

**WILLI
MÜNZENBERG**



FORUM

**Propaganda activities of
Willi Münzenberg in
support of the Spanish
Republic during the
Spanish Civil War**

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1. “Make them wake up”: Münzenberg and the Spanish arena.

After a week, it became clear that Franco’s revolt would lead to a Civil War of long duration, and with possible European complications. Spain was the first European country in which the new Comintern line, the People’s Front, had been tried out and had led to a resounding victory of the Left-wing coalition.¹

The war of Propaganda in the Spanish Civil War could not be understood without the relevant intervention of foreign masters of agitation and political communication. After the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War on the 18th July 1936, prominent republican figures asked the political activist, KPD member (German Communist Party) and propagandist Willi Münzenberg (1889-1940), for assessment in order to achieve the support of foreign nations for the Republican cause. As head of the West-European USSR *Agitprop* he would counterpart the relevant propagandistic and methodological backup provided by Nazi Germany to the Spanish insurgents and to the fast-growing fascist party Falange, which would later take control of the most relevant propagandistic structures of the “New Spain”. Methodologies, campaigns, visual and textual assemblies of the enemy, and lexicon² of the Spanish Falange shared, on this sense, many similarities to those Nazi propagandistic strategies exposed by Münzenberg on *Propaganda als Waffe*³ (1937).

The war in the Spanish peninsula provided the first scenario in which many of the coming atrocities of the Second World War took place – terror bombings, certain forms of massified political repression and rear-guard massacres – giving Münzenberg and his collaborators the possibility to “make the world wake up” and see the true aspirations of transnational fascism.

¹ Koestler, A., *The Invisible writing. The second volumen of an autobiography*: 1932-1940. London, Hutchinson, p. 381.

² A specific approach to the translation of propagandistic strategies and lexical arsenals is being carried on my PhD dissertation: *Hacia una “Lingua Novi Imperii”: lenguaje, propaganda e ideología Nacionalsocialista en el Fascismo español y primer Franquismo (1930-1945)*. Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid.

³ Münzenberg, W. *Propaganda als Waffe*, Basel, Universum-Buchgemeinschaft, 1937.

“It was here, precisely here – wrote the *Pravda* correspondent Mikhail Koltsov on his diary, few days after arriving to Spain in August 1936 – in this underdeveloped, careless slow country, where the working class found the necessary energy, the spontaneous capacity to organize themselves and grab fascism by the throat, harming him, making him bleed”.⁴

Münzenberg created, to assist the under-sieged loyal Spain, “The Committee for War Relief for Republican Spain” taking his “Relief Committee for Nazi Victims” as direct example. Different platforms produced by his apparatus after the Nazi rise to power were also a clear inspiration for those created to support the Republicans, such as the “Committee of Inquiries into Foreign Intervention in the Spanish War”. According to his collaborator and correspondent in Spain Arthur Koestler (1905-1983), the *KPD* propagandist fabricated for this purpose committees “as a conjurer produces rabbits out of his hat”.⁵

The war of propaganda in Spain became, quoting words of Koestler, a playground for conjurers, in which photographs, posters, photomontages, textual propaganda and its “lexical arsenals” shaped the urged image of the “self” – in this case, a precise Anti-fascist conscience – and generated a clear-cut image of the “other”. The very particular constellation that formed the republican resistance –heterogeneous on political goals and inclinations, but homogeneous on anti-fascist convictions – required the elaboration of a precise loyalist identity that could make possible a collaboration of different actors. For this propagandistic “great adventure of advertising”,⁶ Münzenberg counted on the collaboration of men like Otto Katz (1895-1952), who became the unofficial chief of the Spanish Government propaganda in Western Europe and the director of the Republican *Agence Spagne* in Paris (1936-1937).⁷

⁴ Koltsov, M. *Diario de la guerra de España*, Paris, Ruedo ibérico, 1963. p. 41. All following translations from Spanish, French, Portuguese, Catalan and Galego are mine. Texts in German and English are quoted from the original.

⁵ Koestler, A., *op. cit.* p. 6.

⁶ See, on this sense, Creel, G., *How we advertised America*, New York, Arno Press, 1972, p. 4.

⁷ He would be substituted by Luís Rubio Hidalgo on December 1937. This measure was a preliminary step towards the complete integration of the *Agence* in the *Delegación de Propaganda*. See García, H., «La propaganda exterior de la República durante la Guerra Civil», *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* [Online], 39-1 | 2009. Published the 15th April 2011, consulted the 11 April 2017. URL: <http://mcv.revues.org/461>. p. 5. The Francoists would establish their own propaganda apparatus in Paris through Juan Estelrich and his journal *Occident*, published between October 1937 and May 1939.

In absence of official, organized propaganda services in the French capital, *Agence Spagne* became the authorized propagandistic organism of the Republic in Europe.⁸ Only the *Office Espagnol de Tourisme* – which turned out to be in fact a propaganda office on the hands of Luis Buñuel and propaganda delegate in Paris Juan Vicens,⁹ amongst others – had a similar role during the first months of the war. The international news agency of the Loyalists¹⁰ was launched under the supervision of the politician and journalist Álvarez Del Vayo, in collaboration with the Propaganda Chief of the Catalan Government, Jaume Miravittles (1906-1988).¹¹ This propagandist developed also a highly efficient apparatus in the Catalan territories, to be used as a model in the rest of the Spanish State. In addition to the *Agence*, Münzenberg created in August 1936 the French-Spanish Committee (*Comité franco-espagnol*). The members of the *Comité* included some of the closest colleagues of the German propagandist, such as Jean Richard Bloch and Paul Langevin.¹²

The contacts in between Álvarez del Vayo and Münzenberg can be traced to the early 30s, where both met in Berlin while del Vayo worked as the Central European and Russian correspondent of *La Nación*. Relations between the two men would continue before the outbreak of the war, including guest visits by the Thuringian propagandist to Spain.¹³ As stated by Louis Fischer, (American correspondent, short-time *Brigadista* and

⁸ The Comissariat would be, in this sense, the first official institution of the loyal Spain: “Me cabe la satisfacción de poder afirmar que la Comisaría de Propaganda de la Generalidad de Cataluña ha sido la primera institución oficial de propaganda de la España leal” Miravittles in M. Soler, J. “La comisaría de propaganda de la Generalidad”, *Mi Revista*, 1st of May 1937.

⁹ Press attaché of the Spanish Embassy in Paris and since summer 1937 Propaganda delegate.

¹⁰ Julio Álvarez del Vayo (1890-1975) Republican Minister of Foreign Affairs, delegate to the League of Nations, Commissar and general of the Army during the war. Del Vayo would fight against the blatant Nazi-fascist intervention in Spain and denounce the absurdity of the non Intervention Committee in the League of Nations.

¹¹ David Wingeate Pike states connections between Jaume Miravittles – founder of the *Agence*, according to Pike – and the director of the *Agence Spagne*, Otto Katz. Wingeate Pike, D., *Les Français et la guerre d’Espagne*, Paris, Presses Univ. de France, 1975. p. 54. Despite the lack of references to his role, the eminence rise of the republican propaganda efforts certainly was present in Spain through 1937 and 1938, as confirmed by Arturo Barea and Babette Gross. On Gross, B., *Willi Münzenberg, a Political Biography*, Michigan, East Lansing, 1974. p. 312. Even though no direct mention is made to Münzenberg’s activities, researcher Jordana Mendelson considers that the effectiveness and distribution of Miravittles’ propagandistic materials is highly explained by his “vast net of contacts in France”. In Mendelson, J. *Revistas y guerra: 1936-1939*. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Exhibition catalogue, Madrid, 2007, p. 165.

¹² García, H., *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹³ Preston, P. *We saw Spain die. Foreign correspondents in the Spanish Civil War*. London, Constable & Robinson, 2008, p. 48.

man of great influence in the USA and the USSR¹⁴) one of the biggest concerns of the Loyalists from the beginning of the conflict was exterior propaganda and foreign public opinion:

The Republic's main preoccupation is not internal politics. It is the foreign situation. How slow these democracies are, how difficult to shake them into a realization of the dangers that beset them (...) if these countries lack the sense to let the Loyalist Spain safeguard their interests, they will be forced to do the fighting themselves later on.¹⁵

The necessary foreign support to the Republic was to be stimulated through these several platforms abroad. For this purpose, Jaume Miravittles promoted also analogous projects to the *Agence Spagne* in London, the *Spanish News Agency* (1936), which was to be directed by Geoffrey Bing¹⁶. This platform was supposed to work as a counter-power to the main opinion held in conservative British newspapers, such as the leading *London Evening Standard*, which categorized the war as *simple*, non-lasting, non-international military revolt. Another quarrel between Spaniards:

It is a mistake to suppose that the Spanish counter-revolution is a Fascist revolution. It is not. It is an army revolution. It is the kind of revolution that has occurred in Spain and South America over and over again.¹⁷

War correspondent Randolph Churchill, son of the MP and future Prime Minister, wrote about the "irrelevance" of the Spanish warfare in the following terms after a visit to the francoist rear-guard: [Only] a few excitable [British] Catholics and ardent Socialists think that this war matters, but for the general public it is just a lot of bloody *dagoes* killing each other".¹⁸ Similar biases were to be found in France, where traditional

¹⁴ According to some letters intercepted by British intelligence, Fischer was collaborating in 1937 with Katz, in order to bring the republican cause to USA and England. Preston considers that statements of Stephen Koch, who describes the American journalist as a puppet of Katz and Münzenberg, are hardly sustainable. See Preston, P. *op. cit.* p. 250 and Koch, S., *Double Lives. Spies and Writers in the Secret Soviet War of Ideas against the West*, New York, The Free Press, 1994, p. 286, 306. Further private documents of Fischer prove contacts between the two, and a common encounter with President Juan Negrín in Benicassim (October 1937). See Preston, P., p. 289 and 481.

¹⁵ Fischer, L. "Internal Politics in Spain", *The Nation*, 30 October 1937.

¹⁶ Dionisio Ridruejo, Propaganda Chief of the Falange, showed his admiration to the materials of the *Comissariat de Propaganda* after the siege of Barcelona. On Ridruejo, D., *Casi unas Memorias*, Barcelona, Planeta, 1976, p. 167

¹⁷ "Civil War in Spain", *The Evening Standard*, 22 July 1936.

¹⁸ Moradiellos, E., "The British image of Spain and the Civil War". *IJIS*, 15 (1), 2002, pp. 4-13.

prejudices on Spanish brutality still played a relevant role in the perception of the conflict.¹⁹

There was, indeed, a big foreign propaganda war to be fought, in which the battle for foreign public opinion had to be carried in collaboration with the best foreign advisors. The talented Miravittles later confirmed his contacts with some of the men that closely collaborated with Willi Münzenberg on his agitation platforms. These contacts are supported by the “astronomical phone bills” of the *Comissariat de Propaganda*, due to the international phone conferences between Barcelona and Paris through André Malraux,²⁰ organizer of the paramilitary volunteers squadron “Escuadrilla España”. The office of the Catalan *Comisario* was a meeting point of several international anti-fascists, and most possibly a scenario of mutual exchange: “From John Dos Passos to André Malraux, Arthur Koestler and George Orwell, Jean Giraloux and Ehrenburg himself, all of them came to my office”.²¹

Access to a generous budget coming from the *Comintern* and the Spanish loyalists guaranteed the necessary funds for the foreign propagandistic campaigns.²² The achievements of *Agence Espagne* shall be considered – if we pay attention to the records conserved on the Spanish *Archivo General de la Administración* – as considerably successful.²³ Münzenberg himself would consider his propaganda campaigns to be so effective that the apparatus of Goebbels attempted to reproduce the same methodologies as his own.²⁴

The war in Spain was not another classic Spanish “Pronunciamiento”. Münzenberg and his collaborators understood from the very beginning the international relevance of the

¹⁹ See, on this sense, Hurcombe, M. *France and the Spanish Civil War. Cultural representations of the war next door, 1936-1945*. Bristol, Ashgate, 2011.

²⁰ As stated by Miravittles to Permanyer, quoted on Permanyer, L. “El Comissariat de Propaganda”, *La Vanguardia*, 10th February 2007. Although the contact in Paris is not specified by Miravittles, Malraux was part of the international delegation organized by Münzenberg to support the loyalists. On García, H., *op. cit.* p. 3. During 1937, he would travel through the United States promoting support for the Republican Government.

²¹ “Miravittles, J., *Episodis de la Guerra Civil Espanyola*, Barcelona, Pòrtic, 1972, p.227-228.

²² Koestler, A., *op. cit.* p. 400f.. Translations are mine.

²³ The agency published already in March 1938 more than 1200 articles in the French press. The existing branches in other European cities such as London, Brussels, Bern and Prague counted more than 500 each. See García, H., *op cit* p. 9. First correspondents of the agency sent to Spain were Koestler and William Forrest for the British *News Chronicle*.

²⁴ Letter from Münzenberg to Dimitrov, 29.10.1937. SAPMO–BArch, RY 5/I 6/10/68, 58. Quoted on Braskén, K. “Hauptgefahr jetzt nicht Trotzismus, sondern Münzenberg” – *East German Uses of Remembrance and the Contentious Case of Willi Münzenberg*, Kommunismus und Gesellschaft at the Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung Potsdam, 7th December 2010.

Iberian warfare and acquired full commitment with the Spanish cause²⁵. The urgency of the situation made Münzenberg persuade Comintern Secretary Dmitri Manuilsky (1883-1959) to postpone further compromises until he completed his assessment to the Spanish loyalists. The war in Spain was – as claimed by the Italian fascist Italo Barbo – a “war between worldviews and ideologies”, and a great opportunity to counteract the expansion of transnational fascism. Words from Louis Fischer described the situation in similar terms:

In Spain two vast world forces are testing each other out. So far the fascists have displayed more initiative and great daring. They were the first to send airplanes and equipment. Now they are the first to send troops. Their submarines and other naval craft spy and interfere (...) democratic diplomacy is no match for fascist arrogance. If Franco conquers, Europe will be black or Europe will go to war as soon as Hitler and Mussolini are ready.²⁶

Koestler held the same belief: the conflict in Spain was, from the beginning, a highly symbolic contest.²⁷

Spanien würde für viele Antifaschisten zum Fanal euphorischer Hoffnungen, zumal für Deutsche, in deren Heimat inzwischen die Nationalsozialisten an der Macht waren. Schriftsteller im Exil wie Thomas und Heinrich Mann riefen zur Unterstützung der Spanischen Republik auf, und die Vorstände deutscher Parteien und politischer Gruppen, die ins Exil gegangen waren, erklärten den Kampf gegen Franco zum Stellvertreterkrieg gegen Hitler. „Vor Madrid können Hitler und Mussolini geschlagen werden“ lautete eine vielfach wiederholte Parole.²⁸

“Hitler and Mussolini can be smashed in Madrid”. This would be in fact the task conceded to diverse propagandistic campaigns and publications, such as the *The Nazi conspiracy in Spain* (1937). Published in various languages, the book was printed during the Spanish Civil War and was based on and included relevant documents and information on the German intervention, partially gathered by Arthur Koestler. Some of the statements, claims and denouncements exposed in this book have been confirmed

²⁵ “The Spanish War had become a personal obsession with him as with the rest of us.” Koestler, A., *op. cit.*, p. 407.

²⁶ Fischer, L., “Under Fire in Madrid”, *The Nation*, 12 December 1936.

²⁷ Koestler, A., *op. cit.* p. 382. Similar testimonies of American intellectuals can be found on Radosh, R., Habeck, M., and Sevostianov, G., *Spain Betrayed. The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001, p. xvi-xvii.

²⁸ Mühlen, P. “Hitler kann in Spanien geschlagen werden!” *Die deutsche Linke im Spanischen Bürgerkrieg*, Bonn, FES, 2006. Electronic edition, pp. 4-5.

and explained by scholars later, corroborating – in many cases – the assertions of the German propagandist and his partners.

2. *Bilder als Waffe*: Willi Münzenberg and the visual propaganda.

The Nazi's acts of terror were at least hidden behind the walls of prisons and concentration camps. But the massacre of Badajoz, the bombardment of Madrid, the dead children of Getafe, the razing of Gernika, were public events to which the public reacted with a spontaneous convulsion of horror. There were other elements in the Spanish war which touched directly the collective archetypes of European memory: once more the Moors were let loose behind the Pyrenees-but this time as defenders of the Church. The shadows of the Middle Ages seemed to have come alive...²⁹

The very specific context of a civil war, in which both contenders share the same nationality and the current development of new illustrated publications worldwide – such as *Vu* (1928), directly inspired on the *AIZ*,³⁰ *Life* (1936) or *Picture Post* (1938) – explain the intense growth of graphic propaganda in the Spanish arena. In this scenario the diffusion of political ideas through images became, according to some scholars, particularly intense.³¹ Records show, on this sense, the ubiquity of illustrated press and bulletins: during the three years of the war, in between 1.500 and 2.000 different periodicals were published. Visual material – and amongst them, photography – is directed not to the reason of the viewer, but to his emotions and sensibilities.³²

Koestler's reflections from *The Invisible Writing* point out the extremely advantageous situation in Spain, in terms of propagandistic possibilities, due to the brutal, unhidden, repressive procedures of the Moorish *Regulares*, Falangist militiamen, the Foreign Legion and other right-wing paramilitaries in the territories under francoist control.³³ Declarations of the *putschist* officers to the international press clearly made this task easier:

²⁹ Koestler, A. *The invisible writing*...op. cit. p. 398.

³⁰ "Pour inventer *Vu*, un magazine novateur, il s'est inspiré de la maquette, des contenus et du "chemin de fer" rédactionnel de l'*Arbeiter Illustrierter Zeitung*" On Dugrand, A. and Laurent, F., Willi Münzenberg, artiste en révolution (1899-1940), Paris, Fayard, 2008, p. 337.

³¹ *Ibidem*.

³² Moles, A., *La imagen*, México, Trillas, 1991, p. 186.

³³ See, on this sense, the testimony of the Judicial Secretary of Burgos after the fascist uprising in Old Castilla: Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana: Ruiz Vilaplana, A., *Doy Fe...Un año de actuación en la*

We want an antidemocratic, anti-syndicalist society, against woman rights and public education. We want an anti-Semitic society. In our State, people will have the right to keep their mouth shut. We will shoot fifthly thousand men as soon as we enter Madrid.³⁴

The visual propaganda employed by both sides became, in this sense, fundamental in the construction of the “national” *putschist* identity and in the materialization of the Republican image of the “self”. The lines of Koestler quoted above reveal to be, if we analyse the visual propaganda of the Spanish Civil war with historical perspective, wholly accurate: both sides intended to represent through images the “genuine Spain” that revolts and stands against a foreign menace – like in 1808 revolution against the Napoleonic troops – represented in this case, alternatively, by the USSR or the fascist coalition.³⁵ As underlined by some scholars, images had –and still have – a particularly crucial role in the list of reasons to get involved in a mass-scale armed conflict, and are a vital to maintain morale and to encourage soldiers to kill or die.³⁶

Illustrated magazines such as “*El Mono Azul*” (1936-1939) and “*Nueva Cultura*” (1935-1937), “*Estudios*” (1922-1937), and “*Orto*” (1932-1934), amongst others, adopted the visual propaganda of Münzenberg’s *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*³⁷ (1924-1938) and in doing so, spread these techniques amongst the left-wing press. The extremely efficient results of such propagandas would not be missed later during the war by francoist and falangist propagandists, assisted by the Nazi propaganda specialists in Spain. Chief of Propaganda of the Falange, Dionisio Ridruejo, stated the superiority of republican

España nacionalista. Barcelona, Epidauro, 1977. The book was originally published in France and represents a good example of “atrocities propaganda” efficiently used by Münzenberg.

³⁴ Quoted by Southwork, H., *Guernica, Guernica*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1977.

³⁵ See, on this sense, the multiple works of Xosé Manoel Núñez Seixas: Núñez Seixas, X. M., *¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismos y movilización bélica durante la Guerra Civil Española (1936-1939)*. Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2006, and “El miedo al extranjero, o el enemigo como invasor (1936-1939) on VV.AA, *Retóricas del miedo. Imágenes de la Guerra Civil española*, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez (129), Madrid, 2012, pp. 53-70.

³⁶ Seward Barry, A. M, “Political images: public relations, advertising and propaganda” on Seward Barry, A., M., *Visual Intelligence. Perception, image, and manipulation in visual communication*. NY, State University of New York Press, p. 281.

³⁷ The AIZ was itself an initiative – according to Álvarez Dorronsoro – specifically designed to counteract the conservative illustrated press. In Álvarez Dorronsoro, T., “John Heartfield (1891-1968) Desmontando a Hitler”, *Pensament per la pau. Artistes en temps de guerra. VII Seminari monogràfic*. Centre Borja de San Cugat, Dissabte 5 Març de 2011.

propaganda – visually and rhetorically more sophisticated – after the siege of Barcelona, where most of propagandistic illustrated magazines were published under control of Miravittles's Comissariat. The supremacy of such materials in terms of propagandistic effectiveness and refinement, originally pointed out by Ridruejo, was reaffirmed by various scholars decades later.³⁸

The specific support of production of visual materials, guaranteed by the personal inclinations and convictions of propaganda masters such as Ridruejo and Miravittles, justifies the central role of illustrated press:

Both are known for their support to print culture, particularly in the area of literary and illustrated magazines. As directors of both propaganda organs, both assumed [Ridruejo and Miravittles] an active role in the support of other artists and writers during the war.³⁹

These publications would often be distributed amongst those who were facing the enemy on the trenches, thus actively collaborating to the construction of an antifascist, loyalist identity, mostly based on the dichotomy "*Cultura contra barbarie fascista*". As stated by Balfour, the employment of such precise depictions of the enemy was way more effective for war mobilization than the exposition of defined political goals or ideological statements.⁴⁰ The urgency of armed conflict requires propagandistic strategies able to generate adherence in a reduced period of time. Visual communication makes possible, in this sense, the acceptance of statements, emotions and beliefs that would take longer to assimilate through verbal communication.⁴¹

The use of eye-catching photos and photomontages on a direct, striking, moving style permeated and shaped a large variety of publications of different political inclinations, from the anarchist *Argos* to the sophisticated and pompous Falangist

³⁸ "A simple vista se veía que los medios de propaganda republicana habían sido muy superiores a los nuestros y su asistencia intelectual mucho más extensa, valiosa y organizada" in Ridruejo, D., *Casi unas Memorias*. Barcelona, Planeta, 1976, p. 167. See also, Batalla y Galimany, R., *Jaume Miravittles i Navarra, Intel·lectual, revolucionari i home de govern, Els anys joves (1906-1939)* (Tesis doctoral), Departament d'Història Moderna i Contemporània Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2010, p. 592.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 164.

⁴⁰ Balfour, S. "El otro moro en la guerra colonial y la guerra civil" En González Alcantud (Ed.) Raha, R. y Akalay, M. *Marroquíes en la Guerra Civil española. Campos equívocos*. Anthropos, Granada, 2003, p. 95 y ss.

⁴¹ Seward Barry, A., M., "Media images and Violence", in Seward Barry, A., M., *Visual Intelligence. Perception, image, and manipulation in visual communication*. NY, State University of New York Press, p 329.

magazine *Vértice*, specifically oriented to bourgeois, erudite publics.⁴² As stated by Pere Catalá-Pic (1889-1981), Chief Editor of the *Comissariat de Propaganda* and professional photographer and publicist, photography permitted a distortion of reality that could stimulate a desired emotional response on the receptors. Photomontages go a bit further: the accumulation of selected captures of reality, commonly perceived as objective, allowed the combination of different concepts or visual “purr and snarl images”⁴³ capriciously selected by the propagandist.



Tolosa, *Argos*⁴⁴



Monleón, *Estudios*⁴⁵



José Compte, *Vértice*⁴⁶

The manipulation of images denounced by Münzenberg, and his propagandistic instrumentalization was not, however, a completely new procedure. Different examples of such practices are meticulously described and listed in Arthur Ponsby's *Falsehood in Wartime* (1929). During the First World War, different agencies would sell the same photographs to both contenders, to illustrate the “barbaric acts” committed by the enemy.⁴⁷ The *Arbeiter-Fotograf* (1926-1932) provides, in this sense, even earlier

⁴² See, in particular, the photomontages of the Falangist chief of Photographic Propaganda, the catalan artist Josep Compte.

⁴³ I apply here the *Hayakawian* concept of “purr” and “snarl” words to define an equivalent phenomenon in visual communication. Most propagandistic images contain, in this sense, similar “snarl” and “purr” concepts associated to them, such as “Bourgeois”, “foreign”, “fascist”, “imperialist” that could be, as stated by the American linguist, a simple concatenation of denunciations, commonly without any “verifiable reports” included. See Hayakawa. I., op. cit p. 26-27.

⁴⁴ Tolosa, Cover of *Argos* Magazine, March 1937. Private Collection

⁴⁵ Monleón, Cover of *Estudios* Magazine, January, 1937. Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid

⁴⁶ José Compte, *Vértice*, February 1939. Biblioteca Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

⁴⁷ Ponsby, A. *Falsehood in wartime*, London, Bradford & Dickens, 1942 [1929], p. 21.

examples of those propagandistic strategies through direct photograph manipulations. During the Paris Commune (1871) – states the publication of Münzenberg – photographic montages were already used in the bourgeois media to promote and facilitate the demonization of the insurgent workers.⁴⁸

Propaganda through visual artefacts did not necessary imply, as seen in examples provided by Ponsby and during the Spanish Civil War, a blatant manipulation of facts through faked photographs. Many times, particularly during the Iberian conflict, images were authentic and remained unaltered. As Walter Benjamin explained, it was the caption that accompanied the picture where the reconstruction of reality took place, allowing all kinds of interpretations of reality. Events captured in photographs could be authentic – like the destruction of villages showed in francoist propaganda – but carried on a different place, by different perpetrators or even on a different war:

The camera becomes smaller and more susceptible to catch those hidden, short-lived images whose *shock* on the observer stops his association mechanism. The image caption that integrates the photograph intervenes, on this sense, explaining a photographic construction that is otherwise too imprecise.⁴⁹

The imprecise nature of photographs, accompanied by the “overcrowding” characteristics pointed out by Roland Barthes – “The photographic image is full, overcrowded: there is no space, nothing can be added”⁵⁰ – turned photography into a very useful tool in the hands of propagandists. It was, and still is, wrongly perceived as objective and less susceptible of being permeated and shaped by ideology. Early declarations of Münzenberg show, on this sense, a deep understanding of the power of photography for propagandistic and mass-mobilization purposes. On 1931 he wrote in the *Arbeiter-Fotograf*:

Die Fotografie wirkt auf das Auge des Menschen, das Gesehene spiegelt sich im Kopfe wieder, ohne daß der Mensch zu kompliziertem Denken gezwungen wird. Auf diese Weise kommt die Bourgeoisie der Trägheit breiter Volksschichten entgegen und außerdem macht man ein gutes Geschäft, denn die illustrierten Zeitungen erreichen oft Millionenauflagen. Damit aber nicht genug, viel wichtiger ist die – letzten Endes – politische Wirkung, die durch die Zusammenstellung mehrerer Bilder, durch die Unterschriften und Begleittexte erzielt wird. Das ist

⁴⁸ “Fotomontage im Dienste der Bürgerlichen Hetze – Gegen die Kommune”, *Arbeiter-Fotograf*, Heft 5, 1931, p. 80-81.

⁴⁹ Benjamin, W. *Pequeña historia de la fotografía*. En *Obras*, libro II, vol. 1. Madrid, Abada, 2007, p. 403.

⁵⁰ Barthes, R. *La cámara lúcida. Notas sobre la fotografía*. Barcelona, Paidós, 1990, p. 155.

das Entscheidende. Auf diese Weise kann ein geschickter Redakteur jedes Foto in das Gegenteil verfälschen, kann er den politisch nicht geschulten Leser in jeder gewünschten Richtung beeinflussen.⁵¹

The fascist coalition in Spain would use varied visual material produced by the Republic to enrich their propaganda. Certain documentaries of German production – such as *Helden in Spanien*⁵² (1938) – would re-use loyalist footage to compose anti-communist propaganda, in which republican soldiers are depicted – through an appropriate assembly, music and speed alterations – as insubordinate, coward, and lustful. Footage filmed by Roman Karmen would end up in German hands, and thus manipulated for their own propagandistic interests, even before it was exhibited in the USSR or Spain.⁵³ The representations of National-socialism that appeared in the *AIZ* undoubtedly influenced the perception of the racist, totalitarian movement in Spain. The growing menace of fascism took form in the photomontages of the *Arbeiter Illustrierte Zeitung*, making any further attempt of imagination unnecessary: images and posters could, as stated by Kai Artinger,⁵⁴ convince individuals in a few seconds. The immense amount of images and different visual artefacts of all kinds – posters, montages, illustrations – that surrounded European citizens of the 30s could block and substantially influence the masses, categorized by contemporary highly influential thinkers, such as Gustave Le Bon,⁵⁵ as extremely rash⁵⁶ and particularly susceptible to visual propaganda:

When a man becomes part of the mass, he descends automatically several grades on the scale of civilization. When isolated from the masses, he can be a cultivated man. But as part of the masses he will act instinctively and become a barbarian. He will react with the spontaneity, violence, ferocity, heroism and

⁵¹ Münzenberg, W., “Aufgaben und Ziele. Der Internationalen Arbeiterfotografenbewegung” *Arbeiter-fotograf*, Heft 5, 1931, p. 99.

⁵² Translated to Spanish as *España Heroica (Estampas de la Guerra Civil)*. Produced by Hispano Filmproduktion.

⁵³ It appeared for example on the UFA Wochenschau. See Martin Hamdorf, W. Madrid-Moscú. “La Guerra Civil española a través del “cine de montaje” soviético”. *Actas del V Congreso de la A.E.H.C.*, A Coruña, C.G.A.I., 1995, pp. 117-136.

⁵⁴ Artinger, K., “Das politische Plakat – Einige Bemerkungen zur Funktion und Geschichte”. On Artinger, K. (Ed.) *Die Grundrechte im Spiegel des Plakats. 1919 – 1999*. Berlin, DHM, 2000, p. 15 – 22.

⁵⁵ Münzenberg quoted words of Le Bon regarding visual propaganda and his effects on the masses. See Münzenberg, *Propaganda als Waffe... op. cit* p. 36.

⁵⁶ Le Bon, G., *Psychologie des Foules*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 41 Édition, 1939 [1895].

enthusiasm of primitive beings. He will be easy to impress by words and images, and moved to act against his most obvious interests.⁵⁷

These perception of visual materials as highly influential and malleable appeared in the texts of many contemporary experts of communication. Nazi theoretician and radio expert Eugene Hadamovsky – mentioned by Münzenberg as a fundamental figure of NS propaganda in addition to Goebbels⁵⁸ – reflected the importance of such propaganda before his mass use in the Spanish Civil War. Words from Hadamovsky show a clear understanding of such methodologies:

Im übrigen aber ist die Photolinse nur im gleichen Maße objektiv, wie der, der sie auf die Dinge richtet. Alles kommt auf die Blickrichtung an. Es macht den ganzen Unterschied, ob der Reporter mit seiner Kamera die mild anstürmende, revoltierende Menge fotografiert oder den energisch mit Gummiknütteln oder Karabinern dagegen vorgehenden Polizeikordon. Das eine Bild ist gut für „Die Woche“, um den bürgerlichen Lesern das Gruseln von der Revolte beizubringen, das andere zeigt den Lesern der kommunistischen Arbeiter Illustrierten überzeugend das brutale und gänzlich unbegründete Vorgehen der Polizei „gegen die proletarischen Massen“.⁵⁹

The direct and indirect assessment of both German experts to both contenders permitted the expansion of these highly developed methods of persuasion through images. Visual artefacts should be used, as Münzenberg pointed out, years before, as a first-line instrument on the class struggle, as well as against fascism:

Die Arbeiter-Fotografen müssen Bildreporter im Klassenkampf werden. Die nackte Wirklichkeit (...) **Jede Fotografie vom Kampfe gegen die Gummiknüttel, Maschinengewehre und Gasbomben der Polizei ist ein Dokument der Zeitgeschichte, belebt die Entschlossenheit und den Kampfesmut der Arbeiter anderer Städte und Länder.**⁶⁰

The American linguist and politic Ichiye Hayakawa exposed similar appreciations in *Language in thought and action* (1939). This publication from the semantics specialist offered a clear approach to studying the language of politics and advertisement, and how they relate to each other. Even though the exploration of Hayakawa would mostly

⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Münzenberg, W., *La propaganda hitlerienne. Instrument de guerre*, Paris, Editions Sébastien Brant, 1938, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Hadamovsky, E., *Propaganda und nationale Macht: Die Organisation der öffentlichen Meinung für die nationale Politik*, Oldenburg, Gerhard Stalling, 1933, p. 97.

⁶⁰ „AUFRUF. An die Arbeiter-Fotografen aller Länder“ *Arbeiter-Fotograf*, Heft 5, 1931, p 75.

focus on textual communication, the linguist underlined the fundamental role of images in the development of identity or the national character of a country. The combination of well-chosen photographs that persuaded individuals not to carry “complicated thoughts” – as pointed out by Münzenberg⁶¹ – would be systematically combined with *Hayakawian* “purr” and “snarl-words”, and further subjective interpretations as stated by Benjamin, thus constructing the most effective form of propaganda.

The most known Spanish loyalist graphic artist and director general of fine arts, Josep Renau (1907-1972), took – as did other Spanish artist and political illustrators – the work of Heartfield in the *AIZ* and the *Volksillustrierte*⁶² as examples and applied them to his own work. The definition of the “others”, the visual construction of fascist menace on republican Spain could not be understood without the work of Renau (he also became director of the whole graphic propaganda of the Republic in 1938) and remembered Heartfield as his master.⁶³ His photomontages would spread out along the whole loyal territory, exhibited on the Spanish Pavillion of International Exhibition of Paris (1937) with Picasso’s *Gernika* and reproduced in the Nazi Pamphlet *Das Rotbuch über Spanien*.⁶⁴ They would shape – in company of those of Heartfield that inspired his work – the anti-francoist identity of different Spanish generations during the Civil War and after it.⁶⁵

Posters made by Renau resemble the guidelines that the German propagandist gave to Koestler during the production of *Ein Spanisches Testament*, published by

⁶¹ Reflexions of Gerbner and Seward Barry on the power of visual communication reveal strong similarities to those exposed by Münzenberg decades before. See Gerbner. G. Schiller, H. and Mowlana, H., (eds.) *Triumph of the Image*, Boulder, CO: Westview, 1992, p. 246. And Seward Barry, op. cit p. 285.

⁶² The *AIZ* was transferred to Prague after the Nazi rise to power. His name changed in 1936 to be published as *Volksillustrierte*, to be published until 1938.

⁶³ Renau, J. “Homenaje a John Heartfield”, *Photovision*, 1, July-August 1981.

⁶⁴ Anti-Komintern, *Das Rotbuch über Spanien*, Berlin, Nibelungen Verlag, 1937, p. 52.

⁶⁵ Álvarez Dorronsoro, T., op. cit., p. 55.

Münzenberg's Editions du Carrefour⁶⁶ in ten languages: "Don't argue with them (...) make them stink in the nose of the world."⁶⁷

Josep Renau, a reputed designer from Valencia has been considered as responsible for the introduction of Heartfield's iconography and photomontages in Spain since 1932. He appropriated the photomontages of Heartfield and reproduced them on his Anarcho-syndicalist magazine *Orto*, where he collaborated as artistic director. This demonstrates the influence of Heartfield on those Spanish artists that wanted to harmonize graphic practice and political compromise.⁶⁸

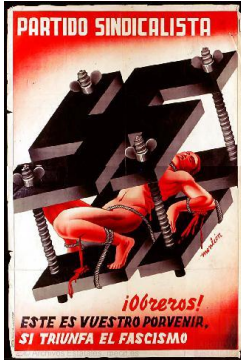
Josep Renau, Mauricio Amster (1907-1980) – considered by Andrés Trapiello as the most relevant "portadista" of his time – and Monleón (1904-1976)⁶⁹ were the first to introduce in Spain certain representations of fascism, that would be developed during the Civil War and thus, complete the construction of the "fascist beast" depicted in numerous propagandistic texts and discourses. The relevance of Münzenberg's work was present on the Spanish left wing visual media even before the outbreak of the Civil War. The direct inspiration of Heartfield's work on many depictions appeared during the Civil War, in which the Nazi swastika served as a metaphor of the crucifixion of the working class is unquestionable. Well-known artists such as Josep Bardasano (*"Trebassadors! El feixisme es l'explotació i l'esclavatge"*, 1937) and other cartelists like Oliva (*"Fascio no!"*) and Monleón (February, 1937) would use the iconic poster of Heartfield in their own designs.

⁶⁶ The edition house Editions du Carrefour in Paris was partially founded with money of the *Neuer Deutsche Verlag*. Gruber mentions about one hundred books and a imprecise amount of other pamphlets, whereas other researches seem to agree on a very precise amount of 56: see , on this sense, Courtois, S. "Willi Münzenberg oder Antifaschismus zwischen Revolution und Demokratie" p. 79-87, in Schlie, T, and Roche, S. (Hrsg.), Willi Münzenberg (1889-1940) Ein deutscher Kommunist im Spannungsfeld zwischen Stalinismus und Antifaschismus, Berlin, Peter Lang, 1995. And Gruber, H., Willi Münzenberg, Propagandist for and against the Comintern. *International Review of Social History* 10, (1965), pp. 188-210, p. 190.

⁶⁷ Koestler, A., *op. cit.* p. 408.

⁶⁸ Cuevas Wolf, C., *Una España desafiante...* *op. cit.* p. 55.

⁶⁹ See the online database of propaganda posters of the Spanish Ministry of Culture, Archivo Guerra Civil Española, <http://pares.mcu.es/cartelesGC/AdminControlServlet?COP=6>



Monleón⁷⁰



Josep Bardasano⁷¹



Oliva⁷²



Cover of Estudios⁷³

2.1. Depicting the fascist beast:

The 30th October 1936, Willi Münzenberg wrote the Spanish ambassador in France, Luis Araquistain, concerning the urgent publication that should immediately counter the propagandistic impulse of the fascist apparatus. His commentaries referred to *Das Schwarzbuch über Spanien*, to be published in 1937:

I've talked with my friends again and we've come to the conclusion that the book on the atrocities of the Whites must be published as soon as possible, especially after yesterday's terrible catastrophe in a Madrid school [bombings over a "Grupo escolar" in Getafe, where dozens of children were killed] and after the Burgos people have proclaimed, in a huge announcement (2-3 pages in the *Times*, which is quite something), the publication of a book about our supposed atrocities. As a result, in order to get things moving we've convinced one of our best writers, comrade Koestler, who is familiar with both fronts, and have commissioned him to write the book immediately. I earnestly request you to help him and to give him all the material and images, in accordance with the promise you gave me, especially the images the Spanish delegation of journalist brought back (...) especially of the schools, photos of wounded kids with description of their lives.⁷⁴

Violent images were a particularly effective propagandistic instrument to "make fascism stink". According to the testimonies of Koestler and Juan Vicens, who was in charge of the *Oficina de Propaganda* in Paris since July 1937, Münzenberg was a true

⁷⁰ Monleón (1936?) "¡Obreros! Este es vuestro porvenir si triunfa el fascismo!", PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica

⁷¹ Josep Bardasano (1937) *Treballadors! El feixisme es l'explosió i l'esclavatge*, Front d'Esquerres de Catalunya. Col.lecció Cartells del Pavelló de la República (UB); F-1020.

⁷² Oliva (1937?) "Fascio no!" PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica

⁷³ Monleón, Cover of *Estudios Magazine*, February 1937, 161. Hemeroteca Municipal de Madrid

⁷⁴ From Luis Ariquistáin's personal archive. Quoted on Gubern, R., and Hammond, P., *Luis Buñuel, the Red Years. 1929-1939*. Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 2012, p. 299.

supporter of that “truculent propaganda” that would be also highly employed by the Nazis and the Spanish *putschists*: publications like the Nazi *Das Rotbuch über Spanien* or the Spanish “*Causa general. La dominación roja en España*”⁷⁵ are good examples of visual, “negative propaganda”, that intended to depict a very precise image of the “Red” as a “mad brute”. The Hungarian correspondent was to be responsible of the gathering of the images of dead children⁷⁶ that became widely used in the republican propaganda and further antifascist materials of the next decade,⁷⁷ initially reproduced in the *Menschenopfer unerhört. Ein Schwarzbuch über Spanien* (Editions du Carrefour, January 1937. A French edition appeared under the title of *L’Espagne ensanglantée: un livre noir sur l’Espagne*). Documentary filmmaker in Spain Roman Karmen remembers the importance of such images and footage for propagandistic purposes:

It was in Spain where I really discovered my responsibility, the relevance of every scene recorded and the importance of every one of my acts. How repulsive must be to a mother that cries over his son’s corpse to see a man that directs his purring camera towards them.⁷⁸

This material proved to be very effective in the mobilization of foreign public opinion against fascist aggression,⁷⁹ particularly in combination with other kinds of propaganda. It would also, if we follow the assertions of Sánchez Biosca and Nancy Berthier,⁸⁰ collaborate in the construction of an anti-fascist identity through a shared experience: the atrocities carried by the fascist troops and the Moorish *regulares*⁸¹ in the occupied cities would generate, in the imagination of the resistance, an “Anti-fascist

⁷⁵ Ministerio de Justicia, *Causa General. La dominación Roja en España*. Madrid, Afrodísio Aguado, 1943.

⁷⁶ According to Laurent and Dugrand, the Hungarian gathered dozens of these photographs during his time in Spain, to be used for propagandistic purposes. Dugrand, A. and Laurent, F., *Willi Münzenberg, artiste en révolution (1899-1940)*, Paris, Fayard, 2008, p. 452.

⁷⁷ Moreno Cantano, A. C., “Literatura de propaganda religiosa extranjera durante la Guerra Civil española”, *Revista internacional de Historia de la Comunicación*, Nº2, Vol.1, 2014, pp. 42-61. p. 56.

⁷⁸ “Karmen, R. *¡No pasarán!*, Moscow, Progreso, 1976, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Similar strategies to those systematically supported by Münzenberg have been used on several occasions. See interesting examples of the Gulf War quoted and analysed by Seward Barry on Seward Barry, A., M., op. cit p. 282-284.

⁸⁰ Berthier, N., Sánchez Biosca, V., on VV.AA, *Retóricas del miedo. Imágenes de la Guerra Civil española*, Collection de la Casa de Velázquez (129), Madrid, 2012, pp. 1-10.

⁸¹ Even Luis Bolín, first chief of the Press Agency of Franco who would also personally capture Koestler in Málaga, remembers with a laconism that cannot hide the facts, the loots and barbaric behaviour of the Moorish troops under Franco’s command. See Bolín, L., *Spain: the vital years*, London, Casell, 1967, p. 229.

Gemeinschaft”⁸² of the intensity of the on described by Jünger on *In Stahlgewittern* (1920).



L'Action "militaire"⁸³



Bombes sur Madrid⁸⁴



Mirbal⁸⁵

Materials produced in France (1937 and 1938) with photographs gathered by Koestler. The second, produced by the Secours Rouge International, quotes its own reflexions towards "fascism or civilization" cited on the following lines. A small reproduction of the same caption was used in the Catalan-illustrated magazine Mirbal on 1937 to document a bombing – date of the attack not provided – over a school in Almería.

It was essential to appeal to the most profound and most rooted emotions, which can only be achieved with images and photomontages of great violence and brutality...⁸⁶

Asseverations that were, indeed, very close to those exposed by Le Bon decades before:

⁸² The stimulation of this "Anti-fascist Gemeinschaft" was carried through diverse publications produced by different organizations and propagandists that orbited close to Münzenberg. See, on this sense, the publication of Miravittles *Catalans a Madrid*. Miravittles, J. *Catalans a Madrid*, Barcelona, Forja, 1938.

⁸³ "Madrid. L'Action "militaire" des Rebelles: ce que l'Europe tolère ou protège ce que vos enfants peuvent attendre. Fondo Antiguo de la Universidad de Valencia, Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes

⁸⁴ Helio Cachan, Atelier Jean Carlou, Secours Rouge International, "Bombes sur Madrid. Civilisation!" (1937). Private Collection

⁸⁵ Mirbal, Revista infantil antifascista, 1937. Private collection

⁸⁶ Koestler, A., *Spanish Testament*, as quoted on Koestler, A., *op. cit.* p. 397.

The masses can only think through images, can only be impressed by images. Only images have the capacity to seduce or terrify the masses and stimulate their actions.⁸⁷

Münzenberg believed that the efficiency of those materials in combination “positive propaganda”, mostly focused on the definition of the republican self. The fascist coalition, on the contrary, mostly focused on the production of “negative propaganda” in order to demonize the loyal. According to Moreno Cantano, statistics on foreign public opinion indicate a “victory” of the republican propagandistic methodologies.⁸⁸

Certain acts of iconoclasm and attempts to kidnap and encage images can precisely summarize the capital importance of visual artefacts and photographs for both contenders. As pointed out in a conversation between art historian Pedro G. Romero and philosopher Georges Didi-Huberman, the systematic destruction of religious images carried by the *Milicianos* shows a profound belief of those objects not only as representation but as a true incarnation of the “other” and as an embodiment of evil. The official decree of the francoists after the siege of Barcelona indicates the same: all photographs produced in the capital of Catalonia during the three years of the war, either by official organisms or particulars, had to be given to the authorities and later sent to special archives in Salamanca to be imprisoned and neutralized. The dramatized and photographically documented shooting of a monumental Christ statue, carried by militiamen on the Cerro de los Ángeles in Getafe (July 1936), exemplifies how symbols that summarized the political inclinations or views of the “other” were perceived as dangerous as their beholders, and thus eliminated with the same procedures.

3. We against them: the antifascist identity on the republican Spain.

I don't like the policy of the Communist party – which doesn't mean that I have joined the anti-Communist parade. If it weren't for the Communists in and outside of Spain, Franco would be in Barcelona.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Le Bon, G., *Psychologie des Foules*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 41 Édition, 1939 [1895], p. 50. Similar statements regarding the power of images in mass mobilization can be found on pages 51 and 80.

⁸⁸ Moreno Cantano, A.C, *op. cit*, p. 58.

⁸⁹ Louis Fischer to Kirchway, 17 August 1937, as quoted on Preston, P., *op cit*. p. 288.

The republican government, as shortly stated before, used diverse nationalist and popular references to construct the identity of the loyal Spain. This initiative can be traced to the publications carried by Münzenberg and his collaborators:

Die Armee General de Llanos bestand aus 50.000 Mann italienischer Infanterie, drei Banderas der Fremdelegion, 15.000 Stammeskriegern aus Afrika. Der Rest der Truppen, etwa zehn von Hundert, war Spanischer Nationalität.⁹⁰

According to Núñez Seixas, the use of nationalism as a mass-mobilization weapon was mostly used by those Spaniards whose internationalism could be, in fact, more expected: *“los españoles de obediencia soviética”*. The rhetoric produced by these propagandists permeated, also, the majority of the republican forces,⁹¹ demonstrating to be a highly effective instrument in the ideologization of the working classes.

Menschenopfer unerhört: ein Schwarzbuch über Spanien followed these propagandistic criteria and systematically underlined the heterogeneous and non-idealistic characteristics of the *putschist* forces opposing the “real Spain”: young *Luftwaffe* adventurers, well paid Portuguese mercenaries, Navarrese catholic militias, and pseudo-fascist *señoritos* of all kinds. The list was to be completed by the feared Moroccan *regulares*, commonly depicted as looters, assassins and rapists, as well as victims of false prospects of freedom and wealth. I will refer to and quote the French version of the *Schwarzbuch* on the following pages:

Everyone feels that the war in Spain contains the germs of a new European war. The fear of a new butchery is duplicated by the panic provoked by the mercenary armies of General Franco.⁹²

A sort of “casticismo revolucionario”⁹³ – both popular, nationalist, folkloric and revolutionary – was to be built in order to efficiently confront the international intervention in Spain. Even those who initially perceived the exaltation of folklore as reactionary – such as Josep Renau, who first condemned any form of “left oriented traditionalism” – understood the power of a redefined traditional culture on the creation and conservation

⁹⁰ Koestler, A., *Ein spanisches Testament...op. cit.* p. 13-14.

⁹¹ Núñez Seixas, X., M., *El miedo al extranjero...op. cit.* p. 55.

⁹² Koestler, A. *L'Espagne ensanglantée: un livre noir sur l'Espagne*. Paris, Editions du Carrefour, 1937, p. 8.

⁹³ I adopt on this case the terminology employed by Dr. Núñez Seixas to define nationalism on the Republican side. See on this sense “La nueva Numancia miliciana: nacionalismo y movilización bélica en el bando republicano”. In Núñez Seixas, *¡Fuera el invasor! Nacionalismos y movilización bélica durante la guerra civil española. (1936-1939)*, Madrid, Marcial Pons, 2006, pp. 29-166.

of popular resistance. The link between tradition, folklore and popular resistance sponsored by the republic took form in the 1937 Spanish Pavilion in Paris, directed by the Valencian Propagandist.⁹⁴ The rural Spain, represented by the image of the “albercana”, (famous through Ortiz Echagües publications⁹⁵ in various languages) was transformed through photomontages: the rural, idealized peasant became “the woman able to actively participate in future of the nation”. The systematic association in between landlords, the church and transnational fascism as a homogeneous enemy populated visual and textual propaganda:

Comrade peasants: the invasion would mean that our lands would pass to the hands of Italian and German assassins, and we would be considered as slaves and as another colony of these totalitarian nations.⁹⁶

“Nosotros solos somos españoles”, claimed some articles present in the magazine *El mono azul*. The fascist coalition was described, in this sense, as a bunch of “moros, legionarios y soldados de la *Reichswehr*.”⁹⁷ This is, in fact, the same description to be found in Arthur Koestler’s *Schwarzbuch über Spanien*. Portuguese mercenaries, descendants of the “African hereditary enemies” and fascist forces carried the ironically called “national war” of the rebels:

Leur “guerre nationale”, ils en sont réduits à la mener avec des mercenaires portugais, avec les descendants des Maures africains, “ennemis héréditaires”, avec des avions allemands et italiens. Ce sont eux, ennemis jurés de l’internationalisme.⁹⁸

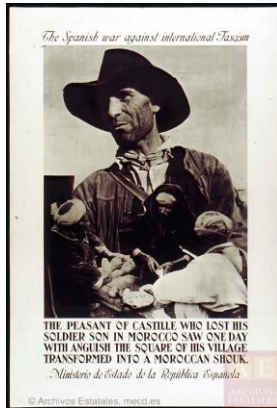
⁹⁴ See, on this sense, Mendelson, J. *Documenting Spain. Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929-1939*. Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005, pp. 126-182.

⁹⁵ A German edition of his famous rural portraits appeared under the title *Spanische Köpfe. Bilder aus Kastilien, Aragonien und Andalusien*, Berlin, Wasmuth, 1929.

⁹⁶ “Independencia en 1808, en 1938”. In Carulla y Carulla, *La Guerra Civil en 2000 carteles*, Barcelona, Postermil vol. I p. 96.

⁹⁷ “Madrid en la independencia nacional” and Serrano Plaja, A. “Madrid-España”, *El Mono Azul*, 2, 15. 11th February 1937, pp. 1-2, respectively.

⁹⁸ Koestler, A. *L’Espagne ensanglantée: un livre noir sur l’Espagne*. Paris, Editions du Carrefour, 1937, p. 21.



"The Spanish war.." ⁹⁹

"Auca del Moro feixista" ¹⁰⁰

Josep Renau (photomontage

displayed on the Spanish Pavilion)

A poster produced by the *Ministerio de Estado* in 1937, employed photomontage to depict the consequences of a fascist victory in Spain: the idealized figure of a Castilian peasant stands in-between a group of Moroccan shopkeepers. Lines under the picture quote: "The Spanish war against international fascism. The peasant of castile who lost his soldier son in Morocco saw one day with anguish the square of his village transformed into a Moroccan shouk".

The reference to the Moroccan *zoco* was not a random choice: existing biases of the souks in colonial territories of Spanish Morocco – perceived as scenarios of chaos, dispute and haggle – could certainly be effectively canalized to generate resistance against the invaders. The rhetorical figure of a father who lost his son to a colonialist, imperialistic war now facing the imposition of "Moroccan barbarism" in the heart of "*Castilla la vieja*" was indeed temporally accurate. The perception of the Moroccan was particularly negative amongst Spaniards after the recent wars and defeats in the colonial territories. The landing of the *Regulares* in rebel territories, carried through the *Luftwaffe*'s airlift facilitated the widespread of fear and stories of revenge amongst the population of the loyal zone:

The terrible defeat of Annual and Monte Arruit (10.000 deaths on the Spanish side, mostly under terrible conditions) facilitated the regrowth of the blackest, pejorative image of the Moroccans as well as the comeback of old stigmas of cruelty, ferocity, lasciviousness, greed and fanaticism (...) as a result of the

⁹⁹ "The Spanish war against international fascism.", (1937). Ministerio de Estado de la República española, PARES, Portal de Archivos Españoles. Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica

¹⁰⁰ "Auca del Moro feixista" (1937). Comissariat de Propaganda Col.lecció Cartells del Pavelló de la República (UB); C-5665; F-685

conflict, to be concluded with a Spanish victory, a double image of the defeated was generated: the Moorish friend, elegantly dressed and smoking European cigars, and the Moor of the far *Cabilas*, big-mouthed peasant with terrifying teeth only neutralized thanks to a muzzle.¹⁰¹

A defeat to the Africanist generals could imply, as the poster hints, a process of “colonization by the colony” and thus an imposition of foreign customs, accompanying the rural counter-reformations desired by conservative forces. The characteristics of the “hereditary enemy” of the Spaniards that appeared on the publications of Koestler and mentioned on the above quoted study of Martín Corrales acquire pictorial materiality in the famous “Auca del Moro feixista” (*Auca* of the fascist moor). It was produced in 1937 by the *Comissariat de Propaganda* and also displayed at the Paris Pavilion of the Republic. The *Auca* was a traditional genre of story in pictures in Catalonia, which was used with propagandistic purposes. The traditional rhymes that accompany the pictures facilitate the assimilation of the slogans.

“El Madrid glorioso es invencible” (Glorious Madrid is invincible, 1938), claimed another poster of Izquierda Republicana. A clear reference was made to the popular resistance of the *Madriileños* against foreign Napoleonic troops. The defender of the loyal Republic is identified with the same popular classes that started the revolution of 1808 and thus dressed this propaganda poster as a traditional “*chispero*”. The Italian *lictor* lies defeated under the feet of the Spanish colossus, ready to counteract the foreign German intervention represented through the menacing figure of a crow.

Further representations of that “anti-fascist folklorism” can be found in the famous poster of the Miravittles’s collaborator and Chief Editor Catalá-Pic, also present at the Republican Pavilion in Paris. *Aixafem el feixisme !* (Smash fascism), produced in 1936, clearly exemplifies the application of the most refined advertisement photography – Catalá-Pic was a superb publicist and professional photographer before the outbreak of the war – to the means of propaganda. It included references to identify anti-fascist resistance as a fight of the popular classes: a traditional Catalan *espardenya* shoe is chosen to stimulate both nationalist and class feelings amongst the loyal population as well as between the European public that went to the Republican Pavilion.

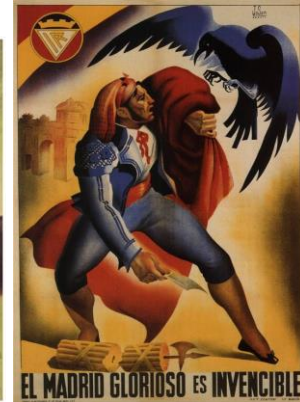
¹⁰¹ “Martín Corrales, E., “Maurofobia/islamofobia y maurofilia/islamofilia en la España del siglo XXI”. *CIDOB d’Afers Internacionals*, núm. 66-67, p. 39-51, p. 42.



*Aixafem el feixisme!*¹⁰²



*No pasarán!*¹⁰³



*"El Madrid glorioso es invencible"*¹⁰⁴

Republican Spain was to be described in Münzenberg's publications¹⁰⁵ and at the Paris Pavilion as a battleground between progress and feudalistic forms of exploitation: "Calvo Sotelo, monarchist, landowner, a man of the old regime. On the other side, the masses of the republican Spain unite on a common defence".¹⁰⁶ *"The Nazi conspiracy in Spain"* (1937) outlines the deep pre-Civil War connections between German interests in Spain and conservative Spanish forces and the Catholic Church,¹⁰⁷ pointing out the collaboration between foreign fascist forces and a class enemy depicted as a "traitor":

The Nazis have learnt from the experiences of the World War. They began the fight for the Mediterranean region before the actual declaration of war. They got Franco's Moorish legions and his Fascist phalanx to lead the struggle (...) Franco, as the deputy of the new German imperialism, was to hand over the naval bases which the German naval staff requires for its active campaign.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Catalá-Pic, "Aixafem el feixisme!", (1936). Comissariat de Propaganda, Col.lecció Cartells del Pavelló de la República (UB); C-78; F-78.

¹⁰³ Peris Aragó, "No pasarán!" (1937) Subsecretaría de Propaganda, Delegación de Valencia, Biblioteca virtual Miguel de Cervantes

¹⁰⁴ Josán, "El Madrid glorioso es invencible" (1938), Izquierda Republicana. Private Collection

¹⁰⁵ "Cinquante mille seigneurs féodaux disposent de plus de terre que les autres quatre-vingt dix-neuf autres centièmes de la population" Koestler, A, *op. cit* p. 27

¹⁰⁶ Koestler, A, *op. cit* p. 33.

¹⁰⁷ Katz, O., *The Nazi conspiracy in Spain*. Translated by Burns, E., Victor Gollanz, London, 1937, p. 9. The first pages of this book are claimed by Koestler to be his principal contribution to the book. On Koestler, A., *op. cit* p.

¹⁰⁸ Katz, O., *ibidem*, p. 14.

Rear-guard terror caused by Moorish troops in Spain – developed in fact by the Spanish Foreign Legion in the Rif years before as a repressive strategy¹⁰⁹ –, and terror bombings of the German and Italian squadrons facilitated the elaboration of such propagandistic campaigns. The speeches of General Queipo de Llano, also interviewed by Arthur Koestler thanks to his journalist credentials and initial good relations with the rebels,¹¹⁰ gave valuable propagandistic material to the loyal agitators. His calls to indiscriminate rape amongst the rebels were a fertile ground for “negative propaganda”:

Our brave legionaries and Moorish *Regulares* showed the reds what is to be a man. They also showed it to their women, which now, finally, got to know real men and not castrated *milicianos*. To shout and to stamp will not save them...¹¹¹

His interventions were quoted by several publications produced by Münzenberg’s apparatus due to his unhidden cruelty. He was thus used as “portrait of a rebel General”:

Die Marxisten sind reißende Tiere, wir sind aber Caballeros. Der Señor Companys [President of Catalunya] verdient abgestochen zu werden wie ein Schwein.¹¹²

The nationalization of the fight, produced by both sides, provoked a systematic use of the map of Spain on visual propaganda. The association between the Republic and Spain as synonyms – the loyal government as Spain and his people against the insurgent coalition as foreign powers and foreign interests – motivated the primary use of visual artefacts within the Spanish peninsula. The association made by this poster of Renau¹¹³ constitutes a superb example: an impersonalized republican fighter – anonymous, thus susceptible of being incarnated by any loyal citizen – is depicted as an impregnable fortress with clear national references. The loyalist combatant coalesces with the silhouette of Spain and the promising horizon of the desired victory, crowned by

¹⁰⁹ Queipo de Llano, Radio Sevilla, 23th July 1936.

¹¹⁰ He received a “salvo-conducto” to enter the “National” Spain in Lisbon signed by the conservative *Cedist* politician Gil Robles. This paper allowed him to move relatively freely in the rebel territories until he got recognised by a German journalist.

¹¹¹ “Our brave legionnaires and Moorish *regulares* showed the Reds what is to be a man. They showed it as well to their women, who finally know what is to be with a real man and not with a castrated *miliciano*. To howl and to stamp will not save them...”

¹¹² General Queipo de Llano on his daily speech in Radio Sevilla, 12th august 1936. Quoted on Koestler, A. *Ein Spanisches Testament*, Berlin, Verlag Europäische ideen, 1979, p. 13. Further speeches are also quoted on *L’Espagne ensanglantée*, p. 23.

¹¹³ From the “Los 13 puntos de Negrín” serie, 1938. The collection of 13 illustrations is made with superpositions of images over the map of Spain.

a red star of obvious connotations. In front of him, a potpourri of traitors and invaders like those described on the following lines arise:

Tercio legionnaires, Carlists wearing red berets, young bourgeois wearing the uniform of the Spanish Falange, white dressed pilots who – curious detail – speak a terrible Spanish and pass the time reading the *Völkischer Beobachter*.¹¹⁴



*“Ejército nacional al servicio de la República”*¹¹⁵



*“Los Nacionales”*¹¹⁶

The experience of Koestler on his first trip to Spain through Portugal is present on the *Schwarzbuch* and describes a hardly-neutral Lusitania in which Spanish officers control access to the country. German troops prowl freely and weapon deliveries are consented and facilitated by the Portuguese authorities, active collaborators of the fascist offensive:

The Portuguese government provides the Army of General Franco with weapons and ammunitions of all kinds; it assures at the same time the secret delivery of German and Italian weapons that pass through Portugal, and allows Spanish and Portuguese officers to coordinate directly the delivery of German and Italian goods, without carrying any custom control in the frontiers.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Koestler, A., *op. cit.*, p. 21.

¹¹⁵ Josep Renau, “Ejército nacional al servicio de la República” (1938). In VV.AA., Josep Renau. *Compromis I cultura* Universitat de Valencia, Servei de Publicacions, 2007

¹¹⁶ Anonymous, “Los Nacionales” (1936?), Ministerio de Propaganda, Col.lecció Cartells del Pavelló de la República (UB); C-57; F-57

¹¹⁷ Koestler, A. *L'Espagne ensanglantée: un livre noir sur l'Espagne*. Paris, Editions du Carrefour, 1937, p. 14.

A very popular and highly reproduced loyalist postcard of 1936 shows exactly the scenario described by Koestler: *“Los Nacionales”* (*Ministerio de Propaganda*) embodies a military ship of Portuguese origin, according to the inscriptions on the vessel, in which the heterogeneous nature of the fascist coalition is summarized: Italian Ground Forces, pompously depicted. Nazi bankers, representing the economical interests of the Third Reich in Spain. Colonial troops and representatives of the Moroccan *Cabilas*, completing the list of foreign powers willing to impose their dominion to the loyal. The Spanish peninsula – and with it, the people of Spain – hangs dramatically from the mast. The figure of a catholic Cardinal blesses and supports the criminal intervention in a composition that resembles the *“Stützen der Gesellschaft”* painted by George Grosz (1926) ten years before.

4. Conclusions

The influence of Willi Münzenberg and the relevance of his methodologies and propagandistic strategies transcend the organizations and structures strictly developed under his command. Approaches to the visual language of graphic propaganda of the Republic confirm the expansion of the aesthetics of *“casticismo revolucionario”* mentioned by Núñez Seixas, and the application of *“snarl-images”* through photomontages present on *AIZ* that contributed to the precise depiction of the *“Nazi beast”*. Also indicates clear similarities and translations between Münzenberg’s publications and the official propaganda campaigns carried by the Catalan *Comissariat*, the *Agence Spagne* and further propagandistic platforms of the Republic. Direct and indirect connections between his apparatus and relevant propagandists in Spain indicate the necessity of further, deeper approximations to the intricate propaganda structures of the Loyalists.

The repercussion of Münzenberg’s thought and methodology amongst international anti-fascists and loyalist publications must be traced and valued to a higher extent. His assessment supposed a fundamental counterbalance against strong Nazi support – on methodological and organizational terms – given to the rebels, amongst all to the Spanish Falange, controlled by strongly naziphile figures during the crucial years of the Civil War and WWII. Although military initiative and warfare superiority corresponded to the *putschists* and their international allies, the war of propaganda was undoubtedly won by

the Republic and its advisors. It is difficult to predict the result and development of a Spanish conflict without the assessment of Münzenberg's apparatus. Maybe the words of Louis Fischer above quoted, concerning the vital work of "communists in and outside Spain" make any further speculation unnecessary.

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