

# THE MEXICAN SUITCASE

## Rediscovered Spanish Civil War Negatives by Capa, Chim, and Taro

The legendary Mexican Suitcase containing Robert Capa's Spanish Civil War negatives, considered lost since 1939, has recently been rediscovered and is exhibited here for the first time. The Suitcase is in fact three small boxes containing nearly 4,500 negatives, not only by Capa but also by his fellow photojournalists Chim (David Seymour) and Gerda Taro. These negatives span the course of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39), through Chim's in-depth coverage from 1936 and early 1937, Taro's intrepid documentation until her death in battle in July 1937, and Capa's incisive reportage until the last months of the conflict. Additionally, there are several rolls of film by Fred Stein showing mainly portraits of Taro, which after her death became inextricably linked to images of the war itself. Following the end of the war and amid the chaos of the Germans entering Paris in 1940, the negatives were passed from hand to hand for safekeeping, and ultimately ended up in Mexico City, where they resurfaced in 2007.

The Spanish Civil War broke out on July 19, 1936. In the broadest terms, the war was a military coup, led by General Francisco Franco and instigated to overthrow the democratically elected government of the Spanish Republic, a coalition of leftists and centrists. From its inception, the civil war aroused the passions of those who saw Franco's actions in Spain as the front line of a rising tide of fascism across Europe. This view was fortified when Franco received material support from Germany and Italy. Many leftist intellectuals and artists internationally—including Capa, Chim, and Taro—were committed to the antifascist struggle, and they provided vivid images and texts in support of the Republican cause for the international press.

The Mexican Suitcase negatives constitute an extraordinary window onto the vast output of these three photographers during this period: portraits, battle sequences, and the harrowing effects of the war on civilians. While some of this work was known through vintage prints and magazine reproductions, the Mexican Suitcase negatives, seen here as enlarged modern contact sheets, show us for the first time the order in which the images were shot and in some cases the full extent of a particular story. Images that have become iconic over the years can now be seen and studied in their original context and sequence. This material not only



Ernest Hemingway (third from the left), New York Times journalist Herbert Matthews (second from the left) and two Republican soldiers, Teruel, Spain, late December 1937  
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provides a uniquely rich view of the Spanish Civil War, a conflict that changed the course of European history, but also demonstrates how the work of three key photojournalists laid the foundation for modern war photography.

Curated by **Cynthia Young**, ICP – International Center of Photography, New York  
Coordinated by **Székely Katalin**, Vera and Donald Blinken OSA Archívum

**VERNISSAGE: 18 December 2015, 5:00 pm**

Opening remarks by **José Luis Rodríguez de Colmenares y Tascón**, Deputy Head of Mission, Spanish Embassy, Budapest  
and **István Rév**, Director, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives

### **Samuel Barber: A Stopwatch and an Ordnance Map (1940)**

Written in 1940, this work is a setting of a lament for one of the fallen in the Spanish Civil War by Stephen Spender. The scoring for male chorus with percussion and brass accompaniment gives the piece an appropriate wartime feeling.

Performed by **Viva Chamber Choir**

Conducted by **Pál Marsovszky**

Timpani: **Lórinç Kéring**

Accompanying film screening series: **Eyes on Spain**

Screening the Civil War Memories on Wednesdays from 13 January 2016.

13 January 2016, 6:00 pm

### **The Mexican Suitcase (2011)**

Directed by: Trisha Ziff; music by Michael Nyman

*Related events in cooperation with the Spanish Embassy in Budapest, and the Cervantes Institute Budapest.*

Full program (film screenings, talks and concerts) here: [www.osaarchivum.org](http://www.osaarchivum.org)

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The exhibition in Budapest was made possible with the kind support of the International Center of Photography, in New York City. The exhibition and the related events were co-organized by the Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives and the Spanish Embassy in Budapest.

Galeria Centralis, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives | 1051 Budapest, Arany János utca 32.

19 December 2015 – 21 February 2016

The exhibition is on view until 21 February, from Tuesday to Sunday, between 10 am and 6 pm | [www.osaarchivum.org](http://www.osaarchivum.org)

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