

Letter to Grover Furr from Wendy Fisher

Dear Professor Furr:

I am the daughter of Harry Fisher, a Lincoln Brigade veteran who, sadly, passed away on March 22 after participating in the New York demonstration against the war on Iraq. Yesterday I managed to go through his recent e-mails and I came across the ALBA announcement of your review of *Spain Betrayed*. I read your review, and want to thank you for the wonderful job you've done in exposing Ronald Radosh for the liar and fraud that he is. I know how much work your review entailed; please know that it is appreciated. I am only sorry that your review did not become available a few weeks earlier, as it would have given my father great pleasure.

In his final years my father had many extraordinary experiences. His book, *Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War*, was published in the U.S., Germany, and Spain. This led to speaking tours not only in this country, but in Europe as well. He visited more than 20 European cities over the past few years, and made more friends than most people make in a lifetime. About a month ago, he finished the manuscript for his second book, which we hope to have published very soon.

Dad's final years were remarkable, but there was one thing that constantly ate away at him, namely, that group of right-wing "historians" (I use the word loosely) who have no qualms about lying and obfuscating in order to rewrite history according to the specifications of their benefactors. (I guess in some circles we would call those people mercenaries; then again, perhaps that would be too kind a word.)

When Radosh's book came out, my father and I acquired a copy. I read it first, and put notes in the margins so that when my father (already in his 90s) read it, he would have a little help wading through the rubble. Like you, I did a careful read, and found a myriad of lies and inconsistencies, to say nothing of editorial commentaries that...well...did not comment on the documents before me. Talk about rewriting history! Radosh's analyses were pure fiction. And how was it possible that so many positive reviews were written about such trash? It is exactly as you said: Reviewers, and too many readers in general, did not bother to read the documents themselves, but only Radosh's absurd critiques.

As my father and I made our way through the book, it became clear that the documents make the Brigades and the Soviet Union look better than anyone could have imagined: altruistic, constantly attempting to improve unity, constantly demanding that the anarchists put an end to the murder of priests, etc. etc. And yes, I can't help but wonder whether Radosh's schizophrenia comes across to the average reader: sometimes, in his distorted view, the Communists are self-serving revolutionaries who hide their true intentions; at other times they are evil counter-revolutionaries who merely want to sabotage the honorable revolutionaries, the anarchists and Trotskyists (whom we are to believe Radosh endorses???)!!)

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I wondered long and hard about why the phrase "in the guise of" was given an accurate translation in a footnote. Your suggestion that the translator wanted to remove herself from this egregious "error" is one possibility; my feeling is that a savvy editor at the publishing house picked it up, but didn't feel that this one "unfortunate" mistranslation warranted further investigation. Easier to simply clarify/correct the error. Too bad. I have no doubt that mistranslations abound.

My anger at Radosh has not subsided. For the past year I have inconsistently jotted down notes in the hopes that someday I would take Radosh on, write a scathing review, and try to get it published somewhere, though with no academic credentials, my chances were slim. My brother tried to calm me down, tried to convince me to let it go: "When you enter a pissing match with a skunk, you're bound to lose" were his exact words. In my case, he was right. Radosh would simply point out that my parents worked at TASS for 50 years and my credibility would be in the gutter. (This was all Todd Gitlin had to say in order to discredit my father's book in a letter to *The Nation*.) So the project fell by the wayside, though all the time we worked on Dad's second manuscript I kept jotting down those notes for my someday-review.

So I am very grateful that you had the courage and persistence to take Radosh on, and that you did such an excellent job. One of these days I will stop by your office, as I am often on the Montclair State campus. (I'm two courses away from my Master's and hope to finish it up soon.) I think you would be amused by my indignant comments in the margins of Radosh's book.

Best regards and sincere thanks,
Wendy Fisher