

WAGING PEACE IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR: THE RELIEF EFFORTS OF THE BRITISH QUAKER MISSION

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Abstract

The Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 was contemporaneously perceived in much of Europe (and indeed as far afield as South Africa and Australia) as a crisis for Western civilisation generally. The Nationalist forces of General Francisco Franco sought successfully to restore the Roman Catholic Church to the privileged status it had enjoyed prior to being disestablished by the Second Republic in 1931. On the other hand, European - especially British - Protestants generally favoured the Republican side, not least because its continuation would guarantee the future of the evangelical presence which had been established in Spain. The Society of Friends, or Quakers, were attempting to establish a spiritual centre in the country when the war broke out, necessitating a fundamental change of emphasis to familiar forms of relief work. Though officially neutral, these pacifist Christians clearly sympathised with calls for maintaining denominational pluralism rather than the return of exclusive Catholic domination of Spanish religious life.

1 INTRODUCTION

More than half a century of research by scholars in the United Kingdom and elsewhere has illuminated many hitherto murky corners of British responses to the civil war which raged in Spain from Francisco Franco's Nationalist insurgency in July 1936 until the capitulation of Madrid in April 1939. Cunningham (1986), among others, has examined aspects of how numerous English *littérateurs* treated the war. Heaton (1985) chronicled Welsh efforts to break blockades of wartime shipping to Spain. Alexander (1982) has told the story of British military volunteers in that country. Aldgate (1979) has probed the shaping of the visual image of the Spanish Civil War in British newsreels. Buchanan (1991) has treated meticulously the contours of Labour's responses to the war. Edwards (1979) has analysed the official British policy of non-intervention.

Church historians and other scholars have not completely neglected the religious dimensions of the manifold set of British responses to the Spanish Civil War. In 1987 a Benedictine monk in the United States of America, Flint (1987:364-374), took steps towards redressing one dimension of the matter by publishing an eleven-page sketch of the contours of English Roman Catholic opinion regarding the war. Within the limits of this brief survey, he succeeded in demonstrating that especially the Catholic press, though largely pro-Franco,

was actually divided in its sympathies towards the Nationalists in Spain, ie that not all English members of the Church of Rome were proponents of Franco or of 'fascism'. Flint's analysis was made largely in a vacuum, however, with very little reference to the religious, historical, and political context in which the editors of the periodicals in question worked. His piece is nevertheless useful as a stepping-stone towards a much more detailed study of the larger issue.

In his highly useful and broadly defined but relatively brief synthesis published in 1997, *Britain and the Spanish Civil War*, Buchanan of the University of Oxford analysed a broad spectrum of sub-topics. In his chapter on the religious dimensions of the British response, he touched on various facets of what he described in an accompanying bibliographic essay as "the least-researched aspect of the British response to the Civil War". Indeed, the religious aspects of English responses remain largely uncharted. Buchanan shed light on such matters as Catholics' feeling of outrage at violence done to religious personnel and ecclesiastical property in 1936, the origins of the pro-Nationalist, interdenominational United Christian Front, certain reactions to the destruction of Guernica, two interdenominational delegations which visited Republican Spain in 1937, pacifists' criticism of the war, and the divided sentiments of British Catholic Labourites (Buchanan 1997:169-189, 228). To date little of a scholarly nature has been published about Quaker involvement in the Spanish Civil War. Exceptions to this generalisation include Fyrth's (1986) book about certain aspects of Friends' relief efforts in Spain during the conflict and Mendleson's (1999:1-23) essay on certain dimensions of Quaker ethics concerning Republican Spain. In Buchanan's (1991:116-117) commendable survey, the Quaker endeavours are described only briefly, and the treatment is limited to the first few months of the conflict. In the present article I shall take steps towards filling this *lacuna* by considering the attitudinal prelude to the attempted establishment of a Quaker spiritual centre in Spain, how the outbreak of the conflict necessitated a radical transformation of those plans, central aspects of the resulting relief endeavours, and the compelled ending of a noticeable Quaker presence there after the ascent of the Nationalists in 1939.

The Society of Friends occupied a unique place in the broad array of British Christian responses to the Spanish Civil War. On the one hand, its members stood with one foot inside the broad camp of English Nonconformity and frequently co-operated with other denominations as, for example, by joining in relief efforts and sending Percy Bartlett on one of the two interdenominational but chiefly Anglican delegations which visited Republican Spain in 1937 to investigate the state of religious freedom there. Moreover, the anti-Catholic sentiments which ran deep among many English Protestants were by no means unknown amongst Quakers and, as we shall see shortly, they manifested themselves in efforts to establish a presence in Spain. On the other hand, members of the Society of Friends, keenly aware of its pacifist heritage and consequent role as a peace organisation in a world rife with war, could not, as a matter of principle, express partisanship for either of the belligerent sides in Spain. In this respect they differed from many of their fellow Christians across the denominational spectrum. Instead, Quakers tended to see their war-time function principally in terms of benevolent work on behalf of victims of the violence.

2 Alfred B Jacob and the origin of a missionary vision for Spain

The proclamation of the Spanish Republic on 13 April 1931 seemed to provide a providential opportunity for reasserting Protestant evangelistic and other missionary endeavours in that country, as we have seen in our consideration of *inter alia* the Spanish Gospel Mission. One of the extremely few Quakers in that country in the early 1930s was Russell Ecroyd, an Englishman who had gone to Spain in 1893 with his father, who managed a mercury mine. The son became a naturalised Spaniard, married a Spanish Protestant named Maria and established a thriving business selling motor vehicles (Fyrth 1986:159). Writing from Castellon to the British Quaker periodical *The Friend* in August 1931, Ecroyd pleaded with denominational fellows not to lose their chance either to gain a foothold or to expand already established bridgeheads. He had just attended a two-day conference in Madrid with a broad spectrum of Spanish, German, English, and North American Protestants who had agreed that owing to the disestablishment of the Roman Catholic Church the time was particularly ripe for a concentrated missionary effort. Presumably to ward off possible allegations of proselytism, Ecroyd assured readers that Spain had become “one of the *least* Catholic countries in Europe”. To substantiate his generalisation, he cited statistics to show that since attendance at Mass had become voluntary for military personnel there, few bothered to attend. Recently in Alicante, for example, only an army chaplain - but no congregation - had appeared in the sanctuary, whereas in Castellon a mere twenty of 800 soldiers had done so. Ecroyd also reported with unveiled delight instances of anticlericalism in Spain, thereby expressing an attitude which also influenced many other British Protestant perceptions of the evolving religious landscape there. In what he declared were ‘typical cases’, he related how in one northern city parishioners had shown their defiance of their bishop by congregating outside the door of their church on consecutive Sundays without entering it, while in another locale the people had given their parish priest forty-eight hours to leave town, which the cleric in question had elected to do rather than remain at his altar under police protection. Ecroyd agreed that the remaining religious orders should be expelled from Spain and, perhaps alluding to the expulsion of the Jesuits in the eighteenth century, reminded readers that if the government in Madrid elected to banish them it would be following a precedent set by Spanish Roman Catholic monarchs. He predictably defended the general policy of disestablishment and asserted that the government had implemented it and taken its other measures ‘with great respect for essential justice’ which was understandable considering the ‘breakdown of law’ during the reign of Alfonso XIII. Presaging a theme which would crop up again in the rhetorical war over the violence in Spain in 1936, Ecroyd declared that “the Catholics have deliberately provoked disorders in order to stimulate their friends to rise in their defence” (Ecroyd 1931:822).

For reasons which the extant evidence does not fully clarify but which may have entailed both the changed political climate following the reaction of 1934 and a temporary lack of appropriate personnel for the undertaking, British

Friends did little during the next five years to extend their international presence to Spain. For them Iberia remained virtually a blank page.

The electoral victory of the Republicans in February 1936, however, revived and bolstered Protestant visions of evangelical expansion in Spain and, in accordance with this renewed interest, Friends in England began again to cast their eyes on Iberian possibilities. One such Quaker was Alfred Jacob, a young American from West Chester County, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia, who had studied Spanish at Exeter College, Oxford, married an English pacifist named Norma who had also been a student of Spanish, become a naturalised British subject, and repeatedly travelled to Spain. Early in 1936 Jacob, who then had two small children, applied to the Friends Service Committee to send them to Spain. After visiting that 'delightfully friendly country' some two months after its election, he optimistically reported his observations in *The Friend*. Calling the newly elected government in Madrid 'able, moderate, and determined to advance neither faster nor slower than good statesmanship can justify' and thereby expressing a position which diametrically contradicted that which was being emphasised in both the English Catholic periodicals and the politically conservative daily press, he downplayed as misleading British journalistic reports that had overlooked or minimised its 'impressive work of reconstruction'. Labelling the Roman Catholic Church in Spain 'an ultra-conservative force dominating politics, economics, education, and the social services', Jacob thought The Friends could fill a particular niche by appealing to those Spaniards who 'would welcome a more liberal faith [and] who cannot associate themselves either with Catholicism or with Spanish Protestantism'. He professed that although Spain was a relatively underdeveloped society, it was on the verge of 'going through half a century of progress in a very few years' and feared that this rapid modernisation would 'leave God behind' because those Spaniards who were disenchanted with Catholicism and did not fit the conservative Protestant mould lacked other Christian alternatives. 'For the first time in Spanish history the way is open for liberal religious activity, and there is no organisation, and only a few individuals, capable of undertaking it', Jacob declared. The timing was thus providential for the Friends to serve as the sorely needed leaven in the loaf: "Our Society is, more than all others, free of the things Spaniards have learned to distrust in religion. If we were able to bring even a few individuals towards an understanding of the essentials of an active religion of the spirit, a seed would have been planted in Spain which might have a lasting influence for good".ⁱ

Jacob's plea struck a chord with at least some of his co-religionists in England. One such sympathiser was Charles Derring of Leeds who, writing in an avowedly anti-Catholic vein, feared that the Spanish people, 'bewildered now that they have lost the external aids of priestcraft on which they have been nurtured', would 'abandon themselves spiritually to merely materialism of reconstruction, which, without spiritual advance will bring its own Nemesis'. He expressed his hope that other Friends with some knowledge of Spain would heed Jacob's call for the establishment of a mission in that country.ⁱⁱ

During the next two months Jacob succeeded in soliciting the support of the Friends Service Council as well as local and regional bodies within the Society

of Friends, including the Witney Monthly Meeting and the Berkshire and Oxford Quarterly Meeting. He could thus report before the end of July that he and his wife were about to depart for an 'experimental year' in Spain, during which they would be 'exploring the possibilities of carrying [the] Friends' message to that country'. Jacob requested the material and moral support of other Quakers who were interested in the undertaking.ⁱⁱⁱ

As recalled by Norma Jacob half a century later, the initial strategy was that she and her husband would establish in Awakening, Spain, a small hostel which would serve as a Quaker Centre analogous to those which Friends had founded in at least three other European cities, namely Paris, Berlin, and Geneva. From the Friends Service Committee they got an initial commitment of one year, contingent on Alfred Jacob raising most of the financial support to enable the undertaking for this trial year. If at the end of that period, conditions seemed to warrant it, the American Friends Service Committee envisaged providing personnel to form a joint Quaker venture similar to those which characterised the *modus operandi* at other Quaker centres (Jacob 1988:229).

Beginning on 18 July 1936, however, Franco's insurgency threw a spanner into the works of Jacob's plans compelling him and his wife to postpone their departure for Spain. He therefore turned his attention to studying the course of recent Spanish history and writing about the rapidly evolving political scene in *The Friend*. In a lengthy article published early in August, he sought to place events into an interpretive historical context. To this enthusiastic young American, it seemed evident that the struggle in Spain was not merely a political one between reactionary parties and the Popular Front: "It is a conflict which touches the very roots of national life. All the forces of tradition, of privilege and of authority are arrayed against the new spirit, which may take the form of democracy, freedom of thought, thirst for knowledge, eagerness for experiment" (Jacob 1936:735-736).

Part of Jacob's article read like an unveiled *apologia* for the Azaña administration in Madrid. Unlike many commentators on the right, he did not question its fundamental legitimacy or call into question that of the February elections. To the rhetorical questions, 'Is the Government any good?' and 'Isn't it made up of Communists, Anarchists, and Revolutionary Socialists?' Jacob replied flatly that it was "a very good Government in a country which has never had an opportunity to place its trust in a good Government". He sought to deflect charges that it was merely a leftist regime by declaring that "it does not contain a single Communist or Socialist, and is made up mainly of the Republican Left or Liberal Republican group". Jacob acknowledged that Manuel Azaña and his colleagues had not succeeded in clearing all the hurdles in their path but excused the government by explaining that "the problems facing it are so complex, so diverse, and so deeply rooted, and the sense of urgency in the people is so compelling, that the aggregate tasks are almost beyond human ability" (Jacob 1936:735-736).

Particularly germane to what had already become a recurrent theme in the British public debate concerning the turmoil in Spain was Jacob's attempt to answer the question, 'Why are churches burnt?' His reply illuminated both his personal alignment with the Spanish proletariat and his underlying hostility to

Roman Catholicism as he had witnessed it in Spain, although he sought to temper his comments about the latter. Jacob did not grant that the vandalism was necessarily the work of the left and complained that cries of '*¡Comunista!*' could be heard in the streets whenever a church was torched. He also generalised that "most people regard the churches as immensely wealthy, and therefore dependent on the army and the capitalists for their protection" and emphasised no less categorically that "churches are not thought of as religious institutions but as symbols of a great humbug, and the people are no longer willing to be deceived". Jacob indicted the hierarchy of the church for calling the wrath of the its members down on its own head by aligning that institution with political authoritarianism and thereby creating an ecclesiastical image which invited violent retribution: "... the church façade (where there is one) is connected with centuries of oppression, centuries in which the Church has opposed all significant efforts to improve the lot of the poor; and when resentment is aroused anew, as by the present war, it is vented afresh on the Church property. It is not the people who are destructive, but the Church which has missed its real opportunity". Despite his censorious attitude, Jacob saw in liberal Catholics a glimmer of hope for the national Christian tradition. "There is a promising group of thinkers and authors who can affirm their essential Catholicism without being blind to their responsibilities as members of a troubled society; who penetrate to the essence of Catholic religion in the knowledge that form without essence is futile; and they find a purified Catholicism consistent with Socialism and with a modern outlook on life not inferior to that of any non-Catholic", he explained without identifying these reform-minded individuals. "A purification of the national faith along the lines of this 'Plus and Minus' group (as it is called) would reconcile many to a religion which at present seems suffocated with forms and remote from human needs." Jacob implied without explicitly saying so that co-operation with them could form one pillar of his mission (Jacob 1936:735-736).

To be sure, not all of Jacob's readers in England shared his perception of the situation in Spain or agreed with his apportioning of the guilt for the crisis there. Part of the critical reaction even reflected the enthusiasm which some English Christians have for fascism as a panacea for contemporary political and economic ills. One Londoner of apparently considerably less liberal bent, Edwards protested immediately in *The Friend* that Jacob had "fallen into the Democratist trap". He questioned the appropriateness of calling a 'democracy' a country which prohibited army officers from engaging in politics and which sought to "destroy the action of the Catholic Church". Edwards acknowledged that *Acción Popular* was a right-wing, pro-Catholic party but denied that the Church of Rome opposed the interests of the working class, citing the papal encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* and *Quadragesimo Anno* as evidence of its concern for the poor in modern industrial societies. Far from being backward-looking, he argued, the Spanish Right was progressive; indeed, "the Fascist organic state is unafraid of, nay rather courts, 'the eagerness for experiment' in the contemporary world". Furthermore, it seemed to him unjustified to attack the Roman Catholic Church as reactionary merely because of the position it had traditionally enjoyed in Spain; he reasoned that "it is a false antithesis to set privilege and authority against freedom of thought and thirst for knowledge". In fact, Edwards contended, the greater danger in Spain and in Europe generally came from the Left, and a religio-political alliance could

effectively halt it. "Real Catholicism is an integral part of the life of Spain and it will fight Marxism and Capitalism, perhaps by means which the Left Wings over Europe will call Fascism" he assured readers.^{iv}

Jacob rejected Edwards' objections and insisted in a letter to *The Friend* a week later that the government in Madrid enjoyed the loyalty of a majority of the Spanish people ranging from anarchists to Basque nationalists. He also emphasised his conviction that the conflict was not primarily an ideological struggle but rather one "between the old order and the new" in which "the spirit of progress is facing the spirit of reaction". Foreshadowing what would become a recurrent bone of contention in the British war of words, Jacob conceded that both sides had inevitably committed atrocities but professed that the Republican side would emerge as "the more generous victor".^v

The anti-Madrid position which Edwards represented apparently was not widespread in the Society of Friends and did not impede plans to establish some form of missionary endeavour in Spain. For that matter, news from the war confirmed both prevailing anti-Catholic prejudices and the impression that the establishment of a Quaker presence in Spain had become more desirable than ever. Writing to *The Friend* from Castellon, for example, Ecroyd's wife Marie conveyed reports that "in the towns where the Fascists are in control they are leaving no one of the Left alive: they are killing women and children". The position of the Nationalists *vis-à-vis* the Roman Catholic Church was ambivalent in her epistle. On the one hand, Ecroyd wrote that in those towns where they had gained the upper hand "they have taken over all the goods, all the money from the Banks, and have melted down the Church plate - they who call the Left irreligious - and they go about the streets shouting 'Long live the inquisition'". She also declared, however, that the clergy were culpable of heinous offences. "In the houses of the priests we have found large quantities of bombs, electric chairs and other instruments of torture", Ecroyd declared without identifying who 'we' were. "They wished to set up the Inquisition again and, instead of using the persuasive methods of Christ, preaching with love, they meant to kill all who did not think as they did."^{vi}

3 FROM EXPOSITION, APPEAL, AND DEBATE TO IMPLEMENTATION

In London the Field Service Committee appointed within a few weeks of the outbreak of the war an *ad hoc* 'Special Committee for Spain' to consider ways and means of ministering to that country. Jacob was among its members. At its initial meeting, held on 3 September 1936 and chaired by Cuthbert Wigham, Paul Sturge reviewed the development of British Quaker concern regarding Spain, and it was noted that more than £150 in designated contributions and pledges had been received to enable Jacob and his family to spend an 'experimental period of one year' in Madrid beginning early that month. Rather than implementing that plan, however, it was proposed that two people who were in attendance but were not members of the committee, Jacob and Emma Cadbury, the latter of whom had extensive experience working with refugees in Austria, should visit Spain "in order to investigate the situation on behalf of Friends".^{vii} A week later the same body met again and

considered a report from a recent international conference held in Paris by representatives of various organisations to consider possibilities for conducting relief in Spain. Delegates to that parley had proposed establishing a central committee to co-ordinate the collection of funds. The Quakers in London decided not to participate, however, because they inferred that the body to be organised “would limit its support to the Government side and have a definite political basis”. This, they believed, would render it impossible for the Society of Friends to participate in it. At the same time, however, it became obvious that the ‘Spain Committee’, as it was also called, did not eschew financial aid from governments. Cadbury reported that she had just interviewed the United States *chargé d’affaires* in London, who had “promised support should action be decided upon by Friends”. To investigate how work could be undertaken, the *ad hoc* committee agreed “to encourage Alfred Jacob to go out to Spain, with a companion, as soon as [a] way opens”.^{viii}

What is evident from the minutes of the Spain Committee is that well before the end of September, ie no later than approximately two months after the revolt of the Spanish army, it had become obvious to formulators of Friends’ policies in London that their mission in Spain would not be merely one of providing spiritual succour to Spaniards who chose to take a pacifist stance in the conflict, which some Quakers, in harmony with widespread British public opinion at that point, believed would be of quite short duration. Increasingly it became evident that the civil war was taking on greater proportions and wreaking havoc on the civil population. This realisation, of course, led to a conviction that the projected mission of the Society of Friends in Spain would probably become in large measure a manifestation of another Quaker tradition of long standing, namely aid to refugees.

Before the end of September Jacob and a second Friend, John W Harvey of Leeds, armed with *inter alia* letters of introduction from the Archbishop of Westminster, Arthur Hinsley, began their sojourn, during which they both spent at least a fortnight in Spain and also visited a refugee centre at Bayonne across the French frontier. Their observations eventually contributed to a focusing of what would shortly become the Quaker relief efforts in Spain. Almost immediately after returning to London in advance of his colleague, Harvey contributed to *The Friend* an article in which he placed the stream of refugees from Spain into the historical context of similar exoduses in war zones in Armenia, Greece, Russia, and Germany, noting that “once again it is France that is - inevitably - bearing the brunt of the human problem”. He implored readers to remember that despite the enormity of the catastrophe each drop within the stream involved a “single human destiny, and that nothing which brings alleviation or hope to even a few of these is wasted effort” (Harvey 1936:917). Though played in various keys, the Quaker endeavour in Spain generally followed this tune for the next three years.

The geographical focus of the Friends’ initial endeavours in Spain stemmed from Jacob’s observations in Catalonia, especially Barcelona, where he spent approximately three weeks in September and October. The young American returned to England virtually bursting with enthusiasm for relief work in that bastion of the Spanish Left. He perceived ‘remarkable things’ occurring in the Catalonian capital which suggested that ‘a new world may be built in our time’.

Jacob's overall impression of the situation in Catalonia at that stage was that it was less a war than a 'social revolution', a transformation owing to what he judged was fully responsible participation of so-called 'anarchists' in the governance of the province. His socialist proclivities led him to praise certain reforms mandated by law, such as the drastic reduction in rents charged for housing and labour legislation more favourable to the working class. He unabashedly presented a brief *apologia* for what he knew was a despised ideology and underscored its affinity with his own religious tradition:

Anarchism, so often represented as a mere gospel of destruction, is at its best an affirmation of the dignity of man and of the tremendous moral responsibility of the individual; anarchists, like Quakers, reject rigid forms of organisation, which they believe are designed to do away with individual responsibility by making the community the source of all values. Even their bitterest opponents recognise their idealism and the lofty nature of their publicity is given to the excesses of extremists among them rather than to the constructive aims of their leaders.

Jacob lauded the efforts of several individual adherents of this ideology whom he had met, particularly Dr Martí Ibañez, the Director-General of Public Health Services, who had welcomed him, the Ecroyds, and an American Friend, Lydia Morris of Philadelphia, and given them letters of introduction which facilitated making contacts with various individuals and agencies in Barcelona. Jacob sought to counter a widespread stereotype by assuring readers that "to the Englishman in Barcelona, it comes as a good deal of a surprise that the individual Anarchist is often a charming person" (Jacob 1936:1009).

Turning to matters which would soon form the backbone of the Quaker mission in Spain, Jacob opined that the most impressive and challenging development he had witnessed in Catalonia was "the wonderful work of the various voluntary societies who have made themselves responsible for the welfare of the thousands of children who pour into Barcelona at the rate of hundreds a day". Most of these young refugees had travelled from central Spain, especially Madrid and Toledo. Many had been orphaned, while all were temporarily homeless and apparently destitute. Jacob found it particularly heartening that they were "dealt with purely on a basis of need, with no questions asked about the politics or religion of their parents". Turning to details, he explained in laudatory terms that the children "are kept together as far as possible in their school classes, each class with its teacher being a separate unit, so that their education is interfered with as little as possible". The programme was not without its deficiencies which international aid could help to rectify, Jacob pointed out, such as "the lack of proper hospital accommodation for children suffering from trachoma, catarrh and anaemia, and the threatened shortage of all the foods especially necessary for children". He believed that the shortage of milk for them could become 'very serious' and explained that war zones separated Barcelona from prolific dairy farming regions in northern Spain.^{ix}

Jacob remained in England for only a few weeks. Before returning to Barcelona in November, he reported his observations at a meeting of the Spain Committee and one of the Committee for Sufferings. He apprised fellow

Quakers of the fact that approximately 40 000 children had been evacuated from Madrid and other areas to Barcelona and environs, where many of them had been placed with private families with 'excellent supervision'. Jacob called attention to the shortage of dairy products and eggs to feed this massive influx and proposed ways of contributing to the relief work there. That body resolved to do so by issuing an appeal through the Save the Children Fund and requesting "Friends to use their influence in obtaining a generous response thereto." At the same time it was reported in *The Friend* that 'excellent relations' were being maintained with the Archbishop of Westminster, whose own committee for relief in Spain was limiting its efforts to the Nationalist side of the conflict.^x

4 Expanding the Relief Mission Qualitatively and Quantitatively

Feeding schemes and related programmes soon lay at the centre of the Quaker relief work in Spain. Well before mid-1937 British Friends there were engaged in various kinds of endeavours of this sort, some of them of their own initiative, others in tandem with diverse other organisations. The crux of their own efforts was in Barcelona, where by May 1937 they were sponsoring five canteens. Many of the people who received sustenance at these institutions were refugees who had recently arrived from areas of the country in which there was heavy fighting, but the majority were reportedly "children of working class parents whose general nourishment has suffered severely from the disorganisation of distribution and deficiencies of supply in the Peninsula's largest city". Tuberculosis as well as rickets and other maladies related to malnutrition were said to be fairly widespread among them. More extensive, however, were the programmes in which Quakers collaborated with such bodies as the Save the Children International Union, the General Relief Fund, the Spanish Red Cross, and other non-governmental organisations. In beleaguered Madrid, meanwhile, the British Friends co-operated with the Ministries of Health, Education, and Justice, chiefly in the distribution of foodstuffs and other supplies. By that time modest efforts had been made to extend Quaker aid to Nationalist Spain, as well; in Malaga, for example, a women's section of the *Falange* administered a canteen for the Friends, whereas in Burgos and other regions held by the Franco forces the Spanish Red Cross distributed clothing, milk, and other items which Quaker donations had underwritten. To a limited degree, the principle of non-partisanship was thus being upheld.^{xi}

Basic statistics illustrate the scope of the undertaking. By mid-1938, when the Quaker relief effort was near its zenith, Jacob had four foreign and eight principal Spanish workers on his staff in Barcelona. In addition to this core staff, 170 'subsidiary helpers', most of them refugees, assisted in the efforts. Seven motor trucks carried food daily to various parts of Catalonia, even though the Republican government allowed them only 1 550 gallons (ca 6 500 litres) of petrol per month. This was a small amount considering that no fewer than seventy canteens and ten 'colonies' for refugees had to be supplied. On average, approximately three tons of food was delivered daily. Jacob assured

readers in the United Kingdom that administrative costs were a scant five farthings per child per month, and the total cash outlay to meet the basic nutritional and educational costs of a refugee child were a mere 1s 6d per month. Illustrating this graphically, he emphasised that it cost no more (ie 1s) to give such a child a large portion of rice daily for a month than to buy *The Friend* for the same period.^{xii}

Within a few months of his arrival in Spain, it was evident to Jacob that the war would be protracted indefinitely and that in Madrid and other certain parts of Spain conditions 'can only get worse not better'; consequently, he believed that partly because the effects of prolonged malnutrition had already become apparent among Spanish children and the threat of epidemics in this vulnerable section of the population was consequently looming large, priority had to be given to establishing safe havens for the younger generation. Jacob informed co-religionists in the United Kingdom in June 1937 that it was possible to co-operate with Catalan relief organisations to create 'colonies' for refugee children using 'some of the finest country houses' which were available to foreign associations at a relatively modest cost of £25 to £50 per month. Each such building could accommodate between twenty-five and fifty children. The scheme seemed doubly appealing to Jacob; it not only provided for their safety from armed conflict, but also offered possibilities for inculcating the values of the Friends which seemed especially needed at that blood-stained juncture in Spanish history. In his words, "it is to be hoped that the curious Spanish word *cuáquero* (Quaker) will gradually become associated in their minds not only with immediate emergency relief of physical needs, but also with a group life in these colonies remote from the conflict and close to all that makes life worth while".^{xiii}

5 Camps for Refugee Children in Spain

These 'colonies' did in fact continue to sprout up in several regions of Republican Spain, especially in the eastern part of the country. Typically they accommodated no more than a few dozen children each and catered for the educational requirements as well as the basic life necessities of their inmates. In June 1937 Cuthbert Wigham of the Friends Service Council and Watson of the Save the Children Fund issued a joint appeal in which they assured potential donors that their investigators had been 'very well satisfied at the results observed' at the colonies which they had inspected. These two gentlemen requested local British committees to consider sponsoring individual colonies for six-month periods. They also gave assurances that the colonies would be constantly supervised and bear the names of the British districts which were supporting them. Finally, Wigham and Watson emphasised the non-partisan nature of the camps; they were open to children regardless of the political sentiments of their parents.^{xiv}

Before the end of 1938 a minor variation on this theme had developed in the form of camps for refugee children. The idea appears to have been conceived by Francesca Wilson, who had been active in other aspects of the relief effort. Her vision was one of creating a rural environment where young Spaniards

could find a respite from the ravages of war. Aided by both Friends and other people, Wilson secured a site at La Cala, some forty kilometres north of Alicante. She aptly described the stressed environment from which she desired to remove children of that city:

The town is still the centre of the province, though it is a centre half paralysed because almost every day there is air raids. These usually occur between eleven and twelve and cause little loss of life. The sirens scream and the whole town disappears underground for an hour or two. There is no panic. People wait patiently until it is over, but they look strained and anxious. Every crash they hear may mean their home in ruins. I was eager to get children away, and much as Spanish mothers hate to part with them they were eager, too.

The camp initially consisted of tents in which girls and boys - sixty in all, though never more than thirty-five at a time - were accommodated. Quite soon after it's founding, however, a donation from a Friend in Birmingham allowed Wilson to purchase a house which allowed some of the youths to stay considerably longer than initially anticipated. "They were, most of them, so happy in the camp that it was harrowing to think of letting them go back again to bombs and hunger," explained Wilson.^{xv} This was a short-lived experiment, however; the end of the war a few months later rendered irrelevant any thought of using it as the foundation of a long-term programme for influencing the younger Spanish generation with Quaker values.

6 The Evacuation of Basque Children

Another dimension of British Christian relief work in which the Friends were asked to co-operate, namely the removal of young Basques to the United Kingdom, met with apparently little enthusiasm on the Quakers' side, but they eventually relented and participated in this controversial scheme. As the Nationalist forces advanced northward and threatened the Basque country through both air and ground assaults, the National Joint Relief Committee announced a plan to evacuate large numbers of Basque children, especially from Bilbao, and providing sanctuary for them on British soil. Meeting on 27 April, the day of the infamous bombing of Guernica south of that city, the Spain Committee considered this proposal but thought it ill-advised. "We do not feel that it is suitable to bring Spanish children to England unless it is absolutely necessary", the members agreed without recording the grounds for their opposition, "and strongly advise the National Joint Relief Committee to investigate the possibilities of taking them either to the South of France or to Catalonia, and forming colonies there which could be supported by British funds".^{xvi} This, of course, was in harmony with the efforts it had already launched for juvenile refugees in Republican-held areas of Spain.

Notwithstanding this mild voice of opposition, the evacuation was carried out shortly thereafter. The editor of *The Friend* wrote in early June that "although Friends engaged in the Friends Service Council work in Spain believe that the

children there may best be helped in their own country, it would be churlish to ignore other paths being followed by those working to bring relief to these innocent victims of war". He was thus willing to publish an appeal by Dr Richard Ellis of London who had just returned from Bilbao. Living conditions in that bombed city had become 'appalling', he wrote, and there was accordingly a 'desperate urgency' to evacuate women and children. He further explained that devastated rural regions of the Basque country could no longer supply enough food to meet the city's needs. Some 4 000 Basque children had already landed in England, and he had participated in the medical examination of them under a general 'state of disruption'. Ellis emphasised that he did not want to work at cross-purposes with the worthy Friends Service Committee in Spain but nevertheless appealed to British Quakers to contribute financially to this dimension of the work of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief in London. On behalf of the Peace Pledge Union, moreover, he urged them to support the Basque Children's House which the noted Anglican pacifist Canon Dick Sheppard was helping to administer for more than fifty young refugees.^{xvii}

7 Alfred Jacob's Radio Interview in Barcelona

Although the mission of the Friends to war-torn Spain did not generally take the form of verbal proclamation, from time to time Jacob and his colleagues there had opportunities to express through the media the relationship between their Quaker principles and their humanitarian endeavours. In October 1938, for example, less than six months before the end of the war, Jacob was interviewed about this on radio in Barcelona. Admittedly, the published transcript of the conversation revealed a highly flawed understanding of the history of the Society of Friends. The Spaniard who conducted the interview declared, for example, that the "Friends' principle of non-violent protest against violence 'first made itself felt under the despotic rule of Henry VIII'", an assertion which would have surprised anyone who was even vaguely familiar with the origins of the movement a century later. Notwithstanding a few such gaffes, however, Jacob was able to point out that he and his British personnel were ministering to the material and emotional needs of more than 20 000 children in Catalonia, while American Quakers and other co-operating bodies were performing similar services in Valencia, Murcia, and elsewhere.^{xviii} Writing in *The Friend* a few weeks later, Jacob expressed his gratitude that notwithstanding "the more remarkable historical details given by the introducer" it had been worthwhile to share the 'historic peace testimony' with Spaniards suffering the ravages of war. According to feedback from unspecified sources, 'a good many' people had heard the broadcast. What appears to have stimulated more interest, however, at least according to Jacob's testimony, was the distribution of food during a time of great distress as the Nationalist forces cut off the flow of foodstuffs to the remnant of Republican Spain. He reported that after a large quantity of flour from North America had been baked into bread for distribution to school children throughout Catalonia, he and his colleagues had received "a great many requests for more information" about the Quakers. To address this demand,

they were preparing “a simple statement about the fundamentals of Quakerism”.^{xix}

This optimistic note did not, however, presage the future of the Friends’ mission in Spain, which continued for only a few more months and never resulted in the Quaker centre which Ecroyd had envisaged. Instead, during the final year of these endeavours the basic task of attending to the physical needs of refugees remained central, and it expanded across the Pyrenees. In April 1938 the Spain Committee requested Bronwen Lloyd-Williams and Mary Gee to investigate conditions amongst the victims of the war who had fled to southern France. The report which these two women filed testified graphically to the plight of Spaniards who had crossed the mountains at high altitudes and were living in squalor. “Poorly-clad, carrying little children and babies, and dragging great bundles containing all that was left of their worldly goods, they presented a sad spectacle - humanity reduced to the last stages of deprivation and misery”, they related. “The astounding feature of their journey was that they were alive.” Gee and Lloyd-Williams visited various towns to which these refugees had been sent and in their report lauded the efforts of French authorities to cope with the large and growing influx but noted that in most cases the uprooted Spaniards did not even have beds in which to sleep. Moreover, “clothing was also very deficient - shoes, underclothes, combs and toothbrushes were all needed in large quantities”. Responding to an urgent plea for assistance, the Service Council in London made an emergency grant of £100, most of which was used to purchase textiles for the refugee women who were to make clothing for themselves.^{xx}

8 The Penultimate Phase

What might be termed the penultimate phase of the Quaker mission to Spain involved enhanced relief work across the Pyrenees in France. What was revealingly described in Quaker circles as the ‘fall’ of Barcelona (but which the Nationalists and their advocates perceived as the liberation of that city) in late January 1939 prompted a new stream of refugees from the fighting, many of whom chose to cross the border in search of safety from the wrath of Franco’s forces. Others remained in Spain, some of them relocating to other parts of Catalonia. Part of Jacob’s staff moved to Gerona and Figueras to assist in the enormous task of caring to these refugees. Meanwhile, Cuthbert Wigham supervised the evacuation of the colonies for children at Manresa and Rubi, the former while it was under fire from Nationalist machine-guns. Appeals were made to the National Joint Committee in London to provide additional motor trucks for this expanded work. In the meantime, a prominent English Quaker relief administrator, Edith Pye (1876-1965) was sent to the Franco-Spanish border region to supervise efforts. This stalwart Londoner was among the most seasoned persons whom the Society of Friends could dispatch. A nurse and midwife by training, she had become a Quaker in 1908. In 1921 and 1922 Pye and her close friend Dr Hilda Clark successfully administered a programme to feed undernourished children in Vienna. Pye had served as a mediator in the Women’s International League during the 1920s and also worked for the League of Nations in China and Europe. After the accession of

Hitler and his National Socialist German Workers' Party to power in 1933, she became vice-chairman of the Friends German emergency committee, which assisted refugees from the Third Reich (Oldfield 1993:538).

The hardships which Pye had endured through years of assisting displaced persons served her well as preparation for the catastrophe near the Pyrenees. On 29 January she wrote to Clark that Senegalese soldiers in the employ of the French government had temporarily prevented Spanish refugees and wounded Republican soldiers who were accumulating by the thousands from crossing the border, forcing them to spend "the nights standing, as one stands in the Tube in rush-hours". To cope with this disaster, Quaker workers had established a provisional canteen on the French side where women, children, and old people whom the French were gradually admitting in small numbers could receive bread and hot milk. Using funds from the National Joint Committee, a second one was then set up for men, including wounded military personnel. Squalor was everywhere, Pye wrote, as was misery. "These poor people have absolutely no shelter - it poured in buckets all last night and thou can imagine what it was like", she declared.^{xxi} At virtually the same time, Pye sent a telegram from Perpignan to fellow Quakers in London and painted a horrific portrait of conditions:

Workers bombed out of Gerona. All safe. Emergency canteens organised giving bread hot milk to thousands refugees, needed until French authorities complete arrangements. Tragedy of frontier conditions indescribable. No shelter for miles, roads impassable.^{xxii}

Reports of this sort characterised the coverage of the war in *The Friend* as the victory of the *Falange* became inevitable.

The capitulation in April distressed at least some of the Quakers who had remained in Spain to continue relief work there. Barbara Wood reported with dismay that in Valencia teenaged boys had commandeered two cars which the Friends and the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief had used in their work, draped them in the colours of Nationalist Spain, and driven them wildly through the streets as Falangist Spaniards shouted "Franco! Franco! Franco!" She also lamented that the relief work as such had become a target. The captain and crew of a British vessel which had delivered food and other supplies had refused to take refugees on board because they feared their ship might be bombed if it became known that it was being so used. Moreover, part of its cargo had disappeared. "For the first time in the two-and-a-half years during which Friends have been sending food to the children of Eastern Spain, their shipment was looted on the quay, and we were able to save only a few lorry loads of milk", wrote the disillusioned Wood. She and some of her colleagues escaped the furore in the occupied city by navigating back streets out of view of Falangist patrols and travelling by what she thought was "almost certainly the last lorry to leave Valencia" (one belonging to the National Joint Committee) to Gandia, where they boarded one of the British warships which was transporting British subjects away from Spain.^{xxiii}

9 Alfred Jacob's Post-war Efforts

Hounded out of Spain by the dogs of war, Jacob and his family spent several weeks in England but returned in June 1939, hoping finally to establish the Quaker centre which had been his vision some three years previously. His initial observations fuelled his pessimism. "When we look back over two and a half years' relief activity in Spain, it is difficult at first to avoid a feeling of discouragement", he reported. "The huge organisation through which Friends, in co-operation with the International Commission, were six months ago helping to feed perhaps a quarter of a million children has vanished almost overnight. The thirty foreign workers have dwindled to ten; the hundreds of Spanish collaborators are scattered, and only one or two remain in our service." Jacob wondered whether "all our work has gone for nothing". Yet the need for relief efforts was apparently as great as ever, and he was determined to press ahead. Jacob affirmed the practical mission, though quickly dismantled, had made an impact. "A great many people have acknowledged with thankfulness that not all foreigners come with engines of destruction and doctrines of hatred", he reported. "And we hope and believe that for some of our most valuable fellow-workers contact with the ideas of Quakerism has opened up new possibilities of service to a wider community." Jacob therefore dared to hope, but nevertheless thought it improbable, that he and his wife could find "people to whom the ideas of Quakerism are congenial". He believed that part of their post-war mission would be to serve as instruments of conciliation and to counter the spirit of hatred which lingered after the war, ie "to try to filter out the truth from the ceaseless rumours, propaganda, criticism, accusation and aspirations which will surround us". Envisaging the casting of a very broad net, Jacob stated that they would "be interested in education, in social service, in religion, in wages and prices, in nutrition, in reconstruction, indeed in every aspect of life". He acknowledged that "outward activities may be restricted by the programme of the new Government" but believed that 'personal contacts' could suffice as vehicles of this ministry. "We look forward to this intercourse between the Quakers and the Spanish people, whom we have come to regard as friends", he concluded.^{xxiv}

The work proved enormously frustrating, but the Jacob's remained in Barcelona for another year. In early July 1940, however, with France occupied by Nazi forces the Battle of Britain about to begin and questions about possible Francoite support for the Third Reich circulating internationally, the Jacob's chose to suspend their activities in Spain. They informed the Spain Committee in London of their intention, following consultations with the noted American Quaker Howard Kershner, to relocate in the United States of America if that body approved, which it reluctantly did on 11 July. The Barcelona office remained open for only a few more weeks under the supervision of a Spanish colleague.^{xxv} If Alfred Jacob needed further confirmation of the difficulty of his situation in Spain, he received it in abundance less than a week after the Spain Committee had accepted his resignation. While waiting for a delayed train carrying refugees back into Spain from France, he was arrested by local authorities, ostensibly for espionage. Kershner intervened and secured his release, but a charge of operating an illegal motor vehicle remained on Jacob's record. He was

consequently deported with his family on short notice. This did not seem to bother his wife. In her brief memoirs, she recalled that “by the summer of 1940 I was fairly well convinced that if the dictator [ie Francisco Franco], didn’t yet know that there was a compatibility between Quakerism and his theory of society, we were wasting our time”.^{xxvi} The Friends’ mission to Spain thus ground to a halt.

10 Conclusion

Although the eruption of hostilities prevented the realisation of the vision of establishing a spiritual centre during the 1930s, the Spanish Civil War provided another opportunity for English Friends to engage in the kind of mission of mercy for which they had long been known internationally and which the violent course of the twentieth century would require repeatedly. Through their charitable work, they gave voice to their spirituality. This abortive history of these Quakers’ endeavours to establish a ministry of religious toleration and reconciliation in Spain illustrates the necessity of adapting Christian missionary endeavours to fit the frequent shifting of local needs, and places the violent religious history of modern Spain into even bolder relief.

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 - 2 Charles Derring (Leeds) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCIV, 20, 453.
 - 3 Alfred Jacob (Charlbury, Oxfordshire) to *The Friend*, XCIV, 30, 706.
 - 4 H J Edwards (London) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCIV, 33, 767.
 - 5 Alfred Jacob (unspecified provenance) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCIV, 34, 786.
 - 6 Marie Ecroyd (Castellon) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCIV, 35, 791-792.
 - 7 Friends House Archives, *FSC Minutes of the Spain Committee from 3rd September 1936 to 11th July 1940*, meeting of the Special Committee held 3rd September 1936, 1.
 - 8 *FSC Minutes of the Spain Committee from 3rd September 1936 to 11th July 1940*, meeting of the Special Committee on Spain held 10th September 1936, 3.
 - 9 Jacob, 'The new spirit in Catalonia', 1009-1010.
 - 10 *Meeting for sufferings*. Minutes, Vol 62. Sixth Month 1935 to Fifth Month 1938. Meeting for Sufferings held 6th of Eleventh month, 1936, 69; 'Meeting for Sufferings', *The Friend*, XCIV, 46, 1057-1058.
 - 11 Alfred Jacob (unspecified provenance) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCV, 23, 542-543.
 - 12 Alfred Jacob (Barcelona) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCVI, 32, 705.
 - 13 *Ibid*.
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 - 15 Francesca M Wilson (unspecified provenance) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCVI, 47, 1038-1039.
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 - 17 'Among the Basque children', *The Friend*, XCV, 23, 543.
 - 18 'A Barcelona broadcast', *The Friend*, XCVI, 43, 933.

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- 23 Barbara Wood (unspecified provenance) to *The Friend*, undated, in *The Friend*, XCVII, 16, 316-317.
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- 26 Jacob, 'The Spanish Civil War', 240.