

Carmen PÉREZ AGUADO, Eulàlia BRUGUÉS-BRUGUÉS

## **Latvian Volunteers in the International Brigades Health Services (Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939)**

In 1921, Latvia regained its administrative and political autonomy and, on September 22, 1921, became a full member of the League of Nations.

The 1935 census shows a population of 1,905,330 people. Women, mainly due to the participation of men in the First World War, made up about 55% of the population. Latvia was the first European country with women's suffrage and women had fully entered typically male dominated occupations: in 1938, 30% of doctors were women. With regard to ethnic nationality, the 1935 census shows that 77% were of Latvian origin, 10% of Russian origin and over 4% Jewish. The rest of the population was composed of Poles, Germans and people from other Baltic regions. 74% of the doctors were Latvian and 10% (that is, 778 people) were Jewish.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out, some 35,000 young volunteers from all over the world headed for the Iberian Peninsula. Some of them came from as far away as Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and the USA, but most were European. Since Hitler's rise to power, many of them had already emigrated from their home countries. Before the First World War, German universities were the place of choice to study medicine. After Hitler's rise in 1933, most medical students chose universities in Austria, Czechoslovakia, France or the United Kingdom. This also happened in other health specialties such as nursing or pharmacy.

The Latvian contingent of the International Brigades consisted of about 200 volunteers. 80% were industrial workers, drivers or farmers. The remaining 20 % were higher education graduates, mainly from the health sector.

Based on the data obtained from the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI), we have traced the identity of these volunteers, their educational development before their arrival in Spain, their participation in the war field hospitals, as well as the path they followed when the Spanish Republic lost the war. In this communication we will also show the data regarding mortality and morbidity of Latvian volunteers in the International Brigades.

*Fundación Diabem*  
*cperezaguado@yahoo.es*