

## LIBERAL ARTS

### Applying the Byronic Model to the International Volunteers with the Spanish Nationalists (1936–1939)

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When the Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936, it prompted a plethora of international right- and left-wing volunteers to travel to Spain for the purpose of defending their respective factions, that is, the rebel Spanish right-wing Nationalists, or the leftist duly-elected Spanish government. I found particular interest in the subject of the non-Spanish right-wing volunteers whose personalities and beliefs reveal a romantic and intricate war of faith, politics, and passion during the interwar period. The research I have completed sheds light mainly on the overshadowed historiography of the interwar period.



*Xhelal Staravecke shaking hands with Major Billy McLean at Shtylla, August 1943, during the first Special Operations Executive (SOE) mission to Albania. Behind them are Stilian and Stephan and, on the right, Major Peter Kemp. Courtesy of the Imperial War Museum.*

To categorize the diverse motivations of the civil war volunteers, I used the model of 19th-century Romantic crusader Lord Byron. The Byronic model seeks to encapsulate the notion that religious beliefs, political ideals, and outright personal longing for adventure drove volunteers to the battlefield. Furthermore, the research points to the trend that right-wing volunteers came from diverse backgrounds and for differing reasons. While a percentage of volunteers had politically radical motivations—including but not limited to the Romanian Iron Guard, who were outright fascist religious ultranationalists—there were also those like Priscilla Scott-Ellis, who was driven by a sense of heroism and adventure. As the Romanian volunteer Ion Moța described, “[the Spanish Civil War] united us all and made us a part of the same people,” a sentiment shared by the Byronic crusade between the political right and left in a country that seemed to have split into two worlds.

*Research advisor Jennifer Foray writes: “Nathan’s work focuses on those foreign volunteers who joined Francisco Franco’s insurgent forces in the Spanish Civil War of 1936–1939. Nathan argues that a ‘Byronic model’ emphasizing valiant, ideal-driven conflict on foreign shores inspired these hundreds of men and women to join this short-lived but absolutely foundational conflict.”*