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**Mujeres Libres – Free Women of  
Spain - II**

**Lead: During the Spanish Civil War, a women’s liberation movement, Mujeres Libres, free women of Spain, pushed for a far more radical social revolution for women than even their male allies on the left were willing to tolerate.**

**Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Even by contemporary standards, the condition of Spanish women in the 1930s was pitiful. Clearly oppressed, women’s wages**

were half that of men, daughters were handed over to husbands as property, divorce was illegal. Women could not be out at night without a chaperone. Until the War, women's rights groups focused on minor adjustments such as legalizing divorce, but during the liberating early days of the civil conflict, women's organizations, allied with anarchist political groups, began to press for serious social change.

The most prominent of these women's groups was Madrid-based *Mujeres Libres*, the free women of Spain. They published a journal by the same name and by 1938 had grown to a national mass movement of some 30,000. The group based itself

**among the growing number of women drawn out of their homes into the factories that supported the Republican war effort. It advocated day care centers in places of work, abortion on demand in the first months of pregnancy, the legalization of prostitution, the wide-distribution of birth control information, and some radical members advocated sexual liberation and the end of marriage.**

**While they welcomed the social enthusiasm and wartime organizational support of Mujeres Libres, its male Republican allies of all stripes were still Spanish men, with fairly traditional views of gender arrangements and they resisted the**

**radical program of the free women. It mattered little; all such schemes of modernism were swept away in the dark, bloody days after Franco's victory in 1939. The free women of Spain would have to wait another 40 years for liberation.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## Resources

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**Nash, Mary. “Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War.” *Journal of Women’s History* Autumn v9 1997 177-186.**

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