Article

Taking sides: Translators and journalists in the Spanish civil war

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Abstract

Soon after the uprising of General Franco in July 1936, the elite of international journalism turned its attention to the political undercurrents of the emerging Spanish Civil War, a historical period which would become a 'golden age' for foreign correspondents, and a conflict where women would for the first time play a leading role in global war reporting. Their battlefield accounts often reflect a biased understanding of the ideological confrontation of the two warring factions, referred to in Anglosaxon media as 'Loyalists' (Republicans) and 'Nationalists' (Francoists), whereas domestic reporters preferred the more categorical 'rojos' (reds) or 'fascistas' (fascists). For many foreign journalists, sending their chronicles back home meant paying a heavy toll, since correspondents were only allowed on the frontline when accredited and any journalist held prisoner could easily be mistaken for a spy. Drawing on a selection of historical, journalistic, media and translation studies research sources, as well as on a number of memoirs, personal accounts and biographies, in this article we discuss some up to now uncharted issues arising from the symbiotic connection between translation and journalism during the Spanish Civil War: (a) their lack of proficiency in Spanish and their unfamiliarity with the country made it necessary for many correspondents to rely on the assistance of interpreters, fixers, guides and press officers, recruited for their ideological commitment to the rebel military uprising or to the Republican Government; (b) the role of translation in the Press and Propaganda Offices set up by the incipient Nationalist government, the Spanish Republic and the Catalan and Basque autonomous governments; and (c) the complex relationship between foreign correspondents and translators working for the censorship departments set up by Francoist and Republican Press Offices in order to prevent journalists from revealing information which might undermine the morale of civilians or troops, and the international reception of the narratives they sought to disseminate abroad.

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Introduction

On 17 July 1936, United Press reporter Lester Ziffren evaded official censorship by transmitting to his London headquarters a simple ciphered message which disclosed that colonial army troops had revolted in Spanish Morocco against the central government in Madrid (Wurtzel 2006:79–80). Although initially the coup d'état did not succeed in the most important cities in Spain, it was the spark that ignited a 3 year civil war, in which the insurgent military forces, the Catholic church and a combination of conservative and radical right wing political groups, later on unified under the command of General Francisco Franco, fought against the legally elected left-wing Republican government. The conflict soon acquired an international dimension and was to be a rehearsal of World War II. The Nationalists (as the rebels called themselves) were supported by Fascist Italian and Nazi German troops, while the Loyalists counted on Soviet war material and military advisors, and on the deployment of the International Brigades, a multinational task force recruited by the Communist International. During the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), hundreds of thousands of Spaniards were killed on the battlefronts, shot at the mass executions carried out by both sides or fled the country seeking asylum. General Franco would be the head of a totalitarian dictatorship until his death in 1975 (Casanova 2014).

A most memorable group of foreign correspondents, including pioneering women journalists, were sent to cover the war in Spain. For some of them, reporting their chronicles from a war-torn country meant paying a heavy toll, since correspondents were only allowed on the frontline when accredited, and any journalist held prisoner could easily be mistaken for a spy, as was the case of reporter and literary translator Renée Lafont, shot in the early stages of the confrontation. Many of these correspondents were enthusiastic supporters of the Loyalist Republican Government, as American journalist Louis Fischer, who apparently even attended war cabinet meetings (Preston 2009:283). Reporters aligned with the Nationalist rebels were fewer in number, although most of them appeared to be as devoted as Harold Cardozo, *The Daily Mail* journalist who depicted General Franco as a 'man of peace, of contemplation' (Cardozo 1937:141).

Throughout the conflict, both Nationalists and Republicans, by means of their own propaganda machinery, strove to build the best possible image abroad of the cause they were fighting for. Only a few correspondents had a previous knowledge of the country and of its ruling politicians, and, even in those cases, they needed the assistance or supervision of a variety of language mediators, as recounted by Hearst Press correspondent Knoblaugh, whose interview to future Premier Francisco Largo Caballero after the Asturias Revolution in October 1934 had to be submitted for approval to Máximo Fernández, a communist writer who sanctioned its Spanish translation. In the 1930s the status of what we now call professional translators/interpreters, as well as their institutional or academic recognition, was still at its very early stages. The shortage of language experts, as depicted

in a number of civil war testimonies, illustrates the difficulties faced by most foreign journalists who struggled to communicate in Spanish. In his account, Knoblaugh (2007: 31) evokes the case of a Norwegian correspondent not being able to send stories back home for weeks because no one could understand him. American journalist Virginia Cowles (2014: 445–446) recalls how she got lost walking through the University City of Madrid until she was rescued by an officer who addressed her in almost unintelligible French. Nigel Tangye, the crypto-Nazi air correspondent to the *Evening News*, spent much time consulting his *All You Want in Spain*, in an attempt to subdue the phonetics of the language (Keene, 2007:60–61). Shortly after their arrival, photographers Robert Capa and Gerda Taro, both fluent in German, resolved to travel first to Aragon, since the Thaelmann Battalion was mainly made up of German Jew volunteers (Rogoyska, 2013:88). Polish reporter Pruszynski (2007:117 and 138) describes his satisfaction when he finds out that he could speak French with most Spanish politicians; and John Tisa (1985:96), an internationalist frontline pamphleteer, as many others, points out that he spent enough time in the war as to eventually learn Spanish.

The Spanish Civil War continues to exert an enduring attraction for researchers and the public at large, as seen by the success of the exhibition 'Correspondents in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939' organized by the Instituto Cervantes and the Pablo Iglesias Foundation in 2006. Still, the catalogue contains few references to the specific communication problems faced by journalists in the war zone or to the interaction between translators and journalists during the conflict (García Santa Cecilia, 2006). In this regard, Salama-Carr (2019:78–79) points out the scarce attention paid by historians, media researchers and journalists to the impact of translation on reported stories and events in times of war, and the way it can contribute to resolve or exacerbate conflicts. Translation scholars Schäffner and Bassnett (2010:1–29), Davier (2014:53–74) and Zanettin (2016: 303–318) also discuss relevant issues such as the invisible link between politics, media and translation, the unacknowledged role of translators and interpreters in media organizations and journalistic accounts and the institutional denial of the interlingual and intercultural transfer operating within news agencies.

In 'Fifteen Years of Journalistic Translation Research and More', Valdeón (2015:635–647) makes reference to the absence of publications which explore the relevance of translation in news production in different periods and considers the compilation of historical journalistic translated texts a challenge for academics. In his view, translation was at the very base of the birth of journalism, often meeting the demands of a readership eager for news on wars erupting in different countries, and it can be described as a gatekeeping process rather than a purely interlinguistic or intercultural one. As gatekeepers, translators are agents, or even censors, involved in the decision-making process of what is to be published. They shape the audience's views according to their own beliefs or to the constraints imposed by the ideology of the private companies or public institutions hiring them.

Drawing on pioneering studies on the history of journalism in the Spanish Civil War (Armero, 1976, 1987; Piquero Cuadros, 2017), memoirs of foreign journalists based, in many cases, on their own reports published during the war (Burns 1993; Buckley, 2004; Cardozo, 1937; Cowles, 2014; Ehrenburg, 2014; Hughes, 1993; Knoblaugh, 2007; Last,

2010; Pruszynski, 2007; Tisa, 1985; Ziffren, 1937), historical studies of the period (Keene, 2007; Preston, 2009, 2012), autobiographies, biographies or articles including personal accounts of translators and interpreters (Arias 2013; García 2010, 2011; Moure-Marino, 1989; Pichler, 2019; Playà Maset, 2015; Redondo, 2020; Ripoll Sintes, 2015; Rogoyska, 2013; Todd, 2005), personal narratives of Francoist propagandists (Bahamonde, 2005; Bolín, 1967; Jerrold, 1938; Kemp, 1957; Knickerbocker, 1937; Lunn, 1937), historical studies on media and propaganda (Calvo Ibariez, 2018; Chomón Serna and Gallo Moreno, 2018; Díez, 2000; Moreno Cantona, 2008, 2016; Pena Rodriquez, 1999), and research on translation and conflict in the Spanish Civil War (Rodríguez-Espinosa, 2016, 2019), we discuss several up to now uncharted issues in the field of Journalistic Translation Studies within the context of the war in Spain, such as (a) the communication problems faced by foreign correspondents working for international newspapers, magazines and agencies such as *The Daily Mail*, *The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The New York Times, O Século*, *Izvestia*, *Pravda, Wiadomosci Literackie*, the International News Service (INS), and the Hearst papers, among others, during the conflict, and their symbiotic interaction with translators, interpreters, fixers, multilingual guides and Press Officers; (b) the role of translation in the Press and Propaganda Offices set up by the Nationalist government in Burgos, the Spanish Republic, and the Catalan and Basque autonomous governments; and (c) the complex relationship between the powerful censorship departments set up by Francoist and Republican Press Offices and foreign correspondents in order to prevent journalists from revealing sensitive information which might undermine the morale of the population or military units, and the international reception of the narratives they sought to disseminate abroad.

Translation, journalism and nationalist propaganda and censorship

One of the first decisions taken by the rebel military commanders after the coup was to abolish press freedom, occupy newspapers and radio stations and imprison or even shoot suspicious local journalists. In August 1936, in Burgos, an early seat of the Nationalist government, Franco established an incipient 'Press Cabinet', later on termed 'Press and Propaganda Office', first directed by pro-Nazi journalist Juan Pujol, who was succeeded by General Millán Astray, the eccentric founder of the foreign legion. After Franco was proclaimed Head of State, the office changed its name to 'Press and Propaganda Delegation', and Vicente Gay Forner, an anti-Semitic university lecturer, was allegedly called on to clean the mess left behind by his predecessors. In April 1938, it was taken over by Ramón Serrano Suñer, the Minister of the Interior, who appointed Major Manuel Arias and monarchist Eugenio Vegas Latapié as heads of the Delegation in order to unify the activities of the military and political press offices, especially those controlled by Falangists and Carlists, and to promote the efficiency of their foreign press departments (Díez, 2000:36–40).

Shortly after the rebel uprising, Seville, Burgos and Salamanca, crowded with uniforms of the diverse political militia, regiments and troops, were the gathering points for foreign news agencies and correspondents. For the military high command, foreign journalists, photographers and newsreel cameramen deployed in Spain were, however,

uncomfortable witnesses to their military operations, or mere potential spies. Bahamonde (2005:94), one of the chiefs of Propaganda in the south at that time, recalls Seville's bookshops displaying German and Italian newspapers as well as books to learn Spanish for the foreign support troops. In Salamanca, Italian and German officers were lodged at the Gran Hotel, and in Café Novelty, at the Plaza Mayor, a crowd huddled to hear the speakers announcing the latest news from the front translated into several languages. In the early days of the conflict, Charles Purgold, a British resident of San Sebastián, and Florence Farmborough, former war correspondent for the BBC and *The Times* in Russia, already broadcast in English on Nationalist radio stations (Kemp, 1957:53; Bocanegra, 2017:2762). Since its foundation in 1937, *Radio Nacional de España* daily bulletins were on the air in German, French, Italian, Portuguese and English. The Germans provided the most important Francoist radio station with advanced technology, and their embassy in Salamanca opened a press and propaganda department which worked closely with Falange and provided them with books, magazines, newspapers and propaganda films, while the *Misione Militare Italiana in Spagna*, a press agency encompassing radio, photographic and cinematographic sections, issued news bulletins in French, an international press dossier for Spanish newspapers, and counterpropaganda leaflets in Italian to be distributed among volunteers fighting for the International Brigades throughout the Republican battlefronts (Calvo Ibanez, 2018:116 and 122; Moreno Cantona, 2016:114–120).

In addition to the books and pamphlets published by Nationalist propaganda in several languages, some foreign correspondents, partial to Franco's side, produced their own propaganda work. For instance, the Portuguese reporter Leopoldo Nunes portrays the killings and mutilations by the 'reds' he claims to have witnessed in many towns of Andalusia in his bestseller *A Guerra de Espanha. Dois meses de reportagem nas frentes de Andaluzia e da Estremadura* (1936), published by Librería Prieto in Granada, in Francoist zone, with a prologue by translator Fernando Sánchez Monis (Pena Rodriguez, 1999:354). He maintains that Spain is indebted to Nunes for illustrating her glories and sorrows and presenting the world with the truth. By means of his translation, Sánchez Monis (1938:35–36) thanks the author with a warm heart for what he has done for Spain.

In spite of these efforts, many pro-Francoist correspondents believed that the Republicans were winning the battle for international public opinion. Nationalist propaganda remained to be meagre and irrelevant when compared to the organizational structures and facilities set up in Republican territory, where the most up-to-date industrial and technical infrastructures, including paper mills, printing facilities, telegraph and radio stations and film laboratories, were still available (Díez, 2000:32).

According to Armero (1976:88), communication was a major challenge to deal with for both the Nationalist authorities and many foreign correspondents during the war. Associated Press Edward J. Neil, Jr, complains bitterly about the problems of finding a translator to dispatch his communiqués. Luis Moure-Mariño (1989:136), a young journalist working at the propaganda offices in Salamanca, recounts the trials and tribulations of hiring language mediators, and how a writer called Octavio Gonçalves de Medeiros, who 'seemed' to speak English and French, was 'enlisted' at the Badajoz Tourism Office and brought to Salamanca to join a team of translators working at the

Foreign Press Section, among them, as Díez (2000:47) reveals, Francisco Torres, José Balcells, Joaquín Ruiz y Ruiz, and Moure himself.

In order to try to control what the world press was saying about the civil war and to launch their own narrative of the conflict abroad, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Military High General Staff relied on such teams of translators to compile confidential bulletins with summaries of the international press and to prepare daily news bulletins for foreign press agencies and newspapers. Telegrams were not only subject to scrutiny by the Press Office but also by military censors. One particular concern for censorship was the use of specific terms to refer to the contending sides in the conflict (Moreno Cantano, 2008: 164, 2016: 95). At the Nationalist headquarters in San Sebastián, and presumably also in Burgos, posters were displayed to point out the prohibition of referring to the Francoists as 'rebels or insurgents', and to the Republicans as 'loyalists or government officials'. In this respect, Karl Robson was expelled from Spain because his paper, *The Daily Telegraph*, kept on describing the Nationalists as rebels (Moreno Cantano, 2008: 164, 2016: 95; Keene 2007:69). Early in the war, Frederic Andrew Rice, a conservative correspondent of the *Morning Post*, tried to skirt Franco's censorship by means of two different texts. He showed the censors a piece on Stonyhurst College, the Jesuit college in Clitheroe, where some rebel press officers had studied, but sent another one from France with the expression 'insurgent horror' to denounce the rebel attack on Irún in September 1936 (Chomón Serna and Gallo Moreno, 2018:259).

In other cases, censorship did not seem to be that rigorous or consistent. In preparing an interview with Franco, Cardozo first had to translate it into French for the General to read it himself. Franco, as Preston (2012:123) notes, had taken English lessons with tutor Dora Lennard Crosby de Alonso in the Canary Islands shortly before the coup, but he could not easily follow spoken English. The British correspondent recalls that the Spanish censors sent the English version back to him with just one alteration:

I had copied out the word 'catastrophe' in its correct spelling–'catastrophe'. The obliging censor, with his perfect knowledge of English, had crossed out the 'e' and substituted a 'y'. It was a splendid piece of work. Another censor I can remember was careful every time I mentioned a 'mechanised column' to cross out the word 'mechanised' and make it read 'mobile', and every time I wrote 'mobile' he put his pen through it and wrote 'mechanised' (Cardozo, 1937: 221–223).

Some correspondents would seek for censors less fluent in English, such as Manuel de Lambarri y Yanguas, the head of foreign correspondents on the battlefronts, who, rather than concede that he did not understand the dense cableese, would just cross out a couple of words at random and then approve it (Preston, 2009:182).

The Press and Propaganda Office also took care of some practical arrangements for foreign correspondents, such as finding them hotels and drivers. In his account of the war, Cardozo says that he first had a French chauffeur who spoke a little Spanish, and that he was later on assigned a member of the Falange militia to drive him through the battlefronts. Journalists were usually summoned to the hallway of the Episcopal Palace of Salamanca, where they were entrusted to the discipline of Press Officers in uniform who took them to the front. These liaison officers were initially not only the transmission belt between the embryonic Nationalist government and the foreign press, the embodiment of

the new ideology, but often their only source of information. The rank of Press Officer was officially created, on a temporary basis, in July 1937, to serve the crucial role of mitigating the misinformation coming from the enemy and of facilitating the engagement of foreign journalists, correspondents or other relevant visitors reporting from Nationalist territory. It included men from an ample range of professional and social backgrounds, such as military officers, Alphonsine and Carlist monarchists, Falangists, Liberal and Catholic propagandists, reflecting the curious ideological concoction which made up the new Francoist state. Press officers had to have a university degree, adequate professional training and the skills to perform their tasks in several foreign languages. While on duty, they had to wear the mandatory uniform of their militia or military regiment, and a distinctive bracelet on the left arm with the words 'Press Officer' and the seal of the Press and Propaganda Delegation (Armero, 1987:51–54; Arias, 2013:201–202, 2008).

Within the Foreign Press Office there was an 'Anglophile nucleus' composed of polyglot aristocrats educated at British Catholic public schools such as Beaumont, Downside, Ampleforth and Stonyhurst (Keene, 2007:58). They became prominent influential figures and convenient agents of propaganda and censorship for foreign journalists and Catholics touring Francoist Spain. Some of them were Franco's most trusted interpreters during the war, and were useful in interviews with the Generalísimo carried out by a number of foreign journalists and writers selected by the Propaganda and Press Office to build the international image of the new state (Bolín 1967:55).

In his memoirs, Luis Bolín (1967:55 and 269), a Spanish former correspondent in World War I, claims that the Foreign Press Office was created upon his advice to Franco on the matter. Bolin's command of English and his connections among British pro-Francoists enabled him to contact a certain Major Hugh Pollard, a professional international conspirator who would provide him with the Dragon Rapide aircraft to fly General Franco from the Canary Islands to Spanish Morocco, to lead the rebellion against the Republic. Bolín's fluency in Italian also granted him a relevant role as liaison officer on board of one of the 12 warplanes sent by Mussolini to Franco. Nationalist intelligence further counted on him to interrogate a military attaché to the British embassy and three foreign war correspondents after the fall of Toledo, as well as some of the Italian prisoners captured on the battlefield.

Bolín's relationship with foreign correspondents was not always easy. He would boast about having expelled dozens and threatened many others with the firing squad, as was the case of the Pathé Newsreels cameraman René Brut after filming the Badajoz massacre, and of *The Daily Mail* reporter Noel Monks, whom Bolín accused of evading censorship. Monks was taken before Franco, who was amused to hear, in Bolín's translation, that the correspondent claimed that he could not be shot simply because he was British (Preston, 2009:112 and 159). He also acted as an interpreter for International News Service correspondent Hubert R. Knickerbroker (1937:28), who maintained that Franco had 'the face and particularly the eyes of an artist', and for propagandist Jerrold Douglas (1938: 385), who depicted the general as 'a supremely good man, a hero possibly; possibly a saint'.

Pablo Merry del Val, the son of an Ambassador of Spain to the United Kingdom and a correspondent of the Catholic newspaper *El Debate* in London, replaced Bolín as head of

the Foreign Press Office after the latter blamed the retreating 'Reds' for the destruction of Guernica and not the bombs of the German Condor Legion. Merry del Val toned down the pressure of censorship, stopped the arbitrary banishment of correspondents and the attacks of Nationalist propaganda against the British government (Burns, 1993:89; García, 2011:78). Merry del Val, who shared a common social background with *The Times* correspondent Kim Philby, acted as his interpreter in a series of interviews with Franco. The Foreign Press Office even held an official ceremony for the General to pin the Red Cross of Military Merit on Philby, who had survived the explosion in 1937 of a Republican shell near Teruel which killed journalists Edward Neil (Associated Press), Bradish Johnson *(Newsweek)* and Ernest Sheepshanks (Reuters), as an act of propaganda to be reported in British newspapers. It was later known that Kilby happened to be a Soviet agent whose undercover mission was to spy on the rebels and even kill Franco himself (Macintyre 2014:45).

Gonzalo de Aguilera Munro, 11th Count of Alba de Yeltes, a retired officer from the Moroccan wars and a pioneering radio broadcaster fluent in English, French, German, Italian and Dutch, was probably, as stated in Preston (2004: 277–312), one of the most controversial of these press officers. His anti-Semitic, misogynistic and anti-democratic opinions were publicized by foreign correspondents. Pro-Nationalist Arnold Lunn (1937: 42–43) pictures a scene where *The Daily Mail* correspondent Randolph Churchill claims that the rebels are losing the war as a result of their 'idiotic' censorship and their refusal to let them write human stories and is berated by Aguilera, who urges him to 'use his brains' and build his article on the information about huge enemy losses and the surrender of red militia included in the official war bulletin which had been orally translated to English journalists in the press room.

Translation, journalism and loyalist propaganda and censorship

In September 1936, journalist Carlos Esplá was appointed Minister of Propaganda of the Loyalist Government, a new office with departments in Madrid and Valencia. In May 1937, after Premier Francisco Largo Caballero was forced to resign, it was taken over by the Ministry of State run by Julio Álvarez del Vayo, a polyglot foreign correspondent and former ambassador in Moscow, and it was termed 'Under Secretary of Propaganda'. The Republican Press and Propaganda Office endeavoured to issue and broadcast its own books, pamphlets, political speeches, news bulletins, radio and film productions in several languages in order to gain international support for their cause. An 'Agence Espagne' in Paris and a 'Spanish News Agency' in London were set up, and the Republican Government used its diplomatic missions all over the world to release press bulletins and pamphlets for local newspapers and agencies (Gordon, 2014:79–104; Chomón Serna, 2018:39).

The Censorship Bureau of the Foreign Press Office had its main quarters on Gran Vía, in the Telefonica Building, the tallest skyscraper in Madrid, with views from the top floor overlooking the Casa de Campo and University City battlefields. Former journalist Luis Rubio Hidalgo, Chief Censor of the Press Office, provided foreign reporters with safe-conduct passes and accommodation, as well as with guides, drivers and interpreters, who

had to disclose their whereabouts and political opinions. The Gran Vía Hotel, Gaylord's Hotel and Hotel Florida in Madrid, together with Chicote's cocktail lounge, were the main gathering places where artists, film stars, commanding officers and mythical correspondents such as Ernest Hemingway, Herbert Matthews, Sefton Delmer, John Dos Passos, Martha Gellhorn or Josephine Herbst, among others, met to talk about the latest news and developments after their visits to the front (Pichler, 2019:333; Cowles, 2014: 406–407).

Rubio Hidalgo was succeeded by Constancia de la Mora, a polyglot member of the Communist Party who had acted as an interpreter for notorious visitors in Madrid, such as pro-Republican journalist Louis Fischer in a meeting with President Manuel Azaña months before the rebel uprising. De la Mora did not approve of the endless stream of 'wartime tourists' who, in the heat of the battle, struggles and deprivation, still complained about transport delays or the lack of food in the hotels. Most of these foreign 'sightseers', however, did provide useful propaganda work and raised large sums of money and supplies for hospitals in Republican territory back in their countries (Armero, 1976:37; Hughes, 1993:358).

A substantial part of the duties assigned to the Press and Propaganda Office, both in Madrid and Valencia, depended on the recruitment of reliable translators and interpreters. Among its ranks some names stand out, such as Aurora Riaño, a journalist and member of the Socialist union UGT, who was fluent in English (García, 2010:220); aristocratic poet Ernestina de Champourcín, translator of the multilingual Bulletin of Information of the Ministry of Propaganda in Valencia (Aub, 1979:14); and Rafael Vázquez Zamora, well versed in English, French, Italian and German (Ripoll Sintes, 2014:187 and 220). Being short of English-speaking interpreters, Spanish musicologist Vicente Salas Viu, from the Alliance of Antifascist Intellectuals, asked American journalist Langston Hughes to escort a group of visitors, among them a lady from the American Midwest, to the University City. Hughes (1993:358) recalls that he was nearly killed in the trenches since, despite repeated warnings from Spanish soldiers and officers, the large white hat of one the guests attracted enemy fire.

Correspondents' testimonies of their relationship with drivers, guides and interpreters can be traced in some of their memoirs. Knoblaugh (2007:93) describes how his anarchist chauffeur Pedro Rosales drives him in a requisitioned car on his rounds to the outskirts of Madrid in search of victims killed the night before. Polish reporter Pruszynski (2007:77 & 176) suddenly finds out that his Spanish driver and interpreter was not translating his words accurately when stopped at a roadblock in La Mancha, but on subsequent trips through the fronts he managed to build a bond of trust with his translators, who then grew to become invaluable sources of information. He also recollects meeting Sánchez, a French international brigadista whose mother was Spanish, who justified executions without trial and even bragged about shooting people himself since, in his view, some had to die for a major transformation to take place. After a first unsuccessful visit to the Morata front, Cowles (2014:980–982) recounts that she was summoned back by the Hungarian General Gal to his secret headquarters. In the course of a 3-day sojourn, including dinner and champagne, David Jarret, a polyglot Russian-born New York court interpreter, would translate into English Gal's long speeches on the blessings of Marxism, young Soviet

writers and the outbreak of a Revolution in the United States. According to Rodríguez-Espinosa (2019:82–83), Jarret was one of the many multilingual volunteers recruited by the International Brigades to perform as translators under the surveillance of communist political commissars due to the lack of professional war linguists.

The Ministry of Propaganda and Jaume Miravitlles, Commissar of Propaganda of the Generalitat of Catalonia, worked in close collaboration. Teams of translators in Barcelona were in charge of issuing a multilingual daily bulletin which was posted not only to the rest of Loyalist Spain, but also to the offices set up by the Commissariat in several foreign countries. Louis Gras, Enric d'Aoust, Joaquín Vilà i Bisa, Carmen Montoriol Puig and Alfons Nadal were among the linguists who worked for Miravitlles (Boquera Diago, 2015:2017). The Propaganda Commissariat also produced more than a hundred movies through Laya Films. In their studios in Barcelona, French writer and activist André Malraux shot *L'Espoir*, and was assisted by Elvira Farreras i Valentí, a cosmopolitan Catalan woman educated at German and French schools, with previous experience working as an interpreter for a Russian colonel, by polyglot author Max Aub, and by María Luz Morales, the first female editor of *La Vanguardia* and translator of Malraux's screenplay into Spanish (Todd, 2005:4940).

The head of the Basque Government Press Office, Bruno de Mendiguren, an engineer educated in France and Belgium, allowed foreign correspondents some freedom of movement. On a visit to the Basque Country, Pruszynski (2007: 435–439) met poet and journalist Estepan Urkiaga, also known by his pseudonym Lauaxeta. Urkiaga had translated some of the poems by his friend Federico García Lorca into Basque and was, in the middle of the war, working on a translation of Sophocles' *Antigone*. In his role of interpreter, Urkiaga travelled, in April 1937, with a group of French correspondents to show them the consequences of the bombing of Guernica by the German Condor Legion. Only a few days later, he was captured by Francoist troops and shot after a court martial (Redondo, 2020).

The Loyalists designed a censorship system which was to be further perfected along the war. In the early days a primary setback was the shortage of efficient censors and their accurate command of foreign languages (Ziffren, 1937:113). Even though Republican authorities soon looked for volunteers with language skills among their junior officials, the results were not satisfactory. Some censors were fluent in French, but could not understand English, a drawback which American reporters turned to their advantage. Journalists were granted a free hand to write stories of human interest, but the Loyalist censorship banned correspondents from referring to a number of touchy issues, such as the International Brigades, Soviet weaponry, the confrontation among the diverse political parties and unions sitting in the War Cabinet, the incompetence of the army, or signs of low morale among civilians. Correspondents dispatched their reports from the only two available lines to Paris and London, mostly under Francoist artillery fire. The articles sent by cable or radiogram had to be accompanied with their Spanish version. Cables transmitted to New York via London or Paris were translated orally, and correspondents soon learnt to circumvent censorship with strategies such as changing lines and paragraphs, including extra information in their texts once they had been approved, using

slang, sending encrypted messages or even bribing censors (Knoblaugh, 2007:159–170; Cowles, 2014: 432–434).

A group of left-wing multilingual foreign women, many of them freelance journalists and international political activists, were also called upon by the Loyalist Press and Propaganda Office to perform as drivers, keep record of the foreign press, translate news bulletins, act as interpreters for Republican authorities or visitors, and censor news articles (Rodríguez-Espinosa, 2016:26). Austrian Ilsa Kulcsar, assistant of Chief Censor Arturo Barea, was rather popular among correspondents, not only because of her command of German, English, French, Italian, and probably Swedish and Romanian, but also for her journalistic and propagandistic approach to censorship and her political independence, which would lead to her becoming a suspect (Pichler, 2019:317). Kate Mangan, a British correspondent for the *Christian Monitor*, was Louise Fischer's interpreter during the visit of a trade union leader. Mildred 'Milly' Bennet, former *Moscow Daily News* journalist and *New York Times* and *Time* magazine stringer, became a well-known fixer at the press office in Valencia, while Elizabeth Deeble ruled the English section of the Catalan Propaganda Commissariat (Preston, 2009:122–284).

Radio broadcasting proved to be so influential that the war was somehow fought as much on the airwaves as it was on the ground. The commercial short-wave station, EAQ, owned by Transradio Española, which aired the official bulletins in Spanish, French, English, German, and Portuguese all over the world, was taken over by the Republic (Ziffren, 1937:115). Political parties, labour unions and the International Brigades started their own broadcasting services. Dutch journalist Jeff Last (2010:1699) gave talks from Radio Madrid, former Cambridge Trinity College student Richard Bennett joined the radio services of the Generalitat, and Ladislav Holdos, under the name of Jaime Guanter Coll, worked for the broadcasts in Slovak of Radio Aranjuez (Armero 1976:398).

The Daily Telegraph reporter Henry Buckley (2004:261) recollects that Soviet correspondents kept a low profile and hardly ever socialized with other reporters. Some of them had secretly arrived in Spain as members of Operation X, a contingent of approximately 2200 combatant and non-combatant personnel sent by the Soviet Union, together with war equipment. Soviet military interpreter Paulina Abramson, for instance, as Rodríguez-Espinosa (2016:24) remarks, worked closely, as did other colleagues from the USSR, with photographer Roman Karmen, cameraman Boris Makasieev, Iliá Ehrenburg, Mikhail Kolstov and other Soviet journalists in Spain, but they were occasionally replaced by trustworthy members of communist organizations. In this regard, Maria Ginestá, born into a family of Spanish exiles in Toulouse, was the interpreter of Kolstov, the *Pravda* correspondent, during his interview with anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti on the Aragon front. A picture of Ginestá posing in her uniform on top of Hotel Colón in Barcelona by German photographer Hans Gutmann became an enduring symbol of Republican struggle against fascism (Playà Maset, 2015:1109; Piquero Cuadros, 2017: 228). *Izvestia* reporter Ehrenburg (2014:974) remembers, in his account of those days, how he drove through Spain in a truck officially attached to the Catalan Commissariat and equipped with a printing press and a film projector. He travelled along with a polyglot typographer who rendered the articles he wrote into Spanish, Catalan, German and French, and with Stefa, his Russian collaborator, who translated the dialogues of the

propaganda films *Chapaev* and *The Sailors of Kronstadt*, and a cartoon movie where Mickey Mouse hoists the red flag over a mousetrap after winning a wrestling match with a cat.

Soviet correspondents expressed great respect for the languages of Spain and tried to learn them. TASS journalist and science fiction author Ovadi Sávich, who knew very little Spanish when he first arrived in the country, would eventually help poet Manuel Altolaguirre to translate Alexander Pushkin's *Little Tragedies* into Spanish (Piquero Cuadros, 2017:156–201). Sávich also met Antonio Machado, the most revered Republican poet and a close friend of Hispanist Fiódor M. Kelin, who was received in audience by Manuel Azaña, the President of the Spanish Republic and a literary translator in his own right (Azaña, 2000:1171). On his return to the Soviet Union, Sávich became one of the most brilliant translators of Spanish and Latin American literature, including Machado's poems.

Concluding remarks

Upon their arrival in Spain, the lack or insufficient command of the language would remain a major issue for most foreign correspondents covering the Civil War. Only a few could communicate in French, German or Russian, not many of them spoke Spanish, although some of them would eventually learn the language to varying levels of proficiency. The pressing urge to fulfill their duties as reporters and keep their readers informed back home made them seek for language mediators fluent in a number of foreign languages to help them better understand the development of events in the armed conflict.

Both Nationalist and Loyalist authorities soon set up Press and Propaganda Offices which conveniently took care of providing foreign correspondents and other advocates of their respective causes with accommodation and with the assistance of drivers, guides or translators, who would, in turn, become instrumental sources of biased news and of 'truthful' accounts of what was happening in Spain, and informants of the whereabouts and political inclinations of journalists. These departments were created as platforms to both control and circulate their ideologies, and they made use of translation to promote their own narratives of the war both at home and abroad. On both sides, Press and Propaganda Offices were in charge of issuing daily multilingual bulletins for foreign press agencies and newspapers, along with political books and pamphlets, and of releasing radiobroadcasts and films in different languages, all of which aimed to publicize their own view of the war worldwide. Hiring qualified multilingual mediators to perform these demanding tasks was a challenge for both warring factions, although their contribution in such crucial assignments proved to be cardinal in many respects.

In this paper we bring to the fore the often overlooked identity of a number of these translators and interpreters, not only in their role as proficient linguists working side by side with foreign correspondents throughout the conflict within the ranks of Press and Propaganda Offices, but also as political activists themselves, challenging the widespread notion of translation as a neutral or passive activity. If journalist Herbert Matthews saw the Spanish Civil War as the period when reporters provided historians with most relevant headlines and articles to feed their academic accounts, translators should also be

acknowledged for their relevant role as gatekeepers and censors in the shaping of those materials.

Nationalist Foreign Press Officers were recruited mainly to mitigate the misinformation coming from Republican propaganda and to escort foreign correspondents in their many trips to the battlefronts. Among them, an elitist group of polyglot officers epitomized the alleged values of the embryonic rebel state and were selected to act as interpreters in many of Franco's interviews with correspondents. The Loyalist Ministry of Propaganda and the Catalan Commissariat of Propaganda enlisted a number of multilingual international political activists, many of them females, to keep record of the foreign press, translate news bulletins, censor news articles and perform as interpreters for Republican authorities or visitors. Some of them also acted as radiobroadcasters in their native languages, while others were assigned a relevant role at the censorship office in order to prevent correspondents from taking advantage of the lack of fluency in English of certain censors. These language mediators were under constant surveillance by the Foreign Press Office, which was, in turn, permanently scrutinized by the all-powerful Spanish Communist Party (PCE). As was also the case with German and Italian reporters in Rebel territory, Soviet journalists were granted a privileged and secretive status by Republican authorities. They toured most battlefronts with the assistance of Soviet military interpreters or Spanish civil translators of proven political affinities.

Nunes's *A Guerra em Espanha. Dois meses de reportagem nas frentes de Andaluzia e da Estremadura*, published in Lisbon in 1936, was the first of many subsequent reports on the war to be translated into Spanish by Francoist propaganda. In 1937, *The Crime on the Road Málaga-Almería: Narrative with Graphic Documents Revealing Fascist Cruelty*, doctor Norman Bethune's first-person account of the mass evacuation of civilians after the fall of Málaga, while the Francoist warship aircrafts bombed the road to Almería, was printed, with pictures by his collaborator Hazen Sise, in English, French and Spanish by Republican propaganda.

The professional activities of these language mediators concluded when the war came to an end. One of Gonzalo de Aguilera's final assignments, for instance, was to act as an interpreter in Burgos at the solemn presentation of credentials to Franco by Maurice Peterson, the first British ambassador to the new Spanish regime. After the civil conflict, Ernestina de Champourcín in Mexico, or Rafael Vázquez Zamora and María Luz Morales in Spain, among others, built a successful career as literary translators, while Octavio Gonçalves de Medeiros unexpectedly ended his days writing articles against Franco in Brasil.

Further research remains to be done on the biographical and professional profiles of these and other translators, interpreters and fixers during and after the conflict in order to unveil new relevant materials for a better understanding of the place they deserve in the history of translation, journalism, the Spanish Civil War and Francoist Spain. Worth studying is also the role of translation in the dissemination of written testimonies by correspondents and Spanish and foreign propagandists, where they account for still controversial war episodes such as the massacre of Badajoz, the siege of the Alcazar of Toledo, or the bombing of Guernica. An instance of this is *España. Los años vitales* (1965), the memorialist chronicle of most of these historical landmarks by former

Nationalist Foreign Press Officer Luís Bolín, which was translated into English and published in Britain and the United States with a prologue by British historian Arthur Bryant, who had authored the preface to the 1939 English edition of Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

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