

The Last Crusade: Limerick's role in the Spanish Civil War.¹

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The Spanish Civil War will be remembered by history as one of the great tragedies of our time. A bitter and bloody conflict, the repercussions of which still resound throughout contemporary Spain, it pitted Spaniard against Spaniard and brother against brother in a three-year long struggle which would leave Spain with the legacy of a tattered social fabric and a ravaged and impoverished country.

Indeed, the fact that Spain has risen almost phoenix-like from the ashes of the Civil War carnage to take her place once more amongst the European family of nations has been one of the great political and social miracles of the latter half of the twentieth century. However, on the part of many historians and commentators, contemporary interest in the Spanish Civil War has not centred on the Spanish experience or the effect of war in contemporary Spanish society although it would be foolish to belittle these obviously important issues.

On the contrary, the Spanish Civil War has been of fascination to many due to its international and ideological nature. Seen as a proxy war between the minions of communism and a new world order against the old forces of tradition, religion and capitalism, Spain immediately became the chessboard for an international struggle of conflicting ideologies, a struggle which would evolve into the Second World War and in its final metamorphosis bring the world close to Armageddon in the heady days of the Cold War which have left such an indelible imprint on our recent history.

That Spaniards would be the original pawns in such a dangerous endgame seems quite absurd today given Spain's geographical and political isolation from the epicentre of global power during the centuries directly preceding the outbreak of the Civil War. Moreover, it seems doubly absurd on first glance that Limerick, a geographically isolated provincial city on the Western seaboard of a still fledgling Irish state with an avowed and proud policy of neutrality would also play a role in this conflict.

Yet, as this article will show, Limerick, its elected representatives and its people did play a definite and active role in the Spanish Civil War. This role may not have been of great military significance but it

was one of political importance and in the light of recent studies on the Spanish Civil War and De Valera's Ireland, it is undoubtedly a role which deserves a fresh historical investigation and appraisal. This study of Limerick's role in the Spanish Civil War may not help us to unravel the tangled web of the Spanish conflict but it does help us to reach a deeper understanding of this historical period in Limerick and the interaction of the city with developments in Irish society.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out on the 18th of July, 1936 with General Franco's revolt in Spanish Morocco, Limerick was a depressed industrial city in an Ireland which was dominated in many ways by the dual spectre of economic and political dependence on the old colonial power, Great Britain and the social hegemony of the Catholic Church, which since independence had assumed a status of almost native nobility, exercising immense power as the only stable force in the uncertain power vacuum in the socio-political and cultural arena which had been the logical legacy of the Irish Civil War and the pyrrhic victory of the Free State forces.

Indeed, the Catholic Church is the key factor in any attempt at the comprehension of Limerick's role in the Spanish

Civil War. In order to understand this factor more fully, one must look at the respective trajectories of the Irish and Spanish states in the years preceding the outbreak of hostilities in Spain. For centuries, the Irish had suffered religious persecution under an imperial yoke and as such, it is no surprise to find widespread Irish sympathy with the Spanish Catholic Church as tales of "wanton destruction of church property" and "priceless church ornaments and statues being burnt on the streets" were reported in the early days of the conflict.³ The paradoxical fact that the imperial yoke in Spain, as represented by Franco and the Bourbon monarchy, was supported by the Catholic Church is largely irrelevant as justification was achieved for the Irish crusade by supplanting the British oppression in Ireland with that of the Russians in Spain and the Spanish Civil War was quickly perceived in Ireland as the first step by the Russian communist empire in their aim of world domination.

Furthermore, the bitter Civil War in Ireland had left the Irish Catholic Church in a position of increasing power. The Church's deliberately ambiguous position with regard to the War of Independence and the Irish Civil War had allowed it to maintain its power-base as the fundamental and centrifugal reference-point in Irish society. Nowhere was this more evident than in the pious and conservative city of Limerick. Many Irishmen had died



Certificate issued to members of the 15th International Brigade by the Republicans. All the Irish who fought on the Republican side were attached to this brigade.

in the preceding years over what would become in time an empty oath of allegiance, but there is no doubt that Church backing for a military cause could, if properly orchestrated, be a much stronger rallying cry.

This crusader mentality was endemic in Irish society and was used by both political factions after the Irish Civil War as a unifying beacon for Irish society. In later years, this mentality would find a more peaceful outlet in missionary activities but in 1936, from the moment the Spanish nationalist struggle was supported from the Irish pulpit, it was no surprise to find that Irishmen would be willing to sacrifice their lives on a foreign battlefield in order to support those who opposed the forces which this pulpit represented.

It could even be argued that English dominance of the Crusades of the Middle Ages through figures such as Richard the Lionheart, etc was in fact a historical anomaly and that Ireland and Spain, given their respective historical trajectories and processes of nation-building, were far more qualified as crusader nations. In many ways, Gen. O'Duffy's Irish Brigade was thus a logical development in the Spanish conflict and simply an Irish response, although markedly inferior from a numerical point of view, to the ill-fated Spanish Armada of 1588.

As has already been stated in this article, the Spanish Civil War quickly became an international war of perceived ideological differences; left versus right, old versus new, them against us. Here, it is fundamental to state that the majority of the nationalist Irish volunteers in the Irish Brigade and for the purposes of this article, those from Limerick, showed very little ideological conviction with regard to the conflict. Most were neither supporters of Fascism or advocates of lay Catholic organisations such as Opus Dei. Neither were they the victims of the economic depression which had blighted 1930's Ireland. In fact, amongst the fifty plus Limerick volunteers, only one, Pat Coffey from the Sandmall, was unemployed at the time, well below the national average. Furthermore, we also know that Coffey was a prominent athlete and was unmarried.

The Limerick and Irish volunteers on the Nationalist side were simply soldiers of the cross answering the call of the pulpit. The question of adventure is also one which must not be disregarded completely, but the over-riding factor was undoubtedly the call of the Catholic Church and the pastoral letters of the Irish bishops were far more significant in sending the volunteers to Spain than any ideological pamphlets or convictions.

On the republican side, the position was markedly different, with volunteers for the International Brigades generally being card-carrying members of Communist Parties with deep ideological convictions about the significance of the Spanish conflict. However, in a Limerick dominated by the Catholic Church, their

numbers were small. Efforts had been made to equate the situation of Ireland with that of Cataluña under Madrid dominance and in 1932, De Valera had written to Juan Fabregas, later to be the Catalan Councillor for Economics stating that "the desire for liberty and independence" of the Catalan people had "the warmest sympathy of the Irish people and their President".⁴ Yet, the call of the Church was far stronger and by 1936, there was no government support for the democratically-elected Republican Government in Madrid and the civic reception granted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alfie Byrne, to O'Duffy's brigade on their return from Spain was another tacit reminder of where the power really lay in Irish society.

However, Frank Ryan from Elton in Knocklong was to become perhaps the most famous Irish combatant in the Spanish Civil War and his imprisonment by Francoist forces earned considerable coverage in the local and national press. Jim Woulfe from Newcastle West was another Republican volunteer. A card-carrying Communist Party member who had emigrated to Canada, he was tragically killed in the Battle of Belchite on the Aragon Front on September 3rd, 1937. Gerrard Doyle, a Sexton Street C.B.S. student from Limerick who had worked on the Shannon Scheme from 1927-29 before emigrating to England, was another Limerickman who fought on the Republican side. He had joined the Communist Party in Birmingham in 1936 and he was imprisoned in Spain after his capture on the Jarama Front in March, 1938. The *Limerick Leader* of Oct. 27th, 1938 reports how he had been later freed from the nationalist concentration camp of San Pedro de Cardena in the Francoist heartland of Burgos.

The role of the Republican volunteers from Limerick in the Spanish Civil War should never be ignored or belittled, but from an objective perspective, one must point out that their numbers were greatly inferior to the Limerickmen who enlisted and fought in O'Duffy's Irish Brigade. Indeed, the fifty Limerickmen who fought in O'Duffy's 600-700 strong battalion made up one of the largest single contingents from any Irish region and this reinforces Limerick's 1930's reputation as a bastion of church power and conservatism.

The Limerick volunteers in O'Duffy's Nationalist Irish Brigade were recruited in the late summer and autumn of 1936. A mixture of city-dwellers and residents of towns such as Knocklong and Rathkeale in the rich agricultural hinterland of the Golden Vale, they were in many ways a motley crew which stands in stark contrast to the politically-motivated profile of the Republican volunteers.

As already stated, only one, Pat Coffey from the Sandmall, was unemployed. Most were single and most were under the age of thirty with little military experience. Their addresses in Limerick were varied but William St, the Garryowen area and Roxboro appear several times. Paul

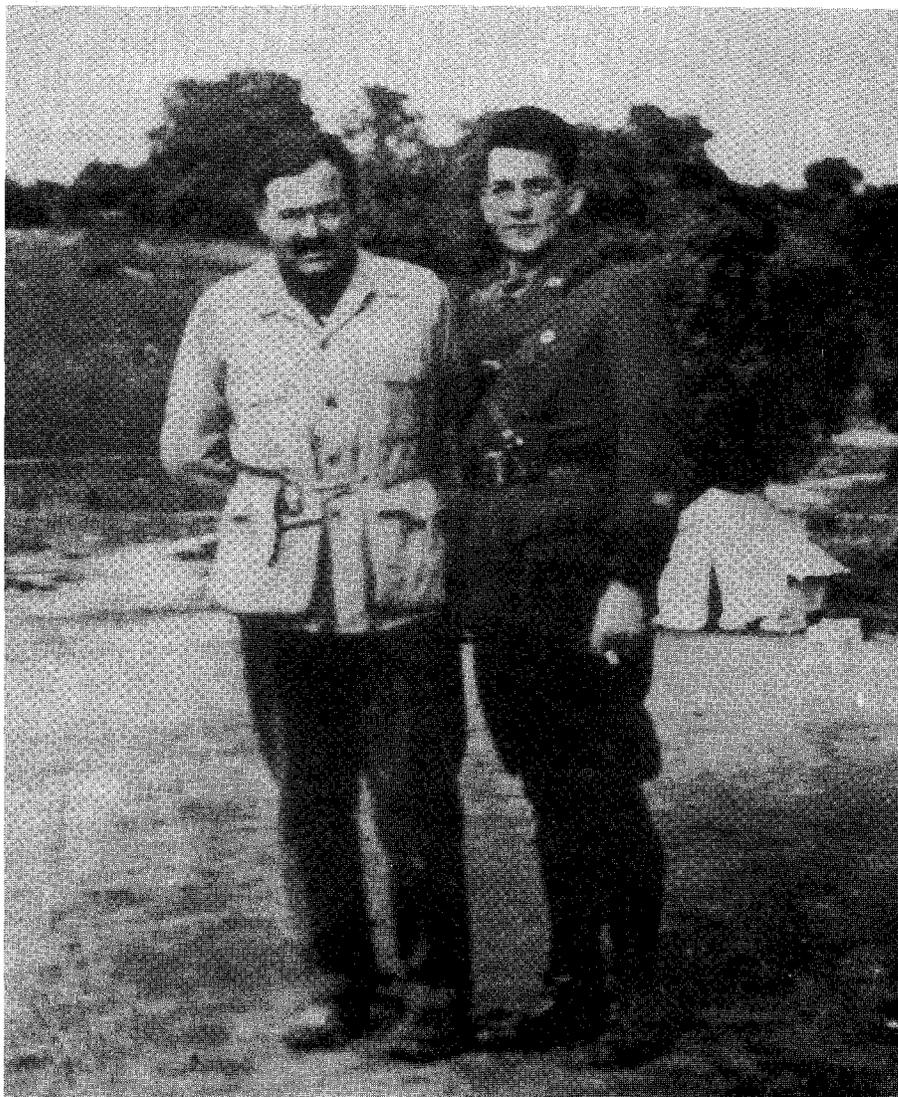
Sheehy from Garryowen, John Quilty from Lisnagry and Thomas Fennell from Rathkeale were all the sons of publicans and the profile of the volunteers was definitely not one of poverty. William McSweeney from Rathuard was an electrician while the Fitzgerald brothers, Frank and Seán, although originally from Cappagh in Waterford, were later to become prominent in Limerick business circles with Frank purchasing a shop on the Ennis Road and Seán setting up the first car-hire business in Limerick.

The aforementioned religious aspect of the conflict is reiterated by the presence of P.J. Cleary from William Street, who would later become a Franciscan, and Pat Heaphy from Scarteen near Knocklong, who was training to be a priest with the Oblate Fathers when he enlisted in O'Duffy's Brigade. Of significance, Heaphy never completed his religious studies and joined the R.A.F. in World War Two before eventually settling down to work as a bank clerk in England. He is buried in Emly.

The youngest volunteer in the Irish Brigade was also a Limerickman, Christopher Whelan from O'Connell Avenue, who was the drummer-boy for O'Duffy's battalion. He was personally presented to General Franco in Spain and later became a successful building contractor in Limerick.

The profile of the Limerick volunteers is thus a kaleidoscopic one but on the passenger lists of the S.S. Ardeola and S.S. Urun which brought the Limerickmen to Spain via Portugal, one finds several common trends. All were Catholics and most seem to have come from respectable and relatively prosperous backgrounds. There is a mixture of former National Army servicemen such as William Delaney from Ballycurrane and Catholic Boy Scouts alongside tradesmen and the enigmatic Christopher O'Sullivan from Nicholas St., whose wife never knew he had been in Spain, but the common bond between them was their belief in Cardinal McRory's pastoral letter of Oct. 18th, 1931, which had been read at all masses in every church in Ireland and which called for "a Great Crusade".

This was the predominant reason why these volunteers enlisted in O'Duffy's Brigade and as the S.S. Urun left Galway harbour on Dec. 15th, 1936, the volunteers sang on deck "Faith of our Fathers" to the waving contingent on the quayside which had come to see them off. Many would have read Aodh de Blacam's pamphlet from the Irish Messenger Office, "For God and Spain; the Truth about the Spanish Civil War" and once this pamphlet received the *Imprimi Potest* of the primate of Ireland in Oct., 1936, the crusade had begun. It had taken over 350 years but the Spanish Armada was now travelling in the opposite direction and once again as the Bishop of Elphin would point out, it was "not a war between royalists and republicans....not a war between rich and poor....it is a war between Christ and anti-Christ".⁵



Frank Ryan with Ernest Hemingway outside Madrid, December 1937.

The Limerick volunteers in O'Duffy's Brigade left Ireland in December, 1936. J. Ryan, who was in charge of recruitment of the Irish Brigade in Limerick addressed the first contingent before departure. The *Limerick Chronicle* of Dec. 19th, 1936, reports his description of the volunteers as "true soldiers of the cross...and apostles to a foreign landwhose wounds for Christ the King will one day be the trophies of their victory". In conclusion, Ryan stated to the eager contingent how they were "a credit to the old Catholic city of Limerick, to the Catholic Church and to their country".

The actual military contribution of the Irish Brigade was in fact minimal. On arrival in Lisbon, they were despatched to Caceres in Extremadura, an area which had seen some of the bloodiest fighting and massacres in the war. Their lack of training and the leadership of the increasingly megalomaniac O'Duffy hampered any serious Irish involvement in military manoeuvres, but their contribution was always going to be far more propagandist than in the trenches.

Strangely, the Spanish Republican forces "had a whole-hearted respect for the Irish Brigade" as was reported in the 22nd June, 1937, edition of the *Limerick Chronicle*, but this was due to the fact that

a 60-strong group of Irish Republican volunteers had routed the far numerically superior 7th Bandera of the Francoist forces and they erroneously equated the military skills of their Irish comrades with that of their countrymen in the Francoist ranks.

On his return to Ireland, Sgt. Paul Sheehy of Garryowen spoke primarily of Irish cooperation with the ultra-Catholic requetés or Carlist troops from Navarra and the *Limerick Chronicle* of 22nd June, 1937, reports how Sheehy declared that the Carlists were "the finest soldiers anyone could meet and treated the members of the Brigade as brothers". He continues to say how "every morning, they had mass about 8:30 celebrated by a Carlist priest, Father Alonso". Indeed, the Church of Santo Domingo in Caceres had a special plaque erected that is still there today and which commemorates the devout nature of the Irish Brigade who used to pray there.

The Limerick volunteers of the Irish Brigade left Lisbon for Dublin with their fellow combatants on June 19th, 1937. They had seen real battle action and had been mostly involved in skirmishes and cleaning-up operations after the Madrid offensive. On arrival at Alexandra Basin in Dublin on 22nd June, 1937, the Irish

Brigade was met by a large crowd with a significant police presence which was due to fears of O'Duffy's capacity to arouse political unrest. Once again, they sang "Faith of our Fathers" before departing for a civic reception in the Mansion House which had been granted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Alfie Byrne.

In the days that followed, the Limerick volunteers gradually returned home and on June 28th, 1937, the *Limerick Leader* published a letter from the legendary Willie Whack Gleeson from Mary St. who spoke of the "brave men who represented Limerick on the Madrid front" and "who have returned home victorious and unscathed and stronger in the Faith of our forefathers due no doubt to the cause in which those 'Soldiers of the Cross' enlisted". Gleeson's sentiments and his call for employment for the ex-volunteers was echoed by the Catholic Church and officialdom. Indeed, it was the Bishop of Limerick who had pointed out in his pastoral letter of February 7th, 1937, how "the Christian nations of Europe were not united as one man against the spirit that emanates from Moscow and Madrid" and there was little sympathy for the besieged civilians in Madrid and the food shortages which were threatening to bring famine to parts of Republican Spain.

It is pertinent to point out that there had been anti-Blueshirt riots in Limerick in August, 1933 and that there were several clerics, such as Fr. Michael O'Flanagan, who championed the Republican cause but on the whole, Limerick in the 1930's was a bulwark of Catholic hegemony even within an Irish context and the actions of Limerick Corporation in 1939 bear tacit witness to this.

After the return of O'Duffy's volunteers to Limerick in the summer of 1937, the war dragged on in Spain. Newspaper coverage continued but the worsening political situation in the rest of Europe began to take prominence.

On the Republican side, there were reports on the release of Gerrard Doyle along with the normal despatches. The Elton volunteer, Frank Ryan, still remained incarcerated and on March 25th, 1939, the *Limerick Chronicle* published a letter to the editor from the Frank Ryan Release Committee but there was no editorial response even though the war would end only five days later with Franco's forces finally entering Madrid and the capitulation of the Republican forces.

Limerick's last act in the Spanish Civil War had taken place a couple of months previously as it became the first city in Ireland to recognise Franco's new nationalist government on the capture of Barcelona in January, 1939. The *Limerick Chronicle* of January 28th, 1939, reports how at a meeting "Limerick Corporation congratulated General Franco on the capture of Barcelona and on his fight for Christianity and freedom and requested the Government to recognise the administration of the Patriot Leader". The records show that Mr. J. Dalton proposed this

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TWO PENCE.

NOTES OF THE WEEK

THE farce of Non-Intervention in Spain has been carried another step further. Franco, puppet of the Fascist powers, is now facilitated by being assured that the Spanish people, on whom he wages war, will be denied reinforcements of men and munitions, while Italy and Germany continue to supply his own needs.

Imperial England's role in the Spanish war deserves to be studied well—especially by those Irishmen who adopt as their watchword: "England's enemy is Ireland's friend." England has not only hampered the Spanish Republican Government by initiating the embargo on arms, but is also helping to starve out the Spanish people. English warships are sent out to Spanish waters, not to protect British shipping, but to prevent it from going to Spanish Government ports. Franco could not enforce a blockade; England enforces it for him. Yet, there are Irishmen who withhold help from Spain on the plea that they "wait to see what side England takes"!

A Coronation Warning

RESPECTABILITY is all agog in preparation for the Coronation in London. Northern Irish workers are even less enthusiastic than their Southern comrades: In Belfast and Derry, Coronation Day means a holiday—in most cases without pay. A holiday without pay in Dublin will hardly be attempted.

The cross-Channel press campaign to whip up loyal feelings, is—under the circumstances—understandable. There is just a danger that such papers, in giving exaggerated reports of Imperialist sympathies in Ireland, may betray their Irish friends. In Dublin and Cork, certain large stores

BELTON PAYS UP!

THE building workers have won a victory over Mr. Patrick Belton, T.D., house builder and leader of the "Christian Front." Belton agreed to pay the 3d. per hour increase for all workers, but on last week-end, pay-day, he only paid the skilled workers the increase, leaving out the labourers. The entire workers struck work with the result that Mr. Belton paid up.

have—as yet discreetly—stocked monarchist emblems, hoping for the demand the newspapers say is there. In the interests of peace, we hope these stores and their potential Coronation clientele will avoid angering the people.

The mass of people, North and South, and a goodly number in Britain itself, see through these displays and realise they are just occasions for Imperialist propaganda in the interests of Big Business. We are glad to note that Labour and anti-Imperialist demonstrations have been arranged for Dublin and that Northern workers will ensure that Craigavon, Baldwin and Co. will not use the Coronation to bolster up their falling political fortunes.

May 12 has another significance

for us. It is the Anniversary of the execution of James Connolly, Irish Socialist leader.

Bewley's Berlin Blunder

MR. DE VALERA must be embarrassed at Minister Bewley's recent pro-Nazi speech, but if he reprimands his Berlin representative, it will be in private. In parliament he has made excuse for Mr. Bewley who, he said was merely being "courteous." He denied Labour leader Norton's assertion that Mr. Bewley's speech "grossly misrepresented the position of the Irish people and was calculated to cause the opinion that a section of them endorsed the policy of religious persecution carried out in Germany."

Now if a Free State Minister had been similarly "courteous" to Stalin, what a hub-bub there would be. But, when it's Hitler—not even one pastoral letter results.

One fact is obvious: Mr. Bewley is no fit representative of any section of our people. The only amende honorable for this insult to Ireland is his recall from Berlin.

Support the Building Workers'

THE stoppage in the Building industry in Dublin and Cork is the most thorough-going strike seen in these cities for a long time. Labourers, plumbers, bricklayers, plasterers, painters, carpenters; all are united in a common front to enforce redress for acute grievances covering wages, hours and conditions of work.

The men want the restoration of the 1d. taken from them in 1931 plus 2d. per hour increase. They want a 40 hour week. They are pressing for an agreement covering the vexed question of broken time and travelling money.

Upwards of 100 firms outside the Federation have signed agreements with the Building Trades Group for 3d. per hour increase. This represents a victory for the workers and the establishment in principle of the workers' claims. The class solidarity of all sections of the men took a further step last week when the skilled workers' unions decided that their members would not work on jobs where the labourers were not also receiving the 3d. increase. A great step in unity between the labourers and craftsmen.

Bitter indignation is felt in the ranks of the striking workers at the part played by the Fianna Fail Government. Mr. O'Sullivan, Mr. Lemass' lieutenant, showed his hand right from the start as an attorney for Messrs. Crampton and friends. The removal of this reactionary is called for. Should not the whole issue and the part of the Government be raised by the Labour Party in the Dail?

A National Issue

THE employers are making the issue a national one. The Snaorlat Federation is called in. It is high time the workers made a similar move. The whole Trade Union

SPANISH REDS HEAR MASS AT THE FRONT



A LIE EXPOSED - A CHALLENGE ANSWERED

TO the lasting shame of the Catholic clergy in Ireland, pulpits as well as press has thundered forth the lie that Fascist General Franco fights for Christianity, and especially for Catholicism, in Spain. The truth is that the Catholic Church is divided, the Hierarchy, and some priests supporting Fascism; many poorer priests standing by the people.

The soldiers in the above picture together with their priests, are fighting AGAINST Fascism. Irish daily newspapers have not published this, or similar, photos, and have glossed over, or suppressed, verified reports of the murder of anti-Fascist priests

movement needs to speak in solidarity with the building workers. Messrs. Crampton and friends should be left under no illusion that the "starve them out" tactic will work. Resolutions pledging financial and moral support should be forthcoming from every Union branch and Trades Council from Belfast and Derry to Dublin and Cork. And in face of the magnitude of the issues involved and the policy of the Government, the Trades Union Congress should come forth with a call to all Unions for support till victory.

By such action the Employers will be brought to heel, the struggle shortened and victory ensured.

CORRESPONDENTS: NOTE WARNING AT BOTTOM OF COL. 1, PAGE 5.

in Spain, and the bombing, by Franco's air-planes, of Churches and Convents with resultant casualties among priests and nuns.

And because the IRISH DEMOCRAT dares tell the truth on Spain, because it dare shows that Bishops as well as newspaper-kings can tell lies—and are telling lies about Spain—it has to face the full fury of discomfited Fascists and pro-Fascists, clerical as well as lay.

Already, it has been decided that the paper that tells the truth must be suppressed. So, a campaign is afoot to boycott the IRISH DEMOCRAT and its printers. Newsagents have been warned not to stock this paper. People who get work done by our printers are "advised" to go elsewhere.

So be it. We can fight in that sort of a war too. And, we won't be beaten.

And you, reader, will you play your part? Push the sales of this paper. Get us new readers, new agents. Give your custom to the newsagents who stock the IRISH DEMOCRAT.

Subscribe to our Defence Fund. Send a subscription, no matter how small, and thus ensure the existence of an unmaneuvered press.

And—even if we do give this free ad. to our printers—we ask you to send your printing orders to them. You will get your work done quickly, efficiently and at a moderate cost by Irish Trade Union Labour.

Against the Fascists! For a free press! Get to work now!



'Time Out' from the front lines, Spain 1937.

motion of congratulations and that Mr. M. Hartney seconded it. A bouquet of flowers was sent to General Franco and the last act of the Crusade had taken place.

Neither did Limerick's actions go unnoticed in Spain. On February 18th, 1939, a letter in Spanish dated February 3rd was received by the Mayor of Limerick from none other than the new Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs in Burgos. In the letter, Franco's gratitude to Limerick for its "enthusiastic congratulations" is communicated along with the new Caudillo's "most friendly greetings".⁶

The *Limerick Chronicle* responded to the letter in the manner to be expected given their position on the Spanish conflict and stated on February 21st, 1939 how it was "very gratifying to know that Limerick was the first place to extend felicitations to the Nationalist leader on his magnificent achievement". Furthermore, the report ends by stating how it was "sincerely trusted that the Corporation would soon be able to transmit a similar message on the capture of Madrid and the end of the Civil War".

The *Limerick Chronicle's* prophecy came to pass and Franco entered Madrid on March 28th, 1939. Two days later, the Republican forces surrendered. The war had lasted 986 days and had left Spain the ravaged and divided carcass of what had once been a united country. It had also divided Europe but a far bigger conflict was now looming on the immediate horizon and the perceived ideological conflict which had begun in Spain would now become a distinct reality as the Second World War engulfed first Europe and later, the globe.

Paradoxically, neither Spain or Ireland would take part in this war but Franco did not forget his Irish allies and strong bonds between the respective Church hierarchies in both countries made Ireland one of the few friends of Franco's pariah state.

Limerick continued to conserve a reputation for conservatism and

catholicism as Franco's correspondence passed into the Corporation records. Frank Ryan was finally released in the spring of 1940 with the aid of Nazi Germany and was taken to Berlin. His health had suffered greatly due to his imprisonment and he died a broken man in Dresden on June 10th, 1944.

On the O'Duffy side, the volunteers had already settled back into civilian life by 1939. Sgt. Paul Sheehy went to work in Mattersons. P.J. Mangan from the Blackboy Pike went back to his job as a postman in the G.P.O. James Fahey from Rosbrien, the only Nationalist volunteer who hadn't returned home in 1937, went to England where he enlisted in the British Army and was captured during the North African campaign. A prisoner of war in Nazi Germany, he was finally liberated by Russian forces and when he returned Limerick many years later, he got employment at the Limerick Telephone Exchange in Roches Street.

Over the next sixty years, Franco and De Valera would both die. Ireland would become an independent republic and Spain would transform itself into a democratic nation. In both countries, the power of the Catholic Church would see itself radically decline with widespread changes in their respective societies.

In Spain, a "pacto de olvido" or agreement to forget would initiate a collective amnesia with regard to the Spanish Civil War in order to achieve some sort of national reconciliation. In Ireland, the episode would also become in many ways a historical embarrassment and Irish and Limerick involvement would become portrayed as a historical anomaly of little real significance in the socio-cultural or political development of our society.

However, the Spanish Civil War and Limerick's role in it remain today as a telling reminder of the power of religion in our societies and the capacity of this power to both inspire souls and engender hatred. The tragic destiny which befell Spain in 1936 could easily have happened

in Ireland in the same era and as the bitter wounds of the Spanish Civil War finally heal, it may be pertinent to strive that no ideology, institution or entity will ever have the same power again which would pit men from Caherconlish and Córdoba against men from Navarra and Newcastle West on a foreign battlefield where to paraphrase an Irish Republican volunteer, even the olives bled.⁷

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The authors of this article have made a deliberate attempt to avoid footnotes where possible, given the nature of the publication, as the nature of the article would demand countless references and this is not in spirit with the style of the publication. However, we would like to extend our thanks to the countless people who made this article possible. We are very grateful for the interviews given by so many volunteers from both sides and their relatives and friends, along with the personal correspondence and archives which many have entrusted to Mr. Des Ryan. In Ireland, we are sincerely grateful to the Franciscan Archives, the Limerick Leader and Limerick Chronicle, the City Library, Limerick Museum, the University of Limerick library, and the Limerick Corporation archives. In Spain, we proudly acknowledge the kind assistance of the Library of the University of Valladolid, the National Library of Spain and the Archive Histórico de la Guerra Civil in Salamanca. We also acknowledge the kind help of Mr. Barry McLoughlin in Vienna and the Russian Spanish Civil War archives in Moscow.
2. Des Ryan is an employee of Limerick Corporation and an independent historian. His main interests lie in Limerick and the Spanish Civil War and the history of the Jews in Limerick City. Dr. Barrie Wharton is a lecturer in Spanish in the Department of Languages and Cultural Studies at the University of Limerick. He has published books and articles both in Spanish and English on the Spanish Civil War and Francoist Spain.
3. See *Limerick Chronicle*, Oct. 20th, 1936.
4. See Juan Fabrega's 1932 book, *Irlanda I Catalunya*, published in Catalan. In 1921, John Langdon-Davies had also lectured in Catalan in the town of Vich on the subject of "The Irish Sinn Fein Movement".
5. See his Lenten Pastoral Letter of February 7th, 1937.
6. The original of this letter is contained in the archives of Limerick Corporation.
7. The phrase "even the olives are bleeding" was said to have been uttered as he was shot by the Irish Republican volunteer, Charles Donnelly. He was also a promising poet and he was killed on the Jarama front on February 26th, 1937.