

INK AGAINST HITLER

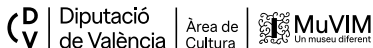


Mario Armengol,
World War II cartoonist

Museu Valencià de la Il·lustració i de la Modernitat
MuVIM

ENGLISH

MUSEU VALENCIÀ DE LA IL·LUSTRACIÓ I DE LA MODERNITAT · MuVIM



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London. December 29, 1940. Herbert Mason

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Air_Raid_Damage_in_Britain_during_the_Second_World_War_HU36220.jpg





DRAWING THE APOCALYPSE

Discover the only Spanish artist who worked extensively for British and Allied propaganda during the Second World War.

From 1941 to 1945, the Catalan Mario Armengol Torrella (Sant Joan de les Abadesses, 1909 - Nottingham, 1995) drew some two thousand cartoons or caricatures attacking the Third Reich and the Axis for publication in newspapers and magazines in neutral and Allied countries, from New Zealand to Haiti.

It is a spectacular, hitherto unknown, body of work covering almost all the fronts and satirising the most prominent figures of that brutal war.

All caricatured in a versatile and tremendously modern style, which prefigured today's comics. A style that continues asking us questions about the limits of humour along with a far-reaching question: to what extent, and in any given context, can a visionary riddled with complexes and hatred, and with the complicity of the ambitious and immoral, lead entire peoples towards the abyss, seducing society itself to the point of collective destruction.

CHRONOLOGY

1939

- . **1 September:** Germany invades Poland.
- . **3 September:** France and the United Kingdom declare war on Germany. The Second World War begins in Europe.
- . **17 September:** The Soviet Union invades easternmost Poland. Subsequently, the Soviet state occupies other neighbouring countries.

1940

- . **April:** Katyn massacre, the Soviets murder 10,000 Polish officers and civilians.
- . **April-June:** Battle of Narvik in Norway. M. Armengol is present at the battle.
- . **22 June:** France signs the Armistice, recognising its defeat at the hands of Germany.
- . **July-October:** Battle of Britain between the German Luftwaffe and the British RAF.
- . **27 September:** Germany, Italy and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact.

1941

- . **22 June:** Germany invades the Soviet Union.
- . **7-8 December:** The United States declares war on Japan after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

1942

- . **20 January:** At the Wannsee Conference, the Nazis plan to exterminate all the Jews in Europe.
- . **9 June:** Japan occupies the Philippines, achieving its greatest victory in its expansion in Southeast Asia.
- . **8 November:** Anglo-American landing in French North Africa.

1943

- . **2 February:** The German 6th Army surrenders at Stalingrad.
- . **10 July:** Anglo-American forces land in Sicily.
- . **25 July:** The Grand Council of Fascism removes Mussolini from office and imprisons him.
- . **8 September:** Italy surrenders to the Allies and is divided into two zones, with the Germans in the north, where they will restore Mussolini to power.

1944

- . **6 June:** Allied landings in Normandy.
- . **1 August:** the Soviet offensive pushes the Nazi forces back into Warsaw.
- . **20-25 August:** The Allies liberate Paris.

1945

- . **27 January:** Soviet troops liberate the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz.
- . **28 April:** Mussolini is executed by a partisan. His body will be put on display in the centre of Milan.
- . **30 April:** Hitler commits suicide in his Reich Chancellery bunker in Berlin.
- . **8 May:** Germany signs the surrender. War ends in Europe.
- . **6 and 9 August:** US nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan.
- . **2 September:** Japan's unconditional surrender. War ends in Asia.

THE AXIS COUNTRIES, COLLABORATIONIST FRANCE AND FRANCOIST SPAIN



ADOLF HITLER (1889-1945)

He combined intellectual mediocrity with the charisma of a snake charmer capable of mobilising the masses, his dictatorial and bloodthirsty regime led Germany to attempt to dominate Europe with a brutal war of aggression (including the Holocaust, or genocide against the Jews, massacres of the Slavs, the genocide of the Gypsies, etc.). A cocktail of nationalist resentment, anti-Semitic demagoguery, personal frustration and overweening egomania would ignite the fuse on the worst conflict ever seen. He shot himself in the head on 30 April 1945.





Hermann Göring
(1893-1946)

Deputy head of the German Nazi regime. Decorated fighter pilot during the Great War, egomaniac and art plunderer, he commanded the Luftwaffe. Sentenced to hang at the Nuremberg trials, he died after ingesting a capsule of potassium cyanide.



Heinrich Himmler
(1900-1945)

He controlled all the Reich's security forces and the network of concentration and extermination camps. Responsible for the death of millions of Jews. Arrested by the Allies, he died after ingesting a capsule of potassium cyanide.



Joseph Goebbels
(1897-1945)

A key figure in Nazism as he devised a new model of mass propaganda that was both brutal and seductive. He committed suicide with his wife and six children in Hitler's bunker.





**Benito Mussolini
(1883-1945)**

Italian dictator from 1922 to 1945. Founder of fascism, his participation in the war will always be in the shadow of the Nazi victories. Executed by anti-fascist partisans in April 1945, his body was put on display in the centre of Milan.



**Victor Emmanuel III
(1869-1947)**

Italian monarch during the First and Second World Wars. His role would be key in allowing the Fascist movement to rise to power in 1922 and to bring down the House of Savoy in 1946.



**Hideki Tojo
(1884-1948)**

Japanese military officer and prime minister throughout the war of Japanese expansion in Southeast Asia. Strong supporter of the alliance with the Nazis. Sentenced at the Tokyo trials and executed by hanging.





Philippe Pétain
(1856-1951)

French hero of the Great War and dictator of German-occupied France during World War II. Prosecuted after the Allied victory, his death sentence for collaboration with Nazi crimes by him and his so-called “Vichy” regime was commuted to life imprisonment.



Pierre Laval
(1883-1945)

Minister and head of government of the collaborationist French regime, he became the most reviled figure for his absolute loyalty to the German occupiers. Shot by the Free French for high treason.



Francisco Franco
(1892-1975)

Dictator who came to power thanks in large part to military aid from the Nazi-Fascist Axis in the course of the Spanish Civil War. In the summer of 1941 he sent the Spanish Blue Division, a volunteer contingent disbanded in October 1943, to take part in the Eastern Front alongside the Nazis. El Caudillo, as he was also known, survived everything and remained in power until his death.



THE ALLIED COUNTRIES



**Winston Churchill
(1874-1965)**

With a cigar in his mouth and his hand making the V for victory sign, he would become the symbol of British resistance to Nazi hegemony in Europe as prime minister from June 1940 until the end of the war.



**Chiang Kai-shek
(1887-1975)**

Leader of the Chinese nationalist Kuomintang party, he was a key figure in the struggle against Japanese occupation. At first an ally and later an opponent of Mao's communists, he ended up as a refugee in Taiwan, where he exercised power as a dictator.



**Charles de Gaulle
(1890-1970)**

From insubordinate soldier to leader of the Free French during a complex exile in Britain. From an unknown general to a symbol of the resistance against the Germans until he became president after the liberation of France in 1944.





**Franklin D. Roosevelt
(1882-1945)**

President of the United States during the Great Depression, he declared war on Japan, and Germany, in 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He died of natural causes in the last weeks of the war.



Joseph Stalin (1878-1953)

Bloodthirsty dictator of what was then the only communist state, and ultimately responsible for the Holodomor, the starvation of millions of Ukrainians (described by historians as genocide). Allied with Hitler in 1939 and an enemy in 1941, after the Nazi invasion of the USSR, the Soviet resistance initially and the subsequent offensive would determine the German defeat in Eastern Europe and much of Central Europe.





CARTOONS **(1941-1945)**

MARIO ARMENGOL

Text by

Plàcid Garcia-Planas & Arnau Gonzàlez i Vilalta

1. HITLER, A *NINOT* SAVED FROM THE FLAMES?

Darkness summed up in a *ninot*, in a puppet: Hitler.

To laugh at him is to laugh at his total power. This is the task Churchill's government gave Armengol: to deconstruct his myth using ink. And it is by turning the tyrant into a caricature that the artist attains the highest expression of the very attribute that was the young Hitler's greatest failure: art. Hitler is the main puppet found in Armengol's work. The *ninot* to be spared, not to save it from the flames, but to continue ridiculing it. Even 80 years later.



Idyll, 1942-1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Published in *According to Plan*. His love of death is everything to Adolf Hitler. The gas is a dramatic addition.



Weakness Behind Cruelty, 1944 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection).
Published in *Message. Belgian Review*, 35, London, September 1944.
The head of the SS, Heinrich Himmler, is the visible face of Hitler's barbarity.

2. A SYMBOL TO BE DEFEATED

How many crimes were committed in its shadow?

The meaning of the swastika, a thousand-year-old Eurasian symbol, was turned upside down when in 1933 the Nazi regime incorporated it into the design of the German national flag (and, in 1935, the only official flag). The emblem of the Nazi Party became the icon of a new *religion* that invaded the public and private space of the German people. When Armengol began to draw cartoons for the British government, the swastika became the cross to be defeated. And the cartoonist recreated it.



Aren't You Christians? (European Calvary), 25 April 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Published in *According to Plan*. While the Warsaw Ghetto and its heroic resistance is being exterminated, Christian Europe is being subdued.



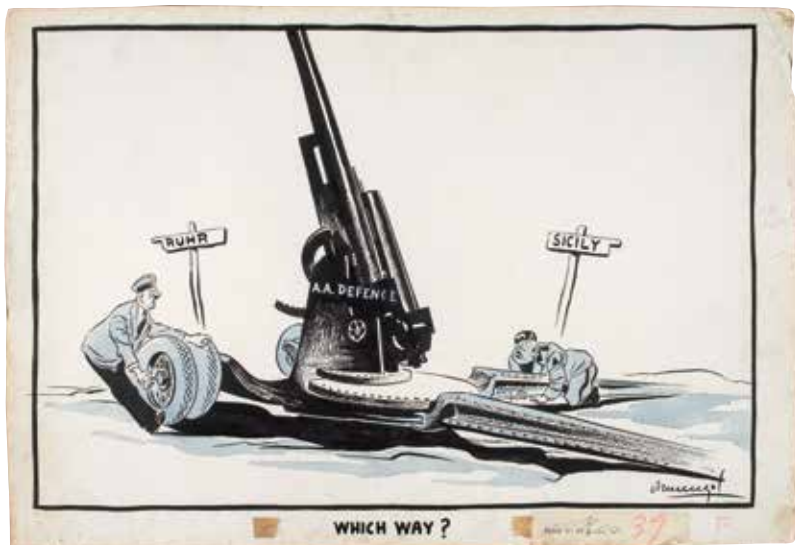
Untitled (Reverse: *And I looked and there came a pale horse; and the name of the rider that rode him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given to them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death...*, From *The Book of Revelation*), January 1941 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey). Before working for British government propaganda, the artist began work on a series of works relating to Nazism, characterising it as the combination of the biblical Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.

3. A STRATEGY OF LAUGHTER

Satire does not change military strategy, but it does serve to mock it. This is Armengol's infinite power: he can bend cannons while Hitler celebrates victory and he can sink submarines while the Nazis say they have ever more of them. This is the battle fought by the cartoonist under the orders of the British Ministry of Information. Perhaps the instructions he received conform to reality, or perhaps not at all, but in Armengol's drawings the Germans always lose the battles, making fools of themselves.

Untitled (Allied Long Range Bombing... Russian Advance), 3 November 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Hitler is caught between the preliminary stages of the opening of the Western Front and the Soviet counter-attack.

Which Way? (A.A. Defence), 30 June 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Published in *According to Plan*. The Berlin-Rome Axis anti-aircraft batteries are insufficient to stop Anglo-American bombing raids on Germany and the island of Sicily, just before the Allied invasion of the island.



4. EASTERN FRONT

Hitler will be defeated in the East, in the so-called living space of the German people where millions of Jews and Slavs will be murdered. But as Armengol draws, the mud and snow become a factor in this expansion: defeating the Soviet Union will prove impossible. The Wehrmacht tanks crash in the Urals, the German soldiers can only wait for death. There is much more East and Armengol caricatures it: the Balkans. And much further east: Hitler is furious that his Japanese allies are not attacking the Soviets from the other flank.

Worn-Out Braces, 1943-1944 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Since the Soviet victory at Stalingrad in January 1943, Hitler has been trapped on the Eastern Front by Stalin.

Unhappy Santa Claus, 11 February 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Hitler drags the corpses of the German soldiers killed and defeated in the Battle of Stalingrad.

5. FROM DISNEY TO THE NIBELUNGS

Opera, paintings, novels, cartoons... Armengol uses culture to ridicule the Third Reich. Even *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, with Shakespeare's play turned into *A Winter Night's Dream* with the German soldiers buried in the Russian snow dreaming of a wood stove. Roosevelt becomes Gulliver dragging the US Navy across the Pacific towards Japan. Or Mickey Mouse from *Fantasia* becomes Hitler, who hypnotises the German people, depicted as brooms. And, in the bloody cobblestones of Prague, the cartoonist is a forerunner of today's dark comics.

Floods in the Ruhr, Floods in Warsaw..., 26 May 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Published in *According to Plan*. Coinciding floods in the industrial German Ruhr due to the destruction of several dams by Allied bombing raids; while, in Warsaw the flooding was from the blood of the dead Jewish resistance fighters, some 7,000, killed when the Germans brutally repressed the Ghetto uprising.

Gulliver's Travels, 1944-1945 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt turned into Gulliver dragging the US Navy across the Pacific to Japan.



FLOODS IN THE RUHR, FLOODS IN WARSAW...



GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

6. THE KAISER'S MUSTACHE

When the Second World War broke out, it was only twenty years after the end of the First World War. The politicians and battles of the 1914 war were very present in the collective imagination of 1939, and also in Armengol's humour. To satirise the German ambition of the past was to satirise that of the present, and his pencil depicts the moustache of Kaiser Wilhelm II and the grave of Hindenburg, the Battle of the Marne and Bismarck, the founder of the Second Reich in 1871. And further back still: how can the Third Reich not be caricatured as a Napoleon sunk in the Russian snows?



!.. (Bad News), 1944? (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Hitler's moustache develops into that of Kaiser Wilhelm II when he hears the bad news about the course of the war. Just like the kaiser, he knows he will be defeated.



Iron and Blood All Right, But What Then? (Bismarck. Eisen und blut), 1944-1945 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey). Hitler claims to be inspired by the famous Iron Chancellor's speech of 1862, the speech that led to German unification nine years later.

7. SHARED DEFEAT: ITALY, FRANCE, JAPAN

Without mercy, Armengol's *cartoons* take aim at Hitler's friends. Firstly, at the French collaborationists, led by the decrepit Marshal Pétain and his prime minister, Laval. Bordering on racism, Armengol caricatures Laval with features that are similar to a stereotypical gypsy physiognomy. He portrays Mussolini, the Italian dictator, as a child playing at war, ignored by the Germans and living in an imaginary world. What about the Japanese? He draws blood depicting their hesitation and their physical traits.

Sharing the Umbrella, 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Published in *According to Plan*. The two founding Axis dictators, Hitler and Mussolini, try to weather the storm of Allied attacks with an umbrella as the water level begins to rise.

Wait! Let's See What It Says (Invasion; Punishment for the traitors), 1944 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey). Pétain and Laval's collaborationist regime will be punished by the Allies.



SHARING THE UMBRELLA



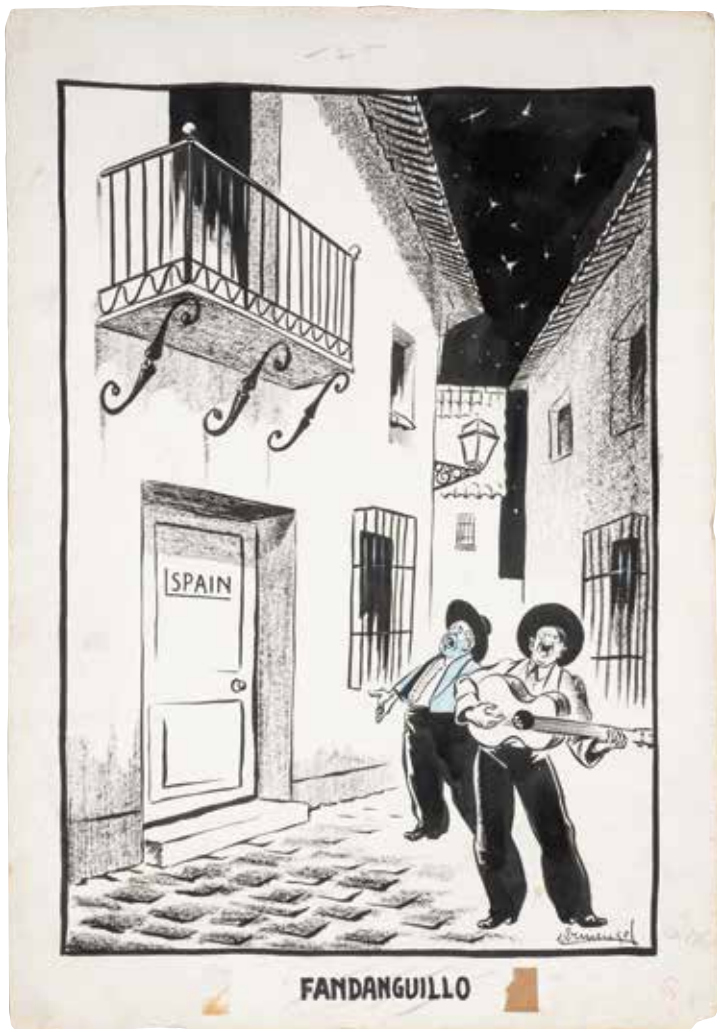
WAIT! LET'S SEE WHAT IT SAYS

8. COUNTRIES COVETED BY EVERYONE: THE NEUTRALS, SPAIN AND FINLAND

Neutrality has different degrees of intensity, like the satire that Armengol fires at the countries that try to remain aloof. Due to the great complexity, these countries are the hardest to satirise. Finland, for example, a democracy first attacked by the Soviets, that then allied with Nazism, and which, at the last minute, will go over to the winning side. Franco, on the contrary, makes things easy for the cartoonist: he draws him as a puppet in Hitler's hands, or a shoeshine, as a little military man who betrays his "German master" and runs after the British when he sees the Third Reich faltering.



Fewer and Later (Naziland. Needs. Trains from: Turkey, Sweden, Spain, Switzerland), 1943-1944 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). The Nazi empire is unable to get the neutrals to sell it essential goods to continue the war.



Fandanguillo, 1943? (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini play a flamenco song to convince Franco's Spain to remain a "neutral" ally of theirs.

9. MORALE IN FREE FALL

Armengol turns his satire on the collapse of the Third Reich. Kneeling arrogance, last-minute decorations, the inability to accept defeat, a population that does not understand why their Reich, which was supposed to last a thousand years, is losing the war: “weren't we the master race?”

The cartoonist, however, did not draw in order to lower the morale of the enemy: neither the German soldiers nor civilians saw his cartoons. He draws them to make it clear that it is them, the Allies, whose morale is soaring.



No More Comfort Now!, 1 February 1943 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey). Published in *According to Plan*. The Allies have just begun their new strategy of “round-the-clock bombing” of German territory: USAAF aircraft by day, RAF by night.

HITLER HAS DECORATED A NUMBER OF GENERALS.



GO ON, SMILE !

Go On, Smile! (Hitler has decorated a number of generals), 1944-1945 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Hitler awards Iron Crosses to officers and privates who are totally distraught at seeing Germany in ruins.

10. THE LIMITS TO HUMOUR

Can we caricature bombed-out cities? Can we draw the enemy as mince-meat for making sausages?

The first paradox is visual. When Armengol draws human beings crucified on the swastika, he does not want us to laugh, he wants us to reflect. But he drew it as a cartoon, published in a newspaper that we glanced at, ready to laugh. And infinite paradoxes follow because the nuances and pain were infinite and he was paid to make us laugh. Armengol's cartoons are fertile territory for a debate that continues to challenge us: where does irony end and cruelty begin?





Japanese Landscape, 1942 (P. Garcia-Planas Collection). US aircraft threaten the Japanese archipelago. Drawing published in *France: Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*, London, no. 514, 23 April 1942. The emblem of the United States Air Force appears on the eagles' wings.

Counter Offensive (Russians advancing on all front; Poland), 18 January 1943 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey). The Red Army has won the battle of Stalingrad and goes on the offensive against the German troops on Soviet territory. Hitler, angry and oblivious to the real war situation, continues to torture Poland, personified by a half-naked man.

11. A REICH IN RETREAT

The withdrawal depicted in a single operatic motion: the German soldiers, more like *ninots*, puppets, than ever, passing beneath the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. History rewinds and what in 1940 was an insultingly haughty parade, now, in 1944, is the graphic representation of the collapse of the Third Reich. Hitler's soldiers now have no strength, no conviction... no teeth. The only thing left for the Führer to do is to plead for a miracle, for the "magic" secret weapons he wants to believe will change the course of the war.



Overwhelmed Operator, 1944 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Hitler, caricatured as the telephone operator of the "Nazi war switch board", cannot cope with all the war fronts opened by the Allies between 1943 and 1944: France, Russia, Italy and... Germany.



Arch de Triomphe "Nach Paris", August 1944 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Just over four years after the German occupation of Paris, when the Wehrmacht passed victoriously under the Arc de Triomphe, the liberation of Paris took place between 19 and 25 August 1944.

12. TOWARDS ALLIED VICTORY

First there was resistance, then offence, and finally.... victory with the V sign that Churchill has been giving from the outset. It is all about self-persuasion and positive messages that spread among readers from America to Oceania. It is the end of the propagandist war, a clash of forces that have mobilised all their powers of persuasion. The end is near and the whole world is knocking on the door of the newborn United Nations.

Untitled (Moscow conference; peace; Churchill Roosevelt Taylors), 3 November 1943 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Between 19 and 30 October, the foreign ministers of the United States, Britain and the Soviet Union met in the Soviet capital to sign various agreements on post-war management. The new European order was being built.

The Fairy of the Seven Seas (German sea warfare), 1942-1943 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey).



13. GERMANY IN RUINS

This is no metaphor. The cities of the Third Reich have been razed to the ground by Allied bombers. Armengol depicts the horror of Berlin and Dresden in response to the Nazi bombings of Warsaw, London and Coventry. It is necessary to caricature how Germany is being punished.

Hitler will have to eat, this time metaphorically, his Mein Kampf. All his dreams, nightmares for the rest of humanity, are swept away, no matter how much Nazi propaganda still screams at a zombified German people.

This is Armengol's last cartoon, from May 1945: justice will punish the Germans for their crimes.

Cheer Up! (Germany), 1943-1944 (Armengol Gasull Family Collection). Himmler "orders" the German people to cheer up in spite of Allied bombing, food shortages, etc.

Between Purgatory and Hell, 1943-1945 (A. L. & P. A. Kiddey). Nazism is destroyed by the Allied bombing. Hitler's brutality is met with greater brutality.



POCKET COMBATANTS

COINS OF THE WAR DRAWN BY MARIO ARMENGOL

Rafael Company

The satirical drawings of the Second World War that Mario Armengol produced, between 1941 and 1945 as an employee of the British Ministry of Information, included caricature portraits of various leaders and other figures from the countries involved in the conflict.

Those he caricatured included heads of state, or government, from six countries that were aggressors during the period 1939-1945. Some of these invaded and occupied other countries at the outbreak of hostilities, as in the case of Hitler's Germany (1) and Stalin's Soviet Union (2) from 1 and 17 September 1939 respectively. Others joined the attackers' camp the following year: the Italy of Mussolini and Victor Emmanuel III (3), commencing on 11 June 1940. Finally, others became aggressors from the autumn of 1941, namely Franco's Spain (4, 4'), Pétain's and Laval's France (5), and Tojo's (and Hirohito's) Japan (6), which would be present on the battlefield, via different forms of military participation, from early October, late November and 7 December of that year. That said, the Stalin depicted in Armengol's cartoons ceased to be accused of being an aggressor because, on 22 June 1941, the Third Reich invaded the Soviet Union, much to the surprise of the occupant of the Kremlin (2').

And alongside the Stalin who had positioned the Soviet Union on the side of the Allies, Mario Armengol drew the other *major* members of the coalition against the Nazi-Fascist Axis: Roosevelt, who held the presidency of the United States (7); De Gaulle, who led Free France (8), opposed to Pétainist collaborationism; Chiang Kai-shek, who resisted the Japanese in China (9); and, last but not least, Churchill, who, at the head of the United Kingdom, was for a long time completely alone in the face of the Nazi juggernaut (10).

All the names mentioned are, in fact, those of *leading* combatants from both sides, and the coins shown below are some of the ones that soldiers would have been carried in their pockets. They were metal discs full of symbolism, which were minted in the context of the rise of totalitarianism and the opening of a chasm with the democracies, and they teach us to see beyond appearances. As Armengol so often did.

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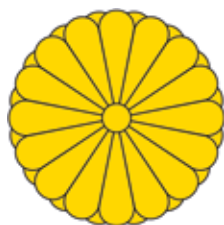
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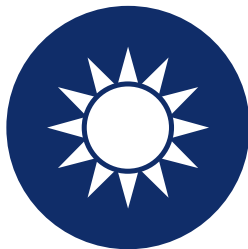




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10



The Catalan Mario Armengol Torrella was the only Spanish artist to work so prolifically for British and Allied propaganda during the Second World War. He did so in a versatile and extremely modern style, which was a forerunner of today's comics. His work continues to challenge us on a far-reaching question: how can a visionary filled with hatred lead entire peoples into the abyss, seducing society itself to the point of collective destruction.



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