

# Book review: *Petals and Bullets*

*Responding to the agonies of war*

REVIEWED BY TONY TAYLOR

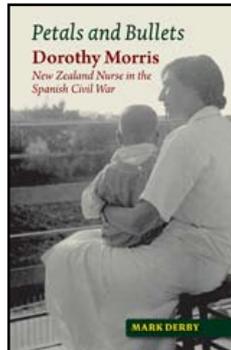
**Petals and Bullets: Dorothy Morris, New Zealand Nurse in the Spanish Civil War**  
By Mark Derby  
Potton & Burton, Nelson. Cost: \$40

Mark Derby has written a first class book about Dorothy Morris, a resolute young lady from Christchurch who for a decade from the late 1930s, responded in different capacities to the agonies and atrocities of warfare in Europe. Like a growing number of contemporary historians, he has drawn material from the personal letters of a key participant, rather than depend on sanitised official reports. In this case, he drew on 80 detailed letters that Dorothy sent home to her family, and put them skillfully into a wider social, political and cultural framework.

As a result, Mark Derby has provided not only a belated tribute to the extraordinary lady herself, but also an authoritative document that might encourage more readers to support alternatives to war in the resolution of conflict. The book should appeal to a wide readership, and gladden the heart of the Women's Movement.

First there was the civil war in Spain, in which as a recently qualified nurse gaining overseas experience, Dorothy Morris volunteered to work in a casualty clearing station on the front-line with the London Universities Ambulance Unit. (The unit had been formed by former diplomat Sir George Young, was named after its principal funders, and had the support of British Quakers.) Six months later she was appointed director of the English Children's Hospital in Murcia, southern Spain – another agency for which British and American Quakers provided most of the funding and a number of staff.

Early in 1939 she had to return to Britain urgently to escape the advance of Franco's forces. Two months later she went back to southern France to work in camps hastily set up for thousands of Spanish refugees who had poured over the borders. The collapse of France then obliged a second heart-wrenching withdrawal to Britain, where for a few years her authority and leadership had her placed in command of several enterprises designed to help women hold essential industrial jobs. Following the German surrender in 1945, she played a key role with American and British Quakers in the recovery and repatriation of many groups in war-torn Europe.



The heavy mental, emotional and physical strain took its toll on her: post-traumatic stress disorder had yet to be conceptualized and treatments developed. She came home to New Zealand a couple of times to recuperate, before returning for good to stay in the loving care of her extended family.

For the record, she was never a Quaker, but said 'I think Quakers really are the salt of the earth – bar none. I never will be religious in the strict sense of the word, and I doubt if I could be a Quaker, but they will always have my complete admiration for the sweet reasonableness and selflessness and honour.' ■

## Saving European Jews during the Nazi period

*Can you help?*

FROM LUCINDA MARTIN, UNIVERSITAET ERFURT

Jewish individuals and organizations have long recognized the multi-faceted assistance provided to Jews during Hitler's reign by Quakers. There are biographies of those saved and local memorials such as fountains as Jewish rest homes. Jewish survivors even purchased a Meeting House for Quakers in Johannesburg to thank them for their assistance.

Yet there is no overarching study on these events, largely because Quakers themselves have viewed their actions to be the obvious humane way to act and have not been interested in recognition. This project seeks to gather the stories of those involved – focussing on testimonies of the still living survivors whenever possible – to document this important chapter in history.

This project aims for two main results:

- 1) a database of Jews saved by Quakers
- 2) a monograph written by the project researcher documenting the role of Quakers in assisting European Jews during the era of National Socialism.

**Contact me!** Friends who know of Jews saved by Quakers or of Quakers who did such work are asked to contact me with their information by e-mail: [lucinda.martin@t-online.de](mailto:lucinda.martin@t-online.de). By the end of 2015 a project web-site with a link to Woodbrooke will be in place. ■