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Physicians imprisoned in Franco Spain’s Miranda de Ebro “Campo de Concentración”

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Abstract

Miranda de Ebro was created in 1937 to imprison Republicans and foreigners who fought with the International Brigades in Spanish Civil War. From 1940, the camp was used only to concentrate detained foreign refugees with no proper documents. More than 15 000 people, most of them from France and Poland, were kept there until the camp was closed in January 1947. Playing both sides of the international divide, fascist Spain at various points in time allowed passage and was a country of refuge both for those escaping Nazism and for Nazis and collaborators who, at the end of World War II (WWII), sought to escape justice. Treatment of each of these groups passing through Miranda was very different: real repression was meted out to the members of the International Brigades (IB), tolerance shown towards those escaping Nazism, and protection and active cooperation given to former Nazis and their collaborators. For the first time, data about foreign physicians imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro were consulted in the Guadalajara Military Archive (Spain). From 1937 to 1947, 151 doctors were imprisoned, most of them in 1942 and 1943, which represents around 1% of the prisoners. Fifty-two of the doctors were released thanks to diplomatic efforts, thirty-two by the Red Cross, and ten were sent to other prisons, directly released or managed to escape. All of them survived. After consulting private and public archives, it was possible to reconstruct some biographies and fill the previous existing gap in the history of migration and exile of doctors during the Second World War.

Keywords: Miranda de Ebro; Franco; Concentration Camp; Doctors; Exile; Emigration

As with personnel of every other profession, medical personnel found themselves on both sides of the divide when the Nazis came to power, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that health professionals were not the least among those interned in such concentration camps as Dachau, Buchenwald or Sachsenhausen. At the other end of the National Socialist spectrum, health professionals played a pre-eminent role in justifying ideology, supporting extermination strategies and more broadly advising on the planning and implementation of Hitler’s racist project. In a symbiotic relationship between the state and the profession such as a few in the history of medicine,¹ many doctors were actively involved in the exclusion of colleagues, the murder of the chronically ill and the disabled, in experiments devoid of ethics, in advising on methods of torture and murder and, ultimately, in the medicalisation of extermination.

Trying and thereby bringing these crimes into the open, the 1947 Doctors trial was among a number of tribunals at Nuremberg under the jurisdiction of United States following the major trials of Nazi leaders under the jurisdiction of the victorious wartime allies. It saw twenty-three Nazi doctors charged with atrocities committed during the twelve years of National Socialism. Several publications, both academic and informative, have since grappled with the ideology and driving force behind such Nazi medical experiments as those conducted by Josef Mengele in Auschwitz.²

¹ Esther Cuerda, ‘Medicina y Totalitarismos’, in *El delirio nihilista. Un ensayo sobre los totalitarismos, nacionalismos y populismos* (Málaga, Spain: Última línea, 2018), 413–441.

² One of the first books published on the topic was Alexander Mitscherlich, Fred Mielke, *Doctors of Infamy: The Story of the Nazi Medical Crimes* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 1949). Other classic books are, for example George J. Annas,

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Conversely, there were many medical professionals in Nazi Germany and in countries occupied by Germany during World War II (WWII) who did not cooperate with or even actively resisted the policies imposed by National Socialism.³ A unique feature of the Miranda de Ebro camp in Spain is that both victims and perpetrators from the Nazi era were interned in the same place, and sometimes at the same time.

Historians continue to debate who originally invented the internment system operated in Miranda de Ebro and somewhere between 103 and 189 other camps in Franco Spain: did imperial Spain build them first in Cuba in the late 19th century or was it British imperial forces during the Anglo Boer South African war between 1899 and 1902? Irrespectively, both occupying forces explicitly called their internment facilities “concentration camps”. These were places in which non-combatants were forcibly concentrated under appalling conditions, resulting in hundreds of thousands of innocent deaths in Cuba and in South Africa, and giving rise internationally to the more generally used term “concentration camp.” This concept is different from the Nazi German “*Vernichtungslager*” or extermination camps such as Auschwitz or Treblinka, whose explicit purpose was systematic mass murder. Upon coming to power, the National Socialists initially followed the historic lead, creating concentration camps in which they imprisoned, maltreated and frequently also murdered their political opponents, members of racial minorities, prisoners of war or people with diverging sexual identities, but their task was not mass annihilation.

At the end of WWII, testimonies and memoirs by doctors who had worked as prisoners in ghettos and in Nazi concentration camps emerged in which the deplorable sanitary conditions, the systematic killing of the weakest, the use of prisoners in experiments and the ethical dilemmas they faced as captive medical practitioners were described.⁴ Not all doctors persecuted by National Socialism ended up in ghettos or concentration camps. Many of them, along with those who wanted to flee the conflict or join Allied armies, sought to escape. Much is still unknown about the people who had to flee from Nazi Germany and the occupied countries. Their migration routes are often opaque, and what is known often only briefly opens a window on the fate of a relatively limited and specific group.

Between 1933 and the second half of the 1940s, there were several reasons, including economic, ideological and political, for doctors to migrate. Among them were those who joined the International Brigades (IB) in support of the Spanish Republic against the Franco fascists, those persecuted for reasons of race, religion or sexual orientation, and, later, those trying to escape Allied justice. Their countries of destination varied before, during and after WWII depending on the progress of the war, who controlled the ports and frontiers, and the chances of getting visas or permission to practice their profession in the countries offering refuge.⁵

Playing both sides of the international divide, fascist Spain at various points in time allowed passage and was a country of refuge both for those escaping Nazism and for Nazis and collaborators who, at the end of WWII, sought to escape justice. Treatment of each of these groups passing through Miranda was very different: real repression was meted out to the members of the IB, tolerance shown towards those escaping Nazism, and protection and active cooperation given to former Nazis and their collaborators.

As a neutral country, Spain, which was non-belligerent and again neutral during WWII, never hid its sympathies for the Axis. Nevertheless, it became an important way station for many seeking to escape the

Michael A. Godrin, *The Nazi Doctors and the Nuremberg Code. Human Rights in Human experimentation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), or Götz Aly, Peter Chroust, Christian Pross, *Cleansing the Fatherland. Nazi Medicine and racial Hygiene* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1994).

³Bruno Halioua *et al.*, ‘Righteous among the Nations: Doctors and Medical Students’, *BMJ*, 349 (2014), g7657.

⁴See, for example, Janusz Korczak, *Ghetto Diary* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 2003) or the memories written in 1946 by Miklós Nyiszli, *I was Doctor Mengele's Assistant: The Memories of an Auschwitz Physician* (Oswiecim, Poland: Frap-Books, 2000).

⁵Two medical specialisations, which included a lot of Jewish practitioners, were dermatology and urology. For urology see: Matthis Krischel *et al.*, *Urologen im Nationalsozialismus. Zwischen Anpassung und Vertreibung*. Vol. 1. (Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2011); Paul J. Weindling, ‘Refugee urologists coming to or through the UK, 1933–1946’, *Urology under the Swastika* (Antwerpen: Davidfonds Uitgevers, 2018), 186–191. For dermatology see: Albrecht Scholz, ‘Institutionalization in Germany’, in *History of German language Dermatology* (Germany: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 3–138; Wolfrang Weyers, *Death of Medicine in Nazi Germany. Dermatology and Dermopathology under the Swastika* (Boston, USA: Madison Books, 1998).

Nazis. After the invasion of the part of France not yet occupied by the Wehrmacht in November 1942, there was no other option for those fleeing the Nazis than to cross the Pyrenees, hoping to transit Spain and reach such ports as Lisbon in Portugal or Gibraltar, from where they could escape continental Europe. During WWII, over 120 000 people crossed the Pyrenees while fleeing Nazi terror. After the Allied victory in May 1945, some prominent doctors were among those senior Nazis able to escape via Italy. Others reached Spain, one of the two primary “Rat Lines” via which Nazi leaders and high-ranking collaborators from other countries fled to South America after WWII. Many stayed in Spain for good, reshaped their lives and even maintained their ideas, as Leon Degrelle.⁶ The Spanish routes were protected by some Catholic priests and groups of Falangists.⁷

Whether victims of the Nazis or perpetrators, many fleeing doctors were over time interned by the Spanish authorities in Miranda de Ebro until their documents had been checked. The Nazi doctors were treated with deference, they were allowed to leave the camp and use municipal facilities such as the public swimming pool. Many were released expeditiously, making intervention by the International Red Cross unnecessary. Some of them even found permanent refuge in Spain until their deaths years later.

In this paper, I seek to examine foreigner physician inmates in Miranda de Ebro in order to present the camps as an intersection of stories, those trying to escape from Nazism in the same place as those trying to avoid the Allied justice.

This way I hope to be able to contribute to the body of literature concerning the paradoxical role of Spain during WWII: ideologically close to the Axis and also a place of saving people persecuted by Fascism. To achieve this goal, I will first review the changing role of Spain during WWII and define Miranda de Ebro as a concentration camp. Then I will present and analyse the data obtained on foreigner physicians imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro and finally I will reconstruct some biographies.

Spain: “neutral” country in a continent at war

Spain played an important role during WWII because of its unique geographic, politico-economic and social position.⁸ Geographically, Spain was a strategic link between Europe on the one side and the Americas and Africa on the other. Its location on the far southwest edge of Europe was of utmost interest to the Nazis, because of its access to Gibraltar, a strategic point for Mediterranean Sea control. Since Spain had borders with the occupied France along the Pyrenees, for Republicans fleeing after their defeat in the Spanish Civil War (SCW) in 1939, the mountain range offered many escape routes. In the west, Spain had borders with Portugal, which under the Salazar dictatorship stayed neutral although friendly towards Great Britain and the USA.

At the beginning of WWII, Spain was a country devastated by the civil war. Franco implemented a system of harsh internal repression while rebuilding the country. In foreign policy, Spain acted in an opportunistic way according to the changing tide of the war from neutrality (September 1939 to June 1940), through non-aligned status (June 1940 to November 1942), back to neutrality (November 1942 until the end of WWII) with a differing degree of sympathy towards the Axis.⁹ Economically ruined and treated coldly by major countries, Spain was susceptible to influence by external elements, accepting help (e.g., oil or food) from Britain, USA and The Third Reich in return for the benevolent treatment of its nationals.¹⁰

⁶Violeta Friedman, *Mis memorias* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 2005), 179–208.

⁷In Eric Frattini, *La huida de las ratas. Cómo escaparon de Europa los criminales de guerra nazis* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 2018), 13–27. See also Clarita Stauffer, la dama que escondía nazis en España. Available at: <https://www.lavanguardia.com/historiayvida/historia-contemporanea/20200702/482024554759/clarita-stauffer-seccion-femenina-primo-rivera-falange-espana-nola-red-huida-nazis-otto-skorzeny-leon-degrelle-espana-argentina-peron.html>, accessed June 2022.

⁸Two Canadian authors edited and published recently an extense monography about the role of Spain during the SCW and the Holocaust: Sara J. Brenneis and Gina Herrmann, *Spain, The Second World War, and the Holocaust. History and Representation*. (Toronto-Buffalo-London: University of Toronto Press, 2020).

⁹Julio Gil Pecharromán, *Estrategias de supervivencia. Franquismo y política exterior (1939–1975)*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2022), 113.

¹⁰About Francoist politics and SCW see: Josep Calvet, *Huyendo del Holocausto. Judíos evadidos del nazismo a través del Pirineo de Lleida*. (Lleida: Editorial Milenio, 2014); Haim Avni, *España, Franco y los judíos* (Madrid, Altalena, 1982); Manuel

The occupation of France by the Germans in 1940 multiplied the number of foreign refugees in Spain,¹¹ forcing the Francoist authorities to establish the first set of norms to regulate the situation of the refugees as well as rules for their custody. Refugees were classified into two groups according to their origin: those coming from belligerent countries (whose custody was managed by the Defense Ministry), and civil or military refugees from neutral or non-belligerent countries, who fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. The links established before the SCW became closer when the Germans and Italians gave military support to the Francoist forces during the war's first phase, but waned from 1943 onwards when Franco, who began having increasing doubts about victory by the Third Reich, tried to ingratiate himself with the Allies. The treatment received by foreign prisoners mirrors this development.

Significantly, Spain's shifting position on the treatment of refugees allowed it to be an escape route for both sides: those fleeing war and Fascism and those fleeing the consequences of their pro-Nazi affiliation. Despite being one of the Axis' main informal allies in the Western Mediterranean, Spain allowed anti-Nazi civilians and Allied military personnel to seek safe haven, accepting the refugees from the very country the Franco government was friendly towards.

Miranda de Ebro – a concentration camp?

On 5 July 1937, the official Spanish government gazette [Boletín Oficial del Estado (BOE)] published an announcement by the Secretariat of War with General Franco's order to create a commission for the establishment of concentration camps for prisoners ("campos de concentración para prisioneros") to imprison Republicans and IB members captured on the front lines during the SCW and later as a system by which the regime could abuse its opponents.¹² The Franco government did not need foreign help or advice to design or run its concentration camps. Some publications wrongly pointed to the Paul Wizner, official at the German embassy in Madrid, as the director of the Miranda de Ebro concentration camp. Although Franco's regime maintained a close relationship with German National Socialists and Italian fascists, and its officials even visited Nazi concentration camps,¹³ there is no evidence that Nazis helped organise or run the camps in Spain.¹⁴

Miranda de Ebro was the biggest and the only camp that stayed opened until 1947. Nevertheless, although Miranda de Ebro is commonly described as a concentration camp, it should not be equated either to Nazi or Communist or to the other Francoist concentration camps. This is because, after 1940, it was used as an internment centre for foreign citizens without the required or any documentation who were neither prisoners subject to punishment nor forced labourers.¹⁵

Vázquez Montalbán, *Diccionario del Franquismo* (Barcelona: Anagrama, 2019); Helen Graham, *The Spanish Civil War. A Very Short Introduction* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹¹The routes will be explained later in the text. Some early memories and testimonies about these routes can be found in: Eduardo Martínez Alonso, *Memoirs of a medico* (Garden City NY: Doubleday, 1961); Airey Neave, *Les Chemis de Gibraltar* (Paris, France: Empire, 1972).

¹²Javier Rodrigo, 'Introducción. Las líneas de demarcación', in *Cautivos. Campos de concentración en la España franquista, 1936–1947* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2005), XIX–XXX.

¹³Félix Santos, *Espanoles en la Alemania Nazi. Testimonios de visitantes del Tercer Reich entre 1933 y 1945* (Madrid: Ediciones Endymian SL, 2012).

¹⁴Despite the assessment of some authors who claim that the camp was designed by the Nazis (see e.g., Patrik von zur Mühlen: Miranda de Ebro. In: *Der Ort des Terrors*, Band 9, 2009, S. 597–601), no documents have been found that probe this theory and quite unlikely according with the information and documents available from these times. It is a common mistake, repeated by some authors and published by a journalists and writers that Miranda de Ebro was led by the Nazis: in a journal in the 1970s. Miranda de Ebro was entirely designed and led by the Francoist government. The camp was led by the Spanish authorities (Guardia Civil). During the first years of existence of the camp, some Gestapo members pressed the Spanish authorities to give some prisoners but they did it in only very few cases. On these occasions the Gestapo visited the camp, but they were not members of the camp staff.

¹⁵Jan Stanislaw Ciechanowski, 'Los campos de concentración en Europa. Algunas consideraciones sobre su definición, tipología y estudios comparados', *Ayer*, 1 (2005), 51–79.

The camp's history can be divided into two phases. The first ran from its opening in 1937 to the summer of 1940. During this period, it served as a "concentration camp" for Spanish Republicans and members of the IB. The IB represent a complex historical phenomenon that has sometimes been oversimplified. These volunteers are presented either as "Stalin's army" or as a group of heroic and romantic fighters drawn from leftist movements around the world, including Germany. Both approaches are too simple. They seek to establish clear opposing ideological lines, right versus left, and thereby distort the purpose and deeper reasons that made thousands of men and women from all over the world join the IB. The political right seeks to discredit the Brigades, all that matters is that it was Soviet leader Josef Stalin who on 15 September 1936 ordered communist parties all over the world to recruit volunteers to fight against Fascism in Spain during the SCW. The left, on the other hand, attempts to maintain an impeccable image of the members of the Brigades where all that counts is the supposedly noble impulse that inspired all the volunteers.¹⁶

The IB consisted of units of volunteers from eighty-six countries, colonies and protectorates. Many were Communists, but there were Anarchists as well, and many others with no defined ideological position except their wish to fight against Fascism. The first volunteers arrived in Spain in October 1936, and recent studies estimate their total number at around 32 500 men and women. Peak figures were reached in the spring of 1937.¹⁷ The volunteers came from all over the world, but they were generally either Europeans or sons and daughters of Europeans who had migrated to America and elsewhere. A quarter of them were Jewish.¹⁸ Among the volunteers in the IB were many physicians from different countries. Most of them came from Poland (fifty-six), Germany (thirty-nine), the United States (thirty-six), Hungary (twenty-six), and France and Romania (twenty-five each).¹⁹ During the SCW and after it had ended some members of the IB were taken prisoner. Between the end of 1936 and November 1941, most of them were imprisoned in the monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña, in Castrillo del Val (Burgos). Some prisoners were sent to Miranda de Ebro. However, during the first years of its existence, the camp's registration system was not accurate. Towards the end of 1941, most of the IB members still in other prisons and camps were moved to Miranda de Ebro.

Miranda de Ebro's second phase combines an initial period between mid-June 1940 and 1942, and a second from 1942 to its final closure in 1947. After the end of the SCW and until 1942 the inmates were mostly Spanish Republican prisoners who, after the armed conflict had ended, were serving sentences or awaiting a court verdict. They shared their fate with members of the IB waiting for repatriation, or foreigners who had come to Spain after 1940, fleeing the war in Europe.

From 1942 to 1947, Miranda de Ebro was a camp exclusively for foreigners. They were separated into two groups representing the two sides fighting in WWII: German and Austrian Nazis and collaborators from other countries on the one hand and Allies on the other.²⁰ The Miranda de Ebro concentration camp has been the subject of several broad investigations published as books,²¹ doctoral theses, scientific articles and book chapters.²²

¹⁶Recently published see Giles Tremlet, *Las brigadas internacionales. Fascismo, libertad y la guerra civil española* (Madrid: Debate, 2020); a classic reference about IB Andreu Castells, *Las Brigadas Internacionales de la Guerra de España* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1978).

¹⁷Andrés Viñas, 'La creación de las Brigadas Internacionales', in *Las Brigadas Internacionales: nuevas perspectivas en la historia de la Guerra Civil y del exilio* (Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2015), 15–22.

¹⁸Helen Graham, *The Spanish Civil War. A Very Short Introduction* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2005).

¹⁹Francisco Guerra Pérez, *La medicina en el exilio republicano* (Alcalá de Henares: Universidad Alcalá de Henares, 2003).

²⁰José Antonio Fernández López, *Historia del campo de concentración de Miranda de Ebro: 1937–1947* (Miranda de Ebro: J. A. Fernandez, 2004).

²¹Jan Stanislaw Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy: Polacy w hiszpańskim obozie internowania w Miranda de Ebro 1940–1945* (Warszawa: Rytm, 2021).

²²Concha Pallarés Morano, *Desplazados y refugiados políticos en España, 1940–1947: el papel de las embajadas* (Madrid, Spain: Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia Facultad de Geografía e Historia, 2009); Javier Rodrigo, *Cautivos. Campos de concentración en la España franquista, 1936–1947* (Barcelona: Crítica, 2005); Matilde Eiroa San Francisco, 'Refugiados extranjeros en España: El campo de concentración de Miranda de Ebro', *Ayer*, 57, 1 (2005), 125–152.

Data from Miranda de Ebro and imprisoned Physicians

The main sources for this paper are files from the Guadalajara Military Archive [Archivo General Militar de Guadalajara (AGMG)]. The archive keeps 104 boxes containing documents concerning all foreigners imprisoned in the Miranda de Ebro concentration camp. The Historical Memory law approved by the Spanish Parliament in 2007 allowed for the declassification of many files unavailable until then, making it possible to examine their contents.

All 15 238 documents held by the AGMG referring to foreign prisoners in the Miranda de Ebro concentration camp were reviewed. The identification clue was medical profession, students of medicine being discarded. All of the information about the 151 physicians registered as prisoners there has been thoroughly analysed.²³

The most common documents included in the admission records are forms with personal data and records of interrogations, including questionnaires. In addition to these records, in some cases, inmates' private correspondence and their translations by the military censors, personal documents confiscated during arrest, and the claims submitted to the Red Cross, have been preserved.

The personal files exist in the form of index cards. Usually, though not always, they contain the name and surname of the prisoner, parents' names, date and place of birth, last address, profession, nationality, date and place of detention and date of internment in Miranda de Ebro. The back of the card sometimes shows the date of transfer or release and who released the prisoner. The cards themselves present some methodological problems. Doctors generally did not lie about their profession, but many prisoners provided false names. Furthermore, the transcription of foreign names is not always correct, which makes subsequent search for data difficult. The nationality provided was, on many occasions, deliberately falsified, as prisoners hoped to be repatriated more easily, or their real nationality had changed because their country of origin had ceased to exist when occupied by the Germans or the Soviets.

On their arrival in the camp, the index cards with the prisoners' personal data were filled in by the Spanish guards or by prisoners employed in the registry. Some interrogations took place immediately after the arrest, in police stations or prisons. Most, however, were done when the arrested person arrived in Miranda de Ebro. The questionnaires were similar, but offer a broader view than the mere administrative procedure, allowing through a contextualised analysis the identification of patterns such as the order of events after the arrest.

The literature and other sources related to foreign prisoners in Miranda de Ebro, doctors serving in the IB, escape routes, and records of the statements of witnesses and trials have been examined. Documents regarding arrests at the Spanish border have been analysed (Archivos de Frontera, Gerona). Furthermore, in order to reconstruct the biographies of some of the interned doctors, additional files and archives have been consulted at the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) in New York, the Central

²³AGMA: DCME 305279, 12, 39, 73, 128, 143; DCME 305280, 217, 233, 255; DCME 305281, 359; 305282 518, 531; DCME 305283 616, 684; DCME 305284 749; DCME 305285 959; DCME 305286 1054, 1086, 1096, 1143; DCME 503087 1195, 1224; DCME 305288 1442; DCME 305289 1507; DCME 305290 1651, 1653, 1655; DCME 305291 1816; DCME 305292 1957; DCME 305293 2059, 2146; DCME 305294 2341; DCME 305297 2669, 2697, 2710, 2755; DCME 305298 2820; DCME 305299 3070; DCME 305300 3110; DCME 305301 3267, 3331; DCME 305303 3637; DCME 305304 3789; DCME 305305 3881; DCME 305307 4145; DCME 305308 4280, 4305, 4326; DCME 305311 4722; DCME 305312 4831, 4870, 4906; DCME 305313 4986, 5073, 5075; DCME 305315 5443; DCME 305316 5573, 5578, 5587; DCME 305317 5607; DCME 305318 5786; DCME 305319 5996; DCME 305322 6329, 6391; DCME 305323 6476, 6510; DCME 305324 6694, 6707; DCME 305325 6783, 6805, 6868; DCME 305327 7193,7195; DCME 305328 7347; DCME 303331 7670; DCME 305332 7797; DCME 305335 8266, 8369, 8402; DCME 3053336 8486, 8561, 8550; DCME 303341 9222, 9238; DCME 303343 9550; DCME 303344 9608, 9621, 9627, 9654, 9665, 9721; DCME 303345 9834, 9850; DCME 303346 9977; DCME 30347 10089, 10155; DCME 303348 10210, 10241, 10254; DCME 303349 10358; DCME 303350 10494; DCME 303351 10629, 10707; DCME 303353 10942, 11025; DCME 303355 11289, 11349; DCME 303356 11439; DCME 303357 11522, 11541, 11544; DCME 303358 11744; DCME 303359 11920; DCME 303361 12154, 12201; DCME 303362 12317, 12351, 12357, 12379; DCME 303363 12484; DCME 303364 12634, 12641; DCME 303366 12864, 12949, 12966; DCME 367 13069, 13110; DCME 303368 13159; DCME 303369 13295; DCME 303370 13535; DCME 303372 13829; DCME 303374 14051, 14052, 14055, 14126; DCME 303376 14412, 14438; DCME 303377 14579, 14588; DCME 303378 14627, 14628, 14721, 14727; DCME 303379 14777, 14808; DCME 303380 14926, 14984; DCME 303381 15080, 15099, 15137; DCME 303382 15153, 15189.

Military Archive in Warsaw, the National Archives in Kew (London), the Bibliothèque interuniversitaire de Santé, in Paris, the Guide Rosenwald, Archive National Pierrefite sur Seine in France, Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv in Vienna, University Saskatchewan College of Medicine in Canada, Archives of the Chaim Herzog Museum in Israel, Ancestry, the Memorial Archives at the Gurs internment camp, Archives Départementales du Pyrénées-Orientales in Perpignan, Archives Départementales du Pyrénées-Occidentales in Pau, the Albert Schweitzer Foundation Archive in France and the Bundesarchiv in Berlin, which provide personal data on the lives of doctors before and after their time at Miranda de Ebro. Some data are not yet available due to the personal data protection law. Some data have been obtained from the personal databases of Jan Stanisław Ciechanowski of the University of Warsaw and Paul Weindling of Oxford University. These we consider to be of great value.

The main methodological limitations relating to the files result from two facts: the data open only a small window of time and the authorities recorded only the information they considered relevant to themselves. So, the data were generated by a group of people with a specific interest, and that was the control. This is why this paper faces two challenges. First, archival data in Miranda de Ebro remain incomplete because many prisoners provided false information on arrival at the camp, for instance, some declared being physicians having completed a couple of years of study. Second, it is impossible to write the personal story of every doctor because we lack information about what they did before and after their confinement.

Physicians imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro and the special case of the IB doctors

According to the files, 151 doctors were interned in Miranda de Ebro, with an average age of 30 years old. The average time spent in prison before transfer to Miranda de Ebro was 61 days and the average stay in the camp was 11 695 days. The time an arrested physician spent in prison before being sent to Miranda de Ebro was in eighty-one cases under 30 days. However, in fifty-five cases, this extended to 1–6 months, and in nine cases, the prior imprisonment lasted over 6 months. No pattern equating the length of prior incarceration to the year of arrest or nationality could be established. On average, the total time spent under arrest was around 6 months.

In our research, we found documents relating to doctors imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro who had been members of the IB. The reasons for their imprisonment, time spent in the camp, dates of release and other data are quite different from those relating to doctors imprisoned after mid-June 1940, as they were considered prisoners of war (POWs). Nevertheless, this group is integral to the research, as it provides a wider perspective on the significance of the camp. Life for IB members imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro was not easy: there was not enough food, and the sanitary conditions were poor. In addition, the Gestapo frequently visited the camp looking for IB members or refugees who had fled occupied France. They demanded that the Spanish authorities hand them over in terms of the accord of 31 July 1938, agreeing that “the German and the Spanish police will surrender directly, systematically, and by the fastest means possible communists, Anarchists and others affiliated to tendencies that are dangerous to the State”.²⁴ For years, this agreement allowed extraditions that were legally questionable, but in fact, deportations were rare.²⁵ Seventeen physicians who had served in the IB were deported to Nazi Germany and interned in concentration camps there, but none of them had been in Miranda de Ebro.²⁶ The camp’s admission files record four physicians belonging to the IB, among them three Polish Jews²⁷ and one Latvian.²⁸

²⁴Hernández de Miguel, *op.cit.*, 1424.

²⁵For the relationship between Francoist Spain and Nazi Germany, see: Danielle Rozenberg, *La España contemporánea y la cuestión judía* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2010).

²⁶Esteban González-López and Rosa Ríos-Cortés, ‘Doctors and nurses in the international Brigades. From international solidarity with Spain to Nazi camps’, in *Medical Care and Crimes in German Occupied Poland 1939–1945. New findings, interpretations and memories* (Berlin: Metropol Verlag, 2022), 158–174.

²⁷AGMA DCME 305335, 8266; DCME 305336, 8550; DCME 305378, 14628.

²⁸AGMA DCME 305308, 4305; Ignacio de la Torre, ‘Latvian Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War’, *Humanities and Social Sciences*, 24 (2016), 51–77.

From 1940 onwards, almost all fugitives from Europe reached Spain across the Pyrenees, mostly hiring guides known as *passeurs* who led them through the mountains in small groups.²⁹ There were several escape networks. Even though some authors tried to classify the routes,³⁰ testimonies and interviews on the ground prove that the refugees would choose different routes according to temporary and geographical convenience.³¹

The Pyrenees were pretty closely guarded by French, German and Spanish authorities: the French train route that carried fugitives to the Pyrenees was under surveillance by the German Gestapo. Controls and identity checks were frequent. The border at the Pyrenees was occupied by the Wehrmacht's 19th division. Around 10 000 men were tasked with preventing illegal border crossings. From 1943, this border was also under the control of German customs agents, and Gestapo agents also operated in nearby cities. The Spanish side of the border was guarded by the armed Guardia Civil, a police force and by agents of the Political and Social Brigade (Brigada Político-Social).³²

According to an order by the Ministry of the Interior, the Guardia Civil was in charge of checking personal documents from 1940 on. This order also established that all persons with a passport but no visa, those without documents, suspects regardless of nationality and deserters from Allied armies with or without valid documents must be interned in concentration camps. The order included a general ban on the entry of citizens from belligerent countries who were of military age (18–40 years old).³³ Henry Dupont,³⁴ for example, was arrested in Figueras on 8 April 1942, and handed over to the Guardia Civil.

According to the files consulted, forty-three physicians were confined in prisons in the Basque Country and Navarre, and forty-two in prisons in Catalonia, most of them in Figueras and Gerona. During the last years (from 1944) of the camp's existence, the physicians came from prisons in the Basque Country and Navarre.²⁰ The personal files of sixteen³⁵ of the forty-two physicians who crossed the Pyrenees on the Catalan route can be found in the archives of the border authorities. Seven of them were Jews and six were arrested together with other physicians, dentists, or students of medicine.

When physicians crossed the border with their wives, the women were separated and taken to other cities by diplomatic or consular missions, or international organisations, while the men were transferred to Miranda de Ebro. The Polish physician Silvain Zaks,³⁶ for example, was arrested together with his 26-year-old wife Claudine, and a fellow countryman and dentist called Michel Gelbart. The release of Zaks' wife was arranged by the Polish Red Cross, who took her to Madrid to deal with the exit formalities. The Polish Jewish physician Abraham Wiór³⁷ was arrested together with his wife Aline Wiór, who was also a physician, and three other Jews, Alfredo Levy, Jean Natap and Andres Fried.

Once they were sent from prisons to Miranda de Ebro, a file was filled up with inmate's information. Data were not checked by the Spanish authorities.³⁸ Inaccurate registration of personal data continued when refugees who had fled from the Allies and had been arrested in Spain began to arrive at the camp. Some of them were already being prosecuted by international courts because of their prominent roles within the Nazi hierarchy or as collaborators with the Nazi regime. A few tried to hide their real identity to avoid being brought to justice.³⁹

²⁹A project of European memory can be found in <http://www.perseguits.cat/en/>.

³⁰Pallarés Moraño, *op.cit.*, 39.

³¹Pierre Sandahl, *Miranda ou l'évasion par l'Espagne* (Paris: La Jeune Parque, 1945); Marcel Vivé and Robert Vieville, *Les évadés de France à travers l'Espagne. Guerre 1939–1945* (Paris: Éd. des Écrivains, 1998).

³²Pallarés Moraño, *op.cit.*, 499.

³³Pallarés Moraño, *op.cit.*, 507.

³⁴AMGA DCME 305307, 4145; AHG 170-478-T2-29307.

³⁵AHG 170-478-T2 29282, 29301, 29385, 29425, 29430, 29428, 29430, 29438, 29458, 29459, 29467, 29471, 29557, 29669, 29704.

³⁶AGAM DCME 305381, 15099; AHG 170-478-T2-29428, 20-23, 27, 30.

³⁷AGAM DCME 305380, 14926; AHG 170-478-T2-29467, 12, 18, 20, 27, 28.

³⁸San Francisco, *op. cit.*, 138–139.

³⁹Wayme Jamison, *Esvásticas en el Sur* (España: Círculo Rojo, 2018).

So, in a further intersection in Spain, prisoners fleeing the Axis powers and prisoners sought by the Allies both tried to hide their true identities. Some also lied about their professions: in some cases, they claimed to be physicians when in truth they had not finished their degrees⁴⁰ or had not even studied medicine.⁴¹

The number of physicians arriving in Miranda de Ebro varied hugely over time. Between 1938 and 1940, only physicians belonging to the IB were imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro. Between September and December 1940, four doctors were inmates in prisons and later transferred to Miranda de Ebro in early 1941.⁴² Most physicians, a total of 127, arrived between 1941 and 1943, over half of them in 1942. This coincides with the period between 1942 and 1943 when the overall number of new inmates in Miranda de Ebro reached its peak. The number of new prisoners peaked in 1943 at 6 800, more than double the 3 200 prisoners arriving in the course of 1942. The number of inmates varied according to the events during the war: initial Nazi occupation of France, the increased persecution of Jews in France peaking in the operation Winter Velodrome, during which almost 13 000 Jews (among them 4 000 children) were rounded-up, transferred to transit camps and finally sent to German extermination camps in occupied Poland. German violence towards European Jews reached its peak in the summer of 1942.⁴³ From September 1943, the Nazis controlled all of Italy and persecution increased. The Italian border with Switzerland had already become impassable in Summer 1942.⁴⁴

In terms of nationality, the highest numbers of prisoners in Miranda were French (at least 6 500), Germans (around 2 000), “Canadians” (2 000)⁴⁵ and Poles (around 1 700).⁴⁶ As to the physicians, fifty-two were French, twenty-eight were Polish and twenty-five claimed to be Canadians.

The amount of time physicians spent in Miranda de Ebro is clearly related to the particular phase in the camp’s existence during which they were interned (Table 1). Reasons for this relate to a number of factors, including their origins or political affiliations.

The camp was overcrowded by the end 1942.⁴⁷ Georges Morin, a student of Medicine, was briefly interned in the camp in 1943, soon released and wrote his doctor’s thesis in Algiers in 1944. He gave the first testimony that allows us to understand the sanitary conditions in the fall 1943. General (filth) dirtiness, the lack of water and food, and the rudimentary conditions of lodging provoked mainly two diseases among inmates: scabies and the so-called “mirandite”, a colloquial term used for all the diarrheic diseases in the camp.⁴⁸

Once in Miranda de Ebro, most remained in the camp for between 1 and 6 months. In most cases (fifty-nine) it was the International, Spanish or French Red Cross who negotiated and managed their release. The International Red Cross had representatives in Francoist Spain. Some of the national sections, like the British and the Spanish committees, even shared the same office in Madrid.⁴⁹ The Red Cross played an important role in providing material aid, mediating, inspecting prisons and negotiating

⁴⁰AMAG DCME 305335, 8266.

⁴¹AMAG DCME 305313, 4986.

⁴²AMAG: DCME 305299, 3070; DCME 305299, 3070; DCME 305311, 4722; DCME 30368, 13159.

⁴³Lewi Stone, ‘Quantifying the Holocaust: Hyperintense kill rates during the Nazi Genocide’, *Science Advances*, 5, 1 (2019), eaa47292.

⁴⁴Switzerland turned away thousands of Jews at the border. See the Chapter about “Switzerland and refugees in the Nazi Era” available online at <https://www.uek.ch/en/> as part of the final report of the Independent Commission of Experts Switzerland – WWII, Switzerland, National Socialism and WWII. Final Report, Zürich 2002.

⁴⁵Although around 2 000 refugees claimed Canadian citizenship, there were few or no genuine Canadians at all in the camp. Almost all claiming Canadian citizenship in fact came from France, Poland and England.

⁴⁶Jan Stanisław Ciechanowski, *Czarna legenda Mirandy. Polacy w hiszpańskim obozie internowania w Miranda de Ebro 1940–1945*, p. II, Oficyna Wydawnicza RYTM, Warszawa 2019, p. 853.

⁴⁷Pallarés Moraño, *op.cit.*, 509.

⁴⁸Héraut, Louis-Armand, ‘Miranda de Ebro: Medical Condition of the Concentration Camp in the Autumn of 1943’, *Historie Des Sciences Médicales*, 42, 2 (2008), 205–214.

⁴⁹Red Cross & Order of St John, *The official record of the humanitarian services of the war organization of the British Red Cross Society and the Order of St John of Jerusalem 1939–1947*. Compiled by P.G. Cambray and G.G.B. Briggs. Printed in Great Britain by Sumfield and Day LTD, 55–64.

Table 1. Years of imprisonment and liberation

	Number of doctors imprisoned	Number of liberations
1938	2	0
1939	2	0
1940	4	1
1941	6	0
1942	77	3
1943	44	79
1944	8	8
1945	2	1
1946-47	5	8

the release of prisoners. The French Red Cross appointed the French priest André Boyer-Mas as its main representative in Spain. His mission was to free and evacuate the almost 10 000 French citizens imprisoned in Spain. In June 1943, Boyer-Mas appointed Jean Pierre Bourbon as his official delegate for Miranda de Ebro. When Bourbon was replaced in August 1944, he had done a very efficient job: twenty-four French physicians had been released in a little more than a year.⁵⁰

Embassies mediated the release of twenty-five physicians from Miranda de Ebro, twelve of whom were British. The British embassy took charge of prisoners considered important or useful for the war effort, like physicians, pilots, or engineers.⁵¹ Pablo Lang was the representative of a Glauberite mine in Burgos. He was appointed to negotiate the release of French inmates in Miranda de Ebro by the embassy of the Vichy Government in 1941⁵² although he never stood out for his sympathy for the Pétain regime. After the end of WWII, the International Red Cross asked him to represent the German and collaborationist refugees detained in Miranda de Ebro while awaiting repatriation.⁵³ He managed to ensure the release of seven physicians, all of them French⁵⁴ except for one, who was from the USA.⁵⁵

After the Allied landings in France in 1944 and the liberation of France, those who had participated in the Vichy government's persecution of members of the *Resistance* and in the extermination of the Jews feared themselves being put on trial and tried to escape across the Spanish border. Those who were arrested were brought to Miranda de Ebro.⁵⁶ They arrived together with Belgian SS members and members of the Belgian Walloon and Flemish Legions who had collaborated with and later fought for the occupying Germans, including, for example, Maurice de Mayer. He was interned for a month from

⁵⁰AMAG: DCME 305366, 12864; DCME 305281, 359; DCME 305282, 518; DCME 305286, 1096; DCME 305287, 1195; DCME 305288, 1442; DCME 305291, 1816; DCME 305297, 2669; DCME 305297, 2755; DCME 305303, 3637; DCME 305319, 5996; DCME 305324, 6694; DCME 305335, 8402; DCME 305341, 9238; DCME 305343, 9550; DCME 305353, 10942; DCME 305366, 12949; DCME 305367, 13069; DCME 305374, 14051; DCME 305376, 14412; DCME 305378, 14727; DCME 305379, 14777; DCME 305380, 14984; DCME 305381, 15080.

⁵¹Pallarés Moraño, *op.cit.*, 233.

⁵²BOE 15 March 1941, 1824.

⁵³Fernández López, *op.cit.*, 278.

⁵⁴AMAG: DCME 305280,233; DCME 305292, 1957; DCME 305297, 2697; DCME 305313, 5073; DCME 305335, 8369; DCME 305335, 8369.

⁵⁵AMAG: DCME 305372, 13829.

⁵⁶Matilde Eiroa and Concha Pallarés, 'Uncertain fates: Allied soldiers at the Miranda de Ebro concentration camp', *Historian*, 76 (2014), 26–49; Concha Pallarés Moraño, 'El reencuentro de antiguos correligionarios: colaboracionistas franceses en el campo de Miranda de Ebro 1944–1947', *Hispania Nova*, 14 (2016), 246–264.

September to October 1946 in a hospital in Vitoria-Gasteiz, south of Bilbao in the Basque country. From there, he sent a letter of greeting to General Franco. Information about him can be found because he was a member of the Flemish National Union and collaborated with the Nazis. He was sent back to Belgium by the Spanish authorities.⁵⁷ Eventually, collaborators from other countries also arrived, for example, Friedrich von Freienfels, a native of the Netherlands.⁵⁸

By the end of WWII, admissions to Miranda de Ebro had dropped sharply: only 400 new prisoners were interned in 1945, and 600 in 1946. This development is paralleled by the diminishing number of physicians admitted during the last 2 years of the camp's existence. From 1944 until its definitive closure on 1947, only fourteen doctors were interned in the camp, seven of them French.⁵⁹ Almost all French citizens imprisoned in those years had collaborated with Nazi Germany⁶⁰ and four were Germans, POW of the Allies in caps in the South of France.⁶¹

Fate, exile or return home: what did the doctors do after Miranda de Ebro?

Not all biographies could be reconstructed.

Józef Leitner, a 32-year-old Polish Jew, was taken POW on 13 March 1938 in Belchite. He was interned in a number of concentration camps and served in working Brigades until he was transferred to Miranda de Ebro on 10 December 1941.⁶² He went to the URSS, where he was fighting with the Soviet troops until the end of the WWII.⁶³ After WWII, he returned to live in Poland.⁶⁴ In 1950, he was the chief medical officer in a military hospital in Wrocław with the rank of Colonel.⁶⁵

Artur Lilker, a Polish Jew, had studied medicine in Vienna and had not yet finished his degree in Paris when he decided to join the IB. On his arrival at the IB base in Albacete, in May 1937, he was appointed lieutenant of the medical battalion within the 35th International Division. Later, he served in the 13th International Brigade, the Drombowski Battalion. He was taken prisoner during the battle of the Ebro on 13 March 1938, and interned in the San Pedro de Cardeña camp. On 10 December 1938, he was transferred to Miranda de Ebro. He was not freed by the Spanish Red Cross until 23 March 1943.⁶⁶ After the WWII, he came back to Poland.⁶⁷

Following pressure exerted by the Allies and in connection with increasing overpopulation of the camps due to the arrival of a large number of refugees from France, the foreigners imprisoned for being IB members left Miranda de Ebro in 1943. Artur Lilker was one of them. The evacuation took place in several groups. The groups were taken by train to Madrid, from there to Málaga and Gibraltar, and later to North Africa. There, many of them took the opportunity to join the Allied military campaign against the Wehrmacht army.⁶⁸

Most of the French physicians returned to France.⁶⁹

After being arrested at the Spanish border in Navarre, the French doctor Bryan Courtenay Meyers was imprisoned in Miranda de Ebro on 26 May 1943. He declared himself to be Canadian and his release was

⁵⁷AGAM DCME 305344, 9608.

⁵⁸AGAM DCME 305313, 4986.

⁵⁹AMAG: DCME 305282, 518; DCME 305324, 6694; DCME 305325, 6805; DCME 305341, 9238; DCME 305341, 9238; DCME 305353, 10942; DCME 305378, 14727; DCME 305378, 14727.

⁶⁰Concha Pallarés and José María Espinosa de los Monteros, 'Miranda, mosaico de nacionalidades: Franceses, británicos y alemanes', *Ayer*, 57, 1 (2005), 153–187.

⁶¹AMAG: DCME 305313, 4986; DCME 305362, 12357; DCME 305364, 12634; DCME 305366, 12864.

⁶²AGMG DCME 305335, 8266.

⁶³<http://sidbrintub.edu/es/printpdf/content/leiner-josef>, accessed June 2021.

⁶⁴Guerra, *op. cit.*, 427–428.

⁶⁵Jan Ciechanowski database.

⁶⁶AGMG DCME 305336, 8550.

⁶⁷<https://sidbrintub.edu/ca/content/lilker-arthur>, accessed June 2022.

⁶⁸Fernández López, *op. cit.*, 1972.

⁶⁹Hérait, *op. cit.* (note 48), 205.

negotiated in June 1943 by the British embassy.⁷⁰ In 1946, he published his doctoral thesis in Paris on “Etude sur les splénomégalies neutropéniques: syndrome agranulocytaire d’origine splénique”.⁷¹ Roger Benichoux entered Spain on 10 June 1943, crossing the border in Navarre. He also declared he was Canadian and was released 2 months later, on 17 August 1943, following an intervention by the French Red Cross.⁷² He published his doctoral thesis in medicine in Paris in 1955. He became Chair of Heart Surgery at Nancy University where he had a successful career and died in 2003.⁷³

Some of the physicians who were held in Miranda de Ebro appear in the Guide Rosenwald of French physicians published in 1938, 1939, 1943 and 1945–49. This is, for example, the case of Benjamin René Zissmans, who worked as a general practitioner in Le Caylar (Montpellier),⁷⁴ or Pierre Joseph Zerbib, who in 1946 worked as a forensic pathologist and psychiatrist in Toulouse.⁷⁵

Pierre Broch was a French physician who was mobilised and appointed captain in the French Army medical service in 1940. On 2 February 1943 he was ordered to stand in for an imprisoned physician, but a few weeks later he decided to desert and escape to Spain.⁷⁶ After his release from Miranda de Ebro in October 1943, he went to Morocco, and on 13 April 1944, embarked with his regiment in Oran bound for England. Months later, on 1 August 1944, he landed in France with the Free French forces to fight against Axis powers. In Morocco Broch had proved penicillin effectiveness, where the US Military Health System had put it at the disposal of physicians of the French Army. Broch learned how to manufacture the antibiotic and proposed to the French Army the creation of the “Centre militaire de fabrication de la Pénicilline” in a former Wehrmacht garage in Paris. He also invented the “pipeline”, a technique that allowed the recovery of penicillin from the urine of American soldiers who had been treated with it. In 1949, Pierre Broch founded a company for the production of antibiotics (Société d’exploitation des produits, SOBIO). By 1965, it was employing 350 people. Pierre Broch died a wealthy man in September 1985 at his home in Paris.⁷⁷

Another physician who returned to Europe, though not to his country of origin, was Stanislaus Seidner. Born in Czernowitz, a city that at the time belonged to Romania but since the end of WWII was part of the Soviet Ukraine, he was interned in Miranda de Ebro in December 1942 under a false identity, Paul Alavouette.⁷⁸ He had studied medicine first at the University of Clermont-Ferrand and finished his studies in Paris. In September 1939, he was mobilised by the French Army and assigned to a surgical ambulance until the captain in charge decided to withdraw Jewish doctors from service because he thought Jews were “not real physicians”. Thanks to useful contacts, in August 1940, he was released from the POW camp at Baccarat, where he had been interned. In July 1942, following massive pressure from the Nazi authorities, Jewish doctors were prohibited from practicing by law in France. Seidner decided to flee France under a false identity and with his medical degree hidden in a roll of toilet paper. On 18 November 1942, he crossed the Pyrenees on foot. He was arrested six days later and was sent to Pamplona prison. On 16 December, he was moved to Miranda de Ebro. On 13 June 1943, after his release from Miranda de Ebro following intervention by the British embassy, he went to Gibraltar, where he joined the Giraudists, a group resisting the German occupation of France led by General Henri Giraud. He later went to Casablanca as an army physician. A year after he had left his home he was in Algeria. In

⁷⁰AMAG DCME 305300, 3110; NLE HO 334/248/FZ175.

⁷¹Bernard Bryan Courtenay-Mayers, *Etude sur les splénomégalies neutropéniques: syndrome agranulocytaire d’origine splénique* (Thèse: Médecine: Paris, 1946).

⁷²AMAG DCME 305286, 1054.

⁷³In http://www.professeurs-medecine-nancy.fr/Benichoux_R.htm.

⁷⁴AGAM DCME 305382, 15189 and Guide Rosenwald 1939 pages 752 and 990 in <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k9797629q?rk=21459;2> and Guide Rosenwald 1946 pages 768 and 1272 in <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb344120051/date1946.liste>.

⁷⁵AGAM DCME 305382, 15153 and Guide Rosenwald 1946 pages 1007 and 1272 in <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cb344120051/date1946.liste>.

⁷⁶AGAM DCME 305292, 1957.

⁷⁷The biography of Pierre Broch can be found in <http://fr.slideshare.net/frogerais/pierre-broch>, accessed 25 November .2020.

⁷⁸AMGA DCME 305279, 143.

November 1943 he embarked on an American military convoy bound for Naples. At the end of June 1944, he arrived in Rome with the US Army and in May 1945 Seidner went back to Marseille, where he worked as a physician until his death.⁷⁹

Other physicians, mainly of Polish origin, tried their luck in the UK. Leon Potaschmayer, for example, was one of them. The first thing we learn about him is that he travelled together with another Polish physician, Marian Goldsztajn. They crossed the border into Spain on the Catalan route and were arrested together with Robert Perret, also from Poland, and a Canadian called Jacques Vircaudel.⁸⁰ When Potaschmayer arrived in Miranda de Ebro on 14 December 1942, he declared that he was Canadian, although his record states he was born in Poland. He was released on 16 January 1943, and taken to a residence for army officers in Jaraba, Zaragoza.⁸¹ In the National Archives in Kew, we read that he obtained British citizenship and lived in Essex.⁸² For many years Potaschmayer worked in the department of microbiology at the Southend General Hospital in Essex. He published a number of papers about cefuroxime, an antibiotic that is still used.⁸³

Another Polish physician, Władysław Mrozowski, was born in 1888 in Jesa and was a colonel in the Polish army medical service. He entered Spain illegally, was first imprisoned in Lérida, and taken to Miranda de Ebro on 27 December 1942.⁸⁴ Once he had been released, he moved to the UK and joined the Polish Armed Forces in the West and after the war the Polish Resettlement Corps (PRC).⁸⁵

When the communist government increased the persecution of the Polish Resistance and of soldiers who had fought in the West, most of whom were loyal to the western oriented Polish Government in Exile, Polish soldiers saw themselves forced to choose between returning to their country and facing repression or staying in Western Europe. Of the more than 250 000 Polish soldiers who were in the West in 1945, 105 000 returned to Poland. The formation of the PRC was announced on 22 May 1946 by the British Government, and the recruitment of former Allied soldiers from countries now behind what became known as the Iron Curtain began in September 1946. The members of this Corps were volunteers, retained their status as military personnel and were subject to British army discipline and military law. They lived in army camps, were paid according to their rank, received English lessons and learned a trade or profession. The Corps was disbanded in 1949. Around 150 000 Polish soldiers and their families took up residence in Great Britain and became an important part of the Polish community in the UK. Doctor Mrozowski did not have time to complete his two-year period in the Corps. On 18 November 1947 he died of a cerebral stroke in Edinburgh.⁸⁶

Before the war, Stanisław Warszawski had been a physician in Paris. He served in the IB and was interned in Miranda de Ebro until 1941.⁸⁷ He is listed in the London Gazette as a medical practitioner.⁸⁸ Additional data relating to his family and prior life is also available. Like his father, Warszawski was born in the Polish city of Łódź, the second of five children of a Jewish family. His three younger siblings, Florette, Tea and Heinrich, were probably born in Germany, since the family moved to Berlin in 1903. All five siblings left Germany from 1933 when measures discriminating against Jews were implemented by the Nazis and were able to survive.

⁷⁹<https://www.facebook.com/docteur.seidner/photos/>.

⁸⁰AHG 170-478-T2 29461, 7–8, 24.

⁸¹AMAG DCME 305355, 11349 and Francisco Javier López Jiménez, ‘Generales, jefes y oficiales de los ejércitos beligerantes en la 2ª Guerra Mundial, internados en los balnearios de Jaraba (Zaragoza),’ *Boletín Informativo del Sistema Archivístico de la Defensa, Segunda Época* 13 (2007), 12–15.

⁸²NAL HO 334/331/8176.

⁸³Leon Potaschmayer and Jefferson KA, ‘Antibacterial Activity of Cefuroxime’, *BMJ*, 1, 6122 (1978), 1279; Leon Potaschmayer *et al.*, ‘A Survey of the Sensitivity of Fresh Clinical Isolates to Cefuroxime and Other Antibiotics’, *Journal of Clinical Pathology*, 32, 9 (1979), 944–950.

⁸⁴AMAG DCME 305347, 10089.

⁸⁵NLE HO 405/37431.

⁸⁶Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe, X 6857.

⁸⁷AMAG DCME 305378, 14628.

⁸⁸<https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/38454/page/5955/data.pdf> and HO 334/221/47514.

For unknown reasons, Stanisław's father returned to Łódź in 1934. There, he lived with his sister, and both were confined in the city's ghetto. Later, they were taken to the Warsaw Ghetto and from there deported to Treblinka, where they were murdered. Stanisław's mother, Regina, decided to stay in Berlin. The German authorities took her to a so-called *Judenhaus* in the same neighbourhood, a building in which Jews evicted from their own apartments were forced to live under increasingly cramped conditions. In January 1942 she was moved to a synagogue and on the 25th of that month, together with another 1 043 Jews, she found herself on platform seventeen at Grunewald station, boarding a train that took them to Riga, where she was murdered. Only thirteen deported that day survived.⁸⁹

These biographical accounts of fleeing Jewish physicians and their families, filled with hardship and death, stand in sharp contrast to the treatment and biographies of the doctors who, as Nazi sympathisers or members arrived in Miranda de Ebro during the last years of the camp's existence. Many Nazis who fled Germany after the collapse of the Third Reich sought refuge in Spain, making use of false documents and protected by the tolerant Spanish regime.

This was, for example, true in the case of Friedrich von Freienfels, who falsely claimed to be a physician renaming himself Luis Gurruchaga Iturriaga, claiming to have been born in San Sebastián. After leaving Miranda de Ebro, he was immediately appointed director of the Santa Clara hospital in Cádiz. This treatment differs markedly from the difficulties most physicians faced regarding recognition and acceptance by the Spanish authorities of their medical degrees. Very soon, Luis Gurruchaga became his patients' favourite even though he had never studied medicine. It is not clear how Luis Gurruchaga eventually ended up in Madrid. He married a very religious woman, and was in private practice, serving a refined clientele until he died in the 1970s.⁹⁰

Wolfgang Schäffer was mobilised into the German Army in April 1940 and was appointed as a Captain in the Medical Corps in October 1943. He practiced at the Military Hospital in Paris and then in Lorient, where the German Navy had a major U-Boot base and a military hospital. He was taken prisoner by the French Army in May 1945, when the base finally surrendered. He crossed the Spanish border in September 1946 after escaping from the Reims POW camp which was under the control of the US Army. He fled to Spain, as he stated in his declaration at Miranda de Ebro, in the hope of being "repatriated to Germany". He was interned in Miranda de Ebro immediately, and transferred to the Provincial Prison of Salamanca in February 1947. From there, it appears almost certain, he was repatriated to Germany.⁹¹

Franz Schwarzweller, was a Member of the Nazi Party (NSDAP). From 1934 to 1935, he was working in Berlin with Eugene Fischer and in 1936 and 1937 with Verschuer in Frankfurt, where he was working with Josef Mengele, always in projects related to Rassenhygiene and Erbbiologie. From 1937 to 1939, he was working as Traumatologist in Frankfurt.⁹² As a Captain in the German Army Medical Corps, he was captured by French troops in Tübingen while working on a hospital train on 22 March 1945. He was held in several POW camps until he escaped from Bayonne in May 1946 and crossed the border in order to "be repatriated to Germany from Spain", according to his declaration of entry to Miranda de Ebro. On 9 June 1946, he embarked in Bilbao for Germany.⁹³

Maurice de Meyer was a Belgian doctor who joined the SS, seeing action on the Eastern Front. Fleeing westward to Toulouse, he joined the French Army's 23rd Infantry Regiment in an effort to hide under an assumed name. On 18 February 1945, he was demobilised from the French Army. Shortly before, he had married a young Swiss woman, through whom he again obtained Swiss identity papers using his real name and they resided in France. On 12 July 1946, a French security agent came to his home with a summons to the police station, as de Meyer had been sentenced to death in Belgium. He crossed the

⁸⁹<https://www.stolpersteine-berlin.de/de/biografie/3235>, accessed 25 November 2020.

⁹⁰Extensive research about von Freienfels was recently published by Wayne Jamison, *Dr. Pirata: Un médico nazi en la España de Franco* (Madrid: Kailas Historia, 2020).

⁹¹AGMA DCME 303364 12634.

⁹²Bunderarchiv R 9361-III/556033; R9361-II/921306.

⁹³AGAG DCME 305366, 12864.

border into Spain 3 days later, explaining this course of events in a statement to a camp guard at Miranda de Ebro. On 3 January 1947, he was released.⁹⁴

Conclusions

The Miranda de Ebro concentration camp was closed in January 1947, and the remaining inmates were sent to regular prisons. Some of the physicians were moved to the prison in Valladolid. The camp was dismantled, and until very recently, there was hardly anything left indicating its existence.⁹⁵ Now a memorial is being built on the location.⁹⁶

Thanks to Spain's 2007 Law of Historical Memory (*Ley de Memoria Histórica*),⁹⁷ many of the archives directly or indirectly related to the concentration camp in Miranda de Ebro have been declassified and are available for research. Because this is a relatively recent development, not much research has so far been done, meaning it remains largely incomplete. Still, the access to historical archives has opened up the possibility of exploring and writing about a period of the recent past in Spain and Europe that had almost been forgotten. It is the story of the physicians who during the war were forced to flee westward through Europe, not in search of a better life, but simply hoping to stay alive at all.

In a still relatively little-known historical episode, around 120 000 refugees, including members of the French and Allied Resistance against the Nazis and Jews from across Europe, sought freedom crossing mountain passes in the Pyrenees helped by *passeurs*. Reaching Spanish territory did not guarantee freedom or well-being, they were treated unequally, often facing forced repatriation to France or, in most cases, detention, imprisonment or permission to live in inns and hostels.

Miranda de Ebro was a camp where a large number of European citizens were concentrated, and where the difference in treatment of inmates by the Spanish authorities is visible: from lenient to active support and assistance. Difficulties faced by interned doctors leaving Miranda were also very different, depending on where they came from and who they were: while Nazis and collaborators were repatriated, protected, or welcomed into Spanish society, those loyal to the Spanish Republic or the Allies faced many more obstacles and complications.

Spain was a barrier, host or transit country for thousands of refugees fleeing WWII. The foreign policy of Spain, expressed in the way Franco's regime treated foreigners during the war, can be described as an attempt to survive in changing circumstances, where the strategies aimed at preserving the authoritarian regime required complicated balance between powers and permanent pragmatism.⁹⁸

The situation of refugees changed over the years from relative ease in obtaining transit visas together with a boat ticket for destination countries in early 1940 to a more complicated system when the Nazi occupation of Europe produced an avalanche of fugitives towards the south, which aroused suspicion and resistance on the part of the Spanish authorities.

Many European refugees were interned in Miranda de Ebro, where they shared the lot of other foreign prisoners captured since the SCW as IB soldiers. In 1943, the camp took on international significance, leading the Francoist government to issue regulations favourable to the Allies, following which the authorities began emptying the camp of inmates.

The Miranda de Ebro camp was unique in Franco's Spain, as it was the only one designated to hold foreign refugees lacking proper documentation. The study of the archives opens up the possibility of at least partially reconstructing the history of the flight and fate of the doctors held there who make up a coherent and at least in professional terms heterogeneous group among the camp inmates.

⁹⁴AGA DCME 305344, 9608.

⁹⁵A very interesting book about Memory in Spain also published in German is by Walther L. Bernecker and Sören Brinkmann, *Memorias divididas. Guerra civil y Franquismo en la Sociedad y la política españolas 1936–2008* (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2009).

⁹⁶<https://mirandamemoria.es/?lang=en>, accessed June 2022.

⁹⁷BOE 2007 in <https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/2007/BOE-A-2007-22296-consolidado.pdf>.

⁹⁸Gil Pecharromán, *op.cit.*, 13.

The interment of doctors in Miranda de Ebro has a qualitative and quantitative relevance. Doctors played a preponderant role in belic conflicts from the beginning of 20th century: as they could take preventive measures to avoid contagious diseases in the troops, cure already declared infectious diseases or war wounds, so that the combatants could join the front again and as collective were very active in volunteering.⁹⁹ In Miranda de Ebro, of nearly 15 000 detainees who passed through the camp, 151 were physicians, which represents almost 1% of the internees' professions, much more than the normal percentage in a random population.

It is correct that when we look at the biographies of the physicians who passed through Miranda de Ebro, we find only survivors. This, however, should not lead us to construct an optimistic story. A glance at the biography of the Polish Jewish physician and member of the IB, Stanisław Warszawski for example, reveals the tragic context of his family's fate: the parents were murdered, the mother in Riga, the father in Treblinka, and their five children were separated by exodus and exile.

Physicians coming from friendly countries or from countries with political regimes similar to that of Francoist Spain were treated quite differently to those seen as loyal to enemies of Franco Spain, particularly supporters of the Spanish Republic. Foreigners from friendly countries held in Miranda de Ebro were allowed to leave the camp, visit the cinema and use the swimming pool and other facilities. Perhaps more significantly, they were offered a way out, given new identities, their degrees were recognised, and they were even appointed as hospital directors. This was completely different treatment compared to that meted out to the physicians of the IB or, years later, to physicians fleeing to Spain to save their lives.

For this reason, even when looking at the later lives of the physicians interned in Miranda de Ebro we find tales of survival and, in some cases, even of success like that of Pierre Brosch, who became a successful businessman, or Leon Potaschmacher, who became a head of department in an English hospital, we should never forget the terror and suffering of those who had to cross the Pyrenees with the help of a guide whom they often could not trust, often equipped, even in winter, with just a woollen coat.

Competing interest. The authors have no competing interests to declare.

⁹⁹Carles Brasó Broggi, *Los médicos errantes. De las brigadas internacionales y la revolución china a la guerra fría*, (Crítica: Barcelona, 2022), 29–33.

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