

Cinema and the Spanish Civil War: A Conflict that Stirred the World



The **Spanish Civil War (1936-1939)** was not just a Spanish affair. Around the world film-makers of the time, and many others since then, found it impossible not to engage with this terrible period. In their many different ways, artists like Ernest Hemingway, Luis Buñuel, Alain Resnais, Pablo Picasso, Paul Éluard or George Orwell all reacted to what was happening in Spain, drawing attention to it through their work.

With the triumph of Franco's troops, Spain entered a dark period of repression and censorship. There was no space for cinema to engage with the recent war and the tyranny of the new system – though some film-makers did manage to get around the censors and present visions of a Spain rather different from the regime's.

Following the death of the Generalísimo in 1975, Spain began to explore the Civil War and its legacy in earnest. Seventy years after the end of the war, this season offers different views of the period and its consequences. There are documentaries and films such as the Oscar nominated **Blockade** (1938) with **Henry Fonda** and **Ken Loach's Land and Freedom** (1995) that look directly at the war itself, as well as films that use the period as a backdrop to other stories as in **For Whom the Bell Tolls** (1943) with **Ingrid Bergman** and **Gary Cooper**. These have been produced in film cultures as diverse as Hollywood, the USSR, Spain with films such as **¡Ay, Carmela!** (1990), France with **Alan Renais' La Guerre est finie** (1966), the UK and East Germany. The programme also includes a selection of NO-DOs – Noticiarios Documentales, or News and Documentaries – cinema propaganda newsreels that Franco used from 1939 until 1981 to update the population about the latest official truths.

The very first film in this survey – **España** - having been made in 1936 and the most recent – **La Buena nueva** - dating from 2008, this programme represents more than seven decades of cinema trying to do justice to these historic events.

With the support of



PRESS CONTACT:

BFI Southbank: Tim Mosley

Tel: 020 7957 8918 or email: tim.mosley@bfi.org.uk

PROGRAMME

The Spanish Earth

Written and narrated by Ernest Hemingway, *The Spanish Earth* shows people's daily lives in their struggle to survive as well as the Republican army at the front. Both John Dos Passos and Orson Welles left this project because of differences with Hemingway.

USA 1937 Dir Joris Ivens 52min

+ *España 1936*

The Republic's Ministry of Foreign Affairs entrusted this propaganda film to Luis Buñuel, then in Paris, who wrote it. Finally made by Le Chanois, the film depicts the resistance of the Republic and the involvement of the International Brigades through a montage of still photos and footage.

Spain 1936. Dir Jean-Paul Le Chanois. 35min

Sun 7 June 18:10 NFT3, Tue 9 June 20:30 NFT3

Return to Life

A documentary on American medical aid and humanitarian work in Republican Spain, and the cinematic debut of French photographer Cartier-Bresson, who went to Spain as a volunteer. His earlier meeting in New York with the politically involved Kline and the Film and Photo League awoke his interest in film-making.

USA 1938 Dir Henri Cartier-Bresson & Herbert Kline 50min

+ *Heart of Spain*

Kline uses images of the civilian population under attack and the international aid to both civilians and Republican soldiers, to show the anguish and suffering of a people in wartime.

USA 1937 Dir Herbert Kline 30min

Thu 4 June 20:40 NFT2, Sun 7 June 20:50 NFT2

Blockade

In this war-torn drama of action and romance, Fonda's character, Marco, has to take up arms to fight during the Spanish Civil War and along the way falls in love with a foreigner involved in espionage. This brave film tackles a subject that was then very delicate in Hollywood, and it later brought problems with the House Committee on Un-American Activities for Dieterle and screenwriter John Howard Lawson.

In spite of trouble surrounding the film's release, it was still Oscar-nominated for Best Original Story and Score.

USA 1938 Dir William Dieterle With Henry Fonda, Madeleine Carroll, John Halliday 85min PG

Wed 3 June 20:50 NFT2, Sat 6 June 18:30 NFT2

Ispaniya

In August 1936 the Central Committee of the Communist Party sent film-maker Roman Karmen and cameraman Boris Makaseev to Spain to record as much as possible of the war from the Republican side. The actual making of this documentary was then given to experienced editor Shub, who eventually received directorial credit.

USSR 1939 Dir Esther Shub 85min

Mon 15 June 21:15 NFT1, Sun 21 June 18:15 NFT2

For Whom the Bell Tolls

USA 1943 Dir Sam Wood With Gary Cooper, Ingrid Bergman 156min PG

An American enlisted to the International Brigades joins a group of peasants who'll help him to blow up a bridge. With them there's beautiful Maria (Ingrid Bergman) with whom he will fall in love.

Sun 28 June 14:45 NFT1, Tue 30 June 20:00 NFT3

L'Espoir

Boasting a cast drawn mainly from the Republican troops, and based on Malraux's novel of the same title, this is a romantic look at how Republicans, with much dignity and very poor means, fought the fascist army. Himself a volunteer, Malraux shot it in 1938, but the film was only released – albeit in a cut rather different from Malraux's – after WW2 was over.

France 1945 Dir André Malraux With Pedro Codina, Miguel del Castillo 80min EST

Mon 8 June 20:50 NFT2, Wed 10 June 18:20 NFT2

Sun 7 June 15:30 NFT1 A rarely-screened alternative cut of *L'Espoir* – ***Sierra de Teruel*** - introduced by the great Spanish director **Víctor Erice**

***Five Cartridges* Fünf Patronenhülsen**

Five brigadiers have to deliver an important message, torn into five pieces and hidden in empty bullet shells. In constant fear of the enemy and dehydrated, the men start an odyssey across the Spanish sierras.

East Germany 1960 Dir Frank Beyer With Ernst Busch, Manfred Krug 83min EST

+ *Guernica*

A meditation on the horrors of war through the words of Paul Eluard and the paintings and sculptures of Picasso.

France 1950 Dir Alain Resnais & Robert Hessens 12min

Tue 23 June 18:20 NFT2, Wed 24 June 18:20 NFT2

La Guerre est finie

Resnais here follows the troubles of Diego, a middle-aged member of the Spanish Communist Party in exile. Written by Jorge Semprún, himself a member of the Party in France, it constitutes a powerful statement about memory, commitment and faith – and managed to intensely irritate the Spanish government, which asked – unsuccessfully – for the film to be withdrawn from Cannes in 1966.

France 1966 Dir Alain Resnais With Yves Montand, Ingrid Thulin, Geneviève Bujold 122min EST

Fri 26 June 20:30 NFT2, Mon 29 June 18:00 NFT1

***Songs for After a War* Canciones para después de una guerra**

With a superb and at times moving montage including still photos, archive footage, films, adverts and popular songs from the time, this is an incisive look at the war and, mostly, at post-war daily and public life. Though the film was forbidden a release by state censorship until the death of the dictator, private screenings were organised for Franco, government personnel and family members to watch the film.

Spain 1971 Dir Basilio Martín Patino 115min EST

Thu 4 June 18:10 NFT3 with Introduction by Basilio Martín Patino, 19 June 20:30 NFT3

***The Spirit of the Beehive* El espíritu de la colmena**

'...When I look around me and I see so much that's missing, so much that's destroyed and also so much sadness, something tells me that we've lost, with those things, our capacity to feel life.' Erice's modern classic about a family in quiet crisis offers a subtle critique of the damage caused by the war as seen through the eyes of a little girl, with hauntingly poetic images.

Spain 1973 Dir Víctor Erice With Fernando Fernán Gómez, Ana Torrent, Teresa Gimpera 98min EST PG

Mon 1 June 21:10 NFT1, Sun 14 June 20:45 NFT1

Caudillo

Following the template of his *Songs for After a War*, and working clandestinely after the controversy that film aroused, Patino made a clever montage of mostly archive footage looking Franco's initial quest for power in Africa up until his seizure of power. In his effort to be objective, Patino shows both sides' vision, producing nonetheless a subtly ironic and intelligent film.

Spain 1973 Dir Basilio Martín Patino 110min EST

Fri 19 June 18:10 NFT2, Sun 21 June 20:30 NFT2

Demonios en el jardín

Secret loves, jealousies and betrayals converge against a backdrop of postwar Spain with a child – of the age of the writer-director himself at the time the film is set – providing testimony. Blessed with an outstanding performance by two of the finest Spanish actresses, Aragón portrays the hypocrisy, severity and miseries of a family that has achieved economic success in the black market and supports the dictatorship.

Spain 1982 Dir Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón With Angela Molina, Ana Belén, Imanol Arias 99min EST

Sat 27 June 18:30 NFT2, Mon 29 June 20:45 NFT2

Las bicicletas son para el verano

One of the best portraits of day-to-day civilian life during the war. Rather than focusing on the conflict, the film – based on a play by the great actor, director and writer Fernando Fernán Gómez – follows the ups and downs of a middle-class family and its neighbours during the war years; how they survive and adapt to circumstances and – with political alignment barely registering – their wish for it all to end and peace to arrive.

Spain-Mexico 1983 Dir Jaime Chávarri With Victoria Abril, Agustin González, Marisa Paredes 103min EST

Sun 14 June 16:00 NFT2, Tue 16 June 20:45 NFT2

The Good Fight

A moving documentary about the 3,200 American men and women who fought alongside other international brigades in the Spanish Civil War. Narrated by radio legend Studs Terkel, the film looks at the reasons and the dreams behind their decision to leave behind the safety of the United States, their experiences at the front and the return home when the war was coming to an inevitably tragic end.

USA 1983 Dir Mary Dore, Noel Buckner & Sam Sills 98min

Tue 23 June 20:40 NFT2, Sun 28 June 18:10 NFT3

La vaquilla

After a long period of trench conflict, a routine atmosphere grows among Republican soldiers. Monotony is broken when Nationalists announce that they're going to celebrate the Virgin's Day with a bullfight. Written by the director's regular collaborator, black comedy specialist Rafael Azcona, the film looks, with good humour and conciliatory optimism, at the sometimes absurd relationship between both sides, with soldiers recruited by chance, depending on the territory they were in and where the front was.

Spain 1985 Dir Luis García Berlanga With Alfredo Landa, Guillermo Montesinos, José Sacristán 122min EST

Wed 3 June 18:15 NFT2, Fri 12 June 20:40 NFT2

¡Ay, Carmela!

Named after one of the favourite songs of the Republican army, *¡Ay, Carmela!* relates the adventures and misadventures of two Republican artists touring Spain during the Spanish Civil War and going into rebel territory by mistake... In contrast to some of Saura's previous films, where the war was presented with brutality, here he looks at it with some humour – much aided by the comic skills of the two lead actors.

Spain 1990 Dir Carlos Saura With Andrés Pajares, Carmen Maura, Gabino Diego 103min EST

Mon 22 June 18:30 NFT1, Sat 27 June 15:50 NFT3

Land and Freedom

In early 1936 a young unemployed communist leaves his hometown of Liverpool to join the fight against fascism with the International Brigades in Spain. With characteristic commitment, Loach tells the story of one individual which nonetheless reflects the experiences of so many British men who went to fight in Spain. The result is a powerful, moving and realistic film.

UK 1995 Dir Ken Loach With Ian Hart, Icíar Bollaín 110min 15
Sat 6 June 16:10 NFT2, Thu 25 June 20:40 NFT2, Tue 30 June 17:45 NFT3

Libertarias

A group of Anarchist women fight for their dreams of equality not only against the Nationalists, but also against factions of the Republican side who want to impose a more traditional military structure. In line with his consistent concern with social issues, Aranda's look at the Civil War shows not only the brutality, but also the important involvement of women on the Republican side.

Spain 1996 Dir Vicente Aranda With Victoria Abril, Ariadna Gil, Ana Belén 125min EST
Fri 26 June 17:50 NFT1, Sun 28 June 20:30 NFT1

Butterfly's Tongue La lengua de las mariposas

Written by Cuerda in collaboration with Rafael Azcona, this is the touching story of a child growing up in a small town in Galicia when the war starts, and the special relationship he builds with his teacher. A poignant description of the strength of fear and violence, and of impotence and sadness in face of betrayal.

Spain 1999 Dir José Luis Cuerda With Fernando Fernán Gómez, Manuel Lozano 96min EST 15
Sat 13 June 15:50 NFT2, Thu 18 June 20:45 NFT2

Hollywood contra Franco aka A War in Hollywood

Examining the impression that the Civil War made on so many American artists of the time, this documentary looks at the particular relation between Hollywood and the War and its consequences, at the same time investigating the relationship between the film industry and politics, then and now.

Spain 2007 Dir Oriol Porta 90min
Mon 22 June 20:50 NFT2, Thu 25 June 18:20 NFT2

La buena nueva

Based on a true story, this is a different look at the War: its beginnings, the treasons, the ideological differences among fascists and the involvement of the Catholic Church. Taberna's is the perspective of a film-maker who, unlike most of the other Spanish directors in this season, didn't live the war directly but who, nonetheless, manages to capture the atmosphere of fear and betrayal.

Spain 2008 Dir Helena Taberna With Unax Ugalde, Bárbara Goneaga, Guillermo Toledo 103min EST
**Wed 17 June 18:15 NFT2
Sat 27 June 20:40 NFT2**

- END -

Booking information

The BFI Southbank is open to all. BFI members are entitled to a discount on all tickets. BFI Southbank Box Office tel: 020 7928 3232. Unless otherwise stated tickets are £9.00, concs £7.60
Website www.bfi.org.uk/southbank

There's more to discover about film and television through the BFI. Our world-renowned archival collections, cinemas, festivals, films, publications and learning resources are here to inspire you.

***** PICTURE DESK *****

A selection of images for journalistic use in promoting BFI Southbank screenings can be found at www.image.net under BFI / BFI Southbank / June 2009