirect help of the Franco government or, more specifically, the Spanish Army Ministry.

Although the German Army was theoretically responsible for the Blue Division, the division was continually, albeit indirectly, financed by the Franco regime as a political tool in order to remain Hitler’s grace following the latter’s support of the Nationalist cause in the Spanish Civil War. As this thesis discusses, the Spanish Army created an elaborate system to transport troops and supplies to and from the Russian Front. This system was essential in allowing Spaniards to remain in Russia as a physical symbol of Franco foreign politics, as long as the regime deemed it necessary to do so. While discussing the origins of the *División Azul*, including its recruitment and training, the experiences and pit-falls of serving on the Eastern Front, this thesis attempts to transcend the battlefield and discuss the relationship of the volunteers to their native Spain upon the division’s repatriation in the autumn of 1943 up to the present day by re-examining the Blue Division in its social, cultural, and political context.

## Introduction

With the invasion of the Soviet Union by Germany with over 3 million men on 21 June 1941, a colossal ideological war began. The Soviet Union and its political system, which Hitler deemed ‘the most decisive concern of all German foreign affairs’, was to be destroyed to allow for German expansion in the East.<sup>1</sup> But in this invasion, Germany did not fight alone. Germany was aided through direct pact or alliance by Italy, Finland, Hungary, Romania, and other, newer, states, such as Croatia and Slovakia. But help came from other sources, including occupied Western Europe, where numerous volunteers joined the newly formed Waffen-SS legions or divisions that helped enforce the concept of Hitler’s New Order protecting Western culture from communism and Stalin’s Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> The volunteers also included individuals from the newly ‘liberated’ Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and also from neutral states such as Sweden and Switzerland.<sup>3</sup> Spain, another neutral country, also contributed an entire ‘volunteer’ division to fight on the Eastern Front. The Spaniards fought in the *División Española de Voluntarios* (D.E.V.) or as they are commonly known from their uniform accretions of the Falange blue shirt, the *División Azul*, or Blue Division.<sup>4</sup> What motivated these Spaniards to join Hitler’s war machine, and what were their experiences when it came to issues such as training, the sights and sounds of Russia, and contact with and knowledge of, their Soviet enemy? And furthermore, as Spain was both neutral and ‘non-belligerent’ during various parts the war, how were these volunteers in the service of Germany later treated within post-war Spain, especially as the Spanish government attempted to return to an international community now moderated by the United Nations? Lastly, how did the veterans themselves respond to these reactions in their native home in the years after the war?

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<sup>1</sup> A. Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (New York, 1971), p.641. Hitler believed that, ‘Only an adequately large space on this earth assures a nation of freedom of existence.’ *Mein Kampf*, p.643.

<sup>2</sup> For a general overview of the various foreign national volunteer groups in the service of Germany in the Second World War, see C. Ailsby, *Hitler's renegades: Foreign nationals in the service of the Third Reich* (Dulles, VA, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> For a good overview of pan-European collaboration with Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1943, see M. Burleigh, *The Third Reich: A new history* (London, 2000), pp.408-31.

<sup>4</sup> For a longer explanation of the unit’s name, among others, see J.M. Bueno Carrera, *La División y la Escuadrilla Azul: Su organización y sus uniformes* (Madrid, 2003), pp.7-8, or E. de la Vega Viguera, *Rusia no es culpable: Historia de la División Azul* (Madrid, 1999), pp.24-25. The division referred to itself as the Spanish Blue Division (*División Azul Española*) in its weekly newspaper *Hoja de Campaña*.

In trying to answer these questions, this thesis will attempt to look at the volunteers of Blue Division as a case study of foreign nationals' experience in serving in the Wehrmacht (not, as most foreign nationals did, in the Waffen-SS) and fighting on the Eastern Front. It will endeavour to go further than the existing studies of the Blue Division by re-examining the divisional archive and published personal memoirs and attempting to transcend the battlefield experience, by considering the veterans' return to civilian life in Spain. The politics surrounding Spain in the Second World War and the military merits of the Blue Division have been relatively well described and studied, but they still are important elements in the discussion of the history of the Blue Division. By keeping these factors in mind while re-examining the divisional historiography, therefore, it is hoped that this thesis will set, more carefully than before, the *División Azul* in a social, cultural and political context both as the unit trained, fought and, ultimately, retired from the Eastern Front.<sup>5</sup> The thesis will also focus also on how the veterans coped with a post-war Europe very different from the one that had existed before and during their service in Hitler's army. As it is also important to look beyond the unit's actual physical existence and ultimate demise, the thesis will attempt to highlight the Blue Division's place in a post-war Spain that was (and largely still) is either disinterested or ignorant of what the division was and what it had achieved. Ultimately, the goal is to generate several new insights into the Blue Division that will hopefully complement the existing historiography of the DEV and create the foundations for future, more thorough and complete academic studies.

When initially attempting to garner interest in the Blue Division, as a possible topic of historical study, there was very little interest, with one academic wondering if the Blue Division had not been 'done to death.' The simple answer is no. The fact is no historical monograph has been published on this subject since the late 1970's.<sup>6</sup> Given that most Spanish archival information may be held 'confidential' for over fifty years, one wonders what items now currently available were not available to Kleinfeld and Tambs when they published their *Hitler's Spanish Legion: the Blue*

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<sup>5</sup> For a more recent overview of the merits and political consequences of the DEV, see D. Smyth, 'The dispatch of the Spanish Blue Division to the Russian Front: Reasons and repercussions', *European History Quarterly*, vol xxiv (1994), pp.537-53.

<sup>6</sup> The absolute best work on the Blue Division is R. Kleinfeld and L. Tamb, *Hitler's Spanish legion: The Blue Division in Russia* (Carbondale, IL, 1979) which is still the only major work still published in the Spanish language. See G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *La division española de Hitler: La División Azul en Rusia* (Madrid, 1983).

*Division in Russia* in 1979.<sup>7</sup> But despite this lapse of time, the work is still considered *the* study of the DEV, despite criticism towards the authors for being too sympathetic towards their subject.<sup>8</sup> Twenty-five years since that study, this thesis intends to shed new light on the nature of the Blue Division, both by examining recently released archival information and by asking fresh questions of the exiting information.

Although arguably the most expanded divisional monograph, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, however, was not the first major academic study of the Blue Division. The first and only other major monograph was 'one rather obscure study by an American academic' which for a time was the only work done in English on the Blue Division.<sup>9</sup> Historian Raymond Proctor initially wrote his work in Spanish as a doctoral dissertation in the 1960s; it was first published, again in Spanish, as *Agonia de un neutral*.<sup>10</sup> Proctor focused largely on the political ramifications of not only the Blue Division, but of Spain's possible entry into the war on the part of the Axis. Later published in English, this work laid in part the groundwork for Kleinfeld and Tambs' study, which largely focuses on the combat history of the DEV.<sup>11</sup> But why focus on two English language studies when the subject matter is, or specifically, one assumes, a Spanish language study? Largely because both of these works are still the mainstays of Blue Division scholarship and are largely cited and influential in other secondary Spanish works.<sup>12</sup> Given that, what exactly are the Spanish studies contributing to the historiography of the Blue Division?

Interest in the Blue Division has generated hundreds of book titles, numerous periodical articles, and dozens of websites within Spain. These are impressive numbers for a single military division, particularly for one like the Blue Division.

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<sup>7</sup> Although somewhat dated, for resources on studying Franco era Spain see W. Bowen, 'Sources for study of the early Franco regime: 1936-45' *Bulletin for the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, xx (1995), pp.8-11.

<sup>8</sup> See P. Preston, 'Spaniards in Russia', *History Today*, xxx (1980), p.57.

<sup>9</sup> The obscure comment is from Paul Preston when originally reviewing the Kleinfeld and Tambs book, see *ibid*.

<sup>10</sup> The dissertation was published in Spanish at the University of Oregon (1962).

<sup>11</sup> R. Proctor, *Agonia de un neutral: Las relaciones hispanoalemanas durante la Segunda Guerra mundial y la División Azul* (Madrid, 1972). For the English version, which differs slightly with better editing, see R. Proctor *Agony of a neutral: Spanish-German wartime relations and the 'Blue Division'*, (Moscow, ID, 1974). As a lieutenant colonel in the United States Air Force, Proctor worked as Director of Intelligence for the U.S. Defense Forces in Spain, Morocco and the Western Mediterranean, as a result of which he was posted in Madrid and therefore had unparalleled access, particularly for a foreign national, to former Blue Division members serving in the Cold War-era Spanish military. This included meeting Franco himself and presenting him a copy of his Spanish edition. See *ibid*, back cover.

<sup>12</sup> Again, for the Spanish language versions, see G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *La division española de Hitler* and R. Proctor, *Agonia de un neutral*.

The vast majority of works concerning the DEV are published in Spanish for the Spanish reader.<sup>13</sup> These include several books detailing the experiences of ex-captives, many of whom were held for nearly ten years following the end of the conflict.<sup>14</sup> The other published works on the division centre on the fortieth, fiftieth, or the more recent sixtieth anniversaries of various divisional events, for example, their march from Spain (13 July 1941) or the Battle of Krasny Bor (10 February 1943). With the exception of the recently published book by Spanish historian Xavier Moreno Juliá, the majority of published Spanish works on the Blue Division consist of basically two types: the memoir and secondary study.<sup>15</sup>

The memoir is the staple of the DEV bibliography and has various incarnations and revivals. Other than the German or Spanish government publications extolling the virtues of the Blue Division during the war, memoirs served as the main medium to discuss the DEV in the years during the war and immediately after.<sup>16</sup> In general, the memoir's content has not largely changed over time, revolving around the defence of the DEV's existence. Central to this task has been 'the fight against Soviet

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<sup>13</sup> There are only four titles published in English dealing with the Blue Division, see J. Scurr, *Germany's Spanish volunteers 1941-45* (London, 1980); P.V. Roig, *Spanish soldiers in Russia* (Miami, FL, 1976) along with the previously mentioned *Hitler's Spanish legion* and *Agony of a neutral*. A newer work of some interest in English, although translated from French, relates to Spanish volunteers serving in the Waffen-SS or smaller Wehrmacht units after the repatriation of the DEV. See, J.P. Sourd, *True believers: Spanish volunteers in the Heer and Waffen-SS, 1944-5* (New York, 2004). There are also several German and at least one French work but are nearly all secondary works. The French work, which was first published in French and translated to Spanish, is very similar to F. Vadillo's works. The French book by Saint Loup, *La División Azul: Croisade espagnole de Leningrad au Goulag* (Paris, 1978), was written under a pseudonym by Marc Augier, who had been a French Fascist volunteer in the Wehrmacht's VLF and later in the SS Division- Charlemagne and, therefore, was very sympathetic to his Spanish comrade-in-arms. For the Spanish translation, see Saint-Loup, *La División Azul: Cruzada española de Leningrado al gulag* (Madrid, 1980). Saint Loup also published works on Belgian and Flemish SS volunteers.

<sup>14</sup> For ex-captive example see T. Luca de Tena Brunet, *Embajador en el infierno: Memoria del Capitán Palacios (once años de cautivero en Rusia)* (Madrid, 1955); G. Oroqjeta Arbiol, *De Leningrado a Odesa* (Barcelona, 1958); and E. Calavia Bellosillo, *Enterrados en Rusia* (Madrid, 1956).

<sup>15</sup> The work by Spanish historian Xavier Moreno Juliá was published as this thesis was in its writing phase. X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul: Sangre española en Rusia, 1941-5* (Madrid, 2004). The best work on the Blue Division bibliography is C. Caballero and R. Ibañez, *Escritores en las trincheras: La División Azul en sus libros, publicaciones, periódicos y filmografía, 1941-5* (Madrid, 1989). This however, only covers works written prior to 1988. A more current, updated listing exists from Blue Division book collector Carlos Diez at his website, see C. Diez, <http://www.geocities.com/divazul/bibliografia.html> (22 October 2004).

<sup>16</sup> German government works for a Spanish audience included Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, *Commemoracion heroica* (Berlin, 1943) and Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, *División Española de Voluntarios: Dos años de lucha, estampas divisionarios* (Berlin, 1944). For the bilingual reader a booklet was published for the troops at the front by the *Propaganda Kompany der Armee Busch*, see W. Lahne, *Spaniens freiwilligen der Ostfront – Los voluntarios españoles en el frente* (Riga?, 1942) and W. Lahne, *Luchadores por una nueva Europa* (Riga?, 1942). Spanish government works included Academia Militar de Zaragoza *Fraternidad en campo de batalla: España y Alemania* (Saragossa, 1942) and Educación Popular, *Balance de la División Azul* (Madrid, 1942).



Communism.’ However, as shall be discussed later, this issue goes from one of the central defences to the only defence for the DEV. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the post-Cold War world, veterans struggled to find recognition for their wartime service in the context of a democratic Spanish society that better remembers the fight for the removal of American air and naval bases, and the opposition to becoming a part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), than any tangible, direct military threat that the Soviet Union ever presented to Spain.<sup>17</sup>

The Blue Division’s contribution to the fighting on the Eastern Front has been a major source of either pride or contention in Spain, depending largely on when and by whom a particular work was produced. The Blue Division’s bibliography has also ebbed and flowed, from the wartime works of recently returned *divisionarios* such as Martínez Esparza and Jiménez y Malo de Molina to the writings towards the end of the Second World War as Germany’s Third Reich collapsed, notable among which were works by Gómez Tello and Hernández Navarro.<sup>18</sup> But the literature was relatively sparse until the return of prisoners of war held by the Soviet Union until April 1954. With the blessings of the Franco regime, the ‘ex-captive memoir’ genre helped regenerate public interest in the mid to late 1950s, including the pivotal and classic book *Embajador en el infierno* by Palacios Cueto and Luca de Tena, which was adapted into one of the few films ever produced related to the DEV.<sup>19</sup>

Under this auspice of passing on to future Spaniards the Blue Division legacy, the memoirs often suffer from forgetting or avoiding those vital questions, ideological or otherwise, about why their authors were fighting as ‘volunteers’ in Hitler’s army in the first place.<sup>20</sup> Often written in a style similar to the German ‘*heroisch-pathetisch*’ memoir, for many former *divisionarios* these memoirs provide the last chance to discuss or explain their participation in the DEV, which for many was the apex of

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<sup>17</sup> For one such viewpoint related to the fighting on the Eastern Front and the eventual fall of communism in the former Soviet Union, see A. Espinosa Poveda, *¡¡Teníamos razón!!: Cuantos luchamos contra el comunismo soviético* (Madrid, 1993), pp.309-325.

<sup>18</sup> For example works from during the war, see J. Martínez Esparza, *Con la División Azul en Rusia* (Madrid, 1943); V.J. Jiménez y Malo de Molina, *de España a Rusia: 5000 kilómetros con la División Azul* (Madrid, 1943); and E. Errando Volar, *Campaña de invierno* (Madrid, 1943).

<sup>19</sup> From the book by T. Palacios Cueto and T. Luca de Tena Brunet, *Embajador en el infierno*, but for more on the film, see S. Alegre, ‘The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4: The filmic recycling of Fascism as anticommunism in Franco’s Spain’, *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, vol xvi, (1996), pp. 349-65.

<sup>20</sup> For one such example of a *divisionario* attempting to appeal to Spanish youths, see J. Miralles Guill, *Mensaje a la juventud* (Alicante, 1987).

their lives.<sup>21</sup> Because of this nostalgic viewpoint, the Blue Division is still presented as '*la gloriosa División Azul*' ('the glorious Blue Division') or '*la famosa División Azul*' ('the famous Blue Division') and is only very rarely seen as anything but a necessity. Despite this the memoir has been and will remain the mainstay of Blue Division scholarship as long as there are those able to write them. The memoir enjoys continued popularity as it helps the author set the context and provide necessary 'justification' or 'ignorance' through a personal voice that most readers can better relate to or sympathize with. The most influential contributor to the DEV bibliography, through his volumes of secondary recollections, is Fernando Vadillo, who is considered the 'chronicler' of the Blue Division.<sup>22</sup>

The Blue Division's champion, Fernando Vadillo, a well-known boxing aficionado and writer following the war, was largely the leading 'authority' on the Division because, as a former teenaged *divisionario*, he had unsurpassed access to fellow veterans. Gaining confidence of other veterans as their former comrade-at-arms, he was able to weave their personal narratives into a collection of memories which fit nicely into the Blue Division's main historical timeline. If anything, these personal accounts and recollections add a certain oral history to the division. However, since the Vadillo books are written in a historical '*novela*' style, the events which they recount are often so exaggerated in language for dramatic effect that the stories seem sometimes 'over-the-top' in content and credibility.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, although well written and readable, their content largely focuses on the romantic and heroic nature of the Blue Division, glossing over the difficulties of war, especially one as brutal as the Eastern Front. As observed by Spanish historian Carlos Caballero and author Rafael Ibáñez Hernández, 'With Vadillo the divisionary literature reappears in a happy, illusioned, epic tone' which overshadows the true difficulties suffered on the Russian Front.<sup>24</sup> This is not to say that Vadillo's works did not have a place in Spain; indeed, he regenerated an interest in the Blue Division when its popularity waned in

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<sup>21</sup> The term '*heroisch-pathetisch*' relates more to the use of 'elevated dictation, combining romanticism and metaphysics' than the literal English translation, 'pathetic heroic'. From Dennis Showalter's introduction to the memoir of G.H. Bidermann, *in deadly combat: A German soldier's memoir of the Eastern Front* (Lawrence, KS, 2000), p.3. For an example of this style translated into English, see F. Kurowski, *Infantry aces: the German soldier in World War II* (New York, 1994).

<sup>22</sup> The 'chronicler' having written *La Gran Crónica de la División Azul*, which included over seven titles related to various facets of the Blue Division.

<sup>23</sup> The '*novela*' in the Spanish sense (not to be confused with the novella) is usually a fiction story. The style is described as '*una historia novelada*' (a novelised history) by C. Caballero Jurado and R. Ibáñez Hernández, *Escritores en las trincheras*, p.62.

<sup>24</sup> C. Caballero Jurado and R. Ibáñez Hernández, *Escritores en las trincheras*, p.63.

the years approaching and following Franco's death and the loss of political influence by the *Movimiento*. His books, reprinted, are still widely read by the general public interested in learning about the Blue Division.<sup>25</sup>

Vadillo notwithstanding, the majority of new Spanish publications related to the Blue Division are secondary works. Given the recent (February 2003) sixtieth anniversary of the Battle of Krasny Bor, the pivotal event for Spain's involvement on the Eastern Front, and the more recent fiftieth anniversary of the return of the Spanish POWs aboard the *Semíramis* (April 2004), this trend is not surprising. Popular historians in English attempt to reap reward for the sudden 'anniversary renaissance' of interest in events such as D-Day, Operation Market-Garden, and the Fall of Berlin, and their Spanish counterparts cannot be blamed for attempting to reach a favourable market. Although these books add little to the Blue Division scholarship, they are essential to informing a fairly ignorant Spanish public about the Blue Division, despite generally painting a 'faultless' picture of the DEV.

To say that no new academic studies of the Blue Division have contributed to our knowledge of its workings would be false and wrong. Ricardo Recio Cardona contributes greatly to the understanding of the division's structure and *intendencia*, or supply administration, and the historical notes by Francisco Torres García accompanying the personal memoir by a former POW and ex-captive are fundamental in better understanding the political plight of Spaniards held nearly ten years following the end of the war.<sup>26</sup> The study of the Blue Division cinematographic material by Sergio Alegre helps better understand how exactly the DEV was visually presented in Spain not only during the war but after, especially through the government controlled NO-DO newsreel images presented to a largely ignorant and often illiterate 1940s Spanish public.<sup>27</sup> Although largely a secondary work, a book by Fernando Carrera Buil and Augusto Ferrer-Dalmau Nieto, on the most highly decorated battalion of the Blue Division, the *Batallón Román*, is fundamental in providing splendid visual imagery to the Spanish volunteer experience in Russia

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<sup>25</sup> The three main works are F. Vadillo, *Orillas del Voljov* (Madrid 1967), *Arrabales de Leningrado* (Madrid, 1971) and *Y lucharon en Krasny Bor* (Madrid, 1975). His best work and most objective is F. Vadillo, *División Azul: La gesta militar española del siglo XX* (Madrid, 1991).

<sup>26</sup> For a study of 'la vida cotidiana' (day-to-day living) of the Blue Division, see R. Recio Cardona, *El servicio de intendencia de la División Azul* (Madrid, 1998). For POW information related to the DEV, see A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin: El combate final de la División Azul* (Madrid, 2002), pp.13-96.

<sup>27</sup> NO-DO were news reels presented before cinematic performances; see S. Alegre, *El cine cambia la historia: Las imágenes de la División Azul* (Barcelona, 1994), pp.101-08.

through its collection of previously unpublished photographs of the unit.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the recent work by Wayne Bowen in English has further contributed greatly to the understanding of the Blue Division's role in Spanish collaboration with Nazi Germany during the Second World War, in which the Falange played a vital part.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the political backbiting between the Spanish Army Ministry and the Falange currently being studied in a doctoral dissertation by Emilio Jaeur-Francés and is an important element in better understanding the Blue Division's role as pawn in an intra-regime chess game.<sup>30</sup> These works aside, there remain very significant gaps in our knowledge of the Blue Division.

This thesis will attempt to tackle some of the issues that are rarely dealt with when looking at Blue Division by asserting that there remain under-studied and less understood aspects of the division's existence. The aim is to produce and highlight aspects of the Blue Division that will hopefully generate further academic study on this historical anomaly. In theoretical terms, this is an attempt to put a social face on a military unit, which is rarely ever done in historical studies. As noted by Omer Bartov, historians pass 'soldiers' between either a 'social study' as when they were civilians, or a 'military study' when they are conscripted into the army with one side largely disinterested in the other.<sup>31</sup> This is an unfortunate trend as it compartmentalises events of people's lives that are not largely separated by the individuals themselves. It is surely the case that someone who has fought in a war, particularly one as brutal and savage as witnessed in Russia, comes out differently at the end, either physically or mentally, if not both. The former soldier, victor or vanquished, picks up the pieces and continues living after war, and how exactly he accomplishes this is frequent omission in historical studies. Hoping to transcend both facets, this thesis will attempt to provide some social contexts to an otherwise military matter, by looking at the Blue Division from its early days of recruitment and training to its present veterans' groups and associations.

Despite their obvious importance for the division's future exploits on the Russian Front, recruitment and training were continual challenges for a 'volunteer'

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<sup>28</sup> F.J. Carrera Buil and A. Ferrer-Dalmau Nieto, *Batallón Román: Historia fotográfica del 2º Batallón del Regimiento 269 de la División Azul* (Saragossa, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> See W.H. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany: Collaboration in the New Order* (Columbia, MO 2000) pp.105-23, 166-174.

<sup>30</sup> Emilio Jaeur-Francés is a doctoral student at the University of Bilbao whose expected dissertation is due by spring 2007.

<sup>31</sup> O. Bartov, 'The missing years: German workers, German soldiers', *German History*, viii (1990), p.52.

unit like the Blue Division and the mechanisms used for both are not covered at any length by any study.<sup>32</sup> Due to its urgency in reaching the front, the Spanish Blue Division's condensed and truncated training was, initially, very different from what was expected of their German counterparts in 1941. Although this particular training trend became more indicative of how later German units were trained, because of the need for bodies at the front, the Blue Division was rushed to the front largely by its first military commander because of fears of missing the expected Axis victory. But exactly how Spain and Germany established a system to send fresh recruits and remove wounded and discharged volunteers is not discussed in any detail in existing studies that often gloss over Spain's function as an accomplice in keeping the Blue Division in Russia as long as Franco saw fit. For this reason, as shall be discussed, Spain's Blue Division held a very unique role in its relation to the greater German war machine than other foreign volunteer units, since the Spanish government was ultimately responsible for ensuring its survival on the battlefield by supplementing German supplies and sending recruits and replacements. This aspect will be highlighted continually throughout the thesis.

But what exactly was the Spanish *guripa*'s (colloquialism for 'soldier', like the American 'G.I.' or the German '*der Landser*') opinion of the 'workers' paradise' he travelled so far to fight in? What did he see and remember of the Russian *muzhik* and his *isba*? Beyond the local population, what were also his frontline experiences and exposure to such things as German and divisional command directives and orders as well as German and enemy propaganda that shaped his views of the leaders he represented (both Hitler and Franco) and the one he volunteered to fight against (Stalin)? How did these elements shape his overall opinion of the war in the East? What exactly was the nature of the information being presented to the Spanish volunteers and did it have any effect on his ideology while in Russia? Although done for his German contemporary, unfortunately, no study exists that attempts to look at this in any greater context.<sup>33</sup> Except for individual accounts, there is no collection, unless one includes Vadillo's 'novelised historical' works, of average Spanish soldiers' experiences on the Eastern Front, nor have their opinions or experience been

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<sup>32</sup> For the initial training period at Grafenwöhr, see Kleinfeld and Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, pp.25-42.

<sup>33</sup> For the German soldier in WW II see, S. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten: The German soldier in World War II* (Lexington, KY, 1995) and for the German soldier in Russia see O. Bartov, *the Eastern Front, 1941-45: German troops and the barbarisation of warfare*, 2 ed. (Oxford, 2001).

compared to those of their German comrade-in-arms.<sup>34</sup> By establishing such comparisons whenever possible, this thesis will hopefully provide a better understanding of what the Spanish ‘volunteers’ saw and felt regarding their service in Russia, as well as what motivated volunteers to fight or compelled many to reenlist for further tours of duty.

This thesis will also discuss the difficulties encountered by the *Guardia Civil* units sent to help police the division. The *Guardia Civil*, or Civil Guard, was historically a social and political control tool within Spain. Its presence in Russia was required by the DEV in order to carry out the seedier tasks of policing a military unit, including the prevention and detection of crime and punishment of individuals deemed ‘*indeseable*’ (‘misfit’) by Spanish or German authorities.<sup>35</sup> The *Guardia Civil* not only policed the division but also assisted the Spanish government in ensuring that the supply and communication lines between Madrid and the Blue Division remained open and ran smoothly. The way in which the Spanish Army Ministry continued to supplement the Blue Division with men and supplies through this transportation network as wounded and discharged men were being repatriated will also be considered.

In order to understand the Blue Division as a social unit, the thesis will also discuss the *Hoja de Campaña*, the divisional newspaper that gave Spanish volunteers thousands of kilometres from home a sense of contact with their distant, beloved *España*. Also providing a cultural insight into the DEV, this divisional newspaper was an important device that not only provided news and information but also allowed the men within the various sections of the division to communicate with each other while at the front. Often using humour and diagrams, the *Hoja de Campaña* was also used to better educate the volunteer while in the field by reinforcing combat instruction and fieldcraft methods he may have not been taught or had forgotten during his basic training in Germany. And as shall be discussed, the *Hoja de Campaña* went from an informative and educative tool a political one, which became geared, to a certain degree, to an affirmation of the ideology of National Socialism in the waning moments of the Blue Division’s existence.

The thesis will look at the attempt to raise new questions about how the *ex-prisioneros* were treated within Spain following their repatriation after many had

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<sup>34</sup> C. Caballero and R. Ibañez, *Escritores en las trincheras*, p.62.

<sup>35</sup> ‘*Indeseable*’ translates as ‘undesirable’ but better is better describes in military terms as a ‘misfit’.

spent nearly a decade in Soviet captivity. Of special importance is the discussion of how these men became prisoners of war, which included desertion (often induced by Soviet propaganda) and capture in combat (notably at the battle of Krasny Bor). Following their repatriation from concentration camps in the Soviet Union in April 1954, the way in which the Franco government used this momentous occasion for its own political agenda is also discussed. This event allowed for the Blue Division to be, albeit briefly, publicly acknowledged by a government that largely ignored the division's existence, despite having created and sustained it during the Second World War.

As the men began to transition from the front back to Spain, an important aspect of the volunteers' service on the Eastern Front was the forms of compensation that was to be awarded for service in the German Army. The most notable compensation was the issuing of pensions to disabled volunteers or to relatives of those killed in Russia. This thesis will provide an in-depth look at the nature of this programme which, developed by the German government for its own troops, was extended to foreign volunteer formations, including the Blue Division. Dependent on various 'grades' of wounding or disability, the amount of compensation was largely awarded accordingly. But with the fall of Nazi Germany, this pension programme, as we shall see, no longer became available. This consequence created further difficulties to those returned volunteers of the Blue Division back to Spain.

Finally, after looking at the ex-captive experience in Russia, the thesis will also look at the opinions and actions of both the Spanish public and government towards the Blue Division, discussing also how veterans organised themselves in response to these reactions, notably through the creation of groups known as *hermandades*, or 'brotherhoods.' Because of the political circumstances both in Spain and abroad, these veterans groups ultimately allowed the men to better re-assimilate back into Spain by creating an organised support network that provided emotional and financial assistance to one another. Amazingly, as shall be discussed, the Spanish public continues, even sixty years later, to debate not only the nature of the division but also its importance, relevance, and respectability within Spanish history in general. Despite this, it is time to shed new light on the Blue Division and its men to better understand their reasons and ultimate consequences for serving in Hitler's Wehrmacht.

## Chapter 1- Formation of the DEV

### Origins of the *División Azul*

Prior to the actual German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Franco government had been informed by two of its ambassadors abroad nearly a week earlier that war was imminent.<sup>36</sup> The day after Operation Barbarossa was launched, Spain's Foreign Minister, Ramon Serrano Suñer sent a congratulatory message to the German Ambassador, Baron Eberhard von Stohrer. He then suggested the creation of the Blue Division to the leader (*Caudillo*) of Spain, Francisco Franco Bahamonde.<sup>37</sup> Serrano Suñer, who was also Franco's brother-in-law, was an ardent pro-Axis Falangist and had envisioned a strictly volunteer Falange unit fighting 'independently of the full and complete entry of Spain into the war besides the Axis, which would take place at the appropriate moment.'<sup>38</sup> These volunteers were thus offered by Spain despite its traditional aversion to becoming involved in European conflicts, reflected, for example, in the refusal to fight in the last two wars in Europe – the Franco-Prussian and the First World wars.<sup>39</sup>

Although the Carlist *Requetés* supplied arguably better-trained volunteers to the Nationalist cause during the Spanish Civil War, the Falange supplied the largest number of civilian militia and paramilitaries to supplement the professional *africanistas* of the Army of Africa.<sup>40</sup> The Falange, a fringe 'Fascist' party prior to the Civil War, became the basis for *the* party, or the *Movimiento*, following it.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Serrano Suñer passed on memoranda from both the Spanish Ambassadors in Sweden and Finland. See Fundación Nacional Francisco Franco, *Documentos inéditos para la historia del Generalísimo Franco*, henceforth (*DIHGF*), vol iii, doc.173, 13 June 1941 (Madrid 1993), pp.167-8.

<sup>37</sup> PRO GFM 33/ 352 234669-70 22 June 1941.

<sup>38</sup> *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, henceforth (*DGFP*), Series D, xiii vols (London, 1951-64). *DGFP*, Series D, vol xii, pp.1080-1.

<sup>39</sup> The provisional French government had sent a messenger by balloon out of Paris as the Prussians lay siege to it to send a message to the Spanish government, led by General Prim, which did nothing. The Spanish government under Eduardo Dato declared neutrality in the First World War. J. Prat, *Memorias (Segundo volumen)* (Albacete, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain: 1923-77* (Madison, WI, 1999), p.242. The Falange was largely blamed, though quite falsely in most cases, for the repression and subsequent political shootings in the Nationalist zone. The Falange had often attempted to save prisoners, including poet Federico García Lorica. For more see S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, pp.245-9.

<sup>41</sup> 'Fascist' meaning that the Falange leaned more toward Italy than Germany. For a comparison of various pan-European 'Fascisms', see M. Mann, *Fascists* (Cambridge, 2004). The *Falange Española* (F.E.) merged with the *Junta Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* (J.O.N.S.) to form the FE y de las JONS prior to the Spanish Civil War. The Falange adopted the banner, emblems (*yuga y flechas*), and various slogans from the JONS. For its creation see de la R. Cierva, *El fascismo y la derecha española, 1934-6* (Madrid, 1997), pp.163-6. During '*la Unificación*' of the parties of the right on 16 April 1937,



Surprisingly, Serrano Suñer's suggestion of volunteers in July 1941 was not the first such initiative on his part. In August 1940 Pedro Teotónio Pereira, the Portuguese Ambassador to Spain, reported to Lisbon that Suñer had suggested 'a body of Falange' be sent to help in the expected German invasion of England, although this initial suggestion was essentially envisaged as a propaganda coup.<sup>42</sup> These new volunteers, sent 'in memory of Germany's fraternal assistance during the Civil War', were gladly accepted by the German Foreign Minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, although he desired Spain to also declare war on the Soviet Union.<sup>43</sup>

Franco's rise to a position of primacy within Nationalist Spain – and eventually the whole of the country – was only made possible through direct military assistance from both Germany and Italy during the civil war. The *deuda de sangre*, or 'debt of blood', mainly resulted from the aviation, flak, and tank units of the German Kondor Legion and the Italian *Comando Truppe Volontarie* (CTV).<sup>44</sup> Although this help was largely profit-driven, rather than purely ideological – particularly for the Germans – Franco's success would not have been possible without it.<sup>45</sup> Germany's Economic Policy Department estimated that Spain owed nearly 14,500,000 Reichsmarks (RM) for war supplies and the Kondor Legion, and Italy further claimed 14 billion lire owed for the use of the CTV.<sup>46</sup> With this debt in mind, and in order to continue 'la Cruzada', or the 'Crusade' against Communism which, Franco felt, had begun in fighting the Soviet-aided Republic in the Spanish Civil War, Franco agreed to allow a single division to be raised to fight in Russia.<sup>47</sup>

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during the Civil War, Franco, largely to appease various pressures from the Requetés and the Catholic Church, added 'Tradicionalista' to the party moniker, thus establishing the FET y de las JONS as the single, legal party in Spain, popularly known as the Movement (*El Movimiento*). For more on the formation of the Falange, see S. Ellwood, *Spanish Fascism in the Franco era: Falange Española de las JONS, 1936-1975* (New York, 1987) and S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain: 1923-77* (Madison, WI, 1999).

<sup>42</sup> *Correspondência de Pedro Teotónio Pereira para Oliveira Salazar*, ii (1940-1) (Lisbon, 1989), pp.79-81.

<sup>43</sup> *DGFP*, series D, vol xii, doc 12, PRO GFM 33/ 352 234678 24 June 1941.

<sup>44</sup> *New York Times*, 15 July 1941, p.5. For a better explanation of Spain's relation to Germany and Italy in post-Civil War Spain, see H. Feis, *The Spanish story: Franco and the nations at war* (New York, 1966), pp.3-27. For military assistance, see R. Proctor, *Agonia de un neutral*, pp.33-9.

<sup>45</sup> K. Eubanks, *The origins of World War II* (Arlington Heights, IL, 1969), p.68.

<sup>46</sup> *DGFP*, Series D, iv, document 124. *DGFP*, Series D, iii, document 783. The exact amount owed to Germany by Spain was 14,346,345.27 RM for help in the Spanish Civil War. *DIHGF*, vol iii, (Madrid 1992), p.42. Luis Suárez Fernández puts the total war bill and the costs of the Kondor Legion at 371,496,476.56RM and 85,847,226.60RM respectively, which are considerably higher figures. L. Suárez Fernández, *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid, 1997), p.193.

<sup>47</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, pp.340-4. Although a professed anti-Communist, Franco was a late conspirator, unlike General Emilio Mola-Vidal, another instigator in the Spanish Army's coup, who firmly believed Communism and the Soviet Union were detriments to the Spanish Army. Several historians assert that Franco was not easy to gauge as far as his political motives for rebelling during

However, it must be stressed that given the success of the previous German campaigns, Franco believed that the engagement against the Soviets would be short, thus lessening the risk of Spain's total commitment to the war. Franco had declared 'the strictest neutrality' with Germany's invasion of Poland in September 1939, largely due to Spain's Catholic affinity with Poland, but Spain changed its political stance to what Serrano Suñer called 'moral belligerency' with the fall of France in 1940 in the favour of the Axis.<sup>48</sup> Franco walked a political tightrope while seeking out the most advantageous position for Spain, notably in regard to coveted French possessions in North Africa. Spain militarily occupied the disputed, international district of Tangier in 14 June 1940 (which it held until 1945).<sup>49</sup> Serrano Suñer later claimed that had Hitler offered additional territories to Franco at their historic meeting at Hendaye in October 1940, Spain would have committed fully to the Axis cause.<sup>50</sup> Given Franco's colonial demands as well as his extensive list of economic and military needs, however, Hitler was not inclined to pursue Spain as an addition to the Axis partnership. He surmised, quite correctly, that Spain was only willing to enter the war at the last moment, but with enough time to share in the spoils. Hitler further recognised that Spain would prove more of a burden than a help, much as Italy was proving to be. As master of most of Western Europe, Hitler was in the driver's seat in the relationship with Franco, although the latter never really acquiesced to any of the German leader's demands. Neither side could agree on terms for Spain's entry into the war. However, given the desperate need for trade with Britain and the United States, Spain was simply not in a position politically, economically, or even militarily, to become a full Axis partner.<sup>51</sup>

### **Recruitment**

Beginning on 25 June 1941, men from throughout Spain began enlisting in the Blue Division. The *reclutamiento*, or recruitment, was organized by the Falange

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the revolt in Spain and had conflicting histories related to Communism. See R.H. Whealey, *Hitler and Spain: the Nazi role in the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington, KY 1989), pp.37-43 and H.R. Southworth, *Conspiracy and the Spanish Civil War: The brainwashing of Francisco Franco* (London, 2002), pp.129-191. Southworth, however, was an ardent critic of the regime, and his criticism should be read as such. For an example see, H.R. Southworth, *El mito de la cruzada de Franco* (Paris, 1963).

<sup>48</sup> *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, 4 September 1939. R. Serrano Suñer, *Entre Gibraltar y Hendaya* (Mexico City, 1947), p.55. P. Preston, *The politics of revenge*, pp.55, 75.

<sup>49</sup> The dispute was between Spain and France for possession of Tangier. S.Hoare, *Complacent dictator* (New York, 1947), p.34.

<sup>50</sup> H. Saña, *El franquismo sin mitos: Conversaciones con Serrano Suñer* (Barcelona, 1981), p.193.

<sup>51</sup> For a document detailing this relationship, see Avalon Project of Yale Law School. 'Spanish government and the Axis', <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/wwii/spain/sp01.htm> (6 Aug 2005).

militia with each of the various Spanish military districts sending men to comprise the four regiments being formed for the division. The German consulate in Bilbao sent various recruitment reports to the German Embassy in Madrid to pass on to Berlin to demonstrate the enthusiasm for recruitment for the division.<sup>52</sup> Former *divisionarios* are quick to point out the diversity amongst the Blue Division's recruits.<sup>53</sup> The volunteers, who were to be between the ages of twenty and thirty-five years of age and in fit physical shape, included all social classes, such as farmers, workers, doctors, aristocrats, Falange notables, office workers, intellectuals, and numerous students.<sup>54</sup> As one veteran later wrote, 'the volunteers were Spaniards without distinction of place, class, profession...they were from the North, South, East, West, Centre, Canaries, Balearics, African provinces. Before the other Nations came, Spaniards were there.'<sup>55</sup> But beyond their occupation or native land within Spain, some joined 'for the simple spirit of adventure.'<sup>56</sup> Most enlisted locally and were allowed to serve amongst friends and acquaintances, like the students of the SEU and members of the *Frente de Juventudes* (Youth Front of the Falange) who volunteered in Gerona and were attached to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Vierna Regiment.<sup>57</sup> Along with the 'Crusade against Communism' theme, the other motivations for joining the DEV varied among the volunteers.

Manuel Álvarez de Sotomayor, a veteran of the civil war, readily acknowledged that slogans such as 'Russia is guilty', 'the return of the visit', and the 'old resentments' for the Spanish Civil War were just bogus 'pretexts' for war.<sup>58</sup> He felt that the 'pure and simple truth', for him was that 'his blood boiled' for the war.<sup>59</sup> Another army regular volunteer, Alvarez joined to avoid the 'hell' of serving in the Spanish Army as it reinforced the perimeter around Gibraltar.<sup>60</sup> He likened his unit to a 'disciplinary battalion' instead of a regiment of the line and preferred fighting on the Eastern front to punishments he faced while at Algeciras.<sup>61</sup> As an added incentive for volunteering for Russia, a Spanish Army regular received double time served in the

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<sup>52</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234766 27 June 1941. PRO GFM 33/352 234711 28 June 1941.

<sup>53</sup> Interview General Víctor Castro Sanmartin, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan 2004).

<sup>54</sup> R. Recio Cordona, *Españoles en la segunda guerra mundial (el frente del Este)* (Madrid, 1999), p.14.

<sup>55</sup> J.A. Vidal y Gadea, *Breves notas sobre la División Azul* (Alicante, 1991), p.12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul: Possad* (Madrid, 2000), p.34.

<sup>58</sup> M. Alvarez de Sotomayor, *Generación Puente* (Alicante, 1991), p.153.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente: Diario de un soldado de Hitler* (Alicante, 1989), pp.20-1.

<sup>61</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, p.19.

Spanish Army while serving in the Wehrmacht. Many thus enlisted in the DEV in order to avoid a longer enlistment in the Spanish Army.

A later recruit, as part of the *quinta* (draft) of 1942 for the Spanish Army, was 'volunteered' by his unit in North Africa with seven other soldiers to serve in the Blue Division in July 1942.<sup>62</sup> Each of the soldiers was asked if they were going to Russia to which they simply replied 'yes' and they were considered 'volunteers'.<sup>63</sup> Of the eight, however, four failed the necessary medical examination. Another later volunteer, Angel Salamanca Salamanca, who was an inadvertent teenage volunteer in the Falange militia during the Civil War and a member of the Frente de Juventudes at the time of the German invasion, felt 'Russia was guilty' for the Spanish Civil War, but was not allowed by his father to join in the initial DEV enlistment because of the effect of that war on their family.<sup>64</sup> He later enlisted, without telling his parents until he reached Germany, in May 1942, as part of the first relief group.<sup>65</sup> One family had a very different response to the volunteer division, having given six sons to the DEV.<sup>66</sup> Moroccan troops were not allowed to join the Russia-bound force. Despite their distinguished service to Spain, 'Moors' were expressly asked by the Germans to be removed from the initial recruitment of the Blue Division.<sup>67</sup>

The archives reveal some interesting stories involving recruits and their attempts to reach Germany. One incident of recruits not technically or legally being eligible for service occurred as the 10<sup>th</sup> Expedition, under the command of Comandante (Major) Mariano del Prado O'Neill, attempted to leave Barcelona on 15 July 1941 on its way to Grafenwöhr.<sup>68</sup> In this instance, two volunteers' mothers had approached the commanding officer to prevent their sons from joining the DEV. One mother wanted to reclaim her son because, 'according to her,' he was 'unfit'

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<sup>62</sup> The term '*quinta*' literally translates as 'fifth' and refers to the traditional royal prerogative in Spain to every fifth man in each province or district, where a '*quinto*' or recruit was given to the army. See R. Stradling in F. Thomas, *Bother against brother: Experiences of a British volunteer in the Spanish Civil War* (Stroud, UK, 1998), p.134, n.21. V. Linares, *Más que unas memorias: Hasta Leningrado con la División Azul* (Madrid, 2000), p.23.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> From a small village (Escalonilla) near Toledo, Salamanca enlisted in the Falange militia during Nationalist operations to relieve the siege at Toledo. Interview Angel Salamanca Salamanca, Madrid (15 Sept 2004), A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin*, p.126.

<sup>65</sup> Interview Angel Salamanca Salamanca, Madrid (15 Sept 2004).

<sup>66</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.120.

<sup>67</sup> The Germans had desired that 'Moors' not be allowed to join and requested assurances from the German Ambassador in Madrid. *DGFP*, Series D, vol xii, doc. 70, 20 Aug 1941. For von Stohrer's reply see *DGFP*, Series D, vol xii, doc. 70, 21 Aug 1941.

<sup>68</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2,D.2/23, 21 July 1941.

(‘*inútil*’).<sup>69</sup> This volunteer from Gerona had his mother and sister following him all the way from Pamplona in attempts to get him back before the division left Spain. The other mother wanted her son because he was underage and had joined without his parents’ permission. Comandante del Prado O’Neill was unable to help with their ‘*reclamaciones*’ of their sons and blamed the Falange for being ‘so defective and poorly organised’ in recruitment.<sup>70</sup> Youths were not uncommon in the Blue Division; often many lied or falsified their documents regarding their age in order to enlist. Fernando Vadillo, for example, was only seventeen when he joined and another veteran observed ‘they were younger and younger.’<sup>71</sup> Many of these under-aged volunteers were eventually repatriated back to Spain after serving some time in Russia. For example, the military attaché had requested that a wounded soldier, Jesús LaSanta Ruíz Navarra, be returned to Spain in January 1942 due to his age and because he had originally ‘enlisted without consent’ from his parents.<sup>72</sup> It often happens after conflict that those simply too young to fight in it are aching for the experience of war- Germans in the Freikorps, Italians in the Fascist squads. Might this joining by Spanish youths suggest the same phenomenon?

The Blue Division also attracted numerous career officers as well. In an army where advancement was largely based on seniority, except in the case of combat service, a younger officer, particularly if a recent subaltern graduate of a Spanish military academy, could gain quicker advancement by serving in the DEV. The relative merits of Spanish-led units and German-led Spanish units had not been weighed up seriously, the latter possibility not having been even considered. This may well have been a consequence of the performance record of the Italian-officered ‘Mixed Divisions’ in the Spanish Civil War, which did not fare well.<sup>73</sup> Peter Kemp had observed the poor fighting merits of such a unit, the *Flechas Negras* and *Flechas Azules*, while in Bilbao as a volunteer in the Requeté 2<sup>nd</sup> Navarre Brigade. After several reverses during the siege of Bilbao, the Italo-Spanish unit required saving by neighboring Spanish units and Kemp later wrote ‘...Spanish soldiers, though they fight stoutly under their own officers, are seldom amenable to foreign command.’<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> J.A. Vidal y Gadea, *Breves notas sobre la División Azul*, p.16.

<sup>72</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.6.D.5/19, 17 Jan 1941.

<sup>73</sup> P. Kemp, *Mine were of trouble* (London 1957), p.30.

<sup>74</sup> P. Kemp, *Mine were of trouble*, pp.30, 96.

With so many interested volunteers the formation of the division could begin to take place. The German Ambassador to Spain telegraphed Berlin that there were enough volunteers to fill several divisions, although only the one was organized.<sup>75</sup> It was reported to the Germans that there were 'very high spirits' with numerous recruits in Madrid; however, the division had trouble recruiting in Catalonia, whose units were augmented by volunteers from Valencia.<sup>76</sup> Although the division was technically a 'volunteer' force, the Alto Estado Mayor (High Command) demanded that half the volunteers must be army regulars in order to ensure the division's military aptitude and structure.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, in order both to maintain Army control and to minimise Falangist influence over the unit, the Blue Division eventually comprised eighty-percent active army regulars.<sup>78</sup> Of the remaining twenty percent, only one third were actual Falangists.<sup>79</sup> According to a German dossier on the composition of the Blue Division, ninety-five percent of the officers were anti-Falangists.<sup>80</sup> Despite these facts, some historians have falsely identified the Blue Division as a 'Falangist Division.'<sup>81</sup>

The Falangists that were allowed to join the Blue Division, however, were some of the younger, more ardent members of the political organisation. Through approval of the Vice-Secretary of the Falange, various party notables such as national counsellors, provincial chiefs, and civil governors were allowed to join the DEV. These Falangists included influential leaders like Dionisio Ridruejo, Agustín Aznar, and José Miguel Guitarte, and also included the Conde de Montareo, who was a secretary to Serrano Suñer.<sup>82</sup> Dionisio Ridruejo, who had been Chief of Propaganda during the Civil War, was a particularly important volunteer because not only was he a member of the Junta Política and a national counsellor, he was also an intellectual and neoclassical poet, who very much embodied the Falange idealist fighting not only against Bolshevism but also for what Ridruejo believed to be a better Europe though the German New Order. As a *camisa vieja* and 'super-Falangist', Ridruejo was described as 'the most eloquent speaker in the [Falange] party since José Antonio

<sup>75</sup> J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul*, p.34.

<sup>76</sup> PRO GFM 33/ 352 234716 3 July 1941. D. Ridruejo, *Los cuadernos de Russia* (Madrid, 1980), p.10.

<sup>77</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.118.

<sup>78</sup> PRO GFM 33/ 352 234773 19 Aug 1941.

<sup>79</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, p.340.

<sup>80</sup> PRO GFM 33/ 352 234773 19 Aug 1941.

<sup>81</sup> H. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 4 ed. (London, 2001), p.922.

<sup>82</sup> *Arriba*, 11 July 1941.

[Primo de Rivera].<sup>83</sup> A list of Falange leaders with their party responsibilities, which included Ridruejo, was generated by the Germans to begin to gauge potential political allies within the DEV favourable to Germany's political and ideological war agenda.<sup>84</sup>

Augustín Aznar, another *camisa vieja* and former confidant of José Antonio, was a powerful Falange leader allowed by the party to join the DEV. A former Greco-Roman wrestling champion from Castile, Aznar had led the Falange militia prior to the Civil War. Aznar, who had escaped from the Republican zone with German help, had also attempted various schemes to rescue José Antonio from the anarchist-controlled Alicante prison where he was eventually executed in November 1936. Another influential leader was José Miguel Guitarte, who headed the *Sindicato Español Universitario* (SEU), the Falange's student section. The SEU, with its historic origins within the party, was the most ardent, violent, and impressionable group within the Falange.<sup>85</sup> As a former prisoner of the Republic for three years during the Spanish Civil War, Guitarte's joining of the Blue Division heavily influenced other students to volunteer to fight Communism in Russia.

It was not just Spaniards who were interested in volunteering for the Blue Division. Exiled White Russians living in Spain, some of whom had fought during the Spanish Civil War and were in many cases still serving in the Spanish military (particularly the Foreign Legion) were eager to enlist.<sup>86</sup> Numerous, presumably aged, White Russians were eager to return to Russia to continue the fight against the Soviet Union. One hopeful volunteer and veteran of the Russian Civil War, a Lieutenant Ali Garski Mahometof of the Legion, wrote to the Ministry of the Army in 23 June 1941 seeking permission to fight for Hitler, who had declared war against "...the Communists, Bolsheviks and Jews that destroyed my Patria (Motherland) of birth."<sup>87</sup> The Germans, however, were leery of any variation of Russian joining this particular volunteer group, and specifically asked that Russians immigrants not be allowed to

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<sup>83</sup> S. Payne, *Falange: a History of Spanish Fascism* (Stanford, CA, 1961), pp.181-2. José Antonio Primo de Rivera was the founder and theorist of the Falange, and killed during the Spanish Civil War whilst a captive of the Republic. He was also the son of Spanish dictator Miguel Primo de Rivera who ruled Spain from September 1923 to January 1930 and who, like Franco, was a staunch opponent of the political left and any regionalist nationalism.

<sup>84</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234758-60, 11 July 1941.

<sup>85</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, pp106-108,110.

<sup>86</sup> For White Russians serving Franco during the Spanish Civil War, see J. Keene, *Fighting for Franco: International volunteers in Nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-9* (London, 2001), pp.188-214.

<sup>87</sup> AGMAV, C.1978, Cp.1, D.3, 23 June 1941.

join the DEV.<sup>88</sup> Regardless of German misgivings, Russians were allowed to serve in the Blue Division and were particularly vital as interpreters. A list of twenty-six Russian candidates, which included Lieutenant Garski, was compiled with their previous experience, including service in Imperial Russian Army and during the Spanish Civil War, and current military or civilian position, as well as their recommended position within the DEV.<sup>89</sup> This list also noted whether or not the Russian held a 'naturalisation card', which the majority were given following the Spanish Civil War, on 23 September 1939.<sup>90</sup> Only a former cavalry colonel was rejected outright, most likely due to his age, while Lieutenant Garski was recommended for the divisional cartography section.<sup>91</sup>

Interest in joining the DEV was not, however, limited to White Russian immigrants. The Italian Ambassador in Lisbon had written Madrid that there were members of the 'Portuguese Legion' who wanted to volunteer for Russia but were prevented from doing so by the Salazar government.<sup>92</sup> However, there were numerous Portuguese volunteers, many of whom were veterans of the civil war in Spain, who eventually joined the Blue Division.<sup>93</sup> One volunteer, João Rodrigues Júnior, was the subject of an article written in the pro-National-Socialist Portuguese magazine *A Esfera*, which highlighted his service in the Foreign Legion during the Spanish Civil War prior to enlisting in the Blue Division.<sup>94</sup> A veteran of Teruel and the Ebro, Rodrigues was described as a twenty-six year old 'boy, dark and fragile.'<sup>95</sup> Rodrigues had decided to reenlist in the Legion after his 'contract' of five years had expired as other Legionnaires were going to Russia to fight Bolshevism and he wanted to fight alongside them.<sup>96</sup> When asked if other Portuguese were serving in the Blue Division, Rodrigues replied 'some fifteen' although he believed that he was

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<sup>88</sup> Request made in a telegram from German State Secretary Baron Ernst von Weizsäcker to the German Embassy in Madrid, see PRO GFM 33/352 234717 3 July 1941. Also see *DGFP*, Series D, vol xii, doc. 70, 4 July 1941, p 81.

<sup>89</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.3, D.2/3-4 Undated.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234798 3 Oct 1941.

<sup>93</sup> According to Judith Keene, the Portuguese comprised the most numerous of all foreign volunteers during the Spanish Civil War but exact numbers, estimated between 1,000 and 20,000, are not known as they easily assimilated with their Spanish neighbours and wore no distinguishing insignia. They were, however the largest number of volunteers serving in the *Legión Extranjera*. See, J. Keene, *fighting for Franco*, pp.7-8.

<sup>94</sup> *A Esfera* 23 August 1942, article quoted and translated in Spanish by C. Diez, <http://www.geocities.com/divazul.html> (22 October 2003).

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.



the only one still alive at the time of the interview in August 1942.<sup>97</sup> Another Portuguese volunteer, Jaime de Assunção Graça, who had also been a veteran of 'la Cruzada' and the Foreign Legion, claims to have joined the Blue Division with forty-five of his countrymen 'with the consent of the authorities of the Salazar regime.'<sup>98</sup> Unfortunately, exact numbers are not known for Portuguese nationals who served in the DEV.

According to archival evidence, at least one German immigrant asked to be allowed to join the Blue Division. On 5 July 1941 an Alejandro Schlegel Schydelsky pleaded in a letter to the Centre of Recruitment for the Blue Division to be allowed to join the division as an interpreter.<sup>99</sup> Mr. Schlegel, who had three children born in Spain to a Spanish mother, was also willing to work as 'an orderly, liaison, or stretcher-bearer for the Red Cross.'<sup>100</sup> His appeal seems successful as the letter had 'interpreters' hand-written across the top with 'organized' also included.<sup>101</sup> His name was not, however, on the roster sheet for divisional interpreters although he could have served in a different capacity within the division, assuming he passed his physical.<sup>102</sup>

Passing the physical exam given by Spanish authorities was not as arduous or as prejudicial as Spanish leadership would have preferred in the field. Not only were underage volunteers accepted, but those well beyond the limit age limit of thirty-five were also allowed to join. Many of these older volunteers were low-ranking members of the Movimiento and used the Blue Division as a hopeful stepping stone towards advancement within the party. One veteran observed that those older than thirty-five years often went to the front with their sons.<sup>103</sup> These men often, however, were not physically fit enough for the rigors of training or the gruelling march the division

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> *O Independente*, 26 June 1992, quoted from C. Diez, <http://www.geocities.com/divazul.html> (22 October 2003). Dr António de Oliveira Salazar refused all invitations and preferred for Portugal to remain neutral. Although asked if he desired to send volunteers to Russia, Salazar was never really pressured by either side to join the Second World War. S. Payne, *History of Spain and Portugal*, vol ii (Madison, WI, 1973), p.670. For more on Portugal in the initial stages in WW II, see G. Stone, *The oldest ally: Britain and the Portuguese connection, 1936-41* (Suffolk, 1994), pp.131-56 and throughout the war, F. Rosas, 'Portuguese neutrality in the Second World War', in N. Wylie, ed., *European neutrals and non-belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2002), pp.268-282.

<sup>99</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/22 5 July 1941.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.3, D.2/13,47 Undated.

<sup>103</sup> J.A.Vidal y Gadea, *Breves notas sobre la División Azul*, p.16.

endured to the front and consequently many were sent back to Spain before ever seeing any action.

As can be expected in a volunteer force, some often had doubts about why they had enlisted into the DEV in the first place, wondering what the risks of fighting in far-away Russia actually were. One example involved volunteer José Manuel Castañon from Asturias, who had volunteered for the first DEV enlistment while stationed in Melilla (North Africa). Castañon had met a Russian émigré named Chemeko who had been with Spanish Foreign Legion since the end of the Russian Civil War and had also volunteered to join the Blue Division. The Russian Chemeko, 'whose age they refer to now as a militarily old man', had asked Castañon, "'Do you know where you are going?'"<sup>104</sup> At that moment, Castañon realised that he didn't and thought to himself, 'I don't know anything nor do I want to know.'<sup>105</sup> Despite this, the division was going forward and needed a strong officer for guidance as it prepared for fighting on the Eastern Front.

For competent leadership, Franco appointed an old *Africanista* comrade-in-arms, General Agustín Muñoz-Grandes, former Secretary General of the Falange, to lead the DEV in the East.<sup>106</sup> This was relatively quick appointment, Von Stohrer telegraphed Berlin on 28 June 1941.<sup>107</sup> Muñoz-Grandes was an ideal choice as he was a readily identifiable figure by Falangists, but also held the military acumen necessary to lead a division-sized force. Muñoz-Grandes had led the 22 Infantry Division during the Spanish Civil War and was the Governor General of the vital Gibraltar military district at the time of Barbarossa. Peter Kemp, a former British volunteer and officer in the Spanish Foreign Legion described him, as '...a magnificent soldier-and incidentally a man of great charm.'<sup>108</sup> The Portuguese Ambassador to Spain described Muñoz-Grandes upon meeting him prior to the German invasion of the Soviet Union as '...a man of noble character, caring, and simple.'<sup>109</sup> The charismatic, 45-year-old general became, in many ways, the symbol

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<sup>104</sup> J.M. Castañon, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul, 1941-2* (Gijón, 1991), pp.13-4.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.118.

<sup>107</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234711, 28 June 1941.

<sup>108</sup> Kemp encountered the then Colonel Muñoz-Grandes while serving in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Navarre Brigade under his command before Kemp transferred to *la Legión Extranjera Española*. P. Kemp, *Mine were of trouble*, p.96.

<sup>109</sup> *Correspondência de Pedro Teotónio Pereira*, vol ii, p.347.

of the DEV in both Spain and Germany with a cult of personality still present amongst surviving *divisionarios*.<sup>110</sup>

After months of postponement, General Emilio Esteban-Infantes in December 1942, another *africanista* friend and former colleague during Franco's tenure as head of the Academia General Militar in Saragossa, officially replaced Muñoz-Grandes. The Germans were not keen on replacing Muñoz-Grandes and even sent a special emissary to Spain in June 1942 to argue against his relief.<sup>111</sup> Muñoz-Grandes, who was a favourite of Hitler, had hoped to promote a more authoritarian government in Spain with German support following the expected conquering of Leningrad.<sup>112</sup> Although Esteban-Infantes joined the DEV in August 1942, with German help, Muñoz-Grandes attempted to delay his replacement as head of the division as long as possible.<sup>113</sup> With Franco aware of the German influence over his former comrade and no longer able to delay the inevitable, Muñoz-Grandes returned to Spain in December 1942, where he was placed in the powerless position as head of the Caudillo's Military Household.<sup>114</sup> Esteban-Infantes, although a capable staff officer, never endeared himself to the men of Blue Division as his predecessor, nor was he as much of a zealot for either the Falange or Nazi causes. Nevertheless, he remained the head of the division during both the crisis at Krasny Bor and the DEV's final repatriation in the autumn of 1943.

### **Organisation**

Prior to the Blue Division's arrival in Germany, a Spanish accommodation commission had been sent to Berlin in early July 1941 to liaise with German authorities in creating and developing the logistical and structural organisation of the division. On 7 July 1941 Colonel José Maria Troncoso Sagredo, the division's first Chief of Staff, phoned the Alto Estado Mayor the guidelines and expected timeline for

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<sup>110</sup> For an example, see A. Espinosa Poveda, *Artillero segundo en la gloriosa División Azul (4 julio 1941-18 abril 1943): Cincuenta años despues* (Madrid, 1992), annexo.

<sup>111</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.11, D.1/23 23 June 1942.

<sup>112</sup> After several discussions with Muñoz-Grandes, Hitler had hoped that after Leningrad fell, he could lavishly reequip the Blue Division for its return to Spain, where it would 'tip the balance against Franco' replacing Muñoz-Grandes as head of state of a pro-Nazi Spanish government. Franco was to remain, however, as a figurehead within that government. P. Preston, *Franco*, pp.462-3.

<sup>113</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, p.463. For more on the political intrigue involving Muñoz-Grandes, Germany, and Franco, see G. Kleinfeld and Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, pp.192-237.

<sup>114</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.13, D.1/5 7 August 1942. Although Muñoz-Grandes fell under suspicion of sedition by Franco, he was later rehabilitated by the latter and held various positions within the Franco regime, including Minister of the Spanish Army and Vice-President of the government. See thesis Chapter 5.

the DEV.<sup>115</sup> These included the rest of the accommodation commission to leave for Irún 9 July where it would receive its instructions for Germany before boarding German transport. The rest of the division was designated to leave from Irún with three daily train transports beginning 14 July. The commission in Berlin travelled on 11 July to meet the Camp Governor at Grafenwöhr.

At Grafenwöhr the Spaniards were dealt several blows to their organisation. The Germans had expected the Spaniards to supply 400 trucks and 300 motorcycles for the division.<sup>116</sup> Given the state of post-Civil War Spain, this was impossible. The division had been recruited under the auspices of it being a motorised unit for which, the Spanish authorities believed, Germany would supply the vehicles. Accordingly, specialists with high mechanical aptitudes had been recruited. One veteran described as 'our first disappointment' the fact that the division was not motorised but would be dependent on the horse, like the majority of the German Army, for transportation.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, the divisional artillery was to be horse-drawn.<sup>118</sup> Also initially 'hipomovil', the divisional anti-tank unit was eventually given a variety of civilian vehicles requisitioned in France to pull their 37mm pieces, but most of these vehicles broke down on the rough roads in Russia.<sup>119</sup>

Furthermore, the Spaniards had unknowingly brought too many volunteers with them to Germany because they had organized themselves as a Spanish division of four regiments, while the average German division consisted of only three. The German Reserve Army (*Ersatzheer*) headquarters had provisioned for only roughly 17,500 men and the Spanish brought nearly 18,500.<sup>120</sup> The initial divisional strength and sent from Spain consisted of 641 officers, 2,272 non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and 15,780 men, which was soon cut down to 526 officers, 2,813 NCOs, and 14,397 men, divided among three regiments, four artillery battalions, a reconnaissance battalion, a sapper (pioneer) battalion, an anti-tank group, a medical staff, and command staff.<sup>121</sup> The division headquarters (*Cuartel General de la División*) consisted of a General Staff (*Estado Mayor*) divided into four sections: *la Primera Sección* (First Section), responsible for organisation, issuing orders, and judicial

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<sup>115</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2,D.1/1, 7 July 1941.

<sup>116</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p 20.

<sup>117</sup> J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul*, p 45.

<sup>118</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2,D.1/1, 7 July 1941.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p.40.

<sup>120</sup> R. Recio Cordona, *Españoles en la segunda guerra mundial*, p.16.

<sup>121</sup> PRO GFM 33/ 352 234719-20, 4 July 1941.

administration; *la Segunda Sección* (Second Section), responsible for collecting and disseminating intelligence; *la Tercera Sección* (Third Section), responsible for communications and included a Topographical Section that generated divisional maps; and *la Cuarta Sección* (Fourth Section), responsible for divisional supplies (*la Intendencia*), health services (*la Sanidad*), veterinary services (*Veterinaria*), horse and automotive transportation (*transportes hipmóvil y automóvil*), anti-gas section (*el servicio antigas*), and police (*gendarmeria*).<sup>122</sup> Also attached to the division were eighty-four female members of the *Sección Femenina* (SF) to serve in auxiliary and administrative positions.<sup>123</sup> As was the historic tradition of the Spanish Army, the division was officer- and soldier-heavy but under-strength in NCOs.<sup>124</sup> Contrary to the need for bodies on the Eastern Front which would develop later in the war, the extra thousand men or so did not please the Germans, as logistically, they were seen as more mouths to feed and supply. These additional troops were eventually returned to Spain but kept as a reserve.

The regular German division was traditionally created from the military district or region (*die Wehrkreise*) in Germany from which it originated. The German division was not only based on its locality of origin but also the *Wellen*, or wave, in which it was created and subsequently equipped. The earlier a division was created, the better it was equipped as it was higher in the supply chain due to seniority.<sup>125</sup> There were nearly thirty-five *Wellen* during both Germany's rearmament and throughout the war.<sup>126</sup> A typical German infantry division also had a depot or reserve battalion similar to the one created for the DEV by over-recruitment of the initial enlistment. A typical German division had its reserve battalion (*Feldersatz*) based in one of the twenty-one military districts in Germany from which the division was formed, which was small enough to maintain a regional identity but large enough to avoid large losses to smaller communities.<sup>127</sup> These reserve battalions were used not

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<sup>122</sup> For a good overview of the functions of the various departments of the headquarters and staff of the Blue Division, see J. Díaz de Villegas, *la División Azul en línea*, pp.133-219.

<sup>123</sup> P. Preston, *Comrades: Portraits of the Spanish Civil War* (London, 1999), p.136.

<sup>124</sup> Over eighty percent of the army budget went towards officers pay, see R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy* (London, 1979), p.22.

<sup>125</sup> G. Forty, *German infantryman at war, 1939-45* (Surrey, 2002), p.10.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.* For a good description of the Replacement Army and how it worked, see W.S. Dunn, Jr., *Heroes or traitors: The Replacement Army, the July Plot and Adolf Hitler* (Westport, CT, 2003), pp.1-14.

<sup>127</sup> There were initially only seven German military districts in 1934, which then expanded, as the Reich expanded, to eighteen by 1939, and finally culminated to twenty-one by 1941 when the DEV was recruited. G. Forty, *German infantryman at war, 1939-45*, pp.10-1.

only for training of new recruits who were then sent as replacements, but also for convalescing soldiers that were then returned to their division at the front. Only when the war turned against the Germans were soldiers sent to whichever division were they were needed most, in accordance with a system similar to the US Army's 'Reppel Deppel' scheme that notoriously did not return the former wounded to the divisions with which they had trained.

Although the regiments were initially recruited from Spanish military districts, there was never the risk that the Blue Division's losses would affect any locality as much as losses in its German counterparts.<sup>128</sup> A more significant problem for the Blue Division was the lack of consistent replacement recruitment within Spain to replace losses suffered by the DEV. This problem worsened as the stay in Russia lengthened. Although not part of a German *Wellen*, the Blue Division was formed around the time of the sixteenth division organisation wave in Germany and therefore would have been relatively low on the German supply chain if not for its status as a *Freiwillige Division* (volunteer division). Some veterans of the Blue Division have wrongly claimed that their division was the only foreign unit not incorporated into the Waffen-SS as the DEV was a Wehrmacht division.<sup>129</sup> Although true for other Western European volunteer formations such as the Jacques Doriot's *Légion Contre le Bolchevisme*, the Walloon Legion and others that were made part of the Waffen-SS in 1943, other Eastern European units were raised and served within the Wehrmacht by the latter stages of the war.<sup>130</sup> The Blue Division, unlike its other Western volunteer formations, remained a part of the regular German armed forces throughout the unit's existence.

The Blue Division was given its official title of 250 Infantry Division (250. *Infanterie Division (Spanische) des Heer*) within the German Wehrmacht. The Spaniards were allowed, in accordance with their military tradition, to name the Division's three regiments.<sup>131</sup> Subsequently, these adopted the surname of their commanding officers. Thus the regiments 262 (Pimentel), 263 (Vierna), and 269 (Esparza) were created. The battalions of the additional fourth regiment (Rodrigo),

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<sup>128</sup> V. Linares, *Más que unas memorias*, p.35.

<sup>129</sup> J.A. Vidal y Gadea, *Breves notas sobre la División Azul*, p.18.

<sup>130</sup> G. Stein, *Waffen-SS: Hitler's elite guard at war, 1939-45* (Bristol, 2002), pp.136,163. For an overview of foreign volunteers which included odd units like the Free Arab Legion and Free India Legion in the Wehrmacht, see C. Caballero Jurado, *Foreign volunteers of the Wehrmacht, 1941-5* (London, 1996).

<sup>131</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/1, 7 July 1941.

organized prior to German specifications, were dispersed intact amongst the other three regiments, with Colonel Rodrigo becoming a deputy officer of the division.<sup>132</sup>

All battalion or company sized sub-units, per standard German practice, retained the divisional number for their designation. For example, the Blue Division reconnaissance battalion was titled the 250 Reconnaissance (*Exploración*) Battalion. Though often comprised of motorcycles or light armoured cars in regular German units, the DEV was given bicycles, although this was not uncommon for regular German infantry divisions. Colonel Troncoso's report also discussed allowance for a mobile reserve unit (*reserva móvil*). The 250 Mobile Reserve Battalion, or *Tía Bernarda* (Aunt Bernarda), as it was affectionately called, consisted of two infantry companies and a mixed company of artillery, engineers, and medical personnel 'armed only with rifle and pistols.'<sup>133</sup> There was also an engineer (*zapadores*) battalion. These 650 men were designated 'to fight while working' to clear or create obstacles or mine fields.<sup>134</sup> Beyond military and auxiliary services, the division also organised an Information Service (*Servicio de Información*) in charge of disseminating military intelligence and information.

The Information Service was also commonly known as the Intelligence Section.<sup>135</sup> Intelligence for a Spanish division traditionally fell to the Second Section (*Segunda Sección bis*). Information obtained and disseminated by the Intelligence Section, as with any military unit, was strategically vital and particularly important to the DEV, as it served a dual role of providing military intelligence for the division but also supplied that information to the Spanish Army Ministry in Madrid. The Blue Division Intelligence Section was organized under a German structure, and therefore had a technical designation of 'I.c' within the German Army.<sup>136</sup> This section, however, remained largely as designed as the *Segunda Sección* of a divisional headquarters within the Spanish Army and mainly reported to the Alto Estado Mayor in Madrid.<sup>137</sup> This organisational structure demonstrates the Spanish Army's interest in maintaining an effective military intelligence system despite German Army guidelines, and is an important example of the Blue Division's close relationship with

<sup>132</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p. 33.

<sup>133</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2,D.1/1, 7 July 1941.

<sup>134</sup> J. Díaz de Villegas, *La División Azul en línea*, p.153.

<sup>135</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.3, D.1/3-4, 10 July 1941.

<sup>136</sup> For an explanation of divisional staff organization within the German, Spanish, and American armies, see chart in G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legions*, p. 34.

<sup>137</sup> The Estado Mayor is simply the headquarters of the division whereas the Alto Estado Mayor is the High Command and head of the entire Spanish Army, located in Madrid.

the Spanish government. Lieutenant Colonel Manuel Ruíz de la Serna was the leading intelligence officer throughout the DEV's existence and despite his rank became influential in the approval of orders, being superseded only by the General and Chief of Staff.<sup>138</sup> Despite his influence, Ruíz de la Serna remains an enigmatic figure as not very much is known about him.

### **The Blue Division in Germany**

With a respected commander, the initial enlistment of new recruits left Madrid's Estación del Norte on Sunday, 13 July 1941 with a *Movimiento* party send-off headed by Serrano Suñer, accompanied by Fascist salutes and singing of the Falangist anthem 'Cara al Sol'.<sup>139</sup> Most relief columns, however, were not sent off in such a fashion. All troops that headed to Germany for training at either *Truppenübungsplatz* Grafenwöhr or Hof before moving to the front were members of a numbered *expedición*, or expedition. These *expediciones* were either composed of a *batallón de marcha* (to the front) or a *batallón de relevo* (from the front). How a particular soldier was sent to Russia, including his training, will be discussed first; this will be followed by an examination of how soldiers were returned to Spain following their service in the German Army.

Before leaving Spain for Germany, soldiers were equipped with a *traje de viaje* (travel uniform) supplied by the Spanish Army. This uniform, a blend of the various political factions controlling Spain, consisted of the red *boina* (beret) of the Requeté, the khaki jodhpurs of the Spanish Legion, and the blue shirt of the Falange. These simple blue shirts gave the unit its popular appellation of *División Azul* or *Blaue Division*. The soldiers were also supplied inexpensive Spanish shoes or boots, cartridge belts, and a woollen blanket. The volunteers did not, with the exception of side-arms for officers and the occasional NCO, carry any weapons. Each soldier was also supplied money before entraining to the French border. Two days prior to leaving for Germany, one veteran recalled receiving a travel stipend of fifty-four pesetas, most of which, he recalled, was spent on 'sandwiches and wine.'<sup>140</sup> The troop trains headed north to Irún but were immediately met at Hendaye by German authorities who ordered disinfecting showers before travelling via France to

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<sup>138</sup> In a telegram sent to a Captain Calero in Königsberg, regarding orders requiring his approval, if not actually from 'el General Jefe o por el Jefe Estado Mayor de la División.' AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.1/6 4 May 1942.

<sup>139</sup> J. Chicharro Lamamié, *Diario de un antitanquista en la División Azul* (Madrid, 2001), p.13. G. Kleinfeld and L. Tamb *Hitler's Spanish legion*, pp.23-4.

<sup>140</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de Puente*, p.27.



Bavaria.<sup>141</sup> One veteran recalls singing the 'Cara al Sol' as the train passed into France over the International Bridge separating Irún and Hendaye.<sup>142</sup> These baths and disinfecting showers were to become routine for all Spaniards on their way to the Blue Division's training facilities in Germany.<sup>143</sup>

Although one volunteer recalled crossing through France 'without emotion or pleasure because the France of today [July 1941] is sad like defeat', en route the Spaniards were treated to rock throwing and throat-slitting gestures by French citizens.<sup>144</sup> Volunteers replied with insults towards the French 'reds' shouted from the train.<sup>145</sup> The Spanish authorities were quite startled by the numerous incidents that occurred with the French population. An official inquiry by the divisional Intelligence Section (*Segunda Sección*) was created that collected letters from each expedition unit as it passed through France to Germany. One report stated that the volunteers were treated 'with coldness and indifference' by the French population.<sup>146</sup> That same report, however, also related a shot being fired from the train which, it was believed, had wounded one of the 'insulting Frenchmen' while the division was near Orleans.<sup>147</sup> The 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Expeditions also fired 'a shot' 'without consequences' near Moselle at discontented French.<sup>148</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> Expedition also had a bottle-throwing incident from the train while near Orleans.<sup>149</sup> A report recognised that these incidents were best avoided with 'correction and discipline.'<sup>150</sup>

Hostility towards the Spanish volunteers was not unusual and continued throughout the DEV's existence. In September 1942 a replacement volunteer recalled seeing a sign over a bridge upon leaving Orleans for training in Germany that stated: 'Dumb Spaniards, many of you go and few of you return.'<sup>151</sup> The volunteer and others who saw the sign agreed that it was the work of Spanish Republican exiles.<sup>152</sup> However, one expedition reported receiving the Fascist salute (*brazo en alto*) and

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<sup>141</sup> J. Chicharro Lamamié, *Diario de un antitanquista*, p.13.

<sup>142</sup> J.M. Castañon, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.17.

<sup>143</sup> A. Bellod Gómez, *Soldado en tres guerras: Campaña de África, Guerra Civil, La División Azul en Rusia* (Madrid, 2004), p.192.

<sup>144</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, pp.33-4.

<sup>145</sup> J.M. Castañon, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.17. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/6, 20 July 1941.

<sup>146</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/1, 19 July 1941.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/13, 21 July 1941.

<sup>151</sup> V. Linares, *Más que unas memorias*, p.32.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

hearing one woman shout of “*Arriba España*” while on their way to Grafenwöhr.<sup>153</sup> Another volunteer, although he noted indifference, also saw a young woman ‘with a kiss in her voice’ who repeatedly shouted “*Viva la España*” as the troop train passed through Limeville.<sup>154</sup> Despite these altercations, the Spanish government was continually interested in French opinion of the German war effort. According to a report collected by the *Dirección General de Seguridad* (DGS) on the early German victories in the East, French popular opinion was not impressed and they believed that a ‘*victoria definitiva*’, or ‘final victory’, was not possible by the Germans because of the USSR’s allies, Great Britain and the United States.<sup>155</sup>

French hostility somewhat startled the Spanish volunteers, but they were greeted by various German delegations until they reached Grafenwöhr or Hof, in Germany, where they would begin their training under German supervision. The Germans, unlike the French, were very welcoming to the Spanish volunteers. This was shown in a series of events which included decorating train stations with welcome signs in Spanish. From first reaching Hendaye, the volunteers were given ‘food and tobacco’ by German authorities.<sup>156</sup> One report dealing with French mishaps also reported that the trip through Germany was ‘Magnificent!’, soldiers being received ‘with enthusiasm and full of attention.’<sup>157</sup> Another veteran recalled being greeted by the Governor General of Strasburg (which had been incorporated back into Germany after the fall of France in 1940), whose train station was decorated with banners with greetings for the DEV, and being ‘presented photographs of Hitler, medals, chains, [and] flowers’ by the Germans.<sup>158</sup> There were also small children who yelled, ‘Kape, Kape’ hoping to be thrown the volunteers’ boinas or caps of the Foreign Legion as souvenirs.<sup>159</sup> The only exception to German enthusiastic greetings was, with no fault to German authorities, due to an unexpected air raid alarm experienced by the 18<sup>th</sup> Expedition in Karlsruhe that resulted ‘in some bruises’.<sup>160</sup> The reality was, however, that not all *expediciones* were as well received as the initial

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<sup>153</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/13, 21 July 1941.

<sup>154</sup> J.M. Castañon, *diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, pp.17-8.

<sup>155</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc. 45, 20 Aug 1942, p.572.

<sup>156</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/14, 7 July 1941.

<sup>157</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/1, 19 July 1941.

<sup>158</sup> J.M. Castañon, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.18.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.* José Maria Sanchez Diana relates a similar story regarding the German children requesting “‘Kepii, Kepii’” from the *divisionarios* as they passed through Germany. J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, p.44.

<sup>160</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2,D.2/6, 20 July 1941.

division. Having crossed the French border, the volunteers became the full responsibility of the German government, which included equipping, training, but most of all bankrolling the division.

### **Equipment of the DEV**

Upon arriving at either Grafenwöhr or Hof, the Spanish recruit was given all necessary supplies and equipment needed, which often included a Spanish-German dictionary.<sup>161</sup> The equipment, especially the footwear, was of the finest quality available to the regular German infantryman and was far superior to any that existed in the Spanish Army. For the most part, volunteers were eager to get their German equipment and uniforms and be rid of their Spanish kit. The decision to uniform the Spanish volunteers in regulation German uniforms with the national emblem, or *Nationalem Abzeichen* (over the right breast per Wehrmacht regulation and contrary to the Waffen-SS with an altered emblem on the left sleeve above the elbow), had been decided as early as 3 July 1941 in a telegram from German State Secretary Weiszäcker.<sup>162</sup>

The only alteration to the regular German uniform was the wearing on the right sleeve above the elbow of a patch with red-gold-red horizontal bars representing the Spanish flag contained in a shield topped with 'ESPAÑA.' This patch saw non-regulation alternates included the Iron Cross, the Falange *yugo y flechas* (yoke and arrows), swastika, or variations of all three within the shield. Furthermore, this shield was often painted, against regulation, on the right side of the German-issued helmet. Many Falangists continued to wear their blue shirts under their German uniforms to maintain their identity to the 'cause' while in Russia.<sup>163</sup> In the spirit of *Kampfgemeinschaft*, but contrary to Spanish military tradition, the officers also wore the same uniform as their men, with only the shoulder boards denoting difference in rank or divisional designation.<sup>164</sup> Germany equipping the Spanish volunteers allowed Spain to remain neutral while affording better protection according to the Geneva Convention (not that the Soviet Union were cosignatories to the accord). This was relatively unique as Germany's allies were self-equipped while the majority of other foreign volunteers, as we have seen, were members of the Waffen-SS.

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<sup>161</sup> V. Linares, *Más que unas memorias*, pp.32-3.

<sup>162</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234717 3 July 1941.

<sup>163</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, (Carbondale, 1979) p.35

<sup>164</sup> *Kampfgemeinschaft*, or the ideal social order due to combat in the First World War that created the *Volksgemeinschaft* in Nazi Germany. See O. Bartov, *Hitler's army: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich* (New York, 1992), p.107. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/1, 7 July 1941.

With the exception of captured French artillery, all other weapons were regular German ordnance.<sup>165</sup> This included the inadequate Pak 37mm (*Panzerabwehrkanone*) anti-tank gun, the scorned 'door knocker' that simply bounced its rounds off the armour of the T-34 and KV tanks. The Pak 37 was obsolete within the first six months in Russia; however, it was a field piece that was never replaced within the division throughout its existence, a fact which had major repercussions in actions at Krasny Bor in February 1943. For small arms, the Mauser Model 98K 7.92mm bolt rifle, the staple of the German Army, was also the regular infantry weapon of the *guripa*. This antiquated, bolt-action rifle was further supplemented with the 'Maschinen Pistole- 40' (MP40). As with all German *gruppe*, the Spanish built their squads around the MG34, and later the MG42, light and heavy machine guns ('*Maschinen Gewehr*'). The division also received various standard infantry mortars (*Granatenwerfer*) to complement hand grenades, and when available, Teller anti-tank mines. Ultimately, unlike most of Germany's allies for whom Germany never became 'the arsenal of fascism', the Blue Division was relatively well equipped and supplied by their German hosts throughout the division's existence.<sup>166</sup>

### **Training of the Blue Division**

It was General Muñoz-Grandes' intention to have the division trained as quickly as possible. The Germans insisted on a minimum training of three months, but Muñoz-Grandes wanted that curtailed significantly. He had asked his regimental colonels their opinions as far as training was concerned. Colonel Martinez Esparza recounted how Muñoz-Grandes demanded their opinions on a proper divisional training schedule to which the answer ranged from six weeks to two months, but Muñoz-Grandes insisted that the division be ready with only fifteen-twenty days of instruction.<sup>167</sup> He would have desired a schedule of only two weeks, but there was a compromised agreement for six weeks of German training before moving to the front. General Friedrich 'Fritz' Fromm of the *Ersatzheer* (Reserve Army) believed that this

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<sup>165</sup> The use of captured foreign armament was not unusual. The Waffen-SS, before gaining control of the German weapons industry and thereby dominating weapon allotments, used Czech material extensively. Captured French vehicles such as the Lorraine *chenillettes* were used to pull anti-tank weapons in Russia, and as most unaccustomed vehicles, broke down relatively quickly in rural, rugged Russia. For an example see, G.H. Bidermann, *In deadly combat: A German soldier's memoir of the Eastern Front*, (Lawrence, KS, 2000), pp.4, 21-2.

<sup>166</sup> As opposed to the United States acting as 'the arsenal of democracy.' For the inefficiencies and deficiencies of Germany in supporting its allies against the Soviet Union, see R.L. DiNardo, 'The dysfunctional coalition: the Axis and the Eastern Front in World War II,' *Journal of Military Affairs*, vol. ix, no. 4 (Oct, 1996), pp.711-30.

<sup>167</sup> J. Martínez Esparza, *Con la División Azul en Rusia* (Madrid, 1943), pp.56,58.

would allow for enough time for proper, though abbreviated, training before heading into the line. General Muñoz-Grandes was concerned that the Blue Division would simply miss any significant action in what was expected to be a quick German victory over the Soviet forces. This decision to abbreviate and condense the training schedule of the initial troop roster later affected the quality of training received by replacements, of which Muñoz-Grandes later complained.<sup>168</sup>

German troop instruction, built on Prussian tradition, was brutal, harsh, and recruits and conscripts learned at their cost the credo, 'Sweat saves blood.'<sup>169</sup> Training was essential for effective cohesion and technical proficiency in order to accomplish the required necessities of the dynamic, modern battlefield, but also created essential camaraderie that was carried into the campaign. Therefore, the short instruction time did not endear the Spanish to their German charges – and to this were added existing differences between the two cultures. The German instructors were amazed at the laxness in Spanish discipline and appearance. Conversely, the Prussian military traditions of parading and formalities were never popular among the Spaniards. Stories are rife of drill instructors attempting to 'dress down' Spanish recruits over matters of unbuttoned tunics and unpolished boots. The Germans were especially frustrated with the ability of the Spanish soldier to easily dismantle and reassemble German weapons, but to never bother in cleaning them. Despite this, the training went reasonably well given the short timeframe allowed. One 'surprised German conversation' overheard and passed on to the Alto Estado Mayor noted the ability Spanish forces in needing only one day to complete all 'necessary camp movements.'<sup>170</sup>

The initial training of the DEV had 'a section with German personnel to orientate the instruction' of the division.<sup>171</sup> There was also a 'translators section' to help facilitate the passing of orders and regulations in both languages.<sup>172</sup> The training guideline determined that each company was to have three German specialists that taught the rest of the company in the use of the machine gun, the automatic pistol, and the light mortar.<sup>173</sup> Smaller units such as the communications (*transmisiones*) unit

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<sup>168</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9, D.3/8 7 April 1942.

<sup>169</sup> For more on the training of German troops, see S. Fritz, *Frontsoldaten*, pp.11-30.

<sup>170</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/10, 30 July 1941.

<sup>171</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/1, 7 July 1941.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

were to have two instructors, one for radio and the other for telephones.<sup>174</sup> The exact amount of instruction varied from group to group. One volunteer in the anti-tank group described not needing the instructor to his 37mm anti-tank gun after the initial eight days as they had learned so quickly.<sup>175</sup> Others had different experiences with the adequacy of training. A later volunteer as a part of the 17<sup>th</sup> March Battalion sent to the front as replacement in the autumn of 1942 complained of not being sufficiently trained. For *divisionario* José Linares García, not only was his training condensed and shortened, but he had not been trained to either clean or shoot his rifle.<sup>176</sup> Fortunately for him he had served for a brief time in the Spanish Army before joining the DEV.

As required by all soldiers, sailors, and airmen serving the Reich, Spaniards also took the *juramento de fidelidad*, or oath of allegiance to Hitler; however, the phrase ‘in the fight against communism’ was added to the existing formula to signify their unique nature on the Eastern Front.<sup>177</sup> The first occasion for the oath occurred on 31 July 1941 when the entire División Azul Española went before General Muñoz-Grandes and General ‘Fritz’ Fromm, head of the Reserve Army, to declare their loyalty to the Führer.<sup>178</sup> All Spanish volunteers who served in the German Army would declare ‘I swear’ (*‘juro’*) to the following question of loyalty:

¿Jurais, por Dios y por vuestro honor de españoles, absoluta obediencia al comandante supremo del Ejército alemán, Adolf Hitler, *en la lucha contra el comunismo* y combatir como valientes soldados, dispuestos en cualquier momento a sacrificar vuestras vidas en cumplimiento de este juramento?<sup>179</sup>

Do you swear before God and on your honour as Spaniards absolute obedience to the supreme commander of the German Army, Adolf Hitler, in the fight against communism, and do you swear that you will fight as brave soldiers, ready to give your life at every instant in order to fulfil this oath?<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> J. Chicharro Lamamié, *Diario de un antitanquista en la División Azul*, p.14.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> Found in several sources including A. Espinosa Poveda, *Artillero 2.0 en la gloriosa División Azul*, pp.73-6 and E. del la Vega Viguera, *Rusia no es cupable*, p.29.

<sup>178</sup> For an excellent account of this event, see A. Espinosa Poveda, *Artillero 2.0 en la gloriosa División Azul*, pp.73-76.

<sup>179</sup> The ‘*En la lucha contra el comunismo*’ is italicised by Poveda. A. Espinosa Poveda, *Artillero 2.0 en la gloriosa División Azul*, p.74.

<sup>180</sup> Translation from R.Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.136.

The *juramento* to Hitler had varying effects on the volunteers. One participant of the first *juramento* recalled that ‘the multiple shouts of a thousand throats of the oath like one, produces an indefinable emotion of patriotic happiness.’<sup>181</sup> After the ceremony, another ‘felt for the first time a part of the enormous sensation’ that the Blue Division would play in ‘Universal History’ (sic).<sup>182</sup> One of the few volunteers from Barcelona felt that because the DEV had a ‘specific mission on the Eastern Front’ the oath was ‘well explained.’<sup>183</sup> Another volunteer from Peñaflores near Seville claimed to have ‘maintained silence’ when his training mates had answered ‘*juro*’ to the oath.<sup>184</sup> In his opinion, it was not right to declare an oath ‘to a foreign country and head of state.’<sup>185</sup> Another veteran had similar feelings and believed he was not wearing a German uniform to defend Germany or National Socialism (which he professed was a doctrine he never preferred), but saw himself wanting ‘to help eradicate Communism.’<sup>186</sup> Somewhat unsurprisingly, possibly because of its political ramifications, many veterans fail to even mention the oath at all in their memoirs.

Despite the loyalty pledged by the Spaniards to Hitler, discipline remained a concern for the Germans. In addition to the incidents in France, a German commander at Bayreuth complained of the excesses of off-duty Spanish soldiers, due to the consumption of alcohol. According to the officer, these volunteers’ behaviour, while in uniform, due to drunkenness, hurt ‘publicly, the population and the prestige of the German Army.’<sup>187</sup> This is an interesting development because the day following the incident in Bayreuth and the day before the German officer wrote his complaint, the divisional headquarters had issued a report related to need for strong discipline when dealing with ‘internal legal rules’ and international law.<sup>188</sup> In the camp communiqué, the divisional Estado Mayor stated, ‘absolute obedience is the fundamental basis for success in warfare, and any infraction will be punished with all rigour.’<sup>189</sup> Although this document dealt essentially with expected field discipline, particularly conduct in occupied territory and handling of prisoners of war, and while

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<sup>181</sup> J.M. Castañón, *diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.19.

<sup>182</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, p.51.

<sup>183</sup> J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul*, p.46.

<sup>184</sup> V. Linares, *Más que unas memorias*, p.33.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul* (Albacete, 1992), p.2.

<sup>187</sup> AGMAV, C.1978, Cp.7, D.3, 5 Aug 1941.

<sup>188</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.2/5 4 Aug 1941.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*

there is no direct evidence to suggest the events were related, there was certainly recognition by the Spanish authorities of the need to tighten discipline.

The Spanish authorities were cognisant of the fact that differences between the two cultures would come to the surface. The Second Section had printed an 'Informative Note' entitled, *Regarding: Conduct of the Forces of the Division* that attempted to assert the behaviour expected of the men of the division.<sup>190</sup> The 'treatment of [German] civilians' included not confusing the 'customs of the country (completely distinct from ours)' or taking advantage of the locals to the soldiers' benefit.<sup>191</sup> One 'concrete case' of misbehaviour occurred with a 'disagreeable incident' involving some divisional sergeants at a local bar located outside the camp in which the NCOs, including a decorated '*Brigada de la Guardia Civil*,' made unwanted advances towards local women who were out with their 'husbands and family.'<sup>192</sup> Another volunteer recalled being denied a dance by some German girls while on weekend furlough with some fellow soldiers in Bayreuth. He asked a local German why they said no and he was told in perfect French that, "In Germany, no one dances while the war goes on."<sup>193</sup> The *divisionario* found it ironic that the same women who would not dance with him at the Metropol (the dancehall in Bayreuth) were the same ones who also would not be required by the Reich to work in an arms factory in support of the Fatherland but they would put together care packages to support the troops.<sup>194</sup>

The local Germans, including military personnel, who often encountered the Blue Division, were not always respectful towards the Spanish volunteers. One incident involved a German sergeant named Tanhauser who had improperly failed to yield to a guard posted outside a cantina to bar entry during the meal.<sup>195</sup> The German NCO had barged past the guard, had failed to salute some Spanish officers or remove his hat inside the mess hall, and had begun to raise his voice after being confronted by a Spanish staff officer, Captain Bañares, and a divisional interpreter.<sup>196</sup> The situation was calmed after a German officer intervened, promising that the Tanhauser would be

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<sup>190</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.3/3 20 July 1941.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, p.42.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.3/10, 26 Aug 1941.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.



appropriately punished.<sup>197</sup> Another incident involved several Germans badmouthing some Spanish soldiers and officers, some who understood German, at a local bar of the base premises at Grafenwöhr.<sup>198</sup> An actual confrontation was avoided when the Spaniards decide to leave the bar.

Justice and discipline were under the jurisdiction of the Spanish authorities and Spanish military law with the exception of when the division was under direct German command. The Judicial Authority was under the control of the general of the division (Muñoz-Grandes and later Esteban Infantes) and abided by the Spanish military code.<sup>199</sup> In one instance, two sergeants who had been Legionnaires in Morocco were returned to Spain because of their 'discontent with the Officer' of the Blue Division.<sup>200</sup> Because they had not observed the 'considerations determined by the *Cuerpo de Suboficiales* (Body of Non-Commissioned Officers)', the pair were arrested, demoted and sent back to Spain where they could 'enlist in the German Army as simple soldiers.'<sup>201</sup> The only exception to Spanish military law was for 'civil-order crimes', which fell under the jurisdiction of German authorities.<sup>202</sup>

During their training, volunteers were not only instructed in weapons, but were taught how to act while in the field. The same camp communiqué that discussed discipline also told soldiers how to act towards the various circumstances that they were most likely to encounter in Russia other than combat. In the bulletin *General Instruction Number 3005*, divisional headquarters told the volunteers how to conduct themselves in occupied territory and how to treat prisoners (*prisioneros*), spies (*espías*), and franc-tireurs or partisans (*francotiradores*) while in Russia.<sup>203</sup> Surprisingly, the volunteers were instructed, contrary to any 'Commissar Order' that existed for troops currently on the Eastern Front, that Spaniards were to conduct themselves as politely as possible.<sup>204</sup> Soldiers were instructed 'to respect their [the POWs'] lives, neither insulting them nor inflicting poor treatment.'<sup>205</sup> Wounded prisoners were also to be treated by medical personnel 'as one of the virtues of the

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.3/9, 17 Aug 1941.

<sup>199</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/2, 7 July 1941.

<sup>200</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.3/4 23 July 1941.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/5-7, 4 Aug 1941.

<sup>204</sup> German troops were initially ordered to shoot commissars and political agitators they captured. See, O. Bartov, *The Eastern Front 1941-5: German troops and the barbarization of warfare*, 2 ed. (London, 2001), p.106.

<sup>205</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/5-6, 4 Aug 1941.

victor' and because in the field, 'The [presence of the] Red Cross is not feasible.'<sup>206</sup> The soldiers were, however, given instructions to fire back against either spies or franc-tireurs who did not surrender themselves or evaded capture. Franc-tireurs would not be considered as such, but 'forces of the [Red] Army' if they distinguished themselves from a distance with 'visible arms' while observing 'the laws and customs of war in the time of war' and were under the command of officers (*Jefes*) responsible for their actions.<sup>207</sup>

The soldiers were also to be instructed in how to act in case they themselves fell prisoner to the Red Army. Though a true soldier preferred 'to die a thousand times attacking or to the last defending himself', he could still become a prisoner of war.<sup>208</sup> The men were admonished to adhere to the '*Juramento*' they had given as it was a greater honour 'to lose one's life with dignity than to place in danger the life of other many companions that continue fighting with the supreme obligation to win.'<sup>209</sup> In other words, soldiers were better off dying as they had promised Hitler, or at least keeping their mouths shut while prisoners of war. Captured volunteers were only allowed to tell Soviet authorities 'their name, rank, date and place of birth, regular residence', and, if pressed, to provide them with their 'identity sheet' (paper).<sup>210</sup> Each man was also instructed to 'conduct himself as he belonged to the military profession' and contrary behaviour would be treated as 'a crime of high treason and punished' following victory.<sup>211</sup> The soldiers were also told to be aware of '*los CHIVATOS*' (sic), or 'stool pigeons' amongst them while in captivity.<sup>212</sup>

### **Payroll of the DEV**

According to archival evidence, although the Spanish government, particularly the Spanish Army, sent extensive supplies, such as foodstuffs and warm clothing, to augment Wehrmacht provisions, payment of the division fell completely to the German government. A lesser-known aspect of the DEV's historiography, the pay received by volunteers has not been discussed in depth in any other English work on

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<sup>206</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/6, 4 Aug 1941.

<sup>207</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/7, 4 Aug 1941.

<sup>208</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/9, 4 Aug 1941.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/10, 4 Aug 1941. A '*chivato*' is translated as 'goat' but describes someone who betrays one's comrades for his own benefit, like a 'rat' or 'stool pigeon'.

the DEV so far.<sup>213</sup> A volunteer was generally paid in accordance with his rank but the sum total fluctuated depending on other variables such as length of service, the number of dependents, and whether or not he was receiving 'combat' pay. The base pay (Figure 1.2) ranged from as low as 60RM per month for the common foot soldier all the way to 900RM for the general of the division. In addition to their base pay, volunteers were given an additional 30RM for combat pay when at the front.<sup>214</sup> Each individual had the potential, based on marital status and the numbers of children, to gain considerably more pay for his loved ones back in Spain than he would have been made had he stayed home. Another factor was the number of years of service within the German Army, which was of course short for the majority of the Spanish volunteers in the Blue Division.

<b>Figure 1.1- Potential German yearly pay in Reichsmarks to Blue Division volunteers and their families, July 1941.</b>	
	<b>Reichsmarks/year</b>
<b>General of the Division</b>	19,000
<b>General of the Brigade</b>	16,000
<b>Colonel</b>	12,600
<b>Lieutenant Colonel</b>	9,700
<b>Major</b>	7,700-8,400
<b>Captain</b>	4,800-6,900
<b>Lieutenant</b>	3,400-4,200
<b>Lieutenant-2<sup>nd</sup></b>	2,400-4,200
<b>Master sergeant</b>	2,550-2,934
<b>Sergeant</b>	2,400-2,800
<b>Corporal</b>	1,536-2,060
<b>Soldier</b>	1,400

Source: AGMA, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/2-3 7 July 1941

The yearly earnings beyond the monthly base pay could be quite substantial if the volunteer qualified based on the number of years of service, marital status, the number of children, etc. The general of the division stood to earn 700RM per month if single. If he was married, however, he potentially could make 1,700RM per month, which was a significant pay increase (Figure 1.2). Therefore, the general of the division could earn, with the proper criteria, 19,000RM a year with a possible 360RM in combat pay. The stipulations for such a dramatic increase in total payments,

<sup>213</sup> For a discussion on the German pay rates for DEV volunteers, see R. García Pérez, *Franquismo y Tercer Reich* (Madrid, 1991), pp.263-9 and R. Recio Cardona, *El Servicio de Intendencia de la División Azul*, pp.143-51.

<sup>214</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/2-3 7 July 1941.

unfortunately, are not clear from the pay chart sent from Lt. Colonel Troncoso to the Alto Estado Mayor. The pay ranges noted (Figure 1.1) with individual officers such as junior officers and the NCOs were also based on the same factors for yearly payments and the ranges largely reflect the number of years of service in the German Army (especially among the junior officers and higher NCOs).

As has usually been the case throughout history, the common soldier was the lowest paid with in the service with 1,400RM yearly base pay and a potential 360RM in combat pay. With the earning potential of only 60RM a month, but having to serve continually at the front, the lowly soldier was only eligible for an additional 30RM a month in additional payments for his family (Figure 1.2). This 90RM was a fairly meagre salary compared to that of the officers. Despite his sacrifices while fighting at the front, the lowly *gurípa* stood to earn very little compensation despite having to endure greater risks on the battlefield. However, the costs of paying for the division added up.

<b>Figure 1.2- German monthly pay in Reichsmarks to single and married Blue Division volunteers, August 1941.</b>		
	<b>Monthly Single</b>	<b>Monthly Married</b>
<b>General</b>	900	1,700
<b>Colonel</b>	620	800
<b>Lt. Colonel</b>	490	630
<b>Major</b>	400	520
<b>Captain</b>	340	430
<b>Lieutenant 1<sup>st</sup></b>	230	290
<b>Lieutenant 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	210	270
<b>Sergeant 1<sup>st</sup></b>	145	210
<b>Sergeant 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	140	205
<b>Corporal 1<sup>st</sup></b>	130	185
<b>Corporal 2<sup>nd</sup></b>	105	145
<b>Soldier 1<sup>st</sup></b>	75	105
<b>Soldier</b>	60	90

Source: FDA, *Carpeta de Instrucciones: devengos a los oficiales, clases y tropa de la DEV*, 2 Aug 1941 as cited in R. Recio Cardona, *El servicio de intendencia de la División Azul*, p. 147.

The soldiers also received an additional payment (Figure 1.3) through a monthly stipend known as a '*gratificación de campaña*' (campaign bonus). This 'campaign bonus' was essentially additional combat pay for spending time at or near

the front. This payment was in addition to the normal pay provided by the German government and could be of considerable financial benefit to the lower, lesser-paid ranks.

**Figure 1.3- Monthly 'Campaign Bonus' for Blue Division Volunteers, August 1941.**

	RM/ Month
General	210
Colonel	150
Lt. Colonel	120
Major	108
Captain	96
Lieutenant 1 <sup>st</sup>	81
Lieutenant 2 <sup>nd</sup>	72
Master Sergeant	60
Sergeant	45
Corporal 1 <sup>st</sup>	45
Corporal 2 <sup>nd</sup>	42
Soldier 1 <sup>st</sup>	36

Source: FDA, *Carpeta de instrucciones: devengos a los oficiales, clases y tropas de la DEV*, 2 Aug 1941 as cited in R.Recio Cardona, *El Servicio de Intendencia de la División Azul*, p.149.

Although technically the Spanish men were bankrolled by, and wards of, the Third Reich and under German command, the Spanish government also shared some of the expenses of the Blue Division (which remained subordinated to the Ministry of the Army in Madrid).<sup>215</sup> Between July 1941 and March 1942, the Central Military Pay Office of the Spanish military had paid 58,000,000 pesetas towards the costs of bankrolling the Blue Division.<sup>216</sup> These payments were, in fact, partially made by the Spanish government as a means to help repay some of the '*deuda de sangre*.' By the end of the Second World War, the Blue Division had cost the Franco government over 613.5 million pesetas (including several payments towards its cost following its repatriation).<sup>217</sup> This great financial cost to the Spanish government, argues Spanish historian Xavier Moreno Juliá, meant that the DEV was more the *División Azul* than the *Blaue Division*.<sup>218</sup>

To help facilitate payments to the families of the Blue Division while the troops were at the front, a *Werhmachtkasse* (German Armed Forces payroll office) was set up at the *Instituto Español de Moneda Extranjera* (IEME- Spanish Institute of

<sup>215</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, p.342.

<sup>216</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, pp.476-8.

<sup>217</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.368.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid*, p.369.

Foreign Currency) in Madrid.<sup>219</sup> Family members of *divisionarios* also received payments or funds sent from Germany or Russia in Reichsmarks. Mailed in the form of ‘*giros postales*’ or money orders from the men in the field, these money orders were converted by the IEME from Reichsmarks to pesetas.

The close connection between the Blue Division and Spanish Army Ministry went beyond mere supplies and payroll, however. This relationship is apparent in the archival correspondence between the Spanish Military Attaché in Berlin, who acted as liaison between the Blue Division and the Alto Estado Mayor (Spanish High Command) in Madrid. Through the military attaché the Blue Division continually requested supplies and reinforcements from the Spanish Army headquarters. For their part, the Alto Estado Mayor was interested in military intelligence and the return of various junior officers for further training in Madrid. Despite this, the division was recognised by both militaries for any awards such as medals and honours in combat.<sup>220</sup> Although the German *Oberkommando* sent the ‘conditions for awards concessions’ to the DEV when awarding German medals like the Iron Cross, the Blue Division eventually requested 800 ‘*Cruces Guerra*’ for troops and a further 100 for officers, as well as 100 ‘*Medallas Militares*’, from headquarters in Madrid to award for gallantry in the field.<sup>221</sup> The Spanish Army sent these medals but any awarding of medals required ‘the approval of [that] ministry’ before they were given to the troops.<sup>222</sup> This, then, is further proof that the division was not the sole possession of the German military, but was closely entwined with the Spanish Ministry of the Army and the Franco government.

### **Memories of Germany**

The ‘friendly village’ of Grafenwöhr and Hof, both located south of Nuremberg, were ideal settings in lower Bavaria for training and instruction of troops.<sup>223</sup> Though both were rather small encampments, or *Truppenübungsplatz*, Grafenwöhr had especially good facilities surrounded with open training grounds with ‘excellent fields of instruction and shooting.’<sup>224</sup> The small size of the camps, however, often made rotating the *batallones de marcha* and *batallones de relevo*

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<sup>219</sup> R. Recio Cardona, *El servicio de intendencia de la División Azul*, pp.146-7.

<sup>220</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.1/2, 7 July 1941.

<sup>221</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.1/19 3 May 1942. AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/20 16 Oct 1942.

<sup>222</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/30 21 Oct 1942.

<sup>223</sup> J.M. Castañón, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.21.

<sup>224</sup> J. Chicharro Lamamié, *Diario de un antitanquista en la División Azul*, p.14.

difficult.<sup>225</sup> That is not to say that both places did not leave great memories for most Spanish volunteers. They were also the only place of social interaction between the German population and their Spanish guests for many volunteers and therefore represented, at least in the minds of volunteers, what Germany was like. For many the simple things of southern Germany, which one veteran called 'High Bavaria', were most striking<sup>226</sup> This particular veteran fondly remembered the decorative 'jarras' of German beer and the songs of the beer halls of Grafenwöhr.<sup>227</sup> Another volunteer enjoyed the clocks of Bavaria 'which told time in the same melody for four-hundred years.'<sup>228</sup>

The initial Blue Division complement that trained there has very fond memories of not only the small village itself but of their German civilian hosts, especially the *Mädchen* (girls). A volunteer officer replacement, who was not only a civil war veteran but also a former *africanista*, recalled being served large portions of food by 'young and beautiful girls' at each train station in Germany on his way to Grafenwöhr for training in April 1942.<sup>229</sup> Another artillery officer trained at Hof recalled how the Spanish volunteers were completely smitten with the "'froilans'" in Germany, but played pranks on their social sensibilities.<sup>230</sup> These German women, who were well versed in the German Army hierarchy, knew little or no Spanish, but had asked to learn complete phrases, like 'good afternoon, my colonel' to show respect when speaking to the colonel of the divisional artillery regiment. This officer, who was older and did not associate with the junior officers, was disparagingly called '*mariposón*' by the younger artillery officers.<sup>231</sup> One officer had taught his female companion to tell the commanding officer, 'My colonel, I have a beautiful ass.'<sup>232</sup> Other events also occurred where Spanish men were less than gentlemanly toward the local female population. One incident included some divisional NCOs who provoked locals and German personnel into a bust-up following unwanted advances towards some female locals.<sup>233</sup>

<sup>225</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.5, D.2/32 12 June 1942.

<sup>226</sup> J.M. Castañón, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.21.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid. 'Jarra' is literally a barrel, but describes mugs (or steins) of beer which are traditionally not drunk in Spain, where the preference is the smaller '*caña*.'

<sup>228</sup> J.L. Gómez Tello, *Canción de invierno en el este: Crónica de la División Azul* (Barcelona, 1945), p.15.

<sup>229</sup> A. Bellod Gómez, *Soldado en tres guerras*, p.192.

<sup>230</sup> A. de Andrés y Andrés, *Artillería en la División Azul: Krasny Bor* (Madrid, 2004), p.16.

<sup>231</sup> Literally, '*mariposón*' translates as 'big butterfly' but also denote homosexuality. Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.3/3 20 July 1941.

Affection for the local women, for some volunteers, however, went beyond mere physical attraction. Women also reminded them of home. One veteran described a woman who owned a local bakery as 'treating us like we were her own children.'<sup>234</sup> Another volunteer recalled admiringly the care in which local German women had wrapped little Christmas care packages that included 'little candles...to light up the Christmas tree' for German soldiers.<sup>235</sup> As he saw it, though these German women would not dance with Spanish volunteers or ever actually work as a labourer in industry, they would 'with total care, prepare these gifts, happy that the soldiers [by fighting in Russia] could open a way for civilisation and justice with the point of their bayonets.'<sup>236</sup> The fact that Bavaria was also a predominately Catholic region led to a natural affinity by the Spanish volunteers to the area, but it also created a great deal of homesickness amongst some. The same volunteer who enjoyed the clocks also found that Bavaria represented the three Ks, '*Kirche, Kuss, Kuche*' or 'church, kiss, and home.'<sup>237</sup>

### **Repatriation and Reinforcements**

A relatively new discussion in the historiography of the Blue Division is exactly how the DEV filled its ranks and replaced losses with a troop rotation system designed to not only replace losses from the battlefield but to also return those volunteers, whose service to the Wehrmacht was complete, back to Spain. After recruiting a number of replacements, these men were then sent to Germany for training as expeditions of *batallones de marcha*. These expeditions were then equipped and trained per their specialty within the DEV in Germany before heading to the front to replace either relieved troops or combat losses. In essence, a *batallón de marcha* was designated to replace those men who were then part of a *batallón de relevo* that would stop in Germany, 'demobilise' by returning German uniforms, reequip in Spanish *trajes de viaje*, and return to Spain via a train.

Despite the use of 'battalion', the size of the unit generally ranged between 800-1000 men and each *batallón de marcha* or *batallón relevo* was assigned an expedition number. The German Army, facilitated by Franco's government, basically cycled in and out groups of volunteers as they came through Hof or Grafenwöhr. As soon as an expedition left for the front, another expedition could return to Spain. For

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<sup>234</sup> J. Chicharro Lamamié, *Diario de un antitanquista en la División Azul*, pp.14-5.

<sup>235</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, pp.42-3.

<sup>236</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, p.43.

<sup>237</sup> J.L. Gómez Tello, *Canción de invierno en el este*, p.15



example, on 19 May 1942 a *batallón de marcha* under Lt. Colonel Robles left from Grafenwöhr for Russia with 1,000 men; that same day a *batallón de relevo* under Colonel Pimentel, original commander and namesake of the *Regimiento Pimentel* (262), left for Spain.<sup>238</sup>

For this system to work, the Spanish government, influenced by the Falange but orchestrated by the Spanish Army Ministry, was actively involved in the collection of recruits for the Blue Division. The military attaché in Berlin helped facilitate the transition of both groups, either coming or going, by receiving the replacement needs of the division and then passing them on to the Spanish Army back in Madrid. An example can be taken from the spring of 1942 when the military attaché informed the Alto Estado Mayor that the first of several replacement expeditions 'of a thousand men' would be leaving Hof in June but that because of the relatively small space at the camp there that the next group would not be ready until end of June.<sup>239</sup> The next marching battalion, consequently, could not be ready for the front before July.<sup>240</sup> The divisional headquarters, therefore, wanted to know from Madrid the exact composition of future *batallones de marcha* to Germany so they could better 'prepare for their arrival and equipping' to avoid this problem in the future.<sup>241</sup> This is but one example of the many logistical difficulties that often plagued a volunteer formation so far from Spain.

This communication went both ways as the military attaché also had to request information from the Blue Division to tell Spanish authorities about the composition of *batallones de relevo* being sent from the front back to Spain via Germany. Thus, on 16 June 1942, the Alto Estado Mayor requested via the Spanish Military Attaché in Berlin, 'with maximum speed' by phone, the exact numbers including ranks and weapons of men who were to have been relieved from Russia in March 1942.<sup>242</sup> It is possible that these men had either not yet reached Spain or the Spanish authorities were simply interested in a formalised list of repatriated soldiers, neither of which is clear in the archival evidence.

Unlike a German Army regular or conscript, who was bound to the Army until the war's end, a Spanish volunteer had, in general, the option of returning home after

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<sup>238</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.5/35 19 May 1942.

<sup>239</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.5, D.2/32 12 June 1942.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.6, D.2/47 16 June 1942.

only an eight to ten-month tour of duty on the Eastern Front. Volunteers were generally returned to Spain due to the termination of their enlistment or because of grievous or, less often, minor wounds suffered that deemed them *'inutil'*, or *'unfit'* for service. Additionally, several volunteers were drummed out of service for unfitness prior to even reaching the front. After being sent to one of the rear collection stations away from the front like Riga or Berlin, the returning volunteer, as a part of either a full *batallón de relevo* or smaller unit, then travelled back to either Hof or Grafenwöhr where he was decommissioned from the German Army, after exchanging his German equipment for his Spanish *traje de viaje*. For example, a repatriated expedition under the command of a Major Rivera returned to Hof 30 August 1942 containing twenty-five officers, seventy-eight NCOs, and 627 troops.<sup>243</sup> These 831 men were then to be processed out of their service to the Reich and returned to Spain of which the Alto Estado Mayor was to be informed of *'the return date as soon as fixed.'*

An example of how a *batallón de relevo* worked can be taken from the *Cuarta Exedición de Relevo* (Fourth Relief Expedition), which left the front on 30 June 1942 in the direction of Hof under the command of Lt. Colonel Rodriguez Vita.<sup>244</sup> Comprised of twenty-one officers, 123 NCOs and 1,007 troops, the Alto Estado Mayor was not informed of its departure until 4 July 1942, in a telegram from the military attaché.<sup>245</sup> The Alto Estado Mayor was then informed on 6 July that the Fourth Relief Expedition had arrived at Auerbach the previous day where they were expected to leave on 9 July before then reaching the Spanish-French border on 11 July 1942.<sup>246</sup> The military attaché next informed the Spanish High Command that the *batallón de relevo* under Lt. Colonel Rodriguez Vita had left Hof at 4pm on 9 July and was expected at Irún by 7am of 11 July.<sup>247</sup>

Other problems existed in the correspondence between the division and the Army Ministry in Spain. The Alto Estado Mayor often had to request information months, or even years after the fact, on various *divisionarios*, to either complete their records or formally inform relatives of what had happened to them. For example, the military attaché relayed information of a corporal wounded at Possad on 11

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<sup>243</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.13, D.3/42 31 Aug 1942.

<sup>244</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.12, D.2/7 4 July 1942.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.12, D.2/10 7 July 1942.

<sup>247</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.12, D.2/14 8 July 1942.

November 1942 but no official notice had been sent to his situation or status had ever been received and a follow up had been requested in August 1943 from Madrid.<sup>248</sup> There were also instances of individuals being confused for one another. Such an example existed when the Alto Estado Mayor had wanted news on a Lieutenant Maximo Cuervo supposedly serving in the DEV.<sup>249</sup> The division informed Madrid that no such person ever served in division except for a Lieutenant Amador Cuervo Valesca who had served in the anti-tank group but had been repatriated 16 July 1942.<sup>250</sup>

The reasons why an individual was repatriated varied. There was a general rule that no volunteer would remain in Russia beyond eight to ten months, but many individuals sought to stay longer and others, realizing the difficulties of Russia, preferred to return sooner. An example of one seeking to be returned after only two months, though possibly for the betterment of his unit, was provided by a Lieutenant Otero de Arce who had been serving in the rear services of the DEV when his commander requested from divisional headquarters to allow his '*licenciamiento*' (discharge) from the Blue Division.<sup>251</sup> The exact nature of his deficiencies within the rear service, unfortunately, is not known. Officers could also intervene in blocking the admission of a volunteer to the Blue Division. An example is General Esteban-Infantes requesting that a supply captain not be allowed to join the DEV as he was a *persona non grata* among his fellow officers because he had an English wife.<sup>252</sup>

Repatriation was also allowed for those volunteers who had survived the first winter of 1941. The Alto Estado Mayor had decided to ask for this in early October 1942, hopefully with sufficient time prior to the approaching winter, to relieve those men who had served long enough to receive a 'Frozen Meat Medal' from the German Army.<sup>253</sup> By requesting the exact numbers of these men via the military attaché, Madrid was hoping to return as many of them as possible instead of having them endure another difficult winter in Russia. After several months, and having determined those soldiers that were able to do so, the division had agreed to repatriate them back to Spain as long as replacements were in place before they left, which was

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<sup>248</sup> AGMAV, C.2033, Cp.8, D.1/8 11 Aug 1943.

<sup>249</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.13, D.1/26 8 Aug 1942.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.

<sup>251</sup> AGMAV, C.2033, Cp.7, D.4/49 Undated.

<sup>252</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.11, D.1/19 17 June 1942.

<sup>253</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/13 9 Oct 1942.

not the case until early December 1942, when winter had already arrived.<sup>254</sup> Those fortunate individuals repatriated back to Spain having joined the DEV prior to 21 March 1942 included ninety-two officers, 824 NCOs and 4,156 troops.<sup>255</sup> For obvious reasons, including the shortage of manpower available not only to the division but German forces as a whole, the DEV was not eager to see over 5,000 men leave until properly replaced. The division, however, was not always able to receive the proper replacements it needed before it repatriated others. For example, in May 1942 the division was extremely short of lieutenants (both *tenientes* and *alfereces*) when it had rotated out captains and subalterns (*capitanes* and *subalternos*) because the lieutenants had been promoted in rank but not replaced.<sup>256</sup> The division was having trouble distributing the lieutenants from the roster (*plantilla*) that had been sent and wanted the Chief of Staff of the Alto Estado Mayor aware of the problem.<sup>257</sup> The Blue Division also had a shortage of engineer officers and NCOs in June 1942 and Muñoz-Grandes requested five and fifty-one of each respectively for replacements.<sup>258</sup>

For their part, the Alto Estado Mayor attempted to inform the Blue Division as well as possible about the officers and men it was sending to the division. The Spanish High Command would relate to the Spanish Military Attaché the exact composition of a *plantilla* which included not only the number of officers and men, but also their military branch such as artillery, infantry, or engineers, along with any technical or administrative specialities, such as doctors or quartermasters. The military attaché would then inform the division which could begin to think about how to use these men after their training in Germany at the front. For example, in April 1942 the division was to receive from Spain a large number of infantry, artillery, and engineering personnel, but also a doctor, a paymaster, an interpreter, an adjustor, and communications specialists.<sup>259</sup> However, fulfilling the replacement needs of the Blue Division was not always easy for the Army Ministry to do. The Minister of the Army went to the extent of having the military attaché ask the Blue Division the minimum

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<sup>254</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.3/7 12 Dec 1942.

<sup>255</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.3/40 29 Dec 1942.

<sup>256</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.1/32 6 May 1942.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

<sup>258</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.11, D.1/25 29 June 1942.

<sup>259</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9, D.3/3 8 April 1942.

number of replacements of 'each specialty' needed for the division due to 'shortage of available personnel' in Spain in order to fill the DEV's needs.<sup>260</sup>

The Alto Estado Mayor was also eager to have experienced combat officers returned to duty with the Spanish Army. These officers not only greatly improved their chances of promotion, but were also eligible for continued schooling by their native army. The Spanish High Command was especially interested in intelligence officers for placement at the various academies in Spain. For example, the Alto Estado Mayor had requested that the division return thirty-seven members of the divisional headquarters' Segunda Sección to Madrid.<sup>261</sup> And in the example of officers and specialists being sent, the Alto Estado Mayor was clear that any officers being sent to Russia as replacement were to relieve those returning to for the '*tercera convocatoria*' ('third convention'- related to military intelligence schooling and coursework) in Spain.<sup>262</sup>

Repatriation back to Spain was not necessarily as arduous a process as it may appear. Often soldiers who had been given permission to return to Spain on furlough or leave for whatever reason may have been ordered to remain there, thus being 'repatriated.' Despite being thousands of kilometres from Spain, soldiers were often granted leave, or *permiso*, for such things as family emergencies that included not only death or illness, but also could include business matters. For example, a soldier of the Ski Company was allowed leave back to Spain in order 'to enjoy Madrid' and visit his sick mother.<sup>263</sup> These men on furlough often remained in Spain under authority of the Alto Estado Mayor and were not returned to the DEV. For example, a Captain Miguel Celis had been in Spain on leave was to 'remain repatriated' there.<sup>264</sup> However, the Blue Division could be petty and not allow a certain volunteer to be repatriated because he had not gone through the proper procedure. An example is the DEV requesting that volunteer Andres Moreno Pascual be returned to the divisions as he had not followed 'established rules' for his repatriation.<sup>265</sup> The archives, unfortunately, do not state whether or not he was actually made to return to Russia from Spain. These instances suggest some internal prejudice and favouritism within the Spanish Army Ministry may have been involved in determining who received

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<sup>260</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9, D.3/23 13 April 1942.

<sup>261</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.3/41 29 Dec 1942.

<sup>262</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9, D.3/3 8 April 1942.

<sup>263</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.1/12 5 March 1942.

<sup>264</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.7, D.3/4 2 July 1942.

<sup>265</sup> AGMAV, C.2033, Cp.8, D.3/15 5 August 1943.

preferential treatment in repatriation; however, there are no specific instances in the archive.

Often men were repatriated due to familial crises at home. Like the storyline in the film *Saving Private Ryan*, some *divisionarios* were repatriated because they had lost several of their siblings on the Eastern Front. One example is the return to Spain of volunteer Luis Ruiz Varnacci Cerezuelo because he had two brothers killed in Russia.<sup>266</sup> The Spanish Army Ministry had actually ordered his repatriation back to Spain.<sup>267</sup> In a similar instance, Army Minister General Carlos Asensio Cabanillas requested the repatriation of Lieutenant Alonso Urquijo Landecho because the latter had lost four brothers during *la Cruzada*.<sup>268</sup> In different instances soldiers might be granted extended leave for familial problems. Eduardo Taulet (a soldier from the engineers), was given permission to take care of payroll issues at the Divisional Payroll Office in Berlin, and was then given another twenty days to sort out the issue at the Banco de España in Madrid.<sup>269</sup>

The repatriated troops were often accompanied by supplies, usually surplus items from the *trajes de vaje*, wounded troops, and the occasional 'misfit' expedition being returned to Spain. For example, General Muñoz-Grandes had requested from Spain a list of clothing items (*vestuario*) needed for repatriated volunteers on 12 May 1942.<sup>270</sup> The list included 8,000 berets, gloves, overcoats, and pairs of underwear; 10,000 pairs of shoes, 8,800 pairs of socks, 8,500 shirts, 10,500 towels and handkerchiefs, and 3,000 cups.<sup>271</sup> More often the Spanish Army, in fact, was anxious to have any equipment that was part of the *traje de viaje* returned to Spain when it was not being used. One such instance was a large quantity of 'correaes españoles' or Spanish equipment belts that were being store in Hof, which the Alto Estado Mayor wanted sent back 'with great urgency'.<sup>272</sup> Another desired item were some 4000 army capes (*capotes*) being stored in Germany.<sup>273</sup> The Spanish High Command had requested that these be returned to Spain in October 1942 with returning

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<sup>266</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.6, D.1/2 1 Feb 1942.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.4/2 2 Mar 1942.

<sup>269</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.1/36 19 March 1942.

<sup>270</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.2/1 12 May 1942.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid.

<sup>272</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.2/1 17 Dec 1942.

<sup>273</sup> The 'capote' was a cape worn like a coat but also doubled as a blanket and was regular Spanish Army issue. AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.2/3 8 Dec 1942.

*bataillones de relevo*, which had not been done as of December 1942.<sup>274</sup> It was later determined that nearly double that amount of capes, which were used like a blanket and an overcoat, were still in Germany following another request by Spanish authorities on the exact numbers and ‘the state they are found in.’<sup>275</sup>

Repatriated volunteers often returned to Spain without properly exchanging their uniforms and thus kept many items that still technically belonged to the Reich. Although divisional officers had initially been given a *bonificación para el vestuario* (uniform stipend) of 250RM when they arrived in Germany to pay for their uniforms, they were permitted to purchase their German uniforms upon repatriation.<sup>276</sup> The troops, however, were not permitted to return to Spain with German military equipment. Therefore, the Spanish Army had collected and then returned fourteen large crates of German uniforms and other items to the border after receiving a group of repatriated *divisionarios* in May 1942.<sup>277</sup> The Chief of Staff of the Alto Estado Mayor wanted the Spanish Military Attaché to inform German authorities.<sup>278</sup> The military attaché, in fact, informed the Blue Division authorities at Hof to expect the fourteen crates.<sup>279</sup> Spanish military authorities were not pleased when they happened upon soldiers who attempted to smuggle souvenirs back to Spain. Despite this vigilance, men still brought home souvenirs from their service in the Wehrmacht, which often included small arms. Many ex-volunteers wore their German medals (which they were allowed to keep) as well as the *Nationalem Abzeichen* on their *boinas* or over the right breast of their *traje de viaje* or Falangist blue shirt contrary to Spanish Army regulation.<sup>280</sup> Generating reinforcements via enlistments and recruitments was the job of the Falange, which was in charge of the militias of Spain. Their recruitment left much to be desired by Muñoz-Grandes. In a telegram sent via the military attaché to the Alto Estado Mayor, Muñoz-Grandes asked that replacements arrive to the front in ‘perfect state of health and instruction as well’ when replacing losses and relieved personnel.<sup>281</sup> Not only were the replacements inadequate physically, but they were not receiving the proper training before being

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.3, D.3/2 2 Jan 1943.

<sup>276</sup> AGMAV, C.1987, Cp.16, D.1/19 Feb 1943.

<sup>277</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.2/4 19 May 1942.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.2/6 23 May 1942.

<sup>280</sup> For visual examples see J. Scurr, *Germany's Spanish volunteers 1941-5*, plate G. F.J. Carrera Buil and A. Ferrer-Dalmau Nieto, *Batallón Román*, pp.170-2.

<sup>281</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9, D.3/8 7 April 1942.

sent to Russia; however, Muñoz-Grandes must be partially blamed for rushing the division's initial training schedule, which undoubtedly affected the aptitude of the replacements instruction before reaching the front. In this specific instance, of the 700 men sent to the front as replacements, 100 were deemed '*inútil*' before reaching the front.<sup>282</sup> Despite these difficulties, the Blue Division found itself, adequately training or not, fighting on the Eastern Front where it stayed for over two years until its withdrawal in the autumn of 1943.

### **Conclusion**

The Blue Division was created on Serrano Suñer's suggestion in late June 1941, following Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. This 'volunteer' formation was never any such thing. Its ranks, however, did encompass various Spanish socio-economic classes bent largely on destroying Soviet communism. The ranks were not always filled with Spaniards but also included some White Russians, Portuguese Civil War veterans, and some displaced Germans still living in Spain. Although Serrano Suñer originally intended the division to consist of Falange volunteers, the Spanish Army did all that it could to wrest the organisational structure and military aptitude away from the Falange. Despite this power struggle between the two factions, the Blue Division came into being largely because Franco allowed it to.

Had the Caudillo not agreed to Suñer's suggestion, Spain never would have been involved in the barbarous conflict that occurred on the Eastern Front. Furthermore, the Spanish government demonstrated its duplicity in Hitler's invasion by allowing the recruitment of 'volunteers' ultimately subservient to the High Command of the Spanish Army (not the German Army), supplying the division with provisions and supplies (from the stores of the Spanish Army), and more importantly, continuing to furnish the Blue Division with replacements and recruits (with the *batallones de relevo y marcha* system) to sustain its presence in Russia. The Spanish government and its volunteers of the DEV soon discovered, however, that the war on the Russian Front was unlike any they had expected or trained for as the landscape, peoples, and type of warfare they experienced was unlike any they had seen before.

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<sup>282</sup> Ibid.



## Chapter 2- The DEV at the Front

### Introduction

While the men trained at Grafenwöhr, the Germans attached a military mission under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Zanón Aldaluz to one of the better divisions at the front in late July 1941.<sup>283</sup> This ten-day mission was done to better acquaint the various officers to the combat methods and weapons in the various units within a German infantry division. Sending a group of officers to the frontlines also gave the Spaniards their first glimpse of things to come on the Eastern Front, in all its brutality and cruelty because Hitler had warned that the war in the East was a 'Clash between ideologies... Communism is an enormous danger... This is a war of extermination... We do not wage war to preserve the enemy.'<sup>284</sup> Therefore, no military commission or their abbreviated training schedule would truly prepare the Spaniards for the fighting in Russia whose hard lessons the Blue Division would learn in situ. When the Spanish troops actually travelled through Poland, Ukraine, and Byelorussia to reach their positions with Army Group North and their frontline positions, what had they seen and what were their impressions of these distant places? But what exactly were the experiences of these men not only of some their experiences at the front but how did they view the existing inhabitants of these places so far from their native Spain? While largely avoiding the combat history of the Blue Division, which has been covered in depth, in relation to its existence on the Eastern Front, this chapter will not only attempt to relate part of the more visual and social history of the *divisionarios* relative to the civilian population and their Soviet opponent while in Eastern Europe but also attempt to relate some of those experiences and opinions, when and where possible, to their German counterparts. Although this thesis can not expect to provide a complete picture of the Spanish experience in Russia, but hopefully will provide a framework for future monographs.<sup>285</sup> This chapter will also examine some lesser discussed Blue Division organisational aspects related to serving on the Russian Front such as the extensive use of *Hiwi* labour,

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<sup>283</sup> J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul*, pp.45-6.

<sup>284</sup> Quotes from Hitler as found in C. Cooper, *The German Army, 1933-45* (New York, 1978), pp.547-8.

<sup>285</sup> For the best source on the combat history of the Blue Division see, G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*.

transport difficulties, Spanish military hospitals, and the role of the Guardia Civil on the Eastern Front.

### **Army Group North Overview**

While the Blue Division was being recruited and trained through the months of June and August, its eventual Army Group North was experiencing relatively impressive results in Operation Barbarossa, despite being considered the lesser of the three army groups that the German High Command sent to Russia in June 1941. Despite this, it was appointed the crucial task of capturing Leningrad and securing the lines of both communications and logistics through the Baltic Sea, was vital for the success of Barbarossa. Ideally, capturing or destroying the Soviet Baltic Fleet would greatly secure these objectives. Hitler knew this from the beginning stages of planning for the invasion of Russia. Even in the Marcks Plan, which had only a two-pronged attack with objectives of Leningrad and Odessa, and then turning towards Moscow kept Leningrad a primary objective.<sup>286</sup> Army Group North was given the task of capturing or sealing off Leningrad and Kronstadt Island while meeting with Finnish and German troops attacking from Finland, and would then turn south to help the advance on Moscow. The second prong was to capture Odessa and then turn north to advance on Moscow. Only after Odessa and Leningrad were in German control, was Moscow to be captured. Hitler did not agree with this plan and adopted a three attack approach in the invasion of the Soviet Union.

The three-pronged attack was the eventual plan adopted by Hitler and *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW), or Armed Forces High Command detailed in Hitler Directive Number 21 issued in mid-December 1940.<sup>287</sup> In its directive for the coming campaign in Russia, the German Army High Command (*Oberkommando des Heeres*, or OKH), entrusted in the individual Army Groups' directives, issued the following order on 31 January 1941: 'Of destroying the enemy forces fighting in the Baltic theatre and by the occupation of the Baltic port and subsequently of Leningrad and Kronstadt of depriving the Russian fleet its bases.'<sup>288</sup> Essentially, the objective for Army Group North had not changed; however, an additional attack from the

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<sup>286</sup> Major General Marks was chief of staff for the 18<sup>th</sup> Army and had been given the task of developing the *Operationenwurf Ost* by the then OKH Chief of Staff Colonel-General Franz Halder. This was submitted on 1 August 1940. The plan submitted by Lieutenant-General von Paulus, later of Stalingrad fame, and its three-pronged attack of the Soviet Union, eventually replaced Marcks' plan.

<sup>287</sup> [Hitler, Adolf], *Hitler's war directives, 1939-45*, ed. H. Trevor-Roper (London, 2004), pp.93-98.

<sup>288</sup> C. Ailsby, *Images of Barbarossa* (Dulles, VA, 2001), p.80.

central prong of Army Group Centre would greatly decrease the striking capability and mobility of the northern attack. Army Group North (*Heeresgruppe Nord*) simply had to attack with the resources that were available for the task at hand, which initially consisted of twenty-nine divisions (including three panzer and three motorised) and air support from *Luftflotte I*.<sup>289</sup>

The very capable Field Marshal Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb was put in charge of Army Group North. Von Leeb had successfully led Army Group C in the fighting in France and was promoted to Field Marshal in July 1940 following the stunning German Victory.<sup>290</sup> Von Leeb was an extremely pious Roman Catholic and had recoiled from the Nazi influence on the army.<sup>291</sup> He had expressed misgivings about the treatment of Poland's Catholic population as well as the treatment of its Jews. This withstanding, von Leeb was entrusted with the command of Army Group North and its three army groups, the 16th and 18th Armies under Generals Busch and von K uchler, of which within both the Blue Division eventually served, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Panzer Group under General Hoepner.<sup>292</sup> Von Leeb's command did not survive the first Russian winter where after advocating a withdrawal to Poland to regroup before reinitiating the attack, he was sacked and retired by Hitler.<sup>293</sup> General Georg von K uchler replaced von Leeb as commander of Army Group North and was known enforcer of Hitler's infamous 'Commissar Order' and his replacement of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army, General Georg Lindemann, not only had an admiration of the Blue Division, but the division mutually returned its regard for him.

With only three army groups, Army Group North was the smallest despite being given an initial advance line of over 800 km, which was extended further to the Gulf of Finland, an additional 400 km further. In this advance, nearly four fifths would walk into battle. Contrary to the public image portrayed by the Propaganda Ministry of the modern, motorised German Army, Army Group North eventually

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<sup>289</sup> J. Erickson, *The road to Stalingrad* (London, 2003), p.83.

<sup>290</sup> Von Leeb was disgruntled with feigning attack on the Maginot Line while Army Group A rolled through the Ardennes and eventual glory, but his forces kept French troops along the border awaiting the attack that never came. For an overview of German operations in France, see J. Williams, *France: Summer 1940* (New York, 1969).

<sup>291</sup> See E. R. May, *Strange victory* (New York, 2000), p.220.

<sup>292</sup> In general, the standard German Army Group was comprised of between two and three Armies, which were then comprised of two to three Corps. These Corps were further comprised of two to five Divisions. These numbers varied, naturally, especially during Barbarossa. For a good description of the orders of battle during the German invasion of Soviet Russia, see D.M. Glantz, *Barbarossa: Hitler's invasion of Russia 1941* (Stroud, UK, 2001), pp.245-9.

<sup>293</sup> W. Goerlitz, *History of the German General Staff* (Boulder, CO, 1985), p.405.

needed nearly 200,000 horses to supply and transport itself along the Baltic battlefield, the same way the Blue Division did while attempting to reach its forward position. The Spaniards notoriously lost so numerous an amount of horses that Joseph Goebbels quipped, 'The Spaniards are extraordinarily courageous, but they have military peculiarities which we simply cannot understand. For example, they just can't comprehend that horses must be looked after and fed.'<sup>294</sup>

Army Group North had the best advance of any of the three initial German army groups and only because of the decision by Hitler to stop the initiative of Army Group Centre towards Moscow in support of capturing Kiev coupled with his desire to not take Leningrad by force, which stripped Army Group North of its panzer divisions, did the German advance finally peter out allowing the Soviets to regroup.<sup>295</sup> The inability of Army Group North to capitalise on their initial gains to ultimately capture Leningrad in the initial stages of Barbarossa was deemed by one military historian as 'the greatest unforeseen opportunity presented to German forces in Barbarossa.'<sup>296</sup> Having also failed to destroy the Oranienbaum pocket and lacking mobility, Army Group North settled into what became known to German veterans who fought it as the 'Eternal War of the Poor Man', or a war of attrition in which the lowly infantryman bared the burden and brunt of misery of not only First World-like combat conditions but also a climatic and topographical environment which the majority of Germans (other veterans of the Great War in the East) had ever seen or experienced before. Despite this experience, civilian populations undoubtedly suffered worse as the citizens of Leningrad would lose nearly one million of its pre-war population of three million due to not only from German forces but the majority from cold and starvation.<sup>297</sup> When the Blue Division arrived at the frontlines in October 1941, the Leningrad front had been relatively calmed by the Soviets under the leadership of Colonel General Georgi Zhukov before Germany initiated Operation Typhoon with Army Group Centre with the aim of capturing Moscow (which Zhukov was recalled to defend).<sup>298</sup> At this same time Army Group North began operations to better contain and encircle Leningrad by enclosing Lake Ladoga and meeting their

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<sup>294</sup> [J. Goebbels] trans. L.P.Lochner, *The Goebbels diaries* (New York, 1948), p.106.

<sup>295</sup> For more on the German Army Group North during Barbarossa, see A. Seaton, *the Russo-German War, 1941-5* (Novato, CA, 1993), pp.98-115.

<sup>296</sup> R.H.S. Stolfi, *Hitler's panzers East: World War II reinterpreted* (Norman, OK, 1992), p.47.

<sup>297</sup> H. Salisbury, *900 days: The siege of Leningrad* (New York, 1969), pp.515-7.

<sup>298</sup> G. Zhukov, *Marshal Zhukov's greatest battles* (New York, 1970), pp.25-6.

Finnish allies, who had stopped advancing further than reclaiming their territories lost in the Winter War of 1939-40.<sup>299</sup>

The war then settled into a fairly stable, static front with Army Group North laying siege to Leningrad that eventually lasted 900 days and was not completely broken until the Russian Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive of early 1944.<sup>300</sup> By then the Germans no longer had any offensive capabilities and the Russians had such overwhelming numbers of men and material that the Germans were nearly routed in the East with the destruction of Army Group Centre from Operation Bagration in June 1944, which had been initiated early by Stalin to help ease the Allied landings in Normandy.<sup>301</sup> By this time, and fortunate for Spanish volunteers, both the Blue Division and the Blue Legion were completely removed from Russia.<sup>302</sup> Army Group North was further and further pushed back through the Baltic countries to the Latvian coast where it was renamed Army Group *Kurland* (Courland) in January 1945 and ultimately met its doom trapped by the Red Army in the Courland until the final surrender in May 1945.

### **The Blue Division and the Eastern Front**

As for the Blue Division at the front, after being transported over 1600km by train to Poland, the division then marched nearly 1000 kilometres further to their section of Army Group North after initially being slated for Army Group Centre.<sup>303</sup> Somewhat discouraged because they believed they would miss the triumphant march into Red Square in Moscow, the Blue Division settled into the siege of Leningrad

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<sup>299</sup> For a good overview of the Winter War, see W.R. Trotter, *The Winter War: The Russo-Finnish war of 1939-40* (London, 1991), or R. Condon, *The Winter War: Russia against Finland* (New York, 1972). For the role of Finland in World War II, see C.L. Lundin, *Finland and the Second World War* (Bloomington, IN, 1957).

<sup>300</sup> The Germans were content to surround and attempt to seal Leningrad in order to starve the city into submission, and they never attempted a major, full-scale assault by force. For the best account of the Russian experience within Leningrad, see H. Salisbury, *900 days*, Part III. For the Soviet military response to the encirclement, see D.M. Glantz, *The battle for Leningrad, 1941-4* (Lawrence, KS, 2002).

<sup>301</sup> Operation Bagration caused the destruction of 28 of the 34 divisions and the loss of over 300,000 men serving in Army Group Centre, losses greater than those suffered by Germany at Stalingrad. For an overview on the destruction of Army Group Centre, see P. Adair, *Hitler's greatest defeat: The collapse of Army Group Centre, June 1944* (London, 1994). For a Soviet perspective, see S. Shtemenko, 'Bagration operation Byelorussia, 1944', in J. Erickson, ed., *Mainfront: Soviet leaders look back on World War II* (London, 1987), pp.169-195.

<sup>302</sup> After some anti-partisan actions, the Blue Legion was part of Army Group North's retreat away from Leningrad. The Blue Legion reorganized in Estonia and was assigned guard duty on the Narva coast to help prevent any possible Russian landings along the Baltic during the Leningrad-Novgorod Offensive, but these never occurred. The *legionarios* were eventually completely repatriated to Spain by April 1944. J. Scurr, *Germany's Spanish volunteers*, pp.28-9.

<sup>303</sup> Numerous accounts by *divisionarios* depict the harsh nature of such a long, physical march to reach the front. However, arduous marches were standard for the German foot soldier in Russia. See, O. Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, pp.21-7.

between the east shore of Lake Ilmen and the east banks of the River Volkhov, near the city of Novgorod, providing flank support at the far right end of the Army Group North, officially attached to 18<sup>th</sup> Army (*18.Armeekorps*) and its XXXIII Corps.<sup>304</sup> The *divisionarios* tasted their first combat on 11/12 October 1941 near the shores of Lake Ilmen while going into the line. As a part of Army Group North's push towards Finnish forces, the Blue Division arrived in time for these operations towards Tikhvin in early December 1941, which ultimately failed.<sup>305</sup> The Spanish volunteers next survived the first Russian counter offensive and brutal winter but their military highlights included attempting to hold the nearly surrounded bridgehead at Possad and the roll of the divisional Ski Company in helping relieve surrounded German comrades having skied south across the frozen Lake Ilmen to reach them in the village Vzvad and suffered grievous casualties en route.<sup>306</sup> With the failure of the Russian Liuban offensive, the Blue Division, in a supporting role to the German spring offensive of 1942, took part in the actions of closing the 'Volkhov Pocket' that eventually led to the capture of the General Andrey A. Vlasov, later of the *Russkaia Osvoboditelnaia Armia* (ROA) fame, and 130,000 Soviet troops.<sup>307</sup>

After being gradually replaced by the 20<sup>th</sup> Motorised Division in August 1942, the DEV was attached to the 16th Army Corps and moved from near Lake Ilmen closer to Leningrad (which the DEV often stubbornly referred to as the *Zona de San Petersburgo*) in early September where it was to be trained as an assault division for Operation Northern Light, the proposed attack on the city Peter the Great had founded

<sup>304</sup> For a chronological listing of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 269 Regiment's move to the front, see F. Carrera Buil and A. Ferrer-Dalman Nieto, *Batallón Roman*, pp.69-75.

<sup>305</sup><sup>305</sup> The Germans captured Tikhvin, but due to *Keine neuen Kräfte mehr verfügbar* ('No fresh forces available'), the Germans could not exploit their success. J. Erickson, *The road to Stalingrad*, p.270. See also D. Glantz, *The siege of Leningrad* (London, 2001), pp.48-63, G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, 'Hitler's strike for Tikhvin', *Military Affairs*, xlvii (1983), pp.122-8.

<sup>306</sup> The best narrative on the combat history of the Blue Division is G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*. For a summary on the defence of Possad see J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul: Possad*, pp.74-83. Over the course of twenty-five days, the Spanish Ski Company comprised of 205 men was sent to help 543 Germans at Vzvad. These Germans were reached, but at a high cost: only twelve Spaniards were still fit to fight, including Captain Ordás. Thirty-two were killed with the remainder wounded, mostly from frostbite. For their actions, thirty-two Iron Crosses were awarded by the German Command and Ordás received the *Medalla Militar Individual* and the Ski Company received the *Medalla Militar Collectiva* from the Spanish Army. For an account of the event see F. Vadillo, *Arrabales de Leningrado*, pp.15-20, 213-215 and G. Kleinfeld y L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, pp.156-61.

<sup>307</sup> For Vlasov's capture see A. Clark, *Barbarossa: The Russian-German conflict, 1941-5* (New York, 1965), pp.199-200. The ROA (Russian Liberation Movement) was an 'Army' of two divisions recruited by General Vlasov from Russian POWs to fight against the Soviet regime, which it never did. For an overview of the ROA, see C. Ailsby, *Hitler's renegades*, pp.130-4. For an in depth look, see C. Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement* (Cambridge, 1987) or J. Thorwald, *The illusion: Soviet soldiers in Hitler's armies* (New York, 1975).

that was to be led by the Hero of Sevastopol, Field Marshal Erich von Manstein.<sup>308</sup> Although erroneously identified by one author as one of Germany's 'fresh' and 'Allied' divisions for the expected German offences of 1942, the division was also to receive specialised training as "'Cazadores de tanques'", or 'Tank Hunters'.<sup>309</sup> Though neither the specialised training nor the attack ever occurred, the Blue Division continued to fight around the stagnant Leningrad front until the Operation Polar Star, an intense Russian Winter offensive in February 1943, particularly at Krasny Bor where the division suffered the majority of its deaths and prisoners of war within a couple of days.<sup>310</sup> After a stabilization of the front, Franco called for their repatriation in September 1943 after the reversal of German fortunes at Stalingrad and Kursk. After Hitler and the OKW agreed to Spain's request for repatriation, the Blue Division was assembled in Gatchina in October 1943 before being returned home by train in smaller groups throughout November and first half of December 1943.<sup>311</sup> Although there remained, mostly for political reason, a small *Legión Azul* (Blue Legion) of volunteers on the Eastern Front for another six months, the DEV itself officially no longer existed.<sup>312</sup>

### **The Blue Division travels to the Front**

The Blue Division had somewhat of a haphazard adventure to the front. One veteran recalled not being impressed with Poland after having grown accustomed to Bavaria where the volunteers found refuge and camaraderie with the German soldiers in their 'German Cantinas' with mugs of beer and accordion music.<sup>313</sup> This volunteer also felt that the Poles did not know what to think of the DEV and observed it 'with curiosity'.<sup>314</sup> Not only did they have to travel and march extensively through Poland and Byelorussia to join Army Group North, but they experienced several fatalities

<sup>308</sup>E. von Manstein, *Lost victories*, 2 ed. (Novato, CA, 1982), p.262. AGMAV, C.2006 ,Cp.3, D.1/3 August 1942. The situation in the 'Zona de San Petersburgo' (St. Petersburg Zone) was contained in a dossier presented to the DEV officers in August 1942. AGMAV,C.2006,Cp.2,D.3/1-9 Aug 1942.

<sup>309</sup> W. Shirer, *The rise and fall of the Third Reich* (London, 1960), p.911. The division was anything but fresh by the summer of 1942. The division, however, was designated 'probable' in its role in the expected assault on Leningrad. AGMAV,C.2006,Cp.3,D.1/3 August 1942.

<sup>310</sup> For an overview of Polar Star, see D.Glantz, *The siege of Leningrad* (London, 2001), pp171-5.

<sup>311</sup> German OKW Operations Staff Diary, 8,24 October and 17,28 November 1943 as quoted in W. Warlimont, *Inside Hitler's headquarters, 1939-45* (New York, 1964), p.399. Hitler insisted that the Blue Division be given all necessary provisions in Germany before their return to Spain. Field Marshal Jodl described the Spaniards as 'people [who] want to leave like vacationers.' For the conversation regarding the repatriation of the DEV see, [Oberkommando der Wehrmacht], *Hitler and his generals: Military conferences, 1942-5*, eds G. Weinberg and D.M. Glantz (New York, 2003), p.267.

<sup>312</sup> For a general overview of the Legion Azul, see F. Vadillo, *Balada final de la Divison Azul: Los legionarios* (Granada, 1984).

<sup>313</sup> J.M. Castañon, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.23.

<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*

during the journey. For example, the column set off a land mine near Grodno just over the Soviet border that killed two volunteers, José Cabrera Vicario and Vincente Bonastre García, and severely wounded twelve other volunteers.<sup>315</sup> Also near Grodno another volunteer, José Manuel Castañon from Asturias, observed numerous knocked out Soviet tank that had been stripped of all salvageable materials by the Germans.<sup>316</sup> Amongst this destruction he vividly recalled the charred body of a dead, 'poor unknown' Soviet tanker killed in the initial German invasion that had still not yet been buried by late August 1941.<sup>317</sup>

With the belief that the war was nearly over, veterans of the Blue Division, were therefore not surprised to see the large amounts of war debris and detritus strewn about the fields of Poland and the western Soviet Union. This is a striking memory to another veteran of the division, José Luis Gómez Tello, whose book was published in 1945, described seeing 'the cadavers of automobiles in ditches' and the 'monstrous Soviet tanks, tons of steel painted green' scorched black and knocked out from anti-tank fire while passing through Poland towards the front.<sup>318</sup> Gómez Tello saw these tanks as the 'bestial masses prepared by Timoschenko (sic) for the invasion of Europe' as part of the 'new Hun horse raid' against the West.<sup>319</sup> He further believed that had the Germans not stopped the Russians, then 'the motorised hoofs of Attila' would be in Berlin, Paris, Madrid, or Rome.<sup>320</sup> As common with many *divisionarios* and others, Gómez Tello believed, wrongly, that the Germans invasion of the Soviet Union was a pre-emptive strike against future Soviet aggression.<sup>321</sup> By September when the Blue Division reached Grodno, the division began to feel the affects of not only the long march to the front, but also the lack of adequate conditioning during their abbreviated training in Germany. As a consequence, the division began to lose larger numbers to '*inutilidad*' (unfitness) in the various sections of the division (see Figure 3.1).<sup>322</sup> The men were deemed unfit due to a variety of

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<sup>315</sup> J.A. Vidal y Gadea, *Breves notas sobre la División Azul*, p.24.

<sup>316</sup> J.M. Castañon, *Diario de una aventura con la División Azul*, p.23.

<sup>317</sup> Ibid.

<sup>318</sup> J.L. Gómez Tello, *Canción de invierno en este*, p.38.

<sup>319</sup> J.L. Gómez Tello, *Canción de invierno en este*, p.39.

<sup>320</sup> Ibid.

<sup>321</sup> For an interesting argument to this point, see V. Suvorov, *Icebreaker: Who started the Second World War* (London, 1990). Written under pseudonym by Cold-War ex-Soviet-officer defector Viktor Rezun, the book argues reasonably but falsely that Stalin was ultimately responsible for Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union. For a counterpoint to the assertion, see D. M. Glantz, *Stumbling colossus: The Red Army on the eve of world war* (Lawrence, KS, 1998), pp.1-6.

<sup>322</sup> AGMAV, C.1978, Cp.14, D.4 2 September 1941.



ailments that included, stomach ulcers, tuberculosis, endocarditic problems, bronchial asthma, urine incontinence, deafness, ‘visual defects’, epilepsy, chronic rheumatism, conjunctivitis, ‘age incompatible with service’, pulmonary lesions, flat foot, and general physical incapacity.<sup>323</sup>

Supply	7
Health	3
Anti-tank	1
Reconnaissance	9
262 Regiment	217
263 Regiment	36
269 Regiment	30
Transport	16
Engineers	0
Mobile Reserve	0
Headquarters	0
Artillery	8

Source: AGMAV, C.1978, Cp.14, D.4 2  
September 1941

The passing into Russia was also a very memorable experience for many volunteers. One volunteer, Javier Sánchez Carrilero, distinctly remembers hearing all the propaganda about the ‘*paraiso soviético*’ (Soviet paradise) but recalls seeing instead the ‘miserable farmer, dirty and shoeless, living in a hateful community and eating black bread.’<sup>324</sup> Though the *divisionario* found the bread repugnant (‘with a most disagreeable taste’), he saw the uneducated Russian farmers largely as victims of the Soviet regime.<sup>325</sup> In his mind, the Soviet political system, but not the Russian people themselves, represented the ‘*anti-España*’ or ‘anti-Spain’ in which everything he held dear as a ‘Westerner’ was threatened by Communism and because of this threat he saw himself as siding with the ‘armed forces of Europe’, not Germany in defeating this foe.<sup>326</sup> The concept of ‘anti-Spain’ was a popular concept and image perpetuated and presented by the Franco regime to the Spanish public, and generally

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, pp.15-6.

<sup>325</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, pp.76,16.

<sup>326</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul* pp.2,17.

consisted of liberals, Jews, freemasons, socialists, regionalists, anti-clericals and, of course, communists.<sup>327</sup>

Sánchez Carrilero further believed the Soviet Union enslaved the '*obreros y campesinos*' (workers and farmers) and described the living situation in which the Russian people found themselves. It 'pained' him to see the city workers live in grey homes 'like human anthills' with small living space and without ventilation.<sup>328</sup> These *obreros* not only had to walk fifteen kilometres to work in a factory to earn six roubles a day, (where according to the volunteer, a pack of cigarettes costs three roubles) but would be docked a half his wages and jailed if he arrived late to work.<sup>329</sup> The volunteer further believed that the common field labourer (*obrero campesino*) was also a victim of the Soviet state because the worker 'knows nothing of money' and was only given 200 grams of bread for labouring all sunrise to sunset.<sup>330</sup> As for the educated, Sánchez Carrilero knew that universities existed in the Soviet Union, but believed that they were only accessible to those who had the influence and power to get in.<sup>331</sup> These elite were identified as 'the aristocracy of this country theoretically without social classes.'

Sánchez Carrilero was also very descriptive of the Russian civilian population he encountered while at the front. Though quick to point out often that they were not the enemy, he still found them to be very odd in appearance and manners which he found to be contrary to his own (similar his to his description of Soviet Communism as the '*anti-España*'). Sánchez Carrilero noted that Russian soul 'silent, eager, and suffered...is the polar opposite of ours, clear like the sun, happy like the countryside, transparent like the blue sky of our Patria.'<sup>332</sup> He further found the Russian women 'with grey colouring' to have disproportionate figures with round, bulging eyes unlike any of the girls from 'the schools of Castile and Seville.'<sup>333</sup> Sánchez Carrilero also encountered a tall and skinny girl whom he described as having a white complexion with 'profoundly blue eyes' and black pigtails wrapped in a white scarf and could have been 'a beautiful Slav' if not for her sickness.<sup>334</sup> She had thrown out Sánchez

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<sup>327</sup> D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain: from Franco to Constitutional Monarchy* (London, 1985), p. 9.

<sup>328</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, pp.75-7.

<sup>329</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, p.76.

<sup>330</sup> Ibid.

<sup>331</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, p.77.

<sup>332</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, p.80.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid

<sup>334</sup> J. Sánchez Carrilero, *Cronicas de la División Azul*, p.81.

Carrilero and several of his mates out while billeted in her small room after she could no longer tolerate their 'laughs and voices.'<sup>335</sup> Sánchez Carrilero also recalled encountering 'a deaf fellow, strong, robust big shouldered and erect' who had lively eyes and 'a notable intelligence that he could not demonstrate through words.'<sup>336</sup> This young chap was extremely helpful not only to his mother but also to the Spanish troops.

One concept many *divisionarios* found abhorrent of the Soviet Union was a perceived lack of religion among the general population. As a professed Catholic, one veteran described atheism as 'the dogma of the Soviet State' and even in this dogma, the Soviet worshipped a god: the machine.<sup>337</sup> Furthermore, the Soviets may not have worshiped in churches (which were banned by the regime) but they worshipped the tractor as a god.<sup>338</sup> Another concern of this same veteran was the belief by Russians that America had been discovered by Siberians and not Christopher Columbus.<sup>339</sup>

In reality, the Russian population, despite Soviet attempts to quash it, were religious and did still have religious ceremonies in the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>340</sup> Veteran Luis Riudavets de Montes recalled the importance of religious iconolatriy ('*iconismo*') in Russian religion.<sup>341</sup> Despite the extreme poverty among the Russia farmers, he noted that an icon 'painted on wood or metal' was placed 'in the best corner of the dwelling between showy silks and flowers, illuminated day and night by a small lamp.'<sup>342</sup> The Germans soldiers, including the Spanish volunteers, were ordered by the German High Command 'that all Army components are prohibited in the attendance in Russian religious services' in a memorandum issued by the Blue Division headquarters on 5 July 1942.<sup>343</sup> Despite these opinions, Russians were extremely important in providing additional support to the Blue Division as *Hiwis*.

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<sup>335</sup> Ibid

<sup>336</sup> Ibid

<sup>337</sup> J.L. Gómez Tello, *Canción de invierno*, p. 56.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> J.L. Gómez Tello, *Canción de invierno*, pp.58-61.

<sup>340</sup> For the difficulties of Russian peasants under the Stalin regime in the 1930s (with many concepts and themes such as religion that carried into the Second World War amongst the general population, see S. Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism- ordinary life in extraordinary times: The Soviet Union in the 1930's* (New York, 1999).

<sup>341</sup> L. Riudavets de Montes, *Estampas de la vieja Rusia*, pp.51-9.

<sup>342</sup> L. Riudavets de Montes, *Estampas de la vieja Rusia*, p.51.

<sup>343</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.1/3, 5 July 1942.

## ***Hiwi Labour in the DEV***

A very seldom discussed topic from the Second World War was the extensive use of Russian civilians and POWs as auxiliaries for administrative and labour needs of the Wehrmacht and their allies on the Eastern Front. The use of Russian labour was common, for example the German 6<sup>th</sup> Army had nearly 50,000 *Hiwis* attached to the frontline divisions at Stalingrad alone, which accounted for a quarter of its strength.<sup>344</sup> These *Hiwis* or *Hilfswillige* (voluntary helpers) were used extensively on the Eastern Front to facilitate in administrative duties to allow for Germans to take up a fighting role at the front and by October 1943 comprised nearly sixteen percent of a regular German division's operational, fighting strength in Russia.<sup>345</sup> A *Hiwi*, whom the Spaniards identified simply as '*un prisionero*' (a prisoner) was not only privileged to better treatment and larger rations, but avoided being sent to a POW camp where he ultimately would have most likely died.<sup>346</sup> Therefore it is not surprising that the Blue Division also had Russians in its service and working largely to help the '*intendencia*' or supply services of the division. Seldom mentioned in divisional historical studies and memoirs, these conscripted POWs, however, were to adhere to certain rules in order to remain *Hiwis* and the troops were given guidelines in their specific usage.

The *Hiwis* were assigned by the divisional headquarters Second Section to a particular unit. For example, thirty POWs were detailed to an unspecified unit on 19 October 1942 to be used as labour or speciality jobs 'apt for those locals of the country.'<sup>347</sup> For every eight men, there was to be one, presumably a soldier, assigned to watch over 'the state of morale' of his charges.<sup>348</sup> These POWs were not permitted to leave their designated work areas nor were they allowed to work alone unless they were regularly rotated by other POWs. Wearing any semblance of a German uniform

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<sup>344</sup> A. Beevor, *Stalingrad* (New York, 1998), pp.184-6.

<sup>345</sup> The *Hiwis* are also often called '*Hilfsfreiwillige*' in German. The divisional reorganisation required by the German Army, due to manpower shortages, on 2 October 1943 allotted 10,708 men and 2,005 *Hiwis* for a division to be considered full-strength (roughly 7,000 then 5,000 lower than the previous standards). M. Cooper, *The German Army, 1933-45* (New York, 1978), p.486.

<sup>346</sup> The Germans captured an estimated 5.7 million Russian POWs. C. Streit, 'Soviet prisoners of war in the hands of the Wehrmacht', in H. Heer and K. Naumann, eds, *War of extermination: The German military in World War II, 1941-44* (New York, 2002), pp.80-1. Over 3.3 million Russian POWs were killed by the Germans by war's end, with two million killed at Auschwitz. M. Hastings, *Armageddon: The battle for Germany, 1944-5*, (New York, 2004) p.382.

<sup>347</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.5, D.1/17 19 October 1942.

<sup>348</sup> *Ibid.* The text is not clear who was in charge of the POWs, but it is my assumption that it was a soldier.

was 'categorically prohibited.'<sup>349</sup> This had not prevented POWs to have previously been found wearing German uniforms. In 'General Division Order of 8 October 1942', the Blue Division reiterated that prisoners were not allowed to wear German uniforms and instead wear clothing of 'the Russian dead.'<sup>350</sup> The POWs were also to possess 'special documentation' that stated their use and function as *Hiwis*.<sup>351</sup> Though relatively straight forward in their role; however, problems did arise with the use of POW labour within the Blue Division and the greater German Wehrmacht.

In July 1942 the commander of the XXXVIII Corps had issued a communiqué to the troops regarding his personal observations of the maltreatment and misuse of POW labour.<sup>352</sup> Hoping to set rules for their treatment, the commander found that it was essential to treat the POWs better which included better provisions and medical care in order to receive maximum use of their man-power and skills. Though the current ration system used to them was 'impossible to better', there had to be a more economical way in distributing food.<sup>353</sup> Medical care by divisional doctors was also critical to avoid infections that might affect 'our own troops.'<sup>354</sup> The commander also admonished the troops to better clothe the POWs as he had observed some working without any. The POWs were, however, to also be better supervised and guarded in their work duties to better utilise them as 'prisoners of war constitute an additional hand of labour' and they could not be left on their own, in Headquarters, or allowed to associate and 'influence' the civilian population.<sup>355</sup> Nor could the German troops be too numerous for their wards, as the commander had given the example of fifteen German engineers who were supervising thirty POWs while building a roadway, which the commander found 'intolerable.'<sup>356</sup> Each POW was to be used 'to the maximum of work' and single, individual 'prisoners were not for the comfort of some [German] individuals.'<sup>357</sup> The prisoners were to be commanded 'with a firm hand' and be 'unconditionally obedient' to orders.<sup>358</sup> Failing to do so, they were to be sent to the prison of war camp located near Novgorod. The troops were encouraged to help

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<sup>349</sup> Ibid.

<sup>350</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.5, D.1/6 8 October 1942.

<sup>351</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.5, D.1/17 19 October 1942.

<sup>352</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.3/1-2 16 July 1942.

<sup>353</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.3/1 16 July 1942.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.3/1-2 16 July 1942.

<sup>356</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.3/1 16 July 1942.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.3/2 16 July 1942.

‘with spiritual assistance’ of the prisoners, which included the reading of German books, learning of the German language, and discussing ‘the just aspirations’ of Germany and the ‘errors of Communism.’<sup>359</sup>

The Blue Division also used local, non-combatant civilians for various, mainly domestic tasks within the division. Though Russian civilians were allowed, the division had prohibited, per German High Command orders, the use Jewish Russians for similar duties.<sup>360</sup> The divisional headquarters issued *General Instruction Number 2010* on 28 October 1941 entitled ‘Jews in the Occupied Zones’ which forbade the use of Jews in ‘auxiliary services of the Army.’<sup>361</sup> Working in collaboration in the ‘open or under cover’ was seen as an ‘enemy to our cause’ by the Germans.<sup>362</sup> Passes that allowed others to work were not available to Jews; however, they were allowed to labour in ‘special workers columns’ with German permission.<sup>363</sup>

Despite this order pertaining to Jews, social interactions between Spanish soldiers and the local population were, in comparison with other members of the German armed forces, extremely tame and relatively stable. However, the Spanish volunteers had been told how to act towards the civilian population in occupied countries by order of the High Command of the 18th Army passed on by the divisional Assistant Chief of Staff in early May 1942.<sup>364</sup> Soldiers were basically not allowed to associate with Russian civilians especially the women.<sup>365</sup> The volunteers were not allowed to walk publicly ‘arm in arm’, dance with, or visit Russian women in their houses, but were also ‘to regulate’ the types of photographs taken of German soldiers.<sup>366</sup> The soldiers were also ‘to observe reserve in conversation’ and be silent when discussing ‘military things.’<sup>367</sup> The Blue Division Assistant Chief of Staff, Lt. Colonel Luis Zanon Aldalur, ‘hoped’ that each soldier observed ‘strict discipline and a correct attitude and composure in public’ as members of the German Army.<sup>368</sup> Despite these rules issued by German High Command but distributed by the

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<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.5/9 28 Oct 1942.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

<sup>362</sup> Ibid.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D.1/1 4 May 1942.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> Ibid.

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

divisional headquarters, the Spanish volunteers mixed relatively freely with the local population and were especially fond of the women.

The German High Command in July 1942 issued a communiqué which the divisional headquarters then passed on to the volunteers regarding the treatment of Russian civilians for crimes (*'delitos'*).<sup>369</sup> Following the destruction of the Soviet 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army, the German High Command of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army intended 'to initiate a general and quick pacification' of the recaptured area, and it was expected that the civilian population would attempt to get sustenance from local military centres.<sup>370</sup> These local Russian farmers (*'paisanos'*) were then to be punished according to any assistance they might have provided to the Red Army, however, each punishment was to be determined on a case by case basis, and included 'provisional punishment' such as temporary imprisonment or detainment, or capital punishment that led to 'in serious cases with shooting[s]' of the Russian peasants.<sup>371</sup>

As the Blue Division made its way to the front, the Spaniards were given the impression that the enemy was everywhere. Not only had they been trained to fear *francotiradores* and *espías* while in Germany, but to be aware of the dangers of special Soviet parachutists being dropped behind German lines.<sup>372</sup> These men, dressed in uniforms of the 'Russian Army' with 'red collars' were being helped inadvertently by the local population, especially youths between 10 and 16 years old acting unknowingly as 'unconscious agents' to the Soviets.<sup>373</sup> One such '*paracaidista*' was captured by a driver in the rear area in late May 1942.<sup>374</sup> The parachutist surrendered his firearm to the driver who then handed him over to a passing sergeant and driver in another vehicle.<sup>375</sup> None of the three soldiers, incidentally, were armed and the communiqué issued by a captain of the divisional Estado Mayor, by order of the Chief of Staff, stressed the importance of being armed in the rear areas 'with greater partisans' activity' and traffic patrols were to be vigilant of drivers not in possession of fire arms and they were to be punished 'for neglect of an order.'<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>369</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.1/25 27 July 1942.

<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.2/13 19 Sept 1941

<sup>373</sup> The youths were described as '*agentes inconscientes*.' Ibid.

<sup>374</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D1/9 31 May 1942.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid.

<sup>376</sup> Ibid.

Parachutists seemed a genuine concern of the 18<sup>th</sup> Army, as General Lindemann issued a warning to be aware of them and their activities having issued a communiqué prior to an expected Russian offensive in June 1942.<sup>377</sup> The Soviets, in fact, had attempted to parachute a Spanish Communist, dressed in the uniform of the DEV, behind German lines in 1941 to infiltrate the *Konzentrationslager-Sachsenhausen* that held the Stalin's son Jakob.<sup>378</sup> Soviet special agent José Parra Moya, given the identity of a Lieutenant Luis Menodza Peña of the Blue Division, had unsuccessfully attempted to reach the camp before returning to the Soviet lines.<sup>379</sup> The troops were also to be aware of suspicious spies 'of German origin' that were also dressed in 'German or foreign uniforms, or workers clothes' acting as saboteurs.<sup>380</sup> These individuals 'without exception' were to be handed over to the SD for interrogation.<sup>381</sup>

Spies were a continued concern of German forces and the Blue Division while the fighting progressed in Russia. The division issued a 'General Instruction' order advising the troops of various 'enemy espionage' activities in early January 1942 during the height of the first Russian winter and Soviet counter-offensive.<sup>382</sup> For their own security, the division was 'obligated to fight energetically' the intense Soviet espionage works. To achieve this, the troops were ordered to report any suspected persons to their unit commanders (the report leaves the impression that the report was not just concerned with Russians but possible communist sympathisers within the division) who were then to report them 'immediately' to the Second Section.<sup>383</sup> Only the divisional Second Section was permitted to interrogate suspects as the spies 'required adequate preparation for interrogations and the power to obtain from them the information that interests them.'<sup>384</sup> All documents and papers were also to be handed over to the Second Section, and those suspected persons found to originate from the 'Soviet Zone' (territories that are or were parts of the USSR) were to be 'always' treated as spies.<sup>385</sup> According to the communiqué, the Soviet High

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<sup>377</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D5/2 13 June 1942.

<sup>378</sup> D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin*, p.152.

<sup>379</sup> Known to his comrades as 'Parrita', Parra Moya's identity papers were continually questioned as he tried to pass through the Baltic States to reach Sachsenhausen. Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D.1/3 5 July 1942.

<sup>381</sup> Ibid.

<sup>382</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.1/4 5 Jan 1942.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.



Command had ordered its agents to bribe as needed to avoid capture; therefore, the troops were prohibited, unless with the previous permission of the Deputy Chief of Staff, to receive 'services' from suspected spies.<sup>386</sup> In order to maintain and 'to better avoid abuse of legitimacy' in their sector, any suspected deserters were also to be handed over, with their documents, to the Second Section.<sup>387</sup>

Another untapped resource of the Blue Division archive is the reports compiled by the Second Section of POW interviews, which has not been covered in any of the existing studies on the DEV.<sup>388</sup> The Intelligence Section of the Blue Division was greatly interested in interviewing and interrogating captured or deserted members of the Red Army. These interviews not only gathered military information but also gave the Blue Division a sense of the fibre and character of the Soviet troops facing them. Before even reaching their position in the line, the Blue Division was capturing deserters of the Red Army in the rear areas of Army Group North. One of the earliest examples is the capture of Dimitri Baicof in the early hours of morning in September 1941 by Luis Valero Alonso of the 250 Anti-tank Group.<sup>389</sup> Baicof told the Second Section that he had been 'voluntarily' surrendered to the Germans near the River Disma after his unit had suffered massive casualties.<sup>390</sup> Not having any political ideologies, Baicof had escaped with four comrades in an attempt to return home when he was recaptured by the Blue Division. Baicof also stated that the morale of his unit was extremely bad and 'the majority lacked proper military training.'<sup>391</sup> For his cooperation with the Blue Division authorities, Baicof was sent to the German Field Command in Minsk to a dubious, unknown fate.<sup>392</sup> The

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<sup>386</sup> Ibid.

<sup>387</sup> Ibid.

<sup>388</sup> There is a semi-autobiographical, fictional novel written by Ramiro García Martínez regarding the Servicio de Inteligencia of the Blue Division in Russia. Written under the pseudonym 'Ramiro García de Lesdesma' taken from his village of birth, Lesdesma in Salamanca, the book is an excellent look at a member of the Centro de Información Especial (CIE) prior to joining the DEV who not only goes to Russia but has various espionage tasks like infiltrating the Maquis (who attempted to invade Spain from France via the Pyrenees after the end of World War II). See R. García de Ledesma, *Encrucijada en la nieve: Un Servicio de Inteligencia desde la División Azul* (Granada, 1996). For more on the invasion of Spain by the Maquis, see F. Martínez de Baños Carrillo, *Hasta su total aniquilación: El Ejército contra el Maquis en el Valle de Aran y el alto Aragón (1944-56)* (Madrid, 2002) and F. Martínez de Baños Carrillo, *Maquis y guerrilleros: del Pirineo al Maestrazgo* (Saragossa, 2003).

<sup>389</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D 3/1 16 Sept 1941.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.3/6 16 Sept 1941.

<sup>391</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.3/6 16 Sept 1941.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid. By the end of autumn 1941, the German Army reported 3.9 million prisoners of war, of whom 1.1 million (with only 400,000 of these still capable of physical labour) were still alive by February 1942. W. Murray, 'Barbarossa' in ed. R. Cowley, *No end save victory: Perspectives on World War II* (New York, 2001), p.111.

divisional archive contains numerous examples of POW interviews and reports such as case as Mr. Baicof which often focused on the morale of Soviet forces.<sup>393</sup>

The morale of the Red Army, according to the Segunda Sección, was believed to be extremely poor before the Blue Division even left for the front. In a report written for the Alto Estado Mayor in Madrid, it was asserted that moral 'did not exist outside of those fanatic communists' or those with personal ties 'to the Soviet cause of a definitive manner.'<sup>394</sup> The report furthered that the Soviets had 'discipline based on fear' that caused the troops to speak little for fear of being denounced by fellow comrades.<sup>395</sup> Interviewed Russian POWs also stated they did not know why the war had started but believe that the world, except for 'England and the United States' had declared war on them.<sup>396</sup> The intelligence report also talked about the war materials available to the Soviet troops. While aviation was 'beaten and lost by the complete domination of the air' by the Germans, both artillery and infantry materiel was 'good and abundant.'<sup>397</sup>

Life on the Eastern Front was a difficult existence for most who served there. The pressures for many became so great that they could not imagine living further in such a state. The only ways of avoiding what for many was a certain death was either through deserting to the enemy or ending one's own life through suicide. Both instances occurred within the Blue Division. One example of suicide was from a Spanish soldier named Luis Madronero Murillo who killed himself in December 1941.<sup>398</sup> The division had written a letter to this affect but the Spanish Military Attaché also responded to Spanish High Command following a request from it on his status from a telegram dated 16 November.<sup>399</sup> José Maria Sánchez Diana also lists a comrade from the 5<sup>th</sup> Company as having killed himself but does not mention any specific details.<sup>400</sup> Although suicide was generally an exception rather than the rule, the pressures of fighting in Russia were unbearable enough that it remained an option for some. Some simply cracked under the pressure of fighting on the Eastern Front. One medical doctor treating wounded was placed in a psychiatric hospital in

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<sup>393</sup> For examples, see AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.1.

<sup>394</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.2/3 3 Sept 1941.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> Ibid.

<sup>397</sup> Ibid.

<sup>398</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.1/1 4 Dec 1942.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> See the personnel list of the 5<sup>th</sup> Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 269 Regiment as of March 1942 in J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, pp.219-22.

Königsberg due to the stress of treating wounded volunteers.<sup>401</sup> In October 1942, the Spanish Army had inquired to the state of his health and was informed that he was recovering slowly but would soon be back in a condition to return to Spain.<sup>402</sup>

Another, more common option of escaping the Eastern Front was simply to desert to the Russian sides. The Soviets were keen to capitalise on those susceptible to such an option through propaganda geared towards the Spanish volunteer so far from home.

The men of the Blue Division maintained, despite adverse fighting and living conditions, a relatively good moral and *esprit de corps* while fighting on the Eastern Front. There are no recorded instances of mutiny or mass desertions; however, volunteers did desert to the Soviets and there were volunteers shot while in Russia for offences of military discipline (included attempted desertion).<sup>403</sup> Despite having occurred, there are relatively few documented instances of shootings of troops for desertion or military discipline. One known shooting of volunteer occurred shortly after the Blue Division went into the line in October 1941. A volunteer Andres Dorosin was executed for an unspecified reason in the early morning of 19 October shortly after the DEV had reached the front.<sup>404</sup> Another sergeant whose surnames were Castro Orellana from the 5<sup>th</sup> Company 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 269 Regiment was also shot, but no specific reason is known.<sup>405</sup> Soviet propaganda, in a leaflet dropped to the Blue Division, mentions several cases of soldiers being shot as punishment for various offences like self mutilation and attempted desertion.<sup>406</sup> While both of these were punishable by death in the German Army, the archival evidence does not necessarily support these cases as reported by Soviet propaganda (in its attempts to entice Spanish volunteers to desert). This aspect could certainly warrant further investigation; however, the shootings within the Blue Division never reached the events like the latter stages of the Second World War when between 13,000 and 15,000 German soldiers deserted, with many being shot for undermining the will of the German people to fight (*Wehrkraftzersetzung*).<sup>407</sup> The DGS was concerned with a

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<sup>401</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/31 22 October 1942.

<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> In the case of a possible 'mutiny', it is known that eight individuals who were members of a relief expedition were detained in Hof due to 'insubordination'; however, it is not clear if they were acting as a group or individuals. The exact nature of their 'insubordination' is not known either. AGMAV, C.2030,Cp,D.1/8 10 April 1942.

<sup>404</sup> AGMAV, C.1979, Cp.2, D.4/20 19 Oct 1941.

<sup>405</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, pp.219-22.

<sup>406</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/11-12 Undated.

<sup>407</sup> I.C.B. Dear and M.R.D Foot, eds, *The Oxford companion to World War II* (New York, 1995), p.771.

reported rumour in Barcelona concerning the shooting of twenty volunteers by the division implicated in aiding in the desertion of 'more than ten Falangists' to the Russians.<sup>408</sup> There is, however, no proof that these shootings described in this event ever actually occurred.

### **Concerns of the Infantryman**

When dealing with Soviet prisoners of war, the Blue Division was informed, according to a communiqué from the 18<sup>th</sup> Army to the DEV dated 4 May 1942, that Soviet soldiers were to be imposed with 'severe punishments' if found by their superiors in the possession of German propaganda materials, which included passes, or '*hojas volantes*' to cross over to German lines to surrender.<sup>409</sup> To avoid this punishment, the Germans were to print new 'passes' that the Russian soldier did not have to have on his person but could shout a phrase instead, with the example, "*Schtyki w semlju*", or "'lower the guard'" given to allow to Soviet to pass into captivity.<sup>410</sup> Lt. Colonel Zanon stressed the importance in the officers explaining to the troops the importance of understanding this phrase in acquiring deserters, but to also be prepared 'to combat' large groups of Soviet troops who might feign surrender.<sup>411</sup> Those Russian prisoners who did 'pass over' were to be tagged with small labels identifying them 'when possible, individually' as having deserted to the German armed forces.<sup>412</sup>

Spanish volunteers were issued orders in dealing with those Russians who had deserted to or captured by them. In memorandum *General Instruction Number 2022* issued in mid-June 1942 by the Estado Mayor, the troops were told that when capturing 'components of the Red Army, partisans, or agents' that it was important 'to retain important material' like 'documentation and equipment.'<sup>413</sup> According to the order, the concern was to avoid and stop any possible pilfering or looting by *divisionarios* as 'some objects... are the property of the German State...' and it was 'prohibited and subject to punishment their retaining as a souvenir...'<sup>414</sup> Those Soviets captured were to be sent to the Second Section of the Estado Mayor, for interrogation, with their personal papers especially their '*carnet personal (libreta del*

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<sup>408</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 8, 14 Jan 1942, p.171.

<sup>409</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D1/4 4 May 1942.

<sup>410</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>413</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D4/3 15 June 1942.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*

*soldado rojo*)’ or, ‘identity card (Red soldier paybook)’ intact.<sup>415</sup> Later, any weapons captured by Blue Division personnel were to be classified and the Second Section wanted to know those types of weapons that could not be transported by individuals outside the division.<sup>416</sup>

While in the line and during the actions that helped close the ‘Volkhov Pocket’ the division was informed by its Chief of Staff in a divisional instruction memorandum that it could expect Russian prisoners of war in the form of ‘*Jefes, Oficiales, Comisarios, Politruks y soldados*’ from the ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Assault Army’ shortly.<sup>417</sup> Though the operations to mop up Vlasov’s 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock (Guards) Army were not completed by June, the division was informed to expect Soviet soldiers with propaganda passes that allowed them to pass safely into German captivity. In an archival revelation, the point of interest regarding this divisional order is that the division was also informed not to shoot captured Commissars that would be in captivity shortly.<sup>418</sup> Troops were told ‘without any waste of time’ that shooting Political Commissars was prohibited and that they were to be treated as ‘any other prisoners’ that passed over to Axis forces.<sup>419</sup> This evidence strongly suggests that though they were instructed in Germany ‘to respect their [POWs] lives’, in actuality, once reaching the front, they were either handing over Commissars to the *Sicherheitsdienst* (SD- the Nazi’s Security Service created by Himmler) or the *Einsatzkommando* of the SS via the divisional *Segunda Sección* for ‘‘special treatment’’ (to be shot) or worse were actually shooting Soviet political officers themselves like other German Wehrmacht units.<sup>420</sup> Further, this suggests that Spanish volunteers, under their own officers, were willing to possibly kill as indiscriminately as their German comrades.<sup>421</sup> There is evidence that Spanish soldiers did shoot captured Soviet prisoners; however, this instance was a ‘reprisal and punishment’ shooting for the brutal treatment and mutilation of a captured Spanish officer and twenty of his men at the hands of the Soviets.<sup>422</sup> Despite this specific

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<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.5, D.1/16 16 Oct 1942.

<sup>417</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D.1/7 12 May 1942.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Ibid.

<sup>420</sup> E. Rauss, ‘Russian combat methods of World War II’ in P. Tsouras, ed., *Fighting in Hell*, p.31. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.2, D.2/5-6, 4 Aug 1941.

<sup>421</sup> C. Streit, ‘The German Army and the policies of genocide’, in G. Hirschfeld, ed., *The policies of genocide: Jews and Soviet prisoners of war in Nazi Germany* (London, 1986), pp.6-8.

<sup>422</sup> In a story retold to the Spanish Ambassador, delivering cognac, cigarettes, and other gifts from *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler, while visiting the Spanish hospital in Königsberg. This event

event, there is no direct evidence or proof, at least in the Ávila archive, that records any 'commissar order' killings having occurred.<sup>423</sup> Despite this, there is a fairly well known instance of Spanish soldiers of the Artillery Regiment under the orders of Comandante (Major) Mariano del Prado O'Neill ordered to shoot suspected partisans in October 1941.<sup>424</sup>

Partisans were a genuine concern of the German troops during the Second World War as they were used extensively to attack rear supply areas, terrorise the local populations (whom often saw them as thieves and hooligans, as bad as the Germans in stealing supplies and food), destroy German Economic Program projects, gather intelligence, and wreak general havoc in support of Soviet offensives.<sup>425</sup> Although it is argued that the partisans were never a threat to the overall function of Army Group North early in the campaign due to insufficient training, organisation, leadership and equipment, the Spanish Blue Division definitely had its own concerns with partisan activity.<sup>426</sup> One veteran described Russian territory as appropriate for partisan action because of its immense woods and the locals' knowledge of the terrain.<sup>427</sup> Having just settled into the line, the division was made aware of partisan activity behind the lines of the German 16<sup>th</sup> Army and its attempts to combat it in late October 1941.<sup>428</sup> The division was informed to then be aware of 'four classes of partisan types' in early November 1941.<sup>429</sup> The Blue Division was continually and often warned of various partisan and attack possibilities such as those intended 'to

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involved the Spaniards basically having their position over run by larger Soviet numbers. The Spaniards allegedly were literally nailed to the ground with entrenching tools and decapitated while still alive. Although exact numbers are unknown, Muñoz-Grandes ordered several of the 1,000 captured Russians shot '*como represalia y castigo*' after the Blue Division recaptured the position. *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 15, 5 Feb 1942, pp.225-6 and L. Suárez Fernández, *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, p.354.

<sup>423</sup> There is not strong evidence for any such event, but I was not able to view all operational files that might suggest otherwise due to time constraints when researching in Ávila.

<sup>424</sup> The old listing system number DOPS, Second Artillery Group, October 1941, DEV 28/33/12/1, p.53 found in G. Kleinfeld and Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, pp.81, 369, n.54. The file is presumably available at the Military Archives in Ávila; however, I was not able to view it due to time constraints. For a vivid description of a participant of the shootings, see V.J. Jiménez y Malo de Molina, *De España a Rusia: 5000 km. con la División Azul* (Madrid, 1943), pp.187-99.

<sup>425</sup> For more on the Soviet partisan activities, see E.M. Howell, *Department of the Army Pamphlet No. 20-244*, 'The Soviet partisan movement, 1941-5' (Washington, 1956) and the similarly-titled, more recent work by Russian historian L. Grenkevich, *The Soviet partisan movement, 1941-5* (London, 1999).

<sup>426</sup> M. Cooper, *Phantom war: The German struggle against Soviet Partisans, 1941-4* (London, 1979), p.14. Army Group North occupied Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, which were relatively sympathetic to the German cause in Soviet Russia, as a result of which Soviet partisan activity was reduced.

<sup>427</sup> Viladot Fargas, Jose. *El espíritu de la División Azul*, p.66.

<sup>428</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.5/1 10 Oct 1941.

<sup>429</sup> From a Blue Division General Order of the Day issued 3 November 1941 in Viladot Fargas, Jose. *el espíritu de la División Azul*, p. 66.

burn deposits of munitions and supplies' by partisans 'equipped with "Thermit" bags.'<sup>430</sup> Spanish Communist *guerrilleros* were known to operate in small bands behind the lines of the German troops, with one leader Francisco Gullón, who operated behind Army Group North and near the Blue Division, even being awarded 'Hero of the Soviet Union' after dying in September 1944 from wounds he suffered in March 1943.<sup>431</sup> Other Spanish partisans were also recognised by the Soviet government, which was then published in the London press promoting their virtues to a Western audience during the war.<sup>432</sup>

Later in the campaign, the DEV had been instructed on how to deal with partisans in memorandum *General Instruction Number 2023*, issued on 7 July 1942 from the divisional Estado Mayor.<sup>433</sup> If they surrendered voluntarily, the Spanish troops were to treat partisans as 'evadidos', or 'deserters'.<sup>434</sup> If the mayors (*los alcaldes*) of Russian villages 'publicly' and voluntarily handed over partisans from their communities, 'for propaganda reasons' the captured partisans were to be 'immediately' given food and 'if possible' tobacco.<sup>435</sup> Those Russians civilians who aided and distinguished themselves 'in the fight and the capture of partisans or elements of the Red Army' were to also be rewarded.<sup>436</sup> These individuals could be recompensed one of the following ways: monetarily (which normally would be no greater than 25RM but if an individual qualified 'in exceptional cases' for 100RM then the approval of the Intelligence Section of German High Command of the XXXIII Corps was required), with tobacco and alcohol (acquired from the German Army supply warehouses), with land (not proper ownership, rather assigned and 'always guaranteed its usage for life'), or livestock (small farm animals but 'with the approval of the [Reich's] Economic Section', horses and cattle).<sup>437</sup> The XXXVII Corps was also to post signs or posters admonishing both partisans to surrender to German authorities and the local population to help in their capture. Those suspected

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<sup>430</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.4, D.3/1 8 Oct 1942.

<sup>431</sup> After being wounded, Gullón worked for Radio Moscow announcing anti-Fascist broadcasts to the Spanish volunteers. D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin*, pp.151-2.

<sup>432</sup> *The Times*, 15 March 1943, p.4.

<sup>433</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.1, D1/8 7 July 1942.

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>435</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid.*

partisans who were captured were to be passed on to the divisional Second Section to determine their 'reason for detention' while being interviewed or interrogated.<sup>438</sup>

Although the Germans were willing to offer monetary compensation for help in capturing and combating the Soviet partisan movement, they were far more willing to use violence. The most common German response to Soviet partisan killings (actual or perceived) towards them was to respond in kind with reprisals or retaliatory measures taken further in destructivity and brutality. For the Blue Division, there is also a known instance of returning, wounded volunteers relating a story of reprisals committed by an unspecified neighbouring German division. This reprisal consisted of all the adult men of a certain (unspecified) Russian village being executed by the Germans because of the death of two sentries, except for twelve village men instructed to bury their dead neighbours all within twenty-four hours.<sup>439</sup> It would be naïve to believe that the Blue Division was not aware of atrocities towards civilians, especially for the professional veterans of the Army of Africa serving in the division who witnessed and, possibly, committed various acts in Morocco and during the Spanish Civil War.<sup>440</sup>

As with any army in the field, the Germans were concerned with the troop composition and disposition while at the front. Therefore it is not surprising that the Blue Division was also concerned with these fundamental items to better prepare for defending or counter-attacking the Soviets. The key component used by both the Germans and the Blue Division in generating field intelligence and information was through the interrogation and interviewing of captured Russian soldiers. Recognising this importance, divisional headquarters issued a communiqué to the troops in mid-October 1941 on 'The Rules for Treatment and Interrogation of Prisoners.'<sup>441</sup> As captured POWs are a 'fountain of information', it was essential that the men handled them properly, 'with a spirit of sincerity', in order to obtain the maximum information as quickly as possible.<sup>442</sup> After being sent up to regimental headquarters and after some initial questioning, if feasible in the field, the POWs were then handed over the

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<sup>438</sup> Ibid.

<sup>439</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, p.170.

<sup>440</sup> For examples of atrocities against the 'Moors', which included chemical warfare on civilians, committed by the Army of Africa while fighting the Rif in North Africa, see S. Balfour, *Deadly embrace: Morocco and the road to the Spanish Civil War* (Oxford, 2002), pp. 41-2,87-8,123-56. For atrocities by the Army of Africa against the miners' rising in Asturias, in 1934, and in the Spanish Civil War, see S. Balfour, *Deadly embrace*, pp252-6, 285-7, and 292-8.

<sup>441</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.6, D.1/10 14 Oct 1941.

<sup>442</sup> Ibid.



Second Section of divisional headquarters 'with the greatest possible urgency.'<sup>443</sup> In the meantime, the prisoners were not to be handled with 'maltreatment' that would negatively affect or 'influence in an unfavourable manner' their later interrogation by the Intelligence Section.<sup>444</sup>

As part of continually informing the troops in the field, the divisional headquarters also released a periodic 'News Bulletin' (*Boletín de Información*) to the officers who then informed the men. Using information gathered from captured prisoners, these bulletins not only discussed the proposed intentions of possible enemy actions but also mentioned the enemy unit and its ethnic composition (when known). For example, 'News Bulletin Number 16' issued 28 October 1941 mentions that the 1004 Regiment comprised of '*siberianos*' (Siberians) who the division believed were attempting to attack the '*cabeza de puente*' (which the report deemed '*origen prisioneros- noticia dudosa*' or 'prisoner origin –news doubtful') that the division held at Possad.<sup>445</sup>

The Blue Division was concerned with the organisation and facilities available to its enemy, the Red Army. The division received and dispersed communiqués regarding the operational organisation of the Soviet troops in relation to the 'winter campaign.'<sup>446</sup> In this particular notice, the troops were informed by the Second Section (Intelligence) to be aware of different Soviet troops and how they might be used, for example ski troops used 'to destroy communications in the rear area' or infantry used as 'shock troops' and fully equipped with sleds in attacks 'on the flank.'<sup>447</sup> The Blue Division also recognised that the individual Russian soldier had tremendous mobility and was willing 'in the words of Suwrows (sic): "where there can pass a stag so can go a soldier; and were there can go a soldier so can an Army advance."<sup>448</sup> The Second Section obviously was reading literature works of Marshal Suvurov and applying it in relation to Red Army doctrine, unlike their German counterparts whom General Waldemar Erfurth, claimed had not properly studied or

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<sup>443</sup> Ibid.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.4/5 28 Oct 1941.

<sup>446</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.14, D.2/9-12 Undated.

<sup>447</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.14, D.2/9 Undated.

<sup>448</sup> The quote in reference to Russian Field Marshal Aleksandr Suvorov of Seven Years' War fame and somewhat of a 'Russian Clausewitz', though a predecessor of the Prussian military theorist, who is often found quoted by Spanish military intelligence in communiqués like this example. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.14, D.2/10 Undated.

understood their Soviet opponent before invading the USSR, especially in the Northern Theatre.<sup>449</sup>

Willing to learn from the habits of the Russians, the division was also interested in the methods used by the Soviets to combat cold, which it passed on to the troops in a memorandum dated 7 February 1942.<sup>450</sup> The troops were informed that Soviet soldiers were punished, even put to death, for cases of '*congelacion*', or frostbite, which the Soviet Army believed were 'avoidable.'<sup>451</sup> The Spanish volunteers were admonished to do the things that their communist enemy was doing in order to avoid frostbite. Such prevention measures included taking care of ones' clothes ('better with various pieces' to wear as layers); wearing tight fitting shoes (or to pad with 'straw, insoles, newspaper, or another pair of socks' if stretched); 'to cover the face and extremities'; when marching through the snow against the wind, remain single file and when using vehicles, rest the drivers and travel in short distances; when taking breaks, look for protection from the wind (especially at 'night in open air' when holes big enough for one or two men should be dug); and finally, like the Red Army, use 'the civil population' for 'works auxiliary and of construction' which included pulling sleds.<sup>452</sup> As the Russian soldier did these things to avoid the cold and frostbite, Spanish volunteers were admonished to do the same. The DEV was also interested in how the Red Army was so easily able to move during winter but also willing to march and manoeuvre at night.<sup>453</sup> Both were essentially possible by the use of skis and sleds but also the Russian soldiers' willingness to discard all 'superfluous equipment' like backpacks and gas masks.<sup>454</sup>

The Soviets were known to be deceptive on the battlefield, and often fight contrary to what the Germans perceived to be the rules of war. Not only were cases of feigning surrender to then shoot unsuspecting Germans detailed to detain them common, but the Soviets used other ruses as well. One such Soviet ruse involving the Blue Division was the use of booby-trapped items to maim or kill unsuspecting *divisionarios* occurred in the summer of 1942. The division had sent a message to the

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<sup>449</sup> The Northern Theatre was not Army Group North, but highlights the unpreparedness of German troops in Soviet Russia. As a representative of the German Wehrmacht to Finnish headquarters, General der Infanterie Dr Waldemar Erfurth witnessed German ignorance of fighting in such extreme temperatures first-hand. See, W. Erfurth, 'Warfare in the far North', pp.264-5.

<sup>450</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.14, D2/8 7 Feb 1942.

<sup>451</sup> Ibid and E. Rauss, 'Russian combat methods of World War II', pp.25,58.

<sup>452</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.14, D2/8 7 Feb 1942.

<sup>453</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.14, D.2/12 Undated 1942.

<sup>454</sup> Ibid.

Sapper Battalion to avoid 'light metal bottles of silver-grey colour' inscribed with "*Marschgetränk*" (beverage consumed during marching) as when the top was removed 'it produces an explosion.'<sup>455</sup> There had also been a case of a 'small bandage package, believed to be German wrapped in brown paper without inscription' found by unsuspecting German troops near the Blue Division.<sup>456</sup> Believing the package contained a bandage, some troops were wounded by a small explosion that occurred while attempting to open it. The package had actually contained with explosives and a detonator. Spanish headquarters told the troops to beware of any such bandage packages found in the Blue Division's sector.

In a similar vein, the German High Command had also passed on an order in October 1941 warning its divisions, including the Blue Division of saboteurs, spies and possible locals that were attempting to poison the drinking water in newly occupied areas after an enemy agent had been captured with a packet of strychnine.<sup>457</sup> The troops were told to be aware of '*aguas envenenados*' that might also affect vegetables, giving them a 'bitter and metallic' taste.<sup>458</sup> The men were told to look for certain warning signs that might indicate a possible poisoning, which were to be directed directly to the closest medical personal for treatment. Madrid had also been informed of the use of dogs equipped with dynamite saddlebags in destroying vehicles by climbing underneath.<sup>459</sup> The use of the dogs in this manner by the Red Army was incredulous to the Spaniards who described the Russians as a 'vulgar race.'<sup>460</sup> These incidents not only highlight some of the unconventional dangers the Spanish volunteers faced in Russia, but typify the nature of the fighting in the East.

The Red Army also employed unconventional weapons that the Blue Division was warned against and asked to be prepared for. For example, the soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 263 Regiment were also warned by their commander against 'incendiary methods' used by the Soviets which included phosphorus bombs dropped by Russian

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<sup>455</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.7, D.1/31 Undated 1942.

<sup>456</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D.5/5 26 June 1942.

<sup>457</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.5/6 17 October 1942.

<sup>458</sup> Ibid.

<sup>459</sup> Used primarily as an anti-tank weapon, the dogs were trained by the Red Army to seek food under the vehicle. After crawling under the moving vehicle, a trip-wire attached to the top of the saddlebags, weighing up to 12 kilos, would graze the bottom or axle of the vehicle, thereby exploding. *DIHGF*, vol iii, pp.157-8. German troop began shooting dogs automatically if seen on the field and the dogs also were indiscriminate about which vehicle they crawled under, which included Soviet ones; both factors led to their disuse.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid.

planes.<sup>461</sup> The men were admonished to take cover under brick (instead of wooden) structures and to have adequate warning and anti-aircraft response to such attacks.<sup>462</sup> There were also cases of ‘balls’ and ‘pellets of phosphorus’ also being dropped on troops.<sup>463</sup> In both cases the men were told to use dry sand to extinguish any subsequent fires.<sup>464</sup> Often, however, the phosphorus did not burn or ignite properly and the men were ‘to avoid touching with their [bare] hands’ these bomblets and instead ‘protect the hands with rubber gloves’ when placing the unexploded arsenal in a sandy, open area.<sup>465</sup>

The Spaniards, like their German comrades, very much respected the fighting ability of their Russia counterpart. But neither the Germans nor the Spaniards could fathom the relative unimportance that the Soviet soldier appeared in regard to his own human life as a cog of the Soviet juggernaut. Upon returning volunteers to Spain reported to the *Dirección General de Seguridad* (DGS), that though the German Army held each, individual soldier’s life in utmost importance, this opinion was contrary to the Red Army’s, who seemed to squander them mercilessly.<sup>466</sup> The DGS reported that Russians used its men ‘in infantry attacks [where] human losses mattered for nothing.’<sup>467</sup> Despite the lack of compassion for the Russian infantryman demonstrated by the Red Army, the *divisionarios* reported being envious of and having a great respect for Soviet artillery. In the case of maltreatment, there is a bizarre instance of a wolf attack on a POW guard in early November 1941.<sup>468</sup> The guard had badly wounded ‘a wolf of large size’ that attempted to attack him while guarding a POW concentration camp. Locals said it was not unusual wolves to attack with the first snows, but the report blamed the use of ‘dead horse meat’ used to feed the POWs in attracting wolves to the camp.<sup>469</sup> The report does not distinguish whether the horse meat was cooked or not.

### **The Blue Division and Nazi Ideology**

The question generally asked regarding the Spanish volunteer and his service in the Wehrmacht is to what extent he shared the ideology of the regime under whose

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<sup>461</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D.5/4 19 June 1942.

<sup>462</sup> Ibid.

<sup>463</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.2/14 20 Sept 1942.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 25 April 1942, p.347.

<sup>467</sup> Ibid.

<sup>468</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.7, D1/5 2 Nov 1941.

<sup>469</sup> Ibid.

flag he fought. This question, which fundamentally relates to his service at while at the front bears some interest in answering here at this point in the thesis. From the beginning of the invasion of the USSR, the German soldier was taught that this was a 'war of extermination' against a 'sub-human' enemy and political system.<sup>470</sup> In 1941, well-known and respected German military leaders such as von Manstein, Kūchler, von Reichenau, and Hoth issued orders stating, 'The [German] soldier in the east is not merely a fighter according to the rules of war, but also a protagonist of a merciless racial idea, who must fully understand the necessity for hard, but just, punishment of Jewish sub-humanity' which necessitated that 'the Jewish-Bolshevist system must be wiped out once and for all.'<sup>471</sup> The German soldier, therefore, was to act 'as avenger for all the cruelties committed against him and the German people.'<sup>472</sup> Realistically, then, how did the Spanish government and the Blue Division fit into this ideological struggle and *Rassenkampf*?

When relating the general opinions of men who served in the Blue Division to the ideology of National Socialism, in particularly the 'Jewish Question', there is simply no clear definitive answer or opinion. Were there anti-Semites? Absolutely, but that was not an uncommon feature of many peoples throughout the world at that time. The reality, especially for Spaniards, is that Jews were an unknown entity in Spain. The Sephardic Jews having been caste out of Spain with the Muslims after 1492, there was no large population anywhere other than the major metropolitan cities of Spain, where their numbers were minuscule and negligible. Even after the war, when the world was more sensitive and tolerant of Judaism, their numbers were only estimated at between 4,000 and 5,000 among a Spanish population of over 30 million.<sup>473</sup> Spain's official stance, for its part during the war, would argue that it helped with the relocation and the resettlement of Sephardic Jews, now based in Salonika, back to Spain.<sup>474</sup> In reality, the Franco government, through its

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<sup>470</sup> For more on this concept, see J. Förster, 'The German Army and the ideological war against the Soviet Union', in G. Hirschfeld, ed., *The policies of genocide: Jews and Soviet prisoners of war in Nazi Germany* (London, 1986), pp.15-29.

<sup>471</sup> From A. Dallin, *German rule in Russia, 1941-45* (London, 1947), pp.259-60 as quoted in C. Cooper, *The German Army, 1933-45*, p.548.

<sup>472</sup> Ibid.

<sup>473</sup> H.L. Matthews, *The yoke and arrows*, p.187. Despite sensitivities, the Jews, especially those Jewish Displaced Persons (DPs), were still blamed for the economic difficulties in early post-war Germany, where the old influence of National Socialism died hard. S. Fritz, *Endkampf: soldiers, civilians, and the death of the Third Reich*, (Lexington, KS, 2004) pp.239-42.

<sup>474</sup> For an overview, see D. Salinas, *España, Los sefarditas y el Tercer Reich (1939-45): La labor de diplomáticos españoles contra el genocidio Nazi* (Salamanca, 1997).

publications, was prone to anti-Semitic diatribes, especially in relating Judaism as the backers of Capitalism (i.e. the United States).<sup>475</sup> The Spanish volunteers were, for the most part, ardent anti-Communists, which was often portrayed as a 'Jewish-Bolshevist system' to German soldiers through State-regulated propaganda, which was inevitably translated and passed on to foreign volunteers of both the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS.

The men were certainly susceptible to propaganda while at the front. There is strong evidence that the divisional newspaper (*Hoja de Campaña*) did present images to the troops that equated Stalin as a 'Jew' or at least being supported by Jewish backing.<sup>476</sup> Later in the war (after the DEV was replaced by the Legión Azul), the troops were warned the evils of 'Bolshevism, Judaism, and Masonry' as enemies of Europe and Spain.<sup>477</sup> Despite this influence, there is not evidence that suggests the Spanish troops were involved in atrocities towards Jews or assisted in their rounding up for deportation to concentration camps, as regular Wehrmacht (contrary to traditionalist German opinion that still exists in modern Germany that blames the SS) had while serving in Eastern Europe.<sup>478</sup> However, neither the men of the Blue Division or the Spanish government were naïve to the brutal war waged against the Soviet Union that eventually saw 24 million of its citizens (nearly half civilians) killed while fighting the Nazi invasion.<sup>479</sup>

Before the Blue Division was sent closer towards Leningrad in the late summer of 1942, they were informed by German authorities that the 'official Soviet data' from 1939 put the population of Leningrad at 3.2 million people, which incidentally, the division was informed 500,000 were Jews, but that the population had swelled with the German invasion with refugees to 4.5 million.<sup>480</sup> This

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<sup>475</sup> D. Salinas, *España, Los sefarditas y el Tercer Reich*, p. 15.

<sup>476</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 17 Oct 1943, p.4.

<sup>477</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 15 Dec 1943, p.1. For more on the 'indoctrination' of Spanish troops by the divisional newspaper, see the next chapter.

<sup>478</sup> This point is of course a controversial one, having been denied repeatedly by German officers in their memoirs and by sympathetic Western historians. For examples, see E. von Manstein, *Lost victories*; H. Guderian, *Panzer leader* (New York, 1996); and B.H. Liddell Hart, *The German Generals talk* (New York, 1979). For evidence of Wehrmacht complicity in the racial policies of Nazi Germany, see The Hamburg Institute for Social Research, *The German Army and genocide: Crimes against war prisoners, Jews, and other civilians, 1939-44* (New York, 1999) and C. Streit, 'The German Army and the policies of genocide', pp.1-14. For more on the controversy of the traveling exhibition in Germany related to this material, see O. Bartov, 'preface', in The Hamburg Institute for Social Research, *The German Army and genocide: crimes against war prisoners, Jews, and other civilians* (New York, pp.10-7.

<sup>479</sup> R. Overy, *Russia's war*, pp.287-9.

<sup>480</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.4, D.3/3 8 Oct 1942.

population consequently led to an additional growth of the Jewish population of between 600,000 to 800,000 people.<sup>481</sup> The report also discusses the relocation of 'part of the war industry' (*'la Industria belica'*) and the evacuation of some of the population.<sup>482</sup> The report, however, failed to report the number of Russian civilian losses due to starvation or cold, which reached nearly a million following the first winter. The Blue Division was also aware, through this German report, of the negative reaction by the citizens of Leningrad towards Jews because of German propaganda efforts at Leningrad (which should largely be suspect on its own merits).<sup>483</sup> According to the German report, as a consequence of the German anti-Jewish pamphlets 'which produced some agitations' towards the Jews, they were not being properly rationed within Leningrad.<sup>484</sup> There is no strong evidence, however, that this had occurred during the siege the siege of Leningrad; however, Stalin had persecuted Jews in Poland prior to the German invasion and, following the war, continued to imprison Jews and even murdered a leader of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee in 1948.<sup>485</sup> Stalin continued to persecute Jews until his death in 1953.<sup>486</sup> Furthermore in the report, the division was also informed of the exact ration system employed in Leningrad and the supply network across frozen Lake Ladoga used by the Soviets to supply the beleaguered city of food, clothing, and ammunition on what became known as the 'Ice Road' or the 'Road of Life.'<sup>487</sup>

The Spanish government was also aware of the difficulties that Jews were facing in occupied Europe. For example, in a DGS report from 20 August 1942, the government notables were informed that Jews in Paris were made to wear the '*estrella de Sión*' (Star of David) publicly, were only allowed to use the last carriage in the

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<sup>481</sup> Ibid.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid.

<sup>483</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.4, D.3/4 8 Oct 1942.

<sup>484</sup> Ibid. The ration system developed to feed the remaining Leningrad population was inadequate and left many without their ration cards, which were often stolen or traded. R. Overy, *Russia's war*, p.106.

<sup>485</sup> The Soviets had demonstrated anti-Semitic behaviour in dealing with the Jewish population in their half of occupied Poland, including forbidding the public practice of circumcision and Bar Mitzvah. They had also erected numerous statues of Stalin in the plazas and town centres of Jewish communities. With Barbarossa, however, Stalin released numerous Jewish prisoners in August 1941. R. Overy, *Russia's war*, p.137. With the end of the war, Stalin again persecuted Jews in fear of nationalistic feelings generated amongst them from the Holocaust. Solomon Mikhoels, playwright and spokesman for the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, was murdered at Stalin's instigation. His murder was disguised as a traffic accident. After an official investigation, it was determined that Mikoels was murdered by the American Secret Service to prevent him from exposing an American spy ring. See more on Stalin's treatment of Jews in the post-war Soviet Union, R. Overy, *Russia's war*, pp.310-1.

<sup>486</sup> For Stalin's last purge towards Jews before his death, see J Brent and V.P. Naumov, *Stalin's last crime: The plot against Jewish doctors, 1948-53* (New York, 2003).

<sup>487</sup> J Brent and V.P. Naumov, *Stalin's last crime*, p.109. AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.4, D.3/4-6 8 Oct 1942.

Metro, and prohibited attendance to public events.<sup>488</sup> These venues that Jews were not allowed to frequent nor be present at included restaurants, cafes, tea rooms, bars, bodegas, theatres, cinemas, concerts, cabarets, music halls, fairs, markets, museums, libraries, expositions, horse tracks, parks, beaches or pools.<sup>489</sup> According to the report, the general French population was alarmed by the detaining of groups of Jews and were aware that Jews were also being deported outside of the country. However, the report goes on, the rounding up of Jews was done by French police with German supervision on the 14-15 July where these Jewish detainees were separated by sex and reportedly sent to Poland and the Ukraine.<sup>490</sup> The DGS report further stated that it was aware that this event was not unique as similar occurrences had happened to Polish, Czechs, German, and Austrian Jews.<sup>491</sup> Furthermore, eighty-nine of the detainees committed suicide instead of facing deportation to an unknown, ominous fate in the concentration camps in the East.<sup>492</sup>

To what exactly what extent were either members of the Blue Division or the Spanish government aware of the nature of the concentration camps and death camps is not clear. Members of the Blue Division are quick to state that they were not aware of them while serving in the Wehrmacht; however, there was a Polish prisoner of war camp very near to both the Grafenwöhr and Hof training facilities.<sup>493</sup> Although the volunteers were forbidden to approach this camp it is reasonable to suspect that they were aware of the poor state and extreme difficulties of the Polish prisoners there. The Spanish government is certainly harder to find knowledgeable of the various Nazi camps. However, this is not to say that some Spaniards were not subjected to the deprivations, abuses, and horrors of the SS during the Holocaust. Although limited in number, Spaniards (who were not Jews but captured while in the service of France or communists) were killed at the (pre-dominantly Austrian Nazi-run) SS prison of war camp at Mauthausen.<sup>494</sup> It would not be unreasonable to suspect that the Franco

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<sup>488</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc. 45, 20 Aug 1942, pp.550-84.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>490</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>491</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>493</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.1/11 29 July 1941.

<sup>494</sup> Over 10,000 Spaniards (who had been soldiers in the Republic) were captured by the Germans with the fall of France in 1940. Of these POWs, 4,000 (of whom 59 survived the war) were initially sent to the Channel Islands where they were used as labour by the Organization Todt building defences. D.W. Pike, *Spaniards in the Holocaust: Mauthausen, the horror on the Danube* (London, 2000), pp.3-10. Of an estimated 30,000 Spanish Republican refugees sent from France to Germany, 15,000 (many who also served in *Travailleurs étrangers* units), were sent to Nazi camps, including Mauthausen, with



government would have been indifferent to Republican Spaniards (many who were Communists) who did find themselves in such camps and would have done very little in regards to helping them.

However, the Franco government was not only knowledgeable of the treatment of Jews, but also aware of the mistreatment of Poles by German occupation forces.<sup>495</sup> The Spaniards, however, were especially appalled by the German maltreatment of the Catholic population of Poland.<sup>496</sup> With the initial victory in Poland in 1939, the German Army had not only committed murder against Polish Jews, but had committed random acts against the general Polish population.<sup>497</sup> Franco, who was always sentimental about Catholic Poland, had originally regretted its demise at the hands of the Soviets and Germans with the invasion in September 1939, although he blamed the Allies for its dismemberment.<sup>498</sup> As a consequence, the treatment of Polish Catholics did not further endear Franco to the Nazi cause in the East.

### Receiving News at the Front

The opinions of the troops were largely shaped by their exposure to news and information while serving at the front. Aside from the divisional newspaper, the *Hoja de Campaña* (which is covered more in depth further), the Germans also provided the men of the Blue Division a radio programme. A 'special transmission' for the troops was only thirty minutes in duration and was transmitted on 'short band waves of 31.5 metres' German radio at 16.00 hours daily in November 1942.<sup>499</sup> The same 'Transmitter Group' also provided a show called '*Ostland*' for the troops in the field.<sup>500</sup> Another source for news from Spain was the military attaché in Berlin, Lt. Colonel Juan Roca de Togores.

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other international prisoners. By wars end, over 200,000 POWs were killed at Mauthausen, including between 7,000 and 9,000 Spaniards. D.W. Pike, *Spaniards in the Holocaust*, pp 11-13. For an interesting, although factually disputed, account of a Spaniard held at Mauthausen, see M. Constante, *Los años rojos: Españoles en los campos nazis* (Barcelona, 1974). At the latter stages of the war, the camp commandant at Mauthausen, *SS-Standartenführer* Franz Ziereis, had also attempted to threaten the Spanish prisoners into enlisting in the the Blue Division, which they refused. D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin*, p. 261.

<sup>495</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 20, 10 March 1942, pp.288-92.

<sup>496</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 21, 11 March 1942, pp.293-308.

<sup>497</sup> For atrocities committed by Wehrmacht troops against Jews, see A.B. Rossino, *Hitler strikes Poland: Blitzkrieg, ideology, and atrocity*, (Lawrence, KS, 2003) pp.157, 172-4, 186-90, and 232. For examples of anti-Polish atrocities, see A.B. Rossino, *Hitler strikes Poland*, pp.23-8,177 and 202-7.

<sup>498</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, pp.343-4.

<sup>499</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.7, D.1/6 12 Nov 1942.

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid.*

As the communication liaison between the Blue Division and the Spanish Army Ministry back in Madrid, Roca de Togores was eventually used to also relay personal information to various divisional personnel in the field. Messages sent included such subjects as the announcement of births of spouses, like volunteer Julio Fernandez Herrero whose wife gave birth to a daughter 'in perfect health' or whether volunteer Miguel Alvear Urrutia would be permitted to travel to Berlin between 16-20 January as he would have family visiting there at the time.<sup>501</sup> The military attaché would also request information for Spanish authorities, per the request of government (usually Falange) notables or family members, from the division on the status and well being of volunteers. For example, Roca de Togores requested news on soldier Fernando Caneda Velazquez, *Feldpost* 15,303, from the division in early January 1942.<sup>502</sup>

While at the front, General Agustín Muñoz-Grandes also continually sought information (via the Spanish Military Attaché) from Spain in the form of '*peticiones de noticias*' (news petitions). These 'news petitions' might be as simple as requesting information on the health condition of a volunteer's father or why another volunteer's father was detained by the Military Governor of Valladolid.<sup>503</sup> Muñoz-Grandes also invariably communicated (again through the military attaché in Berlin) with various government agencies and Movimiento and Spanish Army notables as necessary to obtain news from Spain. Despite the attempts of the Spanish Military Attaché and General Muñoz-Grandes to help facilitate the communication between the Blue Division and Spain, the troops still depended on mail as their best source for information and news from home.

### **Postal Censorship**

This thesis does not attempt to cover the history of the field post system of either Germany or the Blue Division as that has been done relatively well, but what has not been discussed is the method of censorship of mail.<sup>504</sup> However, field post was essential for morale and helps understand the experience on the Eastern Front, as

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<sup>501</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.6, D.2/11 3 Jan 1942. AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.6, D.2/12 Jan 1942.

<sup>502</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.6, D.2/16 5 Jan 1942.

<sup>503</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.14, D.1/16 28 Sept 1942. AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.14, D.1/15 28 Sept 1942.

<sup>504</sup> Though not an academic, Manuel Vázquez Enciso is a well-known stamp collector who owned a shop on the Plaza Mayor in Madrid. On Sunday mornings in Madrid, people trade in stamps, coins, and other collectibles, and the occasional Blue Division items, including letters, medals, and other regalia. As an expert in the stamps and letters used by the Blue Division, he has numerous examples in his book. See, M. Vázquez Enciso, *Historia postal de la División Azul: Españoles en Rusia* (Saragossa, 1995).

it was the main form of communication between the men in the field and their families back in Spain. In this, the volunteers of the Blue Division were no exception in the Second World War.

The division had set up a temporary mail service when it first reached Germany in late July 1941.<sup>505</sup> As with their German counterparts, the Spanish volunteers were assigned a *Feldpost* number that corresponded to their location within the division. The men, however, though eager to send and receive correspondence, were subject to certain rules and guidelines when writing back to Spain, which were set up that the officers would censor their men's mail, which would then be passed to the Censorship Office between 9AM and 1PM, daily.<sup>506</sup> A divisional 'Censorship Office' (*Oficina de Censura*) was the overall responsibility of the Second Section; however, lower level Censorship Offices were comprised of chaplains and battalion and regimental 'information officers' (intelligence section) who were delegated the responsibility of censoring letters and postcards before passing it on to the divisional Censorship Office located in Frankfurt.<sup>507</sup> Postal items that were deemed acceptable and not containing 'prohibited matters' were marked with a red 'C', written in the far left hand corner of the letter or postcard, to denote that it had been censored thus allowing it back to Spain either via train or on far fewer occasions, via airplane.<sup>508</sup>

The Censorship Office continually had trouble with the content or materials that the men enclosed in their correspondence to Spain. The Censorship Office via a division directive had to clarify its position on allowable items and content in *General Instruction Number 213* that was allowed in mail.<sup>509</sup> The men were not allowed to send German money back to Spain, which was expressly forbidden by the Reich government, and any letters containing it were detained and the money confiscated.<sup>510</sup> Those wishing to send money to Spain had to do so in the form of bank drafts (*giros*) wired from Germany to a specified family member, identified to the Second Section, with the money converted from Reichsmarks to pesetas.<sup>511</sup> To protect their identity and location at the front, the men were not mention their present location or included

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<sup>505</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.3/3 25 July 1941.

<sup>506</sup> Ibid.

<sup>507</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.3/1 24 July 1942. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.1/3 1 Jan 1942.

<sup>508</sup> Ibid.

<sup>509</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.1/3 1 Jan 1942.

<sup>510</sup> Ibid.

<sup>511</sup> Ibid.

any drawings.<sup>512</sup> Furthermore the men were not permitted to send letters for other *Feldpost* numbers other than their own, nor if returning to Spain for 'whichever motive' were they allowed to carry letters or packages not censored first.<sup>513</sup>

Ideally, the rules for sending and receiving correspondence correctly were to be instructed to the troops during their 'daily theoretic instruction.'<sup>514</sup> Later, the Censorship Office, however, simply could not handle and censure the post being forwarded to it from the men at the front. The men were simply not following the necessary procedures in self-censuring their post content before handing it over to the Censorship Office, which led it to issue a divisional communiqué in June 1942 regarding the proper guidelines to ensure effective and proper censoring before sending it on to their friends and families back in Spain.<sup>515</sup> The troops were told that their text needed to be 'clear' and not in illegible, unreadable forms or figures, that included a 'geometric shape' or 'signs no one can decode them' to help the in censoring.<sup>516</sup> They were not to mention that post may be 'hand carried' or transported in a 'suitcase' nor were they allowed to mention which unit they were serving in while at the front.<sup>517</sup> The post could also not include any postcards or photographs of distinguishing physical structures such as 'towers, bridges, routes, etc.' nor were the troops to discuss any military operations or news from the front.<sup>518</sup> Soldiers, furthermore, were not allowed to respond to all the letters that they had received due to the difficulties of sending and censoring mail back to Spain. An example of a soldier who had received thirty to forty letters at once was advanced to illustrate this point.<sup>519</sup>

Officers, specifically captains when available, were directed to censor the letters of their direct subordinates before being re-read, if necessary, by the divisional Censorship Office if there were questions or doubts to whether a topic was indeed censorable.<sup>520</sup> The Hospital Directors were also to censor the mail of their hospital staffs.<sup>521</sup> The officers (captains and higher), in turn, had their mail also censored by

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<sup>512</sup> Ibid.

<sup>513</sup> Ibid.

<sup>514</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.3/1 24 July 1942.

<sup>515</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D4/2 June 1942.

<sup>516</sup> Ibid.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

<sup>519</sup> Ibid.

<sup>520</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.1/3 1 Jan 1942.

<sup>521</sup> Ibid.

the divisional Censorship Office before sending it to Spain.<sup>522</sup> The divisional headquarters made the rules fairly clear in what was and was not allowed in a communiqué issued in July 1942.<sup>523</sup> The ‘absolutely prohibited’ list included: the place where the division was currently located; ‘geographic, regional, or whatever other characteristic’ of the current zone or territory the division was in; ‘allusions’ to military units or mentioning their names or numbers; all referenced to troop movements or destinations; ‘commentaries over the course of operations’; and any data related to the organisation or material used by either the division or the German Army.<sup>524</sup>

Although officers were in charge of censorship, they were not always able to catch all items that the men sent from the front back to Spain. Certainly, the Blue Division was no exception. For example, the Censorship Office had returned a letter to the commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Group of Artillery when a soldier from the 5<sup>th</sup> Battery of Artillery had attempted to send a “*Personalusweis*” (identity card), presumably his own, back to Spain as a souvenir.<sup>525</sup> This prompted the group commander to contact the captain of the battery to make sure that the troops were ‘sufficiently instructed’ in the needs of retaining certain, essential documents.<sup>526</sup> The problem of not properly censoring the soldiers’ letter content, however, was also not resolved by the end of November 1942 as the Estado Mayor had to issue a new directive to the entire division reiterating the importance of proper censorship of correspondence being sent home.<sup>527</sup> The Estado Mayor found it ‘intolerable’ that the men ‘of all sections of this division’ were still sending information that contained ‘troop movements, transports, formations, new weapons...etc.’ in their correspondence.<sup>528</sup> The division directed the section chiefs to report ‘immediately all contraventions that occur’ against the standing order of permitted letter and postcard content.<sup>529</sup>

### **Spanish Military Hospitals**

The Germans had extensive medical services they provided for the curing and rehabilitation of their wounded servicemen throughout the war. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Blue Division also had its own network, within the German system,

<sup>522</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D4/2 June 1942.

<sup>523</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.3/1 24 July 1942.

<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

<sup>525</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.7, D.1/8 11 November 1942.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid.

<sup>527</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.5, D.3/1 30 November 1942.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid.

for treating and caring for their wounded. The history of the medical services, unfortunately have not been covered in any existing study on the DEV.<sup>530</sup> While a precise history at this moment is hopefully forthcoming, it is worth mentioning certain aspects that are known about the various medical facilities used by the Blue Division while in the service of Germany, but also how the men were often returned to Spain from them.

After being treated by medic and field aid stations at the frontline, the wounded were transported to the Spanish Field Hospital in Grigorovo (*Hospital de Campaña de Grigorowo*), which was the closest facility to the fighting. Here the men were given a wound grade that determined where they might require treatment. These four grades were: *leve* (light), *menos grave* (less grave), *grave* (grave), and *gravísimo* (extremely grave).<sup>531</sup> After determining the wound severity grade, the Spanish Field Hospital in Grigorovo move the men to the *Hospital de Evacuación* in Gatchina that was responsible for then transferring the various wounded to the main Spanish hospitals located in Berlin, Königsberg, Vilna, Riga, and Hof.<sup>532</sup> These individual hospitals were supplied with Spanish medical staffs and personnel (including nurses from the *Sección Femenina*) from the *Sanidad Militar* (Department of Military Health of the Spanish Army) in Madrid. The *Sanidad Militar* was so interested in the medical services of the Blue Division that its Inspector General of Health, General Gómez Ulla visited the hospital in Riga and met with General Muñoz-Grandes in February 1942.<sup>533</sup> As the medical services were technically part of the German Army, the head of the Spanish hospitals was called *Chef Sanitätswesen* (Medical Chief). General Gómez Ulla had appointed Doctor Lieutenant Colonel Francisco Pey in the reorganisation of the hospitals following an official request from the DEV and Gómez

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<sup>530</sup> For a recent article on hospital organisation, see J. M. Poyato Galán, 'La organización y la gestión sanitaria de la División Azul', *Revista Española de la Historia Militar* (August, 2005). Dr. Juan Manuel Poyato Galán is a urologist from Seville and a collaborating member of the Fundación División Azul who gave a seminar recently on the study of Urology and Urinary Pathology of the Blue Division on the Eastern Front entitled *La Urología española en la Segunda Guerra Mundial: Patología urinaria en el frente de Rusia (1941-1943)* at the LXX Congreso Nacional de Urología in San Sebastian in June 2005. Fundación División Azul, <http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org> (2 Sept 2005).

<sup>531</sup> For an example of a list of injuries, including the first injuries related to combat, from the field hospital in late October 1941, see AGMAV, C.1979, Cp.1, D.2 22 Oct 1941.

<sup>532</sup> J. Díaz de Villegas, *La División Azul en línea*, pp.192-3. For a good account of the process of passing through the various Spanish military hospitals for treatment by a *divisionario* who was wounded, treated, and reincorporated back with his unit, see J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, pp.157-89.

<sup>533</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.7, D.2/12 2 Feb 1942.

Ulla's visit to the front in February.<sup>534</sup> Lt. Colonel Pey was officially at his post as Medical Chief by early March 1942<sup>535</sup>. To help in the communication of the numbers of men treated at each Spanish facility, the *Chef Sanitätswesen* periodically sent reports on the totals (in and out) of the various hospitals to the Spanish Military Attaché, Lt. Colonel Juan Roca de Togores, in Berlin who then relayed that to the Alto Estado Mayor in Madrid.<sup>536</sup>

The Spanish Army Ministry was not only interested in the amount of troops that were going passing through each hospital, but also the severity, or 'grade', of the injuries of the wounded volunteers. For example, in 9 March 1943 the Alto Estado Mayor requested information on the 'state of division personnel, specifying the grade of wound and the hospital that each was found in.'<sup>537</sup> The hospitals in Riga, Vilna, and Königsberg (which were considerably closer to the frontlines) all reported various results such as numbers at the hospital and whether these wounded were being sent back to the front or transferred to another Spanish hospital (like Vilna or Riga to Königsberg or Berlin for more treatment).<sup>538</sup>

Exactly who furnished the majority of the necessary medical equipment and supplies to the Blue Division is not exactly clear in the archive. One would assume given the provisions of when the division was formed, that Germany would have done so. Regardless, the hospitals were in desperate need of more medical supplies by early spring 1942. To help augment the 'last reserves of hospital supplies', General Muñoz-Grandes requested from the Minister of the Spanish Army that the Blue Division be 'urgently sent and to avoid a difficult situation without them' more medical supplies.<sup>539</sup> The division had also had to request coats for the nurses of the Sección Femenina during the initial stages of the first Russian winter, as German authorities had supplied none.<sup>540</sup>

Spanish medical personnel, especially surgeons, were in high demand by the division, so much so that Muñoz-Grandes was not always amenable to allowing their repatriation back to Spain. After the Spanish Army Inspector General of Health requested in late May 1942 that any remaining doctors who were sent to Russia in the

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<sup>534</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.7, D.2/17 17 Feb 1942.

<sup>535</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.1/14 6 Mar 1942.

<sup>536</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.6, D.3/34 10 June 1942.

<sup>537</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.4, D.1/6 9 March 1942.

<sup>538</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.4, D.2/35 21-2 March 1942.

<sup>539</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.1/21 5 May 1942.

<sup>540</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.4, D.2/7 3 Nov 1941.

original roster from July 1941 be repatriated back to Spain, the division's commanding officer was only willing to do so with certain conditions.<sup>541</sup> Aside from twenty nurses (who were required for unspecified 'new hospital and other needs') the exact demands are unknown.<sup>542</sup> These details were to be arranged by Comandante (Major) Pey, head of the divisional medical services, who had requested that a telephone conference between the division and the *Sanidad Militar* in Madrid.<sup>543</sup> Muñoz-Grandes had due cause for concern of replacement doctors as a previous roster of doctors sent as replacements was short an entire surgical team and three doctors.<sup>544</sup> With such concerns of medical personnel, medical orderlies, especially in the field, often consisted of *Hiwi* helpers, such as a Russian man and woman used by the Second Company of the *Grupo Sanidad*.<sup>545</sup>

With limited medical opportunities in neutral Spain, the war on the Eastern Front presented an opportunity for Spanish Army surgeons to hone and perfect their skills. As with other career officers in the regular army, medical officers could also not only gain valuable field experience but also advance their military profession. One thing for certain is that doctors and their assistants were divided into teams that were rotated, like the soldiers at the frontline, in and out of service. One such example is the sending of a surgical team under a Major Torres Marti to the hospital in Vilna to replace the existing surgical team under Captain Cardenas.<sup>546</sup> Despite their medical expertise and necessity, the hospitals seemed to have various discipline problems within. In November 1942, General Gómez Ulla requested that Lt. Colonel Pey continually enforce discipline within the various hospitals 'with the objective of avoiding disagreeable incidents.'<sup>547</sup> It is not clear whether it is the staff or the patients that required disciplining.

During the war, the Spanish military hospitals also became part of the process of helping the relatives of deceased veterans in receiving the necessary pensions from the German or Spanish governments. Because of the various bureaucratic hoops and logistical problems in obtaining legal '*certificados de defunción*' (death certificates) from German authorities, the Alto Estado Mayor had requested that the various

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<sup>541</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.5/40 20 May 1942.

<sup>542</sup> Ibid.

<sup>543</sup> Ibid.

<sup>544</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.1/24 12 May 1942.

<sup>545</sup> AGMAV, C.1982, Cp.5, D.1 20 May 1942.

<sup>546</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.4/49 28 March 1942.

<sup>547</sup> AGMAV, C.1985, Cp.8, D.4/1 5 Nov 1942.



hospitals used by Spanish personnel actually issue the certificates themselves in June 1942.<sup>548</sup> By issuing death certificates from the hospital in which a veteran had actually died, this streamlining of the acquisition process helped the deceased's relatives properly register with the *Registro Civil* (Civil Registry) to receive any benefits they might be entitled to.

As German troops were supplied with *Hauser der Landser* which were recreational venues for troops to enjoy when not at the front. These 'Soldier's Clubs' supplied games, reading materials, forms of live entertainment, and more importantly, beer to help in the rest and relaxation of troops that were generally removed from the frontlines. Therefore, it is not surprising that these also existed for the Blue Division. One well-known *Haus der Landser* was created specifically for convalescing soldiers at the Spanish Hospital in Berlin.<sup>549</sup> This specific Haus also had a cinema theatre to show films to the men who were generally recovering from minor wounds.

In late August 1942, Major Pey had requested from General Gomez Ulla, the Director of Spanish Military Hospitals that wounded men requiring convalescing and healing time greater than three months be allowed to return to Spain for rehabilitation.<sup>550</sup> After treatment or convalescence in either a Spanish or German hospital, troops often found themselves discharged from the Blue Division. These variously wounded men, travelling from hospitals in Riga, Vilna, Königsberg, or Berlin back to Hof, were then returned to Spain aboard the necessary transport they required (depending on severity of wounds). For example, several hospital groups were returned in different trains in June 1942.<sup>551</sup> Expected to leave Hof on 11 June 1942, the largest group returned in a hospital train consisted of 248 volunteers of which 226 were wounded.<sup>552</sup> The next two groups, consisting of seventy lesser wounded who had been 'discharged' directly from hospitals, were to have left Hof the 12 and 13 June aboard regular transportation.<sup>553</sup> When necessary, a Spanish medical officer was placed in charge of the returning medical expedition and would accompany the train back at least as far as the border where the train was often met by

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<sup>548</sup> AGMAV, C.1982, Cp.8, D.1 June 1942.

<sup>549</sup> For a photographic example, see L. Suárez Fernández, *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, p.46.

<sup>550</sup> AGMAV, C.1984, Cp.2, D.5 28 Aug 1942.

<sup>551</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.6, D.2/26 10 June 1942.

<sup>552</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*

Spanish medical services.<sup>554</sup> German doctors also sometimes assisted wounded volunteers during the voyage home to Spain. For instance, one medical expedition that included four officers, twenty NCOs, and 259 troops (of which 143 wounded and 140 sick) was 'assisted during the trip by German personnel and two Spanish medics as well as two interpreters.'<sup>555</sup> On occasion, wounded troops also accompanied the luggage and personal effects being returned to Spain to the relatives of those *divisionarios* killed in Russia.<sup>556</sup>

The Spanish Military Attaché often requested that special arrangements be made to receive the seriously wounded back in Spain, which included a reception by medical personnel or ambulances. The wounded were then transported to the local military or public hospital (depending on whether the volunteer was still a member of the Spanish Army upon his return to Spain). For example, in late July 1942, the military attaché requested that medical assistance be readied at the French-Spanish border to receive some seriously wounded volunteers (including sixty-four on stretchers and 169 requiring seating out of 233 total being returned) under the command of a Captain Roldan.<sup>557</sup> The military attaché had even gone to the extent of asking that an ambulance be readied at the airport in Madrid to receive a Major Oses who was expected on 3 July 1942.<sup>558</sup> The ambulance was to transport Major Oses, accompanied by his wife, to the military hospital for further hospitalisation.<sup>559</sup> However, in another example, fifteen volunteers deemed simply 'unfit' and 'sick' had left Hof under the supervision of Medical Captain Galiana and were travelling in regular transport and did not require 'special care upon their arrival.'<sup>560</sup> Often troops were returned to Spain after being deemed '*no aptos*' (incapables) for contracting venereal diseases such as syphilis.<sup>561</sup> One such group was returned to Spain in August 1942. Spanish hospitals reportedly cared for over 8,000 wounded, 7,800 sick, and 1,600 frostbitten former Blue Division volunteers upon their return from the Eastern Front.<sup>562</sup>

After rehabilitation and treatment in Spanish facilities, convalescing soldiers were treated by nurses of the SF at the *Hogar de la División Azul*, or Home of the

<sup>554</sup> AGMAV, C.2033, Cp.7, D.3/78 31 July 1942.

<sup>555</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.10, D.5/25 14 May 1942.

<sup>556</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.8, D.4/54 31 Mar 1942.

<sup>557</sup> AGMAV, C.2033, Cp.7, D.3/60 22 July 1942.

<sup>558</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.6, D.2/74 29 June 1942.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid.

<sup>560</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.14, D.3/29 9 Sept 1942.

<sup>561</sup> AGMAV, C.1984, Cp.3, D.1/1 2 Aug 1942.

<sup>562</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, p.346.

Blue Division. There were several of Hogares for returning DEV veterans with the main one in Madrid. Unfortunately, not much information is available regarding how this facility worked, and although veterans remember it, they cannot recall very many specifics about it.<sup>563</sup> Run by Jaime Colsa (*el Jefe del Hogar de la División Azul*), the building located on Calle Atocha near the Puerta del Sol in Madrid accommodated at least twenty patients, with lesser injuries (including frostbite and amputations).<sup>564</sup> As how exactly it was financed remains unclear, the Hogar did hold fundraisers to either pay for itself or supplement its income from either Spanish, or more likely, German governments endowment. One such fundraiser, the 'Homage to the Blue Division', was in April 1942 that included a visit by Spanish actress Maria Fernanda Ladrón de Guevara and singing of the '*Himno de la División Azul*' by a youth choir of the Frente de Juventudes.<sup>565</sup> The minimum donation to attend was 150 pesetas for box seats (*el palco*) or 25 pesetas for chair seats (*la buteca*).<sup>566</sup>

For his part, Jaime Colsa apparently was a fairly public figure that regularly attended public events to promote the *Hogar* during its existence, although little is known about him now. Not only had he attend the 'Homage to the Blue Division', but also attended a public mass attended by party dignitaries, such as Joaquin Canalda Palau (*Jefe de la Vieja Guardia*) and Celía Jiménez (*madrina* of the Blue Division) at the church of Santa Barbara in Madrid in honour of the dead of the division.<sup>567</sup> Celía Jiménez was not only a strong supporter of the Hogar de la División Azul but had also collected toys for the children and siblings of Blue Division volunteers during the division's first winter in Russia.<sup>568</sup> After receiving care in the Hogar de la División Azul, those men well enough to work, were provided identity cards and assistance in finding employment by the *Servicio de Reincorporación de los Combatientes al Trabajo*, an organisation with its roots in helping disabled Nationalists from the Spanish Civil War.<sup>569</sup>

### **Transport and Supplies**

The Blue Division, as most every other division who fought in the Second World War, was a combat unit consisting of auxiliary support units that provided

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<sup>563</sup> General Víctor Castro Sanmartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan 2004) and Cesar Ibáñez Cagna, Historian-Secretary: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan 2004).

<sup>564</sup> *Informaciones*, 24 Feb 1942.

<sup>565</sup> *Informaciones*, 18 April 1942, p.5.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>567</sup> *Informaciones*, 24 May 1942, p.1.

<sup>568</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 17 Feb 1942, p.2.

<sup>569</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.319.

supplies, policed the division and its rear area, and offered hospital and medical services for the front-line troops.<sup>570</sup> These services, however, were not specifically provided by the German government, but were also facilitated by the Spanish Army Ministry in Madrid. This is an important point, since it adds weight to the contention that although the Blue Division was comprised of volunteers, it was directly, albeit not publicly, supported by the Franco's government.

As the war wore on the Blue Division recognised that some sort of reorganisation of the rear services had to occur if the division was to successfully supply from Spain- a task that had proved to be a logistical nightmare. The rear services or *servicios de retaguardia*, was so poorly organised from its inception that it was not able to receive its own mail until late spring 1942. After being somewhat better organised, the DEV's rear services began getting its post sent to *An der Apostel kirche 5 Berlin W- 35* by May 1942 (over six months after the division was in the field).<sup>571</sup>

The supplying of troops fighting in Russia was a colossal logistical endeavour. The administrative effort exerted to maintain the broad front dwarfed later operations for supply to Allied forces fighting in the Mediterranean or Northwest Europe. Not only did the Blue Division determine fairly early on that it would not have the supplies necessary to sustain its needs, needing therefore to be supplied by German resources, but it also needed to supply Spanish troops with foodstuffs they were accustomed to, but which were foreign or in short supply to German quartermasters. The German diet of various sausages (*wursten*) and potatoes (*kartoffellen*) was never popular amongst *divisionarios*. Onions (*cebollas*), large peppers (*pimentón*), olives (*acetunas*), garlic (*ajos*), saffron (*azafran*), and olive oil (*aceite de oliva*) were and are essential elements of the Spanish diet. These foodstuffs were requested by the divisional general via chief of rear services to the Agregado Militar (Military Attaché) who finally requested the items from the Estado Mayor in Madrid.<sup>572</sup> The Spaniards were even supplied 20,000 kilos of garbanzos (chick peas) and 5,649 kilos of olives in August 1941 right before the division began its trek to the front.<sup>573</sup> These items not only helped better feed the volunteers in Russia but also boosted morale. The greatest

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<sup>570</sup> For a good overview of the *retaguardia* of the DEV, see X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, pp.211-309.

<sup>571</sup> AGMAV, C.3032, Cp.5, D1/2 6 May 1942.

<sup>572</sup> For an example see, AGMAV, C.3031, Cp.12, D1/24.

<sup>573</sup> AGMAV,C.2030,Cp.1,D.1/1 11 Aug 1941.

morale booster and single most important item from Spain, however, was not a food or spice but a liquid: wine.

German beer, though readily drunk, was not a popular among the troops compared to Spanish wine and cognac. The Germans did not supply wine, so it was requested from Spain. Wine was in such short supply from the lingering effects of the civil war and poor climatic conditions, however, that it was not readily transported from Spain to the front. This problem was compounded by the scarcity of the necessary containers to transport the wine in. In June 1943, the Estado Mayor telegraphed the Spanish Military Attaché in Berlin that the requested divisional wine supplies could not be sent as requested as there were not enough containers (*envases*) in Spain until the division supply returned its empties.<sup>574</sup> The Muñoz-Grandes, possibly realising the necessity of the wine ration, replied through the Military Attaché that the Blue Division would 'return the bottles immediately.'<sup>575</sup> Cognac was definitely the preferred spirit, especially during the cold Russian winter. Also a part of the Caudillo's *aguinaldo* (Christmas gift), cognac was also supplied by the Spanish Army Ministry for the troops. The Alto Estado Mayor was concerned, however, if the amount of bottles they were supplying to the Blue Division were actually making it all the way to the front.<sup>576</sup> The Alto Estado Mayor requested that that the head of the rear services (*servicios de retaguardia*) inform them of this immediately.<sup>577</sup> Although the archive is not clear on whether the Spanish High Command was concerned with the welfare of the troops at the front, or that the supplies might be getting pilfered at various points on the way to the front.

Possibly due to concerns of supplies not properly leaving Spain while being transported to the front, the Spanish Army Chief of Staff had informed the military attaché that the Army Ministry intended to send a supply officer and numerous gendarmes to Hendaye to be 'in charge of successive general supply expeditions' from there to the front.<sup>578</sup> Also possibly due to pilfering along the journey to reach the divisional supplies or concerns from possible partisan attacks, the gendarmes (of the Guardia Civil) actually often accompanied the supplies to the Blue Division. One example is the 'general supply expedition', which included olive oil, under the

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<sup>574</sup> AGMAV, C.3032, Cp.5, D1/2 15 May 1942.

<sup>575</sup> AGMAV, C.3032, Cp.5, D1/6 24 May 1942.

<sup>576</sup> AGMAV, C.3031, Cp.10, D1/45 21 May 1942.

<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

<sup>578</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.1/22 29 Dec 1942.

command of Captain Navajas Arbelais in early January 1943.<sup>579</sup> Gendarmes also accompanied another supply train to the front in the middle of February 1943 ‘to the front.’<sup>580</sup>

While it appears that the Spanish Army Ministry occasionally supplied food and alcoholic beverages without compensation from the men, it is not clear whether the German Army paid for these supplies, at least according to the archival evidence in Ávila. It is believed that the Spanish government paid for these particular items directly as a means of paying off the debt to Germany created during the Spanish Civil War. It appears that some of the costs for supplying the division were indirectly passed on to the volunteers themselves. For example, Colonel Manuel Estrada of the Alto Estado Mayor had discussed creating a ‘tobacco deposit’ for the Blue Division in late September 1941 with Roca de Togores.<sup>581</sup> The Spanish Army eventually supplied tobacco for the men in late November 1941 that was designated to ‘serve as a monthly supply.’<sup>582</sup> This tobacco, however, was not free and was designated to be sold to the troops.<sup>583</sup> The supplies from the Spanish Army were not just food and perishables but also practical clothing as the division realised the possible implications of foreboding Russian winter.

. In early November 1941, with the approaching first winter in Russia, the Spanish troops had expressed serious concerns regarding the adequacy of the winter clothing they had received from their German wards before even reaching the front.<sup>584</sup> To help augment the little that had been supplied to them by the German Army, the Spanish Military Attaché, Juan Roca de Togores immediately requested that the Spanish Army Ministry send winter supplies.<sup>585</sup> Due to the low temperatures the division was experiencing in Russia, Roca de Togores again requested ‘*vestuario*’ (clothing) including 20,000 pairs of gloves and 20,000 winter caps.<sup>586</sup> Due the necessity of sufficient time for the German Army to transport these items combined with decreasing temperatures (which eventually reached  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), Roca de Togores emphasised that ‘The response [from the Spanish Army] is extremely urgent.’<sup>587</sup>

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<sup>579</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.3, D.1/1 5 Jan 1942.

<sup>580</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.3, D.3/3 18 Feb 1942.

<sup>581</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.4, D.1/1 27 Sept 1941.

<sup>582</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.4, D.1/5 22 Nov 1941.

<sup>583</sup> Ibid.

<sup>584</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.4, D.1/1 1 Nov 1941.

<sup>585</sup> Ibid.

<sup>586</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.4, D.2/4-5 16 Nov 1941.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

After receiving an initial supply of 380 crates, the military attaché, though thankful for this supply, stressed the importance of more items, especially winter shoes.<sup>588</sup> Throughout the first Russian winter, the supplies (see Figure 2.2) sent by the Spanish Army was rather extensive and further demonstrates the Spanish governments duplicity in supporting the Blue Division on the Eastern Front while officially denying this involvement.

**Figure 2.2- Additional winter clothing sent by Spanish Army to the Blue Division during the first Russian winter, 1941-42.**

Item	Total Distribution
Winter Caps ( <i>pasamontañas</i> )	23,631
Wool Gloves ( <i>guantes de lana</i> )	14,025
Cloth Gloves ( <i>guantes de pano</i> )	6,319
Gloves with one thumb ( <i>guantes un solo pulgar</i> )	1,495
Leather Gloves ( <i>guantes de piel</i> )	348
Mittens ( <i>manoplas</i> )	30
Glove covers ( <i>sobre-guantes</i> )	3,294
Sock covers ( <i>sobre-calcetines</i> )	2,498
Jumpers ( <i>jerseys</i> )	4,860
Winter Vests ( <i>protege-pulmones</i> )	12,034
Wraps ( <i>fajas</i> )	6,240
Ear Muffs ( <i>orejeras</i> )	5,540
Overcoats ( <i>sobre-abrigos</i> )	3,374
Leather Coats ( <i>abrigos de piel</i> )	1,197
Felt Boots ( <i>botas de fieltro</i> )	2,250
Straw and Reed Boots ( <i>botas paja y junco</i> )	2,568
Lambs-skin Boots ( <i>botas de piel de oveja</i> )	915
Boot Covers ( <i>sobre-botas</i> )	244
Winter Smocks ( <i>trajes blancos</i> )	6,650
Skis ( <i>esquis</i> )	820
Rubber Boots ( <i>botas de goma</i> )	1,050
Snow Shoes ( <i>raquetas</i> )	890

Source: R. Recio Cardona, *el servicio de intendencia de la División Azul*, p. 179.

Traffic transport was not necessarily one-way either. The transport system invariably sent various troop loads back to Spain. The transport would also include the mail of the soldiers at the front. Often with the post, the ‘the clothes and personal objects’ of those killed in Russia were also returned to Spain per the request of Colonel Estrada in Madrid in December 1941.<sup>589</sup> Troop trains often included special trains that included various degrees of wounds. Aside from returning both healthy and wounded *divisionarios*, the transport system also sent goods and various other items

<sup>588</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.4, D.1/6 28 Nov 1941.

<sup>589</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.5, D.1/1 5 Dec 1941.

back to Spain. On one such occasion music instruments were shipped to Spain in late December 1942 for the *Casa Militar Generalísimo* (Generalissimo Military Household) of Franco to be received in Irún through the shipping license of a company called Baquero, Cusche and Martin.<sup>590</sup> It is not known what kind or what became of the instruments for Franco's household.

### **The *Guardia Civil***

To help facilitate the function and security of the transport system used by the Blue Division, the *Guardia Civil*, or Civil Guard, offered its services to the Division, although it is not clear whether it was ordered to do so by the Spanish government. The role of the *Guardia Civil* has been covered in an existing book on the Blue Division.<sup>591</sup> This book, however, suffers from partiality in a controversial subject in Spanish history. This thesis will present the lesser-known subject of the *Guardia Civil*'s use in policing and enforcing the Spanish military law in regards to the apprehension, detention, and, often, expulsion of those volunteers deemed 'misfits' by divisional authorities.

The controversy regarding the *Guardia Civil* in Spain is as long as the unit has been in existence. The paramilitary group was created in 1844 as a national police force that largely created to combat banditry in the Spanish countryside. Seen by the elite land-owners as the 'Meritorious' (*Benemérita*), the *Guardia Civil* was deeply unpopular, being regarded by many as 'the great enemy' of the impoverished rural populations, an occupation force sent by the King of Spain to hold sway over the masses.<sup>592</sup> As a consequence, the unique, distinctive (often, erroneously described as a tri-corner) patent-leather hat was the authoritative symbol of oppression and social injustice of the centralist government in Madrid. For their own part, the Civil Guards themselves were always stationed away from the local, native communities. With dual consequences, the Guards were not encouraged by the government to interact with nor where they accepted by the local population. The *Guardia Civil* was especially seen as an oppressive force when the majority of its ranks joined the Nationalist cause during the civil war, contrary to its duty to defend the constitution of the Spanish Republic. As a symbol of Spanish foreign policy, therefore, it is not surprising that the *Guardia Civil* maintained a fundamental role in the Blue Division.

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<sup>590</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.2, D.1/26 Dec 1942.

<sup>591</sup> J. Garcá Hispán, *La Guardia Civil en la División Azul*, (Alicante, 1991)

<sup>592</sup> R. Carr, *Spain, 1808-1939* (Oxford, 1966), pp.233-4.



The Guardia Civil (although officially attached to the Fourth Section) worked in close proximity with the Second Section's *Servicio de Información Interna* (Internal Information Service) whose head was Guardia Civil Captain Pedro Marínez de Tedula García. The unit's main function was determining the character of Blue Division recruits by determining if 1) they were good representatives of the DEV and Spain, and 2) that there were no questions of loyalty to the 'cause' for fear 'anti-fascists' might enlist in the DEV to desert once the division reach Russia.<sup>593</sup> However, the principle role of the Guardia Civil, acting as military police, was to 'regulate' the division. The Guardia Civil therefore provided to the division what the Germans called *Feldgendarmerie* (Field gendarmes) to the policing of the Blue Division and its personnel. As '*Feldgendarmes*', the field police was one of the few fully motorised sections of the Blue Division having received seven light cars, five motorcycles and a small truck to carry baggage while at Grafenwöhr.<sup>594</sup> The initial division recruitment consisted of eighty-nine members of the Guardia Civil. This original complement, however, was deemed inadequate as the division realised that the logistical difficulties of supplying the division and protecting and guarding its rear area services. To facilitate this, the Guardia Civil sent Captain Martinez to help in the reorganisation of the rear guard service in April 1942.<sup>595</sup> He and his team were in Hof awaiting orders from the divisional headquarters (although Lt. Colonel Ruiz de la Serna requested that he be allowed to determine the actual amount of authorisation Captain Martinez was to be allowed.<sup>596</sup> The Guardia Civil was to help guard the roadways to and from the division used by its rear supply services. This required dividing the various areas in between Spain and Russia in three 'zones' or areas of responsibility for various Guardia Civil personnel. These three zones were the *Zona de Retaguardia* (Rear Area), *Zona de Vanguardia* (Forward Area), and *Zona del Frente* (Front Area). After this reorganisation, the number of Guardia Civil reached a force of 159 persons placed at various stations and posts from the Spanish-French border all the way to the front lines.<sup>597</sup>

A captain located in Königsberg commanded the *Zona de Retaguardia*. His responsibilities included overseeing train transportation as it travelled from Hendaye,

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<sup>593</sup> J. Garcá Hispán, *La Guardia Civil en la División Azul*, pp.38-9.

<sup>594</sup> J. Garcá Hispán, *La Guardia Civil en la División Azul*, p. 40.

<sup>595</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9,D.1/25, 29 April 1942.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid.

<sup>597</sup> For the numbers and station areas of the Guardia Civil, see J. Garcá Hispán, *La Guardia Civil en la División Azul*, pp.62-5.

France to Vilna, Lithuania. Hendaye, across the Spanish border from Irún, there was located a corporal (*cabo*) and a guard (*guardia*) of the Guardia Civil.<sup>598</sup> The next location along the travel route was Paris with three personnel that included an NCO and two guards (although this number was known to reach a complement of six persons). In the Strasbourg on the French-German border, another corporal and guard were stationed. In Karlsruhe, which also served as an important train and communications hub in Germany, the Guardia Civil posted a corporal and guard until 20 June 1943 when this post was reassigned and integrated with the detachment in Berlin.<sup>599</sup> Another German communications hub in Frankfurt am Main also was assigned a corporal and guard. As Hof was the transition point of battalions of *relevo* and *marcha*, the Guardia Civil assigned there consisted of a lieutenant, an NCO, a corporal, six guards, and an interpreter.

The *Zona de Retaguardia* also included Berlin. As the capital of the Reich and command centre of the German war effort, the Guardia Civil complement there was also the largest of any of the other postings with two lieutenants, two NCOs, one corporal, eleven guards, and three interpreters.<sup>600</sup> Incidentally, the building in which this detachment was quartered was flattened after a severe Allied bombing of Berlin on 1 March 1943 without any loss of personnel, however.<sup>601</sup> Although Berlin had the largest numbers of Guardia Civil, the entire operation was headquartered in Königsberg, site of one of the principal Spanish hospitals for the Blue Division. In Königsberg, the famed old city of East Prussia, Guardia Civil numbers were a captain, a lieutenant, an NCO, a corporal, ten guards and two interpreters.

The Rear Area of the Blue Division also included the Baltic countries of Lithuania and Latvia. Taurage (known as Tauroggen or Wirbalen by the Germans during the war), a principal post on the border of Lithuania and East Prussia, had a Guardia Civil detachment of one corporal and two guards. The Lithuanian capital of Vilna (modern Vilnius) also had one lieutenant, one NCO, one corporal, five guards, and one interpreter. Riga, the Latvian capital and site of another Spanish hospital, had one lieutenant, an NCO, a corporal, ten guards and two interpreters. The other Baltic state, Estonia was considered closer to the frontlines of Army Group North and was

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<sup>598</sup> J. Garcá Hispán, *La Guardia Civil en la División Azul*, p.62.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>600</sup> NCOs identified in these Guardia Civil numbers relate to some grade of sergeant in the German Army although technically, a corporal is also an NCO. By separating the 'NCOs' from the 'corporals', one gets a better sense of the hierarchy of each Guardia Civil posting within the Blue Division.

<sup>601</sup> J. Garcá Hispán, *La Guardia Civil en la División Azul*, pp.62-3.

therefore designated in the *Zona de Vanguardia* by the Blue Division. The Estonian capital of Tallinn (called Reval by the Germans and in Blue Division documents) consisted of a lieutenant, a corporal, and four guards.

In *General Order Number 117* issued by the headquarters of the Blue Division, the Guardia Civil was to maintain a principle detachment at Gatschina and a secondary one at Pleskaw. Therefore, the *Zona de Vanguardia* was subdivided into two districts: the *Zona Avanzada* (Advanced Area) and the *Linea de Pleskaw* (Pleskaw Line). The Guardia Civil post at Gatschina (which was actually located nearby in a village called Krasno-Wardeisk) consisted of one lieutenant, one corporal, five guards, and one interpreter. A corporal, four guards and one interpreter maintained the smaller post at Pleskaw. The *Zona de Vanguardia* also encompassed several nearby Estonian towns and villages, including Narva, Tapa, Tartu, Valga and Tallinn. Except for the numbers at Tallinn, the composition of the other posts is not known.

The Front Area (*Zona del Frente*) included the nucleus of what could properly be identified as 'Field Police' (*Feldgendarmes*). Assigned to the divisional headquarters of the Blue Division were a lieutenant, two NCOs, two corporals, and twenty-four guards. The captain of the Guardia Civil also had assigned several smaller posts in small villages that surrounded the Blue Division's operations area. These Russian villages included Fedeorwskaja, Ssluzk, Krasny-Bor, and Mestelewo with an additional twelve guards divided amongst each one. The entire Guardia Civil complement in October 1942 totalled two captains, nine lieutenants, nine NCOs, nineteen corporals, 108 guards, and twelve interpreters giving the Blue Division 159 personnel from the *Benemérita* of Spain.<sup>602</sup>

Policing the division began while the DEV was still training in Germany. An example of such a duty was watching the railroad station at Grafenwöhr when soldiers were permitted daily or weekend furlough to Bayreuth. The guard details were to observe the trains that left early in the morning (by 7am) and those that returned late at night (by 11pm).<sup>603</sup> The Guardia Civil was also in charge of keeping Spanish volunteers away from visiting a Polish prisoner of war camp located near the Blue Division's training grounds.<sup>604</sup> During the training of the Blue Division in Germany,

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<sup>602</sup> Ibid.

<sup>603</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.1/11 29 July 1941.

<sup>604</sup> Ibid.

the Guardia Civil was responsible for controlling the behaviour of the men towards the local German population while conducting various patrols around the camp and the local villages. One incident included a breaking up a fight between several Spaniards and some German NCOs at a bar located just outside the main gate of the *Truppenübungsplatz* at Grafenwöhr resulting in some thrown beer mugs that cut the hand of the Chief Sergeant of the police patrol and nose of one of the Germans.<sup>605</sup> Also during training, someone decided to steal the moneybox from the camp movie house. In this particular occasion on 7 August 1941, Civil Guards Nicolas Martin, Guillermo Castejon and José López while on patrol responded to shouts from the German ticker taker after 'a Spanish soldier' had robbed 105RM from the cinema moneybox.<sup>606</sup> The robbery had happened so fast that the 'old German man' could not provide any more details. The *Guardias Civiles* discovered the assailant had dropped 15RM as he fled the crime scene. Unfortunately, it is not known the final outcome of this theft that occurred within three weeks of the division's arrival to their training in Germany.

This example demonstrates that the Guardia Civil often dealt with criminal events while attached to the division. Other problems included dealing with the seedier, less desirable elements and individuals of the division. Counter to the public persona presented by the Spanish press and even those veterans alive today of '*la Gloriosa División Azul*', the division had its problems, which included '*indeseables*' or 'misfits.'<sup>607</sup>

Before being designated '*indeseable*' a soldier was generally handed over to the divisional *Juzgado* (tribunal) for punishment. For example, a Corporal José Luis Abascal Azcunaga was handed over to the *Juzgado* by the order of the Lieutenant Judge Inspector (head of this particular military tribunal) on 26 February 1943 for trial of an unspecified offence.<sup>608</sup> Crimes within the division ranged from dereliction of duty to assault and battery on a comrade.<sup>609</sup> After charging the individual for his assorted crime, a punishment was meted out. For example, a Lieutenant Julio Matamoros was punished (for an unspecified offence) with forty-eight hours detention

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<sup>605</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.3/9 17 Aug 1941.

<sup>606</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.3/4 8 Aug 1941.

<sup>607</sup> '*Indeseable*' translates as 'undesireable', but in military terminology would be considered a 'misfit.'

<sup>608</sup> AGMAV, C.1987, Cp.10, D.1/1 26 Feb 1943.

<sup>609</sup> While he was fighting at Krasny Bor, one recruit, Jesus Galian Garcia Rayo, was arrested for 'mistreating and wounding a comrade' while still in training at Hof in February 1943. His punishment, unfortunately, is unknown. AGMAV, C.1985, Cp.16, D.1/62 10 Feb 1943.

in the camp stockade in Grafenwohr that thereby resulted in 'ceasing the duty he was in charge of due to no confidence by the High Command.'<sup>610</sup>

The division experienced several instances of soldiers who were deemed to be 'absent without leave' but they were not necessarily considered deserters as they had not attempted to pass over to the Russian lines. Generally, these men were found without permission or proper credentials in the rear areas. For example, four soldiers held by German authorities at Minsk because they were considered '*alejado de su tropa sin permiso*', or 'separated from their troop without permission', in early December 1941.<sup>611</sup> The Germans offered 'to accompany them with guards' back to Spanish authorities, although their punishments are not known. In another instance, a Vicente Santos Perez of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 263 Regiment had been apprehended by German authorities after he had attempted to drive a 'German car' he had stolen to Smolensk.<sup>612</sup> In both examples, as was the nature of the division falling under Spanish military law, the Germans gladly handed back '*indeseables*' for trial before a Spanish military tribunal.

Although punished troops punished for minor offences were often briefly confined in the field for short-term punishments, some were sent to the divisional punishment company or returned to Spain for imprisonment in a Spanish military prison. In November 1942, a soldier Claudio Martín Fernández was punished with service for one month in the divisional '*Pelotón de Castigo*' for falsifying information regarding his release and 'pretending to be repatriated' after receiving treatment in the rear area hospitals for wounds he sustained at the front.<sup>613</sup> Another soldier Angel Iglesias Sanz was also to serve a month's punishment in the '*Pelotón de Castigo*' for an unspecified offence later that same month.<sup>614</sup> Those punished troops deemed to incorrigible after serving in the punishment company were simply sent home (under armed escort) with those soldiers whose crimes were severe enough for direct imprisonment in a Spanish military prison.

After a suspect was charged, found guilty under Spanish military law (except in civil cases) of a serious offence, and therefore deemed '*indeseable*', he was returned, under guard of one or more members of the Guardia Civil. The misfits were

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<sup>610</sup> AGMAV, C.1978, Cp.1, D.3 13 Aug 1941.

<sup>611</sup> AGMAV, C.1979, Cp.2, D.4/38 3 Dec 1942.

<sup>612</sup> AGMAV, C.1979, Cp.2, D.4/39 3 Dec 1942.

<sup>613</sup> AGMAV, C.1985, Cp.8, D.1/1 9 Nov 1942.

<sup>614</sup> AGMAV, C.1985, Cp.8, D.1/2 29 Nov 1942.

generally returned to Spain amongst the various *batallones de relevo*. For example, in October 1942, the 8<sup>th</sup> Relief Battalion under Major Fernandez Cuesta composed of twenty-nine officers, three chaplains, 116 NCOs, and 1194 troops, also included fifty misfits under the guard of one lieutenant and four *Guardias Civiles*.<sup>615</sup> Military misfits were also returned in their own group (under guard) or accompanied with small groups of soldiers on leave. In one instance, twenty-seven ‘*indeseables*’ and six guards under the command of Lieutenant Salvador Lopez de la Torres returned to Spain with six soldiers travelling ‘*con permiso*’ (with permission) in April 1942.<sup>616</sup>

The Guardia Civil was often assisted by regular soldiers as ‘*tropa escolta*’, or escort guards, in returning misfits to Spain. In one example, a Lieutenant Herrero Rivera and two Civil Guards required the addition of five armed guards in escorting only twenty misfits back to Spain. However, the return to Spain did not always go as planned as demonstrated by Juan Manero, who after being recaptured after having escaped from a previous misfit expedition that had returned to Spain was being held in the stockade at Hof awaiting another attempt to return him in the next expedition.<sup>617</sup>

The Guardia Civil not only helped in returning the divisional misfits to Spain, but also helped in looking out for wanted ‘suspects’ such as Russian civilians or deserters. One example was the memorandum, with various descriptions such as physical features and clothing, issued by the Second Section that told the military police to be vigilant two Soviet males (one Ukrainian, the other Russian) that had been done unspecified actions at the civilian hospital in Kolmovo.<sup>618</sup> The descriptions were relatively broad (and given the numerous populations and the expansive nature of the Soviet Union), it must have been extremely difficult for the Guardia Civil to police the civilian population as well. However, the Guardia Civil had to balance both policing the division internally and maintaining vigilance over the external factors and influences surrounding the division. In both capacities, the Guardia Civil served for the betterment of the organisation and function of the Blue Division as it served on the Eastern Front.

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<sup>615</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.3/8 5 Oct 1942.

<sup>616</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.9, D.3/15 11 April 1942.

<sup>617</sup> AGMAV, C.2033, Cp.7, D.4/3-4 2 July 1943.

<sup>618</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D.3/1 11 June 1942.

## **Conclusion**

The war in the East was unlike any the Spanish had imagined or prepared for when most had enlisted in Spain. Being attached to Army Group North, the Spanish Blue Division had the unfortunate fate of serving in some of the most inhospitable climate and terrain available in Russia. Not only was the weather a major factor, but also the nature of warfare experienced on the Russian Front was unlike anything that even the most seasoned veterans of the Spanish Civil War had seen. The ways in which a soldier might be killed varied and often did not include direct enemy action. Through the command directives generated from the army group, corps, and division level, the experience of the individual volunteer was shaped. Through these orders, the Spanish volunteer was made leery of not only Communism but also the land and its inhabitants that surrounded him. These images were further reinforced by the introduction of the divisional newspaper, *Hoja de Campaña*, that helped shape the opinions, and to a certain extent, the ideologies involved in war on Eastern Front for the average volunteer.

## Chapter 3- The *Hoja de Campaña*

### Introduction

Both sides used printed materials extensively during the Second World War for propaganda and informative purposes. However, as observed by historian Joachim Fest, ‘propaganda was the genius of National Socialism.’<sup>619</sup> The development and use of newspapers or propaganda and information was a feature common to military formations, especially the German armed forces. Publications such as *Der Adler*, *Die Wehrmacht*, and others were widely read among soldiers throughout the war and were useful not only as the obvious means of passing information, but also as a way to motivate and propagandise. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Blue Division also created a printed weekly paper for its troops. This chapter looks at the influence of the Blue Division’s *Hoja de Campaña*, a resource that, amazingly, has not been studied in depth as a solid primary source for the divisional historiography, and more importantly, for soldiering on the Eastern Front.<sup>620</sup> Ultimately, the *Hoja de Campaña* performed three basic functions: informing, educating, and subtly indoctrinating the Spanish troops in the East. When blended together, its views played a central part in creating, shaping, and reinforcing the Spanish volunteers’ perceptions of why they were fighting in Russia.

### Origins of the *Hoja de Campaña*

As a newspaper, the *Hoja de Campaña* was, to a large extent, the only news source readily available to Spanish front-line soldiers. Although there were certainly copies of other Spanish publications at the front, including Falangist newspapers *F.E.*, *Arriba*, and *Informaciones*, these arrived, at the best of times, several days and even months late. Colonel Manuel Estrada, of the Alto Estado Mayor in Madrid, acknowledged in September 1941 that this was a concern. He was responding to criticism by the Spanish military attaché in Berlin, Lieutenant Colonel Juan Roga de Togores, who had previously requested that publications such as *Arriba* reach the front in a timelier manner than had been the case so far.<sup>621</sup> Liaison between the Blue Division and Roga de Togores was a continual problem, one which the divisional

<sup>619</sup> J. Fest, *The face of the Third Reich: portraits of Nazi leadership* (New York, 1970), p.83.

<sup>620</sup> The only known work, and one on which this chapter draws heavily, looking at the development of the *Hoja de Campaña*, is C. Caballero Jurado and R. Ibañez, *Escritores en las trincheras*, pp.81-8.

<sup>621</sup> AGMA, C.2030,Cp. 2 D.1/4.



Estado Mayor's intelligence section attempted to detail in a February 1942 report which mentioned the delays involved in supplying the troops with recent issues of *Arriba* as well as other items, such as mail and packages.<sup>622</sup> Previously, the Blue Division, while stressing the importance of maintaining a 'spiritual link with the Patria', had complained about receiving copies of *Arriba* dated 2 or 3 November by 29 November 1941.<sup>623</sup> Given the primitive postal and supply delivery between Spain and Germany during the Second World War, the speedy delivery of newspapers could only be accomplished by their inclusion in Spanish Embassy mailbags, dispatched on Lufthansa flights. Such a solution could not, however, meet the needs of an entire division.

The Germans, as host to the Spanish volunteers, also attempted to provide Spanish language reading material by translating and publishing the popular German magazine *Signal*. This seminal and largely photograph-based publication was not only supplied to the DEV, but was also distributed in Spain. An effective propaganda tool, *Signal* helped promote the Blue Division (as well as the wider German war effort) among the Spanish public with articles dealing with the division and in particular its Ski Company. Once again, however, the print-run could never meet the demand of a division nor was its content specific enough for a Spanish *guriipa*. Therefore, largely in response to these issues, the *Hoja de Campaña* was born.

The *Hoja de Campaña* developed through various failed incarnations of other newspapers, bulletins or newsletters. There were several manifestations of periodicals created in the early days of the division, which included *Nuestro Boletín* ('Our Bulletin') that largely included excerpts from Spanish newspapers *Arriba* and *La Codorniz*.<sup>624</sup> Created in early August 1941, *Nuestro Boletín* was initially started as a daily mimeographed sheet while the division was in training at Grafenwöhr, where another weekly paper, *Adelante*, was also created.<sup>625</sup> *Nuestro Boletín* was published everyday except Sundays and included information from the German High Command (as permitted), news stories from the Spanish and foreign press (when translated), and a "“*Comentario*”" ('Commentary') section for whenever soldiers of the division wanted to submit something to the paper (after clearing censorship of the Second

<sup>622</sup> AGMA, C.2005, Cp. 14, D.1/1-2.

<sup>623</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 188, Nov 1941, pp.388-9.

<sup>624</sup> C. Caballero Jurado and R Ibañez, *Escritores en las trincheras*, p.83.

<sup>625</sup> AGMAV,C.2005,Cp.4,D.4/1 2 Aug 1941. M. Vázquez Enciso, *Historia postal de la División Azul*, p.54.

G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, p. 39.

Section first, however).<sup>626</sup> *Nuestro Boletín* was also to include a “‘*Mentidero del Soldado*’” section, which was a place for soldiers to discuss the various rumours that might have been circulating within the division.<sup>627</sup>

The weekly *Adelante* was supposed to be ‘made by the collaboration of all parts of the division as it desired.’<sup>628</sup> The items that were to be included in *Adelante* were related to the war and military issues (excluding technical specifics or items that should be published), subjects related to ‘Spain, its history, its army, and the FET y las JONS, its customs and memorials, etc, etc’, ‘Germany, its history, its memorials, its art, etc, etc’, and subjects related between the history of Hispano-German relations.<sup>629</sup> The weekly was also to contain sports information, drawings, crossword puzzles, and humorous articles to keep the troops entertained, but also include ‘photographs of memorials, landscapes, [and] deeds of our Crusade’ on the Eastern Front.<sup>630</sup> All newspaper articles and other works were to meet also the approval of the Second Section, who was also to oversee the printing of the editions, as indicated by the Propaganda Service of the German Army.<sup>631</sup>

Both *Nuestro Boletín* and *Adelante* were used mostly for promoting Falangist political doctrine and were edited by the leader of SEU, the Falangist student faction, José Manuel Guitarte, who had enlisted in the fervour of June 1941.<sup>632</sup> Guitarte was described by diplomatic sources in Madrid as ‘a very dangerous element’ and was influential in the Falange.<sup>633</sup> Being comprised of external news sources, the early periodicals suffered again from delayed news information, but also lacked the greater divisional identity that eventually made the *Hoja de Campaña* such a success. The *Hoja de Campaña* was not, however, the first front-line bulletin. Its predecessors also included ones that were unit-specific in their development. One such example was the short lived periodical *Vitamina 13*, which was created by student members of the 13<sup>th</sup> Company of Artillery from the 269 Regiment under the command of Captain Rafael Barbuela Duarte while at a stop in Vitebsk, Byelorussia before proceeding into the line.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>626</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.4/1 2 Aug 1941.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

<sup>631</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.4, D.4/1-2 2 Aug 1941.

<sup>632</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 10 Jan 1944 p.4.

<sup>633</sup> *Correspondência de Pedro Teotónio Pereira*, vol ii, p.383.

<sup>634</sup> C. Caballero Jurado and R Ibañez, *Escritores en las trincheras*, p.83.

As the name slightly indicates, the bulletin was named for the company number but was also called *Vitamina* to poke fun at, in true Latin fashion, the German preoccupation with vitamins and pills. This work only ran one issue of which the first printing occurred in early October 1941 on the back of a disused field map.<sup>635</sup> During their seven-day rest at Vitebsk, *Vitamina 13* was printed an additional three times. The topical information for this mini-paper included sports and ‘*información general y de guerra*’ (general and war news). After settling into their positions near Lake Ilmen, the company merged with the 14<sup>th</sup> Company of Artillery to create another bulletin called the *Vitamina 27*, which also ran only one issue.<sup>636</sup> Printed on 26 January 1942, *Vitamina 27* was, surprisingly, created well after the *Hoja de Campaña* was in full publication and distribution among the division. Smaller bulletins simply were not necessary nor could they compete with the *Hoja*, which became the most important document to the Spanish soldier.

According to Carlos Caballero and Rafael Ibañez, the *Hoja de Campaña* was created and existed in largely three stages, or *etapas*, of printing and development.<sup>637</sup> First published on 4 November 1941, the *Hoja de Campaña* was originally printed on extremely poor printing materials with a captured Russian printing press. This first stage of printing, lasting only twelve issues, was carried out in Grigorovo. The prominent figures in the publishing of these editions were Alvaro de Laiglesia, Fernando Castiella, and Federico Izquierdo.<sup>638</sup> These rudimentary editions, of single folios numbering one or two pages only, provided the start of what would become a fairly sophisticated periodical, particularly after the printing moved from Grigorovo to Riga, in Latvia. This move allowed the *Hoja de Campaña* to enter its second stage of existence.

On 4 February 1942, the thirteenth issue was printed in Riga. The bulk of the newspaper’s issues were printed in this second stage and at its peak, the *Hoja de Campaña* was printed between 18,000-25,000 copies per issue.<sup>639</sup> These large quantities ensured that each and every individual soldier was guaranteed a personal copy of the newspaper, since the operational division strength hovered around 14,000

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<sup>635</sup> Ibid.

<sup>636</sup> C. Caballero Jurado and R Ibañez, *Escritores en las trincheras*, p.84.

<sup>637</sup> Ibid.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid.

officers and men.<sup>640</sup> It was during this phase that the tone for the paper's design and content, which included articles and pieces sent from recognised journalists from Spain for publication within the *Hoja de Campaña*, was set. The thirteenth issue also was directed under the supervision of a certain Lieutenant Zubiarre, who would henceforth oversee the publication. The *Hoja de Campaña* was successfully printed weekly, during this second stage, which lasted until the end of 1943, with the sole exception of one issue, due to the Russian attack at Krasny Bor during Operation Polar Star.<sup>641</sup>

The third and final printing stage of the *Hoja de Campaña* began on 15 December 1943, or issue number 97, approximately two weeks after the return of the last contingent of Blue Division volunteers to Spain. The *Hoja de Campaña*'s purpose in this last printing phase was to keep informed the 1,500 or so Spanish volunteers of the newly organized *Legión Azul*, or Blue Legion, that remained with Army Group North following the repatriation of the DEV. This final printing phase was not, however, as regular as the divisional edition had been. The Blue Legion edition ran sparingly until the final publication on 18 March 1944 with issue number 106. With this commemorative issue extolling the relationship between Spain and Germany as 'comrades in the fight, the death, and the hope' against Soviet Russia, the *Hoja de Campaña* ceased publication.<sup>642</sup>

### **Informing**

Information was the main function of the *Hoja de Campaña* in service to the Blue Division. Under no circumstances was the *Hoja de Campaña* non-partisan or objective. Below the newspaper title was posted the line, '*Por una España mejor y una Europa mas justa*' ('For a better Spain and a fairer Europe'), which encompassed the sentiments of many Spanish volunteers in Russia.<sup>643</sup> Ardently anti-Communist, the newspaper allowed a Spanish soldier on the steppes of Russia to feel that much closer to his beloved Spain. Therefore it was essential that the majority of the content somehow related to news in Spain. This content varied from subjects such as political speeches from Franco to the football scores of la Liga. In some manner, it was essential that the newspaper's substance be consistently relevant to the troops.

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<sup>640</sup> The initial DEV enlistment was around 18,000, but after 1942 the operational strength was around 14,000. See, C. Caballero Jurado, *Morir en Rusia* (Valladolid, 2004), p.18.

<sup>641</sup> For more on Operation Polar Star, see D. Glantz, *The battle for Leningrad, 1941-44* (Lawrence, KS, 2002), pp.287-98.

<sup>642</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 18 Mar 1944.

<sup>643</sup> R. Proctor, *Agonia de un neutral*, p.192.

The divisional news was fairly brief in content, especially in the first stage of printing. It dealt with events like the awarding of the Iron Cross and later the Knight's Cross to Munoz-Grandes, acts which were important for the division's morale.<sup>644</sup> But the *Hoja de Campaña* also covered sport events within the division, like inter-unit football matches. It covered, for example, the 3-0 drubbing the divisional Communications Section team inflicted on an artillery squad, despite the latter being better kitted. 'The referee', it seems, 'was fair and made correct calls' during the match.<sup>645</sup> The *Hoja de Campaña* even covered a match between DEV soldiers and the local population while the former were convalescing in Lithuania.<sup>646</sup>

To create a sense of familiarity and promote a cultural identity, the *Hoja de Campaña* continually called the DEV, the 'Spanish Blue Division' (*División Azul Española*) and very rarely used its official German or Spanish designations. The *Hoja de Campaña* also presented images of distant Spain to the beleaguered troops fighting near Leningrad. Seemingly trivial events like 51°C heat waves in Seville or the growing of an enormous, 1.2 kilogram orange in Valencia were vital to the maintenance of a connection with their homeland.<sup>647</sup> These topics allowed soldiers to relate to things that were dear to them as Spaniards. Not wanting to indulge in stereotypes, these items included arbitrary things such as hot weather and citrus fruits. In fact, oranges had been sent from Spain as a treat to volunteers rehabilitating and convalescing in German and Spanish hospitals in January 1942.<sup>648</sup>

The *Hoja de Campaña* played a fundamental role as a social tool within the division. Soldiers were allowed to send messages to each other within the 'Radio Macuto' section of the newspaper. The term 'Radio Macuto' is simply a Spanish colloquialism for receiving news by word-of-mouth or the 'grapevine.'<sup>649</sup> These were as simple as sending greetings, complaints for not writing, or playful ribbing towards friends in other companies or sections of the division.<sup>650</sup> The *Hoja de Campaña* had a similar section for the *madrinas de guerra* (godmothers or bridesmaids of war, depending on age) of the division. These women organized by the *Sección Femenina* (the Women's Section of the Falange) sent letters and presents to men in the DEV,

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<sup>644</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 19 Nov 1941. *Hoja de Campaña* 16 March 1942. For his awarding of oak leaves to his Knight's Cross see *Hoja de Campaña* 23 Dec 1942.

<sup>645</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 18 June 1943, p.6.

<sup>646</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 24 June 1942, p.5.

<sup>647</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 22 Aug 1943. *Hoja de Campaña*, 4 April 1943.

<sup>648</sup> AGMAV,C.2030,Cp.6,D.3/2 6 Jan 1942.

<sup>649</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p.58.

<sup>650</sup> For an example see *Hoja de Campaña* 27 June 1943, p.3.

although they may not necessarily have had a son or relative of their own in the division. The *Sección Femenina*, organised by Pilar Primo de Rivera, sister of the late José Antonio, had also helped in the collection of supplies and foodstuffs, including cold weather items for the critical first Russian winter.<sup>651</sup> The soldier himself had to request a *madrina* by writing to the Central Foreign Registry Service at the *Delegación Nacional de la Sección Femenina* in Madrid.<sup>652</sup> The ‘*Madrina de Guerra*’ section posted the name of the soldier and the new name of his *madrina*, whom he hoped would be sending goodies from Spain soon. This newspaper section, however, did not last into the later editions of the *Hoja de Campaña* as either the soldiers or the women lost interest in correspondence and the program’s success tailed off. Besides providing news and information for the Spanish volunteers, the *Hoja de Campaña* also educated the men.

### **Educating**

Educating the common soldier was also an important function of the *Hoja de Campaña* as it was an easy method to pass information amongst the *divisionarios*. These information subjects included both personal and military topics that were generally presented in easily understood formats such as drawings, diagrams, or short articles. Through these methods in discussing important topics, the *Hoja de Campaña* hoped to increase the health and survival rate of the Spanish volunteers in the Blue Division. As a consequence, the *Hoja de Campaña* became an important apparatus within the DEV.

For personal education, weekly articles such as one entitled ‘Hygiene at the front’ attempted to cover health topics that bettered the overall wellbeing of the volunteer while he was at the front. An example of such an article covered water, particularly the necessity of drinking water to avoid dehydration. Soldiers were also reminded that, ‘Water, the good water, is a transparent liquid without flavour or smell.’<sup>653</sup> But the *Hoja* would also cover other personal issues with columns such as ‘*Cuidados en el Frente*’, or ‘Cares at the front,’ which included discussions like ‘Alcohol in winter’, warning of the dangers of consuming alcohol while serving in such extreme temperatures. Although it seemed ‘Alcohol is an enemy of the cold’ (because it seems to ‘warm’ a cold soldier who imbibed it), in reality alcohol gave ‘a

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<sup>651</sup> P. Preston, *Comrades* (London, 1999), p.137.

<sup>652</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 23 Sept 1942, p.2.

<sup>653</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 11 Nov 1942 p.6.

false sense of warmth.’<sup>654</sup> This seemingly warm sensation was a danger because alcohol actually ‘predisposes freezing’, the article warned.<sup>655</sup> Another topic was ‘*Un parásito*’ (‘A parasite’) dealing with the lice infestations that were prevalent in Russia. Disparagingly known as *piojo verde*, or ‘dirty louse’, the ‘bothering, tenacious, and always dangerous’ lice were the scourge of every fighting man on the Eastern Front.<sup>656</sup> One veteran described how *los piojos* were untreatable enemies that only remained slightly less irritating when the men buried their infested cloths, and lay in the snow naked.<sup>657</sup> When the troops returned indoors and reclothed, however, the lice were reinvigorated and continued to bite. Unfortunately, the *Hoja de Campaña* article did little in promoting affective ways of combating lice other than *la desinfección* (disinfection), through ‘a good bath [and] change of clean clothes.’<sup>658</sup>

Another ‘*Cuidados en el Frente*’ featured an article titled ‘Combat the cold’, which recommended avoiding the touching of the helmet to the ears as they might freeze together and also recommended changing clothes frequently, as worn clothes lost eighty percent of their warmth.<sup>659</sup> As ‘paper is our excellent ally,’ the volunteers were to add it under clothing ‘in times of necessity...to cover the chest, the belly, the legs, or feet.’<sup>660</sup> This was another, unacknowledged and unexpected benefit of the *Hoja de Campaña* in the field. Such advice must have seemed somewhat moot to a volunteer ordered to sentry duty in sub-zero temperatures, but was given in response to men dying of exposure or losing appendages from frost bite.

The newspaper also attempted to educate the Spanish volunteer in the use of the German language. A sporadic column by ‘El Profesor Anton’ was created to help facilitate this. Column topics included what would have been regularly heard German words amongst the *divisionarios* such as ‘*Verboten*’ and ‘*Luftwaffe*’ but also dealt with ‘*palabras de costumbre*’, or ‘vernacular words’, which helped identify various ranks within the German Army.<sup>661</sup> To help the less literate and to give a visual demonstration, the German ranks were accompanied by drawings of uniform collars and shoulder tabs. However, the use of drawings and illustrations was not limited to this purpose of helping to educate the Spanish volunteers.

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<sup>654</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 4 Nov 1942 p.6.

<sup>655</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>656</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 3 Feb 1943 p.3.

<sup>657</sup> J.M. Sanchez Diana, *Cabeza de puente*, p.104.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>659</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 25 Nov 1942.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>661</sup> For an example of ‘El Profesor Anton’ see, *Hoja de Campaña*, 23 Sept 1941 p.3.

The *Hoja de Campaña* also made use of drawings and illustrations to help in furthering the combat training. One stunning example is a full-paged article entitled ‘El hombre contra el tanque’, or ‘The man against the tank’ that attempted to persuade the individual soldier of the relative ‘ease’ of combating armour.<sup>662</sup> According to the article, the infantryman’s best weapon was to use of ‘serenity and decision’ before the tank attacked.<sup>663</sup> By remaining within his foxhole or trench, the soldier could disable a tank after it had bypassed his position, a tactic vividly displayed in the illustrations. Similarly, there was another article on sapper Antonio Ponte Anido’s fight against a tank that cost him his life but won him the Cruz Laureada de San Fernando, the Spanish Army’s highest military decoration.<sup>664</sup> According to the article ‘*En lucha contra el monstruo*’ (‘The fight against the monster’), the ‘best machine, in war and peace, is always the heart.’<sup>665</sup> The newspaper piece asserted that a machine is only as good as the man driving it: if a soldier was calm, decisive, and brave enough, he could knock out a T-34 tank on his own. Largely owing to the lack of sufficient anti-tank power within the Blue Division and its sector, so profoundly demonstrated at Krasny Bor, and since the *panzerfaust* was not available to German infantry at the time of the article, such an premise, although ludicrous, was of paramount importance in building troop morale against the prospect of armoured attacks.<sup>666</sup>

The *Hoja de Campaña* did not limit its articles to combat training, but also focused on fieldcraft issues. One such example was an article that demonstrated the use of *la lona*, or *Zeltbahn*, in the field as a tent. The *Zeltbahn* was an essential piece of the German field kit as it was used dually as a rain poncho or as camouflage cover, but could also be combined with four other sections to create a four-man tent. This article showed volunteers its best usage in protection ‘against wind’ and rain during the mud (*el barro*) of the *rasputiska*.<sup>667</sup> Beyond its function as both an informative and educative tool, the *Hoja de Campaña* was also used subtly in an attempt to shape the opinions of the Spanish volunteers in the ideological struggle on the Eastern Front.

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<sup>662</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 9 Oct 1943, p.5.

<sup>663</sup> Ibid.

<sup>664</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 19 June 1943, p.1.

<sup>665</sup> Ibid.

<sup>666</sup> For deficiencies in Spanish anti-tank capabilities, see C. Caballero Jurado, *Morir en Rusia*, pp.25-8.

<sup>667</sup> Standard issue of the German Army, the *Zeltbahn* was a camouflaged, water repellent gabardine tent quarter to be used ‘contra el viento y flotador’. See *Hoja de Campaña*, 24 Oct 1943, p.4.



## Indoctrinating

Historian Omer Bartov argues that newspapers were a more direct and, possibly, a more influential means of indoctrination of German troops serving in Russia than other mediums used by German authorities.<sup>668</sup> As with most periodicals of the time, military newspapers not only informed the reader, but also helped shape the political and social opinions of their audience. Certainly, as shall be discussed, the *Hoja de Campaña* was no exception, though it may be argued that the newspaper had the luxury of having a particularly receptive audience, especially amongst the Falange volunteers within the DEV. Aside from informing, the paper also strove to educate, politicise, and to a certain extent indoctrinate the average Spanish volunteer through its content. This content was greatly influenced by the division's German handlers.

The *Hoja de Campaña* was completely anti-Communist and went to great lengths to provide examples of the ills of the 'workers' paradise' of the Soviet Union. The *Hoja de Campaña* was rife with articles and pictures portraying Stalin and his cronies as evil incarnate. One early article, entitled 'The reason for our presence', was based on a speech Serrano Suñer gave before the Spanish press on the eighth anniversary of the founding of the Falange party.<sup>669</sup> In it, Serrano Suñer was quoted as having stated, 'we hate communists as Spaniards, as men, and as Europeans.'<sup>670</sup> The article also blamed, as Suñer had done before in public speeches, the Soviet Union for the Civil War in Spain, concentrating on the sending of the International Brigades and the attempt to separate Spain from its 'civilization, culture, and religion' by breaking it 'apart and then [putting it back] together as Soviet republics.'<sup>671</sup> Another article stated that Spaniards did not see their presence in Russia as 'a romantic effort' but rather as a 'matter of conscientious effort' that saw themselves equally as soldiers of Hitler and Franco.<sup>672</sup>

The *Hoja de Campaña* attempted to paint as bleak a picture as possible of the Soviet Union, although the men were there seeing Russia themselves. Articles attempted to focus on the nature of the Russian population and difficulties it encountered with communism. For example, in 'Hunger in Russia' infant mortality and deaths due to hunger were portrayed as the leading causes of mortality in Russia,

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<sup>668</sup> O. Bartov, *The Eastern Front, 1941-5*, p.79.

<sup>669</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 11 Nov 1941, p.1.

<sup>670</sup> Underlined emphasis per original, see *Hoja de Campaña*, 11 Nov 1941, p.1.

<sup>671</sup> Ibid.

<sup>672</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 18 Jan 1942, p.1.

at a time when, allegedly, ‘the communist party ha[d] reserved special rations’ for themselves.<sup>673</sup> Another cartoon entitled ‘Hunger in the Soviet Zone’ painted a grievous picture of the expense of foodstuffs such as meat, milk, and bread was in Russia.<sup>674</sup> Despite this claim by the *Hoja de Campaña*, Spain itself was experiencing food shortages. This notion, however, was not a presentable concept to display to the men of the Blue Division when the message was to attack the Soviet ideology. Similarly, another article titled, “How many communists are there in Russia?” claimed that only ‘two per thousand’ of population were really communist.<sup>675</sup> These various claims may have seemed somewhat contradictory to the average Spanish volunteer who had initially enlisted to fight communism. It may suggest that the *Hoja de Campaña*’s editors recognised that the average Spanish volunteer, having encountered the local population, very much identified with the Russian peasants, and only the political system these peasants found themselves ‘oppressed’ under was leading to the ruination of Russia.

In the last issue before becoming the newspaper of the Blue Legion, published as the division was nearing its complete repatriation to Spain in December 1943, there was a full page of political illustrations accompanying an article promoting fear of a Soviet occupation of Europe. Warning ‘Europe for the Bolsheviks!’ and ‘Terror! Death! Violence! Hate! Blood!’ if the Russians were allowed to take over Europe, the article vowed to continue ‘the fight against communism!’ This article promoted the idea that the struggle could not end despite the return of the DEV to Spain. This assertion was essential as the volunteer numbers fell from divisional to regimental size, or, in other words, from 14,000 to 1,500 men. Those men that had agreed to remain members of the Blue Legion were very amenable to the message as legion mostly contained hard-line anti-Communist Blue Division veterans, many with a political inclination towards Nazi dogma. With this ideological proclivity favourable to the Hitler regime amongst the remaining *legionarios*, the future publications of the newspaper made the *Hoja de Campaña*’s work easier.

The defence of religion, especially the Catholic faith, was an essential part of the *Hoja de Campaña*’s mission, and there was no greater enemy to religion than atheist Soviet Union. To demonstrate the newspapers assertion against the Soviet

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<sup>673</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 10 Oct 1942, p.3.

<sup>674</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 26 Sept 1943, p.5.

<sup>675</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 9 Oct 1943, p.8.

system, one cartoon depicted Stalin ‘protecting’ religion while having actually destroyed 80,000 churches and killed 250,000 people.<sup>676</sup> The *Hoja de Campaña* also published an article entitled ‘Soviet Cynicism’, which claimed Stalin had performed a ‘sacrilegious farce’ when the Archbishop of York had invited a youth commission of the Communist Party to a church service while he visited Moscow.<sup>677</sup> The Soviets were not the only targets of religious criticism. The *Hoja de Campaña* was also critical of the indiscriminate bombing of the Vatican and Rome by Anglo-American air forces in October 1943, denouncing it as an attack on Catholicism.<sup>678</sup> The Allies had indeed bombed Rome on 29 July 1943, with minimal damage and avoiding the city centre, to push for Italy’s surrender following the fall of Mussolini’s Fascist regime on 25 July<sup>679</sup>. In fact, though, both the Allies and the Germans did their best in avoiding fighting in Rome because of its historic nature.<sup>680</sup>

The *Hoja de Campaña* was also eager to attack the Soviet Union’s ally Great Britain. With a subject that resonates even today, the single greatest bone of contention was the disputed control over Gibraltar.<sup>681</sup> Soldiers were inundated with flash headlines of ‘¡Gibraltar Ya!’ on various occasions in printings of the *Hoja de Campaña*. The newspaper was quick to report when the British and American met to discuss possible usage of Gibraltar as a jumping point for actions in Europe or when the British began to fortify the base facilities there.<sup>682</sup> Both of these actions, in the minds of the Franco regime, indirectly constituted a threat to Spain. The *Hoja de Campaña* told the *divisionarios*, who believed they were fighting for a ‘fairer Europe’, that Gibraltar would be inevitably returned to Spain because ‘justice demands the return of what is ours. Gibraltar!’<sup>683</sup> In another display of disgust with the British occupation of the disputed territory, a cartoon showed a Spanish soldier kicking

<sup>676</sup> *Hoja de Campaña* 10 Oct 1943, p.4.

<sup>677</sup> *Hoja de Campaña* 9 Oct 1943, p.1.

<sup>678</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 14 Nov 1942, p.4. *Hoja de Campaña*, 21 Nov 1942, p.2.

<sup>679</sup> B.H. Liddell Hart, *History of the Second World War* (New York, 1980), pp.444-5, 450-1.

<sup>680</sup> A German Army recorder of Hitler’s military meetings, Hans Jonuschat, in an interview with the Dauchau prosecutor Horace R. Hansen following the war, stated that Hitler had intended to keep Rome free from destruction of the war and had ordered Field Marshal Albert von Kesselring to withdraw German troops with the approach of Allied forces in June 1944. Horace R. Hansen, *Witness to barbarism* (Grey Eagle, MN 2002), p.277.

<sup>681</sup> The controversy over Gibraltar continued beyond the Second World War with Franco closing the border in 1969 (it did not fully reopen until 1985). Although Spain still asserts its claim to this small territory, Great Britain has maintained that Gibraltar (and its 30,000 inhabitants) must decide for itself its political destiny in the near future. *New York Times*, 18 August 2004.

<sup>682</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 7 Nov 1941, p.1. *Hoja de Campaña*, 13 Dec 1941, p.1.

<sup>683</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 18 Jan 1941, p.1.

British soldiers off Gibraltar under the slogan, 'The national business is not finished!'<sup>684</sup>

Besides criticism of the British control of Gibraltar, the *Hoja de Campaña* also portrayed Churchill and his government as bedfellows of the Soviet Union. In one example, a cartoon depicted Churchill selling his soul to the devil, the consequences of such an action being the creation of a Communist Europe.<sup>685</sup> The *Hoja de Campaña* also enjoyed announcing British setbacks or defeats, such as the sinking of the H.M.S. *Ark Royal* in the Eastern Mediterranean in November 1941.<sup>686</sup> Possibly in response to misunderstandings among the troops as to the exact relationship between Great Britain and the Soviet Union, another boxed headline in July 1942 noted:

'England is an ally of Russia. Those that want England to triumph also work for the victory of Russia and are therefore enemies of Spain...Spaniards are decidedly against Russia and its allies. Our political and historic reasons coincide with the reasons for war maintained by the German people. The Blood of the Condor Legion in the skies of Spain and the Blue Division in the lands of Russia have tightened Spanish and German youths in an embrace stronger than treaties.'<sup>687</sup>

This statement identified both powers as national enemies of Spain, but also indirectly included the United States who had supplied Great Britain and the Soviet Union through Lend-Lease. This statement also attempted to intertwine the youths of both Germany and Spain in their idealist defence of Europe against its perceived enemies.

The international political element is relevant from the very first issue of the *Hoja de Campaña*, which attacked the motives of a then neutral United States. The newspaper asserted that that the recent U-boat attacks on the US vessels *Green* and *Curney* had occurred only because both ships were part of a British convoy and further asserted that such incidents would incite American pacifist opinion.<sup>688</sup> Prior to United States' entry into the war, the *Hoja de Campaña* reprinted excerpts from an article in the *New York Herald* that stated that the United States could not afford to send any force larger than an expeditionary force outside of the North American continent.<sup>689</sup> President Roosevelt was also despairingly called a 'mason' following a speech he had delivered regarding South America that the *Hoja de Campaña* deemed

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<sup>684</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 1 July 1942, p.1.

<sup>685</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 16 Feb 1942, p.1.

<sup>686</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 17 Nov 1941, p.1.

<sup>687</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 7 July 1942, p.2.

<sup>688</sup> *Hoja de Campaña* 4 Nov 1941, p.1.

<sup>689</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 11 Nov 1941, p.1.

was contrary to the spirit of '*la Hispanidad*', or 'Spanishness.'<sup>690</sup> In the 13 December edition, the *Hoja de Campaña* was as equally quick to blame the United States for what the newspaper deemed as that government's role in starting a global war after the Japanese bombing at Pearl Harbor. With another world war, the *Hoja de Campaña* proclaimed, Roosevelt could be 'satisfied' that the 'entire planet was a battlefield' and, therefore, 'the United States wanted war... Well now they have it.'<sup>691</sup> These articles were also accompanied by a cartoon of a black-eyed Roosevelt slumped in the corner of a boxing ring with the slogan, '¡¡Primer "round"!!' ('First round!!')<sup>692</sup>

The *Hoja de Campaña* continued the attack on the United States in articles claiming that it had 'robbed' the Philippines from Spain in 1898 following the Spanish-American War.<sup>693</sup> Furthermore, the *Hoja de Campaña* defended Japan by stating that it had acted in order to give freedom to others' colonies. While 'Japan is a race of Heroes', the 'United States are a people of merchants' who were exploiting the Philippines.<sup>694</sup> But the article wondered what was Spain's role in relation to the Japanese actions in the Philippines? This an interesting viewpoint as, according to one-time Falange Secretary-General José Luis Arrese, Spain had considered sending a volunteer division to the Philippines in response to the pagan, Shintoist aggression of Japan there.<sup>695</sup> The sending of another 'volunteer' force to counter Japanese aggression in Asia was highly improbable, not to mention unrealistic, and was never mentioned publicly; it was certainly never published in any issues of the *Hoja de Campaña*.

The *Hoja de Campaña*, as expected, continually played up the importance of the relationship between Spain and Germany. Discussion of this 'bond' was the life's blood in keeping troops motivated so far from Spain. Both nations were routinely depicted as 'brothers' or 'comrades' in the fight against communism in the East. This being the case, the awarding and receiving of German medals was especially important and symbolic of this relationship. While the *Winterschlact im Osten* award, or commonly known as the 'Frozen Meat' medal, from the first, brutal Russian winter was the symbol of a true *gurípa* veteran, nothing was more coveted by Spanish volunteers than the Iron Cross. Cognizant of this fact, the *Hoja de Campaña*

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<sup>690</sup> Ibid.

<sup>691</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 13 Dec 1941, p.1.

<sup>692</sup> Ibid.

<sup>693</sup> *Hoja de Campaña* 10 Feb 1942, p.2.

<sup>694</sup> Ibid.

<sup>695</sup> S. Payne, *Falange*, p.239

published an article entitled 'German crosses over Spanish chests.'<sup>696</sup> The article cited 'thousands' of Spaniards who had received the medal but also discussed its origins and history.<sup>697</sup> Overall, the Blue Division garnered two Knight's Crosses (one with oak leaves), two German Gold Crosses, 135 Iron Crosses 1<sup>st</sup> Class, 2362 Iron Crosses 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, 16 German Military Merit Crosses with Swords 1<sup>st</sup> Class and 2200 2<sup>nd</sup> Class.<sup>698</sup> A later medal, one created by Hitler specifically for the Blue Division was the *Medalla del Este*, or Eastern Campaign Medal, which was the 'symbol of the brotherhood of Spain and Germany in the fight against Bolshevism.'<sup>699</sup> Issued in January 1944, this commemorative medal had engraved on it '*Erinnerungsmedaille für die Spanischen Freiwilligen in Kampf gegen Bolschewismus*' (Commemorative Medal for the Spanish Volunteers in the Struggle against Bolshevism) and was unique to other non-German volunteer formations.<sup>700</sup>

As a part of indoctrination, the *Hoja de Campaña* strove to bolster and promote the Blue Division's position in the German war effort in the East. The divisional newspaper continually praised the accomplishments of both German and Spanish deeds at the front. The *Hoja de Campaña* also hoped to intertwine Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union to the doctrines of the Franco regime. In one such article entitled 'Spain against Communism', 'The Patria reaffirm[ed] its anti-Soviet position' by sending the 'Spanish Blue Division' as its 'first vanguard' in the invasion of the USSR.<sup>701</sup> Furthermore, while celebrating the 'Historic Victory of Franco', the Caudillo had said, "I urge the battle against communism, the first enemy of the grand dream."<sup>702</sup> In another reprint of excerpts from a Franco speech, the generalissimo had announced that, "Our best [the DEV] continue the fight in Russian territory that began in Spain."<sup>703</sup> These statements from Spain's leader greatly enhanced the role of the Blue Division on the Eastern Front in the eyes of its men.

German defeats like Stalingrad and Kursk did not deter the message of unity between the two countries. Certainly, the *Hoja de Campaña* could not contain

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<sup>696</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 26 Sept 1943, p.8.

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>698</sup> C. Ibáñez Cagna, *Banderas Españolas contra el comunismo: Las enseñas de los voluntarios en el Frente del Este (1941-44)* (Madrid, 2000), p.17.

<sup>699</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 29 Aug 1943, p.8.

<sup>700</sup> C. Ibáñez Cagna, *Banderas Españolas contra el comunismo*, p.17.

<sup>701</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 19 June 1943, p.1.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> Reprint from an *Arriba* article on a speech Franco gave in Seville. *Hoja de Campaña*, 16 Feb 1942, p.2.

defeatist messages within its content, but it went to the extent of not discussing Stalingrad and playing up Kursk (identified by the newspaper as the Belgorod and Orel sector) as a success.<sup>704</sup> Despite the difficulties for the Axis during the second Russian winter (including the capture of Stalingrad), the *Hoja de Campaña* boasted that Colonel General Lindemann had considered Army Group North had experienced ‘a defensive success.’<sup>705</sup> The 11 July 1943 issue of the *Hoja de Campaña* claimed the successful destruction at Kursk of 1,227 Soviet tanks and 1,100 airplanes, as well as the introduction of a new German tank-busting plane with special bombs.<sup>706</sup> The *Hoja de Campaña* finally claimed a total of nearly 3,700 Soviet tanks lost at Kursk, although only an estimated 3,300 were actually at Kursk.<sup>707</sup> It suffices to say the *Hoja de Campaña* was favourable to the German war effort regardless of its setbacks or difficulties.

The political element aside, the *Hoja de Campaña* became more anti-Semitic in tone later in publication, particularly towards the end of the division’s existence in Russia. This was especially noticeable after the German defeats at Stalingrad and Kursk. Anti-Semitism was not an unheard of concept in Franco’s Spain, as the Caudillo had spoken of ‘the Jewish spirit which permitted the alliance of big capital with Marxism’ following the Spanish Civil War.<sup>708</sup> Unlike Hitler, who was able to blame Jews and Communists for numerous problems in Germany, Franco and the Falange chose to identify Communists and Freemasons as the true enemies of Spain; there was simply little to no Jewish presence within Spain, and whatever anti-Semitism existed was religious, rather than racial, in character.<sup>709</sup> In support of anti-Freemasonry extolled by the Franco government, an article entitled ‘*Nuestra Patria*’ (‘Our Motherland’) in the *Hoja de Campaña* identified Spain as the victim of masons for centuries.<sup>710</sup>

<sup>704</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 11 July 1943, p.1.

<sup>705</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 16 May 1943, p.1.

<sup>706</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 11 July 1943, pp.1-2.

<sup>707</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 18 July 1943, p.8. M. Veranov, *The Third Reich at war* (London, 1997), p.462.

<sup>708</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, p.330.

<sup>709</sup> Hitler was able to equate Communism with a number of problems (real and imaginary), which included Judaism, in Germany prior to the war. For a listing, see R. H. Whealey, *Hitler and Spain*, p.31. Franco continued to blame Masons and Communists for difficulties with Spain’s intended re-assimilation into post-war Europe. See S. Payne, *Franco Regime*, p. 403. The above statement is made on the basis of writings published in F.E. in the days of the Falangist Part, which did not attempt to imitate National Socialist anti-Semitism and appears to not have understood the depths to which the Nazis were willing to go to resolve the ‘Jewish problem’. See S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, p.96.

<sup>710</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 31 Oct 1943, p.3.

One particularly inflammatory *Hoja de Campaña* article, ‘*La guerra presente ante la historia de España*’ (‘The current war before the history of Spain’) by Falangist *camisa vieja* and intellectual Antonio Tovar, attempted to group all of Spain’s alleged enemies.<sup>711</sup> Tovar, a trained philologist and former Falangist press undersecretary, asserted that Spain was fighting against a ‘modern’ world, which is ‘totalitarian,’ ‘practical,’ ‘Calvinist and Puritan,’ ‘Jewish,’ ‘liberal,’ ‘free-tradist,’ ‘Anglo-French, and American.’<sup>712</sup> All these principles and beliefs were founded to the ‘detriment’ of Spain.<sup>713</sup> As press undersecretary during the Falange’s brief but strong influence on Franco’s politics, Tovar had once controlled censorship of all publications within Spain, allowing for the creation of a politically autonomous fascist press friendly to Germany.<sup>714</sup> Tovar believed that only Germany was sustaining the fight that was started previously started in Spain during the Civil War. Tovar believed that if the Allies were not defeated, they would perfect a world system that would lead to Spain’s ‘historic ruin.’<sup>715</sup>

Although directly anti-Semitic articles are nearly absent, the *Hoja de Campaña* instead used garish, dark cartoons to promote such ideas. And although not numerous, these illustrations were especially useful in promoting a simple idea with a sparsely worded picture, more effective than the bombast from an editorial or opinion column. The presence of these cartoons contradict the notion long asserted during – and more importantly, after – the war that the Blue Division was only in Russia to fight Communism and was no way connected to the Nazi regime or its ideology.<sup>716</sup> Therefore, the division’s true nature becomes questionable and open to debate. But was the nature and message of these cartoons found in the divisional newspaper?

The *Hoja de Campaña* attempted to demonstrate that Stalin and his Soviet system were funded and controlled by the Jews. To illustrate this point, for example, one cartoon entitled ‘Stalin and his Shadow’ claimed that ‘Jews rule in Russia’ and showed a profile drawing of a grinning Stalin with a shadow of a bearded, crook-nosed ‘Jew’ with ‘*Judaismo*’ (‘Judaism’) written within the shadow.<sup>717</sup> The cartoon also depicted the symbols of the Star of David, the hammer and sickle, and the dollar

<sup>711</sup> *Hoja de Campaña*, 6 June 1943, p.3.

<sup>712</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>714</sup> S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, p.358. Tovar resigned before the shake-up that ultimately saw Serrano Suñer exit office, see S. Payne, *Fascism in Spain*, p.359.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>716</sup> For examples, see J. Viladot Fargas, *El espíritu de la División Azul*, p.46.

<sup>717</sup> ‘*Los Judios mandan en Rusia*’, see *Hoja de Campaña*, 17 Oct 1943, p.4.



sign within the shadow of the 'Jew.'<sup>718</sup> This cartoon reproduces the basic premise, strongly defended by Nazi rhetoric, that both the Soviet Union, with its Communist Bolshevist system, and international capitalism, with its unofficial headquarters on Wall Street, formed part of a Jewish-run and funded conspiracy to destroy Germany. What makes this cartoon particularly interesting is that it appeared when the division began hearing rumours of its possible return to Spain in October 1943.

With the first edition of the Blue Legion's version of the *Hoja de Campaña* there was a return to anti-Semitic rhetoric within the newspaper. With an article entitled 'Spain Defends Europe against its Three Enemies: Bolshevism, Judaism, and Masonry', another headline blurb identified the perceived dangers to Spain and Europe. Not only were Bolshevism, Judaism, and Free Masonry identified as the enemies of Europe but the headline also asserted that 'Spain knows who the enemies are.'<sup>719</sup> By identifying the 'enemies' of Spain and Europe, a necessary response was needed in defence. As a consequence, the *Hoja de Campaña* also promoted the view of the Legión Azul as a heroic manifestation of this fight or struggle for Western civilization against these three identifiable 'enemies.'

Despite the fairly limited existence of anti-Semitic material in the *Hoja de Campaña*, there is no known evidence to show that the Blue Division was as ideologically penetrated at any given time by National Socialism to the extent of the regular German Army, particularly later in the war.<sup>720</sup> There were no known 'political officers' attached to the division, although there is archival information suggesting that there may have been political discussion segments as part of the Blue Division's training regimen.<sup>721</sup> The exact nature of those discussions, however, is not known. Were there, then anti-Semites in the Blue Division? As has been discussed, the simple answer is 'yes.' Although anti-Semitism was often a prevalent opinion within various parts of Europe (including Spain to a certain extent) at the time of the

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<sup>718</sup> Ibid.

<sup>719</sup> 'De que España sabe cuales son los enemigos', see *Hoja de Campaña*, 15 Dec 1943.

<sup>720</sup> For examples of the penetration of the political ideology of the Nazi Party into the German Army, see O. Bartov, *The Eastern Front*, pp.90 & 96-8 and S.Fritz, *Frontsoldaten*, pp.199-200 & 205-6. The Russians also included 'political classes' during the training of cadet officers before sending them to the front where they included political discussions with their men. E. Bessonov, *Tank rider: Into the Reich with the Red Army* (Mechanicsberg, PA, 2003), p.30.

<sup>721</sup> There is the mention of 'daily theoretic instruction' where officers were to administer discussions to the troops, but it is not known what subjects (other than specific military ones) formed parts of the discussion. See, AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.1, D.3/1 24 July 1942. Usually 'Instrucción teórica' was military-based instruction, such as one on German Army field markings. For an example, AGMAV, C.1987, Cp.16, D.1/51 9 Feb 1943.

Blue Division, there are examples of members of the division clearly demonstrating their dislike for both Jews and, as seen by a select number of *ex-divisionarios*, their alleged influence on the Soviet style of government.<sup>722</sup> The amount and the degree of their indoctrination along the lines of the Nazi Party, however, are also not known.

The *Hoja de Campaña* had gained some small notoriety within the Spanish press. After reading a copy of the divisional weekly, *Arriba* had expressed its admiration for the *Hoja de Campaña* stating embodied ‘the high spirit of the heroes fighting against communism.’ The Spanish daily *Informaciones* also described the relationship between the volunteers of the Blue Division and its newspaper as being one in which ‘...those valiant comrades that when they have a moment during daily combat to put down the rifle and pick up a pen with the same efficiency and enthusiasm in the defence of Spain and its holy ideals.’<sup>723</sup> Both of these article comments were reprinted in the *Hoja de Campaña* to promote the function of the newspaper to the men with positive reinforcement from ‘credible’ news sources from back in Spain. This validity from home also attempted to strengthen the division’s mission on the Eastern Front at a time when it needed it most (June 1943).

The exact relationship between the *Hoja de Campaña* and its readership is difficult to gauge. French historian Antoine Prost has written that a frontline newspaper’s credibility is dependent on it being written by soldiers or those near the front despite the army authorities’ inability to control or censor these newspapers’ content.<sup>724</sup> Prost, however, was speaking of the frontline newspapers written by French troops representing a democratic nation during the Great War. Although the *Hoja de Campaña* was a frontline newspaper written by members of the Blue Division, and although was printed relatively close (especially in its earliest *etapa*) to the front, its subject matter was greatly filtered by divisional authorities (through the Intelligence Section) who were in turn given directives by the Propaganda Section of the German Army. In this way, the German Army ultimately controlled the content

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<sup>722</sup> For some examples of world anti-Semitism prior to the Second World War in places like the Vatican, the United States, Great Britain, and Japan, see P. Brendon, *The dark valley a panorama of the 1930s* (London, 2000), pp.55,172, 469-70,545 & 576. For the Blue Division there are relatively few (see previous chapter); however, see a description of Leningrad as a ‘homage to the Jew Lenin’ in L. Riudavets de Montes, *Estampas de la vieja Rusia* (Madrid, 1960), p.19.

<sup>723</sup> Comments from the *Arriba* and *Informaciones* articles were reprinted in the *Hoja de Campaña*. *Hoja de Campaña*, 6 June 1943, p.2.

<sup>724</sup> For more on ideology in relation to democracy at the front, see A.Prost, *Republican identities in war and peace: Representations of France in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, trans. J. Winter and H. McPhail (Oxford, 2002).

that was permissible to print. Despite this control, the content did reflect subjects, such as Spanish news and sports and divisional information, which were important to volunteers so displaced from Spain. Furthermore, the *Hoja de Campaña* was widely read within the division (illustrated in the numerous quantities its editions were printed in), thereby reinforcing its validity as an important tool of the Blue Division's relationship with its men.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the *Hoja de Campaña* was most definitely an effective propaganda tool. As the newspaper for the Blue Division, the *Hoja de Campaña* played a fundamental role in the life of the Spanish volunteers during their time on the Eastern Front and in the service of the German Army. Unfortunately the *Hoja de Campaña* has not been utilised as a main topic in the study of the Blue Division, which is possibly due to the partisan nature of the newspaper towards Spain's volunteers and Nazi Germany. Although the *Hoja de Campaña* contains prejudicial, non-objective, and biased materials, it still represents a prime resource in the understanding of not only the Spanish volunteers themselves, but also the nature of soldiering in the brutal conflict in Russia. The *Hoja de Campaña* has opened up new avenues to both these topics by giving an insight into the topics, information, and content that the newspaper presented to the men. And as a political, social, and cultural tool, ultimately, the *Hoja de Campaña* served the three functions of informing, educating, and subtly indoctrinating, although not necessarily to the extent of the Wehrmacht, in the dogma of National Socialism. These three aspects blended together created the Spanish volunteers' perceptions and shaped their experiences of why, ultimately, they fought in Russia. These opinions developed on the Eastern Front become extremely important to the Spanish volunteers after their service in the German Army and their repatriation back to Spain, particularly to the prisoners of war that were still detained in the Soviet Union well after the conflict had ended.

## Chapter 4- Propaganda and the Spanish POWs

### Introduction

The extensive fighting on the Eastern Front led to a fairly fluid military situation that ebbed and flowed as either the Germans or the Russians attacked. The exchange of territory inevitably led to the capturing of prisoners of war by both sides. The Germans had been extremely efficient in employing their Blitzkrieg tactics in the initial phases of invasion of the USSR, a fact that led to the capture of nearly four million men by the spring of 1942. For their part, however, the Red Army was also able to begin taking larger and larger quantities of Germans and their allies prisoner with operations like Operation Uranus (encirclement of Stalingrad) and Operation Bagration (the destruction of Army Group Centre), while yielding fewer and fewer prisoners to the Germans by using the immense open spaces of the Soviet Union to conduct fighting withdrawals, thus avoiding the encirclements that devastated its ranks earlier in the war. The Spanish Blue Division had helped to close the 'Volkhov Pocket' in early 1942, an operation that resulted in 66,000 losses (including 32,000 prisoners) to Vlasov's 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army alone, and was thus experienced in the capturing of Soviet soldiers and deserters.<sup>725</sup> But the Soviets also captured hundreds of Spaniards during the course of the war either in combat or, on the rarer occasion, through desertion (both instances involved using POWs for propaganda purposes to get others to desert) before sending them to prisoner-of-war camps located in the desolate expanses of the Soviet Union.

These Spanish prisoners of war, like the majority of their German comrades, were then sent to labour camps or gulags for not only the duration of the war but nearly ten years after the conflict had finally ended. The experiences of former *cautivos* of the Soviet Union are not a new subject to the overall story to the Blue Division. On the contrary, the memoirs of those returning prisoners to Barcelona in April 1954 sparked a public interest in the division that, by then, had been all but forgotten in Spain. These memoirs, mostly published within the first five years of the

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<sup>725</sup> D.M. Glantz, *the battle for Leningrad*, pp207-8. J. Scurr, *Germany's Spanish volunteers*, p.18. For more on General Andrey A. Vlasov (who had been a favourite of Marshal Stalin but hated the Communist system), see S. Steenberg, *Vlasov* (New York, 1970).

POWs' return, were fervently promoted by the Spanish government and subsequently read by Spanish public to not only sympathise with the plight of the hapless prisoner of the Soviet system, but to also assert the evils and dangers of Communism. A better collective form of studies is needed to make sense of the multi-faceted experiences of the Spanish volunteers who endured Soviet captivity, but this is a subject too vast to be covered in this thesis. However, since the Spanish POWs are largely ignored by the current studies of the DEV, this chapter will attempt to relate how they became prisoners of war by discussing the Soviet propaganda that often led disillusioned volunteers to desert and, of course, the largest combat engagement by the DEV, the battle of Krasny Bor, which led to the capture of the majority of Spanish POWs held by the Russians.<sup>726</sup> Another aspect requiring attention is the way these men were treated back in Spain upon their return from captivity in April 1954, when the Franco government determined that their repatriation was, in the context of the Cold War, also a valuable political tool.

### **Enemy Propaganda**

As a symbol of Spanish foreign politics, the Blue Division was, for the greater part of its existence, the darling of the Spanish press. Even when the war turned against Germany, the Blue Division remained a topic in most issues of, at least, the Falangist newspapers such as *Arriba* and *Informaciones*. The foreign press, however, was not as nearly as kind to the division, as could be expected. Largely in order to pressure Spain into withdrawing the unit, there were also governmental propaganda attempts by the Allies to jade the world's opinion of the division. Finally, of course, the Soviet Union also directed extensive propaganda towards the Blue Division to encourage its men to desert.

Both Germans and Soviets used propaganda extensively during the fighting on the Eastern Front.<sup>727</sup> Both sides jockeyed for some psychological advantage by enticing the other's soldiers to cross the battle line. This was achieved through the dropping of leaflets, radio programmes, the blasting of announcements over

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<sup>726</sup> The subject of prisoners is largely ignored in both the works of R. Proctor and G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs. Fernando Vadillo had published a single volume on the experiences of prisoners of war in one of his volumes. See, F. Vadillo, *Los prisioneros*.

<sup>727</sup> For more on the German use of propaganda towards the German public in justifying and promoting the war on the Eastern Front, see M. Balfour, *Propaganda in war, 1939-45: Organisations, policies and publics in Britain and Germany* (London, 1979), pp 224-30, 234-42

loudspeakers, photographs, press, and rumours spread by agents or Russian POWs.<sup>728</sup> The Soviets were particularly interested in reaching German working-class elements, many of whom were former communists.<sup>729</sup> Although not from the working class himself, one former German fighting in the Crimea recalled hearing such a loudspeaker speech in the autumn of 1941:

‘German soldiers and workers, throw off the yokes of your oppressing imperialist and fascist! Come over to us, the farmer and worker’s state. Clean, comfortable beds, beautiful women, good food and sweet wine awaits you! And your lives will be spared!’<sup>730</sup>

One would expect, therefore, that the Blue Division of Spain, a country with its own recent history of social upheaval, culminating in a fratricidal civil war, would be exposed by similar attempts by the Soviets to invite desertion in the ranks. The Germans had suspected, and with good reason, in August 1941, that there were several communists amongst the Spanish and French volunteers who had joined to sabotage operations and supply information to the Soviets.<sup>731</sup> The Germans had suggested that the communists had enlisted in the volunteer formations from Morocco, which should be investigated by Spanish authorities.<sup>732</sup> Wanting to avoid approaching Franco’s government, the German Ambassador in Madrid felt that, since the initial enlistment consisted of primarily regular troops with a prerequisite of ten years of service (which was not in fact true), infiltrators were not likely. If they did succeed in making the ranks, they could then be investigated by German security agencies while training in Grafenwöhr, if necessary.<sup>733</sup> It remains unclear whether the German security services did indeed identify and investigate any suspected communists within the DEV.

Propaganda directed by the Soviets towards their German enemy was not unusual and had been a priority of the Communist International prior to the short-lived pact between Germany and the Soviet Union which terminated with Operation Barbarossa. The Comintern had, until 1939, focused on ‘antifascism’ and the promotion of Soviet-style communism. It had also used propaganda extensively

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<sup>728</sup> For more on Soviet propaganda, see E. Rauss, ‘Russian combat methods of World War II’ in P. Tsouras, ed., *Fighting in Hell: the German ordeal on the Eastern Front* (New York, 1995), pp.122-7.

<sup>729</sup> For attempts by the Nazis to control the German worker, see T. Mason, *Nazisim, Fascism, and the working class* (Cambridge, 1995), pp.231-73.

<sup>730</sup> G.H. Bidermann, *In deadly combat*, p.63.

<sup>731</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234775 20 Aug 1941. *DGFP*, Series D, vol xii, doc. 70, 20 Aug 1941.

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>733</sup> *DGFP*, Series D, vol xii, doc. 70, 21 Aug 1941.

during the civil war in Spain to promote not only communism but also the 'myth of the Republic' being a 'liberal democracy' because of the Popular Front developed to lead it.<sup>734</sup> The Soviet Union's 'counter intervention' in the Spanish Civil War also included the sending of the Spanish Republic's gold for 'safe keeping' in Moscow, the sending of a limited number of military 'specialist' advisors and equipment, and the organisation of foreign communists sent to Spain as part of the International Brigades.<sup>735</sup> Following the eventual defeat of the Spanish Republic, exiled Spanish communists like Dolores Ibárruti ('*La Pasionaria*'), General Juan Modesto, General Enrique Jesús Lister Forján, and Valentín Gómez González ('*El Campesino*') found political asylum in the Soviet Union.<sup>736</sup> With these die-hards in tow, the Soviets readily used exiled Spanish communists writing pamphlets and sending loudspeaker or radio programme messages to the men of the DEV.

After attempts by Spanish Communists to lure new DEV replacement recruits (on their way to train in Germany) into deserting before even reaching the front, the Soviets were quick to exploit opportunities of propaganda aimed specifically at the Blue Division when they had finally arrived to their frontline positions.<sup>737</sup> By early November 1941 the division was reporting that the Russians had installed a loudspeaker ('*un altavoz*') immediately opposite the Spanish positions located at the bridgehead at Possad.<sup>738</sup> This loudspeaker not only announced speeches ('*discursos*') in Spanish but also played Spanish radio music.<sup>739</sup> The exact content of the speeches is not known, but one imagines it was not friendly to the German cause in Russia. Similar to German radio broadcasts aimed towards Russian troops, the Soviets also used radio programmes to attempt to persuade members of the DEV to question why they were fighting on the Eastern Front.

Although not directly from the Soviets, one such programme example was a 'clandestine Spanish radio' that was identified by military authorities before the troops ever reach the frontlines in early September 1941.<sup>740</sup> The radio programme

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<sup>734</sup> S. Payne, *Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union and communism*, p.137.

<sup>735</sup> The Republican gold, which was never returned, was sent in 7,800 boxes to the USSR and was worth \$518 million. R.C. Tucker, *Stalin in power: The revolution from above, 1928-41* (New York, 1990), pp.350-2. D. Glantz and J. House, pp.12-3.

<sup>736</sup> For more on the Spanish Communists in the Soviet Union during the Second World War, see D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin: Spanish Communists in exile, 1939-45* (Oxford, 1993).

<sup>737</sup> The Spanish communist exiles, attempting to prey on the 'conscripts', allegedly then re-clothed and hid the deserter from French and German authorities. D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin*, p.95.

<sup>738</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.7, D1/2 2 Nov 1941.

<sup>739</sup> Ibid.

<sup>740</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.5, D.2/2 1 Sept 1941.

‘with a wave of 33 metres’ and called *España independiente* was actually based in the Pyrenees and ‘dedicated its transmission each night’ to the Blue Division and the Spanish pilots of the *Esquadrilla Azul*.<sup>741</sup> The radio programme claimed that volunteers wanted to return to Spain, while attempting to dissuade other Spaniards from joining. The programme also complained that the number of Germans was increasing in Spain and ‘little by little they were going to control the national life in all its aspect’, making it necessary for Spaniards to ‘boycott Hitlerism.’<sup>742</sup> Although propaganda often included loudspeakers and radio programmes, these lacked the precise language and political message that is usually contained in printed materials. Fortunately, archival evidence provides several samples of Soviet propaganda designed specifically for the Spanish volunteers of the Blue Division that includes several printed examples, such as newspapers and leaflets.

Officially, German soldiers, including the members of the Blue Division, were not allowed to be in possession of Soviet propaganda leaflets. The DEV was directed in late November 1942 by the Military Attaché Section, by order of the German High Command, that ‘*volantes soviéticas*’ were not allowed to be in the hands of the troops nor were any examples to be retained to take home as a curiosity as souvenir ‘for curiosity.’<sup>743</sup> Any copies that were found among the troops were to be seized immediately and destroyed, with a sample given to the Second Section.<sup>744</sup> Inevitably, however, samples must have been read by the troops, contributing to their decision to desert. Luckily, several examples did survive which gives a good indication of the focus of the Soviets in coaxing Spanish volunteers to desert.

The Spanish Blue Division had been given a copy of a Soviet propaganda newspaper printed in German called, *Nachrichten Von Der Front*, in early January 1942.<sup>745</sup> Translated into Spanish as *Noticias del Frente* (News from the Front), this two-page ‘newspaper’ was used by the Intelligence Section of the Blue Division to disseminate the various messages that the Soviets were enclosing in their propaganda newspaper and leaflets. The common German soldier was told that that ‘the German Army is in ruin’ and ‘to read here the truths of the situation at the front.’<sup>746</sup> The

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<sup>741</sup> Underline per original document. Ibid.

<sup>742</sup> Ibid.

<sup>743</sup> AGMAV, C.2006, Cp.7, D.1/22 29 Nov 1942.

<sup>744</sup> Ibid.

<sup>745</sup> For the German copy, see AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.3/1-2 January 1942. For the Spanish translation, see AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.3/3-4 January 1942.

<sup>746</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.12, D.3/3 January 1942.



newspaper also stated, quoting from a Swedish newspaper article, that German troops were not allowed to send mail home to their families because there was a fear that information about the difficulties and losses of the German Army on the Eastern Front would be passed on to the Home Front.<sup>747</sup>

One Spanish-specific example of a Soviet attempt at getting men to desert was the newspaper *La Verdad* ('*The Truth*') which attempted to feed stories to the Spanish soldiers regarding the demise of the German war effort and the benefits of deserting to the Communist side. Written in Spanish and presumably published and edited by Spanish Communists, *La Verdad*, in January 1942, extolled the virtues of the Red Army in the face of Fascist aggression and announced that 'Hitler has lost the battle for Moscow.'<sup>748</sup> The newspaper also mentioned the surrounding of Possad on 6 December that led to the 'arrival of fugitives to our lines' on 8 December, and further claimed that the Soviets had twenty-four cannons, twenty mortars, and 5,000 other weapons including rifles and machine guns trained on the DEV.<sup>749</sup> *La Verdad* also reported that the Red Army now held the dead bodies of Spaniards from the Vierna and Esparza Regiments and that, in order to avoid a similar fate, 'he who does not want to die should pass over to the side of the Red Army.'<sup>750</sup>

The Soviets produced *La Verdad* also used captured POWs to help further their aims in getting other Spaniards to desert the Blue Division. By enclosing a letter 'voluntarily' written (with a handwritten and more legible typed versions) from several Spanish prisoners of war, the Soviets hoped to play on the sensibilities of their comrades in the DEV by written in the familiar '*vosotros*' form.<sup>751</sup> The letter talked of the good treatment the POWs were receiving from the Russians, who were providing 'food and cutting our hair and shaving us and they gave us a bath with hot water.'<sup>752</sup> Allegedly receiving three meals a day ('We eat more and better than when we were with the Division'), the letter asked that their comrades should not only desert<sup>753</sup> but also inform the POWs' families back in Spain 'not to worry about us, that we are well,

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<sup>747</sup> Ibid.

<sup>748</sup> AGMA, C.2005, Cp.12, D.3/5-6, *La Verdad*, Jan 1942, p.1

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

<sup>750</sup> Ibid.

<sup>751</sup> AGMA, C.2005, Cp.12, D.3/6, *La Verdad*, Jan 1942, p.2. '*Vosotros*', or informal plural form of 'You', was used contrary to the formal '*Ustedes*' form which is normally appropriate in correspondence except among very good friends seen as equals.

<sup>752</sup> Ibid.

<sup>753</sup> Ibid.

better than in the Division.’<sup>754</sup> Ten or so former Spanish volunteers of the Blue Division who now found themselves in Soviet captivity signed the letter, which was also reprinted in *La Verdad*.<sup>755</sup>

Also reprinted in *La Verdad* was another letter from a captured and wounded volunteer, Rafael Navarro Muñoz, of the Pimentel Regiment, to ‘Friends and Comrades of the Blue Division.’<sup>756</sup> Captured while on patrol, Navarro Muñoz blamed ‘the criminal propaganda of the Falangists’ for distorting the ‘red soldiers’ as being ‘worse than Moors that torture and kill prisoners’ after he found himself ‘wounded in [a fire] fight and left defenceless to the mercy of the red soldiers.’<sup>757</sup> Previously gripped with terror and ‘looking at his mother’s face in far away Salamanca’ on his impending death, Navarro Muñoz found the Soviets treated him ‘with care and solicitude’ in treating his wounds.<sup>758</sup> The letter also included a photograph of a head-banded soldier attended to by a male doctor and a female nurse printed in *La Verdad*. Writing ‘voluntarily’ and in the familiar ‘*vosotros*’ form, Navarro Muñoz asserted, ‘all that the officers told us about [Soviet] maltreatment are venomous lies’, adding ‘don’t shoot red soldiers’ and ‘pass over to their lines.’<sup>759</sup> For his part, Navarro Muñoz did not live to see Spain again as he died in Soviet captivity.<sup>760</sup> His death unbeknownst to his comrades, however, these letters found in the newspaper *La Verdad* were an affective way for the Soviets to persuade volunteers of the Blue Division to question the reasons they had really gone to fight in Russia and entice some to desert as a way to escape the turmoil of the Eastern Front. *La Verdad* was not the only propaganda method used by the Soviets, which also included leaflets.

The divisional archive in Ávila contains numerous examples of leaflets, usually dropped by airplane or shot in canisters by the Soviets, directed and written especially for the volunteers of the Blue Division. The Soviets also used balloons to drop propaganda leaflets for the Spanish volunteers. The Second Section, which had found some balloons near the divisional headquarters, had warned not to use cigarettes to pop the balloons as they were filled with hydrogen gas and would

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<sup>754</sup> Ibid.

<sup>755</sup> Ibid.

<sup>756</sup> Ibid.

<sup>757</sup> Ibid.

<sup>758</sup> Ibid.

<sup>759</sup> Ibid.

<sup>760</sup> See the list of ‘Fallen in the Soviet concentration camps or assassinated after falling prisoner’ in A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin*, pp.307-10.

explode.<sup>761</sup> Despite such an unexpected danger, these leaflets naturally tried to play again on the volunteers' sensibilities in relation to the predicament they found themselves in serving in Hitler's Army.

One of the earliest examples of such a leaflet is one called 'Letter from the Spanish Prisoners', again allegedly written by captured comrades on 11 November 1941.<sup>762</sup> Addressed to 'The soldiers of the Blue Division, brothers, friends, and comrades' in 'a fraternal greeting', the Spanish POWs asked their comrades to desert to the 'red zone.'<sup>763</sup> The leaflet attempted to convey the care provided by the Soviets to the captured soldiers, including two men, Luis Arija Raba and José Carrion Herrero, who were being 'caringly attended and cared for' in a Russian hospital.<sup>764</sup>

The 'letter' asked that the volunteers 'listen to the truth from our lips that we say without any pressure, voluntarily' about the 'the false propaganda regarding the ferocity of the Russians and the weakness of their army.'<sup>765</sup> According to the leaflet, the only 'salvation' for the remaining volunteers was to desert to their comrades already being held by the Soviets to avoid certain death caused by the Blue Division's 'entrapment' on in Russia.<sup>766</sup> The leaflet also alluded to the horrendous 'Russian winter...above like a terrible menace' that caused 'numerous cases of comrades that have lost their feet from the ice' due to the being 'almost shoeless and naked' because of the 'scarce clothes' provided by the Germans.<sup>767</sup> The leaflet further asked that the volunteers of the Blue Division 'pass over without fear to the side of the Red Army' and 'not shoot at Russian soldiers'; it concluded, 'long live peace and friendship between the peoples of Spain and the Soviet Union' and 'down with Hitler.'<sup>768</sup> The 'letter' was finally 'signed' by the eight captured members of the Blue Division. Of these eight, only two are known to have returned from the prisons of the Soviet Union following the war.<sup>769</sup> The two wounded POWs (Arija Raba and Carrion Herrero) who were 'caringly' helped by the Soviets eventually died in captivity.

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<sup>761</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.18, D.5/5 26 June 1942. The Second Section recommended that the balloons be cut open to allow the gas to escape. Ibid.

<sup>762</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.7, D.4/1 November 1941

<sup>763</sup> Ibid.

<sup>764</sup> Ibid.

<sup>765</sup> Ibid.

<sup>766</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.7, D.4/1-2 November 1941.

<sup>767</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.7, D.4/2 November 1941.

<sup>768</sup> Ibid.

<sup>769</sup> Of the eight POWs, José Maria Gonzalez and Mariano de la Torre Majolero were returned aboard the *Semiramis* in April 1954. Four others including José Carrion Herrero and Luis Arija Raba are known to have died in Russian concentration camps following the war. The other two, Emilio

Another leaflet played on the question of why the Spaniards found themselves fighting in Russia. ‘From the hot lands of Spain’, the leaflet admonished, ‘you have been tricked into being on the cold steppes of Russia. For what? Why have you left your homes, your families, your Motherland?’<sup>770</sup> The leaflet stated that the volunteers found themselves in Russia ‘to serve an alien cause’ and they were ‘going to support an abdominal crime of all human’ by remaining there.<sup>771</sup> The leaflet also asserted that ‘Spain was being converted into a country of slaves’, but the men of the Blue Division would not fight for the enslavement of a Spain ‘proud of its traditions to fight for Independence’ and one that would not let ‘its sons fight for the plans of a furious and crazed despot.’<sup>772</sup> Furthermore, the leaflet claimed, ‘Hitler treats you like colonial troops.’<sup>773</sup> The leaflet went on to discuss ‘the terrible Russian cold’ that the men were experiencing. The Soviets asserted that ‘we are not your enemy’ and that ‘we fight today for our Motherland, for our independence.’<sup>774</sup> The Soviets also attempted to relate Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union to Napoleon’s invasion of Imperial Russia in the hope that the Spaniards of the Blue Division might relate current events to their own sense of history and Spain’s *Guerra de la Independencia* (War of Independence-following Napoleon’s invasion in 1808).<sup>775</sup> Together, the leaflet expounded, their ancestors had brought about the first defeats of Napoleon and therefore, the men of the Blue Division should not ‘serve the enemy of all peoples [Germany]’; the ‘noble people of Spain’ should therefore ‘pass over to our side individually, in groups, in companies, and in battalions’ because ‘hundreds of your companions have [already] passed over to the Red Army.’<sup>776</sup> The leaflet contained a ‘*Salvoconducto*’, or ‘Safe Passage’ slip printed in Russian and Spanish at the bottom that was to be given to the capturing Soviet soldiers who were to pass them on to the command of the Red Army who had ‘assured’ the POW’s life, ‘good treatment’, and ‘the immediate return, at the

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Rodríguez and Antonio Pelayo Blanco are unknown as they are not listed amongst those returned aboard the *Semíramis* or the known dead from Soviet gulags. See, A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin*, pp.301-6, 307-10.

<sup>770</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/7 Undated.

<sup>771</sup> Ibid.

<sup>772</sup> Ibid.

<sup>773</sup> Ibid.

<sup>774</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/7-8 Undated.

<sup>775</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/8 Undated. The Spanish War of Independence (1808-14) is known as the Peninsular War in English history. For more an overview of the war that included civilian uprisings, French repression and eventual guerrilla warfare see, A. Bahamonde and J.A. Martínez, *Historia de España Siglo xix* (Madrid, 1994), pp 24-49. For an in depth look at Spain’s involvement, see J.A. Armillas, ed., *la Guerra de la Independencia (Estudios I y II)* (Saragossa, 2001) and C.J. Esdaile, *the Spanish army in the Peninsular War* (New York, 1988).

<sup>776</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/8 Undated.

end of the war, to [his] country.’<sup>777</sup> Despite such assurances, few Spanish prisoners of war were returned to Spain immediately. The leaflet also asked the volunteer to ‘Read it and pass it to your companion!’<sup>778</sup>

Leaflets were also used to reprint letters allegedly written by Spanish prisoners of war to their ‘comrades and companions’ in the Blue Division.<sup>779</sup> One example of this type of leaflet is the one sent by Hernan Gurgui of the 6<sup>th</sup> Company, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Vierna (263) Regiment, who had deserted to the Soviets on 10 February 1942.<sup>780</sup> He told his comrades that he was ‘perfectly well and at the same time to invite you all’ to desert to the Red Army where ‘you will be well received’, washed ‘like it is due to you’, ‘will not go cold, eat abundantly, those that are sick can be cured,’ and ‘change clothes.’<sup>781</sup> Gurgui also complained of the maltreatment of Spanish officers towards the men; this, combined with the adverse conditions in Russia, should have caused the volunteers to recognise that they were ‘morally and physically exhausted’ and could escape their ‘captivity’ on the Eastern Front, since the relief they had been promised would never come.<sup>782</sup> To escape this fate, the volunteers of the Blue Division could desert to the Red Army where they would be fed ‘bread each day: 500 grams. Breakfast: coffee with milk and sugar, 50 grams chocolate. Lunch: Soup (a pot) and a stew with meat, potatoes, rice, etc., tea. The abundant Dinner: A can of conserves, coffee with sugar, 25 grams of tobacco and 200 of vodka.’<sup>783</sup> This leaflet also contained a ‘*boleto*’ or ticket, printed in Spanish and Russian, that was to allow safe passage to the Soviet lines.<sup>784</sup>

Another leaflet also expounded the maltreatment of the men at the hands of their officers. Entitled ‘Protest against Punishment and Maltreatment!’ the leaflet mentioned the ‘incapable command’ of the Blue Division, which inflicted ‘brutal treatment and monstrous punishments’ on the men.<sup>785</sup> These punishments, according to the leaflet, included one visited upon a Spanish soldier of the 5<sup>th</sup> Company of the Pimental (262) Regiment, who had allegedly served guard duty at a listening post in his underwear, and that inflicted on two others in the 4<sup>th</sup> Company of the 269

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<sup>777</sup> Ibid.

<sup>778</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/7 Undated.

<sup>779</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/9 20 Feb 1942.

<sup>780</sup> Ibid.

<sup>781</sup> Ibid.

<sup>782</sup> Ibid.

<sup>783</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/10 20 Feb 1942.

<sup>784</sup> Ibid.

<sup>785</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/11 17 Undated.

Regiment, who had died after being ordered to serve guard duty naked in sub-freezing, temperatures as a result of unknown transgressions.<sup>786</sup> According to the Soviet flyer, it was purportedly better 'to pass over to the Russian lines' than to suffer punishments like two soldiers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the Pimentel Regiment who were allegedly shot in front of the entire battalion, or the shooting of a soldier, called Arochalde, of the 9<sup>th</sup> Company of the 262 Regiment who was shot for self mutilation.<sup>787</sup> The leaflet mentions several other shootings of Spanish volunteers, including those of members of several companies of the Vierna (269) Regiment for attempted desertion and self-mutilation.<sup>788</sup>

This leaflet also mentioned the failure of the Blue Division to be relieved from the line, as many had hoped, which, when mixed with 'hopelessness of the hunger, the cold and the bad treatment', led many soldiers to attempt to hurt themselves in order to be sent to the hospital and eventually home to Spain.<sup>789</sup> These men, however, would not be allowed to go home, the leaflet declared, because medical authorities would only send back the gravely ill and wounded cases for treatment. The men allegedly not allowed to return to the rear for treatment included 'soldier Prieto' of the 6<sup>th</sup> Company of the Vierna Regiment, who was 'obliged to remain at his post' for more than ten hours 'without blanket nor cape.'<sup>790</sup> Prieto was finally relieved from his post only after receiving a 'Grade 3' frostbite that caused swollen hands and feet for the next month and a half, being left gravely ill but never being evacuated from the front.<sup>791</sup> In order not to 'close all the doors of life' and avoid 'the insults, rudeness and support the sticks of sergeants and officers', the men had only to pass over to the Russian lines 'like many of your companions have... saving their lives far from the front, in warm rooms, eating and smoking, living completely free.'<sup>792</sup>

Another leaflet also attempted to question Franco's loyalty to the men of the Blue Division during the most important holiday time that Christian fighting men can experience away from their homes: *La Navidad* or Christmas. Another undated leaflet aimed at the DEV wanted to know, '**What happened with the *aguinaldo*?**' that had been donated by Franco to the Blue Division during the first winter in

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<sup>786</sup> Ibid.

<sup>787</sup> Ibid.

<sup>788</sup> Ibid.

<sup>789</sup> Ibid.

<sup>790</sup> Ibid.

<sup>791</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/11-12 Undated.

<sup>792</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/12 Undated.

Russia.<sup>793</sup> The Falange, primarily through the Sección Femenina, had organised a collection of various traditional items, packaged in care box that was to be given to each soldier of the Blue Division in time for *la Navidad* (Christmas season- of which Three Kings Day on 6 January is the most important day). The men were to receive:

4 jumpers	3 bottles of cognac
2 leather vest	7 bottles of wine and liquor
3 winter caps	1 kg. of peladillas
various pairs of socks	2 kg. of jam and sausage
and underwear, eye glasses,	2 kg. of marzipan and sweets
and other objects	1 kg. or marmalade
2 packets of cigars	An important quantity of money
20 packs of cigarettes and tobacco <sup>794</sup>	

These gifts, part of the Caudillo's *aguinaldo*, were very coveted by the men of the Blue Division and would be greatly appreciated; however, the leaflet asked, where was they disappeared to?

Described as '**Another lie!**' and '**A new joke!**', the leaflet also asserted the *aguinaldo* of Franco was a 'pretext' to rob all of Spain, since the supplies needed to fill the 'donation' were from all over Spain.<sup>795</sup> The leaflet asked '**Have you received it?**'<sup>796</sup> To which it replied 'A handful of hats, some figs, some packets of cigarettes that they made you pay for, and a little bit of cognac.'<sup>797</sup> Directing the blame at Franco and the Falange, the leaflet asked, '**What has he done with the *aguinaldo*?**' replying, '**The Falange organised a new "blackmarket" at your cost.**'<sup>798</sup> The leaflet went on to claim of the Falange leadership and its *Sección Femenina*:

Calmly in Spain they eat and drink what was collected or do business with it. A small part that was sent to your commanders to buy their silence. Some packets that were sent by the young ladies of the women's section went to their particular friends.

The leaflet finally asked the volunteers of the DEV to 'put down [their] weapons and pass over to the lines of the Red Army' where they would be guaranteed by the Russian command their 'lives, abundant food, warm rooms, and the return to Spain

<sup>793</sup> Bold from the original leaflet. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/13 Undated. The *aguinaldo*, which literally translates as 'tip', is a traditional gift given during Christmas by an employer to his workers, like a holiday bonus.

<sup>794</sup> Items quoted from Malaga newspaper, *Sur*, 9 November, 1941 as quoted in Soviet propaganda leaflet. AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/13 Undated.

<sup>795</sup> Bold per original leaflet. Ibid.

<sup>796</sup> Bold per original leaflet. Ibid.

<sup>797</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.16, D.2/14 Undated.

<sup>798</sup> Bold per original leaflet. Ibid.

when the war ends.’ All of these prospects must certainly have sounded promising to some men of the Blue Division as certainly some did desert to the Soviets; however, the exact numbers of men who deserted to the Russians is not known. The best estimate is about eighty men.<sup>799</sup> Despite the best efforts of the Soviets with the help of Spanish Communists, such a relatively low number of deserters might either indicate a genuine fervour for the cause in the East or a general fear of falling prisoner to the Soviets. The relatively low number of deserters may also indicate a good cohesiveness and collectiveness among the Spanish volunteers than other Axis formations at the front. More likely, however, the Blue Division’s shooting of potential deserters, inhibited others from deserting. In actuality, the majority of men from the DEV who found themselves prisoners of war were actually captured in combat, notably during the Battle of Krasny Bor in early February 1943.

### **Krasny Bor**

While many Spaniards fell captive during small actions or to Soviet patrols, the majority of Spaniards who became prisoners of war were captured at the Battle of Krasny. Fernando Vadillo described the Soviet attack at Krasny Bor as ‘the bloodiest and ferocious battle in the history of the Blue Division.’<sup>800</sup> Another veteran of the Blue Division recalled the Battle of Krasny Bor as the single most memorable (and terrifying) event of not only his experience on the Eastern Front but in his entire life.<sup>801</sup> Even over sixty years afterwards, he recalled vividly the smells and sounds of the massed Soviet armoured formations and men and directing his artillery battery of 105s as anti-tank weapons.<sup>802</sup> The Spanish difficulties at the Battle of Krasny Bor are well documented; however, it is important to provide an overview of the engagement as it not only caused the majority of Spanish losses (both deaths and prisoners of war), but is a major divisional event still observed by the remaining *divisionarios* alive in Spain today.<sup>803</sup>

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<sup>799</sup> This low number represented only 0.2 percent of the total number of men who served in the DEV during its time on the Eastern Front. X. Moreno Juliá, *la División Azul*, p.320.

<sup>800</sup> F. Vadillo, *los prisioneros*, p.57.

<sup>801</sup> Interview with General Víctor Castro Sanmartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004). General Castro was an artillery captain with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Artillery Group in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery of the 250 Artillery Regiment of the Blue Division at Krasny Bor.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>803</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler’s Spanish legion*, pp.238-304. For an updated account see C. Caballero Jurado, *Morir en Rusia*.



In its attempts to loosen the stranglehold of the German siege of Leningrad, the Soviets launched Operation *Iskra* (Spark) on 12 January 1943.<sup>804</sup> In response to this offensive, the Germans had to withdraw divisions away from an already vulnerable perimeter along the area that the Blue Division was designated to cover. With only two Spanish regiments (actually, a reinforced regiment and three battalions) able to defend the sector between Pushkin and Ivanovskoe (facing the entire Soviet 55<sup>th</sup> Army of the Leningrad Front), the Blue Division was potentially in trouble if the Red Army decided to attack.<sup>805</sup> With these weakened German formations in place, Stavka (Soviet High Command) decided that just such an offensive was needed and launched Operation Polar Star on 10 February 1943. With three Fronts (Leningrad, Volkhov, and Northwestern) slated for the offensive, the Soviets aimed to not only encircle the German forces on the Siniavino-Mga salient, but also had the sweeping goals of capturing Pskov and Narva, relieving the Russian troops trapped in Oranienbaum, and encircling and destroying Army Group North.<sup>806</sup> This was the unenviable position the Blue Division found itself on the eve of this ambitious Soviet offensive.

In the early hours of the morning of 10 February 1943, the Soviets began a heavy artillery bombardment unlike any the division had experienced before. The Blue Division was ordinarily accustomed to the occasional light shelling and harassing fire by Soviet artillery. On this particular morning, however, an intensive '*redoble de tambor*' ('drumroll fire') of over 1,000 guns and mortars for two hours prior to the Soviet ground assault was carried out to pound Spanish positions before the attack and also to demoralise the Spaniards.<sup>807</sup> One survivor recalled 'the volume fire had the capacity to shake the ground like an earthquake.'<sup>808</sup> The Soviet 55<sup>th</sup> Army, under the command of Lieutenant General V.P. Sviridov, was comprised of the 45<sup>th</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup> Guards and 43<sup>rd</sup> Rifle Divisions, 34<sup>th</sup> Ski Brigade and the 31<sup>st</sup> Tank Brigade leading the assault, followed by the 35<sup>th</sup> Ski and 122<sup>nd</sup> Tank Brigades in mobile support to exploit any success gained against the Spanish volunteers at Krasny

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<sup>804</sup> K.A. Meretskov, 'Breaking of the Leningrad blockade', in J. Erickson, ed., *Mainfront: Soviet leaders look back on World War II* (London, 1987), pp.95-103

<sup>805</sup> The Germans had three divisions covering a 100 km wide section facing the 54<sup>th</sup> Army of the Volkhov Front. D.M. Glantz, *The battle for Leningrad*, pp.287,294.

<sup>806</sup> A Soviet Front is the German equivalent of a German Army Group. For details of the attack see D.M. Glantz, *The battle for Leningrad*, pp.287-98.

<sup>807</sup> '*Redoble de tambor*' literally translates as 'intensity of the drum' and describes F. Vadillo, *los prisioneros*, p.57.

<sup>808</sup> From General Victor Castro SanMartín as quoted in C. Caballero Jurado, *Morir en Rusia*, p.137.

Bor. In all, Sviridov had over 33,000 men, eighty tanks, and 187 artillery batteries to throw against the Blue Division's 4,500 men (supported by elements of the 4<sup>th</sup> SS *Polizei* Division) and no tanks along a sector thirty-two kilometres wide.<sup>809</sup> Needless to say, the odds were ominously against the Spanish Blue Division and its German comrades.

The intensive Soviet artillery preparation was crushingly effective against several front line elements of the Blue Division, which paved the way for the relatively easy capture of the village of Krasny Bor. Spanish opposition along the River Izhora, despite the scale of the attack, was not broken and stiffened considerably, including intense hand-to-hand fighting, as the Soviet 55<sup>th</sup> Army attempted to continue its advance. With the tanks and infantry bogged down due to Spanish resistance, the Soviets could not deploy their ski troops effectively, due to an unexpected thaw. The Germans were able to reinforce the Spaniards by sending two German regimental combat groups thus stabilising the front; by then, however, the Spaniards had suffered over 2,200 casualties (see Figure 4.1).<sup>810</sup> The Russian losses were estimated at 11,000.<sup>811</sup>

<b>Figure 4.1- Blue Division casualties at Krasny Bor, February 1943.</b>				
	<b>killed in action</b>	<b>wounded in action</b>	<b>missing in action</b>	<b>Total casualties</b>
<b>Officers</b>	48	55	5	108
<b>NCOs</b>	130	95	19	244
<b>Soldiers</b>	949	885	67	1901
<b>Totals</b>	1127	1035	91	2253

Source: G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion: the Blue Division in Russia*, (Carbondale, 1979) p. 317.

The losses suffered by the Spanish Blue Division at Krasny Bor are significant in relation to the overall losses suffered by the division while it was at the front. The division suffered 1,127 deaths during the battle and 1,964 deaths during the entire year of 1943 (Figures 4.1 and 4.2). Therefore the division lost over fifty-seven percent of its dead for the entire year at Krasny Bor (Figure 4.3). In terms of total dead for the entire campaign (1941-43), the Battle of Krasny Bor accounted for nearly a third

<sup>809</sup> D.M. Glantz, *The battle for Leningrad*, p. 294. R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.231.

<sup>810</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, p.317. The Blue Division loss numbers are also listed as 3,200 in R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.23 and P. Carell, *Scorched earth: the Russian-German war, 1943-44* (Boston, MA), pp.246-7 as cited in D.M. Glantz, *The battle for Leningrad*, p.295.

<sup>811</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.232.

(28.7%) of the total numbers of volunteers killed in Russia (Figure 4.4). These numbers are indicative of the killing power (especially of the pre-attack bombardment) of the Soviet offensive during its assault during Operation Polar Star.

<b>Figure 4.2- Blue Division yearly casualties, 1941-43.</b>				
<b>year</b>	<b>dead</b>	<b>Wounded</b>	<b>missing</b>	<b>totals</b>
<b>1941</b>	718	1612	86	2416
<b>1942</b>	1252	2777	3	4032
<b>1943</b>	1964	4077	237	6278
<b>totals</b>	3934	8466	326	12726

Source: E. Esteban-Infantes, "Blaue Division" Spaniens Freiwillige an der Ostfront, (Hamburg, 1977) p, 148.<sup>812</sup>

The Battle of Krasny Bor also provided over a quarter (25.4%) of the total number of wounded the DEV suffered for the entire year of 1943 (Figures 4.3). For overall wounded casualties during the campaign, the Blue Division suffered over twelve percent of its total wounded at Krasny Bor (Figure 4.4).

<b>Figure 4.3- Blue Division casualty percentages- Krasny Bor to totals for year 1943.</b>				
	<b>deaths</b>	<b>wounded</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>totals</b>
<b>Krasny Bor</b>	1127	1035	91	2253
<b>1943 total</b>	1964	4077	237	6278
<b>Percentage</b>	57.4%	25.4%	38.4%	35.9%

Sources: G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p. 317 and E. Esteban-Infantes, "Blaue Division" Spaniens Freiwillige an der Ostfront, p. 148.

In terms of overall losses, Krasny Bor provided nearly thirty-six percent of the total divisional casualties suffered by the DEV during the year 1943 (Figure 4.3). With regards to total divisional losses suffered by the DEV between its arrival at the front in October 1941 and its repatriation (which began in October 1943), the Battle of Krasny Bor created nearly eighteen percent of the total (Figure 4.4).

Furthermore, the Battle of Krasny Bor generated nearly thirty-nine percent of the total numbers of men considered 'missing in action' (Figure 4.3). The entire year

<sup>812</sup> When considering divisional casualties on a 'yearly' basis, one must consider that DEV did not reach the front until nearly mid-October 1941. Therefore, the divisional losses are fairly considerable given the short amount of time it was at the frontlines that year. The division was only truly at the front for the entire calendar year of 1942 as it was repatriated in the autumn of 1943.

of 1943 also had the greatest total of 'missing in action' of any of the other years that the Blue Division was in Russia (well over seventy percent), which may be indicative of the more fluid nature of the battlefield that year (and possibly of more desertions). This total represents over a quarter of the men considered *desaparecido* (missing) by the Blue Division during its campaign in Russia which, again, is indicative of the ferocity of the Soviet attack with artillery and armour at Krasny Bor. In relation to the numbers of men captured at Krasny Bor, the role of *desaparecidos* is particularly important in attempting to determine the total of Spanish prisoners of war that eventually fell into the hands of the Soviets

**Figure 4.4- Blue Division casualty percentage- Krasny Bor to totals for Years, 1941-3.**

	<b>deaths</b>	<b>wounded</b>	<b>missing</b>	<b>totals</b>
<b>Krasny Bor</b>	1127	1035	91	2253
<b>1941-3 total</b>	3934	8466	326	12726
<b>Percentage</b>	28.6%	12.2%	27.9%	17.7%

Sources: G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p. 317 and E. Esteban-Infantes, "Blau Division" *Spaniens Freiwillige an der Ostfront*, p. 148.

Even in the most recent study on the Battle of Krasny Bor by Spanish military historian Carlos Caballero Jurado, the exact number of Spanish volunteers captured by the Soviets is not established with complete precision.<sup>813</sup> The most current study of the Blue Division estimates the numbers between 200 and 300 men captured, which represents roughly half of the total Spaniards captured.<sup>814</sup> The numbers become skewed because of the relationship of 'missing in action' (*desaparecidos*) totals to those totals of men actually taken prisoner. In the carnage of the pre-bombardment and the subsequent tank assault, numerous men simply went missing and were often thought to have been killed as their bodies were never found. Although some men were obliterated during the attack, many volunteers were in fact captured; however, Spanish authorities were often never made cognizant of this fact until numerous years after the war had ended. Although their loved one might have been reported '*desaparecido*', this prospect left many *divisionarios*' relatives back home in Spain hopeful that he might actually be alive in some gulag in a remote location in the Soviet Union.

<sup>813</sup> Caballero Jurado estimates conservatively that only 200 Spaniards were captured at Krasny Bor. C. Caballero Jurado, *Morir en Rusia*, p.139.

<sup>814</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.322.

Determining the fate of *desaparecidos* was a problem that had often plagued the Blue Division while it was in Russia. Often the division simply did not know the exact fate of certain individuals within the DEV. For example, in October 1942 the military attaché informed Madrid of the fate of two brothers, José and Francisco Fernandez Diaz, after a request on their situation from the Alto Estado Mayor.<sup>815</sup> As both were members of the Sapper Battalion, Francisco was listed as *desaparecido* while José was still listed with the unit. It was later determined, however, that Francisco was not missing in action but was actually still with the Sapper Battalion with his brother. In another message from the Spanish Military Attaché in early November, the Alto Estado Mayor was informed that Francisco had been confused with another person of the same name who had been listed as *desaparecido*.<sup>816</sup> These instances during the war often led to confusion regarding who was actually missing and who was not, as many *desaparecidos* were actually captured as prisoners of war, unbeknownst to the division.

Another factor in relation to the number of Spanish prisoners taken at Krasny Bor was the occurrence of '*bestialidades soviéticas*' (Soviet bestialities) toward certain POWs captured during the battle that left many wounded prisoners killed by their Soviet captors.<sup>817</sup> One well-known episode that highlights this behaviour was the shooting and bayoneting of wounded prisoners of war by the Soviets as they marched north of Krasny Bor towards the village of Kolpino. Volunteer Juan Negro Castro who was amongst a group of mostly wounded 300 Spanish prisoners, wrote that as those gravely wounded fell out of the march, their Russian captors instantly finished them off where they fell.<sup>818</sup> In one particularly ghoulish instance, Negro Castro related the killing of a severely wounded comrade after the POWs had finally reached their final destination. Having survived the difficult march (which included a Stuka attack on the POW column), a young wounded Navarrese volunteer whose lower mandible was nearly detached from his face had been pulled away from the column by a drunken, female Soviet soldier.<sup>819</sup> After being stripped naked by the laughing female soldier, the volunteer was thrown to the ground and a hand grenade was placed where his jaw was. The POWs had attempted to protest the woman's

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<sup>815</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/19 16 Oct 1942.

<sup>816</sup> AGMAV, C.2032, Cp.1, D.1/4 4 Nov 1942.

<sup>817</sup> A. Espinosa Poveda, *Artillero 2o. en la gloriosa División Azul*, p.582.

<sup>818</sup> J. Negro Castro, *Españoles en la URSS* (Madrid, 1959), pp.20-1. G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, p.295.

<sup>819</sup> J. Negro Castro, *Españoles en la URSS*, pp.21-2.

actions but were quickly bayoneted silent by her comrades as the grenade exploded. As a final insult, another Soviet female soldier bayoneted the body and placed the dead man's helmet on the top of the rifle in parody of the German symbol for a fallen comrade.<sup>820</sup>

The captured soldiers of the Blue Division were not the only ones to feel the wrath of the soldiers of the Red Army. The Russians were also unkindly towards the civilian population of the newly liberated village of Krasny Bor. Fleeing villagers encountered by Blue Division troops stated the Red Army had began shooting civilians whom it believed had collaborated with the Spaniards.<sup>821</sup> In response to this, the Russian villagers began to accompany the Spanish volunteers back towards their re-established lines. Russian civilians had even carried the weapons of the exhausted *divisionarios*, which Caballero Jurado identifies as a symbol of the close bond between the local Russian population and the Blue Division.<sup>822</sup> Those unable to escape from the Soviet onslaught, Spanish soldier or Russian civilian alike, found themselves at the mercy of the Red Army. For those unfortunate captured Spaniards, they now faced an uncertain fate as prisoners of war of the Soviet Union.

#### **Axis Prisoners of War**

Unfortunately, this thesis cannot cover the overall experience of the Spanish prisoner of war in Soviet captivity. Although both German and Spanish memoirs (which are numerous) are generally most informative in creating an understanding of that experience, hopefully a more thorough academic monograph is forthcoming as the subject deserves more than currently exists in relation to the divisional historiography of the DEV and its men.<sup>823</sup> Needless to say, Spanish prisoners suffered many deprivations and cruelties like the other former Axis prisoners of war.

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<sup>820</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, p.296.

<sup>821</sup> G. Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish legion*, p.302.

<sup>822</sup> C. Caballero Jurado, *Morir en Rusia*, p.87.

<sup>823</sup> For examples of Spanish POW memoirs (often dictated to writers) see, T. Palacios Cueto and T. Luca de Tena Brunet, *Embajador en el infierno*; E. Calavia Bellosillo, *Enterrados en Rusia*, (Madrid, 1956); M. Puente, *Yo, muerto en Rusia: memorias del Alférez Ocañas de la División Azul*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Madrid, 2003); J. Poquet Gardiola, *4045 días cautivo en rusia, 1943-54: Memorias* (Valencia, 1987); G. Oroquieta Arbiol, *De Leningrado a Odesa* (Barcelona, 1958); and J. Negro Castro, *Españoles en la URSS* (Madrid, 1959). For German examples in English, see Bidermann, *In deadly combat*; H. Von Luck, *Panzer commander: The memoirs of Hans von Luck* (New York, 1989); and S. Knappe and T. Brusaw, *Soldat: Reflections of a German soldier, 1936-49* (New York, 1992). The best current study on the Spanish POWs is the first half of the monograph/memoir book by Spanish historian Francisco Torres García in A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Escalvos de Stalin*.

Many of these POWs, including Spaniards, lost their lives while imprisoned within the Soviet gulag system.<sup>824</sup>

As the number of German prisoners captured by the Red Army increased, the Soviets had to reorganise their gulag system to begin to accommodate the numerous Axis prisons. By end of 1942, the gulag system had created sixteen new camps specifically for Germans POWs, which altogether held 120,000 prisoners.<sup>825</sup> During the war, the Soviets permitted the release of other Slavic prisoners (like Poles, Ukrainians, and Czechs) to make room for other nationalities (mainly Germans, but also Finns, Romanians, and Italians), which ultimately created room for Spaniards from the Blue Division.<sup>826</sup> Between 1941 and 1945, the Soviets captured an estimated 2,388,000 German, 1,097,000 other European nationalities, and 600,000 Japanese prisoners of war.<sup>827</sup> Needless to say these over four million men required a great logistical effort to detain, cloth and feed.

The Soviet prison of war camps were initially part of the gulag system, but after deeming the Axis POWs required greater administration and 'care', the NKVD (the USSR's internal police during World War II and predecessor of the KGB) created the Administration of War Prisoners in 1944.<sup>828</sup> Following the end of the war the prisoner-of-war camps came under the administration of the Main Administration of War Prisoners and Internees.<sup>829</sup> By this time the Soviets were also keen to punish Russian soldiers who had surrendered to the Germans or had been sent as forced labour during the war (as traitors against the State), as well as those incorrigible German National Socialists (including many civilians in the 'mini-gulags' of former Nazi concentration camps) and other political 'questionables.'<sup>830</sup> The NKVD also sought to imprison as many leaders of the Polish Home Army (which had fought alongside the Soviets until 1944) as possible as Stalin began to install a pro-Soviet, communist regime in Poland.<sup>831</sup>

In reality, even though the Western Allies had difficulties in handling over three million prisoners of war (including many deaths due to starvation and abuse),

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<sup>824</sup> A good overview of the Soviet gulag system and its history is provided in A. Applebaum, *Gulag: a history* (London, 2003).

<sup>825</sup> E. Bacon, *The gulag at war* (London, 1994), p.91.

<sup>826</sup> E. Bacon, *The gulag at war*, p.101.

<sup>827</sup> A. Applebaum, *Gulag*, p.391.

<sup>828</sup> A. Applebaum, *Gulag*, p.390.

<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>830</sup> E. Bacon, *The gulag at war*, p.97.

<sup>831</sup> A. Applebaum, *Gulag*, pp.391-2.

German POWs generally look upon their captivity under the Americans and British as a decent experience, although very few would assert the same about Soviet captivity.<sup>832</sup> German prisoners of war in the East, many of whom were handed over to the Soviets following their surrender to the British or Americans, had an unknown fate. After weeks and years of captivity, the POWs suffered physical and mental cruelty that often led to severe depression with many committing suicide. Of the nearly 3.1 million European men who were still held prisoner of war by the Soviets at the conflict's end, 1,110,000 were to die in captivity and 1,959,000 were repatriated.<sup>833</sup>

The fact of the matter is that of the nearly 35 million servicemen (including 11 million Germans) worldwide who became prisoners of war during World War II, a relatively small number of them were Spaniards.<sup>834</sup> Despite the large numbers of suspected German POWs by war's end (3.1 to 3.5 million) in Soviet hands, they only made up 3.1 percent of the total number of prisoners held within the gulag system.<sup>835</sup> Of these POWs, despite Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov estimating 890,532 Germans still in captivity by 1947, with 1,00,974 having been released previously since the war's end, there, at a conservative estimate, still two million Germans still being held by the Soviet Union.<sup>836</sup> These unaccounted men became known as the 'Missing Million.'<sup>837</sup> Even as late as 1950, the Soviet news agency TASS reported that only 9,719 prisoners 'convicted of serious war crimes' were still being held in prisoner camps, including members of the Blue Division.<sup>838</sup> Many of these German prisoners were kept until 1957 before being repatriated to either West or East Germany.<sup>839</sup>

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<sup>832</sup> M. K. Sorge, *The other price of Hitler's war: German military and civilian losses resulting from World War II* (Westport, CT, 1986) p.74. For more on the Western Allies' handling of POWs see G. Bischof, and S. Ambrose, eds., *Eisenhower and the German POWs* (Baton Rouge, 1992).

<sup>833</sup> Rüdiger Overman estimates are based on the Maschke Commission that was delegated the responsibility of accounting for German war losses which believed that between 3.1 to 3.5 million German POWs held by the Soviets, therefore the death and repatriated numbers are based on the lower number. See, *Ibid.*

<sup>834</sup> G. Bischof and S. Ambrose, eds., *Eisenhower and the German POWs* (Baton Rouge, 1992), p.2.

<sup>835</sup> The gulag contained by the end of 1945 largely Russians and Ukrainians 57.5 and 12 percent, respectively). 'Axis' POWs (Germans, Balts and Finns) were only 4.5 percent. From V.N. Zemskov, 'Arkhivny nachinayutgovorit- Gulag (istorikosotsiologicheskii aspekt)', *Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya*, vol xi (1991), pp.17,26 as quoted in E. Bacon, *the gulag at war* (London, 1994), p.153.

<sup>836</sup> R. Overmans, 'German historiography, the war losses, and the prisoners of war', in G. Bischof and S. Ambrose, eds, *Eisenhower and the German POWs* (Baton Rouge, 1992), p.153.

<sup>837</sup> R. Overmans, 'German historiography, the war losses, and the prisoners of war', p.154.

<sup>838</sup> M. K. Sorge, *The other price of Hitler's war*, p.80.

<sup>839</sup> M. K. Sorge, *The other price of Hitler's war*, p.76.



## Spain and the Soviet Union

Besides the Blue Division in Russia, there were an estimated 700 Spanish Communists serving in either the Red Army or Air Force, who had fought against the German invasion of the USSR, including *La Pasionara*'s only son, Rubén Ruiz, who was killed at Stalingrad.<sup>840</sup> Incidentally, it is believed that *La Pasionara* also had a relative in the Blue Division.<sup>841</sup> At the Potsdam conference near the end of World War II, Stalin had wanted the Allies to deal with Franco by removing him from power, contrary to the opinions of Truman and Churchill, who although they did not necessarily like the Spanish dictator, felt that Spain had not influenced the course of the war (Churchill's opinion) and the Spanish people were ultimately responsible to determine the nature of their government (Truman's position).<sup>842</sup> Following the proceedings by the UNO to answer the 'Spanish Question' and beyond, it is, therefore, not surprising that Spain continually kept the Soviet Union at arms length while Franco was in power. The international relationship between the Soviet Union and Spain, aptly and true to form, was not reinitiated diplomatically until after the death of Francisco Franco. Not until both countries issued a joint declaration on 9 February 1977 of their formal re-establishment of diplomatic ties, did both countries begin commercial and cultural interchange.<sup>843</sup> At this time the Soviets also named their first ambassador to Spain since 1938 (he had been killed in the Soviet purges of 1937-8).<sup>844</sup> The Franco regime, although not publicly, had had previous, albeit indirect, interactions prior to this event with its enemy the Soviet Union.

The British government had expressed concern that Spain had intended to seek Soviet grain during the height of its global ostracism in 1950 following an article in *Pravda* that announced TASS was looking for either direct or indirect trade with Spain.<sup>845</sup> TASS ultimately denied the report, although the British Economic Intelligence Unit had reported in September of the previous year that the USSR and

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<sup>840</sup> D. Ibarruri, *Memorias de Pasionaria: Me faltaba España* (Barcelona, 1985), p. 530 as cited in D.W. Pike, *in the service of Stalin*, p.153.

<sup>841</sup> Artillery Captain Antonio de Andrés y Andrés relates a story of a young Asturian with the surname Álvarez who served as his orderly during the Battle of Krasny Bor who allegedly was a relative of Dolores Ibárruti. Amazingly, he had been allowed to join the DEV but he was constantly under observation and suspect to his comrades. After some time at the front, however, he was found to be a fairly good soldier. A. de Andrés y Andrés, *Artillería en la División Azul*, pp.46-7.

<sup>842</sup> J.R. Moskin, *Mr. Truman's war: the final victories of World War II and the birth of the postwar world* (Lawrence, KS, 2002), p.213.

<sup>843</sup> J.L. Shneidman, Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, in ed. J.W. Cortada, *Spain in the Twentieth-Century world, essays on Spanish diplomacy, 1898-1978* (Westport, CT, 1980), p.155.

<sup>844</sup> *Ibid.* R.C. Tucker, *Stalin in power: the revolution from above, 1928-41* (New York, 1990), p.505.

<sup>845</sup> PRO 371/ 89542 WS 113381/1 24 Jan 1950.

Spain had held secret negotiations for trade.<sup>846</sup> Another British intelligence report also stated that Italy was exporting Spanish cork to the Soviets.<sup>847</sup> In May 1950 the British Ambassador reported to the Western Department of the Foreign Office that he believed that Spain was going to receive Soviet cereals, but Spain would not discuss it publicly because they were in the process of negotiating the return of the POWs (reportedly, 400 men and 20 officers of the Blue Division) with Stalin's regime.<sup>848</sup> These men were believed by British sources to be imprisoned together at a camp near Moscow and 'were not being badly treated and the Spanish Government understood they had been able to sing their own Spanish hymns at Christmas.'<sup>849</sup> With the rumours of trade between them unfounded by October 1950 (with more British intelligence work by the British Commercial Counsellor in Madrid), Spain still wanted these POWs back but did not have the proper communication in place to attempt to retrieve them.<sup>850</sup> Without option, Spain approached the British in help in gaining the prisoners' release.

William Strang of the Foreign Office was approached by the Spanish Ambassador to Great Britain in July 1952 asking His Majesty's government if the British government would make an inquiry to the Soviet Union regarding the fate of 362 Spanish prisoners and former members of the Blue Division known or thought to be held in the USSR.<sup>851</sup> Spain was looking to secure their release with British help as neither the German or Japanese governments had been able to secure the release of their respective POWs, still held by the Soviets. With the Korean War and Stalin still in power, the British Foreign Office, in internal discussions, was not sure that it had enough leverage or political influence to bring this about. The Foreign Office felt that the Soviets would either deny the existence of the Spanish prisoners of war or tell the British to mind their own business.<sup>852</sup> There was also a feeling that if the news should be released publicly that the British government helped Spain, there would be 'adverse criticism at home.'<sup>853</sup> The British ultimately declined the Spanish request

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<sup>846</sup> Ibid.

<sup>847</sup> Ibid.

<sup>848</sup> PRO FO 371/89542 WS 11338/3 4 May 1950.

<sup>849</sup> Ibid.

<sup>850</sup> The British were rest assured that Spain was not falling into the Soviet orbit of influence and that if trade did exist between the USSR and Spain, '...the trade is not on a vast scale.' See PRO FO 371/89542 WS 11338/4 20 Oct 1950.

<sup>851</sup> FO 371/ 102051 WS1551/1 24 July 1952.

<sup>852</sup> See hand written memos between various FO individuals. Ibid.

<sup>853</sup> Ibid.

despite fears that Spain might exchange the POWs for 'strategic materials' beneficial to the Soviets (which were 'limited' and if supplied might 'incur US displeasure' which 'would certainly mean the loss of their much needed aid.')

Although the British Foreign ministry was told there were 362 POWs still in Russia in 1952, the exact number of Spanish prisoners of war captured and later imprisoned by the Soviet Union is a source of great debate.<sup>855</sup> Similarly with the number of POWs taken at Krasny Bor, the precise amount is not known because of the addition of '*desaparecidos*' (including those possibly killed on their way to captivity) and those few deserters who remained in Russia after the war. Therefore, these numbers tend to fluctuate according the source but it is reasonable to surmise that the number of Spanish POWs held in prisons in the Soviet Union, including the numbers of '*desaparecidos*' and deserters, was between 400 and 500 men. Official Spanish sources placed the number of POWs at 372, of whom 115 died in captivity.<sup>856</sup> In the 1950s, the Soviet Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs gave the total at 289 Spaniards, but the opening of Soviet archives in modern Russia show the numbers of Spanish prisoners of war at 452 men (of whom 70 died in captivity).<sup>857</sup> Although the exact numbers of Spaniards held in the Soviet Union during and after the Second World War are not known, the number of men that finally returned to Spain is.

### **The S.S. *Semiramís* and Other Ways Home**

The majority of Spanish prisoners of war were returned to Spain aboard a Liberian-registered ship, the S.S. *Semiramís*, in April 1954. In a political manoeuvre brokered and facilitated by the International Red Cross, the Soviet Union agreed to return to Spain the majority of the POWs it held in its labour camps throughout the Western Soviet Union. The total number of Spaniards aboard the *Semiramís* was 286 men. In a public spectacle orchestrated by the Spanish government to greet their arrival, 248 Spaniards who had fought in the German armed forces were returned aboard the *Semiramís* to the docks in Barcelona on 2 April, having departed from Odessa in late March.<sup>858</sup> Among this number were 227 members of the Blue Division, twenty-one '*clandestinos*' (those who served in the various other German formations

<sup>854</sup> Ibid.

<sup>855</sup> FO 371/ 102051 WS1551/1 24 July 1952. Kleinfeld and Tambs do not list any POW numbers in their work other than the number aboard the S.S. *Semiramís*. David Wingeate Pike lists 321 Spanish POWs. See, D.W. Pike, *in the service of Stalin*, p.297, n.10.

<sup>856</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p. 322.

<sup>857</sup> Ibid.

<sup>858</sup> The *Semiramís* first travelled to Istanbul where the men were met by the Spanish press. The ship then sailed to Marseilles before travelling on to Barcelona.

following the repatriation of the DEV, many who had previously been *divisionarios* also), nineteen merchant sailors, fifteen pilots (one officer from the *Esquadrilla Azul* and the rest were disfavoured former Republican Spanish volunteers – many of whom were not Communists – in the Republican Air Force), and four ‘*niños de guerra*’ (‘children of war’- who had been sent to Russia following the Civil War but were now adults).<sup>859</sup> Franco, true to character in maintaining his distance from the division, was not in attendance in the reception of the ship. As Franco’s official representative, Lieutenant General Agustín Muñoz-Grandes was present at the dock to receive his former men among the throngs of friends and relatives of the former captives.

The repatriation of former Blue Division volunteers held in the Soviet Union did not end with the return of the *Semíramis*. On 9 January 1956, another volunteer was also repatriated along with a former captain of the *Ejército Popular* (People’s Army of the Spanish Republic) who had also found himself a prisoner of the Soviets. The former DEV member, Sergeant Antonio Caver, had not been permitted repatriation aboard the *Semíramis* because he had been condemned to twenty-five years hard labour after being designated a ‘war criminal.’<sup>860</sup> The exact nature of his ‘war crimes’ is not known nor is why he was eventually released by the Soviets earlier than his long sentence had come to an end. The Franco government was interested in the return of not only the POWs still held in captivity but also the return of Spanish exiles that had left Spain following the Republic defeat in 1939. Part of the ‘thaw’ in relations included the return of the POWs and in 1956 the Soviet government allowed the return of 4,000 Spaniards, mostly children evacuees and relatives of former Republicans, to Spain.<sup>861</sup> In December 1956 some other Spanish exiles were repatriated to Spain aboard the S.S. *Crimea*. Among this group that arrived at the port in Castellón were several former Blue Division volunteers, including one deserter and a Spanish member of the Waffen-SS (and former *divisionario*) captured in Yugoslavia.<sup>862</sup> Remarkably, eighteen former volunteers of the Blue Division decided to remain in the Soviet Union despite their opportunity for repatriation to Spain.<sup>863</sup> Their exact motivations, political or otherwise, are not known.

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<sup>859</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p. 336.

<sup>860</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.343.

<sup>861</sup> S. Payne, *The Franco regime*, p.419.

<sup>862</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.336.

<sup>863</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.322.

The returning *cautivos* had a very different homecoming than their exiled Republican counterparts. The Spanish government had made arrangements for the former Blue Division POWs in finding work in Spain through a programme developed after the Spanish Civil War. Attached to the *Instituto Nacional de Previsión*, this programme was called the *Servicio de Reincorporación de Ex-combatientes al Trabajo* (Reincorporation of Ex-Combatants to Work Service) and it successfully employed 218 former POWs.<sup>864</sup> This service was not, however, available to former Republicans. As a consequence, numerous exiled Republicans decided that Franco's Spain was still not for them and they attempted to emigrate to France or Mexico where many had been promised work within Spanish Republican communities. Despite having accepted former Republicans (including many who had served numerous years in Stalin's gulags, having fallen into disfavour), the Franco regime still portrayed them as 'reds' and it continued to play on the fear of possible Soviet invasion and communist insurgency that might throw Spain back into another Civil War. The Franco regime was able to use this 'red fear' to help push its political agenda in the face of changing global political events.

### **The 'Red Fear' and the POWs as a Propaganda Tool**

José Antonio Primo de Rivera had once questioned whether 'soldiers, Spanish officers of land, sea and air' could assert that the military was 'indifferent to politics' in a open letter he had written clandestinely while imprisoned in the Modelo Prison in Madrid in May 1936.<sup>865</sup> Written prior to the Spanish Civil War, the aim of this missive was to assert the dangers of 'the imminence of a barbarian invasion' which José Antonio believed was threatening society, in the form of 'Russian' Communism.<sup>866</sup> In general the men serving in the Blue Division, although not necessarily Falangists, were ardent anti-Communists as the hate for Communism ran deep before, during, and after the DEV was in Russia. Nationalists had continually asserted that Communism and the Soviet Union had conspired to 'destroy Spain', being halted only by the actions of the Spanish generals; they blamed the USSR for the Civil War and the subsequent destruction and misery in Spain.<sup>867</sup> During the

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<sup>864</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, p.342.

<sup>865</sup> From the letter entitled, 'Letters to the soldiers of Spain' 14 May 1936 in [J. A. Primo de Rivera], *Selected writings*, H. Thomas, ed. (London, 1972), pp238-43.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid*, p.238.

<sup>867</sup> Nationalist Spain provided 'Secret Documents of the Communist Plot' that asserted such a plot existed. There is continued debate as to their authenticity, though largely believed to be forgeries, published after the coup started. For a refutation of this assertion of the Communist conspiracy, see

Second World War, on July 1942, Franco asserted during a speech in front of the *Consejo Nacional* (National Council) that, 'For Europe only one danger exists: Communism.'<sup>868</sup>

Following the war, the Spanish government under Franco continued to perpetuate this imagery in not only policy and rhetoric but also through government-controlled propaganda machinations such as press and film. One such work, published by the Spanish Ministry of Justice, was the book entitled *The Red Domination in Spain*.<sup>869</sup> As all Republican factions were tarred with the same 'Red' brush, the Attorney-General of the Ministry of Justice was ordered by decree in April 1940, ratified in 1943, to create a 'lawsuit' (really an indictment) against the 'criminal activities on the part of the subversive elements who in 1936 openly attacked the very existence and the essential principles of their Country, which was providentially saved at the last moment by General Franco's rising.'<sup>870</sup>

In Franco's Spain, following the Civil War, it was not the army that had revolted against the democratically elected government. The Nationalists saw the Republic as one allegedly ruled by 'the Communist Party, controlled outside Spain...[and] in reality arbiter of the [Republican] Popular Front policy.'<sup>871</sup> According to this 'lawsuit' (accompanied with graphic, grotesque photographic evidence of various Republican atrocities), the 'Reds' were to be treated as war criminals and punished for their activities in 'red' territory, which included the killing of José Antonio Primo de Rivera.<sup>872</sup> This is not an attempt to go over the social upheaval of the Civil War but to demonstrate the hate of Communism by the Franco regime that remained even after the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945 (a year before this report was finalised). This work published by the Spanish government is a strong example of anti-Communist propaganda that carried beyond the end of the Second World War. The Spanish Blue Division, despite being shelved publicly immediately following the war, was also used to promote Franco's anti-Communist agenda, when history dictated it was feasible to do so after the war, in an alternative, more visual media: film.

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H.R Southworth, *Conspiracy and the Spanish Civil War: The brainwashing of Francisco Franco* (London, 2002), pp1-128.

<sup>868</sup> *Informaciones*, 18 July 1942.

<sup>869</sup> Ministry of Justice, *The red domination of Spain* (Madrid, 1946).

<sup>870</sup> Ministry of Justice, *The red domination of Spain*, p.7.

<sup>871</sup> Ministry of Justice, *The red domination of Spain*, p.8.

<sup>872</sup> The Franco regime effectively called all leftist political parties 'Reds.' For the Republican indictment against José Antonio, see Ministry of Justice, *The red domination of Spain*, Annex II.

Both sides during the Spanish Civil War used films as propaganda tools to push their desired forms of government in Spain.<sup>873</sup> Following the end of the conflict on the peninsula, Franco continued to use film to promote not only his regime, but what he envisioned as the 'ideal' Spain. One would expect, therefore, that Franco would have attempted to do so while the Blue Division was fighting in Russia. This, surprisingly, was not the case. With the exception of several '*Noticiarios y Documentales Cinematográficos*' (NO-DO) newsreels played before cinematic features during the war, the Blue Division was never portrayed in a full-length, feature film until well after the end of the war.<sup>874</sup> The NO-DO films were similar to the *Movietone* or *Time Marches On* newsreel series used by the Allies or the German newsreels by *Ufa-Tonwoche*, *Deulig-Woche*, *Tobis Wchenschau*, and *Fox tönende Wochenschau* (which was American-owned prior to World War II) that were eventually dissolved and replaced by Joseph Goebbels' (therefore, state-controlled) *Deutsche Wochenschau GmbH* in November 1940.<sup>875</sup> The *Deutsche Wochenschau* eventually produced short newsreel segments on the Spanish Blue Division shown to German audiences during the course of the war.

This thesis does not attempt to explain the history of film during Franco's regime or of the Blue Division, which both exist, but it is essential to point out that film was one of the few methods that visually displayed the exploits of the Blue Division in Russia.<sup>876</sup> Aside from the short documentary *División Azul* that premiered in 1942 and footage shot for Spanish NO-DO newsreels, for its German equivalent *Universum-Film-Aktiengesellschaft* (UFA), and by the divisional *Propaganda Kompany* during the war, the Blue Division was not a subject of any (fictional or factual based) film until ten years after it was withdrawn from the Eastern Front.<sup>877</sup> In

<sup>873</sup> For an interesting work that relates and contrasts two documentaries of the two sides during the Spanish Civil War, see M. Crusells, *La guerra civil española: cine y propaganda* (Barcelona, 2000), pp107-32.

<sup>874</sup> For an overview of the history of NO-DO, see S. Ellwood, 'The moving image of the Franco regime: Noticiarios y Documentales, 1943-75', in H. Graham and J. Labanyi, eds., *Spanish cultural studies: an introduction* (New York, 1995), pp.201-3.

<sup>875</sup> For an overview of German newsreels propaganda, see D. Welch, 'Nazi wartime newsreel propaganda', in K.R.M. Short, ed., *Film and radio propaganda in World War II* (Knoxville, 1983), pp201-19.

<sup>876</sup> For film during the height of Franco regime, see J.M. Caparrós Lera, *Estudios sobre el cine español del franquismo: 1941-64* (Valladolid, 2000), and for the Blue Division, S. Alegre, *El cine cambia la historia*.

<sup>877</sup> The documentary *División Azul* was only thirty-seven minutes long, was produced by the private company Alianza Cinematográfica Española, and directed by Victor de la Serna and Joaquin Reig Gonzales. The majority of action footage was of German units (due to the large amount of footage available) and there are questions of authenticity with the fighting footage that was allegedly filmed of

other words, not a single fictional film involving the Blue Division was ever produced while it was still fighting communism in Russia. What could possibly explain this late and sudden interest in the experiences of *divisionarios* on the steppes of Russia? The late attention to the Blue Division can be contributed to two reasons that shared a commonality: The recent release of Spanish former prisoners of war aboard the *Semíramis* in April 1954 and the escalation of talks with the United States. Both combined helped promote the anti-Communist agenda still present in the Franco government at that time.

The return of former prisoners of war aboard the *Semíramis* was a propaganda coup for Franco. Not only were numerous stories and newly published books on the division in Spain but Franco was able to exploit this event through NO-DO film reels to present a visual image of the returning ex-POWs who had served over ten years of servitude within the Soviet gulag system. Although limited in number, the relatively few films that were produced created an image of the brutality of both the Russian landscape and the Soviet form of government. Franco was able to use film as a propaganda medium to push his anti-Communist agenda after the Second World War had ended. The production of Spanish films on the Blue Division started soon after the repatriation of the ex-captives to Spain.

The first film done on the Blue Division after the war was another documentary entitled *Regreso a la Patria* (Returning to the Motherland), produced by NO-DO in 1954. These NO-DO films, which were both state-sponsored and censored, allowed the government total control over the public knowledge and perception of both national and international realities.<sup>878</sup> NO-DO, incidentally, had not covered any aspect of the Blue Division after its last newsreel during the war in 1943. *Regreso a la Patria* dealt primarily with the return of the ex-POWs aboard the *Semíramis* to Barcelona. Exceptional coverage of the event was deployed by the Spanish government to guarantee a propaganda bonanza. Spanish film historian Sergio Alegre describes the voiceover narration as the centrepiece (based on Franco's eulogies of the DEV) of the film footage as an attempt to present Franco not as a simple head of state,

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the Blue Division. NO-DO produced eight newsreel segments (which were under two minutes in length) that were shown prior to cinematic screenings during the war. The UFA shot over fifteen short film segments (under a minute in length) about the Blue Division that were shown to German audiences. The divisional propaganda unit shot over 6,000 metres of film footage that has not been seen since the end of the war. For an overview of the content and subject matter of NO-DO films and UFA films respectively, see C. Caballero Jurado and R. Ibáñez Hernández, *Escritores en las trincheras*, pp.75-7, 74-5.

<sup>878</sup> S. Ellwood, 'The moving image of the Franco regime: Noticiarios y Documentales, 1943-75', p.201.



but as a *paterfamilias* who welcomed his 'lost' children to the home 'that through means of greatness and freedom' the Caudillo had built for them.<sup>879</sup> Completely lacking in any of the narration is any mention of the Falange or its association with the men or the Blue Division. It was not long before a fictional account followed this brief NO-DO documentary.

The first fictional account of the Blue Division, entitled *La Patrulla* (The Patrol), was directed by Pedro Lazaga, one of the most prolific film directors in Spanish cinematography during the Franco era. While it asserted the protection of European civilisation from the dangers of communism as the main reason for sending the DEV to Russia, *La Patrulla* did not present the difficulties suffered by the volunteers who fought there nor did it allude to the economic hardships of the general population due to food shortages and rationing in Spain. Its central message was that after the lapse of the momentary peace in Europe following the war, the West would resume the war against the Soviet Union and Spain (as an ally of the United States) would also resume the fight.<sup>880</sup> At the time of its release, *La Patrulla* was a critical success in Spain more from its anti-communist message than from the film's cinematographic value itself.

The next film based on the Blue Division was one entitled *La Espera* (The Wait) and was directed by Spanish director Vicente Lluich. As an unknown director, Lluich had hoped (unsuccessfully) to receive a government subsidy with *La Espera*, a film that dealt with both the experiences of POWs in Russia and 'the wait' of relatives back in Spain.<sup>881</sup> Again the film's central message was that despite the separation of the film's hero Juan López from his girlfriend Mari Teresa, for twelve years, communism was something worth fighting against in the present (as he had told Mari Teresa before he left) so one did not have to fight it again in the future. Once again, however, the film ignored the difficulties in Spain resulting from Spanish Civil War or the fraught economic conditions in Spain during the war. Despite its message, *La Espera* was a commercial failure, running for a disappointing three days.

One of the first books that related the experiences of the Spanish prisoners of war held in the Soviet Union was Torcuato Luca de Tena Brunet's collaborative literary effort with Captain Teodoro Palacios Cueto, *Embajador en el infierno*

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<sup>879</sup> S. Alegre, 'The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4: The filmic recycling of Fascism as anticommunism in Franco's Spain', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television*, xvi, (1996) p.4.

<sup>880</sup> S. Alegre, 'The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4', p.5.

<sup>881</sup> Ibid.

(Ambassador to Hell) published in 1955 following the latter's return to Spain aboard the *Semíramis*.<sup>882</sup> Their book, with Luca de Tena writing the screenplay and supervising production, was adapted into the film *Embajadores en el infierno* that premiered in Madrid at the Palacio de la Música in 1956 and was the last of three films produced on the Blue Division following the war. This particular film, sanctioned by and financed with over 3 million pesetas from the Franco government, was the most important of the three films produced.<sup>883</sup> *Embajadores en el infierno* and its lead actor, Antonio Vilar, won several film prizes within the Spanish film industry but the film also won honours at international film festivals in Glasgow and Cork.<sup>884</sup> The Spanish government had deemed the film was worthy of the letter 'R' (of national interest) in its *Interes Nacional* (National Interest) categorisation system for films. Ultimately, *Embajadores en el infierno* was one of the costliest films ever produced in Spain but had had an unprecedented successful thirty-five day run in Madrid. The film's political message, however, was more important than any cinematographic awards or monetary gains to the Franco regime.

The political message of *Embajadores* was covered within its three principle themes: anti-communism, religion, and patriotism. In an effort to promote these ideals, *Embajadores en el infierno* was the most graphic and detailed portrayal of the experiences of the Blue Division on the Eastern Front and the subsequent of those men captured and imprisoned by the Soviet during the war. The film's director, José María Forqué, strove for authenticity (which included expertise from former *divisionario* and captive Sergeant Angel Salamanca Salamanca) and went to great lengths to reconstruct the prison camp's surroundings and decor.<sup>885</sup> For further realism, the production included at least five former *cautivos* as extras in the film.<sup>886</sup>

This authentic portrayal of the hardships of Spaniards at the hands of the Soviets helped the Spanish government to promote anti-communism and invigorate patriotism within certain segments of the population. Although it was a critical and a commercial success, *Embajadores en el infierno* was not without its detractors. Glaringly absent in its contribution to the Blue Division was any mention or

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<sup>882</sup> T. Palacios Cueto and T. Luca de Tena Brunet, *Embajador en el infierno: Memoria del Capitan Palacios (Once años de cautiverio en Rusia)*, (Madrid, 1955).

<sup>883</sup> S. Alegre, 'The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4', p.6.

<sup>884</sup> Ibid.

<sup>885</sup> A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin*, p.8.

<sup>886</sup> The former POWs who served as extras were Carlos Junco, Victoriano Rodríguez, Desiderio Morlán, Félix Alonso, and Juan López Ocaña. A. Salamanca Salamanca and F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin*, p.98, n.7.

symbolism of the Falange. Although somewhat of a political pariah in Spain by 1956, the Falange was critical of its lack of presence in the film. One reviewer from the Falangist magazine *Primer Plano* put it more succinctly:

'I did not hear about the Blue Division in stories. I lived it first-hand. I think the initial premise for this film is false and it lies about something very important: the character of the volunteers of the film...all of them knew what they were doing there, soldiers and officers. Higher ranks, commanders, officers and privates were all Falangists. None more or less Falangist than the others. On this point *Embajadores en el infierno*, based on the book by Captain Palacios, is flawed. The action portrayed in Russia could have taken place in any war. The men who endured captivity in the Soviet concentration camps are not the men of the Blue Division. Any semblance between this film and the true spirit of the thousands of men of the Blue Division is pure coincidence, because the film only aims at reflecting the spirit of one man, Adrados [a fictionalised character], who embodies the spirit of the prototype Spanish officer...But the consequence of leaving out- except certain details- the Falangist character of this epic event, does the film harm. As it was not intended to display all the notes of grandeur of the campaign, the film loses part of the emotion that served as magnificent support for the bravery of the prisoners.'<sup>887</sup>

Falangists were not the only critics of *Embajadores en el infierno*. After it was finally cleared by the *Freiwillege Selbstkontrolle der Filmwirtschaft* (FSF- the West German film censorship commission), *Embajadores* premiered before a German audience in December 1957.<sup>888</sup> Because of the political climate in Germany at the time, German film critics were unsympathetic to the film with one critic calling *Embajadores en el infierno* a piece of 'cheap National Socialist propaganda.'<sup>889</sup>

Despite criticisms by the Falange for the lack of its role in *Embajadores en el infierno*, the film, in fact, had added Falange symbols at the behest of General Muñoz Grandes (then Minister of the Army), General José Luis Arrese y Magra (Minister-Secretary of the Falange), and Gabriel Arias Salgado (Minister of Information and Tourism) after they had previewed it prior to its general public release. This was after the Falange (under its then Secretary-Minister Raimundo Fernández Cuesta) had initially banned the film (a move which was rescinded by Arrese). Some Blue Division veterans were also not pleased with their image depicted in the film. Several

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<sup>887</sup> *Primer Plano*, 832, (1956) pp.29-30 as quoted in S. Alegre, 'The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4', p.10.

<sup>888</sup> Rodas Films, the Spanish production company in charge of *Embajadores*, had first submitted the film to the FSF in March 1957 but had to re-edit the film several times before receiving the initial release for November. *Embajadores* premiered before a German audience in Mainz on 22 November 1957 but it had to be re-censored by FSF because it feared it projected too much 'gloom and sadness' to impressionable German youths. The final copy was released on 9 December 1957. S. Alegre, 'The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4', p.10.

<sup>889</sup> *Darmstader Echo*, 11 October 1963 as quoted in S. Alegre, 'The Blue Division in Russia, 1941-4', p.10.

had physically threatened Luca de Tena and Forqué which required both to leave Madrid briefly accompanied with armed guards.

After Hollywood's attempt to show the travails and dramas of the Spanish Civil War, there was a suggestion of putting the story of the Blue Division on the silver screen.<sup>890</sup> According to papers in possession of his widow, American filmmakers had considered adapting Captain Palacios' *Embajador en el infierno* into a Hollywood version starring Gregory Peck.<sup>891</sup> The Hollywood version was allegedly never done because Palacios had wanted the production done in Spain by Spaniards. One wonders how this story would have played to American audiences.

These films on the Blue Division essentially helped Franco bolster public opinion against the evils of the Soviet Union and, as a consequence, to make American aid more palatable. Despite Franco's attempts to destroy Communism in Spain, the PCE survived, albeit clandestinely, until after his death in 1975.<sup>892</sup> Following the end of the Spanish Civil War and even in the Caudillo's lifetime, the PCE was never the great political threat that the Franco regime claimed it to be.

### **The *Cautivos* in Spain**

After returning to Spain, the Spanish ex-captives were not subjected to events like the West German *Kamaradenschinder* trials, which attempted not to punish German 'Nazi' war crimes, but those recently repatriated Germans who had collaborated with the Soviets during their internment against their fellow prisoners.<sup>893</sup> During the course of these trials between the late 1940s and 1960, West German authorities incarcerated hundreds of German ex-captives after they had denounced and often beaten their fellow prisoners while being politically re-educated in Communist ideology.<sup>894</sup> Despite being under the influence of political re-education themselves while in Soviet captivity, the Spanish POWs were not subjected to intense scrutiny by the Franco regime.

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<sup>890</sup> Hollywood made numerous, obscure films during the civil war, however, the Production Code Administration attempted to curtail content to not offend either side fighting in Spain. J. Coma, *La brigade Hollywood: Guerra española y cine americano* (Barcelona, 2002), pp.98-9.

<sup>891</sup> F. Torres García, *Esclavos de Stalin*, p.98, n.8.

<sup>892</sup> For an overview of the limited success by the PCE in Spain see J. Foweraker, *Making democracy: grass-roots struggle in the south, 1955-75* (Cambridge, 1989), pp.133-53.

<sup>893</sup> F. Biess, 'Between amnesty and anti-communism: The West German *Kamaradenschinder* trials, 1948-60', in O. Bartov, et al., *Crimes of war: Guilt and denial in the Twentieth Century* (New York, 2002), pp.138-60.

<sup>894</sup> F. Biess, 'Between amnesty and anti-communism', p.139.

Although one Blue Division veteran captured at Krasny Bor recalls being questioned by Spanish Army officials about one of his compatriots who had deserted during the war after being repatriated aboard the S.S. *Semiramis* together, the Spanish government, at least according to current DGS and Guardia Civil files available at the Archivo General de la Administración, accepted the returned POWs and captives without questions.<sup>895</sup> In this particular instance, the Spanish Army had expressed an interest in the behaviour and attitude of this deserter towards Communism while being held with other prisoners.<sup>896</sup> One would expect that Spain would be extremely interested in the foreign influences of Communism on individuals it was about to release back into and amongst the general public. On the contrary, however, although the Spanish government compiled extensive lists of suspected political dissidents, no names from the *Semiramis* roster of returning prisoners appear on the lists compiled by the DGS or the Guardia Civil for observation.<sup>897</sup> Although the research was done when some names could possibly have been released publicly, it should be noted, however, that given the fifty-year seal on archive folders, some names could appear later under suspicious activity.<sup>898</sup>

## Conclusion

The way in which some of the men of the Blue Division found themselves prisoners of war of the Soviet Union is an interesting aspect of the Blue Division historiography. Although most were captured in combat, some men of the Blue Division deserted to the Russians during the time the division spent at the front. The propaganda methods used by the Soviets to entice Spaniards to desert were extensive. The use of loudspeakers, radio programmes, and various printed materials such as

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<sup>895</sup> Interview: Angel Salamanca Salamanca, Madrid (15 Sept 2004).

<sup>896</sup> Sergeant Salamanca does not remember the name of the man, but said he was '*un buen hombre*' (a good man) which he conveyed to the Spanish Army. He believes that nothing ever became of the interview in any form of punishment towards the former volunteer and deserter, whom he further did not recall being a communist sympathiser. Interview: Angel Salamanca Salamanca, Madrid (15 Sept 2004).

<sup>897</sup> The surnames (as there are two per Spanish tradition) of each person aboard the *Semiramis* was cross-referenced with databases of the DGS and Guardia Civil. Twelve names were found to be the same and were double-checked for the date compiled (whether the individual would have had a file if he was imprisoned in the Soviet Union during that time) of which none could have been the same person. The DGS and Guardia Civil files are immense with 119,341 and 64,194 individual folders each, respectively. The databases are held at the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares.

<sup>898</sup> Individuals whose names appear on the DGS and Guardia Civil police lists that are still sealed may not be viewed without the written permission of those individuals (assuming they are still alive). If they are deceased, then the fifty-year rule still applies. It is possible, therefore that individuals returning from captivity in the Soviet Union might have made either the DGS or Guardia Civil watch lists after their repatriation in 1954 (or those fewer numbers in 1956).

pamphlets and newspapers by the Red Army ultimately had limited success in actually getting volunteers of the Blue Division to desert (as only approximately eighty of the 45,000 men that served in the division deserted). The nature of the messages contained in these mediums, however, are of interest in better understanding the mindset of the Spanish volunteer as he fought at the front. The Soviets consistently used captured comrades who 'voluntarily' sent messages to their comrades about the alleged benefits of being held in Soviet captivity. History has shown that many of those men who had sent 'letters to comrades', of whom many were grievously wounded upon captivity, eventually died in the hands of the Soviets. In actuality, the majority of the Spanish men who became POWs were captured in combat, with a large number of those taken prisoner at Krasny Bor (between fifty and seventy-five percent of the total POW numbers). This single engagement that began on the early morning of 1 February was the climactic (and near catastrophic) event of the Blue Division during the Second World War and contributed greatly to the number of total casualties suffered by the division during its time in Russia.

Those fortunate men who managed to survive Soviet captivity did so only after enduring over a decade more of imprisonment returned to a Spain that was willing to discuss their ordeal publicly. The Franco regime, however, did so to help promote its own foreign policy as it attempted to warm relations, militarily and economically, with the United States. Only when it suited the regime, were the sacrifices of the former volunteers and captives presented in three separate films (each with various degrees of success and controversy). The experiences of the Spanish volunteer did not end with the repatriation of the DEV in the autumn of 1943. For the volunteers, hundreds of whom were kept prisoners of war, the spirit of the Blue Division continued to manifest itself as veterans began to re-assimilate back into an ever-changing post-war Spain.

## Chapter 5- The Return to Spain

### Introduction

As discussed in the first chapter, the reasons for joining the *División Española de Voluntarios* varied. The primary reason for doing so was based on the premise that Spain, or at least its volunteers, were fighting in the East to destroy the Bolshevik threat that many Western Europeans believed was determined to destroy their culture and way of life. There were certainly others who saw serving in Russia as either a quicker way to avoid further military service or promote their careers in the Spanish Army. The financial incentive was also evident by the rampant unemployment and hardship in Spain following the Civil War, and serving at the front doubled the pay that furthered the incentive of serving in the DEV. Idealism, financial reasons or simple adventurism aside, what, if any, were the other compensations for fighting on the Eastern Front after returning, often maimed and disabled, to civilian life in Spain? While attempting to give an overview of the political situation inside of and foreign pressures on Spain during the latter stages of the war and beyond, this chapter will focus on the other 'benefits' of serving in the Blue Division, and, as shall be discussed; the dearth of compensation in post-war Spain ultimately lead to an organised response by the veterans themselves.

By the spring of 1943 the Spanish political position regarding the Blue Division remaining at the front had become untenable. With pressures from both the American and British Ambassadors, Franco began negotiations with German authorities for the complete and final removal of the DEV by the end of the year.<sup>899</sup> As recognised by historian Raymond Carr, three major setbacks also caused the removal of the Blue Division: the US entry in to the war in December 1941, the invasion of North Africa in November 1942 and the defeat of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad by February 1943.<sup>900</sup> Although the token, regimental-sized *Legión Azul* would remain through the spring of 1944, the majority of the *División Azul Española* returned to Spain by the end of 1943.<sup>901</sup> With the last troops having passed into Spain on 24 December 1943, the final flight of General Esteban-Infantes and his chief of

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<sup>899</sup> For their accounts, respectively, of dealing with Franco during the Second World War, see C. Hayes, Carlton, *Wartime mission in Spain* (New York, 1946) and Sir S. Hoare, *Complacent dictator* (New York, 1947).

<sup>900</sup> R. Carr, *Spain: 1808-1975*, 2 ed. (Oxford, 1982), p.713.

<sup>901</sup> PRO FO 371/38414, C15417/104/41 24 Dec 1943.

staff, Lieutenant Colonel José Díaz de Villegas from Berlin to Madrid the division officially no longer existed. Through the *relevo* and *marcha* system, over 45,000 Spaniards saw service in the German Army.<sup>902</sup>

The return to Spain, for many of the veterans, was one of the most difficult times in their lives. Having experienced some of the most brutal fighting ever in human history, returning *divisionarios* were often unsettled and unsure of what they were returning to by leaving the Eastern Front to a warless Spain. Many were certainly relieved to no longer be trapped in Russia; however, some very much had a bittersweet return home. With so many returning maimed and injured volunteers, it is perhaps not surprising that some individuals, for better or worse, could not cope with their old environs and had different responses with how they dealt with being back in Spain. The plight of the veteran in post-war Spain could provide the basis for a still unwritten monograph and cannot be covered in the depth necessary to provide a complete picture of the experience. That said, however, this chapter will attempt to provide an overview of how the former volunteers were compensated for their service to Germany (and all the difficulties that entailed), how they were treated in Spain (while considering the political circumstance it found itself at various times), and how they responded to their homecoming (both during and after the war).

### **Pensions**

Spanish volunteers went Russia with the belief that, in general, their needs would be taken care of. These not only consisted of supplies, clothing, and provisions, but included also monetary compensation for their services to the Wehrmacht of the Third Reich (see Chapter 1). Most had not considered, however, how or what they would need to take care of themselves and their families following service to the Reich or if they found themselves gravely wounded or maimed after fighting in Russia. Many had simply not thought that far ahead when enlisting in what most thought would be a short war in the East. The German government, however, had developed a plan for the monetary compensation of foreign volunteers disabled while fighting the Soviet Union at Hitler's behest.

The German government drew up the terms for monetary compensation, in the forms of pensions, for German nationals in the event of death or serious wounds

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<sup>902</sup> There is discussion to the exact amount and 45,000 men is the best number. Cesar Ibáñez Cagna, Secretary of the Fundación División Azul, estimates 45,000 men having served. Interview: Cesar Ibáñez Cagna, Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004). There is another higher estimate of 47,000 'Falangist' volunteers in H. Thomas, *the Spanish Civil War*, 4 ed. (London, 2001), p.922.



received while fighting in Russia. This legislation's provisions also covered foreign national volunteers in the service of Hitler. On 30 September 1941 the German High Command of the Armed Forces (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*) passed the resolution regarding 'Provisions and Pensions of the German Armed Forces', or '*Werhmachtfürsorge und versorgungsamt*' (W.F.V.A).<sup>903</sup> The payments were to be regulated by the office of the WFVA on the *Rheinstrasse* in Berlin. The pensions were to be paid monthly in Reichsmarks (RM) to those foreign and domestic servicemen of the Wehrmacht. This decree provided not only for the 'disabling and mutilation' of individual soldiers but also provided pensions for the widows and orphans of killed *divisionarios*.<sup>904</sup> Germany most certainly created the payment system of the WFVA with the intent of a short war on the Eastern Front.

**Figure 5.1- Monthly Payments in Reichsmarks to Disabled Veterans of Foreign Volunteers Fighting Against the Soviet Union per German Legislation, 30 September 1941**

Disability Percentage		Scale 1- 25%		Scale 2- 50%		Scale 3- 75%		Scale 4- 100%	
Group	Grade	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married	Single	Married
16	Soldier	20	26	40	52	60	78	80	104
15	Corporal	23	29	46	58	69	87	92	116
13	Sergeant	34	45	68	90	102	135	136	180
12	Staff Sergeant-1*	36	49	72	100	124	150	148	200
11	Staff Sergeant-2*	37	50	74	100	111	150	148	200
10	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant	50	62	100	124	150	186	200	248
9	1 <sup>st</sup> Lieutenant	54	66	108	132	162	198	216	264
8	Captain	76	94	152	188	228	282	304	376
7	Major	88	112	176	224	264	336	352	448
6	Lieutenant Colonel	106	134	212	268	318	402	424	536
5	Colonel	132	168	264	336	396	504	528	672
3	General	188	242	376	484	564	726	752	968

\*The sergeants have been simplified in this chart as the numerous NCO rankings in the German army do not correspond well with either the Spanish or American NCO rankings. A Staff Sergeant-1 is a specialist NCO with less than 10 years service. A Staff Sergeant-2 is a specialist NCO with more than 10 years of Service.

Source: AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/2 March 1942

Payments, or 'pensions for unfitness' (*pensiones de inutilidad*), for wounds received in Russia were determined according to their severity and how that severity affected the overall quality of life of the volunteer. There were two wound types that were either considered external or internal (*lesions externas o internas*). With these

<sup>903</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/1-20 March 1942.

<sup>904</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/2 March 1942.

two wound types, there were four basic payment scales that corresponded to the disability percentage based on the amount or types of wounds. The volunteer was also assigned a group number (see Figure 5.1), which ranged from three ('General') to sixteen ('Soldier'). The group number combined with the wound scale then determined the pension paid. The payments for a *brigada* (sergeant) varied according to number of years of service and speciality, such as working as an armourer or in supplies.<sup>905</sup> In general, the higher the rank, the lower the group number but the larger the pension payment. A married incapacitated volunteer was eligible for a slightly higher pension also according to wound scale number and group number (see Figure 4.1). Any soldier who was blinded resulting 'from war or an act of service' was paid a 'special' additional monthly payment of 100RM in addition to whichever internal or external scale wound received.<sup>906</sup>

Scale one included twenty-five percent disability and ranged in payment from 20RM to 188RM depending on the rank within the division. The wounded soldier also benefited if he was married by gaining a slightly larger stipend. The wounds for a scale one wound included loss of the thumb, loss of three or more fingers except the thumb, wounds to the hands that cause loss of the use of the fingers; wound to the foot that causes loss of use when marching; complete or partial paralysis of the articulation of the shoulder, knee, wrist, elbow or ankle; loss of one eye or vision in one eye or the diminishment of usual vision by a quarter; total loss of use of the palate or all teeth; loss of a testicle, kidney, or the spleen; and finally nervous disorders or 'head scars with considerable bone mass loss' but 'without functional disorders.'<sup>907</sup>

Scale two payments were for disability considered at fifty percent from external wounds. These payments also varied in amount and were greater if the volunteer was married. A lowly soldier was pensioned either 40 or 52RM where a general, had either of the two divisional generals qualified, might have been paid 376 or 484RM depending on their marital status (Figure 5.1). Scale two external injuries included the following:

- Loss of a foot or hand
- Partial loss of forearm or leg but with functional articulation of the elbow or knee
- Wounds that are equivalent to the loss of an extremity (paralysis or stiffness)
- Almost or total deafness
- Loss of all or the greater part of the head skin or mandible

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<sup>905</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/3 March 1942.

<sup>906</sup> Ibid.

<sup>907</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/7 March 1942.

Loss of all or part of the nose  
Total or near all stiffness to articulation of the hip  
Loss of eyesight to 1/10  
Loss of the larynx  
Total loss of the tongue or the greater part its tissue [causing] speech disorders  
Anal, vorical, or intestinal fistula  
Loss of anal sphincter  
Significant aneurisms  
Head wounds with small functional disorders<sup>908</sup>

All of these possible wounds were certainly daunting and frightful; however, the scale three injuries were even more so as they were considerably more debilitating for the volunteer.

The scale three pensions were for seventy-five percent disability. The monthly pensions ranged from 80 to 104RM a month for either the single or married soldier, respectively (see Figure 5.1). A captain in the Blue Division on seventy-five percent disability would have received 228 or 282RM monthly where a colonel would have received either 336 or 396RM depending on his marital status. These scale three wounds included the loss of the arm to the shoulder or leg to the hip, wounds with complete paralysis of an extremity, total blindness ('where it is not possible to count the fingers'), total paralysis of the spinal column, and head wounds leading to 'incurable and grave functional disorders.'<sup>909</sup>

Internal wounds, particularly those affecting the pulmonary or circulatory systems, were readily debatable in severity; therefore, it was necessary for 'observation and study' before determining 'the exact gradation of unfitness' in the wounded *divisionario* because he often did 'not present visible wounds or lesions.'<sup>910</sup> Consequently, how a wounded veteran actually felt did little to help him receive more German government aid unless visibly diagnosed by medical personnel. The wounded veteran was therefore at the mercy of the German medical system, which had its own hospital care issues as the war progresses. The same scale system was used to determine severity, either one to four with percent disability corresponding accordingly and the payments were paid according to disability percentage as with external wounds (Figure 5.1).

A scale-one internal disability might include chronic respiratory ailments but with the regular capacity to breathe with occasional debility; 'active or latent

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<sup>908</sup> Ibid.

<sup>909</sup> Ibid.

<sup>910</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/7-8 March 1942.

tuberculosis'; illnesses related to the heart and the circulatory system 'with limitation of activity'; chronic gastritis and colitis 'that produce a deficient general state of health'; and what was termed 'venous disorders' which were related to problems 'with or without a continuous albumin.'<sup>911</sup> These injuries were considered only bad enough to debilitate the veteran twenty-five percent of his ability to function in civilian society.

The internal scale-two disabilities included similar ailments as those found in scale one, however, to a much worse degree. These injuries included 'chronic respiratory illnesses to the respiratory ways' that required continuous care.<sup>912</sup> These chronic respiratory illnesses included everything from bronchitis to asthmatic attacks, but also 'slow evolving' tuberculosis.<sup>913</sup> Other scale-two ailments also included chronic illnesses related to the heart and circulatory system that not only affected the 'general state' of health of the patient but affected the ability to work jobs of medium intensity.<sup>914</sup> Chronic gastritis, colitis, and stomach ulcers 'with prejudice of the general state of strength and nutrition' were also classified as scale-two ailments, which considered the soldier to be fifty percent incapacitated by his injuries. The volunteer was then paid according to his group number (refer to Figure 5.1).

Scale-three internal wounds were considerably worse and debilitated a volunteer seventy-five percent of what was considered normal function. These ailments included those deemed as 'grave progressive illness of the lungs' such as frequent bronchial asthma attacks and 'open progressive tuberculosis.'<sup>915</sup> Grave and chronic problems with or the stomach and intestines that affected the overall general state of health and required the 'need of a severe diet' were also considered scale three.<sup>916</sup> Any extreme ailments concerning the heart and its function also provided for pensions at the seventy-five percent disability scale.

For both external and internal wounds, scale-four disability was a state of complete incapacitation on the part of the maimed or mutilated volunteer. The provisions of the WFVA did not clearly define the necessary classification for such severe wounds. However, basically the wounding was so severe that the *divisionario* was completely invalided and one hundred percent incapable of functioning at any

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<sup>911</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/8 March 1942.

<sup>912</sup> Ibid.

<sup>913</sup> Ibid.

<sup>914</sup> Ibid.

<sup>915</sup> Ibid.

<sup>916</sup> Ibid.

physical or possibly mental level within society. This was a daunting and scary existence for any returned volunteer short of death. Even in death, however, the German Armed Forces had provided for both the widows and orphans of the Blue Division.

The pensions designed for fallen members of the Blue Division were called 'Pensions to Relatives of the Fallen' (*Pensiones a Familiares de Caidos*).<sup>917</sup> This monetary aid was 'an indemnity equal to the salary of three months following the death' and was to be paid to selective, qualifying family members only. These family members were basically only the widow and children, or in the event that both parents were deceased, just the children. In order for the family members to be eligible for the pension, the *divisionario* had to have been either killed in action or have died as a pensioner from wounds received in the war (internal or external wounds as stated above, scales one to four) which had left him 'disabled or mutilated.'<sup>918</sup>

In the case that the husband had died due to his wounds after being repatriated home, the payments were then once again paid to the widow according the rank group that her husband qualified for (Figure 5.2). Group numbers were organized, once again, from three (general) to sixteen (soldier) for the amount to be paid to the deceased volunteer's widow and/or her children. The payment went to one of the following: the widow (*pension de viudad*), the widow and her children (*media pension de orfandad*), or in the case that both parents being deceased, just the children (*completa pension de orfandad*).<sup>919</sup>

In order to receive a widow's pension, there had to be proof that the marriage had occurred prior to enlisting in the DEV. The children, also to be eligible, had 'to be legitimate.'<sup>920</sup> The widow was to be paid her pension at the end of each month until either she died or remarried. The 'pension of orphanhood' was also paid at the end of each month and was to be paid until either the child reached sixteen or was also deceased.<sup>921</sup> Neither payments to widows or orphans could exceed the amount of pension received by an invalided volunteer at the married, scale four-rate upon his death (Figure 4.1 for scale four rates).<sup>922</sup> In the unfortunate event that the volunteer was considered 'missing in action' (*un Voluntario desapareceria*) but the death was

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<sup>917</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D1/3 March 1942.

<sup>918</sup> Ibid.

<sup>919</sup> Ibid.

<sup>920</sup> Ibid.

<sup>921</sup> Ibid.

<sup>922</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D1/3-4 March 1942.

considered 'certain', the widow and/or orphans could petition for a legal declaration of death in order to receive their respective pensions.<sup>923</sup>

**Figure 5.2- Pensions for Families of Killed Foreign Volunteers per German Legislation, 30 September 1941**

Group	Grade	Widow Pension	Half Pension-Orphan (Death of Father)	Full Pension-Orphan (Death of Both)
16	Soldier	65	13	21
15	Corporal	70	14	23
13	Sergeant	108	21	36
12	Staff Sergeant-1*	118	23	39
11	Staff Sergeant-2*	120	24	40
10	2nd Lieutenant	148	29	49
9	1st Lieutenant	158	31	52
8	Captain	225	45	75
7	Major	268	53	89
6	Lt. Colonel	321	64	107
5	Colonel	403	80	134
3	General	580	116	193

\*The sergeants have been simplified in this chart, as the numerous NCO rankings in the German army do not correspond well with either the Spanish or American NCO rankings. A Staff Sergeant-1 is a specialist NCO with less than 10 years service. A Staff Sergeant-2 is a specialist NCO with more than 10 years of Service.

AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D.1/3 March 1942

Although these pensions were put into place, there was considerable difficulty in actually obtaining the necessary payments from the German government for a number of reasons. One of these was the physical and logistical difficulties of receiving payments from the *Wehrmachtfürsorge und versorgungsamt* in Berlin and then getting the money to the former *divisionarios* and their families in Spain. This was particularly difficult when the fortunes of war turned against Germany. The other single greatest reason is that Germany ultimately lost the war and any benefits that had been made available to maimed and mutilated men, national or foreign, during the war were no longer provided pensions by the non-existent Third Reich government.

The Spanish government expressed reservations in the difficulty of receiving news from the front when the DEV first went into the line. Under pressures from relatives in Spain, the Spanish Ambassador in Berlin, the Conde de Mayalde, had requested in October 1941, per instructions from Serrano Suñer, that he be permitted

<sup>923</sup> AGMAV, C.2023, Cp.3, D1/4 March 1942.

immediate contact with the personnel of the Blue Division.<sup>924</sup> Although the division had not yet reached its frontline position, no news had been received since they had left Germany and British propaganda was running rampant in Spain with stories of their fate at the hands of the Soviets.<sup>925</sup> The government could not respond publicly because it had no news itself. Problems in communication also touched the financial aspects as well. Therefore, while payments had been fairly regular while the Blue Division was in Russia, General Muñoz-Grandes expressed concerns regarding the payments to '*familiares*' back in Spain. The general had asked the military attaché in Berlin to determine if the relatives of the volunteers were receiving their paycheques.<sup>926</sup> The Alto Estado Mayor responded in late February 1942, that relatives of the DEV volunteers were indeed receiving their '*haberes alemanes*' (German payments) in Spain.<sup>927</sup>

As the war progressed, however, pension payments became increasingly difficult to obtain. By the spring of 1943, pensions and allotment checks sent from Germany were often extremely late in arriving if they arrived at all. The blame was not only on the difficulties of the war but the complexity of German bureaucracy.<sup>928</sup> Many times payments were not made because veterans and their relatives failed to file proper requests or supply the necessary credentials that caused delays and no-payments. These bureaucratic difficulties were continual problems for both the German Ambassador and Military Attaché in Madrid as each faced an influx of requests from ex-soldiers or their families and became such a problem that Hitler ordered the matter straightened out. The German Ambassador and Military Attaché had, in fact, been working hard to meet the monetary compensation the veterans deserved and also had sought employment for *ex-divisionarios* in German-owned firms in Spain.<sup>929</sup> In September 1943, Spain refused to sign an accord with Germany known as the *Proyecto de Acuerdo Hispano-Alemán* (Hispano-German Agreement Project) that would have provided continuous health care for Blue Division veterans.<sup>930</sup> Due to the changing international political climate such an agreement presented too many difficulties for the Franco regime despite the obvious benefits

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<sup>924</sup> DGFP, Series D, vol xii, doc. 30 4 Oct 1941, pp612-3.

<sup>925</sup> Ibid.

<sup>926</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.7, D.4/25 18 Feb 1942.

<sup>927</sup> AGMAV, C.2030, Cp.7, D.2/36 28 Feb 1942.

<sup>928</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.267.

<sup>929</sup> Ibid.

<sup>930</sup> X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, pp344-5.

former DEV volunteers might have received.<sup>931</sup> By 1944, however, all assistance more or less ceased as the DEV liaison office in Madrid closed permanently.

With the end of Nazi Germany, the pensions for wounded Spanish volunteers ceased. The Spanish government was not forthcoming with any benefits for those volunteers that it sent to fight against the Soviet Union.<sup>932</sup> The West German government, however, eventually provided a pension for disabled veterans, including members of the Blue Division, in 1965.<sup>933</sup> In 1984, over forty years after being sent to Russia, the Spanish government did allot 500,000 pesetas to be paid as supplemental pensions for living expenses and health care for the Blue Division maimed and disabled; however, healthy veterans did not qualify.<sup>934</sup> Although it had ultimately sent the DEV to Russia, the Franco regime, largely from external political pressures from the United States and Great Britain, was not able to publicly display acknowledgment of the Blue Division and its extensive connections to the Spanish government in the latter stages of World War II and the immediate post-war years that followed. By 1945 where the public spectacles, plastered all over Spanish newspaper headlines, of the sending of fresh recruit replacements and the returning of frontline veterans were long gone.

### **Uncertain Homecoming**

Initially, the sending of the Blue Division to the Eastern Front was a popular decision amongst right-wing Spaniards. Influenced by the Falange, the Spanish government had attempted to present the war effort in the East in the best light possible given the increasing difficulties of the campaign. This support included public photographic and painting exhibitions of German and Spanish soldiers serving at the front in such shows like 'Exposition of German Painters at the Front' organised by the *Asociación de la Prensa* (Press Association) facilitated by the Reich Propaganda Department and the German Institute of Culture in Madrid, which was later attended by the German Ambassador and his wife.<sup>935</sup> At the *Círculo de Bella*

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<sup>931</sup> From various documents between the German Embassy and Spanish Foreign Ministry, Sept 1943-June 1944, AMAE, R2197/43 as quoted in W. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany*, p.189.

<sup>932</sup> A side note. Disabled Republican veterans did not receive pensions until 1975, only months before Franco died. F. Cate-Arries, *Spanish culture behind barbed wire: memory and representation of the French concentration camps*, (Cranbury, NJ, 2004) p.13.

<sup>933</sup> This was after extensive negotiations between Spain and Germany that began in 1962. For an overview this aspect, see X. Moreno Juliá, *La División Azul*, pp.355-60.

<sup>934</sup> Interview General Víctor Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan 2004)

<sup>935</sup> *Informaciones*, 25 March 1942, p.3. *Informaciones*, 14 April 1942, p.1.



*Artes* in Madrid, the *Vieja Guardia* ('Old Guard') of the Falange with help of the *Educación Popular* (Spanish Propaganda Ministry) also put on a photo exhibition for the relatives of the DEV, which also included NO-DO film footage and the documentary, *División Azul*, which was attended by various part notables and members of the German community in Madrid.<sup>936</sup>

From the beginning the *División Española de Voluntarios* was a darling of the Spanish press and radio. In the eyes of the government-controlled media, the division could simply do no wrong. As champions of 'Western Civilisation', the division was destined, in the eyes of the press, to do great things. Not only was the division going to better Europe by destroying Bolshevism, it was also going to allow Spain to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the other ruling powers of the New Order. Amongst Germany and Italy, Spain would return to the former imperial glory of Charles V and Philip II. Contrary to the observations by noted Blue Division historians Kleinfeld and Tambs, who assert that that the forming of the division created an 'ecstatic response' in Spain, the DEV was not necessarily so received.<sup>937</sup> At a time when prisoner of war camps were still sorting out the 'reds' into forced labour gangs for Franco's various public works projects like the Nationalist shrine el Valle de los Caídos and the continuation of political prosecution and censorship towards non-members of the Movimiento, no public voice of dissent against the sending of Spanish volunteers to Russia was allowed.<sup>938</sup>

From the day the DEV left the Estación del Norte in Madrid in front of masses of Falange notables and cronies, the division remained a topic for conversation within Spanish press. However, the Movimiento was quick to lay down ground rules for discussing the DEV publicly. A memo from the Vice Secretary of the *Educación Popular* (Propaganda Ministry) to newspaper directors bluntly informed the Spanish press what were and were not acceptable topics when dealing with the Blue Division.<sup>939</sup> One interesting guideline included insisting on referring to the division as the 'División Española de Voluntarios' when reporting on any 'official' items related to it by the Sub-Secretary of the Spanish Army or government.<sup>940</sup> With any news or information not released to the press by the Spanish Army or the government,

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<sup>936</sup> *Informaciones*, 10 April 1942, p.1. *Informaciones*, 17 April 1942, p.1.

<sup>937</sup> G.Kleinfeld and L. Tambs, *Hitler's Spanish Legion*, p.6.

<sup>938</sup> J. Alvarez Junco and A. Schubert, *Spanish history since 1808* (London, 2000), p.274.

<sup>939</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234811 November 1941.

<sup>940</sup> *Ibid.*

the division could then be referred to as the 'División Azul.'<sup>941</sup> This criterion was a blatant attempt by the Spanish authorities to publicly avoid any linking between the Blue Division and the Franco regime. Those newspapers that failed to adhere to this policy would be punished accordingly by any power the *Delegación de la Educación Popular* had. Those publishers that had any doubts as to how to report on the Blue Division were to contact the *Sección de Información y Censura* (Information and Censorship Section) at anytime for clarification.<sup>942</sup> Obviously the Spanish government was to control how exactly the division was reported to the Spanish public, and in general, the reporting was nearly always cast, as would be expected, in an extremely favourable light when speaking of '*la gloriosa División.*'

Spanish newspapers also attempted to relate the sacrifices of common civilians back in Spain to those volunteers actually meting it out in the difficult expanses of Russia. In one instance, a photograph published in the Spanish newspaper *Informaciones* in late March 1942 showed several mothers of DEV volunteers receiving German Iron Crosses from a Falangist lieutenant colonel of the Spanish Army.<sup>943</sup> The government also tried to connect with the general population through special radio programmes to promote the division within Spain. The *Radio Nacional de España* (Spanish National Radio) reproduced or retransmitted radio programmes from Berlin radio to the Spanish public. For example, one broadcast included the DEV stemming a Russian attack 'in the early hours of the morning' on 18 January 1942 in temperatures -30°C.<sup>944</sup> In another example, in May 1942 the Spanish National Radio produced a radio programme delivered by the '*madrina*' of the Blue Division Celia Jiménez called 'Face to the Public' which extolled the virtues of the Spanish volunteers in the German Army.<sup>945</sup>

Although the initial '*repatriados*' ('repatriated ones') had been well received in Spain (including a motorcade parade in downtown Madrid) in the spring of 1942, the later receptions by Spanish authorities and Falange notables were much more low-key. Prominent members of the Spanish Army, such as General José Millan Astray, founder of the Spanish Foreign Legion, or government dignitaries like Pilar Primo de Rivera, founder of the *Sección Femenina*, no longer awaited the trains at the Estación

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<sup>941</sup> Ibid.

<sup>942</sup> Ibid.

<sup>943</sup> *Informaciones*, 26 March 1942, p.1.

<sup>944</sup> AGMAV, C.2005, Cp.13, D.2/5 1 Feb 1942.

<sup>945</sup> *Informaciones*, 2 May 1942, p.1.

del Norte as they had like when Colonel Esparza returned.<sup>946</sup> The public turnout for the receptions of the Blue Division became, in fact, so bad, that the *Dirección General de Seguridad* (DGS), or Internal Security, had complained of not only the lack of public support, but also the scarcity of local and national government officials in those towns that saw more and more grievously disabled and disfigured former volunteers returned to Spain.

For their part, the Spanish government was not naïve to the difficulties that the volunteers were experiencing in Russia. Returning volunteers, many often seriously wounded, were the best source of information on the adverse conditions of the Eastern Front. For example, in January 1942, thirty-nine ex-divisionarios were interviewed by the DGS as to the conditions in the East. These wounded former volunteers talked of the cold weather conditions causing as many casualties as the Russians had.<sup>947</sup> The former soldiers also discussed the lack of food and water while at the front. Due to the inclement weather conditions, the men often went days without rations other than some bread and were relegated to eating snow to quench their thirsts. These men also expressed that they missed very much Spanish drinks and liquor that would 'have lifted them over the hardships of those inhospitable lands' had they been available.<sup>948</sup> These same interviewees also complained ('as other groups had') of the difficulties of exchanging their German money into Spanish currency at the *Comandancia Militar* (Military Command) in Irún and were also discouraged by the 'rocks and insults' by 'French Communists' as they passed through France on their way back to Spain.<sup>949</sup> The men did mention, however, that they were happy with the medical treatment they had received in hospital (although they do not mention whether it was a German or Spanish facility) and its 'healthy and abundant food.'<sup>950</sup>

By the spring of 1942, the returning groups of wounded soldiers were no longer an uncommon sight at the French-Spanish border. On one occasion in April 1942, four hundred wounded and disabled volunteers returned to Spain in what a DGS report stated were the worst physical condition of any of the men returned from the Eastern Front so far.<sup>951</sup> One hundred of the four hundred were amputees of either legs or arms (if not both), two of whom were completely blind. The doctors who had

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<sup>946</sup> J. Martínez Esparza, *con la División Azul en Rusia*, pp.26-7 and P. Preston, *Comrades*, pp.26-7, 137.

<sup>947</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 8, 14 Jan 1942, pp.169-76.

<sup>948</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 8, 14 Jan 1942, p.170.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>951</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 18 April 1942, pp.331-50.

accompanied the grievously wounded told Spanish authorities that losses so far in the division had reached 7,500: with 2,000 were dead, 2,000 'irrecoverably' wounded, and the remainder 'recoverably' wounded.<sup>952</sup> Another group of six hundred returned wounded (of which 60 percent were deemed '*mutilados absolutos*') slipped into San Sebastian in the early hours of 25 April 1942.<sup>953</sup> The public response, however, was what really concerned the DGS, which reported that the civilian population was beginning to show indifference towards the DEV with coldness and little enthusiasm for its veterans.<sup>954</sup> Despite the efforts of the *Sección Femenina*, which regularly received *batallones de relevo* and hospital trains to feed and entertain volunteers recently arrived from Russia, wider public opinion remained more important to the former volunteers. The DGS complained that there was an absolute lack of enthusiasm, with no assistance from the general public or the civil authorities, which included both the local government and members of the Movimiento.<sup>955</sup> Undoubtedly this attitude had an effect on the veterans themselves privately; however, the Blue Division was still presented in the Spanish press as government darlings publicly.<sup>956</sup>

The DGS had noted of the reaction of the returning Spanish volunteers to this reception after serving on the Russian Front. The lack of public and governmental support and failure 'to understand their sacrifices and mutilations' had an immediate detrimental effect on the now former volunteers, who, for their part, noted 'a marked anti-military ambiance' and felt 'an atmosphere of opposition...to the Army' upon reaching San Sebastian.<sup>957</sup> Possibly stemming from hard feelings left over from the Civil War amongst the civilian population, the returning veterans also noticed an apparent public phobia of the DEV as a possible 'Militia for the Party' with 'appropriate powers.'<sup>958</sup> The government, for its part, did not allow public ridicule of the division despite private sentiments noted by the DGS. For example, in Alicante, an unknown civilian was fined 100 pesetas by the Civil Government for 'Offending

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<sup>952</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 18 April 1942, p.336.

<sup>953</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 25 April 1942, p.345.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>955</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 25 April 1942, pp.345-6.

<sup>956</sup> See demonstrations of this in DEV smiling wounded receiving items from members of the *Sección Femenina*. *Informaciones*, 15 May 1942, p.1.

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*

the volunteers of the Blue Division.<sup>959</sup> Despite these attempts by the government to censor public opinion, the veterans themselves were often candid about the difficulties of serving in Hitler's Army.

Returning veterans were quick to complain about the situation on the Eastern Front, which included concerns as to why they had not received letters and packages from family members while in Russia.<sup>960</sup> The volunteers were also critical of their former German hosts, particularly in their treatment of the civilian population in occupied territories like Poland, Lithuania and Russia. While in these 'occupation zones', the Spaniards had observed the Germans demonstrate a complete disregard for 'the life of a Pole or a Russian' that the Spaniards had seen shot 'openly in the street.'<sup>961</sup> Returning soldiers also reported the poor treatment of prisoners of war who were contained in miserable conditions and served meals 'of boiled potatoes [...] only once a day.'<sup>962</sup> Despite these observations, the former *divisionarios* still held the German military in high regard for its organisation and because, ironically, it deemed 'that the life of each [Wehrmacht] soldier was valuable' while fighting in the East.<sup>963</sup> Overall and despite, present difficulties, the DGS reported that men had professed a fondness for their division which they believed '[was] admired and loved by all' and concluded that 'the spirit of the repatriated soldiers was excellent and their enthusiasm unlimited.'<sup>964</sup> In a statement very much paralleling the position of the Spanish government at that time (April 1942), the report concluded by stating that each, individual volunteer could be proud 'of a high morale and pride of having offered his blood for Spain.'<sup>965</sup>

### **Back to the Front**

One response to the repatriation of both the Blue Division and Legion was the attempt of former *divisionarios* and *legionarios* to return clandestinely to Germany to re-enlist in either the Wehrmacht or, more often, the Waffen-SS. Although some Spanish officers (and former volunteers) had officially asked permission to leave

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<sup>959</sup> From Register Book of Fines in the Archivo Histórico Provincial de Alicante as quoted in D. Sanz Alberola, *La implantación de franquismo in Alicante: El papel del Gobierno Civil (1939-46)* (Alicante, 1999), p.80.

<sup>960</sup> Ibid

<sup>961</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 25 April 1942, p.345

<sup>962</sup> Ibid.

<sup>963</sup> Ibid.

<sup>964</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 23, 25 April 1942, p.347.

<sup>965</sup> Ibid.

Spain to join the Waffen-SS, they were denied.<sup>966</sup> However, in a dire need for men to fill his ranks, Hitler sent General Edwin Hexel to Madrid to re-enlist those veterans eager to return to the Eastern Front following the exit of the Blue Legion in February 1944.<sup>967</sup> The Franco regime, pre-emptively, closed the borders and announced in April 1944 that any Spaniard still serving in the German Armed Forces would forfeit any allowances, pensions, and Spanish citizenship if he did not return to Spain.<sup>968</sup> Despite these threats, by July 1944 small groups of ex-*divisionarios* had passed over the Pyrenees to France to be placed in various German formations.<sup>969</sup> German diplomatic authorities in Madrid, naturally, denied any knowledge of such a program.<sup>970</sup>

After some of these men were incorporated into the German Waffen-SS alongside several members of the Blue Legion who refused to return to Spain, these Spaniards fought roughly to the end of the Third Reich as members of the *Wallonie SS Division* under Leon Degrelle.<sup>971</sup> This small group of 150 Spaniards led by *Hauptsturmführer* (Captain) Miguel Ezquerro Sánchez (a former DEV volunteer repatriated in October 1943) comprised the '*SS Einsatzgruppe Ezquerro*' and allegedly defended the Reichstag in the closing phases of the Battle of Berlin.<sup>972</sup> Some other Spaniards also allegedly enlisted in a special operations *Kommando* unit *Sonderstab 'F'* that was a part of the *Abwehr*'s (German Military Intelligence) *Brandenburg Division*.<sup>973</sup> Others amongst the men who smuggled themselves across the Spanish-French border to join the German armed forces were also incorporated in smaller Wehrmacht units, such as the *Spanische Freiwilligen Kompanie 101* and

<sup>966</sup> M. Puente, *Yo, muerto en Rusia: Memorias del Alférez Ocañas de la División Azul*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Madrid, 2003), p.18.

<sup>967</sup> D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin*, pp.205-6.

<sup>968</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.260. D.W. Pike, *In the service of Stalin*, p.205.

<sup>969</sup> Ibid.

<sup>970</sup> Raymond Proctor asserts that neither the German Ambassador nor the German Military Attaché in Madrid knew of any such operations because of the language in the correspondence between the embassy and Berlin. R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.267.

<sup>971</sup> For more on the Spaniards in the Waffen-SS, see C. Caballero Jurado, *El batallón fantasma: Españoles en la Wehrmacht y Waffen SS 1944-5* (Alicante, 1987).

<sup>972</sup> Captain Ezquerro is an enigmatic character and many have questioned his role in the defence of Berlin. He had written an account of his service in M. Ezquerro Sánchez, *Berlin a vida o muerte* (Barcelona, 1975). First published in Portuguese, this was not allowed to be published in Spain until after Franco's death. Leon Degrelle, Belgian Rexist and commander of the *Wallonie SS Division*, never mentioned any Spaniards having served in his division in his account of his service on the Eastern Front, although this may have been motivated by not wanting to upset his Spanish hosts (where he fled and ultimately died in Malaga in 1994) following the end of the war. L. Degrelle, *Campaign in Russia: the Waffen SS on the Eastern Front* (Torrance, CA, 1985).

<sup>973</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p. 266. J.P. Sourd, *true believers*, pp21-2. For more on German *Kommando* units, see J. Lucas, *Kommando: German Special Forces or World War II* (London, 1985).

*Spanische Freiwilligen Kompanie 102* that were sent to the Austrian Tyrol for anti-partisan and mountain warfare training before being sent to Yugoslavia.<sup>974</sup> Although not well documented, Spanish and French *maquis* forces in fighting near Toulouse in August 1944 allegedly captured former officers and soldiers of the Blue Division serving in a German unit in Southern France.<sup>975</sup> One former *divisionario*, Lieutenant Lorenzo Ocañas Serrano had been wounded and spent long periods in German hospitals before being repatriated back to Spain while with the Blue Division. He was such an anti-Communist, however, that he returned to Germany only to be captured during the latter stages of the war and remained in the Soviet Union as a *cautiviero* until April 1954.<sup>976</sup> Many of these Spaniards serving in German units following the official repatriation of the Blue Division continued to wear the emblems of that unit in their new German formations.<sup>977</sup> This constituted a problem for the Spanish government as it was concerned that such visual demonstrations might hinder Spain's neutrality late in the war.

#### **Internal and Foreign Pressures during the War**

Although the exiled Republican government suffered a tremendous blow with the fall of France in 1940, it still continued to influence foreign nations in their dealings with Franco's Spain.<sup>978</sup> Despite this effort abroad, Franco's regime Spain held a firm grip on any political dissention in Spain during the Second World War, a state of affairs which continued far beyond, as observed by historian Michael Richards:

After 40 years in power, the Nationalist ensured they left few traces of their 'justice.' A reliable estimate for the peak of post-war retaliation, between 1939-1945, would be 100,000 executions. About 250,000 people were given long prison sentences during which their sins had to be redeemed through work. Labour battalions undertaking public units were formed. The biggest aberration of all was the construction, between 1940-1959, by 20,000 political prisoners, many whom died or badly injured, of the so

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<sup>974</sup> These were substandard, low quality formations that suffered from poor morale and desertions. The exact history of these formations is also greatly debated. J.P. Sourd, *true believers*, pp24-7.

<sup>975</sup> E. Pons Prados, *Republicanos españoles en la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid, 1975), pp.79-83.

<sup>976</sup> M. Puente, *Yo, muerto en Rusia*, p.17.

<sup>977</sup> W. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany*, p.211.

<sup>978</sup> There were nearly 500,000 Republican refugees in France which were held in various concentration camps. Given the choice of being returned to Spain or supplying France with cheap manual labour, many Republicans chose the latter. For an overview of the experience, see M. Rafanaeu-Moj, *Los campos de concentración de los refugiados españoles en Francia, 1939-45* (Barcelona, 1995). However, following Germany's victory, Marshal Petain's government handed over many Popular Front leaders, like Luis Companys, Julián Zugazagoista, and Francisco Cruz Salido to Nationalist Spain and all were sentenced to death and executed under the orders of Franco. J. Pons Prat, *Memorias*, p.34.

call: el Valle de los Caídos, a gigantic mausoleum to the northeast of Madrid, to commemorate those who had died for 'God's Cause.'<sup>979</sup>

However, despite nearly 241,000 estimated political prisoners held by the Franco regime when the DEV was organised in 1941, the exiled Republicans certainly had an opinion about the sending of Spaniards to fight in Russia.<sup>980</sup> For example, José Pons Prat, who had been a member of the legislature of the Republic and then exiled to Columbia following the Civil War, recalls feeling 'left speechless with fright' with the Franco's intervention on the side of the Axis.<sup>981</sup> As a writer for a pro-Republic magazine, *El Tiempo*, he had asserted that Germany simply could not defeat the naval power of Great Britain with air power alone and was further convinced that the war was lost with the German invasion of the Soviet Union and the entry of the United States into the war.<sup>982</sup>

Franco, however, not only had to contend with exiled Republicans, but also members of the former Spanish monarchy also living abroad. As the son of the exiled Alfonso XIII and pretender to the Spanish throne, Don Juan de Borbón y Battenberg also attempted to exert political pressure on Franco's 'provisional regime' to not only restore the monarchy (as Franco had continually promised to do) but to also declare 'absolute Spanish neutrality' in the Second World War, which included the removal of the Blue Division from Russia.<sup>983</sup> Despite Franco's appeal to the contrary, Don Juan issued his Lausanne Decree in late 1943.<sup>984</sup> Don Juan, who had threatened to break from the Franco regime publicly, hoped to appeal to Franco's patriotism in allowing the Bourbon monarchy back into power in Spain, thus avoiding the expected downfall of the Franco regime similar in a replay of events in Fascist Italy.<sup>985</sup> Don Juan's appeal fell on deaf ears as Franco plotted his own political course for Spain, one which did not include the monarchy (he later named Don Juan's son and current

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<sup>979</sup> M. Richards, 'Civil war, violence and the construction of Francoism' in P. Preston and Mackenzie, eds., *The Republic*, pp.195-239 as cited in F.J. Romero Salvadó, *Twentieth Century Spain: politics in Spain, 1898-1998* (London, 1999), p.127.

<sup>980</sup> As quoted in H.L. Matthews, *The yoke and arrows* (New York, 1961), p.59.

<sup>981</sup> J. Pons Prat, *memorias*, pp.79-81.

<sup>982</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>983</sup> J. Tusell, *La España de Franco* (Madrid, 1989), p. 78. Don Juan had actually been friendly to and a proponent of the Axis cause initially. Germany was a proponent of restoring the Spanish monarchy which it felt would be friendlier to the New Order than Franco's government turned out to be. P. Sainz Rodríguez, *Testimonios y recuerdos* (Barcelona, 1978), p.279, as quoted in S. Payne, *The Franco regime*, p.328.

<sup>984</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, p.496. S. Payne, *the Franco regime*, pp.325-32.

<sup>985</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, pp.496, 504-5.



Spanish king, Juan Carlos, whom Franco hoped would be a Bourbon trained 'in the framework of the regime itself', as heir apparent and successor in July 1969).<sup>986</sup>

Given the nature of the Civil War, Franco's government had to deal with leftist sentiment and occasional dissention still prevalent in Spanish society while the Blue Division was still in Russia. Even as Germany received goods purchased from Spain to further the war effort, Spanish leftists, employed in the factories and workshops, continued to leave their mark on these exported products. In February 1942 the DGS reported that various incidents involving the writing of subversive slogans, such as '*Muera Alemania, Viva el Comunismo*' ('Death to Germany, Long Live Communism'), inside the (unspecified) products being sent to Germany.<sup>987</sup> There were also numerous drawings of the hammer and sickle ('*hoz y martillo*'). Interestingly, the report claims that the Gestapo had allegedly detained and jailed the suspected offenders (not the DGS).<sup>988</sup> Spanish workers had been sent as contract labour to Germany as another facet of repaying the '*deuda de sangre*' in the spring of 1941; however, the DGS report also stated a fear that there were Spanish Communists ('adversaries of our Crusade') posing as foreign workers in German factories.<sup>989</sup>

The DGS had concerns over Communist guerrilla activity that occasionally still occurred in Spain despite Franco's announcement of the end of the civil war on 1 April 1939. The guerrilla activity culminated in October 1944 with the attempted 'invasion' of Spain from France by over 2,000 armed Communists, who hoped for a popular uprising in response to their actions.<sup>990</sup> This motley force, many whom had trained and fought with the *maquis*, was easily defeated by the Spanish Army under the leadership of General Yagüe, having received little or no help from the local conservative, peasant population.<sup>991</sup> Communist bands would continue to raid from France into Spain until these marauding groups were largely destroyed by counter-operations by the Civil Guards in 1947.<sup>992</sup> Besides Communist activity, the Franco

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<sup>986</sup> S. Payne, *The Franco regime*, pp.379, 539-42.

<sup>987</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 15, 5 Feb 1942, p.227.

<sup>988</sup> *Ibid.* Preliminary discussion to send over 100,000 Spanish workers to Germany occurred in April 1941, months prior to Barbarossa and the invasion of the USSR. For more on this process, see W. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany*, pp.97-8, 127-8.

<sup>989</sup> *DIHGF*, vol iii, doc 15, 5 Feb 1942, p.227.

<sup>990</sup> D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain: From Franco to Constitutional Monarchy* (London, 1985), p. 82.

<sup>991</sup> S. Payne, *History of Spain and Portugal*, vol ii (Madison, 1973), p.688. For more on the invasion see, F. Martínez de Baños Carrillo, *Maquis y guerrilleros: Del Pirineo al Maestrazgo* (Saragossa, 2003).

<sup>992</sup> D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain*, p.82.

government was also worried about guerrilla activity of former members of the *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (CNT) that periodically caused general chaos and confusion with raids, robberies, and shootings of policemen and the distribution of anarchist propaganda.<sup>993</sup> The DGS was also concerned with nationalist separatist groups like the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV), who gathered military intelligence for the British while attempting to undermine the Franco regime to gain Basque independence.<sup>994</sup>

Following the end of the Spanish Civil War and until 1960, despite the attempts of foreign exiles living in expatriate communities in Paris and Mexico City to exert pressure meaningful pressure on foreign powers (mainly the United States and Britain) to help in the disposal of the Franco regime, there still existed within Spain internal strife and 'subversion.' Franco had attempted to curtail political dissent abroad by granting exiles an informal 'amnesty' in allowing them to return to Spain.<sup>995</sup> Understandably, very few risked the opportunity to be placed in a Spanish jail, or worse, killed upon their return. Franco's political machine in Spain had the ability to repress, in general, the majority of contrary political opinion throughout its rule.

### **Falange veterans back in Spain**

Despite Germany's difficulties, the resolve by certain 'die-hards' amongst the Falange believed, inevitably, that the Axis would win the war against the Soviets. There was also the perception by some members within the Falange that Germany could not prevail in the East without them. One unnamed son of a *Marqués* (marquis) whom had visited the front following the disastrous first winter returned to Spain and briefed the Alto Estado Mayor with the following opinions:

'The Germans did see the arrival of the Spaniards to Germany as an important thing until they saw their heroism at the front. The Germans admired them and wanted them more than ever... At the front tragic days have passed... [The Germans] were surprised by the capacity of the Russian Army. The Russians had guarded their war materials for the winter and [then] demonstrated their tanks, flame throwers, and superior airplanes like the Axis [has]. More so, they had a capable military.'<sup>996</sup>

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<sup>993</sup> Ibid.

<sup>994</sup> J. Sullivan, *ETA and Basque nationalism: the fight for Euskadi, 1890-1986* (New York, 1988), pp21-2.

<sup>995</sup> *Arriba*, 14 April 1945. *Evening Standard*, 14 April 1945.

<sup>996</sup> PRO GFM 33/352 234851-53 5 May 1942.

Even with these Russian advances at the front, the son of the *Marqués* was convinced that the Germans would win the war within the next six or seven weeks.<sup>997</sup>

Despite the Blue Division being sent by Franco as ‘the blood of our youth...to join that of our comrades of the Axis... under the watchful protection of our united Army and the Falange’, as the tide of fortune turned against the Axis, so did the influence of the Falange on internal Spanish politics.<sup>998</sup> The reality was that neither the Falange nor Spanish Army were ‘united’, and the person with the most to lose politically the longer the DEV remained in Russia was Serrano Suñer. The Army and the Falange had many public disagreements culminating in a violent incident during the pageant of the *Virgen de Begoña* in Bilbao, in August 1942.<sup>999</sup>

Before the Falange lost any and all influence on the Spain’s government and the Blue Division, Serrano Suñer had attempted to assert what little authority he had left in asking that those ‘super-Falangists’ like Guitarte and Ridruejo, who had enlisted in the euphoria of June 1941, be returned as quickly as possible to Spain. Despite Suñer having asserted that ‘on the Eastern Front you will find the best of Spanish youth’, the Falange was experiencing a relative dearth of political notables in governmental positions, since it had lost seven Civil Governors to the DEV.<sup>1000</sup> Many old Falangists like Enrique Sotomayor and José Maria González Gimenez were killed fighting in Russia.<sup>1001</sup> Sotomayor, a well-known Falange writer prior to enlisting in the Blue Division, had died, according to the Spanish daily *Informaciones*, ‘in Russia for God and Spain.’<sup>1002</sup>

Despite Franco’s ability to efficiently repress the various political parties, such as the Communists and Socialists (which were all illegal in and ‘enemies’ of Franco’s Spain), social upheaval, such as the guerrilla wars of the 1940s, the student protests and riots of the 1960s and the terrorism of ETA in the 1970s, continued to exist in

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<sup>997</sup> Ibid.

<sup>998</sup> Taken from Franco’s ‘The die is caste’ speech. *Extremadura: Diaro Católico*, 18 July 1941 as cited in E. Hernández-Sandoica and E. Moradiellos, ‘Spain and the Second World War, 1939-45’, in N. Wylie, ed., *European neutrals and non-belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2002), p.260.

<sup>999</sup> This incident involved a Falangist throwing two hand grenades at Army officials celebrating the pageant and honouring men of the *Tercio de Begoña* from the Spanish Civil War. L. Suárez Fernández, *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial*, pp.408-12. Also for the political consequences surrounding the incident, see S. Payne, *Franco regime*, pp.302-12.

<sup>1000</sup> Serrano Suñer quote from an interview in Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* as reprinted in *Informaciones*, 22 April 1942, p.1. J. Tusell, *La España de Franco* (Madrid, 1989), p.70.

<sup>1001</sup> *Informaciones* 3, 11 Jan 1942, p.15.

<sup>1002</sup> *Informaciones* 3 Jan 1942, p.3.

Spain.<sup>1003</sup> It should not come as a surprise, therefore, that dissent occurred as well within Franco's own ranks. Certainly many Falangists felt deceived by Franco's political policy and the direction of the regime, very different to that clearly laid out in the writings of José Antonio Primo de Rivera. These *camisa viejas*, many of whom were former volunteers of the Blue Division, began to plan ways to change the current course of Spanish politics in the clandestine organisation called '*la Falange Auténtica*', or 'Authentic Falange' in the autumn of 1943.<sup>1004</sup>

The Falange, as a big proponent of the Blue Division, was particularly interested in playing up the sacrifices of the 'Falange volunteers' serving at the front. One editorial exalted the actions of the Falange serving in the East, describing their situation in Russia as 'hard' but adding, however, that 'Spaniards are made of steel.'<sup>1005</sup> However, the faltering position of Germany, which many Falangists felt would destroy their movement in Spain, was a difficult pill to swallow. One particular die-hard was the sister of the Falange's founder, Pilar Primo de Rivera. For her the Blue Division embodied not only the fight against communism, which she detested, but represented the survival of the Falange as a whole. As observed by historian Paul Preston:

The Falange Auténtica sought to replace the Franco Regime with a more authoritarian leader with the interests of the Movimiento first. She would push for the Junta Política to remove [Secretary General of the Movimiento, José Luis] Arrese from office after he had proclaimed in a speech that Spain was no longer totalitarian. If anything she did not believe it was totalitarian enough. Pilar, possibly from influences from Dionisio Ridruejo, felt Franco had betrayed the interests of not only Germany, but also the party and Spain. She would assert that 'the Falange comes before everything else.'<sup>1006</sup>

Pilar Primo de Rivera, however, was not the only member of the Falange who felt disillusioned after the removal of the DEV from the Eastern front.

Dionisio Ridruejo, another former Movimiento notable and *ex-divisionario*, was so disenfranchised with the Franco regime that he created his own clandestine political party, the Social Democrats.<sup>1007</sup> After being wounded on the Eastern Front,

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<sup>1003</sup> Political parties other than the Movimiento were outlawed, when they legalised, except for the Communist Party (PCE), in June 1976 by King Juan Carlos. J. Story, 'Spain's external relations redefined: 1975-89' in R. Gillespie, et al. eds., *Democratic Spain: Reshaping external relations in a changing world*, (London, 1995) p. 33. R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy*, 2 ed. (London, 1981), p 134.

<sup>1004</sup> P. Preston, *Comrades*, p.137.

<sup>1005</sup> *Informaciones*, 28 April 1942, p.1.

<sup>1006</sup> P. Preston, *Comrades*, pp 137-8. Also see *DIHGF*, vol. iv, pp.502,506-9.

<sup>1007</sup> Ridruejo created the *Partido Social de Acción Democrática* in 1956.

Ridruejo was returned via plane from Russia dressed in his 'uniform of the glorious Blue Division' where he was met by Serrano Suñer, Pilar and Dolores Primo de Rivera, and others.<sup>1008</sup> After initially towing the line of the party (including giving an emotional speech to his DEV comrades returned to San Sebastian in late May 1942), Ridruejo resigned all his positions with in the Falange and Spanish government and claimed that 'authentic' Falange was officially dead in a letter written to Franco in July 1942.<sup>1009</sup> So politically disillusioned following his experiences on the Eastern Front was he, that Ridruejo stated, 'the victors of yesterday, we fell the vanquished of today', in reference to Franco's failures to keep his post-Civil War promises.<sup>1010</sup> Ridruejo felt that Spain was failing because it was ruled by one man not by a party (the Falange). Naturally, despite his history within the Falange and service during the Civil War, Ridruejo found himself an 'enemy' of Spain and was often arrested and detained, which included six weeks for supporting a student riot in 1956, by the government for his outspokenness and criticisms towards it.<sup>1011</sup> In 1961, Ridruejo complained that Spain had experienced 'a loss of working-class consciousness' under Franco's rule, and he believed Spain should choose a different path politically as a result<sup>1012</sup>.

As the Falange's influence on internal politics waned and the reverses against the Axis continued, Spain had to extract itself from its tumultuous and precarious relationship with Germany in what has been described as 'moral belligerence by impotence.'<sup>1013</sup> Franco, realising he had to divert the attentions of the Allies, led Spain on to what Spanish historian Javier Tusell has called, 'the uncertain road to neutrality' or what another historian more succinctly called 'an adaptable neutrality.'<sup>1014</sup> However, Franco was willing, if possible, to broker a peace between the Allies and Germany in order to hopefully stave off the expected Russian conquering of Western Europe. With the help of the Vatican (which had received

<sup>1008</sup> *Informaciones*, 23 April 1942, p.1.

<sup>1009</sup> Ridruejo spoke, 'Comrades, in the name of the Falange which represents the will of the Spanish people, we welcome you to la Patria. In your representation, the Falange sent to Russia the best men.' *Informaciones*, 26 May 1942, p.3. Death of Falange from D. Ridruejo, *Casi unas memorias* (Madrid, 1976), pp 236-40 as quoted in R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., p. 26.

<sup>1010</sup> Quoted in R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy*, 2 ed., p.163.

<sup>1011</sup> D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain*, pp.97-8.

<sup>1012</sup> R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy*, p.139.

<sup>1013</sup> E. Hernández-Sandoica and E. Moradiellos, 'Spain and the Second World War, 1939-45', in N. Wylie, ed., *European neutrals and non-belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2002), p.259.

<sup>1014</sup> J. Tusell, *La España de Franco*, p.72 and R. Tamames, 'la era de Franco' in M. Artola, *Historia de España* (Madrid, 1988), p.257.

several members of the Blue Division during the war), Spain hoped that a negotiated peace would allow Germany to remain a 'bulwark against communism.'<sup>1015</sup> Despite these political overtures abroad during the war, the Spanish Army maintained its unique association with the Blue Division while it was in Russia; however, this relationship inevitably caused certain divisions within the Spanish Army Ministry itself as the fortunes of war changed against Germany.

### **Spanish Army and the Blue Division**

The Spanish Army played an essential role during the Civil War. Under the leadership of its generals, it was the driving force in both resolving the conflict and securing Franco's power in Spain. The relationship between the Spanish Army and politics in Spain has been well described in Paul Preston's *The Politics of Revenge*; therefore it does not need to be rehashed in this thesis.<sup>1016</sup> However, it is important to provide an overview of the role Spanish Army during World War II and of the Blue Division veterans who were influential in not only deciding later army policies, but also in attempting (although failing) to retain power upon Franco's death.

The response in Spain to the invasion of Russia by Germany varied greatly in spite of the Spanish press's attempt to paint a pro-Axis slant. Certainly, the Falange, as demonstrated, was supportive of it. The Spanish Army, however, was not as enthusiastic about the prospect of war, particularly if it meant a substantial Spanish commitment. Operation Barbarossa largely caught the majority of Spain off guard, including the Army, and according to the former Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs Colonel Juan Beigbeder Atienza, Spain sent the 'Expeditionary Force [DEV] to Russia' as "'an act of fear'" of Germany.<sup>1017</sup> In a conversation with the British Military Attaché, Beigbeder also quickly blamed the Falange for sending an 'Army of the Falange' to Russia.<sup>1018</sup> An initial rivalry developed between the Falangist and non-Falangist officers over the potential role of the division in Russia and its potential impact on the future of the Spanish Army and Spain itself. Colonel Beigbeder, like many of his contemporaries, was party to this infighting and back-biting between the

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<sup>1015</sup> The Pope had received four members of the DEV who were guests of Italy's Fascist government. *Informaciones*, 22 May 1942. For Franco's desire for help, see H. Livermore, *A history of Spain* (London, 1958), p.447.

<sup>1016</sup> P. Preston, *The politics of revenge: Fascism and the military in 20th century Spain* (London, 1995).

<sup>1017</sup> "un acto de miedo" PRO HS 6/921 27 June 1941.

<sup>1018</sup> Ibid.

Army and Falange. Though discussed in many works, unfortunately, no current monograph exists on this topic that delves any deeper than the surface tension.<sup>1019</sup>

As stated previously the Spanish Army was not interested in allowing the Falange to control the eventual volunteer division that Spain was to send to fight the Soviet Union. Despite Falange recruitment of its various leaders and her militia throughout the lifespan of the Blue Division, the Spanish Army Ministry always held control of the division's composition by squeezing out Falange volunteers by two simple methods. By either excluding Falange officers or by simply sending Falange volunteers home early from Russia, the Spanish Army was capable of keeping Falange control of the division at arm's length. The fact that Franco largely threw out his Falange-controlled and Axis-leaning cabinet in early 1942 also helped the army. When Serrano Suñer, despite being Franco's brother-in-law, and other Falange cronies were replaced by Count General Francisco Gómez Jordana and other, more moderate, officials, the Falange was effectively removed from any real influence over the DEV. However, the Falange did continue to recruit for the division in the name of the Movimiento, but it could not effect the overall position of either the government or the army in regards to policy in Russia.

As the war progressed the commitment of Spanish troops in Russia remained a touchy subject amongst the officers of the Alto Estado Mayor in Madrid. Not only was there friction between Falangist and non-Falangist officers, but there was intense animosity between officers of either pro-German or pro-Allied (mainly British) leanings. As the war turned against Germany, the pro-British officers of the Spanish military asserted their opinions as Spain's political allegiance shifted away from the Axis. Some officers, including senior staff members of Franco's War Council, felt obligated to demonstrate to the Allies that Spain was privately moving away from the Axis despite public posturing to the contrary. In a letter to the Foreign Office, the British Military Attaché in Madrid, Brigadier W.W. Torr, revealed a conversation he had with General Antonio Aranda Mata in which Aranda openly discussed the withdrawal of the Blue Division. Aranda, who was an anti-Francoist, further discussed the plans for the Blue Legion (that it would consist of 8,000 men and be incorporated into the SS; neither were true) and the future of the Blue Squadron (that it would remain entirely).<sup>1020</sup> Both details lead the Foreign Office to question the

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<sup>1019</sup> One doctoral dissertation is in development that will hopefully illuminate this subject.

<sup>1020</sup> PRO FO 371/34814 19 November 1943.

‘categorical assurances’ from Count Jordana that the DEV was truly being withdrawn from the Eastern Front.<sup>1021</sup>

Even prior to his conversation with Aranda, Brigadier Torr was able to talk fairly openly with members of the Spanish military regarding the Blue Division. Prior to the repatriation of the DEV, Torr submitted three pages’ worth of information to the Home Office in another of his “Conversations with Generals,” which stated that, ‘I was impressed by General [Antonio] Barroso’s attitude throughout this conversation, especially bearing in mind the fact that he had made a special request that I should go and see him.’<sup>1022</sup> Torr considered Barroso ‘a very able officer with considerable diplomatic experience.’<sup>1023</sup> Torr would say ‘it may be...premature guesswork, but I have the feeling that it is possible, that General Franco, backed by the generals, may have made up his mind at last that Germany is not going to win the war, and has decided to adopt a more confident policy directed to the achievement, in successive stages, of (1) the withdrawal of the Blue Division, (2) the declaration of Spain’s neutrality, and (3) the restoration of the monarchy, on his own terms.’<sup>1024</sup> Torr had surmised quite correctly, except for the immediate restoration of the monarchy (which did not occur until Franco’s death), the intentions of the Spanish government following his conversation with General Barroso (who eventually became head of Head of the Caudillo’s Military Household in 1956).<sup>1025</sup> Torr also reported not only on the Blue Division and the restoration of the monarchy, but also on the potential change of government, Spanish foreign policy, arms for Germany, the changing trend of the war, and the political situation in Portugal all based on a single conversation with a Spanish general. While some of the Spanish Army seemed to extend an informal olive branch to the Allies, others took their experiences in serving in Russia to help change and influence the Spanish Army as a whole.

The Spanish Army, despite having fought the recent Civil War, was antiquated during the Second World War. Consisting in 1939 of nearly 850,000 poorly equipped infantry and 19,000 artillerymen, and with mobility (including active cavalry units) dependent on horses at, the standing ‘army of occupation’ still consisted of half a

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<sup>1021</sup> Hand-written comment from M.S Williams of the Foreign Office, see *Ibid.*

<sup>1022</sup> FO 371/ 34814, no. 1714 4 Oct 1943.

<sup>1023</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1024</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1025</sup> For Barroso’s relationship with Franco while head of his Military Household, see P. Preston, *Franco*, p.660.



million men in the early 1940s.<sup>1026</sup> Therefore, the Spanish military was greatly affected by the experiences of those men who served in Russia. These former officers of the Blue Division, who gained invaluable combat experience and field knowledge, eventually became the backbone of the officer corps in the Spanish Army and Air Force. For its part the German Army left an indelible mark on its Spanish counterpart. Spain had sent numerous military commissions to various parts of German-occupied Europe and the Russian Front to see exactly how the German Armed Forces worked.<sup>1027</sup> In an effort to modernise itself during the Second World War, the Spanish Army had also hoped to gain a manufacture license from German arms maker Krupp for the fabrication in Spain of the 88 mm artillery piece in early October 1942.<sup>1028</sup> After the war and before being supplied with American weapons, the Spanish Army continued to use many German weapons as standard heavy equipment into the 1960s and the German-patterned *Stahlhelm* up until the late 1980s.<sup>1029</sup> Despite this, the Spanish military inevitably had to change as Spain changed politically and economically.

The reality is that these officers returned to a much different Spain than the one that existed prior to fighting in Russia. Both the army and the Spanish Catholic Church, traditional stalwarts of reactionary Spain, experienced changes following the Second World War.<sup>1030</sup> Franco had predominately leaned on the Falange and the Spanish Army (not the military in general) until 1945.<sup>1031</sup> Following the end of World War II, however, Franco began to depend on prominent leaders of the Catholic Church to promote Spain's image abroad (mainly to the victorious Allies). Although the Falange took up a relegated, practically non-existent, secondary role in Spanish politics, the army remained entrenched and loyal to Franco, and later provided the

<sup>1026</sup> The 'army of occupation' included 22,100 officers which was forty-seven percent greater than the French officer corps of both the metropolitan and colonial armies. P. Preston, *The politics of revenge*, p.85.

<sup>1027</sup> In one example, a Spanish military mission under Lt. Colonel Jiménez Alfaro was sent to observe German coastal batteries in occupied France. AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.14, D1/1 3 Sept 1942. Several Spanish military commissions were sent to the Russian Front several times throughout the war.

<sup>1028</sup> AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/10 5 Oct 1942. The license was approved for sale on 26 October 1942 and a German technical commission was sent 'to study the possibilities of fabrication in Spain.' AGMAV, C.2031, Cp.15, D.1/37 26 Oct 1942.

<sup>1029</sup> The *Stahlhelm* is the distinctive German-style helmet which is well-designed protective pattern similar (although not used previously because of political connotations) to the 'Fritz' helmet used by today's US Army, and subsequently supplied to the modern Spanish Army.

<sup>1030</sup> For more on both in modern Spain see I. Gibson, *Fire in the blood: the new Spain* (London, 1992), pp66-84.

<sup>1031</sup> Spanish historian Santos Juliá states that the Spanish Army, not the airmen or seamen conquered Spain and legitimised Franco's hegemony. S. Juliá, 'La sociedad', in J.L. García Delgado, ed., *Franquismo: El juicio de la historia* (Madrid, 2000), p.92.

backbone of what remained of 'el Bunker' towards the demise of the regime leading to Franco's death.<sup>1032</sup> By 1957, however, Franco also began to surround himself with not only military leaders and members of the *Opus Dei*. This quasi-secretive Catholic order also provided the necessary technocrats for industrialising, thereby rebuilding, Spain's economy in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s.<sup>1033</sup>

Despite a short relegation on the political backburner immediately following the Second World War, the Spanish Army remained entrenched in a strong political position as long as Franco remained in power. The higher powers included numerous officers of not only the Spanish Civil War, but also veterans of the Blue Division. Therefore working on the hypothesis that Blue Division veteran officers provided part of the backbone of the Spanish Army in the post-war Spain, their role comes into question. The exact political motivations after 1943 of career Spanish officers who had served in the Blue Division are extremely difficult to systematically research and the subject merits a monograph of its own. Although it is difficult to quantify and veterans of the Blue Division generally deny it, service in the Blue Division did help build a military career in the Spanish Army.<sup>1034</sup> No greater example exists than the public persona of the DEV, General Agustín Muñoz-Grandes.

After serving several years as head of Franco's military household, Muñoz-Grandes was allowed a more prominent, public position within the Movimiento. As a staunch anti-Communist, Muñoz-Grandes was an active supporter of and pushed for the base agreements between the United States and Spain.<sup>1035</sup> Following Mao Tse-tung's victory on mainland China, Spain continued to recognise the Nationalist government in Taiwan as the legitimate voice of China. Muñoz-Grandes was sent there as a delegate as Spain sought new trade partners in the Far East in 1960.<sup>1036</sup> On 10 July 1962 Captain General Muñoz-Grandes was named to the newly created position of Vice-President of the government while he simultaneously held the post of *Jefe del Alto Estado Mayor* (Chief of the Supreme Staff) of the Spanish Army.<sup>1037</sup>

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<sup>1032</sup> 'The Bunker' was the name given to Franco and his cronies at the centre of Spanish power.

<sup>1033</sup> S. Payne, *Franco's Spain* (New York, 1967), p.42. R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy*, 2 ed., p.168.

<sup>1034</sup> General Víctor Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan 2004) and Cesar Ibáñez Cagna, Historian-Secretary: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan 2004).

<sup>1035</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.288.

<sup>1036</sup> V.R. Pilapil, 'The Far East', in ed. J.W. Cortada, *Spain in the Twentieth-Century world: Essays on Spanish diplomacy, 1898-1978* (Westport, CT, 1980), pp227-8.

<sup>1037</sup> F. Agüero, *Soldiers, civilians, and democracy: Post-Franco Spain in comparative perspective* (Baltimore, MD, 1995), p.53.

The creation of a Vice-President position was significant as Franco delegated the daily operations of government to another individual. As a Falangist, Muñoz Grandes helped represent the ideological undertones of the powers that brought about the Franco government thereby helping the Caudillo demonstrate that there were not any changes in either his control or the regime's anti-democratic nature.<sup>1038</sup> This promotion within the government initially also gave many in Spain the impression that Muñoz-Grandes, and not Almirante (Admiral) Luís Carrero Blanco (who replaced him in 1967), was the heir-apparent to Spanish leadership, which was not true, although neither lived longer than Franco himself.<sup>1039</sup> General Muñoz-Grandes was also Spain's representative at the funeral of assassinated US President John F. Kennedy in October 1963.<sup>1040</sup> Muñoz-Grandes would continue to work in the government until it was announced on 1 April 1965 that he had a cancer, from which he eventually died from on 11 July 1970 at the age of seventy-four.<sup>1041</sup>

However, the Spanish military, whose officers always had more prestige than privilege, was no longer an attractive option for Spanish youths who had greater employment opportunities with the success of the Spanish economy of the 1960s.<sup>1042</sup> With greater economic opportunity, entrants into the Academia General dropped by two-thirds in 1969-70.<sup>1043</sup> The Spanish military also experienced some internal changes in allegiance. For example, beginning in the early 1970s, there were more officers willing to pull away from the regime, such as those in the *Unión Militar Democrática* (Democratic Military Union).<sup>1044</sup> This inner counter-regime aspect mixed with a pre-existent political and regional tensions in certain segments of the civilian population caused problems for the traditionalist Spanish military as Spain began the transition from its Francoist past to the democracy it knows today.<sup>1045</sup> By the transitional period to democracy in Spain, the senior ranks of the Spanish Army

<sup>1038</sup> S. Ellwood, *Franco* (London 1994), p.197.

<sup>1039</sup> S. Ellwood, *Franco*, p.225. Almirante Carrero Blanco, who could have been Franco's heir if he had wanted the job, in fact supported Juan Carlos' naming as future head-of-state. Carrero Blanco was assassinated by an ETA car bomb in 1973. D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain*, pp.129-30.

<sup>1040</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.118.

<sup>1041</sup> R. de la Cierva, *La transformación de España, 1956-72* (Madrid, 1997), p.109. R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.118.

<sup>1042</sup> R. Carr and J.P. Fusi, *Spain: Dictatorship to democracy*, 2 ed., p.22.

<sup>1043</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1044</sup> C.T. Powell, 'Spain's external relations, 1898-1975', in R.Gillespie, et al, eds. *Democratic Spain: Reshaping external relations in a changing world* (London, 1995), p.29.

<sup>1045</sup> For the difficulties in the transition, see F. Agüero, *Soldiers, civilians, and democracy: Post-Franco Spain in comparative perspective*. For greater depth on the role of the military in post-Franco Spain culminating in the coup, see D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain: From Franco to Constitutional Monarchy* (London, 1985), pp.230-48.

were still dominated by veterans of the Spanish Civil War and the Blue Division.<sup>1046</sup> For its part, the Spanish military plotted at least five coups d'état between 1978 and 1982.<sup>1047</sup> As a consequence, there was a suspected collision course between the military and the reformed, democratically elected government of the 1970s, culminating in the attempted coup (with the Spanish Congress held hostage by Colonel Antonio Tejero and several heavily armed *Guardias Civiles*) broadcast on Spanish television on 23 February 1983.<sup>1048</sup> The coup, therefore, without the support of the king or the majority of the military, was doomed to failure.

Even in modern Spain, the Spanish Army walks a fine line between the political ambitions of the government to expand its influence internationally (like José Maria Aznar's sending of Spanish troops and special forces during the American invasion of Iraq in 2003) and the public pressure to remain uninvolved in world politics (like José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero's subsequent removal of those same troops following the train bombings in Madrid on 11 May 2004). The recent deaths of seventeen Spanish troops killed in a helicopter in Afghanistan further highlight the precarious relationship.<sup>1049</sup>

### **International Politics and the Return to Post-War Spain**

The men of the DEV returned to an uncertain fate following their service in Hitler's army on the Eastern Front. Many simply returned, especially the career officers, to the Spanish Army. But the majority of the volunteers, as many veterans of other wars, settled back into the daily grind of civilian life. These men, however, were not like the veterans of other wars or even the Second World War. These Spanish volunteers had fought for a losing side and cause, but never really had to suffer the fate of their other, comrades in arms. Spain was in a unique position unlike, any other in Europe with the possible exceptions of Switzerland and Sweden. Although Spain had the burden of being associated with the losing Axis, it had the luxury of neither being used as a battlefield, like most of Western and Eastern Europe, nor being occupied by the conquering Allies, especially its primary enemy, the Soviet Union. So what was the Spanish government to do to re-assimilate back into the post-

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<sup>1046</sup> P. Preston, *The politics of revenge*, p.181.

<sup>1047</sup> D. Gilmour, *The transformation of Spain*, p.230.

<sup>1048</sup> Tejero was a colonel in the Guardia Civil and not the Army. There were attempts by several army garrisons to garner support for the coup, but the failure of the *División Acorazada Brunete* (Brunete Armoured Division), stationed in Madrid, to mobilize in support led to the ultimate demise of the attempt. For an account of the coup, see F. Agüero, *Soldiers, civilians, and democracy*, pp.162-8.

<sup>1049</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, 21 Aug 2004.

war, United Nations fold? And ultimately, what was the response to the veterans of the Blue Division, the embodiment of Franco's former foreign policy?

By the end of the Second World War, Spain was a pariah. Not only was it an outcast of the new United Nations community, but it also no longer had any commercial outlets with the final defeat of Germany in May 1945. Spain was a nation of poor natural resources and therefore unsustainable autarky.<sup>1050</sup> With the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco between 25 April and 26 June 1945, Mexico tendered a resolution, with the help of Spanish Republican exiles, which attempted to exclude membership to any government that had been helped to power militarily by the defeated Axis powers (i.e. Spain).<sup>1051</sup> The United Nations had also professed a preference in a regime change, either to a monarchy (defended by José Maria Gil Robles's *Confederación de Fuerzas Monárquicas*) or a republic (as proposed by exile José Giral's *Alianza Nacional de Fuerzas Democráticas*).<sup>1052</sup> At the Potsdam Conference from 17 July to 2 August 1945, the 'Big Three' made a point to affirm the Mexican resolution to not allow Spain into the United Nations Organisation (UNO) on the basis of the nature of the origins of the Franco regime and its links with and support for the Axis during World War II.<sup>1053</sup> As a further insult, France formally closed its borders to Spain in March 1946.<sup>1054</sup> With the UN Assembly in April 1946, Poland (now under Communist control) formally requested a resolution to condemn the Franco regime it deemed a 'threat to peace and international security' which led to the proposal to resolve 'the Spanish Question' through international diplomacy.<sup>1055</sup> Having voted in the UN Assembly, the first action was to announce the removal of all diplomatic missions with Spain by the cosignatories of the United Nations Charter.<sup>1056</sup> This United Nations resolution effectively created both a diplomatic and economic block on Spain that was largely not lifted until the 1950s.

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<sup>1050</sup> E.R. Arango, *Spain: from repression to renewal* (Boulder, CO, 1985), p.78.

<sup>1051</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, pp.536-7.

<sup>1052</sup> R. Tamames, 'La era de Franco' in M. Artola, *Historia de España* (Madrid, 1988), p.259.

<sup>1053</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, pp.540-1

<sup>1054</sup> S. Payne, *History of Spain and Portugal*, vol ii, p.687.

<sup>1055</sup> R. Tamames, 'La era de Franco', p.259.

<sup>1056</sup> The vote was 34 votes for, 6 votes against, 13 abstentions, and 1 missed votes. Those that votes against the removal of ambassadors were: Argentina, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Peru. Perón's Argentina actually announced the designation of a new ambassador to Spain immediately following the vote. Ibid.

All members of the UNO, with the exception of Argentina, removed their envoys from Spain following the end of the war in Europe.<sup>1057</sup> This combined with the failure of industrial autarky following the war, led Franco to recreate Spain's image abroad.<sup>1058</sup> The Spanish government attempted a 'cosmetic change' to the personalities and procedures of Franco's government; this largely entailed abolishing the Fascist salute, excluding members of the Falange from governmental positions, and reducing the Falange's influence in the press.<sup>1059</sup> These public changes were carried out in order to reform internal policy, but also to help Spain's public personality as it began to attempt to reach out to other countries for trade and commerce.<sup>1060</sup> Spain was in dire straits, but the new path eventually paid dividends.<sup>1061</sup> Although it had to suffer politically and economically for over five years following the end of the Second World War, Spain was able to capitalise on the world's changing political landscape as the rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union heated up.

At the close of the Second World War, the British and Americans had supported a political change in Spain. As a consequence, they began studying the various political parties that could conceivably replace Franco.<sup>1062</sup> With fears that another civil war might occur in Spain, both the US and British governments thought replacing Franco with a 'caretaker' government until the Spanish people chose a government they wanted was necessary.<sup>1063</sup> With the initial phases of the Cold War, however, the United States, who had initially armed and trained separatist movements like the PNV with advisors and weapons in France in the hope of generating a regime change in Spain, sought a closer relationship to the anti-Communist Franco.<sup>1064</sup> The United States therefore pulled the plug on support for dissident groups in 1947 as its relationship warmed with Spain.<sup>1065</sup> As this relationship grew, it unexpectedly allowed Franco to create a revisionist history of his involvement in the Second World

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<sup>1057</sup> R. Proctor, *Agony of a neutral*, p.287.

<sup>1058</sup> M. Richards, "'Terror and progress': Industrialisation, modernity, and the making of Francoism' in H. Graham and J. Labanyi, eds. *Spanish cultural studies: an introduction* (New York, 1995), pp173-82. Also see R. Tamames, 'La era de Franco', pp.219-220.

<sup>1059</sup> J. Tusell, *La España de Franco* (Madrid, 1989), p.87.

<sup>1060</sup> *Ibid.* *Evening Standard*, 25, April 1945.

<sup>1061</sup> For the withdrawal of British Ambassador Victor Mallet, who was recalled in December 1946, see FO 371/ 67867 z580/3/41 8 Jan 1947.

<sup>1062</sup> For a complete dossier by the British government covering the years 1943-5, see PRO HS 6/922 which includes thirty-nine pages on anti-Franco personalities and groups.

<sup>1063</sup> *Newsweek*, 31 March 1947, p.20.

<sup>1064</sup> J. Sullivan, *ETA and Basque nationalism*, p.22.

<sup>1065</sup> *Ibid.*

War, one which dealt not only with relations with the Axis powers but also in his decision to send the Blue Division to fight the Soviet Union.

For his part, Franco was able to present himself and Spain as the original ‘Sentinel of the West’ against ‘the Bolshevist hordes’ that continued to threaten, despite Germany’s attempt to stop it, the civilisation of Western Europe.<sup>1066</sup> American politicians saw him, not without some truth at the time, as “the only commander-in-chief who ever completely defeated a Communist army.”<sup>1067</sup> Dependent on Spanish authors to promote his political virtues and ‘foresight’, Franco was also helped by foreign writers who were friendly to his regime like Herbert L. Matthews, who claimed that Franco’s ‘greatest contribution to the [Spanish] nation’ was to avert its entry into the war in his book *The Yoke and Arrows*.<sup>1068</sup> Later in that same book Matthews stated, ‘General Franco never wavered in his anti-communism and ultimately found himself back at Hitler’s side’ by sending the Blue Division to Russia.<sup>1069</sup> American politicians who were privy to the nature of Franco’s political manoeuvring were also sympathetic in the notion that Franco not only avoided Spain’s entry but actually helped the Allied cause through his dealings.<sup>1070</sup> This opinion is still present in current, ‘documented historical fiction’ works like *Hitler Stopped by Franco* that perpetuate the idea that Franco was responsible for not only stemming Hitler’s aggression towards Spain but eventually aided in his defeat.<sup>1071</sup> With these altered realities in tow, the United States inadvertently saved the Franco regime through military and economic aid in the 1950s.

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<sup>1066</sup> For the classic example of Spanish writers playing up Franco’s pre-emptive, anti-Communist slant just after the base signings, see L. de Galinsoga and F. Franco Salgado, *Centinela del Occidente; Semblanza biográfica de Francisco Franco* (Barcelona, 1956). This book was written in collaboration with Franco’s cousin and aide, General Francisco Franco Salgado-Araujo.

<sup>1067</sup> S. Payne, *History of Spain and Portugal*, vol ii, p.688.

<sup>1068</sup> H.L.Matthews, *The yoke and arrows*, p.56.

<sup>1069</sup> H.L.Matthews, *The yoke and arrows*, p.58.

<sup>1070</sup> Willard Beaulac served as assistant to Ambassador Hayes in Madrid as the US and Great Britain attempted to pressure Franco in removing the Blue Division from Russia. His account creates the image that Franco intentionally helped the Allies. See his account, W.L. Beaulac. *Franco: silent ally in World War II* (Carbondale, IL, 1986). This opinion was held by at least one of Hitler’s General Staff officers, General Freidrich W. von Mellenthin who stated ‘with great diplomatic skill [Franco] kept Hitler at arms length.’ F.W. von Mellenthin, *Panzer battles* (Norman, OK 1956), p.27.

<sup>1071</sup> J. and B. Boyar, *Hitler stopped by Franco* (New York, 2001). The authors (who were biographers of the late entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr.) profess that they are not historians. With this in mind, this is an interesting book that is entertainingly written and was well researched with real government documents and correspondence as well as numerous personal interviews with individuals close to Franco and his family. However the dialogue is completely manufactured and contrived to be friendly to Franco, and never mentions the Blue Division or any other Hispano-German business relations. The authors became friends of the Franco family after they discovered their landlady was Carmen Franco Polo, or ‘Carmencita’, who is Franco’s daughter and owner of all his possessions and papers (which are available to researchers ‘friendly’ to the Franco regime).

By 1947, with the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, designed respectively, to stop Communist expansion and to help rebuild Europe, the political division of the world's nations was becoming more defined.<sup>1072</sup> This was a blessing for Spain as political lines were suddenly reopened. The United States, under the Eisenhower administration, was willing to enter into discussions in the allowing the use or the leasing of base facilities within Spain to better protect the western half of the Mediterranean. After initial, lengthy negotiations in the spring of 1952, which included Franco voiding an agreement settled by his negotiators, the US military was granted the use of the Rota naval base and the Torrejon and Saragossa air bases by September 1953. For the use of Spanish land and facilities, the Franco government received \$600 million in military and \$500 million in economic aid from the United States government.<sup>1073</sup> The Spanish government had also wanted either their armed forces to be modernised with US weaponry or guaranteed military protection like that of the NATO treaty; the US chose the latter. A month prior to the finalisation of the US pacts, Franco also renewed a Concordat (initially signed in 1851) with the Vatican. Being recognised publicly as equals by both the most powerful democratic nation and the most powerful spiritual institution in the world undoubtedly helped lift Spain's ostracism from the United Nations (when it was finally permitted to join on 15 December 1955, alongside other wartime neutrals such as Ireland and Portugal).<sup>1074</sup> Furthermore, the success of these treaties greatly enhanced the Franco regime, allowing it to remain in power another twenty-two years and initiating the economic success Spain experienced in the 1960s, in what became known as '*la década prodigiosa*'.<sup>1075</sup> The lean years prior to this economic revolution in Spain, however, required the veterans of the Blue Division to somehow organise themselves into a social network to help themselves better assimilate back into Spanish society.

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<sup>1072</sup> R. Tamames, 'La era de Franco', p.260. For an interesting article on the Soviet Union's attempt to foil the Marshall Plan and extend its influence into Western Europe, see M.M. Narinskii, 'The Soviet Union and the Marshall Plan', in A. Vasori and E. Calandri, eds., *The failure of peace in Europe, 1943-8* (Chippenham, 2002), pp.275-96.

<sup>1073</sup> B.N. Liedkte, 'Spain and the United States, 1945-75', in S. Balfour and P. Preston, eds., *Spain and the great powers in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1999), pp.236-8.

<sup>1074</sup> E. R. Arango, *Spain: From repression to renewal* (Boulder, CO, 1985), pp.79-80.

<sup>1075</sup> For an overview of this Spanish economic boom, see J.M. Cuenca Toribio, 'La España de Franco', in J. Andrés-Gallego, ed., *España siglo XX* (Madrid, 1991), pp 319-22. For Spain's overall integration back into the European Community following the base agreements, see J. Crespo MacLennan, *Spain and the process of European integration, 1957-85* (Oxford, 2000).



## Hermandades

Although they were pawns of an authoritarian state, the men of the Blue Division demonstrated they were not indifferent to the perceived menace of the Stalinism that threatened to dominate and divide Europe (which it eventually did). But with the changing fortunes on the Eastern Front, there was no simple solution for dealing with men who were abandoned by their government as well as the German government, which closed its Blue Division liaison offices in Madrid and the provinces in late 1944. Even the Falange and the Spanish War Ministry, which had long championed the cause of the Blue Division, no longer supported these men or their families financially or discussed them publicly. The volunteers never received the houses that they had been promised in the *Obra Sindical del Hogar* in early 1942.<sup>1076</sup> They had requested that special, communal housing be set aside for those Falange volunteers of the Blue Division who had hoped 'to continue in Spain the battlefield friendships forged in those frozen trenches in the face of communist enemies.'<sup>1077</sup> Furthermore, all talks of pensions, promotions, and decorations promised to the veterans by the Spanish War Ministry were indefinitely postponed.

The veterans, many jobless, were left with few options. Some veterans, either unemployed or idealists, left Spain covertly to rejoin the German war effort in the East; those that remained either rejoined the Spanish Army or attempted to gain civilian work. Following the war, however, those that had stayed in Spain attempted to maintain some visual impact and voice among the Spanish public. Although the veterans were not repressed directly (as had occurred, ironically, with Soviet soldiers) by the government following the end of hostilities in Europe, the men, in essence, had lost any political voice within Spain that might have existed when the Blue Division had been so greatly supported by the Franco regime.<sup>1078</sup> In response to this, the veterans organised themselves into groups that later became the *Hermandad de la División Azul* (HDA), or Brotherhood of the Blue Division.<sup>1079</sup>

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<sup>1076</sup> *Informaciones*, 22 March 1942.

<sup>1077</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1078</sup> In true Stalin paranoia fashion (afraid of 'toadying idolisation of the West' and 'cosmopolitanism'), not only were Soviet POWs held by the Nazis persecuted by the regime following their liberation, but other purges against Soviet officers and soldiers blamed for the defeats of 1941 and 1942, the defenders of Leningrad, and Jews occurred after final victory. M. Broekmeyer, *Stalin, the Russians, and their war* (Madison, 1999), pp.236-7.

<sup>1079</sup> This is briefly discussed in Wayne Bowen's *Spaniards and Nazi Germany* (Columbia, MO, 2000), p.206.

The development of the *Hermandad* or *Asociación* was a common occurrence for various social groups that wanted to create, legally, a place for social interaction in Franco's Spain. These various groups often included social ones like the *Asociación de Sordomudos* (Association of Deaf Mutes) of Valladolid, the '*Cine Club*' *Pontevedra* ('Movie Club' Pontevedra), *Asociación Amigos de Vasquez de Mella* (Association of Friends of Vasquez de Mella), but also military ones like the *Hermandad de Antiguo Combatientes de la Cruzada- Primera Compania del Quinto Cuerpo Ejército* (Brotherhood of Old Combatants of the Crusade- First Company of the Fifth Army) of Saragossa. The largest, legal *Hermandad* was the one created for the Nationalist veterans of the Spanish Civil War, the *Confederación de Ex-Combatientes*. The first *Hermandades* of Blue Division veterans were rather informal gatherings of several former friends or comrades, that became larger and better organised. In fact, the HDA was not a legally recognised body in Spain until the 1950s, when it had to, for political reasons, demonstrate that it was not a gathering of political subversives, but an actual club or brotherhood.

The archival evidence (held at the Archivo General de la Administración (AGA) in Alcalá de Henares outside of Madrid) of the early years of the *Hermandad de la División Azul* are unfortunately lacking, possibly due to small localisation and poor organisation of the various chapters in the last years of the war leading into the early 1950s. As the chapters were required to 'register' with the government in order to be legally recognised as a social club in the mid-1950s, the archive does, however, provide a good picture of how the various veterans' group chapters operated between the years of 1958 and 1969. These records provide meeting minutes, membership totals (lists with name, address, and occupation of members), financial reports (detailing dues payments and where each chapter spent its budget), political mission statements, group activities, paying homage to fallen comrades, and other group related information.

The *Hermandad de la División Azul* has its origins in the informal meetings between mothers and relatives of dead comrades in 1942 and 1943 who used to meet for Mass at the Chapel for the Blue Division at the Church of Santa Barbara in Madrid that formed the *Hermandad de Familiares de Caídos* (Brotherhood of Relatives of the Fallen).<sup>1080</sup> As the men began returning to Spain, these groups eventually became

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<sup>1080</sup>J. Díaz de Villegas, *la División Azul en línea*, pp.234-5. Also see the FDA website, ([www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org)) (12 Nov 2003) for the origins of the *Hermandad*.

what today is recognised today as the *Hermandad de la División Azul*. Because of its origin, however, the various chapters had some slightly different variations for their groups' name. For example, the chapters in Malaga, Ceuta, and Asturias called themselves *Hermandad de la División Azul*; the Barcelona, Valencia, Valladolid, Albacete, and Almeria chapters called themselves *Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes de la División Azul*; the Melilla, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Murcia, and Huelva chapter called themselves the *Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes y Familiares de Caidos de la División Azul*; and the Caceres chapter was the *Hermandad Provincial de Ex-Combatientes de la División Azul*. With the return of POWs in 1954, the chapter in Cadiz called itself the *Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes y Cautivos de la División Azul*. Regardless of the name, each chapter served the same function for the veterans: to simply help themselves in acclimating back home.

For the veterans of the DEV, the Hermandad sought to 'raise the voice of the ex-combatants...to all sectors of the population' and to receive the benefits and accolades that the Spanish government under Franco had promised them, despite the attempts of Spain to somehow reinvent its role in the Second World War.<sup>1081</sup> For the former volunteers of the Blue Division, the Hermandad was a veterans' organisation developed as a centre for social interaction and help amongst the Spanish veterans upon their return to Spain. Its primary role was to help ex-combatants find work, but these men also simply sought to create a place for recovery both mentally and physically have experienced some of the fiercest combat in the extremes of weather in history, including temperature as low as minus 52° C and the dreaded *rasputiska* (the muddy terrain of Russia).<sup>1082</sup> The Hermandad de la División Azul is similar to the American Legion or Veterans of Foreign Wars groups found in the United States, the *Verband Deutscher Soldaten* groups in Germany, or Old Comrades Associations found in the United Kingdoms and the Commonwealth. The Hermandad de la División Azul also was simply a way for veterans to record and preserve their service stories, records, diaries, memorabilia, etc. in a centralised location as well as create an

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<sup>1081</sup> From a letter from the Delegación Nacional de Asociaciones to the Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes la División Azul, AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no. 775, 20 Oct 1965.

<sup>1082</sup> Interview Cesar Ibañez Cagna, Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004). Also see J. Díaz de Villegas, *La División Azul en línea*, pp.234-37.

organised front to promote the spirit of the DEV but also gain some, albeit limited, political voice in post-war Spain.<sup>1083</sup>

Each chapter of the HDA was responsible to register itself with the central government in Madrid through the *Delegación Nacional de Asociaciones* (DNA), or National Commission of Associations, in order to 'incorporate' themselves with the Movimiento.<sup>1084</sup> For example the Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes de la División Azul had their statutes approved by the government as early as February 1955.<sup>1085</sup> In another example, the HDA of Cadiz had requested admittance on 20 July 1957, but the DNA did not fully recognise the Cadiz chapter until 30 June 1958.<sup>1086</sup> Several years later, the chapters were then given a register number through the Delegación Nacional de Asociaciones. For instance, the Almeria chapter was given the register number eighty-one on the 10 October 1961 by order of a *Delegado Nacional de Asociaciones*, or delegate member of the DNA.<sup>1087</sup> The Almeria chapter's registration number with the *Registro de Asociaciones del Movimiento* (Register of Associations of the Movement) was then published in the *Boletín Oficial de Movimiento* on 17 October thereby fully legitimising the government's recognition of this particular chapter.<sup>1088</sup>

Being allowed incorporation into the Movimiento was a lengthy, bureaucratic process like the experienced by the HDA in Barcelona in February 1960. Only after submitting a registration packet that included one letter of solicitation, two examples of its statutes, a chapter list of the governing body members (*relación de la Junta de Gobierno*) and membership list (*relación de asociados o afiliados*), was the Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes de la División Azul de Barcelona accepted by delegate of the National Committee of Associations, Manuel Fraga Iribarue as an official member of the Movimiento on 23 February 1960.<sup>1089</sup> In a separate notification, the HDA of Barcelona also received its registration number twenty-seven on the same day by the National Secretary of the DNA, José Luís de Azcarraga.<sup>1090</sup>

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<sup>1083</sup> The Hermandad would produce a *cuaderno* (journal), which voiced its opinions especially if they felt their group's integrity was being attacked. See a fervent response to an editorial from a magazine called *El Pápus* in *Cuadernos de Hermandad División Azul*, v (1977), pp 2 and 10.

<sup>1084</sup> For a good example of this see the file on the Hermandad Provincial Ex-Combatientes de la División Azul, Caceres. AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09200 no.838.

<sup>1085</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no.27, 18 Feb 1955.

<sup>1086</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no.815, 30 June 1958.

<sup>1087</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09200 no.851, 10 Oct 1961.

<sup>1088</sup> *Boletín Oficial de Movimiento*, no. 851, 17 Oct 1961.

<sup>1089</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no.1A, 23 Feb 1960.

<sup>1090</sup> *Ibid.*

Registration with the government was also important because the DNA would also donate through a '*subvención*' (grant) a small amount of money to each individual chapter of the HDA. For example, the Hermandad of Melilla in North Africa received 2,000 pesetas from the *Delegación Nacional de Asociaciones* in 1963.<sup>1091</sup> However, any *subvención* that was given by the DNA required a report on exactly how the money was spent by the chapter during its financial year. Therefore, the Melilla chapter reported on 31 January 1964 that the 2,000 pesetas combined with dues amounting to 14,305 pesetas was largely spent in commemorating the various anniversaries of the division.<sup>1092</sup> Despite a relatively small budget of 16,591.15 pesetas of existing money and that which was received during the year, the HDA of Melilla spent 16,545.40 pesetas on parties and social gatherings, leaving only 45.75 pesetas in the chapter's coffer.<sup>1093</sup>

Later the Secretary General of the Movimiento requested in 25 October 1964 (published in the *Boletín Oficial del Movimiento*, 1 November 1964) that all chapters had to resubmit their group charters or constitutions, including all statutes or rules, for approval by their local *Delegado Provincial de Asociaciones* (Provincial Delegate of Associations) who then passed it on to the DNA in Madrid.<sup>1094</sup> For example, the Almeria HDA chapter again resubmitted their statutes to their local delegate on the 18 June 1965 who then submitted it to Madrid on 22 June 1965.<sup>1095</sup> Jorge Jordana de Pozas, a delegate of the DNA, then approved the Hermandad of Almeria's constitution on the 26 June 1965.<sup>1096</sup>

Although each HDA chapter was individually organised and run by the various local veterans, most chapters had similar organisational structures. This chapter hierarchy generally included a president, one or two vice-presidents, a secretary, vice-secretary, treasurer, vice-treasurer, and council members (*vocales*). Some chapters, like the one in Murcia also had departments or committees such as a *Comisión de Hogar* (Home Committee), *Cultura y Propaganda* (Culture and

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<sup>1091</sup> AGA (09) 017.021 sign. 44/09200 no.856 31 Jan 1964.

<sup>1092</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1093</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1094</sup> *Boletín Oficial de Movimiento*, no. 961, 1 Nov 1964. AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09200 no.838, 25 Oct 1964.

<sup>1095</sup> AGA (09) 017.021 sign. 44/09200 no.851 18, 22 June 1965.

<sup>1096</sup> Ibid.

Propaganda, *Comisión Religiosa* (Religious Committee), and *Comision de Asistencia Social* (Committee of Social Assistance).<sup>1097</sup>

A small chapter like the one Melilla that had barely over 135 members in 1963 was not as well organised as the chapter in Barcelona that had over 800 members in the early 1960s but grew to over one thousand members by February 1965.<sup>1098</sup> Chapter membership varied by location and fluctuated invariably as veterans either moved away from their local chapters (often joining new ones upon resettlement) or, less often, simply died (usually from lingering illnesses or wounds leftover from the war). An influx of new members helped smaller chapters like the one in Tarragona that had barely 102 members in January 1963 and would lose a further twelve members during the year but gained an additional twenty-two members who moved into the area thereby increasing the total membership of the chapter to 111 members to start January 1964.<sup>1099</sup> When members died, they were removed from the chapter's membership list due to '*defunción*' (death). On the rare occasion, a chapter actually expelled members for failure to pay dues or inappropriate behaviour as a chapter member. In one instance of the latter, a Juan Segura Caparros was expelled from the HDA in Barcelona because he had inappropriately and illegally used an 'alleged name' to join the Hermandad, although the exact details of this offence are not clear.<sup>1100</sup> The HDA of Albacete also threw out a member in 1963 for being deemed '*indeseable*' by the governing body of the chapter.<sup>1101</sup>

As the various chapters of the HDA had to submit a '*recepción de afiliados*', or membership list to the Delegación Nacional de Asociaciones in Madrid, these lists give a good indication of what type of work the former volunteers of the Blue Division were doing several years after their return to Spain. For example, the membership list from the HDA in Huelva from October 1959 noted that the majority of its members were day labourers (*jornaleros*).<sup>1102</sup> Other jobs included farm workers (*labradores*), field workers (*campesinos*), clerks (*empleados*), miners (*mineros*), bakers (*panaderos*), candy maker (*dulcero*), electricians (*electricistas*), sailors

<sup>1097</sup> AGA (09) 017.021 sign. 44/09199 no.806, 6 Sept 1957.

<sup>1098</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09200 no.856, 31 Jan 1963. AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 27/1A, Feb 1965.

<sup>1099</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no.799, Jan 1964.

<sup>1100</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no.27/1B 7 Feb 1965, p.5.

<sup>1101</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no. 775, 7 Feb 1964.

<sup>1102</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no.782, Oct 1959.

(*marineros*), and a shoemaker (*zapatero*).<sup>1103</sup> The Huelva chapter had also several members of the Guardia Civil and, interestingly, only five out of the 350 members had remained in the Spanish Army.<sup>1104</sup> Similarly, the HDA in Valladolid only had seventeen members (including a '*Capitán mutilado*') out of 213 members in October 1959 still serving in the Spanish Army.<sup>1105</sup> The membership lists were not only limited to the veterans and relatives, but also included, on occasion, women. The Hermandad in Valladolid, for example, had a 'Nurse of the 18 July', María Pilar del Gordo and four other nurses in its active membership list of 1959.<sup>1106</sup> The membership lists also included those veterans too ill or debilitated to work (including blind ex-volunteers), and helping them and their family members was one of the primary objectives of the Hermandades.

As each chapter was dependent on monthly dues (*cuotas mensuales*) collected from members, grants (*subvenciones*) from the central government, donations and bequests (*donativos y legados*) from private citizens and wealthier members, or inheritances (*herencias*) for their financial survivals, the chapters often did other things to help supplement their incomes. For example, the HDA chapter in Barcelona sold cards and emblems that earned them an additional 1,310 pesetas to add to their budget in 1964.<sup>1107</sup> Although not a significant contribution to a budget that nearly reached 150,000 pesetas (with nearly 48,000 pesetas still in its bank account), even a little bit helped contribute towards helping the less fortunate chapter members. The form of help varied amongst the various chapters of the HDA.

As a wealthier chapter due to its size, the HDA of Barcelona was able to provide scholarships (*becas*) to the family members of fallen comrades. These '*becas*' were called '*Bolsas de Ayuda Escolar*' ('Bags of School Help') and totalled over 25,500 pesetas, which was divided into sixteen secondary and nine primary school scholarships for 'children of affiliates' of the chapter.<sup>1108</sup> All twenty-five secondary school scholarships were for studies at the *Institución Sindical Virgen del Merced* in Barcelona.<sup>1109</sup> The Barcelona chapter also had a 'Help to the Comrade'

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<sup>1103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1105</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no.785, Oct 1959.

<sup>1106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1107</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 27/1A, Feb 1965.

<sup>1108</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 27/1A, 7 Feb 1965.

<sup>1109</sup> Ibid.

(‘*Ayuda al Camarada*’) report in its bulletin sent to the DNA in February 1965.<sup>1110</sup> The assistance had included giving money the mother of a fallen comrade and seven other former volunteers and Christmas toys for various comrades’ children.<sup>1111</sup> With smaller chapters like the one in Santa Cruz de Tenerife in the Canary Islands (with 120 members), ‘*Ayuda al Camarada*’ came in the form of helping financially in the medical treatment of a comrade diagnosed with tuberculosis and in travel expenses and food for another comrade’s blind son.<sup>1112</sup>

The Hermandad had even helped during the repatriation of the former Spanish prisoners of war returned to Spain aboard the S.S. *Semíramis* in 1954. The Hermandad made three hundred canvas bags with ‘*La Hermandad de la División Azul a los liberados de Rusia. Bienvenidos a la Patria. ¡Arriba España! 1941-54*’ (The Brotherhood of the Blue Division to the liberated of Russia. Welcome to the Motherland. Long live Spain! 1941-54’) embroidered on them were given to the POWs after their medical checkups at the military hospital in Barcelona.<sup>1113</sup> These ‘welcome home’ bags were filled with paper, a leather wallet with some money, a packet of ‘*Ideales*’-brand cigarettes, and a blue shirt.<sup>1114</sup> The Hermandad of Catalonia had also organised a *Comisión de Recepción* (Reception Committee) to assist in facilitating their arrival in Barcelona and also helped in coordinating the transport of the former POWs and their families in a special train to Madrid, where they were to be met by former comrades and current members of the Hermandad at the train station.<sup>1115</sup> The president of the HDA, Carlos Pinilla, not only donated one hundred thousand pesetas of his own money to help pay for the costs of returning the POWs, but also pledged to help them all find work in Spain upon their repatriation.<sup>1116</sup>

With Spain experiencing an economic crisis following the war, the veterans, other than the career soldiers, had little to look forward to in Spain. Volunteer Cesar Ibáñez Cagna related that all men returned to the social classes they had been members of before they enlisted.<sup>1117</sup> Students returned to their studies, officers

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<sup>1110</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 27/1B, Feb 1965, p.3.

<sup>1111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1112</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no. 772, 19 Feb 1964.

<sup>1113</sup> F. Vadillo, *los prisioneros*, p.338.

<sup>1114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1115</sup> F. Vadillo, *los prisioneros*, p.339.

<sup>1116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1117</sup> Interview with former *divisionario* Cesar Ibáñez Cagna, Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004).



returned to the army, lawyers returned law, etc. The former volunteers then basically advanced in those trades or jobs that they were good at prior to the war. Ibáñez Cagna suggested, however, that later recruitment included more fieldworkers than the initial complement of DEV recruits.<sup>1118</sup> The Hermandad allowed them a way to network with each other regarding employment. The more fortunate would help out those comrades and their families who were not, but also to help the widows and orphans through group collections and donations. The Hermandad also helped disabled veterans and their families with small monetary donations, food and clothing, or simply help around the house.

Before disabled veterans were able to receive money from the West German government in 1965, the Hermandad often paid small pensions of their own to their disabled comrades. The Barcelona chapter had donated 35,711 pesetas in the form of '*Ayuda al Camarada*' out of the nearly 141,000 pesetas spent from its yearly budget in 1964.<sup>1119</sup> When the veterans were able to begin petitioning the West German government for inclusion in the pension scheme for disabled veterans, various Hermandades helped their members apply for such benefits. For example, the HDA in Santa Cruz de Tenerife sent in thirty-five applications for disabled veterans and relatives of fallen comrades in February 1964.<sup>1120</sup> The Barcelona chapter also helped its members send 'the documentation of numerous possible beneficiaries' for review by West Germany.<sup>1121</sup>

Financial help, however, was not always forthcoming, as the coffers of the various Hermandades began to empty as membership dropped or there were fewer donations from wealthier veterans. Even today there are numerous letters and emails (the veterans are even on the internet) sent to the national headquarters by family members of veterans (including relatives as far removed as nieces and nephews) seeking some sort of financial compensation for having a relative who had served in the Blue Division.<sup>1122</sup> The Hermandad simply cannot offer monetary help to relatives of the division, although it often offers to volunteer, whenever possible, to help

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<sup>1118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1119</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 27/1B, Feb 1965, p.6.

<sup>1120</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no. 772, 19 Feb 1964.

<sup>1121</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 27/1A, 7 Feb 1965, p.2.

<sup>1122</sup> The Blue Division website ([www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org)) receives between fifty and one hundred hits per day. The Hermandad receives between eight to ten letters a day with relatives asking for money from the HDA. <sup>1122</sup> Interviews Cesar Ibáñez Cagna, Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004) and General Víctor Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004).

relatives of volunteers. For example, General Víctor Castro SanMartín, late president of the *Hermandad Nacional de la División Azul*, related a story of the wife of a deceased volunteer whose son had been badly injured in an accident.<sup>1123</sup> She had asked for money from the Hermandad to pay his medical bills, but its members volunteered to help her around the house and offer emotional support.

Chapters remained active as long as there were enough members to keep one going. The HDA of Valladolid stated in its statutes that that, 'The Brotherhood can not be dissolved while there exists a number of members greater than twenty, that want to continue.'<sup>1124</sup> Those that did not have sufficient numbers to survive were integrated into a larger, regional chapter. For Example, the HDAs in Algeciras and Jerez were integrated into the chapter in Cadiz (which also included individuals residing near Gibraltar).<sup>1125</sup> At its height in the late 1960s, the HDA had between 9,000 and 10,000 members in over fifty chapters throughout Spain, the Balearic and Canary Islands, and territories in North Africa.<sup>1126</sup> Although quite numerous throughout Spain at one time, the veterans' groups of Blue Division now only include three active chapters: Madrid, Barcelona, and Alicante.

As of January 2004, there were approximately one hundred and fifty known, dues-paying members of the Madrid chapter of the Hermandad del la División Azul, with an estimated eight or so dying per month.<sup>1127</sup> Unlike their American counterpart, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, who have attempted to supplement their membership totals (namely from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam) with recent veterans from the Gulf Wars, the Blue Division has not been able to renew itself.<sup>1128</sup> With their numbers continually dwindling due to old age and poor health, the veterans of the division realised that they needed to create some way to pass on their history to

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<sup>1123</sup> General Víctor Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004).

<sup>1124</sup> See Chapter 6, Article 27 of the chapter statutes of the Hermandad de Ex-Combatientes de la División Azul of Valladolid, AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09198 no. 775, 18 Oct 1959.

<sup>1125</sup> AGA (09) 017.021, sign. 44/09199 no. 815, 14 Feb 1960.

<sup>1126</sup> The chapters of the Hermandad de la División Azul were found in Alava, Albacete, Alicante, Almería, Ávila, Badajoz, Barcelona, Burgos, Cáceres, Cadiz, Castellón, Ceuta, Ciudad Real, Cordoba, Coruña, Cuenca, Gerona, Granada, Guadalajara, Guipúzcoa, Huelva, Huesca, Ibiza, Jaén, Leon, Lérida, Logroño, Lugo, Malaga, Melilla, Miranda de Ebro, Murcia, Navarre, Orense, Oviedo, Palencia, Palma de Mallorca, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Santander, Segovia, Seville, Soria, Tarragona, Tenerife, Teruel, Toledo, Valencia, Valladolid, Vigo, Villa Cisneros, Vizcaya, Zamora, and Saragossa. J. Díaz de Villegas, *la División Azul en la línea*, p.236.

<sup>1127</sup> The 150 known members were based solely on their dues (of €30 annually) being paid and does not indicate the total members alive. The eight per month death ratio was from the President of the FDA, General Víctor Castro SanMartín, who eventually passed away himself in September 2004 at the age of 86 years old. Interview with General Víctor Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004).

<sup>1128</sup> *Baltimore Sun*, 15 May 2005, p.4a.

other generations of Spaniards unaware of the ‘sacrifices’ the Blue Division had done while fighting Communism in Russia. In response to this need, the surviving veterans created the *Fundación División Azul* (FDA) as the legacy of Blue Division and its *Hermandad de la División Azul*.

The Hermandad through motions to add a chapter to its charter on 25 June 1990 officially established the Fundación. This chapter of eight points helped to define the role and function of the Fundación. The Fundación División Azul was to promote “the study, dissemination and knowledge of what was and represented the Spanish Division of Volunteers and its successors the Blue Legion and Blue Squadron [air force volunteers].”<sup>1129</sup> The *Fundación División Azul* would be officially registered with the Ministry of Culture’s Foundations Registry on the 22 February 1991 and was further officially recognized by the Spanish government on 19 March 1991 in the *Boletín Oficial del Estado* (State Official Bulletin) number 67.<sup>1130</sup> The Foundation states its aims as:

1. The study, dissemination and knowledge of what was and represented the Spanish Division of Volunteers and its successors the Blue Legion and Blue Squadron.
2. To advance and promote studies of the actions and motivations of the volunteer units and other units and historic military actions.
3. To collaborate in the conservation and extension of existing archives and museums of the different Blue Division Brotherhoods within Spanish territory in charge of archives, documents and museums with the intent of diminishing all or some.
4. To assume, equally, if in agreement, the functions of solidarity and assistance with the combatants and their families of the above units establishing relations at the national level and international correspondence with other organizations, associations, and foundations with similar motivations, in particular the *Verband Deutscher Soldaten*.
5. To establish literary prizes, educational grants and scholarships for study about the themes and actions of the unit but also relations with other combat units and Spanish military units.
6. To organize conferences and expositions, excursions and trips dealing with the creation and performance that presided over the units’ doctrine and thought. Also to remember and pay homage to the memory of those who lost their lives defending their ideals and their faith, embodied in the Blue Division.
7. To publish the works of the patronage and their auspices and whomever else in the manner their patriotic spirit deserves.
8. To create an essential foundation or any other analogous groups for these functions and similar endeavours. The Foundation attends each aspect having full liberty of projecting the activities, purposes and objects that in the opinion of the patronage are appropriate to the historic time and always fitting their spirit.<sup>1131</sup>

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<sup>1129</sup> *Boletín Oficial del Estado*, no. 67 (19 March 1991).

<sup>1130</sup> This information is found in Spanish in the mission statement of the Fundación División Azul at website ‘Información’ ([www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org)) (11 Nov. 2003).

<sup>1131</sup> This is stated on their Website ([www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org)) (12 Nov 2003) and has been translated by the author. Any errors are the author’s alone.

The FDA works closely with its German equivalent the *Verband Deutsche Soldaten* for the maintenance of cemeteries in Russia (including the largest at Pankowka) and the return of certain remains for reburial in Spain.<sup>1132</sup> Though there had been one approved during the war, the FDA was also able to create a memorial, the first of its kind in Spain, to the Blue Division. The monument, called the *Panteón de los Caídos de la División Azul* (Pantheon of the Fallen of the Blue Division) was erected in the Almudena Cemetery in Madrid by the Hermandad and the Fundación de la División Azul in 1991. The memorial creates a meeting place to honour those killed in Russia, including the ceremony of the 'Five Roses' and the memory of the division itself during the numerous, historical dates celebrated by veterans.<sup>1133</sup> However, the foundation's main mission is to catalogue these various items and allow them to be used for research pertaining to the history of the group. These various studies include but are not limited to the various combat monographs, personal diaries, military history critiques, administrative history, day-to-day activities, and military regalia subjects dealing with the Blue Division.

Currently housed in the same facility at the Hermandad of Madrid (which is also the national headquarters for the *Hermandades de la División Azul*), the FDA has been an easy location for the members to bring their materials to be listed for resource material. There are part-time, unpaid archivists who catalogue any new additions to the FDA catalogue, which are then donated to the Spanish Army. The foundation also had at onetime a small museum to display various items for greater public access; however, several of these items were donated to the Museum of the Army and will be displayed in Toledo upon completion of the new site.<sup>1134</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The men who enlisted in the Blue Division did so without really knowing what the consequences of such an action ultimately might mean for them in the future. There was the expectation that the Blue Division was to be funded by the National Socialist government of Germany, but little more was probably on their mind when the throngs had volunteered to fight on the Eastern Front in late June 1941. Most

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<sup>1132</sup> For more information on the return of Spanish remains from Russia in relation to the FDA see F. and M. Garrido Polonio, *Nieve roja: españoles desaparecidos en el frente ruso* (Madrid, 2002), pp.37-44.

<sup>1133</sup> Interview with General Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004).

<sup>1134</sup> Although the FDA did donate various items to the Museum of the Army, the foundations will retain various documents and manuscripts within its archive. Interview with General Castro SanMartín, President: Fundación División Azul, Madrid (22 Jan. 2004).

volunteered under the assumption that their financial needs and those of their relatives would be timely and orderly supplied by the German government. Unfortunately, many were grievously wounded, maimed, disabled and killed while fighting in the Wehrmacht and although German authorities, with a great deal of foresight, attempted to provide pensions for these men and their families, the monetary assurances were only good as long as the Reich was able to write the cheques. The Franco government, despite knowing the difficulties the DEV faced against the Red Army in Russia (as we have discussed), allowed it to remain fighting there as long as politically possible or necessary. Although the Spanish government offered limited assistance, the reality was that the men of the Blue Division ultimately relied on themselves to reacclimatize themselves back into a Spain that was largely disinterested in them. Through the development of the Hermandad de la División Azul, the veterans were largely able to re-assimilate, through an organised financial and social network, back into Spanish society. The war, however, was not over for some members of the Blue Division. For those unfortunate few that were captured by or had deserted to the Soviets during the war, the Second World War did not officially end for them until their repatriation to Spain nearly ten years after the end war had officially ended.

## Conclusion

### The Blue Division in Modern Spain

Spanish children educated under the Franco government in 1945 were taught that the civil war had been a “war of independence...against foreign ideas” and fought by a Spanish Army that carried “out its duty...and saved Spain from the red revolution.”<sup>1135</sup> Children in Spain following the war, however, were not generally taught about the role of the Blue Division in either Spanish international politics or fighting Communism. Having known three generations of North Americans (schooled at various times from 1953-1987) who have studied in Spain, none were formally taught in school what the Blue Division was (although everyone seemed to know someone with a relative in the DEV).<sup>1136</sup> The Spanish public, still often divided by social issues prevalent prior to the civil war, generally see the Blue Division in three lights. One view, right or wrong, is that it was a symbol of Franco’s foreign policy during the early 1940s and his collusion to the Axis cause, asserted by opponents and political dissidents of the Franco regime. The second view is that of as defenders of Western civilisation against the Bolsheviks and their brand of Communism, promoted by the Franco regime itself. And the third is a somewhat ambiguous role of the division in relation to history that is more typical of the general public’s knowledge of the division. To highlight this, let us look at some examples of how the Blue Division is often viewed by the Spanish general public.

The late Spanish authoress Monserrat Roig, in a travel journal related to her visit to Leningrad in 1980, wrote an interesting account of the German siege during the war.<sup>1137</sup> Other than a description of the famed city by General Esteban-Infantes and his opinions of the Palace of Catherine the Great at Pushkin (located 24 kilometres south of St. Petersburg), the Blue Division is a non-entity in relation to the

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<sup>1135</sup> From a Spanish text book approved by the Ministry of Education, entitled *Elementos de geografía regional e historia de España* (1945), p.176, as quoted in D. Gilmour, *the transformation of Spain*, p.9.

<sup>1136</sup> The author who took a world history class as a secondary student in 1987 was not informed about the DEV during any part of the lectures on World War II (which included the evils of the US for dropping the atomic bombs on Japan), but did have a classmate whose grandfather had served in the Blue Division (and never mentioned anything regarding his service). This classmate, despite living in Felipe González’s PSOE (Socialist) Spain, was particularly proud of his grandfather’s service in the German Army.

<sup>1137</sup> M. Roig, *Mi viaje al bloqueo* (Barcelona, 2001).

900 day siege by German forces.<sup>1138</sup> As a writer (and a Catalan) whose works were predominately written in the 1970s, she would seem a possible choice for some angle (either pro or con) on the Blue Division and its fighting in the East. Although she describes the forces at the palace in Pushkin as being ‘Nazi troops and with them forces of the Blue Division’, she ventures no further into any sort of political ramifications although she had gone to great troubles throughout her journal to discuss the evils of National Socialism in its subjugation of the population of Leningrad during the siege.<sup>1139</sup> The palace at Pushkin, in fact, was the headquarters of the Blue Division after it left Novgorod to join the German 18<sup>th</sup> Army in the late summer of 1942.

Just as Germany has experienced a resurgence of younger population interested in the ideologies of their grandparents, Spain has experienced a similar phenomenon.<sup>1140</sup> In more current times, the Blue Division has become a ‘popular’ symbol of extreme rightist (bordering on neo-Nazism) sentiment still present in disenfranchised youth segments of the Spanish public. Often wearing bomber jackets emblazoned with DEV or Falange paraphernalia, many of these youths rally around a common ‘skinhead’ identity that often seeks to verbally and physically assault other segments of the population, especially foreigners such as North African and Chinese immigrants. The Blue Division and the time it spent on the Eastern Front has even influenced the names of several punk rock bands (in the ‘*música oi!*’ style) in Spain, including the groups 250 Division and Krasny Bor 1943.<sup>1141</sup> These punk rock groups, although not necessarily preaching hate, extol the virtues of the Blue Division, Ramiro Ledesma Ramos (founder of las JONS), the glories of Imperial Spain, and the ancient Spanish peoples, the Celts and Iberians.<sup>1142</sup> The band 250 Division, in particular, also writes anti-Communist and anti-Marxist lyrics in its songs, such as ‘Pólvora y Sangre’ (‘Gunpowder and Blood’).<sup>1143</sup> Although, realistically, this music and its listeners represent a political minority in Spain, they still perpetuate the idea

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<sup>1138</sup> M. Roig, *Mi viaje al bloqueo*, pp.57, 220.

<sup>1139</sup> M. Roig, *Mi viaje al bloqueo*, p.220.

<sup>1140</sup> For an example of the rise of neo-Nazism in Dresden, Germany during a march organised by the German National Party (NPD) for the sixtieth anniversary commemoration of the Allied fire bombing in February 1945. *The Sunday Times*, 27 Feb 2005.

<sup>1141</sup> ‘Música oi!’ is influenced by and similar to British Oi! which finds its roots in Jamaican Ska and British punk music.

<sup>1142</sup> For more bands that are musically similar in style and lyrics see the Website for a Spanish neo-Nazi organisation called *Nueva Orden* (New Order). *Nueva Orden*, [http://www.nuevorden.net/o\\_07.html](http://www.nuevorden.net/o_07.html) (15 August 2005)

<sup>1143</sup> *Ibid.*

that the Blue Division was sent to the Eastern Front 'to save Europe from Communism and Zionsim.'<sup>1144</sup> As an inadvertent symbol of the extreme right, the Blue Division still often revitalises latent political emotions and controversy periodically as Spain continually struggles with its Civil War and the Franco regime.

More recently, the attempts of the Fundación División Azul to repatriate the remains of various Spanish volunteers still buried in the Soviet accentuated the ill will that still persists among the Spanish population. Still seen as a political tool of the Franco regime, Spanish Communists and Socialists complained of the government's assistance (including help from Queen Sophia) in not only returning various remains, but also donating money for restoration work on the Spanish cemetery in Panowka in the early 1990s.<sup>1145</sup> With *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, the FDA had successfully petitioned the Embassy of the USSR, with the help of the German Ambassador and the blessing of the King of Spain, in allowing a *Comisión de la Hermandad* to venture to Russia to determine the logistical possibilities of realistically finding, exhuming, and repatriating the remains back to Spain.<sup>1146</sup>

The commission comprised of former volunteers and members of the Spanish military, including the military attachés in Bonn and Moscow, arrived in Russia on 2 April 1992 to gather a report submitted to the Spanish government.<sup>1147</sup> The FDA was eventually given 90,000 euros for both the repatriation of Spanish remains and an additional 40,000 euros for the refurbishment of the Spanish cemetery in Panowka, Russia.<sup>1148</sup> The PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) members of the Spanish Parliament (although a Socialist government had approved the financing in 1995) found it hypocritical of the government to assist in exhuming 1,162 bodies (whom the majority were relocated to the cemetery in Panowka) from the various Spanish cemeteries in Western Russia between 1996 and 2001 when it had not given any financial assistance to the recovery of those killed by the Nationalists during the Civil War.<sup>1149</sup> As of November 2003, the Spanish government had still not given any

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<sup>1144</sup> Lyrics from the song 'Krasny Bor' by Krasny Bor 1943, Ibid.

<sup>1145</sup> Fundación División Azul, [www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org) (12 Nov 2003).

<sup>1146</sup> Fundación División Azul, [www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org) (12 Nov 2003).

<sup>1147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1148</sup> The FDA was also assisted by the *Volksbund*, who is responsible for the maintenance of German military cemeteries (including one in Cáceres, Spain) but also worked to repatriate German remains from the former Soviet Union. The two countries had signed an accord on 16 December 1992 seeking to accomplish this goal. See, Ibid. For monetary amounts see <http://www.pce.es/foroporlamemoria> (November 2003).

<sup>1149</sup> *Diario de León*, 10 March 2003, as reprinted in the public forum of the Spanish Communist Party website. Spanish Communist Party, <http://www.pce.es/foroporlamemoria> (November 2003).



financial support to any initiative to exhume 'the Republican disappeared.'<sup>1150</sup>

Despite this reaction, the Blue Division veterans have more recently taken part in a public event that somewhat recognised, but not necessarily accepted, their sacrifices on the Eastern Front by the modern Spanish government.

On the 12 October of every year a national holiday is held in Spain. Normally accompanied with a parade involving various parts of the *Fuerzas Armadas* (Armed Forces) in Spain, the *Día de la Fiesta Nacional*, or the *Día de la Raza*, as it was known in Franco's day, is the traditional day in Spain that celebrates 'la hispanidad' ('Spanishness') centred on the discovering of the New World by Christopher Columbus in 1492.<sup>1151</sup> This traditional holiday is a chance for Spaniards to celebrate the things that make them great and to reflect on the times and conquests of Imperial Spain. For obvious reasons, the *Día de la Raza* (Day of the Race) was an extremely important venue for Franco and his administration. Similarly, for the Blue Division the 12 October signifies the date of their first venture into the line in 1942 and remains one of the celebrated dates for old veterans. It was always a source of bitterness that successive Spanish governments had not allowed them to march amongst the other units of distinction from the Spanish military.

That changed on 12 October 2004 when three veterans were invited by the current Minister of Defence to march in the parade with 3,500 other participants before the King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia and the head of the current Spanish government, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero.<sup>1152</sup> One veteran, Angel Salamanca Salamanca, was asked to lay a wreath together with a former Spanish volunteer of the French 'Leclerc' Division, an Allied formation, to pay homage to Spain's war dead.<sup>1153</sup> In many ways the parade of the Fiesta Nacional, with the long exclusion and the recent participation of DEV members, represents a microcosm of the role the Blue Division has played in Spanish society and politics, and the laying of a single wreath has allowed the experiences of former *divisionarios* to come full circle.

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<sup>1150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>1151</sup> *Día de la Raza* was a politically incorrect name for the holiday, which led it to be replaced by the *Día de la Fiesta Nacional*. A similar holiday is celebrated as Columbus Day in the United States.

<sup>1152</sup> *El País*, 12 October 2004.

<sup>1153</sup> Ibid. For more on the Spanish volunteers in service of the Allies see, E. Pous Prades, *republicanos españoles en la segunda guerra mundial* (Madrid, 1975). General José Miaja Menant, who commanded the Popular Army during the Spanish Civil War had allegedly proposed to President Roosevelt the creation of a Division Española Republicana as counterpart to the DEV, but it was never formed. X. Moreno Juliá, *la División Azul*, p.278.

The acceptance and recognition by the modern Spanish government of the Spaniards who had volunteered for the Blue Division over sixty years ago did not end with the wreath-laying ceremony during the Fiesta Nacional. In gaining international recognition from the modern state of their former enemies, a small group of Blue Division veterans travelled to St. Petersburg in Russia to help commemorate the end of the Second World War.<sup>1154</sup> Despite this recent recognition by both the Spanish and Russian governments what again was Spain's role in World War II and the nature of the Blue Division on the Russian Front?

### **The Blue Division, World War II and Spanish History**

As asserted by historian Charles T. Powell, Spain was strictly speaking only neutral in the Second World War at the beginning (1939-40) and the closing (1944-45) stages of the war, when either German victory was certain or impossible.<sup>1155</sup> There is a general historiographical argument as to the exact role Spain played in the Second World War ('volunteer neutrality' between the two sides to avoid participation at all costs, versus 'qualified neutrality' which entailed the initial Axis temptation of entering the war if the conditions were right to only avoid doing so because of Germany's ultimate demise).<sup>1156</sup> Despite Franco regime-era historians and politicians who asserted that Franco had done all he could to avert Spain's entry into the Second World War, Spain quite often nearly joined in the Second World War on the part of the Axis.<sup>1157</sup> As modern Spanish historian Javier Tusell has written, Spain repeatedly nearly entered the war 'of its own free will...[and its] was [a] far from strict neutrality during a large part of the conflict.'<sup>1158</sup> Regardless of either assertion, Spain was ultimately a survivor and a winner following the Second World War, although it took nearly ten years following to assert so and another ten to see tangible economic results.

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<sup>1154</sup> Fundación División Azul, [www.fundaciondivisionazul.org](http://www.fundaciondivisionazul.org) (20 Aug 2005).

<sup>1155</sup> C.T. Powell, 'Spain's external relations, 1898-1975', in R.Gillespie, et al, eds. *Democratic Spain: reshaping external relations in a changing world* (London, 1995), pp.18-19.

<sup>1156</sup> For a comparison argument see E. Hernández-Sandoica and E. Moradiellos, 'Spain and the Second World War, 1939-45', in N. Wylie, ed., *European neutrals and non-belligerents during the Second World War* (Cambridge, 2002), pp 241-267.

<sup>1157</sup> For examples of pro-Franco works that assert his avoiding Spain's entry into the Second World War, see J.M. Doussinague, *España tiene razon* (Madrid, 1949); L. De Galinsoga and F. Franco Salgado, *centinela del Occidente; semblanza biográfica de Francisco Franco* (Barcelona, 1956); and Luis Suárez Fernández, *España, Franco y la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid, 1997). For a contrary opinion and the various ways Spain actually assisted the Axis, see V. Morales Lezcano, *Historia de la no-belligerancia española durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Las Palmas, 1980).

<sup>1158</sup> J. Tussell, *Franco, España, y la Segunda Guerra Mundial* (Madrid, 1997), p.13.

Spanish intellectual Salvador de Madariaga described Franco as 'limiting to one token division, of the so-called Blue Division of so-called volunteers, the collaboration of Spain in the so-called crusade' with the war in the East'.<sup>1159</sup> Spain's collaboration went beyond just sending the Blue Division to fight in Russia, since it included also the sending of Spanish workers to toil in the German war industry and the sale of wolfram (tungsten) for hardening the steel of German tanks and anti-tank projectiles.<sup>1160</sup> Despite this collaboration with Nazi Germany, Franco's Spain had the luxury of explaining its historical role on its own terms. The regime was able to present itself first as a potential German ally in the war against Communism in the East without having to commit the entire nation to war, and, later, after Germany's defeat, as a potential American ally in the Cold War. And the United States not only ultimately saved Franco's regime but also, at least in the mind of the dictator himself, vindicated his experiences and political choices thus far. With the treaties on bases negotiated with, and the military assurances received from, the United States in September 1953, Franco was able to assert, 'at last I have won the Civil War.'<sup>1161</sup>

Although he sanctioned its creation, Franco abstained from participating in any public ceremonies that might connect him to the Blue Division. He never attended any of the send-offs and return-greeting functions organised by the Falange, nor was he present at the return of the *Semiramis*. Furthermore, Franco seldom mentioned the Blue Division in any conversation or speeches. Although he had once told Hitler that he was sending the 'flower of our movement' to fight in the East, he never really saw them as a significant contribution to the vast war effort Germany and its other allies were making in their invasion of the Soviet Union.<sup>1162</sup> Possibly in an attempt to explain his actions before Spain was excluded from the UNO and its member countries pulled their ambassadors from Madrid, Franco met with the newly appointed British Ambassador, Sir Victor Mallet, who had recently replaced Sir Samuel Hoare (who, with the US Ambassador Carlton Hayes, had successfully pressured Spain to remove the Blue Division in 1943).<sup>1163</sup> Mallet attempted to

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<sup>1159</sup> S. Madariaga, *Spain: A modern history* (New York, 1958), p.577.

<sup>1160</sup> For more on the intricate relationship between Germany and Spain during the Second World War, see W. Bowen, *Spaniards and Nazi Germany: collaboration in the New Order*, and C. Leitz, *Economic relations between Nazi Germany and Franco's Spain, 1936-45* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>1161</sup> Cited by G. Hills, *Franco: El hombre y su nación*, (Madrid, 1969) p.430 as cited in E. Hernández-Sandoica and E. Moradiellos, 'Spain and the Second World War, 1939-45', p.267.

<sup>1162</sup> In a telegram sent in response to one from Hitler after the Blue Division had crossed the frontier of the Reich and marched towards the front. PRO HW12 268 no. 095362 11 Sept 1941

<sup>1163</sup> P. Preston, *Franco*, pp.540-1.

confront Franco with his help to the Axis during the war, including the sending of the Blue Division, but Franco described this unit as a 'mere drop of water' in contributing to the Nazi cause in the East.<sup>1164</sup> The reality is that Franco's reign ultimately affected the Spain that exists today. There is often the assertion that the 'authentic bourgeois' of modern Spain could also not have existed without the 'pseudo-bourgeois' prior to the Second Republic.<sup>1165</sup> Furthermore, there is often the common assertion prevalent amongst the general population in Spain that it could not have been the democracy it is today without nearly forty years of his dictatorship, despite his flirtation with joining the Axis during the Second World War.

In a discussion with American Ambassador to Spain Alexander Wedell in September 1941, the Spanish Minister of Industry and Commerce, Demetrio Carceller Segura, described the Blue Division as a 'cheap gesture' by Franco in reaping the 'blood debt' incurred from the Spanish Civil War to the Nazi cause in the East.<sup>1166</sup> Historian Michael Burleigh asserts that countries like Romania, Finland, Italy and Spain offered troops to fight against the Soviet Union because they all believed that Nazi Germany represented the beacon of leadership in Europe and that these countries' leadership invariably hoped to use the troops they sent to the Russian Front as 'levers' for territorial concessions from the Germans following an Axis victory.<sup>1167</sup> He further contends that the pretext of fighting the threat and barbarity of Stalinist communism to Western civilisation was a bogus and weak one because of the equal barbarity demonstrated in the creation of the numerous death camps like Auschwitz by Nazi Germany.<sup>1168</sup> Finland and Romania aside (as both were directly threatened by the Soviets and each had made territorial concessions to them prior to the war), both Italy and Spain each are responsible for a certain degree of accountability in sending men to the Eastern Front.<sup>1169</sup> Italy itself was a full Axis partner so even its actions in sending Italian units are understandable. Spain certainly sent the Blue

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<sup>1164</sup> As quoted in, *Ibid.*

<sup>1165</sup> J. Peña González, *Manuel Azaña: el hombre, el intelectual y el político* (Alcalá de Henares, 1991), p.270.

<sup>1166</sup> United States Department of State, *Foreign relations of the United States, 1941*, vol ii (Washington D.C., 1959) p 912 as cited in D. Smyth, 'the dispatch of the Spanish Blue Division to the Russian Front: reasons and repercussions', *European History Quarterly*, xxiv (1994) p.539.

<sup>1167</sup> M. Burleigh, *the Third Reich*, p.429.

<sup>1168</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1169</sup> Finland lost the Karelian Peninsula to the Soviets following the Winter War in March 1940 and Romania conceded Bessarabia and Bukovina in August 1940. Both countries found themselves, therefore, little alternative for military protection or assistance from anyone other than Germany. R. Overy and A. Wheatcroft, *the road to war*, 2 ed. (London, 1999), pp.249-50.

Division under both pretexts of repaying the '*deuda de sangre*' to Germany and fighting communism in its own backyard. As demonstrated, the Spanish government was aware of both the difficulties of the DEV in Russia and the behaviour of German authorities towards the Jewish populations in France and Poland (as well as Catholics in the latter). Ultimately, all four later extracted themselves from any political ties they had with Nazi Germany as the fortunes of war changed. So in some manner both Carceller and Burleigh are each somewhat correct in their assertions; however, neither addresses the nature of the men who volunteered their services.

The veterans of the Blue Division would not claim to have been either a 'cheap gesture' or a political 'lever' while serving in the Wehrmacht, especially during the war. In hindsight, certainly many veterans might have questioned their individual reasons for why they fought. The majority of the veterans of the Blue Division who decided to attest to their service in Hitler's army ventured some viewpoint as to the reason they ultimately fought. While the majority professed that they joined to fight Communism, some, like Spanish historian Angel Ruiz Ayúcar, felt proud to have fought alongside the Nazi troops in the invasion of the USSR.<sup>1170</sup> Very rarely, despite evidence to the contrary, do veterans ever see 'their' Blue Division as anything less than '*la famosa División Azul*' that served honourably and with distinction during the war. As a consequence, the men of the Blue Division are not interested in the discussion of their own individual fates and difficulties following the war. For them, the survival of the Blue Division's legacy is still paramount. In reality the Blue Division had organisational and logistical difficulties and social problems like any other military unit during the war. Despite these, veterans still see the Blue Division as a necessity during the Second World War despite modern perceptions of the division. This fundamental viewpoint maintains the spirit and legacy, which inevitably generates interest in a military unit that was of very little military value, and was, as Franco described it, 'a mere drop of water' in the vast ocean of war that encompassed the Russo-German War.

The Blue Division was a complete anomaly on the Eastern Front. By its very nature, it was never a proper 'volunteer' force nor was it an official representative of Franco's Spain. However, it was a physical entity that represented a regime bent on financial and territorial rewards for its usage. In this manner, the Blue Division

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<sup>1170</sup> A. Ruiz Ayúcar, *El Partido Comunista: 37 años de clandestinidad* (Madrid, 1976), p.71.

represented a government that used it for its own political purposes both during and after the war as needed. The Franco government went to extraordinary lengths to maintain the Blue Division in Russia for as long as feasibly possible. Only after Germany began to lose the war did the Franco regime realise that the division represented a liability. Consequently, the Blue Division could not be removed fast enough (but without insulting German sensibilities) from Russia by Franco. Furthermore, the regime no longer publicly acknowledged the Blue Division and its relationship with the Spanish government. Unfortunately, this treatment greatly affected the manner in which the division has been treated by its own government following the end of the Second World War. The Spanish government was largely apathetic to the plight and difficulties that many veterans endured after their service in Hitler's army. However, this apathy by their own government led the former volunteers to create their own subsistence and survival network that not only helped them acclimatise to post-war Spain, but also helped create the foundation for future interest and research into what, exactly, the Blue Division was. This interest can still spark controversy surrounding the place of the Blue Division and its role in Spanish history. Despite this controversy, the DEV has gained, at least somewhat publicly, some validity as an important facet of Spanish history.

Furthermore, controversy does not diminish the need for further study of the Blue Division. This thesis has demonstrated that the historiography of the DEV has not been 'done to death', as there remain many elements of the division that are little understood. The Blue Division presents a unique case study in the various foreign volunteers that served in the German Army during the Second World War. Neither truly 'volunteer' nor wards of the Third Reich, the Blue Division was a complex organisation that required a great logistical effort by the Spanish government to maintain a steady supply of recruits and replacements through its system of rotating *batallones de relevo y marcha*. Furthermore, although bankrolled by the German government, the Blue Division could not have survived without additional subsistence from the Spanish Army, which supplied vital medical doctors to treat wounded soldiers and native foodstuffs and additional clothing to bolster morale on the Eastern Front. Both the Spanish and German governments tried to further that sense of purpose through information disseminated amongst the troops through both command directives and the divisional newspaper *Hoja de Campaña* that endeavoured to shape and influence the thought processes of the Spanish troops while they were in Russia.

This thesis has demonstrated that these measures had some effect on the troops in generating some degree of anti-Semitism amongst the *divisionarios*.

In reality, the Blue Division's existence did not end with its repatriation in the autumn of 1943 as many men found themselves prisoners of the Soviet Union until the 1950s. There is another important aspect of the divisional study of the Blue Division. The way in which the Franco government used the *cautivos* as propaganda fodder for its own political purpose following their repatriation is another aspect of the DEV that transcends its time in Russia. In studying the division, it is fundamentally important to look beyond the unit's actual physical existence and ultimate demise while fighting in Russia. Therefore, a central focus of this thesis was to discuss the development of the *Hermanidad de la División Azul*, which was a fundamental coping mechanism for the veterans' return to post-war Spain. The HDA helped not only with the social reinsertion of the veterans who had been repatriated during the war, but it also maintained the spirit of the division until the return of the POWs and continues to do so even today. Even as this thesis was being finished, the scholarship of the Blue Division has been greatly helped by recent works on various aspects of the division.<sup>1171</sup> Hopefully this thesis has generated several new insights into the Blue Division that complement the existing historiography of the DEV, and by doing so, it has created the foundations for future, more thorough and complete academic studies.

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<sup>1171</sup> The best, updated monograph work finally done on the Blue Division is the recent work by Spanish historian Xavier Moreno Juliá. This work has already been covered in Spanish certain elements of the division asserted in this thesis. See, X. Moreno Juliá, *la División Azul: sangre española en Rusia, 1941-45* (Madrid, 2004). Another work is another work on an administrative element of the division. See, J. Dolado Esteban, E. Ramos Redondo, and E. Robles Esteban, *Revista de Comisario: El Cuerpo de Intervención Militar en la División Azul, 1941-1944* (Madrid, 2005).

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