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"Somebody understood us" :: Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid/

Item Type	thesis
Authors	Healey, Marta H.
DOI	10.7275/6871143
Download date	2025-04-21 11:58:27
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/45086

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“SOMEBODY UNDERSTOOD US”:
NANCY MACDONALD AND THE SPANISH REFUGEE AID

A Thesis Presented

by

MARTA H. HEALEY

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

May 2007

History

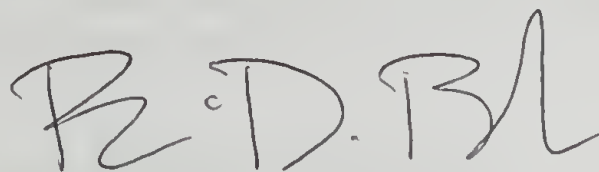
“Somebody Understood Us”:
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A Master's Thesis Presented

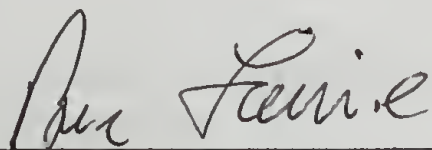
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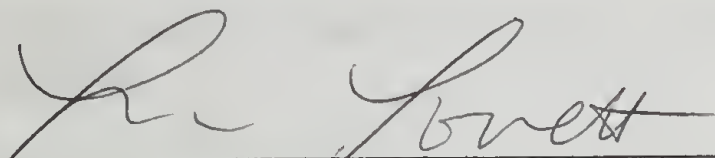
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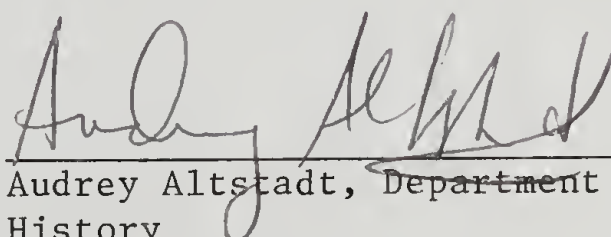
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INTRODUCTION

NANCY MACDONALD'S OTHER HALF

Nick Macdonald, Nancy and Dwight Macdonald's son, claims that his mother's close acquaintance, author Mary McCarthy, had actually been "quite dismissive" of Macdonald.¹ He believed one of McCarthy's characters to be based on his mother, who was described as a society woman with a silver spoon in her mouth. Whether or not the character was based on her, Macdonald fit into the model of an upper-class New England woman's social pedigree and political aspirations. Her upbringing influenced her political strategies, even during her Trotsky era into anarchism. The irony of Nancy Macdonald's activism is that she continued to wrap herself in maternalist strategies even when traveling through various radical political circles that did not require those nineteenth century tactics.

McCarthy's "dismissal" of Macdonald as a privileged upper-class woman speaks to the overall overlooking of Macdonald's political work and contributions. Despite her greatest achievement in creating and maintaining the Spanish Refugee Aid, various biographies and historical accounts of influential 1930's intellectuals who worked with and for Macdonald have rarely described Macdonald as "political." Instead, they describe her work with international refugees as a spiritual calling, attributed to her deep maternal instinct and deep humanitarian consciousness.² To some extent all those assessments are true. Yet the other side of Nancy Macdonald, the truly political part, has been routinely ignored by historians and those around her. This is mainly attributed to

¹ Nick Macdonald (son of Nancy Macdonald) in discussion with the author, 9 Dec. 2006.

² Mary McCarthy, preface to *Homage to the Spanish Exiles: Voices from the Spanish Civil War*, by Nancy Macdonald, New York: Insight Books, 1987) 17. Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald* (New York: BasicBooks, 1994) 29.

the central role that her husband of almost twenty years, Dwight Macdonald, played in his professional life. His protagonist role in the sociopolitical discourse of the time, in addition to the prominent intellectuals of their circle which included members Mary McCarthy, James T. Farrell, and Hannah Arendt, have disproportionately garnered the attention of the interpreters of history. Furthermore, Nancy's own insecurities made her more modest about her intellect and accomplishments, evidenced in her own writings and papers. The combination of those contemporary and retrospective forces has obscured the life of a woman who determinedly created the SRA to aid thousands of political dissidents.

An integral part of Macdonald's story was how she dealt with her emotional anxieties and intellectual concerns. Events from Macdonald's childhood shaped her perception of herself and her relationship to the world. She primarily responded to disconcerting news and information by channeling her insecurities and preoccupations into her relief work. The relationship with Dwight Macdonald is a vivid example of Macdonald taking some of her darkest moments and directing those energies into something positive and useful. She found independence and a greater sense of self through her work with the Spanish refugees. In a sense, Macdonald nurtured herself by reaching out to others. The process of disentangling Macdonald's life from preconceived notions has resulted in an illumination of the various strands that have come together to form a rich and complex tapestry of a self-motivated woman.

Macdonald established the SRA as a charitable organization in 1953, yet her eventual adoption of anarchism led to her re-conceptualize and reconstruct her idea of humanitarian work. Macdonald's upper-class upbringing instilled in her maternalist

values and strategies; that is, political strategies that nineteenth century women found especially useful to enter into the public sphere. In order to do so, maternalism was based on the idea that women possessed an innate moral authority that motherhood helped to invigorate, an authority that found its natural societal expression in social reform activities.³ Inculcated with those principles of “women’s” work, Macdonald engaged in various forms of charity during the course of her life, retaining her instilled maternalist tactics as she developed her political identity. The result is not a simple combination of both concepts; in some instances her maternalist leanings are obvious, and in other instances her radical politics are at the forefront of her decisions. While she may have held on to those instilled values and strategies, she participated in charitable help because of the refugees’ political affiliations and consequent oppression. Therefore she combined the charitable aspects of maternalism with radical political discourse.

Macdonald began to combine charitable aspects of maternalism with radical political discourse when she first visited Spain in 1932. It was there in Spain that Macdonald became politicized and her views on the world changed. For many people, the struggle in Spain did not end once Franco defeated the Loyalists.⁴ The meaning of the Spanish Civil War went beyond the conditions and realities of that specific conflict. In fact, it transcended the physical fight between the Spanish Republic and Nationalists and came to represent a theatre for the ideological battle between freedom and fascism in the world. For many who supported the Republic, freedom lost the battle, and Spain, in turn became a symbol of the failings of Western democracies to intervene. Macdonald

³ Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, introduction to *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993) 2.

⁴ The term Nationalist, as well as rebel, indicates a pro-Franco sympathizer/militant; Loyalist, as well as Republican, indicates someone loyal to the Spanish Republic.

shared those feelings of failure and injustice on a more personal level, having lived earlier among the Spanish people and landscape. For her, the refugees were both her ideological companions and the physical representations of the guilt all the democracies shared in their dismissal of the Spanish government's fight against internal rebellion.

After the war, the Spanish refugees became synonymous with Communists, mostly because of the Soviet Union's alliance with the Spanish Republic. Stretching into the post-World War II era, the fear of communism defined 1950's Cold War culture. Three years after Senator Joseph McCarthy's infamous "Enemies From Within" speech in Wheeling, West Virginia, Macdonald created the SRA in 1953. Anti-communism not only dominated American culture, it played an important part in the formation and operation of the SRA. As an anarchist and supporter of George Orwell's assessment of the Spanish Civil War, Macdonald blamed the Communist Party for suffocating revolutionary activities and, ultimately, the Spanish government's loss to fascism. Like Orwell, Macdonald supported the Trotskyist political organization Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) and anarchist revolutionaries who fought against the Communist Party amidst the war. Macdonald, then, consciously excluded Communists from giving and receiving aid through her organization.

Nancy Macdonald was a woman who was shaped and guided by deep and personal convictions. Perhaps it was her more tacit understanding of what had to be done that contributed to her apolitical description. Despite her lack of overt social and political criticisms, such as those by Dwight, Macdonald's politicization led her down the path of action. She chose instead to use her organizational skills to help Spain's political exiles. Her legacy involves the aid to thousands of refugees, from its inception in 1953 to its end

in 2006. For fifty-three years Macdonald's SRA provided necessary and comforting supplies, living accommodations, and hope. By examining her humanitarian and political evolution, Macdonald emerges as a complex individual who adopted and adapted new ideological frameworks to her already internalized system of values and practices.

CHAPTER 1

CULTIVATING STRATEGIES: MATERNALIST AND RADICAL POLITICS

The summer welcomed a young Nancy Macdonald, née Nancy Gardiner Rodman, who selectively picked from her gardens the fullest, brightest, and perfectly formed dahlias, zinnias, ageratum, sweet alyssums, baby's breaths, and lemon verbenas. The garden, nostalgically remembered by Nancy as "one of the most beautiful gardens in America," was part of a sprawling forty-acre estate on Grand Avenue overlooking the Hudson River, just north of Newburgh in the small city called Balmville. Among her family, it was known as Hemlock Glen.⁵ Inside the mansion, the upper walls were decorated with deer and buffalo heads and spears. Downstairs a tiled hallway expanded the length of the house, decorated with a large Italian bronze horse, two Spanish wood chests, and swan doorstops. Openings off the walls made their way to a green formal parlor and dining room, adorned with chairs depicting lions and unicorns "fighting for the crown" that circled a mahogany table.⁶ There, she and her brother, Selden, played cops and robbers, hide and seek, and "terrible golf."⁷ Those months spent in the country surrounded by family and flora were seminal to Nancy's growth, laying the foundation for a life devoted to political humanitarianism.

The gardens provided Nancy with one of the first places to begin her charitable activities, as she made her way through the blooms, picking handfuls at a time. Back home, Nancy carefully assembled the flowers with the help of her Aunt Fanny, crafting old-fashioned bouquets with lacy paper holders and tinfoil over the stems. After the last bit of foil was wrapped around the bottoms, Nancy distributed the bouquets to the

⁵ "Hemlock Glen," Folder: Hemlock Glen, Aunt Fanny, 2, Nancy Macdonald unpublished papers.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

patients at St. Luke's Hospital.⁸ The next day, the flowers that did not make Nancy's initial cut she sold on the sidewalk on Water Street in her hometown of Newburgh to passersby. True, Nancy was initially embarrassed by the sale's pitch ("twenty five cents a bunch for the benefit of the Associated Charities – or Dependent Children or Salvation Army!"), but making a profit of about \$35 each time warmed her to street hawking.

This anecdote, taken from Nancy's writings, speaks volumes about Nancy's character. It opens a window into the world Nancy grew up in, a world that ultimately shaped her understanding of how to care for others. Flowers could neither ease the suffering of the ailing nor cure poverty, yet they provided an instance of happiness, of beauty, and maybe of hope. Much like the flowers, Nancy was being cultivated to assume the values and mores of her class. No doubt her interests in the various charities stemmed from her observations of both her grandmother and mother's own charitable activities.

Nancy's grandmother ran a program for young women at the Henry Street Settlement in Manhattan.⁹ The settlement women provided educational programs that addressed issues of poverty and hygiene, in hopes that through reform the issues of urban poverty would be eased. Nancy's mother financially supported two World War II orphans, Carmen and Renée Coinces, for both humanitarian reasons and as a lesson to Nancy and Selden. The "adoption" impressed upon a young Nancy the importance of charity, especially those in support of war victims. Both of these women engaged

⁸ "Hemlock Glen," Folder: Hemlock Glen, Aunt Fanny, 4, NM unpublished papers.

⁹ Henry Street's program was more health-centered, as it was ran by the main nurse, Lillian Wald, who felt she could not "morally stand by and let people live in such squalor conditions." The program provided nursing services in urban spaces, health care instruction to her patients, study rooms for children so that they had a safe space to do their work, specially trained teachers to work with children with mental and physical disorders, and a system of scholarships for children aged fourteen to sixteen. Lillian Wald, *The House on Henry Street* (New York : H. Holt and Company, 1915) 6-7, 103,117,138.

activities that historians identify as “maternalist” in nature because of their emphasis on the traditional sphere of influence and nurturing capabilities of women. Historians Seth Koven and Sonya Michel trace the maternalist legacy by examining the influence of women on the rise of the welfare state in the Progressive Era. The roots of maternalism lay in the early nineteenth century when women in many Western countries formed organizations in the name of social reform and moral purity. Simultaneously, the century saw the rise in domestic ideologies that stressed women’s difference with men, humanitarian concerns for conditions of child care and labor. Thus, women’s moralism and nurturing capacity were linked to motherliness, and maternalist women claimed their authority as mothers to influence the rise of the welfare state.¹⁰ Nancy’s grandmother and mother were role models to Nancy of maternalist reformers engaged in suitable work.

The untimely death of her father, Cary Selden Rodman, who passed away at Hemlock Glen in 1911, was a formative moment in Nancy’s life. She attributes his death to her insecurities and desire to find a strong and protective male figure. Nancy was often angry as a child, and expressed feelings of abandonment and desertion from her father, the “strange man” who was more of a ghost to her than a tangible memory.¹¹ Growing up, she replaced her anger with longing and a deep sense of loss. Nancy’s son, Nicholas Macdonald, recalls how his mother frequently spoke of her father’s death, stating it was “the most pivotal thing in her life.”¹² Indeed, mention of her father invariably finds its way into her assorted writings, particularly when referring to her search for a protective and comforting man. Whatever angst Nancy felt regarding her father was repressed early

¹⁰ Koven, 10.

¹¹ “My Father, Cary Selden Rodman”, 1, Folder: Family History – Finished Duplicates, NM unpublished papers.

¹² Nick Macdonald interview.

on; she learned not to ask about her father, since talk of dead people was taboo in the family.¹³

At a young age, Nancy had to shoulder her mother's grief. Her visits to his grave in Woodlawn Cemetery frequently left her feeling miserable as she watched her mother weep.¹⁴ Just as she supported her mother early on through troubled times, she later assumed the burden of taking care of her toward the end of her life. In a revealing passage, Nancy's first thought of her mother are naked in their honesty:

Why is it so hard to write about you, to think about you?...After you died, I was often killing you in my dreams – perhaps because I had never broken away from you while you were alive.¹⁵

The imposed responsibility of caring for her mother placed Nancy as the parent. The role reversal had an adverse effect on her, and she resented being the strong one in the relationship.

The name "Hemlock Glen" had been bestowed upon the estate by a "cigar-smoking pre-feminist feminist," Fanny Van Nostrand Ramsdell, "Aunt Fanny" to Nancy.¹⁶ Aunt Fanny, who was not an actual aunt to Nancy but rather one to Nancy's mother, was a great influence on Nancy as model of female strength and initiative. Described by Nancy as a woman "full of fun," who "easily laughed at herself" (and often good-naturedly at others), Aunt Fanny taught Nancy how to express herself.¹⁷ Aunt Fanny stood in contrast to Nancy's own mother, Nannie Marvin Rodman, who Nancy

¹³ "My Father, Cary Selden Rodman," 1, Folder: Family History – Finished Duplicates, NM unpublished papers.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁵ "My Mother and I," Folder: Family History – Finished Duplicates, 1, NM unpublished papers.

¹⁶ Nick Macdonald interview. The term "feminism" came into the English language through the French word *feminisme* in the 1880s by a advocate of political rights for women, Hubertine Auclert. In the U.S. the term created confusion regarding what its aims were, and until 1913 "feminism" was not adopted by the woman's movement. Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987) 14-15.

¹⁷ "Aunt Fanny," Folder: Family History – Finished Duplicates, 6. NM unpublished papers.

described as retiring and shy. Unlike Nancy's mother, Aunt Fanny loved to discuss books and politics, and was a great conversationalist. She also participated in charitable activities as well, helping to shape Nancy's vision of what it meant to help others. Furthermore, it was Aunt Fanny's ability to be forthright and honest about what she believed in that made Nancy admire her "'go out and say what you think'" attitude.¹⁸ Despite Aunt Fanny's charismatic presence, Nancy saw more of her mother's introverted nature in herself than the qualities that her aunt possessed. Nancy may have been more comfortable in the background, where she spent much of her adult political life, but she charted her own path as Aunt Fanny taught her to do.

Despite her father's death, Nancy had a relatively privileged upbringing. Indeed, Nancy became a debutante in 1928 at the age of 18, which in New York meant being chosen among one hundred girls to attend the three dances hosted by the Junior Assembly. Simultaneously, Vassar College accepted Nancy in 1928, though her mother claimed she "had been accepted at birth."¹⁹ Nancy's years at Vassar were difficult. She found all-female life dissatisfying, and often escaped home to New York. When she seriously thought of dropping out her junior year, Dean Mildred Thompson "dangled a Junior Phi Beta Kappa key at me and so, supinely, I stayed."²⁰ Apart from the key, Professor Agnes Rindge inspired Nancy through her discussion of Spanish art. That relationship marked the beginning of her interest in Spain.

Nancy Macdonald's "calling" to Spain and its people, as Mary McCarthy put it, lay in the interconnectedness of Spain and the development of Macdonald's political

¹⁸ Nick Macdonald interview.

¹⁹ "Vassar," Folder: Family History – Finished Duplicates, 1, NM unpublished papers.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

consciousness.²¹ Inspired by Professor Rindge's lectures on Spanish art, Macdonald went on a trip to the Iberian Peninsula in 1932 with a couple of her friends, the first time she set her foot in the nation. Macdonald traveled to Spain to see exactly what her professor had brought alive in the classroom, and it was then that she fell in love with Spain's landscapes and cultural beauty, and developed strong attachments to the land and its people. She traveled to Avila, Salamanca, Valladolid, Madrid, Barcelona, and Palma de Mallorca, each stop providing an opportunity to visit art museums, libraries, and ornate cathedrals.

Vaguely aware that the year before her trip the Spanish monarchy had gone into exile as Spain's Second Republic formed, Macdonald admits she had no interest in politics during this period of her life. All that changed in the lending library of a suburb in Palma, when she came across Leon Trotsky's *Autobiography*. The book changed Macdonald's life, becoming a "strong influence" on her first political views.²² She found Trotsky's criticisms of Joseph Stalin's reign over the Soviet Union convincing, and she became one of the many intellectuals who sympathized with the communist credo but ultimately shied away from the Communist Party's line. Later in life, Macdonald would eventually go further left, casting Trotsky aside and adopting the philosophy of Anarchism. Trotskyism, however, initially introduced Macdonald to a philosophy that many New York intellectuals at the time were adopting, intellectuals who would help her found her relief organization for the Spanish refugees.

After returning for Spain, Nancy joined her brother Selden as co-editor of the protest magazine Common Sense. In 1933, she and Selden hosted a party at the

²¹ Nancy Macdonald, 17.

²² Nancy Macdonald, 32.

apartment they had been sharing, which was attended by many young intellectuals, including Dwight Macdonald. She distinctly remembers that she wore a “red velvet pants suit” and that it she “ruined it by spilling a glass of red wine on the couch” – but Dwight, apparently, made less of an impression on her than her own clumsiness.²³ The next time they met at an evening discussion meeting for Common Sense, he succeeded in capturing her attention. Sitting companions at the event, they amused themselves by criticizing the speakers. A few months later, she bumped into Dwight on the subway, and they made a date to go to Jones Beach. Her favorite memory of the date was Dwight lying on the beach and reading the Nation, an image that predicts the political influence they would have on each other throughout their lives.

By the third or fourth date, Dwight asked Nancy to marry her, to which she replied “no,” but was “thrilled that” an intellectual such as Dwight liked her.²⁴ Dwight seemed to represent her image of the strong male presence she had lacked growing up. Nancy’s statement also reflects her own intellectual insecurities as she appeared to have held Dwight up on a higher pedestal than she held herself. Her mother, Nannie Marvin, was less enthusiastic about Dwight’s entry into her daughter’s life as Nancy was, however. Nannie Marvin’s diary entries reveal many unfavorable remarks about Dwight, such as “Dwight Macdonald for dinner, nice but not interesting, long session,”²⁵ and “He is good company and amusing but lacks charm, I think.”²⁶ Eventually Nannie Marvin warmed to her future son-in-law, as Nancy accepted Dwight’s second proposal of marriage in 1934.

²³ “Dwight,” Folder: Family History – Finished Duplicates, 1, NM unpublished papers.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ “Mother’s Diaries – 1933-4, December 7, 1933,” Folder: Nannie Marvin, 1, NM unpublished papers.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, August 16, 1934.

Almost immediately after they married, Nancy's vision of Dwight as a strong male protector seemed to diminish. "Dwight was a powerful figure, but he wasn't a protective father figure."²⁷ On their honeymoon in Philadelphia they had "the first of many arguments" that reduced her to tears because of Dwight's overbearingly rational attitude. Nancy lamented, "Dwight almost always won but I *knew* I was right but couldn't prove it."²⁸ Though from this statement it appears Dwight intellectually bullied Nancy, in truth their partnership was based on a mutual respect for each other's intellect. Her frustration with their arguments, instead, seems to reflect personal doubts and insecurities of her intellectual capabilities. She knew the nature of the argument and the information that backed up her position, yet she could not easily express her opinion. Furthermore, feelings of abandonment surfaced when Dwight left her sick in bed to go to a party, explaining to her that they should not be dependent on each other, and should be able to go their own ways if they felt like it. Nancy felt "disillusioned that" Dwight could feel that so soon, and lamented, "Why had I married an idea?"²⁹ Clearly, Dwight took a more intellectual approach to marriage, where Nancy's expectations stemmed from more long-held emotional needs she would later seek psychological treatment for assuaging.

Despite the honeymoon disappointments, Dwight and Nancy planned a second one of sorts, this time to Europe. They spent a whole month in Mallorca, Spain, taking in the contentment of simple village life at the Villa Soleil on the outskirts of Palma at Porto Pi. Just as she experienced so many years ago at Hemlock Glen, Nancy found a sense of peace and accomplishment tending to the small garden at the villa. Nancy wrote her mother during her stay, "Happiness of this sort is difficult to describe, perhaps that is why

²⁷ Nick Macdonald interview.

²⁸ "Dwight," Folder: Family History – Finsihed Duplicates, 3, NM unpublished papers.

²⁹ Ibid., 3.

I haven't."³⁰ It is clear that her love for Spain was rekindled on her second trip, and, thus, how personally Nancy took the news that the civil war had broken soon after she and Dwight returned to the United States.

³⁰ Nancy Macdonald, 32-33.

CHAPTER 2

AN UNREALIZED DREAM: THE SECOND REPUBLIC AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

For Nancy Macdonald, Spain's Second Republic, which came into power in 1931 until the end of the war in 1939, was an exciting experiment in modernizing Spain. The emergence of the Republic had come after two generations of slowly accelerating reform and modernization. The process was not a smooth one, as Spain's transition into the modern era was marked with social, economic, and political unrest. Promises of land, labor, and political reform encouraged those on the Left in Spain and around the world. For Republicans, the new government represented hope. The creation of the Republic was also seen as an end to what many Spaniards saw as a decadent monarchy supported by top military officials and a reactionary Church hierarchy.³¹ The government proposed varied and far-reaching reforms, in an attempt to modernize Spain all at once. The most controversial reform introduced, the separation of church and state, allowed civil marriages and divorce, and instituted a secular system of education. It also ended government subsidies to the parish clergy. In particular, the 1932 Law on Confessions and Religious Congregations, which limited Catholic activities in areas such as education, alienated much of the Catholic constituency.³² Other reforms included the expansion of education (the highest priority of Republican leaders), military reform (democratizing the structure of the army), regional autonomy (especially to the Basque and Catalan regions), labor reforms, and agricultural reform. Unfortunately for the Republic, the programs were too ambitious and optimistic to be successful. Regarded as

³¹ Patricia W. Fagen, *Exiles and Citizens: Spanish Republicans in Mexico* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1973) 3.

³² Payne, 84.

too slow to the Left and too revolutionary to the Right, the Republic never managed to effectively enact many of its reforms. Historian Paul Preston argues that not only was the Republic attacked by a coalition of monarchists, Catholics, and conservatives (later unified under the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right, or CEDA), Anarchist and Communist forces also challenged the government's policies³³ The government's moderate model and its inability to appease either camp, according to Preston, led to the inevitable fall of the Republic.

The Left's criticism of the Republic began by targeting those in power. Those who made up the Republican government were people of middle class standing, when in reality they constituted a very small minority in Spain's overall demography. Their liberal politics made for a slower, less revolutionary, institutionalization of reforms that many Spaniards thought needed immediate attention. Furthermore, political fragmentation among the Left allowed for the more unified forces of the Right to effectively challenge the Republic. By contrast the Right's criticisms of the Republic focused on reform politics. Secularization, military reforms, regional autonomy, and labor and agricultural reforms were perceived by the Right to be calculated efforts to undermine their traditional authority. Resistance to the reforms through successful propaganda, disseminated largely through the continued influence of the Church, military, and aristocracy pushed the Republic's Socialist administration over the brink until it was forced to resign its cabinet in 1933. Over the next two years widespread violence, protests, strikes, and revolts escalated and began to stratify Spanish society. This upheaval was seen by the rank-and-file Socialists as the success of rightist

³³ Paul Preston, *The Coming of the Spanish Civil War: Reform, Reaction, and Revolution in the Second Republic 1931-1936* (New York: Harper & Row Inc., 1978) xi.

propaganda, and proof of the inability of liberal democracy to effectively enact social reform. As employers quickly discarded provisions of new labor legislation, the Socialists interpreted this as how easily the democratic process could be manipulated by a rather small conservative minority in Parliament.³⁴

Consequently, the Right used the violence and discord created by the strikes to their advantage. In 1933 CEDA claimed victory in the new elections. Though their reign was short-lived, during their years in power the Right successfully overturned most of the reforms put into place by the previous government. The Left rallied together for the 1936 elections, and were successful in putting Popular Front moderate republicans, Socialists, and Communists in power. Their victory was brief. The coalition of the Right had already begun to agitate for a return to power, and exploited the mood created around the leftist assassination of a prominent right-wing politician, Calvo Sotelo. The murder provided the moral justification of the Right became to call for military intervention to save Spain from encroaching anarchy. On July 18, 1936, Generals Francisco Franco and Luis Orgaz marched into Las Palmas,³⁵ and with that the Civil War between the Spanish Nationalists and Loyalists had begun.

News of the civil war devastated Nancy Macdonald. Having just vacationed there with her husband, the idea of peaceful and picturesque Palma de Mallorca transformed into a war zone saddened her and sparked her political passion. In 1937 she attended a Loyalist rally in Madison Square Garden, numbering around 20,000 people. Still, Macdonald wrote, if she had known more about what was happening in Spain, she would have attended the smaller meeting at Oak Square, where speakers exposed the role of the

³⁴ Paul Preston, *The Spanish Civil War: 1936-1939* (New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1986) 92.

³⁵ Franco had made a name for himself as a military leader in the Moroccan campaigns. His fame from the campaigns allowed him to secure nearly the full backing of the military.

Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War.³⁶ For Macdonald, especially when she adopted anarchism as her politics, the most devastating part of the Spanish Civil War was the crushing of the initial and organic anarchist revolution. The anarchists in Catalonia, Macdonald wrote, and the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, CNT, quickly established control over the Nationalist rebels. They took arms from the local government in order to defend themselves, and groups of militiamen took over the factories and businesses and ran them successfully. A Central Committee of Militias was formed to represent the various trade unions and political groups. The towns and villages were additionally collectivized. From July to September of 1936, this system seemed to work. The Spanish Republic, however, refused the collectivized industries' financial aid. The "counterrevolution," as Macdonald referred to it, effectively starved the anarchist collectives of food, supplies, and materiel, resulting in their collapse.³⁷ Apart from fighting the rebels, the Republic was fighting the revolutionaries. Because of the policy of Non-Intervention, in which the major powers claimed to not supply either side of the civil war with materiel, the Republic collapsed under the burden. The Spanish people were fleeing the land to seek refuge for what would become an unforeseen period of time. Fully politicized and unable to forget her experiences with the Spanish people, Macdonald ultimately formed the SRA as a sign of solidarity with those who opposed Franco.

³⁶ Nancy Macdonald, 44.

³⁷ Ibid, 39-40.

CHAPTER 3

A “REPUGNANT” EXISTENCE: THE SPANISH REFUGEES IN FRANCE

Just as Spain represented the birth of Nancy Macdonald’s political consciousness, and the Spanish Civil War nurtured its growth, so too would the Spanish refugees play an integral part in her ideological development. The refugee’s flight into southern France and the subsequent living conditions that they encountered there symbolized to Macdonald the Western world’s failure to aid the Spanish Republicans.

Historian Louis Stein crafted a clear history of the exile’s migration from Spain to France, creating a fuller picture of who the refugees were and why they came over.³⁸ He observed that aristocratic families and members of the upper middle classes became the first official Spanish refugees in France. They fled Spain because of fears that they would be targeted in what seemed to the makings of a communist and/or anarchist revolution. These families could afford to wait out the conflict in luxurious French hotels (or personal summer homes), certain their country would be saved from the Marxists. When the city of Irún fell to the Nationalists, many returned to Spain, assured that the old order had been reestablished.³⁹ The other refugees would not be so lucky in their living accommodations or quick to run back to what was turning out to be fascist Spain.

The tides of immigration between July 1936 and April 1939 came in five different waves. The first three waves of immigration came at the end of the battles of Irún (August-September 1936), during the final phase of the war in Asturias (May-

³⁸ Nearly twenty-five years later, Louis Stein wrote Nancy Macdonald asking for contacts and information to help him research his work. She happily provided him with a list of leads, most likely names of people working in southern France who first encountered the refugee situation. NM to Hanne Benzion, February 15, 1980, Folder: Hanne Benzion, NM unpublished papers. In Stein’s acknowledgments, he thanks NM for “sharing her comparable knowledge of the Spanish exiles and for her support throughout the project.” Louis Stein, *Beyond Exile and Death: The Spanish Republicans in France, 1939-1955* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979) vii.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

October 1937), and the occupation of Alto Aragón (April-June 1938), bringing in about 10,000, 68,500, and 17,000, respectively. The figures of the fourth wave after the fall of Catalonia in 1939, and the final wave after the surrender of Madrid in 1939, are unclear, but places the estimate of Spanish refugees in France from 200,000 to 340,000.⁴⁰

Wave after wave, after wave. For the residents of the sleepy Argelès-sur-mer string of farming and fishing villages, the incoming tide of immigrants entering French land must have felt like an invasion. Most of the refugees entering France before 1939 were women, children, and old people; however, military combatants also found their way among the masses. The young male military combatants, above all, were the “loose factors” that made the French people skittish, and they sought any way to repatriate them as soon as possible. Already embroiled in its own political upheavals, France feared the displaced populations were politically radical. With the fear of strikes and revolts from its own citizens, the Spanish nationals appeared to be the flame ready to light the powder keg.

Like many other European nations effected by the American Great Depression, France was experiencing its own economic and political crises. The Radical Party, which had been in power since 1924, was strained by the effects of the First World War on the budget, currency, and civil order. By 1936, the French Right’s continued political attacks on the Left coincided with the Strikes of 1936, in which 12,142 documented strikes took place involving nearly two million workers.⁴¹ The French Right used the Strikes of 1936 and the refugee problem brought on by the Spanish Civil War as an opportunity to seize power. The strikes created the perception of a complete breakdown of authority, and the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 6-8.

⁴¹ Ibid., 151.

influx of Spanish Republicans bolstered anxieties over swelling numbers of Communists in the country. It provided an opportune moment for conservatives to link the strikes to the refugees and strengthen their position.

During the last phases of the Civil War, the total number of Spanish republican refugees numbered anywhere from 350,000 to 500,000. This period became known in France as “the Great Fear of 1939” because of the sheer volume of Spaniards entering the country. The final slide into World War II had begun, and fears that hordes of radicals entering the country would bring rape, robbery, pillaging, destruction of property. A Spanish and French Communist insurrection produced a panic among the French citizens.⁴² Most refugees waited assignment in open-air triage areas, camped in forests and fields, stayed in homes, or were herded into French controlled concentration camps at Argelès, St. Cyprien, or Barcarès.⁴³ The Spanish refugees were equally disgusted at the perceived hostility they received in France. Refugees would later express the betrayal they felt by the democratic world in their struggle as defenders of democracy and fighters against fascism.

The sense of betrayal extended to the French government as well due to the conditions of the government concentration camps built to house the refugees. Much of Nancy Macdonald’s purpose in creating the SRA was to bring attention and address those conditions, which forced refugees to languish for years in squalor. The camps became a symbol for Spaniards of the callousness and negligence of the unsympathetic French government. The camps, described as “repugnant” by retired French army doctor, Dr. Peloquin, were overcrowded with the overwhelming numbers of refugees, and conditions

⁴² Ibid., 39.

⁴³ Ibid., 30.

did not improve as government construction efforts lacked organization and coordination.⁴⁴ Mostly, the living conditions made the experience miserable. The death of the great Spanish poet Antonio Machado in one of the camps because of exhaustion and illness became a symbol of the fate that befell many refugees, and heightened the grisly state of medical care and sanitation. Decades later, Macdonald's refugee organization, the Spanish Refugee Aid, held a commemoration of Machado.

Immersed in the intellectual scene, Nancy Macdonald understood the significance of Machado's death. He had represented a generation of authors who wrote about Spain's traditional literary myths and language, supported regional autonomy, and his dislike of the monarchy's restoration. With his death, so too did hopes for a traditional and regional-oriented Spain die. The SRA's commemoration highlighted his unnecessary death, and it pointed its fingers at Western nations' unwillingness to help the Republic during the war and with the refugees afterward.

It is likely, based on France's own precarious standing with Germany, that the French government had created the concentration camps, neglected basic needs of the inhabitants, depressed the morale and health of a formerly disciplined army, and exerted strong pressures upon exiles to choose repatriation as a "voluntary" action as a symbolic denunciation of the Spanish state. The exiles were required either to return to Franco or remain in the squalid camps. This appeased the French Right, which claimed that the return of the Spanish exiles to their homeland would be beneficial to both countries. The policy of coercive repatriation caused 150,000 to 200,000 refugees in 1939 alone to be sent back to Spain. The process was slower than the Right wanted, but it sped up during World War II, when many Spaniards returned to Spain. After their treatment in the

⁴⁴ Stein, 68.

camps, many had no desire to fight for France, opting to take their chances with Franco's justice.

Refugees in France, however, still faced some of their hardest times as World War II engulfed Europe. Many of them were drafted into the Vichy government's army, ironically fighting for the very ideology they had made them exiles. Many others, however, joined the Allied side, fighting to free Europe from fascism. After the war, there was a brief period of euphoria with the passage of the United Nations resolution to ban Franco from the international community. The period was indeed brief: by 1952 Spain was admitted into specialized organs of the UN, and in 1953 a military-economic aid pact was signed between the U.S. and Spain. By 1955, Spain was restored full member status in the international community once again. The refugees who were not allowed to return to their home never gave up agitating, as evidenced by a statement written by a group of refugees after 1951 that was addressed to the world community. In the statement, the refugees cite the existence of 120,000 exiles still residing in France. They highlighted their contribution to the war effort, fighting with France, as well as being taken as forced laborers to Germany, where 10,000 were placed in the Mauthausen labor camp for refusing to work for the Germans.⁴⁵ The refugees also describe their lack of aid from the French government, which did not have enough funds to concurrently support the refugees and their own citizens. The refugees' statement refuted accusations of them being Communists or Communist sympathizers, and claimed solidarity with "the Catalans and Basques, the trade unionists of the UGT and CNT, the Socialists and

⁴⁵ "Statement of the Spanish Civil War Refugees in France," Box 5, Special Collections, Vassar College, Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid, Folder: Suggestions and Ideas, 1.

Republicans and Anarchists.”⁴⁶ Curiously enough, the thought of donating relief to Socialists and Anarchists was supposed to ease fears of aiding radical refugees. For Nancy Macdonald, the refugees’ political affiliations were precisely what attracted her desire to help.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

CHAPTER 4

“EVER LEFTWARD”: FROM TROTSKYISM TO ANARCHISM

Nancy Macdonald's work had a political purpose that had a distinct moral basis. In 1939 Macdonald joined the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP) with her husband while working as the business manager of Partisan Review. Most likely Nancy helped persuade Dwight into joining the SWP, for Nancy, according to observers, “prodded him ever leftward.”⁴⁷ In fact, Dwight never read Marx until he was thirty-years old, in 1936, two years after he and Nancy married. Nancy suggested Trotsky to him and other radical texts.⁴⁸ Through the Party, Macdonald became the executive of the Committee for Emergency Aid to Refugees, which sought to help Trotskyists and dissident refugees in Europe. Her job was to find people who would donate money and affidavits of support for the persecuted refugees. During this period, Macdonald honed her managerial skills for her future work with the SRA, her greatest organizational undertaking. The Honorary Chairman of the Committee for Emergency Aid to Refugees was novelist James T. Farrell, who had, like many of his generation, been attracted to the U.S. Communist Party in the early 1930's, but later became disillusioned with Stalin's policies and became an out-spoken critic of the regime. His interest in Trotsky led him to meet the Macdonald's, who asked him to join Partisan Review as a contributing writer.

Nancy and Dwight's social circle continued to grow, incorporating other intellectuals such as author Mary McCarthy. McCarthy, the self-described “accidental” Trotskyist, became involved in the Group in 1936 after a party at Farrell's house. There they were discussing the case of Leon Trotsky, charged with betraying the revolution.

⁴⁷ “Nancy MacDonald Dies at 86; Aided Spain's Loyalist Exiles,” New York Times 16 Dec, 1996: B13.

⁴⁸ Wreszin. 29.

The host asked her if she thought Trotsky was entitled to a fair hearing and asylum. McCarthy did not know the specifics of the case, but in principle she said “yes,” and inadvertently became part of the political group that would soon define her. The crowd became known as the Partisan Group, named after the literary magazine Partisan Review for which they wrote.

Macdonald and her husband became part of the U.S. Popular Front movement. Historian Michael Denning describes the Popular Front in the U.S. as a an “insurgent social movement” created from “labor militancy of the fledgling CIO, the anti-fascist solidarity with Spain, Ethiopia, China, and the refugees from Hitler, and the political struggles on the left wing of the New Deal.”⁴⁹ The movement “proletarianized” American culture, in that there was an increased influence and participation from working-class Americans in the world of middle-class culture and arts. It stands as one instance of radical insurgency in modern U.S. history, when taking part in seemingly progressive cultural phenomenon suddenly became in vogue.

Although the Communist Party was part of the Popular Front, Denning argues it would be a mistake to view the movement as purely Communist in makeup. At the heart of the movement lay non-Communist socialists and independent leftists, making a culture that was neither a Party or liberal New Deal culture.⁵⁰ The central issue of the Popular Front, however, remains Stalinism. The Popular Front’s culture of international solidarity with working-class and anti-fascist movements also meant solidarity with the socialist experiment of the Soviet Union. In the face of Franco’s Spain, Mussolini’s Italy, and Hitler’s Germany, Communists forged a united front with Socialists, social

⁴⁹ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 1996) 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

democrats and liberals to build popular support against fascism. Unfortunately, once revelations of Stalin came to light, the movement was divided into Stalinist supporters and anti-Stalinists. Denning describes the position of the U.S. intellectual and cultural figures toward the Soviet Union as the “litmus test” that determined nationalist fidelities. Nancy and Dwight eventually joined the anti-Stalinist side, Dwight becoming such a popular outspoken critic against Stalinism that Denning characterizes his cultural significance by his anti-Stalinism.

While working at Partisan, Macdonald seized an opportunity to put her politics into practice and to provide aid to Spanish refugees. Initially, the problem seemed too vast for her to possibly begin to make a difference. She learned of an organization called the New World Resettlement Fund (NWRP) was founded in order to aid in the resettlement of Spanish families in Ecuador. American novelist John Dos Passos served as secretary of NWRP, and traveled to Ecuador and the Dominican Republic to help select Spanish refugee families for resettlement. Unfortunately the funds for the program dried up, and although Macdonald urged the organization’s executive to campaign for contributions for the Spaniards, she was only met with pessimism.⁵¹ No one seemed interested in donating to the cause. At Partisan Macdonald set up the Partisan Review Fund for European Writers and Artists, collecting and sending various stipends to people in need each month. Through that fund Macdonald was able to help out one Spanish mother in particular, Olga Nin, the widow of former POUM leader, Andrés Nin, who had been assassinated during the Spanish Civil War. Unfortunately, Macdonald lost all contact with the Spaniards once World War II broke out, and therefore had to discontinue sending aid through the Partisan Review Fund.

⁵¹ Nancy Macdonald, 58.

In 1943 Dwight quit his job at Partisan Review when the editors, William Phillips and Philip Rahv wanted to reduce the magazine's political content and concentrate on literary criticism. Nancy, naturally, resigned as well. The two had little time to dwell on the end of their run at Partisan, for a year later Dwight founded a new literary journal called politics.⁵² In that journal, Dwight produced some of his most famous writings, and criticisms of his new distaste of the Popular Front. He, like his fellow former-Trotskyist James T. Farrell, berated Popular Front culture as "counterfeit," and fraught with "inner emptiness."⁵³ By then Dwight and Nancy's affair with the Socialist Worker's Party had ended, disenchanted with the bureaucratic and dogmatic nature of the organization. Furthermore, they came to believe that Trotskyism had played a role in the development of authoritarianism, and that its organizational policies laid the foundation to Stalinism.⁵⁴ Though Nancy does not officially discuss her political evolution from Trotskyism to the political philosophy of anarchism, one could infer she made the transition with Dwight. She introduced Dwight to various radical texts, who in turn suggested other readings to her. As such, Nancy and Dwight's intellectual pursuits were never far from each other; together they explored different political and intellectual thoughts, each influencing the other.

While still working for Partisan, Dwight wrote a piece on Randolph Bourne, an anarchistic intellectual who had opposed World War I. Bourne's line, "War is the health of the State," struck a chord in Dwight, and propelled him further and further away from the Trotskyists. Dwight returned to his belief in the role and the obligation of the

⁵² Dwight insisted on the little "p" so as to indicate the journal's non-partisan discussion of political matters.

⁵³ Denning, 107-8.

⁵⁴ Wreszin, 86.

intellectual, discarding politics as “a mask that molds the face,” effectively changing a person into a political party tape recorder: “You become what you do and say. You don’t become what your reservations are.”⁵⁵ No doubt Nancy shared his fears of leftist totalitarianism, as they were both annoyed with the new prestige of the Communists and fellow travelers during World War II. The Communist and fellow-traveler backing of the war frustrated Nancy and Dwight, who considered the “war-parade” to be “intellectual sabotage from the left.”⁵⁶ It was most likely during this that Nancy adopted the political philosophy of anarchism as she and Dwight shied away from Marxist doctrine.

Anarchist philosophy seemed to fit Macdonald naturally, especially the humanitarian aspects of it. Macdonald’s experiences growing up instilled a belief in individual initiative, especially regarding community building, which corresponded with the spirit of anarchist philosophy. The flowers she handed out to hospital patients as a girl, sold on the streets, and given to handicapped children went to the benefit of the overall community, and she had faith in people’s natural cooperative spirit. She was not dogmatic in her advocacy of a decentralization of power, but rather preferred the anarchist idea that everyone should arrive at their own conclusions. In keeping with Aunt Fanny’s early example, Macdonald “wasn’t an activist in the sense of getting arrested” or participating in demonstrations.⁵⁷ For Macdonald, that sort of obvious activism would be inconsiderate “trumpet[ing]” that did not fit her introverted character. Her activism was more private, more intellectual, and aimed at inspiring others to act because of its essential moral implications.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 101.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 108.

⁵⁷ Nick Macdonald interview.

Although Dwight preferred to remain ideologically unbound, Nancy's newly-adopted anarchist philosophy helped shape his understanding of the world and of how he envisioned his new journal. From the very beginning, Dwight designed politics to be the journal that floated above ideological dogma, and indeed the contributing writers represented an eclectic and independent political spectrum. Among the contributors to the magazine were a diverse array of intellectuals: Nicola Chiaromonte, a refugee from Mussolini's Italy, Franco's Spain, and Nazi-occupied France; authors C. Wright Mills, Albert Camus, Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt, and Mary McCarthy; historian Daniel Bell, a devoted anti-Communist; Lewis Coser, who was involved in the socialist and Workers Party politics; and the anarchist/libertarian writer Paul Goodman, to name a few.

Nancy worked as the business manager of the journal until it folded in 1949, all the while busily orchestrating the financial and logistical aspects of running a publication. Her influence did not stop at simply managing politics, for according to historian George Sumner, Dwight's "acceptance of women like Simone Weil, Hannah Arendt, and Mary McCarthy as intellectual equals is evidence of an inchoative female consciousness – a sensitivity undoubtedly encouraged by his wife and collaborator, Nancy Macdonald."⁵⁸ Sumner even goes so far as to call Macdonald the "soul" of politics, though this most likely is an embellishment. Although Dwight conceived politics and it remained his vision throughout its short lifespan, the most appropriate estimation of Macdonald's contribution to the magazine was made by Dwight himself, when he noted that "the business manager is the Unknown Soldier of the little-magazine world."⁵⁹ However

⁵⁸ Gregory Sumner, *Dwight Macdonald and the politics Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996) 107.

⁵⁹ Dwight Macdonald, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist: Essays In Political Criticism* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957) 25-6.

described, Macdonald played a significant role in the journal's production, and it, in turn, provided the intellectual discourse that nurtured her desire to help the politically persecuted.

Inspired by her work at the journal, Macdonald created Politics Packages Abroad, a relief-oriented program under the politics project, and what would become the basis of the Spanish Refugee Aid. Many of politics' contributors were refugees that had kept in touch with friends in Europe who had been persecuted for their political affiliations. Contributors such as Hannah Arendt, Nicola Chiaromonte, Lewis Coser, and Victor Serge provided Macdonald with the names and addresses of people who needed food, money, clothes, and medicines.⁶⁰ Packages Abroad sent essentials to the politically oppressed, be they refugee or exile. In this respect, Macdonald's politics guided her careful selection of who was deserving enough to receive aid – those receiving aid were anti-Communists, and were as often anarchists.

Macdonald contacted international organizations which in turn described the type of aid they needed. Through these efforts, Macdonald's definition of aid evolved, from the collection of funds to the distribution of supplies. A couple running a camp for children in France, and perhaps Macdonald's first brush with Spanish refugees, wrote up a list of necessities including specific clothing items, hygienic articles, and food products.⁶¹ Boxes filled with these items became the standard in care packages for the politics project and the SRA. In addition to packaged items, another of Macdonald's contacts introduced the idea of "adopting" families, much like Macdonald's mother had

⁶⁰ Nancy Macdonald, 62.

⁶¹ E. Cohn-Bendit to NM, May 1946, Folder: 1940s Correspondence Re Aid, NM unpublished papers. Mr. and Mrs. E. Cohn-Bendit were parents of Daniel Cohn-Bendit, or Danny the Red, famous for his role in the Paris student strikes in 1968.

done with the French orphans. American families once acquainted via mail with their German "adoptee," for example, sent income and supplies specifically to Germans who had taken part in the Spartacist movement.⁶²

Though Packages Abroad eventually stopped when politics quietly ended, the momentum in Macdonald's international relief work steadily continued. Her enthusiasm led her to the International Rescue Committee (IRC). The IRC was a combination of the International Relief Association, the American branch Albert Einstein helped create and later headed, and the Emergency Rescue Committee (ERC). In 1942 the IRA and ERC teamed up under the name International Relief and Rescue Committee, later shortened to the current-day IRC. In 1951, when Nancy Macdonald joined the organization, the IRC delivered food to the people of West Berlin during a time of increased Soviet oppression. The IRC was exactly what Macdonald needed at that time in her life. Besides the appeal of working for the non-government organization, Macdonald's increasingly difficult personal life made her look to other areas that required her care. Her relationship with Dwight was steadily breaking down.

⁶² Paul Mattick to NM, August 8, 1946, Folder: 1940s Correspondence Re Aid, NM unpublished papers

CHAPTER 5

CHANNELING DISCONTENT: SETTING UP THE SPANISH REFUGEE AID

For nearly twenty years, Nancy and Dwight had been intellectual partners and friends. Yet in a letter Dwight wrote to his friend, Arthur Wiser, Dwight expressed the basic human desire to “satisfy [his] spontaneous needs.”⁶³ While he felt his marriage to Nancy had been intellectually and politically stimulating, they both recognized it was emotionally and sexually unsatisfying. Dwight did not feel great passion for Nancy, and, and as a result, Nancy did not feel that he showed her enough warmth and affection. And yet while vacationing in 1949, Nancy was still shocked when she became aware of Dwight’s infidelity.⁶⁴

Nancy and Dwight frequently vacationed in the summer at Cape Cod. They were among many returning couples, and had become intimately involved in each other’s lives. Dwight became involved in an affair with one of the Cape pals, Joan Colebrook. Though Dwight did not seem to have any formal intentions other than to act upon his newly awakened passions, Dwight’s affair invariably hurt Nancy, leaving her feeling alone and uncertain. They were married nearly twenty-years, had become intellectual partners, together raised their sons Michael and Nicholas, and Nancy was at a loss of how to deal with the new events. She took to writing to her closest friends, especially IRC member Anna Matson, confiding in them her deepest feelings she normally reserved for her therapist. In a moving letter, Nancy laments,

At times everything goes along well. Trouble is that it seems hard to be “reasonable.” Maybe I’ve been a reasonable being too long. D talks about freedom, justice and reason and I just

⁶³ Wreszin, 188.

⁶⁴ Dwight had a previous affair with the wife of one of his old college classmates, though it’s not clear whether Nancy knew about the affair or not. Wreszin, 205.

hit the ceiling, my stomach turns over and I get angry and jealous and miserable and horrid. And I just don't feel like sharing him but if I don't he says he feels like a captive. At the moment it seems like an insoluble problem and having it under my nose this summer (which I didn't expect) has been pretty grim so far.⁶⁵

The anxiety produced by the affair stemmed from not knowing what was to become of her marriage. In order to get her mind off of her problems, Nancy threw herself into work, channeling her emotional distress into her volunteer work at the IRC. Though Matson was happy to see Nancy engaged in fruitful activities, she thought her friend's contributions deserved more monetary compensation (which had until then been reduced because of her relationship with Dwight). Both out of her interest to protect Nancy from an inevitable separation from Dwight, and to see Nancy receive the credit she was due, Matson lauded Nancy's abilities and demanded that Nancy be paid in full for her work. Initially, Nancy expressed doubts over Matson's advocacy, but Matson put them to rest in a letter that affirmed: "I dare speak so strongly because I DO know your worth and because I love you."⁶⁶ Matson's strong and effective and professional support enabled Nancy to focus on a burgeoning idea in her mind of setting up a separate organization of her own just for the Spanish refugees.

As always, Macdonald's feelings for the refugees ran deep, and she felt guilty "at the failure of [the United States] to help the Spanish Republic."⁶⁷ Perhaps the responsibility she felt toward the U.S.'s dismissal of the Spanish Civil War was partly aimed at herself; despite her few efforts, she had been unable to significantly impact the lives of Spanish refugees. She professed her distress to Matson, "The Spaniards have

⁶⁵NM to Anna Matson, June 28, 1950, Folder: Anna Matson 1948-1952, NM unpublished papers.

⁶⁶ Anna Matson to NM, January 5, 1951, Folder: Anna Matson 1948-1952, NM unpublished papers.

⁶⁷ Macdonald, 71.

always been our babies but we've dropped them completely last year." ⁶⁸ Here is a clear instance of Macdonald's maternalist views standing in conjunction with her political convictions. Armed with a new sense of purpose, she translated her feelings of guilt into SRA's mission to educate and illuminate Americans of the consequences of inaction. The SRA's constant programs of consciousness raising, benefits, and Macdonald's continual letters to the New York Times, reflected her desire to make the Free World feel responsible for the fate of the Spanish refugees.

The other feeling that spurred Macdonald to embark on her new project was sadness over the collapse of her marriage. Dwight's affair with Joan Colebrook ended, but he soon established relations with another woman, Gloria Lanier, in the summer of 1951. Gloria was another of the Cape pals Nancy and Dwight vacationed with. This time, Dwight made no secret of his affair, as his intentions were not simply to enjoy himself but to also find a way out of his marriage. Once again, this caused Nancy to suffer through another painful summer, and she turned to her friends. To Anna Matson she described her frustration:

Dwight professes to be in love with someone else – again – since last fall, plans to be with her part of next summer, wants to be separated for the summer at least. I continue to hold on because I just can't believe in the rightness of it, still believe that he and I could have a wonderful life together if only he could get over this adolescent craving for female adoration. ⁶⁹

She relates her reasoning for creating an organization for Spanish refugees as part desire to help those exiled in France, part need to find a job after IRC lacked the funds to keep her on staff, and part desire to release long-held dependency issues. From the constant references in her papers to the loss of her father and male protector, the anger at having to

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ NM to Anna Matson, March 26, 1952, Folder: Anna Matson 1948-1952, NM unpublished papers.

care for her mother, the joy of having an intellectual such as Dwight notice her, to the expectations of marriage, Macdonald's insecurities came to fore with Dwight's affairs. Nearly forty years old, Macdonald began to address her dependency issues by participating in psychoanalytic therapy. Following her therapist's advice, Macdonald resolved "to do something on my own and I agree with him that it's quite important for me and my (I hope) growing sense of independence and feeling that I can do things on my own."⁷⁰

The therapy enabled her to become more independent from Dwight and his public persona. Dwight recognized the change in Nancy, citing that the therapy had "done Nancy a lot of good," though he hoped her newfound sense of independence would lead to their separation.⁷¹ Nancy, however, unable to give up on Dwight, her intellectual partner for almost twenty years, arranged a meeting between her therapist and Dwight. Although Dwight reluctantly acquiesced a few times, he refused to undergo regular treatment because he had little hope about the results. Even more troubling to Nancy, Dwight's new mistress, Gloria, seemed a far more serious affair than the one with Joan. So desperate was Nancy for help that she confided in an unlikely person: "Do you know that I even talked to the awesome Mary McCarthy about Dwight!"⁷² McCarthy lent a sympathetic ear to Macdonald, probably because she knew Dwight's character so well. She even agreed to help Macdonald with her plans for the SRA.

Gathering hold of herself with her new sense of independence, Macdonald focused her energies on setting up contacts that would support the efforts of her organization. Although Macdonald had originally hoped she could work with the IRC

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Wreszin, 251.

⁷² NM to Anna Matson March 26, 1952, Folder: Anna Matson 1948-1952, NM unpublished papers.

sans pay to create a new program for the Spanish refugees, the IRC lacked the funding to support it. They did, however, promise to help Macdonald set up her separate organization. Along with the list provided by the IRC, fortunately for Macdonald her Politics Packages Abroad led her to one of her most important contacts, Celine Rott de Neufville. While living in France, De Neufville inherited her father's silver mines in Spain in the 1950's. De Neufville decided the best use of her money would be to live under the dictatorship in Malaga, Spain, using her inheritance to raise eight orphaned Spanish boys and one girl.⁷³ De Neufville both inspired Macdonald to set up the SRA and provided her with contacts for the Spanish Republican Red Cross Dispensaries in Toulouse and Montauban. Macdonald received word from her friend James T. Farrell that he would serve as chairman of the new committee. Macdonald also had accrued a list of contributors from the IRC and politics lists that seemed interested in contributing to a Spanish refugee relief organization, in addition to twenty-two dollars from the Catholic Worker, a newspaper of Catholic Worker Movement. Furthermore, Macdonald already had one friend in Mexico, Laurette Séjourné, offer to adopt a Spanish refugee at ten dollars a month, starting what became the SRA's adoption program.⁷⁴ Armed with this bit and a number of contacts, Macdonald flew off to Europe in 1952.

Macdonald traveled to Paris initially, meeting with IRC director Hanne Benzion, who presented her with a list of one hundred Spanish families. There she acquainted herself with the "intricacies of personal and political feuds" among the various labor,

⁷³ Ibid., 72.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 74. The Catholic Worker Movement is a Catholic organization founded by Dorothy Day and Peter Maurin in 1933 to ease the sufferings of those on the margins of society. It is a non-official organ of the Roman Catholic Church.

political, and refugee-oriented groups.⁷⁵ Her next stop was Switzerland, to meet with the United Nation's High Commissioner for Refugees. Macdonald's assessment of the UN, "that monstrous pile" of "endless marble halls, with plushy offices," was that "[the commissioners had] nothing to communicate and [took] a lot of time doing it."⁷⁶ Still, the visit was constructive, as it introduced Macdonald to Heinz and Frieda Jacoby, who became devoted SRA supporters and friends. From Switzerland Macdonald traveled to Toulouse, Montauban, and Perpignan, which were the towns with the highest Spanish refugee concentrations. Those southern towns eventually became the initial central areas of aid for the SRA. In Montauban, she wrote to Dwight that she "saw a lot and [it was] where [she] believe[d] the greatest need of Spaniards exist[ed]."⁷⁷ The Spanish Red Cross Dispensaries were doing "excellent" work, according to Macdonald, but were eventually going to fold due to lack of help. No doubt visions of what she could do to help were already forming in Macdonald's head. Even more so when she met with Federica Montseny, "the leading light of the Spanish anarchists"⁷⁸ and former Minister of Health in the Second Republic during the Civil War. Montseny was the first female minister in the Spanish government, but became most known for her literary works which espoused the possibility of anarchism in Spain. Macdonald recalled Montseny as "very friendly, intelligent looking, and nice."⁷⁹ She also met with Juan Andrade, a former member POUM, a Spanish communist party formed in opposition to Stalinism.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 78.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁷⁷ NM to Dwight Macdonald, August 13, 1952, Folder: Dwight and NM 6/5/1952 – 9/29/52, 6/30/53 – 9/2/53, 7/8/54 – 8/6/54, NM unpublished papers.

⁷⁸ Nancy Macdonald, 80.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 80.

Macdonald's sympathies toward the POUM not only foreshadow the SRA's anti-Communist stance, but also place her within the much debated and heated topic of the organization. The historiography of the POUM has developed mainly into two distinct camps. In one camp are those that believe the Communist Party (namely the Soviet Union) was responsible for the POUM's demise, as articulated by George Orwell in *Homage to Catalonia*. For these historians, including James K. Hopkins, Orwell's own experiences with the POUM coupled with the testimony of Spanish and international fighters confirmed suspicions of Communist foul play. Worse than simply dominating the war effort was the Communist Party's official line of "Republic first, revolution second." Thus, as Hopkins terms, the revolutionary POUM was targeted by the Left, "crush[ed]" by the "antirevolutionary" Spanish Communist Party in heavy street fighting.⁸⁰ The POUM came to symbolize the revolution lost, and therefore Spain lost.

In the other camp are those who conclude POUM was far too small an organization for the Soviets to actively plot against, and claim instead that the Spanish Republic effectively destroyed the POUM by undermining and isolating it. Historians who adhere to this idea tend to downplay the interest and intervention of the Soviet Union in Spain. Historian Helen Graham traces the demise of the POUM to the Barcelona May Days, where the already fractured Left confronted each other in the streets from May 3 to May 8, 1937. Violence broke out when units of the Guardia de Asulto, under the influence of the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) and the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC), attempted to take over a National Confederation of Workers-operated telephone building.

⁸⁰ James K. Hopkins, *Into the Heart of Fire: The British in the Spanish Civil War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998) 204.

The Confederation, mostly made up of anarchists and the POUM, barricaded the building and attacked back at the Guardia de Asulto.

Though a compromise was eventually reached between the Confederation and the government, Graham argues that the POUM's public identification and support of the anarchists, coupled with their relative political marginality, made them ideal scapegoats for the Republic. As such, she rejects the notion that the Communist Party was involved in POUM's undermining. The order to make the arrests was made by the police, and by targeting the POUM, the Republic could easily exclude the organization from political representation.⁸¹ Furthermore, Graham concludes, the government persecuted the POUM because it fought against the state when the state needed centralized control to win the war against the rebels. The May Days presented the perfect opportunity to suppress the revolutionary organization. Though the two schools of thought approach the topic differently, the ultimate outcome was the POUM to dissolve as another casualty of the war.

Given Nancy Macdonald's political awakening began with Trotsky and led her to anarchism, her loyalties rested with the anti-Communist POUM. One can quickly assume how elated she was to meet with the anarchist Federica Montseny and POUM member Juan Andrade on her 1952 trip to Spain and France. Her meeting with Andrade was one of the defining moments that made her realize she had to do something for the Spanish refugees, and ultimately contributed to her creation of the Spanish Refugee Aid.

⁸¹ Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic At War 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 284.

Macdonald interviewed Andrade, whom she described a “Don Quixote type, tall, gaunt, and idealistic.”⁸² He served on the POUM’s Executive Committee until July of 1937 when the Republican government placed him and nine of his fellows on trial for espionage. All ten were convicted in 1938 and sentenced to fifteen years in prison for attempting a coup. Fortunately, Andrade convinced his jailors to release him and other prisoners to France, where they would seek asylum in Paris. What follows is a harrowing description of secrecy, food and sleep deprivation, and continual setbacks until his comrades in Paris finally picked them up. The trip was full of anxiety until they reached their destination as they hid from French police, who routinely stopped cars to look for and arrest Spaniards to take to concentration camps. When they arrived in Paris, they moved from house to house, living off of the goodwill of the people who hid and fed them. Andrade came into contact with Macdonald after World War II, when he asked her to help former POUM comrades who had been shunned by relief groups. She met with Andrade many times to listen to his and his comrades’ story and help out in any way she could. Andrade’s story inspired Macdonald to start the entire process of sending aid and packages to Spanish refugees.

While listening to the stories of people like Andrade, Macdonald began organizing her ideas about her project. She wrote James T. Farrell to see how many contacts he had, and discovered she had all the ones he had and more. Nancy still thought he could be “useful in forming a committee.”⁸³ Nevertheless, she had her reservations about Farrell, who seemed to be overly involved with only the factionalized Spanish Socialists. Her suspicions of Spanish Socialist politics were confirmed by an

⁸² Macdonald, 46.

⁸³ NM to Dwight Macdonald, August 23, 1952, Folder: Dwight and NM 6/5/1952 – 9/29/52, 6/30/53 – 9/2/53, 7/8/54 – 8/6/54, NM unpublished papers.

“energetic” woman in Toulouse, who informed Macdonald that the Socialists were loath to help others and kept funds that they were supposed to share.⁸⁴ For Macdonald, who viewed bureaucracy as ineffective and insufficient on its own, this bit of information only galvanized her to continue her efforts in Europe to promote the SRA. She still considered Farrell an important asset in her plan, and continued to reserve his place as chairman of the SRA.

⁸⁴ NM to Dwight Macdonald, September 8, 1952, Folder: Dwight and NM 6/5/1952 – 9/29/52, 6/30/53 – 9/2/53, 7/8/54 – 8/6/54, NM unpublished papers.

CHAPTER 6

“UNMISTAKABLY ANTI-COMMUNIST”: THE COLD WAR AND THE SPANISH REFUGEE AID

In 1953, the SRA became an official organization. A year after Nancy created the organization, Nancy and Dwight's marriage ended. Despite the rupture, they retained a close relationship up until Dwight's death in 1982. At the time, Macdonald had more important things to contend with, such as facing the daunting task of providing aid for thousands of Spanish refugees. Her travels and activities in Europe had strengthened her spirit; confident in her capabilities and she held her authority over the organization from the very beginning. The SRA may have relied on the help of committee members to operate, but the true power was held by Macdonald alone. Because she often felt more comfortable in the background, Macdonald encouraged others to take chairmanship. Farrell headed the organization as chairman until 1958, when Mary McCarthy took over. Other notable chairs of the SRA were Hannah Arendt and eventually Macdonald herself.

Nick Macdonald, Nancy's son and later chairman of the SRA, describes the chairman position a figurehead – also held by former president of Mexico General Lázaro Cárdenas and Spanish cellist Pablo Casals – which brought recognition to the cause. Nick Macdonald remembered people such as Hannah Arendt at the board meetings, and though they may have presented some ideas, “basically Nancy knew what she was doing and she figured out what was [to be done] ahead of time... there really wasn't much beyond what Nancy did – it was pretty cut and dry.”⁸⁵ Macdonald's work for previous organizations gave her the experience to virtually single-handedly run the SRA. The contacts Macdonald made in her travels ensured that by their first meeting the group had

⁸⁵ Nick Macdonald interview.

forty-four prominent sponsors, including Albert Camus, Sonia Orwell (George Orwell's widow), and George Woodcock.

For all the hope Nancy Macdonald and the other SRA members had for the organization, they could not escape the legacy of previous Spanish refugee organizations. Those organizations created during the Spanish Civil War and shortly after faced difficulties in public and political perception of the refugees. Once viewed as defenders of democracy, the refugees were stigmatized as Communists as news of Soviet aid to the Loyalists spread. Groups who sent aid to those formerly-viewed heroes became easy targets for red-baiters, and routinely collapsed under political pressures.

One of the most famous examples of the changing attitudes toward the Spanish refugees, and the foreshadowing of Cold War politics, is the Spanish Refugee Relief Campaign (a consolidation of various relief organizations) and its offshoot, the American Rescue Ship Mission. In 1940, one hundred thirty people joined Helen Keller, the national honorary chairman, as sponsors of the first American Rescue Ship Mission. After raising \$300,000 to charter a rescue ship, the organization was able to transport Spanish refugees in France to Mexico and other Latin American countries.⁸⁶ By 1941 those efforts were called into question. In a dramatic move, Eleanor Roosevelt quit the American Rescue Ship Mission after the director of the program was accused by the media of being a "Red."⁸⁷ The State Department revoked the organization's license based on the Neutrality Act, but the New York Times speculated that the real reason for Roosevelt's disappearing act was based on accusations that the committee preferred to help communist propaganda rather than help the refugees. Another prominent woman

⁸⁶ "Join Rescue Ship Mission," New York Times 5 Dec. 1940: 6.

⁸⁷ "First Lady Disowns Spanish Aid Drive," New York Times 7 Jan. 1941: 1.

involved in the American Rescue Ship Mission, Helen Keller, continued to defend the organization's intentions, insisting she had joined the committee out of "pure love for the multitude."⁸⁸ In her defense, Roosevelt clarified her reasons for leaving the group: she was involved in far too many organizations and was too busy to continue with the American Rescue Ship Mission. Many years later, Roosevelt was able to justify her early associations with Spanish refugee aid organizations when she associated herself with the SRA in 1954, which had been an outspoken denouncer of Communism. She stressed those anti-Communist tenets in a letter to the New York World Telegram and Sun:

Many people think because the Soviet Union came to the aid of the group who fought for democratic Spain that the Soviets gained complete control and the whole movement was Communist. As a matter of fact this was never so and most of these refugees in France today are democrat and never had anything to do with communism.⁸⁹

The difference in Roosevelt's backing of the SRA can be attributed to the group's clear insistence that it was firmly anti-communist. Unfortunately for those associated with the earlier organizations, such accommodations were not afforded.

Helen Keller changed her position as well on the matter when she was investigated for acting as a front for a communist group. Keller blamed her handicaps for her exploitation by the organization.⁹⁰ That the latter two stories were printed on the first page of the New York Times is not likely a coincidence. Already the scares of communist infiltration roused political and public fears. The SRA, created in the middle

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Eleanor Roosevelt, "Refugees Need Help," New York World Telegram and Sun 2 Mar. 1954, Box 2, Folder: Statistics and Publications, Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid, Special Collections, Vassar College.

⁹⁰ "Miss Keller Quits Rescue Ship Drive," New York Times 8 Feb. 1941: 1.

of Cold War hysteria concerning subversive activities, faced its own accusations of communist conspiracies.

According to historian Ellen Schrecker, the Cold War changed the communists from a political problem to a threat to U.S. national security. The individual cogs in the “far-reaching Soviet network” were busy subverting the people of America, involved in clandestine operations.⁹¹ The subversive activity ranged from causing people to convert to communism to jeopardizing strict gender roles that a nation-state desperately needs to adhere to in order to maintain any form of control over its population. For its part, the FBI launched a counter-intelligence program (later known as COINTELPRO), in which they infiltrated suspected radical movements and organizations and ousted alleged and real Communists.

The question of communism came up even before the SRA was officially created. One of the founders of the group, and noted U.S. historian, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote to Nancy Macdonald in 1952 about the political nature of her burgeoning organization. The committee appeal, he wrote, “should be, in my judgment, humanitarian not political... as for the Communist issue, I would get around that by making the committee so unmistakably anti-Communist in its composition that the issue would not easily arise.”⁹² Schlesinger’s concerns were echoed by other prominent U.S. historians and SRA sponsors, Richard Hofstadter and Daniel Bell. As former Trotskyists who left the Party disgusted with Stalin and his policies, Hofstadter and Bell were quick to advise that the SRA distance itself from the Communist movement. Early thoughts on how to present the

⁹¹ Ellen Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1998) 135.

⁹² Macdonald, 119.

group show the organization heeding Schlesinger's warning, as indicated by one of the first written drafts of the SRA's purpose:

It is only the Communists, who constitute a small isolated block in the mass of emigrants, who are still remembered by their comrades and continue to receive help. The anti-Communist majority, about 90% who live cut off from the Communists, have been cut off likewise, ironically, from the outside world⁹³ ... Needless to say, we are anti-Communist; we now beg of you such help for "our" veterans, the upholders of our values, as the Communists have been furnishing theirs.⁹⁴

Later, when the SRA was fully formed, its pamphlets described the very same sentiment, nearly word for word, as they make their politics (by their political stance) very clear:

At least 90% of the Spanish refugees are strong anti-Communists, with vivid memories of Communist treachery and terror during the Civil War. The tiny pro-Communist minority is cared for by the world Communist movement, but the great non-Communist majority has been shamefully neglected by the free world. Spanish Refugee Aid was set up to help this majority.⁹⁵

This statement makes two points. One assures the public that most Spanish refugees are non-Communists. It seeks to create a certain amount of sympathy among the American people, especially during the Cold War climate. Secondly, by stating the pro-Communist minority is being taken care of by the world Communist movement (or Soviet Union), the SRA implies to Americans that their money will go to the right people. The statement also helps create a sense of competition and nationalist duty. The Soviets are taking care of "their" people, the Americans must take care of theirs. Among Nancy Macdonald's papers were what would later become the SRA's statement of purpose and by-laws, giving

⁹³ "Beginnings," Box 2, Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid, Special Collections, Vassar College.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹⁵ Spanish Refugee Aid. (Spanish Refugee Aid, 1956) Box 129, Folder 16, Jessie Lloyd O'Connor Papers, Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College.

insight into how much the group wanted to disassociate itself from the stigma of communism. Their initial incorporation papers state the purpose of the organization was “to improve the health and social and social conditions and alleviate the human suffering and distress of Spanish non-communist refugees,”⁹⁶ which later was changed to “Spanish Republican, Anti-Communist Refugees”⁹⁷ to firmly drive home the point. That the SRA had to precisely define who the aid benefited shows, for one, how committed the organization was to excluding Communists, and also that significant governmental attention was being paid to American activities. On their tax exemption papers they state that “the purpose of this organization is to give aid to Spanish refugees who presently reside in France. These refugees are non-Communist.”⁹⁸ Even though the group took all the necessary precautions to distance itself from communism, the SRA grappled with the questions years later, facing internal dissention and division.

Nearly eight years later, in 1961, the question of helping Communists continued to come up in SRA board meetings. One of the questions that came up was: “Should SRA help refugees who are Communists? By-laws state that we help non-Communist Spanish refugees, but they do not state the converse, namely that we cannot help an individual in need who is a Communist.”⁹⁹ Clearly the group struggled with what was permissible during the Cold War. Though it raised the question, the organization never committed itself to overtly helping Communists. In fact, in the same document the SRA furthered their commitment to a Communist-free organization by addressing sponsor Waldo

⁹⁶ “By Laws, Article 2, Purposes,” Box 2, Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid, Special Collections, Vassar College.

⁹⁷ Macdonald., 119.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 119.

⁹⁹ “CP Issue,” Box 4, Folder: CP Issue and Medway, Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid, Special Collections, Vassar College.

Frank's association with the Communist Party. After much deliberation, in a letter addressed to Frank on March 28, 1963, the SRA officially ousted him.

After much consideration and with the deepest regret, we feel that we must ask you to resign as one of our sponsors... All of us, including our honorary chairman, Pablo Casals, were agreed that Communists... in the war did not represent our notion of either freedom or democracy. In face, we were and are opposed to both the red and black varieties of totalitarianism.¹⁰⁰

The SRA could not afford to have one of its sponsors associated with the Communist Party, despite many of its members own communist origins. Still, the incident with Waldo Frank would not be their last in dealing with the Communist Party. Accusations of communism reappeared in a far more dramatic and personally painful instance to Nancy Macdonald, an event that ultimately led to two SRA members' resignations.

¹⁰⁰ Nancy Macdonald to Waldo Frank, March 28, 1963, Box 4, Folder: CP Issue and Medway, Nancy Macdonald and the Spanish Refugee Aid, Special Collections, Vassar College.

CHAPTER 7

“THE HELLMAN AFFAIR”

“The Hellman Affair,” as Nancy Macdonald referred to it, became one of the darker moments in the SRA’s history. The incident involved anti-communism, and called into question Macdonald’s political and personal alliances, not to mention Dwight’s. It serves to highlight the continued importance of anti-communism, or anti-Stalinism more precisely, in the later years of the committee’s life. The importance not only lay in the committees’ own attitudes toward a Communist member, but also in the attitudes of SRA supporters.

The Hellman Affair began in 1978, when the long-time friend of Nancy Macdonald and board of directors member, Gabriel Javsicas, approached Macdonald after a board meeting. He turned to her and said, “I wouldn’t be found in the same gutter with that woman Lillian Hellman.”¹⁰¹ Macdonald’s reaction seemed fitting: “But you’ve been on the same committee with her for eight years.” Eight years before, Dwight suggested Lillian Hellman’s name as a sponsor in 1969 because he believed her to have parted from her pro-Stalinist past when she agreed to sign a petition to Moscow from thirty U.S. writers protesting the Sinyavsky-Daniel trial.¹⁰² Hellman’s signature was enough for Dwight to convince him that Hellman was no longer part of the Communist Party. For Javsicas, apparently, it was not.

Javsicas’s adamancy over the issue stemmed from his strong political connections to the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the CNT-FAI in Barcelona. During the Spanish Civil War, the self-defined anarchist Javsicas was an economic advisor to the CNT-FAI.

¹⁰¹ Nancy Macdonald, 124.

¹⁰² Literary critic Andrei Sinyavsky and his translator Yuli Daniel were charged with slandering the Soviet Union in his work *On Socialist Realism*.

Living in France, he reported on Spain for The Nation, The Atlantic Monthly, and Harper's, among other publications. In 1939 he moved to the United States, where he made his living by buying and selling mahogany and “shrewd” trading in foreign currency.¹⁰³ Dwight described him as a “Communist-dreader,”¹⁰⁴ and indeed his fear of the Communist Party was clear in his accusations of Hellman.

In response to Nancy's reaction, Javscas stated that he did not know who Hellman was at the time. He claimed to have a dossier showing she was still a Stalinist, and asked the board to drop her as a sponsor. The board complied, but Dwight had not been present, and when he learned of Javscas's accusations he asked that the question be reopened. After Nancy and Dwight reviewed the dossier, they found no evidence to suggest Hellman remained a Stalinist, and reinstated her as a sponsor.

Javscas responded by writing a series of angry letters to Nancy, Dwight, and Mary McCarthy. Their correspondence with Javscas suggests McCarthy supported his initial attack on Hellman, and even considered resigning. Still, out of loyalty to Dwight and not wanting to hurt Nancy, McCarthy opted to at least wait until something came to light that would justify an attack on Hellman. Javscas continued his personal crusade against Hellman, writing in a letter addressed to Dwight, “We are agreed that for virtually the whole of her public life Hellman has been an active Stalinist. If she has ceased to be one in 1970 as you claim then the burden of proof rests upon you.”¹⁰⁵ When Dwight refused to satisfy Javscas's demands, Javscas then turned to James T. Farrell for support.

¹⁰³ Nancy Macdonald, 126.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹⁰⁵ Gabriel Javscas to Dwight Macdonald, May 8, 1979, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers. Javscas's emphasis.

Farrell and Javsicas were good friends, for Javsicas claimed he had “discovered” Farrell by leading him to his first publisher. As chairman of the SRA, Farrell recommended Javsicas to join the board of directors in 1953. Needless to say, Farrell, avidly anti-Communist, sided with his friend when Dwight and Nancy refused to drop Hellman, and followed at the heels of Javsicas’s resignation in 1980. Stunned that Nancy would allow Farrell to leave, Javsicas exclaimed, “I am shocked to find that you are willing to drop Jimmy Farrell as a sponsor and presumably Mary as well for the joy to retain Helman.”¹⁰⁶ He went on to threaten:

I will get rid of her ... even at the risk of making you wish you had never met me... Otherwise I shall poll all our sponsors to find out whether they would want to be associated with Helman after they have read my entire correspondence in the matter... It may result in your losing all sponsors except perhaps Dwight and Helman.... You have no right to impose this evil woman upon our sponsors and contributors.¹⁰⁷

Javsicas’s attacks on Hellman evolved from accusations of her being a Stalinist traitor to an innately evil woman – though to him Stalinist sympathies and evil were probably never mutually exclusive qualities. Nevertheless, his language indicates that he was taking the incident personally, so personally that he claimed to have contacted two of the SRA’s principle sponsors and contributors regarding Hellman’s Stalinism, and threatened to contact two more in each category following their response. Javsicas also attached a document from the New York Small Claims Court. He resolved to sue the SRA for \$160, citing in the request form, “The above amount was obtained from me in two installments

¹⁰⁶ Gabriel Javsicas to NM, October 16, 1979, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers. Javsicas misspelled Lillian Hellman’s first and last names often.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

of \$80 – each in 1978 and in 1979 under false pretenses.”¹⁰⁸ The issue of “false pretenses” refers to Javsicas’s claim that Nancy and Dwight had deceived him and the SRA’s sponsors by allowing Lillian Hellman to join the board. Because of that, Javsicas believed the SRA no longer served its original purpose.

Four days after filing the small claims suit, Javsicas informed Nancy that he intended to file a class action in the regular court on behalf of all the contributors. The action would demand reimbursements of all funds since Hellman joined as a sponsor. In addition, “copies of the suit will be sent to all consumer protection agencies and to all media such as the press in New York and in Washington. We are going to test whether you are still a charity organization.”¹⁰⁹ Though documentation on Nancy’s response cannot be found, it seems she defended her actions against Javsicas’s accusations in a board meeting, for he ended the letter informing her that he expected an apology from her for publicly “libeling” him.

Macdonald reacted level-headedly, considering her friend’s latest threats, and contacted Herbert Robinson, a lawyer and member on the SRA board, to look at the case. As decisive as she was, however, Macdonald felt deeply betrayed by Javsicas, stating she was “in the dark” and found the whole matter “appalling.” In Nancy’s estimation, Javsicas’s ambitions not only aimed to purge the SRA of Communist sympathizers, but were more nefarious as she wrote to Herbert Robinson in 1979, “ He wants now to destroy the SRA.”¹¹⁰ For Javsicas’s actions to threaten the unity of the SRA was something Macdonald would not tolerate, and she became determined to defeat him.

¹⁰⁸ Civil Court of the City of New York: Small Claims Part Request for Information, November 1979, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers.

¹⁰⁹ Gabriel Javsicas to NM, November 19, 1979, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers.

¹¹⁰ NM to Herbert Robinson, November 23, 1979, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers.

It is possible that Javsicas felt betrayed by the whole incident as well. Most likely he did not predict that Nancy and Dwight would not challenge the SRA's demands for him and James T. Farrell to leave the organization on account of a former Stalinist. Another letter to Mary McCarthy illustrates Javsicas's disbelief at how Nancy and Dwight were handling the fiasco:

In this case I have been left no choice by our friends. I first gained your support and Jimmy's (two former chairpersons) for my contention that Hellman must be reacted exactly as we would a sponsor discovered to have condoned the mass murder of the Jews under Hitler... Our friends' reaction was instruction to Dwight to write to you the weighty reasons for keeping Hellman, and to reconcile me... Our friends dropped Jimmy and me without hesitation. Unfortunately, you gave in and so we will never know whether you weigh less than Hellman... I suggested arbitration by our peers. If they had pulled the sponsors re Hellman I would have accepted defeat. Instead, not only did they refuse to go to arbitration but at the meeting of November 15th I was given exactly five minutes to do what?... to defend myself, to justify my causing dissent among our sponsors, and presuming to differ with Dwight. Such arrogance!¹¹¹

His ironic use of "friends" illustrates his sense of hypocrisy in Nancy and Dwight's defense of Lillian Hellman. It also shows the extent of his anger with Dwight resulting in personal attacks against his character, referring in another letter to Dwight's "overblown ego."¹¹²

In the end the SRA won the small claims suit due to Javsicas's nonappearance at the hearing. Nothing appears in Macdonald's papers to explain his absence, and neither was an explanation given to the committee of the affair from its sponsors or contributors. In what Macdonald described as a "sad, crazy ending to a long friendship," she continued to remember her former friend Gabriel Javsicas as "a lively raconteur, bon vivant, and a

¹¹¹ Gabriel Javsicas to Mary McCarthy, January 8, 1980, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers.

¹¹² Gabriel Javsicas to Mary McCarthy, February 17, 1980, Folder: Gabriel, NM unpublished papers.

marvelous cook.”¹¹³ Even after the lawsuits, Macdonald tried to persuade Javsicas to return to the SRA, though he remained adamant of his accusations until he died in 1982. The affair tested the unity of the SRA and, in effect, Macdonald’s leadership. Her determination kept the SRA together and defended herself against a political and personal attack from a close friend.

¹¹³ Nancy Macdonald, 126-127.

CHAPTER 8

FUND AND CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING: THE SPANISH REFUGEE AID PROGRAMS

Internal divisions and Communist accusations aside, the SRA lived a long and fruitful fifty-three year-long life. For the first thirty-one years, the SRA organized aid to over 5,500 families and 13,000 individuals, faithfully run by twenty-two people. All of the members worked part-time, some of them were volunteers, and as Macdonald put it, “they came at their convenience.”¹¹⁴ The office setting is informal, where members brought everything from their cellos to their dogs and children. Macdonald prided the organization’s relaxed environment, due to everyone knowing what their job was, what was to be done, and who to pass it on to once their shift was over.

During its operation, Macdonald’s primary goal during SRA’s first years was fundraising through various contributions, foundations and benefits. She placed two members, Francis O’Brian and Ruth Leopold, in charge of fundraising. During the first year they managed to raise \$19,000 in cash and \$4,000 in clothing and other goods such as hearing aids, typewriters, and other useful equipment for the refugees.¹¹⁵ Though much of the funds were small amounts made by individuals, organizations across the world helped the SRA in their efforts. As Macdonald set up contacts around the world, offers came in from international organizations to aid the SRA’s efforts. The Swiss Aide aux Refugies Espagnols, created specifically to aid the SRA, sent gifts of money and clothing ranging from \$1,200 and \$2,500 for twenty-eight years.¹¹⁶ German help from Social Deputy in The Reichstag, Peter Blachstein, and Rose Froelich, came in the form of

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 152.

¹¹⁵ Nancy Macdonald, 129.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 135.

the Deutsche Komitee zur Hilfe für Spanische demokratische Flüchtlinge. The Komitee sent money for thirty years, and also provided clothing, scholarships, adoptions, hearing aids, radios, typewriters, and wheelchairs.¹¹⁷ Lastly, Sweden's Individuell Manniskohjelp became involved with the SRA in 1963 and continued its help for about twenty years, providing aid and clothing and funding for member trips to visit the Spanish exiles in France.¹¹⁸ Not only had the SRA become an official American organization, it had become a truly international one.

In addition to contributions from other organizations, Macdonald organized benefits nearly every year. The benefits were not very profitable – the first held a restaurant on Cape Cod netted \$183, while the second in Provincetown made \$275 – but Macdonald felt it was important to continue them from a public relations point of view.¹¹⁹ The benefits raised the required money, and, as Macdonald planned, also served to build consciousness-raising of the Spanish refugee situation in France. She organized the benefit activities around movies, parties, musical events, art sales, viewings of private art collections, and speeches. Not all events, unfortunately, contributed the same amount of profits. Those that made the less amount of money, as Macdonald recalled in her book on the SRA, were the art viewings. Conversely, people seemed to be more interested in buying art, as the most profitable were the art sales. One such benefit on December 4, 1975, produced \$8,076 for the SRA; another four totaled it to \$21,000.¹²⁰

One of the more successful programs that the SRA created was the adoption program, run by Sonya Leopold, Margot Karp, Betty Aridjis, and Margaret Childers (the

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 136.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 142.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 145.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 146.

latter becoming the final chairman of the organization). Influenced by her mother's charitable actions toward the French orphans, Macdonald used this type of aid first in the Politics Packages Abroad adoption program. Readers "adopted" individuals and families by sending regular payments. Macdonald applied the concept to her new organization as the best way for contributors to connect with the Spanish refugees. In its first year, the SRA arranged for seventy adoptions, though the aid was at first sporadic. Success stories of refugees who benefited from the adoptions such as Fulgencio Sanchez inspired Macdonald to invest more attention and energy in the program. Before being adopted, Sanchez, at the time thirty-four years old, was living in an old-people's home "surrounded by hopeless human wrecks, completely alone." Within two years, his adopters arranged for him to leave the home and enter a technical training school, which he passed in six months. His adopters continued to send him financial support until he became economically independent, which was one of the primary goals that Macdonald had for the Spanish refugees. Instead of simply providing hand-outs, she wanted to provide enough assistance to help the exiles integrate into society. Though many of the adoptions were not as dramatic as Sanchez's story, the process formed strong friendships and boost in refugees' morale. In turn, the adoptees reciprocated in ways they could, including knitting, embroidering, correcting Spanish, and expressing their gratitude and affection. One of Macdonald's own adoptees, Juan Porcel Zamorano wrote to her:

Spain for me and many others has meant the disintegration of families, misery, illness. To speak about it is a nightmare, a horror. I came to France when I was twenty-eight, and here I am at sixty-four, having lived here for 36 years without my family, my country, and sometimes obliged to bear the insults of those who don't know what it is to live at the mercy of others...In any case, the fact that you write me and give me your

friendship, is like the plank that the sailor in distress finds in the middle of a storm. Thank you.

Letters such as the one above encouraged the SRA to refine and expand its adoption program so that it eventually grew to allow for 476 adoptions from the years 1973-4, the highest in SRA history.¹²¹

Other programs sponsored by the SRA that worked to integrate the Spanish exiles in their environment as much as possible, and to make their lives more comfortable while living in France. One such program provided scholarships. Much like the opportunity Fulgencio Sanchez received from his adopters, the SRA helped students whose fathers were injured in the Spanish Civil War or chronically ill, or had widowed mothers and were forced to enter the workforce to make ends meet. In one campaign in 1966, the SRA sent out appeals under the names of intellectuals Hannah Arendt, Daniel Bell, and Richard Hofstadter, to name a few, for a scholarship fund. Over the years they helped around 250 students become teachers, nurses, accountants, psychologists, musicians, doctors, lawyers, and architects, among other professions.¹²²

For the older and disabled exiles, Macdonald envisioned a program to meet their needs, creating the Hospitals and Homes program and Special Help. Many of the refugees were elderly, and the organization set up regular payments to provide for their hospital care and old people's homes. Although the refugees received pocket money, that extra cash meant treasured food and drink such as cheese, fruit, cookies, or wine. As always, Macdonald hoped to provide her recipients with a little bit of extra comfort along with the necessities. For others still the money meant buying supplies the hospital did not have such as clothing, shavers, cigarettes, and stamps. In addition, to those who required

¹²¹ Ibid., 191-192.

¹²² Ibid., 197.

special attention and care, the SRA sent wheelchairs, artificial limbs, dentures, hearing aids, and other special items that helped them live more comfortably.

Throughout the years the SRA maintained a special relationship with the IRC, which initially helped Macdonald find the contacts for her organization. Because of their close contacts, and similar missions, the IRC shipped clothing abroad for the SRA without charge. In 1954 and 1955 they gave the organization 81,000 pounds of U.S. Government surplus butter, milk, cheese, and eggs for the Spaniards. The IRC contributed financially as well, sending \$1,000 \$1,500, and up to \$2,000 a year.¹²³

It is clear through Macdonald's writings that her greatest joy was not necessarily in the organization's programs, though she certainly felt pride for the amount of people she helped with them. Her true pleasure was in the contacts she made with the refugees and those who participated in the aid efforts. The human connection to the refugees' suffering was what Macdonald thought was truly at stake. If the exiles were denied their voice and their stories, then the world would have turned their back on them twice. Once ignored during the war by the Western democracies was terrible enough for Macdonald. She, and those who spent their time and energies providing aid, made sure to always the refugees that they would not be forgotten.

¹²³ NM to Hanne Benzion, October 11, 1973, Folder: Hanne Benzion, NM unpublished papers.

CONCLUSION

FROM CRADLE TO GRAVE: THE SPANISH REFUGEE AID COMES TO AN END

“We had the impression that somebody understood us,” recalled Montserrat Carrion, a Spanish refugee living in France for over sixty years.¹²⁴ After fifty-three years of providing aid to the Spanish refugees in France, the SRA closed down its offices in the summer of 2006. The decision to end the operation began in the 1980’s, though Macdonald was careful to do so slowly, as there still were many refugees to be helped. They closed down the Paris and Montauban offices first, leaving two offices in Toulouse, with the highest number of refugees, intact. At this point, the SRA’s lasting relationship with the IRC came in handy. The head of the IRC at the time, Carol Sternberg, came to an agreement with Macdonald to provide an office and all office services for the dissolved SRA corporation. In return for serving under the IRC, the SRA’s mission for the nearly three hundred refugees still living in France could continue on.¹²⁵ Margaret Childers took over as head of the SRA after Macdonald’s retirement in 1983. Even after retirement, Macdonald kept her mind agile by continuing to inform herself on the Spanish refugee situation, and began preparations for another book – though this time as a memoir of her family and life.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, Macdonald passed away in 1996, before she could finish her last work. Ten years later, as the refugees’ numbers dwindled, the IRC and Margaret Childers decided to close up shop.

In 2006, filmmaker Isabelle Millé documented the SRA’s closing of their last two offices in Toulouse, France, based on the very few remaining Spanish refugees. While

¹²⁴ Remember Spain: Spanish Refugee Aid, DVD, directed by Isabelle Millé (2006, Toulouse, France: Les Films du Sud, 2006).

¹²⁵ Margaret Childers, “Re: SRA,” email to author, May 25 2006.

¹²⁶ NM to Hanne Benzion, November 18, 1983, Folder: Hanne Benzion, NM published papers.

Millé's film centers around Nancy Macdonald, the refugees, and the SRA and its supporters, the documentary's strength lay in the depiction of the contributors. Apart from her main goal of helping the Spanish refugees, Macdonald hoped that the SRA would serve as a consciousness-raising organization, inspiring like-minded people to contribute to the Spanish people's aid.

SRA supporter Avice Wilson was a child when she learned about the Spanish refugee situation, remembering it as being "part of my life." Her contributions to her adopted refugee became so commonplace among her family that her referred to him as "Avice's Spanish refugee." Similarly, supporter Joe Aronson was nine years old he used to read Ernest Hemingway's dispatches from Spain, and recalled how the Spanish Civil War came to "inform my world views for the rest of my life...it was a very emotional thing." Aronson made it a point to learn the traditional Loyalist songs as a point of reference when he spoke with the veterans. Other supporters such as Andrew Lee were born after the war, and became drawn to the refugee situation from his interest in Spanish history. Lee remembered his initial thoughts simply as, "They lost...and they should have won." Apart from their contributions to the Spanish refugees, the SRA supporters' consciousness served to inform those around them. No doubt Avice Wilson's family spoke and informed others of the committee and the exiles. Joe Aronson appears in the film with his wife, Penny, who accompanied him on the castanets. Andrew Lee, furthermore, is currently working on his doctoral on the subject of Federica Monsteny and anarchist culture and literature. His son, consequently, has become interested in

anarchism, and in true anarchist fashion, Lee provides readings and information at his son's request, but lets him decide what he wants to read and learn about.¹²⁷

From their birth as refugees to their deaths, Nancy Macdonald faithfully supported her Spanish exiles from cradle to grave. It is obvious through her attachment and devotion to the Spanish refugees that they had become a part of her family, and she a part of theirs. She had served as a form of surrogate mother as she cared and nurtured them through their years in exile. The attachment, as Millé's film makes clear, was much more than simply caring for the refugees as one would care for an abandoned child. The link was their anarchist philosophy. Macdonald had been inspired by the stories of successful anarchist collectives in Catalonia, Aragon, and Levante (Valencia), and their subsequent repression. Therefore, she shared an emotional and ideological connection to the refugees.

Although clearly Macdonald's handlings of her charitable organizations evolved due to her political consciousness, the SRA still retained much of the essence of her earliest work. The flowers she provided to hospital patients brought a little bit of beauty and comfort. They could not fix the ailments of the sickly, nor were they designed to do so. Macdonald never believed in simply offering hand-outs to others; the flowers were meant to inspire hope for something beyond the hospital doors. Similarly, the SRA provided essential levels of subsistence, and sometimes extra pocket change to buy comfort items such as cheese, wine, and jams. More importantly though, the organization also opportunities for the refugees to integrate into society through scholarship and adoption programs. It was their choice and initiative that would determine how well they would live while in exile. Much like a parent to a child,

¹²⁷ Ibid.

Macdonald worked to provide the refugees with the tools to live and succeed on their own.

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