

**THIS IS WAR ! ROBERT CAPA AT WORK**



# THIS IS ROBERT CAPA at work WAR

RICHARD WHELAN



International Center of Photography

Steidl

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you're not close enough," the renowned Robert Capa said about photography. These words could just as easily apply to the philosophy shared by all of us at BNP Paribas, the bank for a changing world.

Capa spent most of his professional life traveling internationally, becoming intimately involved with the people and events he recorded. His work, seen in this exhibition and accompanying catalogue, shows how that approach creates exceptional results.

BNP Paribas follows the same approach at all our locations in eighty-five countries around the world. We take pride in getting close to our clients. We apply the insights we gain from that intimacy to deliver banking and finance solutions capable of meeting their individual needs.

On behalf of my 150,000 colleagues around the world, let me express our thanks for being part of this exhibition of Capa's distinguished work. Let me also congratulate the International Center of Photography for its exceptional work in helping people explore the possibilities of the art of photography.

Please enjoy this book and the exhibition.

Sincerely,

*Everett Schenk*  
Chief Executive Officer  
BNP Paribas North America



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## DIRECTOR'S FOREWORD

Few photographers of the last century have had such a broad and lasting influence as Robert Capa. It is not simply that Capa created numerous iconic photographs, nor that he established a standard for photojournalistic intrepidity that culminated in his own death in action in Vietnam in 1954. Rather, through his photography and his example, Capa allowed twentieth-century viewers to see clearly for the first time the consequences of his principal subject, modern mechanized warfare. In an age of brutal tank assaults and withering aerial bombardments, Capa insistently focused on the ragged individual soldier and the uprooted, wandering refugees. Through his passionate and empathetic images of people, he showed the specific consequences of anonymous military destruction. For Capa, war was an illegitimate solution used by dictatorial powers. He despised war and hoped, through his images, to mobilize others to fight against it.

Capa proffered his humanistic antirear view not only through his famous photographs of soldiers and combat but also through innovative sequences of images, photo-narratives ideally suited to the sensorially successful illustrated magazines of the 1930s and 1940s. By looking closely at five of Capa's classic war stories, from Spain and China and the beaches of Normandy, this exhibition reevaluates his contribution to photojournalism. Capa's notoriously blurry, slightly out of focus photographic style can at times give the impression of impulsive luck. But as the step-by-step examination of Capa's working process—from contact sheets to printed pages—in this exhibition demonstrates, Capa was adept at ferreting out a news story, distilling its principal issues in a few direct but telling pictures, and orchestrating those images into an intense human drama.

In an age of "objective" news coverage, Capa made a virtue of unabashedly partisan reportage. He did not pretend to be a neutral

recorder; he had a point of view and that, more than any blind pursuit of news, directed his selection of stories. A committed antifascist, he sided with the Republicans in Spain, published in the communist weekly magazine in Paris, and landed with the Allies on D-Day. The sense of truth, authenticity, and integrity in Capa's work has less to do with the literal record of events before his camera than the earnestly committed narrative of his own "concerned photography" and how it could affect his audience. It was Capa's firm belief that photography in wide circulation could, in some way, illuminate injustices and inspire political transformation.

Photography's mission of social change, embodied in Capa's work, is central to the mission of the International Center of Photography. Founded in 1974 by Cornell Capa, Robert Capa's younger brother, the center—a combination museum and school—was intended not only to preserve Robert Capa's photographic archive but also to perpetuate his spirit of compassion through the teaching of photography. In pursuit of these goals, the International Center of Photography has presented over 300 exhibitions, including several retrospectives of Capa's work. This exhibition extends those earlier projects while differing from them markedly. While the previous presentations showed large modern prints, *This Is War!* includes mainly vintage photographs, many with the stamps from magazines where they were first published. This exhibition emphasizes the relationship of these prints to the published magazines, but also offers much new information in the form of never-before-published images, rare censored prints, updated research on the dates and locations of the photographs, and a thorough reevaluation of Capa's key photo-essays.

Richard Whelan, the individual responsible for this investigation and the curator of this exhibition, died suddenly in May 2007. A dis-

tinguished cultural historian, Richard's magisterial biography of Capa, first published in 1985, was a landmark in the history of photography. He served as the curator of the Robert Capa and Cornell Capa Archive and never ceased studying Capa's life and work. This book represents a dramatic revision of some sections of his Capa biography, representing major new perspectives. Richard had completed his text and was in the process of editing at the time of his death. A gifted writer and scholar and a cherished member of the ICP family, he will be remembered with great affection and esteem.

We owe tremendous thanks to Cynthia Young, a former Assistant Curator at ICP, who stepped in to organize the exhibition and to coordinate this publication, and has done so brilliantly. Without her deep commitment and thorough knowledge of the Robert Capa collection, this project would simply not have been possible to complete. Brian Wallis, Chief Curator, a continued champion of Capa's work, was supportive in all ways to the development of the exhibition; Associate Curator Kristen Lubben was instrumental in its early conception and planning. Director of Publications Karen Hansgen supervised the dynamic publication, and Philomena Mariani showed extreme commitment and passionate engagement in editing this volume. Chris George, Imaging Specialist, was invaluable in scanning and coordinating the many photographs from the collection as well as acquiring related magazines. Tricia Bassett, ICP Library Assistant, ICP Production Assistant Elizabeth Van Meter, and intern Diana Mesion all contributed to the research of this book. Thanks also to ICP co-publisher Gerhard Steidl and his talented and diligent staff, especially image processor Jonas Wettré and designer Claus Möller who met the challenge of this multifaceted publication with great style and grace.

Other important contributors include Christian Passeri and Sylvain Besson at the Musée Nicéphore Niépce, Denis Grisel at the Archives Nationales de France, Silvia Baccinotti, Dr. Catherine Coleman, Lowell Getz, John G. Morris, Carole Naggar, Nancy Parrella, Huston Riley, Naomi Rosenblum, and Nina Rosenblum. Marie-Pierre Bedin, Maya Benton, Brendan Hawsey, Thierry Miceli, and Ana Tallone helped with last-minute translations. Almost all of the materials in the exhibition came from the ICP collection, although a few important prints and magazines were borrowed from friends, Phil Block, Roger Gershman, Howard Greenberg, Susan Kienaric from the Museum of Modern Art, and Michel Lefebvre. We are grateful to them.

Finally, we offer our warmest thanks to the generous sponsors who stepped forward to support this important exhibition. The National Endowment for the Arts provided initial funds to launch the research. We are extremely pleased to begin a relationship with BNP Paribas with this exhibition and catalogue and are thankful for their contribution. Several loyal friends of ICP have substantially helped to make real this Capa project. They are the Alex Hillman Family Foundation, George and Bicky Kellner, The John and Annamaria Phillips Foundation, and Cornell Capa. Additional support was received from Linda Hackett for C. A. L. Foundation, Ellen and Richard Kelsen, The Liman Foundation, Mr. and Mrs. Ted Nuenberg, Susan and Elihu Rose Foundation, Arnold and Louise Sagaly, Bernard Lee Schwartz Foundation, Marshall Sorenshine and Sorenshine Partners, and Lois and Bruce Zenkel. Their commitment to the institution, thoughtful understanding of the ICP mission, and steadfast enthusiasm for ICP projects make such an undertaking as *This Is War! Robert Capa at Work* possible.

Willis E. Hartshorn – *Exhibition Director*

## INTRODUCTION

Christopher Phillips

*This Is War!* Robert Capa at War grew out of the patient research of the late Richard Whelan, Capa's biographer and the leading authority on the photographer's life and career. Whelan's untimely death came as he was completing preparations for this exhibition and catalogue. His aim was to take a fresh look at Capa's practice as a photojournalist by examining in unprecedented detail the circumstances surrounding a number of Capa's best-known photographs of the 1930s and '40s. This kind of microscopic attention, he felt, would yield a new understanding of the factors that made Capa one of the most acclaimed members of the nascent field of photojournalism. Capa's individual achievement could then be seen as part of a larger story: that of the revolution in visual journalism that reshaped news media in the twentieth century.

It is worth recalling that Capa, who was one of the most widely heralded photographers of his day, never saw his images hanging as framed prints in a gallery or museum. It is doubtful that this caused him great concern. As he was well aware, his reputation was based entirely on the publication of his photographs in large-format, mass-circulation magazines—such as *Vu* in France, *Picture Post* in England, and *Life* in the U.S.—that reached millions of readers every week. As Whelan demonstrates, Capa paid considerable attention to extending the techniques of journalistic photography and to developing an engaging, almost cinematic style of visual storytelling. It was his accomplishments along these lines, and not his self-styled image as a dashing adventurer with a camera, that won him assignments from magazine editors and assured that his photographs would leap out from the printed page. Behind the Capa legend, Whelan shows, there was a hardworking photojournalist who brought enormous professional ingenuity to every task.

Capa entered the world of photography in the early 1930s in Berlin. He was part of a generation of educated, left-wing émigrés from Hungary who, having seen their lives shattered by the economic and political upheavals that followed World War I, turned to photography as a way to win their livelihood and take part in the cultural life of their adopted countries. Arriving in Berlin from Budapest in 1931, the seventeen-year-old Capa started as a darkroom assistant and fledgling photographer at the boutique photo agency Dephot (Deutsche Photodienst), whose members included such pioneering photojournalists as Felix H. Man and Walter Bosshard. There he learned the technical basics of photography; more importantly, he learned the essentials of creating a compelling story through a sequence of related images. When the Nazis took power in Germany in 1933, Capa moved to Paris; there he honed his photographic skills and gained the professional contacts that gradually won him a wide range of assignments from the leading European magazines of the day. In 1936, his photographs of the Spanish Civil War brought him international fame. The following years provided ample opportunities for Capa to continue his remarkable coverage of armed conflicts around the world. He photographed the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), the Chinese battle against Japanese occupation (1938), World War II and the D-Day landings (1941–45), the first Israeli-Arab war (1948), and the French war in Indochina (1954). He was forty years old when he was killed by a landmine in Vietnam in 1954.

From the voluminous new information that Whelan brings to light, it is possible to glimpse, through the window of Capa's working life, the whole range of technical transformations in photography, printing, and the news-publishing industry that collectively fed the growth of photojournalism. The introduction of small, handheld cameras like

the 35mm Leica, for example, made possible unobtrusive picture-taking that lent a startling immediacy and spontaneity to news imagery. Similarly, the advent of celluloid roll film enabled photographers to try out sequences of rapid exposures and to explore different kinds of visual narrative. Equally consequential were the advances in printing technology. The introduction of glossy, coated paper stock enabled photographic detail to be rendered with astonishing clarity on the printed page, and the advent of high-speed presses and quick-drying inks sharply reduced the time necessary for a press run. These and a host of other technical innovations helped to create an expanded visual language for photojournalism, and also shrank the interval between the news event and the appearance of the photographer's reported.

As the number of picture magazines multiplied and the demand for photographs of all kinds of events soared, photographic agencies sprang up as intermediaries between photojournalists and magazine picture editors. Photographers like Capa who worked on an assignment basis for such agencies were expected to be versatile. When Capa was associated with the Paris-based agency Alliance Photo in the mid- to late 1930s, he routinely covered such diverse subjects as the conditions of miners in Germany's Saar valley, boxing and tennis matches, crisis sessions at the League of Nations, and the Tour de France bicycle marathon, in addition to making portraits of celebrated theatrical performers and the proprietors of Paris flea-market booths.

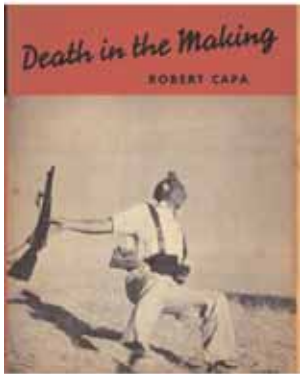
It is clear that Capa consciously used what might otherwise have been hand-drum assignments to develop skills that he could later put to use. He knew that his job was not only to observe and record but also to devise ways to bring to dramatic life the events that he photographed.

The more than sixty-five binders of contact sheets preserved in ICP's Robert Capa Archive provide unusual insights into the develop-

ment of his methods as a working photographer. His 1939 coverage of the Tour de France cycling marathon, for instance, unfolds as a kind of cinematic excursion into provincial France. Photographing the small towns along the Tour route, Capa would typically start with establishing shots of the local square and then move in closer for portraits of residents whiling away the summer hours in cafés. As the racers draw near, he shows the carnival-like scene in all of its aspects: the swelling crowd held back by police, news sellers hawkling special Tour-related editions of the local press, acrobats performing on the periphery of the throng, and children excitedly pressing for a view. Finally the cyclists themselves flash past amid a sea of cheering faces.

Capa knew that this expansive visual material would provide magazine picture editors with a wealth of options for striking photographic juxtapositions and page layouts. He brought precisely the same kind of panoramic vision and split-second photographic decision making to assignments carried out under fire—for example, in the gritty, unnerving images made of the fighting near the Segre River in Spain, which appeared in *Picture Post* in 1938 as “This Is War!” Here, with artillery shells pounding the earth around him, Capa isolates a whole series of harrowing human incidents: searching for fellow soldiers between blasts, a dying soldier dictating his last words.

Capa's day-to-day photographic routine has never been so thoroughly detailed as in this exhibition. Thanks to Richard Whelan's tireless research, we have a fascinating account of the working methods of a celebrated photojournalist during the heyday of the twentieth-century picture magazine. *This Is War! Robert Capa at War* reveals that behind the glamorous public persona there was always another Capa, caught up in the daily practice of a profession whose limits he never ceased to test.



## THE FALLING SOLDIER, 1936

In its broadest outlines, the Spanish Civil War, which broke out on July 19, 1936, was an ultimately successful attempt by an alliance of fascists, monarchists, and Roman Catholics, led by General Francisco Franco, to overthrow the Spanish Republic's democratically elected government, a coalition of leftists and centrists. (The supporters of the government were known as Loyalists or Republicans; its opponents were called Rebels, Insurgents, or fascists.) Because the Insurgents received a great deal of aid (troops, advisers, and matériel) from Germany and Italy, antifascists all over the world saw the Spanish Civil War as their first opportunity to confront international fascism militarily. The passions that the Spanish Civil War aroused among international antifascists were due not only to a desire to defeat the Spanish fascists but also, and even more strongly, to a belief that if fascism could be crushed in Spain, then perhaps the international fascist movement—even in the strongholds of Franco's German and Italian allies—might be so discredited that it would collapse, thereby averting the cataclysmic world war that most intelligent people already saw looming on the horizon.

At the beginning of August 1936, Robert Capa

Spain. The publisher Lucien Vogel was planning to fly a group of journalists to Barcelona on August 5; from there they would spread out to cover the civil war for a special issue of *Vu*.<sup>4</sup> He invited Capa and Taro to join the expedition. Capa had been teaching Taro the techniques of photography for some time, and now she was ready to work as his full collaborator. They had two cameras between them, a Leica and a Rolleiflex. Capa would use the Leica, Taro the Rolleiflex.

After a week or ten days in Barcelona, Capa and Taro drove out to the front in mountainous Aragón province. The situation there was stalemated, as it would remain for more than a year. The fighting amounted to little more than occasional skirmishes—most of them at night, which, of course, was no good for photographers—and much of the front was completely inactive. Capa later wrote in *Death in the Making*, his compilation of his and Taro's photographs of the Spanish Civil War, that they first found the front near a village which, "like so many in Spain," was called Santa Eulalia, but there was apparently nothing to photograph there except a group of militiamen and one militiaman on maneuvers. Capa claimed in the captions that bullets from the enemy hiding across a broad ravine were whizzing past the soldiers as they bounded down



Fig. 39 William Warnecke, [New York City mayor William J. Gaynor shot by an assassin, New York], 1910.

a stable-covered hillside, but this seems to be an exaggeration, for other photos show the soldiers—and even Taro with her Rolleiflex—casually standing around on the hillside (fig. 57).<sup>1</sup>

Sometime around August 21, Capa and Taro left the Aragón front and made their way, via Madrid and Toledo, to Andalusia. News from the front north of Córdoba was encouraging. During the second half of August, the Madrid government had begun an offensive—its first major offensive of the war—to take Córdoba back from the Insurgents. Day after day, the government reported new advances, even claiming—falsely—that its troops had entered the city. If one wanted to photograph Loyalist victories, the Córdoba front was apparently the place to be. There the twenty-two-year-old Capa would capture on film the very instant a Loyalist militiaman was fatally shot and began to collapse into death. The image, known as *Death of a Loyalist Militiaman* or simply *The Falling Soldier*, has become almost universally recognized as one of the greatest war photographs ever made (fig. 40).

The photograph has also generated a great deal of controversy. In recent years, it has been al-



Fig. 40 Robert Capa, *Death of a Loyalist Militiaman*, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain [*The Falling Soldier*], September 5, 1936.

leged that Capa staged the scene, a charge that has forced me to undertake a fantastic amount of research over the course of two decades.<sup>1</sup> I have wrestled with the dilemma of how to deal with a photograph that one believes to be genuine but that one cannot know with absolute certainty to be a truthful documentation. What does one do with a photograph that is now often published with a caption mentioning the doubts that have been raised about its authenticity? Has the taint of suspicion rendered it permanently impotent? Will Capa's photograph have to be relegated to the dustbin of history?

As I will attempt to demonstrate here, the truth concerning *The Falling Soldier* is neither black nor white. It is neither a photograph of a man pretending to have been shot, nor an image made during what we would normally consider the heat of battle.

*The Falling Soldier* was not the first published photograph of a person who has just been shot. That honor probably goes to William Warnecke's 1910 picture of the assassination attempt on New York City mayor William J. Gaynor (fig. 39). Gaynor, who had just boarded a liner bound for Europe, was shot in the back and neck by a disgruntled former municipal civil servant. Warnecke's photograph was reproduced large on the front page of his New York newspaper, *The Evening World*. The shooting was not immediately fatal, but it ruined the mayor's health, and he died three years later.

Another photograph, of a Canadian soldier (fig. 41) who had just been hit at Vimy Ridge dur-

ing the Battle of Arras in April 1917, was made by a military photographer, a man serving in the Canadian Army and not an accredited civilian. The great majority of pictures of World War I battles were made by such enlisted photographers and were not published during the war. The Canadian picture seems to have made its first public appearance in a book entitled *The World War in Photographs—Uncensored*, published in 1934 (just two years before Capa's *Falling Soldier*) by the International Newspaper Syndicate, one of the leading American press agencies.

When we see such relatively static pictures of shootings, we can easily understand the impact of Capa's explosively dynamic photograph. Widely published, it elevated Capa into the photojournalistic elite. The photographer before Capa whose work was most characterized by this kind of dynamism was Hungarian-born Martin Munkácsi, one of the most famous photojournalists working in Germany during the 1920s and 1930s. Although it would be absurd to claim that he exerted a direct influence on the way *The Falling Soldier* looks, it is quite possible that Capa's photograph would have been rejected as "antipicturesque" and too poorly focused for publication without the precedent established by Munkácsi's work (fig. 42).

In 1980, when I began to research my biography of Capa, very little concrete information existed about *The Falling Soldier* except that it was first published in the September 23, 1936, issue of *Vu* (fig. 43), where it was reproduced with another, similar picture by Capa on the same page. The subhead on the top of the page reads, "How they fell," but there is no mention of where Capa had

exposed his negatives. The stirring text says only, "With lively step, breasting the wind, clenching their rifles, they ran down the slope covered with thick stubble. Suddenly their snoring was interrupted, a bullet whistled—a fratricidal bullet—and their blood was drunk by their native soil." The French leftist weekly *Regards*, in its issue dated September 24, 1936, reproduced some images from the series leading up to *The Falling Soldier*, but not the climactic picture itself, and captioned them as having been shot on the Córdoba front (fig. 44). *La Revue de Médecin*, on September 30, 1936 (fig. 46), published a mélange of images from Barcelona, Santa Eulalia, and the Córdoba front, including the second "falling soldier" that had also been used in the *Vu* spread. And when *The Falling Soldier* was published in the July 12, 1937, issue of *Life* magazine (fig. 47), the caption stated, "Robert Capa's camera catches a Spanish soldier the instant he is dropped by a bullet through the head in front of Córdoba." The claim that the man had been shot in the head was evidently supplied by a *Life* editor who mistook the thrown-back tassel on the man's cap for a piece of his skull being blown off.



Fig. 41 Unidentified photographer, [Canadian soldier shot in the Battle of Arras, Vimy Ridge, France], April 1917.

Fig. 42 Martin Munkácsi, [Berlin versus Budapest soccer match, Budapest], ca. 1928.





Fig. 43 Cover of *Death in the Making* by Robert Capa, photo arrangement by André Kertész (New York: Cowi-Prude, 1938).



The *Falling Soldier* was also published on the front dust jacket of Capa's *Death in the Making*, which appeared in 1938 (fig. 43). The photograph was not reproduced in the interior layout, however. By the 1970s, most copies of the book lacked their dust jacket; thus Capa seemed to have deliberately omitted from *Death in the Making* one of his most famous photographs of the Spanish Civil War, a fact that later raised suspicions about the image's authenticity.

Careful examination of *The Falling Soldier* and the photograph published in *Vu* directly below it—a man in a further state of collapse—leaves no doubt that they show two different men who fall on almost precisely the same spot, recognizable

because of a few prominent stalks of grass. Another photograph (fig. 50) shows the two men lined up with some of their comrades and waving their rifles. The man who would minutes later become the “falling soldier” appears at the far left; the other is third from the left. The most obvious distinguishing difference between the two men is that the “falling soldier” is wearing cartridge boxes with straps that run parallel down his torso. The second man's straps cross over his chest (figs. 48 and 49).

The decisive clue to the exact location in which Capa had made *The Falling Soldier* was provided by photographer Hans Namuth. When I interviewed Namuth in 1982, he told me that he

Fig. 44 *La Revue de Méditerranée*, September 30, 1936, page spread of Capa's photographs from Barafano, Santa Eulalia, and the Córdoba front, including the second falling soldier.



Fig. 47 *LIFE*, July 12, 1937.



Fig. 68 Detail of Robert Capa, *Death of a Loyalist militiaman, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain* (*The Falling Soldier*) (fig. 77).



Fig. 69 Detail of Robert Capa, *Death of a Loyalist militiaman, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain* (fig. 78).

and fellow photographer Georg Reiser, accompanying Swiss journalist Franz Borkenau, had been at the village of Cerro Muriano, a few miles north of Córdoba, where a battle between fascists and Republicans took place on September 5, 1936.<sup>4</sup> Although Namuth did not see Capa or Taro in Cerro Muriano, he realized that Capa had been there when he saw his photographs in the September 25 issue of *Vu*. On the page facing *The Falling Soldier* and its variant appeared five photographs—four credited to Capa, one to Reiser—of people fleeing the bombing of their village. Namuth recognized the persons and locations in Capa's photographs as identical to some that he and Reiser had photographed in Cerro Muriano (figs. 51 and 52).

The Robert Capa Archive at the International Center of Photography contains an incomplete set of vintage prints from Capa and Taro's trip to Spain in August–September 1936. I had established that the vintage numbering on the backs of the prints in that set conformed to the chronology of their travels. Given that the numbers on prints of images belonging to *The Falling Soldier* series immediately precede those of prints of the Cerro Muriano refugees, I concluded in my biography that it was “very likely that Capa shot his *Falling Soldier* picture at or near Cerro Muriano, on or shortly before September 5, 1936.”<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the circumstantial evidence provided by Namuth and *Vu*, we now have concrete evidence of Capa and Taro's presence in Cerro Muriano. Dr. Catherine Coleman, curator of photographs at the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid, recently discovered an arti-

cle signed by Clemente Cimorra in the September 8, 1936, edition of the Madrid newspaper *La Voz*, in which he states that on Sunday, September 6 (the day after Capa made his photograph), he encountered Capa and Taro on the Loma de las Malagueñas, a hill just outside Cerro Muriano. Capa said he was working for *Voz*; Taro introduced herself by her original name (Gerta Pohorylle) and said that she was working for *Regards*. Cimorra reported that the brave “muchachos franceses” had with them only their cameras (“cómunistas fotográficos”) and were at that moment photographing a plane flying overhead (fig. 53).

Over the following decades, during Capa's life and for twenty years after his death, *The Falling Soldier* was widely published without any questions being raised about its reliability as an unposed document. The allegation that Capa's photograph was staged first surfaced in 1975, in a book by British journalist Phillip Knightley entitled *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker*. Curious about the circumstances under which the image was made, Knightley contacted several of Capa's colleagues during the period, including O. D. (O'Dowd) Gallagher, a South African-born journalist who, as a correspondent for the *London Daily Express*, covered the Spanish Civil War first from the Insurgent (Francoist) side and later from the Loyalist side. Gallagher told Knightley that “at one stage of the war he and Capa were sharing a hotel room,” though no information is provided about where or when. He then said that “there had been little action for several days, and Capa and others complained to the Re-



Fig. 29 Robert Capa, *Loyalist militiamen breaching rifles, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain*, September 5, 1936. The man in *The Falling Soldier* is on the far left. The third man from left is the second falling soldier.



scenes. Franco's troops were dressed in "uniforms" and armed and they simulated attacks and defence. Smoke bombs were used to give atmosphere. . . . Capa told me the way to get lifelike action shots was to have the camera slightly out of focus and to ever so slowly move the camera when making an exposure. This technique is exemplified in Capa's "instant of death" picture. I believe it was all tied up with the Franco "battle" series with acting soldiers and smoke bombs.<sup>4</sup>

Gallagher's claim to have shared a hotel room in Hendaye may be dismissed for several reasons, any one of which would suffice to discredit his entire testimony.

First of all, we can document Capa's travels between the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War and the first publication of his photograph; he was never anywhere within several hundred miles of Hendaye or Irún. Secondly, Capa would never have had anything to do with Franco's troops. A passionate antifascist, he covered the Spanish Civil War as a committed partisan for the Republican side. In August–September 1936, he was working for *Vu*, which, because of its strongly antifascist stance, was considered a leftist publication. Capa's fellow Hungarian Arthur Koestler wrote that "the insurgents refused to allow correspondents of Left-wing newspapers into the territory held by them."<sup>5</sup> Had Capa ever ventured into insurgent territory, he would have been liable to suffer the fate that befell Koestler, who was arrested in insurgent-held Málaga, found guilty of espionage, and condemned to be shot. Only be-

cause of vigorous intervention by the British and Hungarian governments was he released—having been imprisoned for more than ten weeks, most of that time in solitary confinement.

The third reason that Gallagher's claim is absurd is that throughout Capa's trip to Spain in August and September 1936, the photographer was accompanied by Gerda Taro; he would never have shared a hotel room with anyone but her.

Finally, newspaper reports confirm that on September 5, 1936, O. D. Gallagher was in Hendaye, several hundred miles north of Cerro Muriano, where we know that on the same day Capa exposed the negative of *The Falling Soldier*.<sup>6</sup> Gallagher's claim that he was then sharing a hotel room with Capa and his allegation that Capa staged *The Falling Soldier* must therefore be discarded as the products of an elderly man's confused memory. He may indeed have shared a room in Hendaye with some photographer who made pictures of posed exercises, but that photographer was certainly not Capa.<sup>7</sup>

The staged fighting that Gallagher heard about in Hendaye was probably the same that photographer P. H. F. "Bill" Tovey describes in his memoir *Activist with a Click*. In 1936, Tovey was on the staff of the *London Daily Express*, the paper for which Gallagher was also working. During August, Tovey had photographed (on the Francoist side) in southern Spain. He arrived in Hendaye twenty-four hours after the fall of Irún. Gallagher was in Hendaye at that time. In his book, Tovey says, "I . . . pressed hard to be permitted to travel on to Irún. But my request for permission was met with blank refusal, and it was a veto which

was maintained for several days after the Rebels had taken the town. By the time we were allowed in, all signs of war had been cleared away." A box on the front page of the September 5 issue of the *Daily Express* announced, "Wonderful pictures—wired to Paris, flown to London—of Irún refugees fleeing to French territory are on the Back Page." The photographs were by Tovey.

He soon made his way to Burgos, the Francoist capital, where he went to the press bureau and was issued a photographer's permit by "a smart officer who spoke perfect English." This man then told Tovey that

the majority of the pictures which had decorated the back pages of most of the British and foreign newspapers and had been shown on the cinema screens of the world had been faked. They had been taken on the rifle range just outside Burgos. Young recruits lucky enough to have uniforms acted as the escorts. I was promised more pictures of this type. Faking was the order of the day; even a tumble-down cottage was used as a background and bodies placed in heaps to look like casualties of the war. Men carefully rehearsed in their parts would fall as though shot at the blast of a whistle. On comparing these pictures it was possible to recognize the same soldiers escorting prisoners on two fronts, Bilbao and Somosierra [fig. 54], which were at least one hundred miles apart.<sup>8</sup>

Tovey resolved to photograph the fakery and to have his pictures published with captions telling

the truth about the circumstances in which they were made. Unfortunately, he never had an opportunity to carry out his plan. Although he was told that he would be included in the next "photo call," he was summoned back to London before the call came.

In an article published in the London newspaper *Night & Day* (July 5, 1998), Knightley also stated that he had repeatedly asked that Cornell Capa or the Magnum agency "release the roll of film on which the two 'moments of death' appear so that we could see the whole sequence of shots." He then complained that his requests had not been met, clearly implying that the negatives would



Fig. 54 The Illustrated London News, September 5, 1936. The photograph in the middle of the page is probably one of the faked pictures described by P. H. F. "Bill" Tovey. It is captioned: "An amazing battle photograph taken in the heat of action during a rebel attack on a government position near Somosierra: the victorious rebels reaching the crest of a hill, and defenders surrendering. . . ."

support his allegation that the photographs had been posed.

In fact, the Cerro Muriano negatives suffered a strange and unfortunate fate early on. The roll of film was cut into snippets by Capa's Paris darkroom man, Csiki Weisz, soon after he had developed it. Some of the snippets were cut into single frames, others in groups of two or three frames. This was the normal practice in Capa's darkroom, for some publications insisted on making halftone plates from original negatives. The film strips were accordingly cut to give a publication the frame it needed, while keeping the other negatives available for other publications. At some later point, the snippets were thoroughly and randomly intermixed and all of the original sequencing of the Cerro Muriano and Santa Eulalia negatives was lost. Reproduced here (fig. 55) are all the original 35mm negatives in the collection of the International Center of Photography from *The Falling Soldier* series. (For known images from the series for which negatives are not on that contact sheet, only copy negatives of vintage prints exist.) The negatives are arranged according to numbers which were written on the negatives, but these numbers do not necessarily reflect the order in which the negatives were exposed.<sup>41</sup>

Fortunately, one of the original notebooks of contact prints from Capa and Taro's first trip to Spain, in August and September 1936, survives and is now in the collection of the International Center of Photography. (Eight other Spain notebooks are held by the Archives Nationales in Paris.) It seems to be the second in a series of notebooks made in the early months of the war.

The first would have been filled with images shot in Barcelona during the week or ten days after Capa and Taro's arrival there, on August 5. The existing second notebook, filled with consecutively numbered contact prints beginning with number 276, opens with a sequence of images from what Capa identified in *Death in the Making* as a battle at Santa Eulalia (fig. 56). All of the images in the notebook are of the Aragon front, except for coverage of a bullfight on a return visit to Barcelona from the front. The numbering in the notebook corresponds exactly with the numbering of vintage prints of those images. But even in the notebook there is some confusion about the continuity of individual stories. A second sequence of images apparently from Santa Eulalia begins with number 549, in which we see Gerda Taro, holding her Rolleiflex, standing near some soldiers on what appears to be the same hillside as the images beginning with number 276 (fig. 57). The last image in the ICP notebook is numbered 653.<sup>42</sup> We may assume that the lost third notebook would have contained images from Madrid, Toledo, and the Córdoba front, including Cerro Muriano. Since we have neither that notebook nor an original contact sheet, it is impossible to definitively establish the sequence of images in *The Falling Soldier* series.

The negatives of both "moment of death" pictures, as well as of numerous other images from *The Falling Soldier* series, were lost long ago, presumably during the 1930s or 1940s. All modern prints of *The Falling Soldier* have been made from a copy negative of the vintage print in the collection of the Museum of Modern Art, New

Fig. 55 All existing 35mm negatives from *The Falling Soldier* series at the International Center of Photography.





Fig. 24 The first page of Capa's Spain contact print notebook at ICP. On this page is a sequence of images from what Capa identified as *Death in the Making* at a battle at Santa Eulalia in Aragón.

York (fig. 58). That print, given to the museum by Eberhard Steichen, was made on textured paper and consequently differs from the usual Capa vintage prints of the mid- to late 1930s, which have absolutely flat, glossy, ferrotyped surfaces. Too, that print has undergone some retouching. Because it was drymounted onto card stock at some point, it is impossible to ascertain what stamps or stickers may be on its verso. This was the only vintage print of *The Falling Soldier* known until a second surfaced in Spain during the 1980s. This second print, which has the typical ferrotyped surface, is now in the Spanish government's Civil War Archive in Salamanca (fig. 59).<sup>10</sup> In the making of that print, the image was cropped considerably on the top and on the right.

In the first edition of my Capa biography, I set forth the evidence—detailed above—that had convinced me that Capa had made his photograph during the battle at Cerro Muriano. Nevertheless, the controversy surrounding the photo raged on until a breakthrough occurred in August 1996, when I received a telephone call from Rita Grosvenor, a British journalist based in Spain. Ms. Grosvenor told me that a Spaniard named Mario Brotóns Jordà had identified the man in Capa's photograph as one Federico Borrell García, who had been killed in battle at Cerro Muriano on September 5, 1936. Grosvenor's article would be published in the *London Observer* on September 1, 1996, to mark the sixtieth anniversary of Capa's photograph and of Borrell's death.<sup>11</sup>

The story of how Brotóns made his discovery is a fascinating one. Born in the village of Alcoy,

near the city of Alicante in southeastern Spain, Brotóns had joined the local Loyalist militia, the Columna Alcoyana, at the age of fourteen—and was himself a combatant in the battle at Cerro Muriano on September 5, 1936. He wrote in the early 1990s that he had vaguely—little more than subconsciously—recognized the terrain in Capa's photograph, but "out of stupidity" (*por torpeza*) had never focused his attention on the identity of the man.<sup>12</sup> When Brotóns's friend Ricard Buñó, a young Alcoy historian, mentioned to him that he had read (in my biography of Capa) that Capa's photograph might have been made during the battle at Cerro Muriano, Brotóns began his research.

Men from a number of militias and military units fought at Cerro Muriano, but Brotóns knew that the man in the photograph had belonged to the militia regiment from Alcoy, for the distinctive cartridge cases the man is wearing had been specially designed by the commander of the Columna Alcoyana and made by the leather craftsmen in Alcoy. No one in any of the other Loyalist units participating in the battle at Cerro Muriano would have worn cartridge cases of that particular design. Because Brotóns was himself wounded at Cerro Muriano on September 5, that day was fixed very clearly in his memory; and he recalled hearing on that day that Federico Borrell García, one of the most popular men in the Alcoy militia, had just been killed. Brotóns then realized that if the man in Capa's photograph was from Alcoy and was killed at Cerro Muriano on September 5, then he could very well be Federico Borrell García. What Brotóns needed was confirmation that no other member of the Alcoy militia



Fig. 59 Robert Capa, [Contact print of a 35mm negative of Gerda Taro in Santa Eulalia, Aragón front, Spain], August 1936.

Fig. 58 Robert Capa, *Death of a Loyalist militiaman*, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain, September 5, 1936. Print at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Fig. 59 Robert Capa, *Death of a Loyalist militiaman*, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain, September 5, 1936. Print at the Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española, Salamanca.



had died at Cerro Muriano on September 5. (Of course, men belonging to other militias and military units were killed there that day.)

According to Grovener, Brotóns “began a painstaking search through local records in Alcoy and military archives in Madrid and Salamanca.”<sup>58</sup> After the publication of Grovener’s *Observer* article, I wrote that Brotóns “confirmed in the Spanish government archives in Salamanca and Madrid that only one member of the Columna Alcoyana had been killed at Cerro Muriano on that particular day—Federico Borrell García.”<sup>59</sup> Both statements turn out to be misinterpretations of what Brotóns (who died in the spring of 1996) had written in his own account of how he had

identified the man in the photograph. “And then came the most convincing proof,” he stated. “This was that both in the Salamanca archives and in those of Madrid was registered only one single death, with the name well known to all of us [who had been in the Alcoy militia] of Federico Borrell García.”<sup>60</sup> Brotóns never said that he had visited those archives himself.

As a result of this slippage, a new round of *The Falling Soldier* controversy erupted in 2002, with the publication of Alex Kershaw’s biography of Capa.<sup>61</sup> Kershaw quotes Miguel Ángel Jaramillo, director of the official *Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española* (Spanish Civil War Archive) in Salamanca, as stating that the name Federico Borrell García does not appear in any document there, and that no record exists of Mario Brotóns having visited the archive.<sup>62</sup> I could not have unraveled the dilemma presented by Jaramillo’s assertions without the collaboration of Dr. Catherine Coleman. It was she who contacted Brotóns’s son, a teacher, and was told by him that his father, in fact, had not visited the Salamanca and Madrid archives himself. He said that Brotóns had obtained his information about the documents in the archives from Francisco Moreno Gómez, the author of the definitive book about the Spanish Civil War in the Córdoba region.<sup>63</sup>

Dr. Coleman also discussed with Jaramillo the question of why the archives have no documentation of Borrell’s death. The men of the Alcoy militia were mostly members of the anarchist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT). Jaramillo said that “the anarchist militiamen were not exactly keen on bureaucracy.”<sup>64</sup> Too, he said, Septem-

ber 5 was in the early days of the war—in other words, before record-keeping procedures were well established. Alcoy historian Miguel Pascual Mira provides another reason for the lack of documentation: typically the widow of a dead soldier would report the death of her husband to the relevant civil or military registry, in order to activate a pension; Borrell was unmarried, therefore no immediate report would have been made.<sup>65</sup> Regarding the question of what happened to Borrell’s body, Brotóns’s son told Dr. Coleman that, during the war, news took about two months to reach Alcoy. There was obviously no way that Borrell’s body could have been returned to his native village. He was presumably buried in a hastily dug grave, with some very simple marker, near where he fell. There was more fighting at Cerro Muriano the following day, September 6. His grave could have been obliterated then, or later, when the town fell into the hands of the Francoists, who had little respect for the Loyalist dead.

In the first edition of his history of Alcoy village, *Retazos de una época de inquietudes* (self-published in the late 1980s), Brotóns neither reproduced nor mentioned Capa’s famous photo-



graph, though he described the death of Federico Borrell García. In chapter 7, he tells the story of the Alcoy regiment in Andalusia during September 1936, and he recounts that Borrell, known to his comrades as “Taino,” was a twenty-four-year-old textile-mill worker from Alcoy who had belonged to the anarcho-sindicalist Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (thus the initials “CNT” embrodered on his cap, legible in one photograph preceding *The Falling Soldier* (fig. 60). He was one of about fifty militiamen who had arrived at Cerro Muriano on the morning of September 5 to reinforce the Columna Alcoyana’s front line. That afternoon, Borrell and his comrades were on the hill known as La Loma de las Malaguetas, defending the Murcia artillery regiment, which was behind the Alcoy infantry, when enemy troops infiltrated behind Loyalist lines and began firing at them from behind as well as from in front, hoping to squeeze the Loyalists in a vice. (Brotóns says that Borrell was killed at about five o’clock in the afternoon, but, for reasons detailed below, I believe that he was probably killed at least an hour or an hour and a half earlier than that.) Some weeks later, the Ruesca-Taino Battalion was formed in Alcoy, named in honor of Borrell and another CNT militiaman, Juan Ruesca Ángel, who had died on September 21 or 25, 1936, defending the town of Espejo. The Ruesca-Taino Battalion later fought at the Battle of Teruel.

The second edition of Brotóns’s book, printed for him in 1995 by the local printer in Alcoy, seems to be an unaltered reprinting of the 484-page first edition followed by a new 112-page sec-

Fig. 60 Detail of another Capa photograph (fig. 76) of the man in *The Falling Soldier*. Note the initials CNT for Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (National Federation of Labor) embrodered on his cap.



Fig. 41 Unidentified photograph, [Federico Borrell Garcia (enlarged detail from a family photograph)] ca. 1926.



Fig. 42 Detail of Fig. 50.

tion dealing with the nine murders committed at the Circulo Industrial in Alcoy on February 23, 1937. The information about his identification of Borrell as the man in Capa's photograph is provided on a separate sheet, printed front and back, folded and inserted unattached into each copy of the second edition. The reason is that to have incorporated the new material into the body of the old text would have meant resetting, or at least renumbering, many pages for the new edition.

When Brotjans showed Capa's photograph to the widow of Federico's younger brother, Everisto, she confirmed the identification. A comparison of a family photograph of Federico and another picture of the falling soldier that precedes the moment-of-death photo (figs. 61 and 62) shows the same high forehead, large ears, heavy eyebrows, downturned lower lip, and pronouncedly jutting chin. Nevertheless, since 1996 there has been much dispute over the identification of Borrell as the falling soldier.

It is unfortunate that the controversy about *The Falling Soldier* has led to so much importance being attached to the identity of the man in the photograph. Before the controversy, the photograph was taken as an image of the quintessential Unknown Loyalist Soldier of the Spanish Civil War. The picture seemed to symbolize Republican Spain itself, charging forward to defend itself and being struck down. As such, it has both symbolic and representational affinities with Goya's great painting *The Third of May, 1808* (fig. 63). Indeed, Capa's photograph compresses into a single figure much of the drama of Goya's complex scene.

In his July 1998 article, Phillip Knightley denied the importance of Brotjans's discovery and stated, "The famous photograph is almost certainly a fake—Capa posed it." He went on to argue, "Federico could have posed for the photograph before he was killed." To refute that suggestion, I sought the advice of a forensic expert, Captain Robert L. Franks, the chief homicide detective of the Memphis Police Department. When I asked him, in September 2000, whether he would be willing to give me a reading of the two "moment of death" photographs as if they were evidence in a murder case, he very kindly acceded to my request.

In his analysis, he said that the first thing that struck him as odd about *The Falling Soldier* was that the man in the photograph "had been standing flat footed when he was shot. He clearly was not in stride when he was shot." He went on to write, "Was this picture posed? I think not, based on the human reflex response. You will notice that the soldier's left hand, which is partially showing under his left leg, is in a semi-closed position. If the fall was, in fact, staged, the hand would be open to catch his fall (simply a self-preservation reflex to keep from getting hurt)."<sup>26</sup> Franks also noted that the position of the fingers, somewhat curled toward the palm, indicates that the man's muscles had gone limp and that his body was rapidly shutting down in the process of dying.

The disturbing fact of the soldier's flat-footedness, along with Captain Franks's equally disturbing deduction that the man had been carrying his rifle in a way suggesting that he did not expect to use it soon, led me to reconsider the story that Hansel Mieth, who had become a *L'Es* staff photo-



Fig. 43 Francisco de Goya, *The Third of May, 1808*, 1814. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

grapher in the late 1930s, wrote to me in a letter dated March 19, 1982. She said that Capa, very upset, had once told her about the situation in which he had made his famous photograph. "They were fooling around," [Capa] said. "We all were fooling around. We felt good. There was no shooting. They came running down the slope. I ran too and knipsed."<sup>27</sup>

"Did you tell them to stage an attack?" asked Mieth.

"Hell no. We were all happy. A little crazy, maybe."

"And then?"

"Then, suddenly it was the real thing. I didn't hear the firing—not at first."

"Where were you?"

"Out there, a little ahead and to the side of them."<sup>28</sup>

Beyond that, Capa told Mieth only that the episode haunted him badly. We do not know the nature of Capa's guilt. Did he initiate the "knipsing" and feel guilty about its outcome? Or perhaps the soldiers initiated the "knipsing" because they wanted to be photographed. The "knipsing" seems to have

ended when the soldier stood up to have Capa make a portrait of him. But did Capa ask the soldier to stand up for his portrait, or did the soldier himself suggest making the portrait? Whatever the case, Capa implied to Mieth that he felt at least partially responsible for the man's death.

Taking into consideration all of the foregoing—along with newly identified photographs by Gerda Taro shot at Cerro Muriano (figs. 64–66 and 73)—I shall now put forward my hypothesis of Robert Capa's experience on the afternoon of September 5, 1936, during the battle at Cerro Muriano.

During the siesta period, which lasted from about 1:00 to about 3:30, Capa and Taro encountered a group of militiamen—Francisco Borrell Garcia among them—from several units. (In his account of the day at Cerro Muriano, Franz Borkenau states that both sides strictly observed the tradition of the siesta, during which no fight-

ing took place.)<sup>29</sup> This encounter probably occurred at a gully a few feet deep on the Loma de las Malagueñas, a hill outside Cerro Muriano. Capa photographed various groups of men, their bodies mostly hugging the side of the gully, aiming and perhaps firing their rifles over the top (figs. 67 and 68). I believe that it was at this trench that the entire group of soldiers stood up and brandished their rifles (fig. 70). We do not know who suggested simulating some battle action to be photographed—Capa or Taro or perhaps the soldiers themselves.

Capa subsequently (at least I deduce that it was subsequently rather than previously) shot a series of photographs of men kneeling and aiming their rifles. The view of the landscape indicates that this picture (fig. 69) was made much lower on the hill than was *The Falling Soldier*.

In one of Taro's photographs (fig. 73), in which Borrell is recognizable as the second man from the left, shows that the men proceeded up the

hill. Then, as seen in a detail of one of Capa's photos published in the September 24, 1936, issue of *Regards* (fig. 71), the soldiers turned and aimed their rifles.

Next, evidently, the men began running down the hillside, with Capa and Taro running beside them. Soon they jumped across a gully that looks about eight or ten feet deep (fig. 74). Nearly stretched out on the gently sloping earth at the top of the gully, they aimed and perhaps fired their rifles (figs. 75 and 76). I have speculated that they indeed fired, and by doing so attracted the enemy's attention. The man's long shadow in *The Falling Soldier* suggests that the time could easily have been around 3:30, the end of the siesta.

I long assumed that the men next continued their forward advance, running down the exposed hillside. But it seems that at least two of the men—including Borrell—turned around and climbed back up the side of the gully that had been behind them. In Capa's two photographs of

the soldiers crossing the gully, we can clearly see, in the upper left corner of each picture, upstanding stalks of grass like those in the two "moment of death" photographs (fig. 75).

Once Borrell had climbed out of the gully, he evidently stood up, back no more than a pace or two from the edge of the gully and facing down the hillside, so that Capa (who had remained in the gully) could photograph him from below (fig. 72). Perhaps the intended result was a heroic standing portrait. Just as Capa was about to press his shutter release, a hidden enemy machine gun opened fire. The position of Borrell's body in the photograph—his torso twisting to the left—suggests the impact of a bullet to the upper left quadrant of the torso, quite possibly to the heart, as Brotius states (fig. 77).

Borrell died more or less instantly and went limp while still on his feet, as Capa's photograph shows. As soon as he had fallen to the ground, comrades must have dragged his body back into the gully, which would explain why his corpse is not visible in the photograph of the other "falling soldier" (fig. 78). Indeed, Captain Franks concluded that the man in *The Falling Soldier* was the first to be shot. He wrote, "I base this upon the cloud formation that seems to be tighter in [The Falling Soldier] and more dissipated in the [other] picture. The second soldier's photograph is in focus, which indicates to me that Robert Capa had time to attend to the settings on his camera between the two shots."<sup>30</sup>

As for the other soldier, Franks wrote that the photograph of him "indicates to me that the soldier was on his knees, leaning back with his but-



Figs. 64–66 Gerda Taro, *Joyful militiamen*, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain, September 5, 1936. In our collaborative work to prepare an exhibition of Gerda Taro's work, Insa Schabert (Taro's biographer) and I have ascertained that eight of Taro's existing negatives are from Cerro Muriano. They were made with a Roliflex, the camera that Taro used exclusively during August and September 1936, while Capa exclusively used a Leica. (Roliflex negatives are 2 1/4 inches square; Leica negatives are 25mm rectangular format.) We now finally know for certain that Taro was with Capa while he shot *The Falling Soldier* sequence.





Fig. 70 Robert Capa, [Loyalist militiamen brandishing rifles, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936.



Fig. 71 Robert Capa, [Loyalist militiamen on a hill aiming rifles, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936, published in *Regards* [fig. 44, photo at bottom left].



Fig. 72 Robert Capa, [Loyalist militiamen landing across a gully, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936. The top arrow points to approximately where Borrell must have been standing when he was shot. The lower arrow indicates where Capa was evidently hugging the side of the gully.

tocks resting on the heels of his feet, the rifle being held in his right hand and the rifle muzzle pointing up and slightly to the rear. As the soldier was thrown back by a bullet, gravity took over, pulling the weight of the barrel towards the ground.<sup>110</sup> When the gunfire began, he was presumably standing far enough to Borrell's right so that he was outside the left edge of *The Falling Soldier*. He must then have dropped to his knees, both to protect himself and to help move Borrell's body into the gully. He probably lifted Borrell by the armpits, which would explain why the photograph shows him just slightly behind the spot where Borrell had been standing. Men in the gully would have dragged Borrell by the feet toward them. The man in Capa's second photograph was evidently picking his rifle up from the ground when he was shot.

The most troubling pictures in the entire *Falling Soldier* series are the photographs of ostensibly dead bodies lying on the ground (fig. 79). We have no way of knowing whether these pictures are genuine or posed. If the photograph showing only one body is of the second "falling soldier," then someone has placed his gun across his midsection. If the man did not die quickly after being shot, then perhaps he was able to grasp the gun barrel himself.

Late in the summer of 1937, while on a visit to New York, Capa stated in an interview for an article in the *New York World-Telegram*: "No tricks are necessary to take pictures in Spain. You don't have to pose your camera [i.e., stage photographs]. The pictures are there, and you just take

them. The truth is the best picture, the best propaganda."<sup>111</sup>

That was certainly true most of the time, but we know that Capa and Taro did occasionally resort to staging. The most fully documented instance occurred on June 24, 1937, at the Chaparral Battalion headquarters near Peñarroya, on the Córdoba front. The unit's political commissar, the German writer Alfred Kantorowicz, recorded in his diary how Capa (who was using an Eyemo movie camera to make footage for one of Time Inc.'s *March of Time* newsmagazines) and Taro (who was using a Leica) filmed and photographed a mock attack. The staff and troops headquartered behind the lines "all had to wear their helmets and carry their rifles, and Capa arranged a whole attack scene: an imaginary fascist position was stormed as the men, with terrifying roars and passionate battle-lust, leapt and bounded double-time into victory." Capa, he added, "was very pleased with the result."<sup>112</sup> Taro's photographs are probably those that the Paris newspaper *Ce Soir* published as showing an attack on the village of La Granjuela. In this dramatic series of pictures, men advance along a dirt road into a tiny country village, a scenario that may well have been a recreation of what had actually happened at La Granjuela on April 5, when the battalion had—in fact—captured it. Such dramatic reenactments of events were by no means unusual in *March of Time* films, for Henry Luce himself had ordered the series directors to use "fakery in allegiance to the truth" whenever necessary. When Capa told Kantorowicz that the footage of the staged battle would appear more authentic on the screen than



Fig. 73 Gerda Taro, [Loyalist militiamen running up a hill, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936.



Fig. 74 Robert Capa, [Jayalir millonen jumping over a gully, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936.



Fig. 75 Robert Capa, [Jayalir millonen landing across a gully, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936.



Fig. 76 Robert Capa, [Three Loyalist militiamen in a gully aiming rifles, Cerro Muriano, Cantábrico front, Spain], September 5, 1936.



Fig. 77 Robert Capa, Death of a Loyalist militiaman, Cerro Muriano, Cantábrico front, Spain, September 5, 1936.



Fig. 78 Robert Capa, [Death of a loyalist militiaman, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936. The second falling soldier.



Fig. 79 Robert Capa, [Body of a loyalist militiaman, Cerro Muriano, Córdoba front, Spain], September 5, 1936.

footage of an actual battle would, he was probably echoing advice given him by Richard de Rochemont, chief of European operations for *The March of Time*.

By Capa's own testimony to Hansel Meith, his Carmo Mariann photographs leading up to *The Falling Soldier* depict "fooling around" rather

than posing or actual fighting. But, according to that same testimony, the moment captured in *The Falling Soldier* was deadly earnest. Federico Borrell Garcia stood up for what was intended to be a heroic portrait but which became, completely unexpectedly, a picture of a man who has just been mortally wounded.

## NOTES

1 Published August 28, 1936.

2 Robert Capa, *Death in the Making* (New York: Coward-McCoy, 1937), 209.

3 For a review of the debates and evidence both pre and post, see the complete lecture dossier compiled by photographer Luis Piquet at <http://www.photographershistorical.org/index.html>. Proponents of the argument that *The Falling Soldier* was indeed indeed Philip Knightley (to be discussed below) and Caroline Beardon, for the latter see her *War and Photography: A Cultural*

*History* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 128-29.

4 Beardon's account of the day's events in *Carmo Mariann* appears in *March: The Spanish Civil War* (London: Faber & Faber, 1973), pp. 108-65.

5 Fear of reimagining his genre, who remained in Germany, led Neuwirth to publish under Beaton's name the photographs that they made together.

6 Richard Whelan, *Robert Capa: A Biography* (1983; reprint, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), pp. 93, 96.

7 Philip Knightley, *The First Casualty: From the Crimea to Vietnam: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth Maker* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1971), p. 212.

8 Inge Lewicki, *The Camera at War: A History of War Photography from 1840 to the Present Day* (London: W. H. Allen, 1976), p. 66.

9 Arthur Kroeber, *Avatar in the Blue: An Autobiography* (New York: Maxwell, Inc., 1952), p. 115.

10 Capa, for example, G. D. Collier, "Bols' Fight in the East," *Daily Express* (London), November 3, 1936; identified "Vladimir (Pravda) Spanish Frontline," Friday.

11 There is an affidavit that Capa and Collier got lost before January 1936, when they were both staying in the Hotel Majestic in Barcelona. On the night of January 20-21, as limited images entered the windows of the city, Capa photographed Collier and journalist Herbert Matthews walking and photographing their lost dispatches before the three of them left the beleaguered city to gather to drive north to the French border and safety (see chapter 6).

12 *It's Me, It's "We"* (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 104-5.

13 The six actual contact sheets that contain negatives from the series were made in the 1930s and happened to mix negatives from unrelated series. (The six sheets are numbers 36, 10, 15, 08, 11, 06, 07.) The chaotic organization is typical of the contact sheets of Capa's pre-June 1963 work. All of their outprints of negatives must have been jumbled together in boxes until after the founding of Magnum in 1947. In the early days of Magnum, someone seems to have made an attempt to sort all of those outprints according to story. In most cases, especially stories from World War II, a fairly good job was done—but as far as getting the original on from each story together, but not as far as joining up all the outprints from each roll of film. However, most of Capa's pre-World War II stories listed purely in the listing. They are often contained not only among the contact sheets of a single story but also among the contacts of various stories.

14 In some prints, presumably in the late 1930s or early 1940s, it is not known why or by whom—the negatives from Santa Fe de la Abadía were all shown out of the numerical (and presumably chronological) order of the notebooks, intentional, and then renumbered. In that renumbering, the notebook contact sheet number 238 became now negative number 263 (number 264 from the renumbering is missing, but 262 is an image from Carmo Mariann) image 279 from the ICF notebook became number 268. There is absolutely no light in the renumbering.

15 Capa gave the prize to Juan Tripin, president of the Spanish Republic, before the end of the war. See Michael Chabon, "An Atomic Misadventure of a Sort: When Captain Robert Capa," *Los Angeles Times*, 20, 2000, p. 22.

16 *The Observer* and Harold Kopp, "Capa's Falling Soldier Ready Did Die That Day," *The Observer* (London), September 1, 1994, p. 5.

17 Martin Beardon, *Robert Capa: A Biography*, 2d ed. (Albany: M. Beardon, 1991), 106.

18 *Observer and Kopp*, "Capa's Falling Soldier."

19 Richard Whelan, "Robert Capa's Falling Soldier: A Detective Story," *Aperture*, no. 146 (Spring 2002), p. 12.

20 *Review, Robert Capa: A Biography* by Richard Whelan, *Aperture*, no. 146 (Spring 2002), 10.

21 *Review, Robert Capa: A Biography: The Life and Times of Robert Capa* (London: Museum, 2002).

22 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

23 Francisco Ferrer Oliver, *La Guerra Civil en Córdoba* (1976; 1978), 24 ed. (Madrid: Editorial Argentea, 1980), 22. Note Richard Whelan was in the process of writing this text at light of new information about his death in May 2007, and the editors have been sympathetic to argument with relevant documentation. Unfortunately, despite Beaton's claim, no such conclusive evidence of the date and place of Beaton's death, much less that he was the only member of the Column to die on September 5, 1936, has been found. By other Beaton or other interested historians. It also was not, as previously thought, in Memoir Oliver's study. Subsequent research in other archives has likewise produced no real documentation of Beaton's death. For example, photo historian Luis Piquet has contacted and received negative responses from several archives, including the Archive General Militar in Madrid and in Segovia, see <http://www.photographershistorical.org/index.html>. See also <http://www.photographershistorical.org/index.html>, for the story of another Army historian, Miguel Rosendo Mira, who he knew that Federico Beaton was killed at Cerro Maricón on September 5, 1936, but has been unable to locate supporting documentation in any archive. Nevertheless, strong circumstantial evidence does suggest the identification of Beaton (not Capa) as Capa's falling soldier and the date and place of his death as September 5, 1936, at Cerro Maricón.

24 Catherine Coleman correspondence, 2003, International Center of Photography, *The Robert Capa and Cornell Capa Archive* (November 1971-1972).

25 See <http://www.photographershistorical.org/index.html>.

26 Report from Captain Robert L. Shook, Memphis Police Department, September 2006, ICF/BUCCA.

27 "Is Knightley" in German slang for "taking a picture."

28 Letter from Hansel Meith to Richard Whelan, March 19, 1962, ICF/BUCCA.

29 Beardon, *The Spanish Civil War*, p. 104.

30 Report from Captain Robert L. Shook, Memphis Police Department, September 2006, ICF/BUCCA. During a radio interview in 1962, Capa made a statement about *The Falling Soldier* that may explain the lens-the-profile focus noted by Beaton, and the fact that the man's feet and rifle are partially cut off at the edges of the image. "I never saw the picture in a frame [i.e., through the rangefinder]," he said. "Someone that comes over to show my book" (see "Bob Capa Tells Photographic Experiences Shared," WYBC, October 20, 1962, interview, p. 7 ICF/BUCCA).

31 Report from Captain Robert L. Shook, Memphis Police Department, September 2006, ICF/BUCCA.

32 *New York World-Telegram*, September 1, 1933.

33 Alfred Eastman, et al., *Photography: An Introduction* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, 1936).



Fig. 90 LIFE, May 16, 1938, cover with Capa's photograph of a fifteen-year-old Chinese Nationalist soldier.

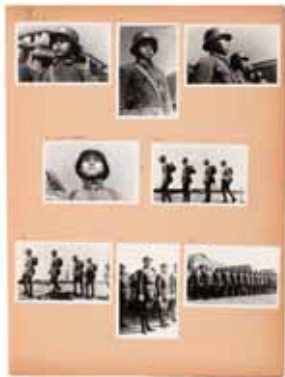


Fig. 91 A page from the Fix agency album of Capa's China photographs. The full image of the LIFE cover variant is at the top left of the page. The full image from which the LIFE cover was cropped is first in the second row.