The Other Volunteers

American Anarchists and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939

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In 1933, observing Spain's rapid transition away from monarchy and dictatorship, Spanish American anarchist Maximiliano Olay wrote that Spain's anarchist movement "has not yet reached its peak, and… when it does, the present republican form of government will go the way of its predecessors." In its place, he predicted that "we may soon hear the news that Spain is no longer a capitalist country, that modern, constructive anarchism–anarchist communism–has won a chance to put its philosophy to the test, and… is privileged at last to prove its virtues to an unbelieving world."[1] Olay had reason for optimism. By the mid-1930s, there were over a million members enrolled in Spain's anarcho-syndicalist Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo (National Confederation of Labor, or CNT), the country's largest labor organization, which in turn followed the direction of the smaller Federacion Anarquista Iberica (Iberian Anarchist Federation, or FAI).[2] When the "Nationalists"–a right-wing alliance of Catholics, monarchists, and fascists within the Spanish military–rose up against Spain's Popular Front government on 17 through 18 July 1936, they were defeated in nearly every major city by a combination of police and armed workers. The CNT's preexisting defense committees led the resistance in the industrial center of Barcelona, and "with no transition at all, the defense cadres became People's Militias," the improvised new armed forces of the Popular Front.[3] With the virtual collapse of Republican government authority, the CNT found itself in effective control of much of Catalonia and Aragon. Though the anarchists refused to seize power (as doing so would violate their anti-authoritarian principles), they swiftly instituted workers' control in most of Spain's industrial enterprises and collectivized more than half the agricultural land outside of Nationalist hands.[4] Olay's prediction was becoming a reality, and beleaguered anarchists in the United States found new hope in what they called the Spanish Revolution.

[1] Maximilian[o] Olay, "Spain's Swing to the Left," in Recovery through Revolution, ed. Samuel D. Schmalhausen (New York: Covici Friede, 1933), 108, 127–28.

[2] Antonio Bar, "The CNT: The Glory and Tragedy of Spanish Anarchosyndicalism," in Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective, ed. Wayne Thorpe and Marcel van der Linden (Aldershot, England: Scolar Press, 1990), 119–38; Juan G6mez Casas, Anarchist Organisation: The History of the F.A.I. (Toronto: Black Rose Books, 1986); and Stuart Christie, We, the Anarchists! A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–1937 (Hastings, England: Meltzer Press, 2000).

[3] Robert J. Alexander, The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War (London: Janus, 1998), 1:128–31; Pelai Pages i Blanch, "The Military Uprising and the Failure of the Rebellion," in War and Revolution in Catalonia, 1936–1939, trans. Patrick L. Gallagher (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 20–31; and Agustin Guillam6n, Ready for Revolution: The CNT Defense Committees in Barcelona, 1933–1938, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2014), 70.

[4] Alexander, Anarchists, vol. 1; Antoni Castells Duran, "Revolution and Collectivization in Civil War Barcelona, 1936–9," in Red Barcelona: Social Protest and Labour Mobilization in the Twentieth Century, ed. Angel Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), 127–41; Pages i Blanch, War and Revolution; and Frank Mintz, Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain, trans. Paul Sharkey (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2013).

They mobilized the meager resources at their disposal to aid the CNT, and some left for Spain to fight alongside their Spanish comrades.

The voluminous literature on foreign volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, however, takes almost no notice of these anarchists or of the CNT's accomplishments on and off the battlefield. Instead, historians have focused almost entirely on the Communist-organized International Brigades and continue to debate whether their members were heroic "premature antifascists" defending Spanish democracy or naive victims of Stalinist machinations.[5] This scholarship, still defined by the dichotomies of the Cold War, lacks analytical space to accommodate the anarchists and the revolution they supported. As Noam Chomsky observed more than half a century ago, for liberal historians sympathetic to the Republican cause, "the revolution itself was merely a kind of irrelevant nuisance, a minor irritant diverting energy from the struggle to save the bourgeois government."[6] This remains true of most chroniclers of the American section of the International Brigades, the famed Abraham Lincoln Battalion, who conclude that American volunteers "were not revolutionaries but men committed to stopping the growth of fascism," who "went to Spain… not to accelerate social revolution but to stabilize it."[7]

Although foreign anarchists fought alongside, and in some cases within the same units as, the Communists and fellow travelers who constituted the bulk of International Brigades volunteers, they were engaged in an entirely different struggle–one to protect and expand the revolution headed by the CNT against both fascism and any attempt by the Republican government to constrain its progress. Refocusing the story of Americans in the Spanish Civil War on the anarchists highlights several forgotten dimensions of the conflict: the international impact of, and support for, Spain's unfolding anarchist revolution; the important military role of the CNT's militias, including the foreign fighters within them; and the overwhelming importance that the war came to hold for the American anarchist movement. These, in turn, emphasize the complex and multipolar nature of "the good fight" and push analyses of its international dimensions beyond the tired disputes of the Cold War era. They help us see, in other words, a very different group of volunteers engaged in a very different fight–one that proved to be the last great campaign of American anarchism.

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[5] George Esenwein, "Freedom Fighters or Comintern Soldiers? Writing about the 'Good Fight' During the Spanish Civil War," Civil Wars 12, no. 1–2 (2010): 156–66.

[6] Noam Chomsky, "Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship," in The Chomsky Reader, ed. James Peck (New York: Pantheon Books, 1987), 102.

[7] Robert A. Rosenstone, Crusade of the Left: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War (New York: Pegasus, 1969), 268; and Peter N. Carroll, The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade: Americans in the Spanish Civil War (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 74. The Abraham Lincoln Battalion is commonly mislabeled a "Brigade," a unit composed of several battalions.

Revolutionary Aid

Shortly after the war began, French Communist observer Andre Marty informed the Communist International (Comintern) that in Catalonia "the machinery of state is either destroyed or paralyzed" and "the anarchists have under their control, either directly or indirectly, all major industry and part of the agriculture of this country." One former Spanish Communist later declared that without collectivization "it would have been impossible to sustain the war for three months, let alone three years."[8] These are telling admissions given the Comintern's strategy of downplaying and, if possible, reversing the CNT's revolution in the hope that Western democracies would then be willing to intervene and halt the growing threat that fascism posed to the Soviet Union.[9]

Writing in late 1937, disillusioned American Communist Liston Oak, who had worked for the Republican government in Madrid early in the war, affirmed the success of the revolution: "The fact that is concealed by the coalition of the Spanish Communist Party with the left Republicans and right wing Socialists, is that there has been a successful social revolution in half of Spain. Successful, that is, in that the collectivization of factories and farms which are operated under trade union control, and operated quite efficiently."[10] Most anarchists in both Spain and the United States viewed the triumph of this revolution as key to mobilizing sufficient resources and morale to triumph over Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces. Perhaps this was wishful thinking, but it was no more so than the counterrevolutionary strategy pursued by the anarchists' Popular Front rivals, which was destined to fail in the face of European appeasement and American isolationism.[11]

The Spanish Revolution revitalized a diminished American anarchist movement. Composed overwhelmingly of immigrants, anarchism in the United States had reached its heyday in the first decade of the twentieth century, though in 1933 an

[8] Ronald Radosh, Mary R. Habeck, and Grigory Sevostianov, eds., Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), 42, 45, 48; and Ronald Fraser, Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), 325.

[9] David T. Cattell, Communism and the Spanish Civil War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955); and Geoffrey Roberts, "Soviet Foreign Policy and the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939," in Spain in an International Context, 1936–1959, ed. Christian Leitz and David Joseph Dunthorn (New York: Berghahn, 1999), 81–103. For a more sinister interpretation of Soviet motives, see Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed; and Stanley Payne, The Spanish Civil War, the Soviet Union, and Communism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004).

[10] Socialist Review (New York), September 1937.

[11] Michael Alpert, A New International History of the Spanish Civil War (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and Dominic Tierney, FDR and the Spanish Civil War: Neutrality and Commitment in the Struggle That Divided America (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

estimated 75 anarchist groups were still scattered across the country. These were largely organized according to ethnicity or language and lacked any national coordinating structure. The only significant nationwide organization was the Yiddish-speaking Jewish Anarchist Federation of the United States and Canada, which included several hundred members in around a dozen branches. One of the movement's few signs of vitality was New York's Vanguard Group, founded in 1932 by a number of college-age, American-born children of Jewish and Italian anarchists.[12] In the first weeks of the war, several of these organizations–including the Jewish Anarchist Federation, the Vanguard Group, and the Spanish-speaking Cultura Proletaria Group formed the United Libertarian Organizations (ULO) to coordinate aid for the CNT. They were joined by the Marine Transport Workers Union and General Recruiting Union of what remained of the syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). In August, the ULO founded the newspaper Spanish Revolution to publicize the CNT's accomplishments, soon printing 7,000 copies of each issue.[13]

In addition, many anarchists went to Spain to observe developments firsthand. In October 1936, Andre Marty noted, "anarchists from every corner of the world are thronging to Barcelona."[14] Reports from these visitors further enflamed hopes abroad. Louis Frank, an American who in Barcelona directed the documentary films Fury Over Spain (1937) and The Will of a People (1938), informed readers of New York's Vanguard that "the dream of Bakunin is no longer utopian, no longer a myth; it is a living reality in Spain."[15] Another American anarchist newspaper declared, "a great libertarian revolution is in the making; a revolution breaking with all precedents and charting a new course for humanity… The Spanish Revolution is rapidly assuming an international scope. Its battle front is extending to all parts of the world."[16] In the midst of such breathless reports, it was easy for Americans to overlook the messy reality on the ground in Spain, which included widespread extrajuridical killings, the establishment of prison labor camps by the CNT and other Popular Front parties, material shortcomings and lack of coordination among the CNT's collectives, a precarious Popular Front alliance, and the increasing su-

[12] Kenyon Zimmer, "Revolution and Repression: From Red Dawn to Red Scare" and "'No Right to Exist Anywhere on This Earth': Anarchism in Crisis," in Immigrants against the State: Yiddish and Italian Anarchism in America (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 136–205.

[13] Sam Dolgoff, Fragments: AMemoir (Cambridge: Refract Publications, 1986), 19.

[14] Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed, 48.

[15] Vanguard, February–March 1937.

[16] Spanish Revolution, 6 November 1936. Emphasis in original.

periority of Nationalist forces.[17] Instead, Los Angeles anarchist Morris Nadelman recalled, "We believed that the anarchists in Spain could not be repressed."[18]

The CNT's greatest need was arms. Within the first 15 months of the war, most of Spain's negligible munitions industry was in Nationalist hands, and the non-intervention agreement signed by the major European powers prevented Popular Front forces from purchasing weapons from most suppliers–despite the fact that signatories Germany and Italy immediately violated the treaty and supplied the Nationalists with arms, troops, and advisers. The U.S. government also declared a "moral embargo" on Spain, and in January 1937 it formally banned arms shipments, followed by a prohibition on the transportation of any passengers or articles to Spain.[19] Workers in Barcelona and Madrid hastily converted hundreds of plants for war production, but the armaments produced were of mixed quality and insufficient to meet demand.[20] According to Spanish Revolution, "in Spain there are seven eager men to one rifle. We must not relax for a moment in our efforts to collect money and to stir up the public opinion against the infamous blockade which the would-be democratic governments of France and Britain have established against the Spanish people."[21]

The final legal shipment of over $2 million worth of armaments departed the United States onboard the Mar Cantdbrico on 6 January 1937, just hours before the Neutrality Act went into effect. The ship also carried five Spanish anarchist immigrants, including Cesar Vega, a longtime resident of the anarchist colony in Mohegan, New York; Jose Tomas Fernandez, who had been associated with New York's Cultura Proletaria before returning to Spain and then being dispatched back to the United States "with the mission of obtaining arms and ammunition for the

[17] See, for example, Paul Preston, The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain (New York: W. W. Norton, 2013); Julius Ruiz, The "Red Terror" and the Spanish Civil War: Revolutionary Violence in Madrid (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Michael Seidman, Workers against Work: Labor in Paris and Barcelona during the Popular Fronts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Michael Seidman, Republic of Egos: A Social History of the Spanish Civil War (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2002); Burnett Bolloten, The Spanish Civil War: Revolution and Counterrevolution (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Helen Graham, The Spanish Republic at War, 1936–1939 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); and Gerald Howson, Arms for Spain: The Untold Story of the Spanish Civil War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999).

[18] Morris Nadelman, interviewed by Paul Buhle, 18 April 1980, tape 171A, the Oral History of the American Left, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York (hereafter cited as Tamiment Library).

[19] Howson, Arms for Spain; and Tierney, FDR and the Spanish Civil War.

[20] Jose Peirats, The CNT in the Spanish Revolution, ed. Chris Ealham, trans. Paul Sharkey and Chris Ealham (Hastings, East Sussex: Meltzer Press, 2005), 2:81–92; Alexander, Anarchists, 528–65; and Pages i Blanch, "The War Economy and the War Industries," in War and Revolution, 84–92.

[21] Spanish Revolution, 6 November 1936. Emphasis in original.

front"; and Andres Castro, who intended to join an anarchist militia.[22] However, after taking on more munitions in Mexico, the Mar Cantdbrico was captured by Franco's navy off the coast of Spain. The crew and the five anarchists aboard were executed, but not before Vega was allowed to write a final farewell to his wife and child; Mohegan resident Harry Kelly remembered that it was "a brave letter and voiced no regrets."[23]

Although anarchists condemned American neutrality, they never mounted a significant campaign to rescind the embargo, lacking the resources to do so. Instead, they used their transnational connections to circumvent the embargo by directly supplying arms and funds to Spanish comrades. An early effort was undertaken by sailor Bruno Bonturi, who had migrated to America with his mother in 1914 at the age of 12. After returning to Italy in 1922, Bonturi shuttled back and forth between the United States, Italy, and Spain. He joined New York's Vanguard Group and then sailed for Spain in July 1936, arriving immediately following the Nationalist uprising. After briefly serving with an anarchist militia near Granada, he was dispatched by the CNT to the border town of Portbou to help supervise the entry of foreign volunteers.[24] British reporter Keith Scott Watson met Bonturi in Spain and recorded the anarchist's thick Italian American accent: "I was in de wobblies [i.e., the IWW] in de American seamen's union. I seen every longshore strike on the Atlantic coast. Cops knew me O.K., they ran me out just before de bust up here." Bonturi also lamented, "Christ, we got no guns; can't fight this war with bows and arrers [sic]. De Fascists got guns O.K., getting 'em all the time from Hitler and Mussolini and de Portuguese bastards."[25] Bonturi subsequently returned to New York to procure arms for the CNT, making contact with his comrades in the Vanguard Group. However, according to member Clara Freedman Solomon, due to the embargo his mission "turned out to be a plan in futility." Bonturi departed in April 1937, smuggling only a small quantity of weapons purchased by the cash-strapped Vanguard Group.[26]

Yet Vanguard members may have played a more active role in running arms then they later admitted; Joseph J. Cohen, former editor of the Yiddish anarchist paper

[22] New York Times, 7 January 1937; and Cultura Proletaria (New York), 21 August 1937.

[23] Howson, Arms for Spain, 182–83; New York Times, 9 March 1937; Paul Avrich, Anarchist Voices: An Oral History ofAnarchism in America (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 397; Harry Kelly, "Roll Back the Years: Odyssey of a Libertarian" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), 37:G15, boxes 26–27, John Nicholas Beffel Collection, Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Tamiment Library, New York University, New York.

[24] Bruno Bonturi file, busta 743, Casellario Politico Centrale, Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome (hereafter cited as CPC).

[25] Keith Scott Watson, Single to Spain (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1937), 20. Watson refers to Bonturi as "Bruno Brunelli." My thanks to Matt White for bringing this source to my attention.

[26] Maurizio Antonioli et al., eds., Dizionario biografico degli anarchici italiani (Pisa: Biblioteca

Fraye Arbeter Shtime, recalled, "Younger comrades journeyed to help in the struggle, with material not obtainable in Spain through the 'Non-Intervention' blockade."[27] According to one former Vanguard Group member, famed anarchist labor agitator Carlo Tresca, who maintained close ties to the group, "had people coming over on the ships from France and other places" to smuggle weapons into Spain.[28] Meanwhile, members of the anarchist colony at Stelton, New Jersey, established a fund to purchase an airplane for the CNT in memory of legendary Spanish anarchist Buenaventura Durruti, though it is unclear if they succeeded.[29] The ULO and other anarchist organizations also collected money to send directly to CNT representatives in France and formed at least eight branches of Solidaridad Internacional Antifascista (International Antifascist Solidarity), an international anarchist initiative to raise humanitarian aid for Spain; together these groups collected a combined sum of over $100,000 during the war.[30] Yet such aid fell woefully short of wartime needs, and the Popular Front desperately turned to the Soviet Union, which covertly began arms sales in return for the Spanish government's gold reserves.

Anarchist Volunteers

For many, giving material support to Spain was not enough. The first foreign anarchists arrived in Barcelona within days of the Nationalist uprising. These were French antifascists and Italian exiles belonging to the organization Giustizia e Liberta' (Justice and Liberty), founded in Paris by socialist intellectual Carlo Roselli. On 17 August 1936, Roselli and prominent Italian anarchist Camillo Berneri, who was living in Barcelona when the war began, organized the volunteers into the Italian Section of the CNT's Ascaso Column. Of the original 130 members, 80 were

Franco Serantini, 2003), s.v. "Bonturi, Bruno"; Clara Freedman Solomon, A Memoir: Some Anarchist Activities in New York in the 'Thirties and 'Forties (Los Angeles: Clara Freedman Solomon Memorial Gathering, 2001), 8; and Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 450.

[27] Joseph J. Cohen, Di yidish-anarkhistishe bavegung in Amerike: historisher iberblik un perzenlekhe iberlebungen (Philadelphia: Radical Library, Branch 273 Arbeter Ring, 1945), 520.

[28] Dorothy Gallagher, All the Right Enemies: The Life and Murder of Carlo Tresca (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 159.

[29] Cultura Proletaria, 23 January 1937.

[30] Zimmer, Immigrants against the State, 197–98; Alexander, Anarchists, 98–99; and Eric R. Smith, American ReliefAid and the Spanish Civil War (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2013), 130. Smith makes the incredible claim that the ULO "was unable to send any funds to Spain because expenses outstripped contributions," but this statement is directly contradicted by his own data, which unequivocally confirm Sam Dolgoff's recollection that the group "sent every cent collected to Spain with no deductions for expenses." Smith, American ReliefAid, 28, 130; and Dolgoff, Fragments, 19.

anarchists, and within a few months, anarchists made up 250 of the unit's approximately 300 members.[31] The initial group included 57-year-old Michele Centrone, who had been an active anarchist in San Francisco for more than a decade before his deportation in 1920. The Italian Section undertook its first military engagement early on the morning of 28 August 1936, attacking a fascist position at Monte Pelado in Aragon. Centrone was the first to fall when "a rifle bullet smashed his forehead," but the offensive succeeded after five hours of fighting.[32] Shockingly little has been written about the hundreds of foreign anarchists who, like Centrone, fought in Spain. Historians of the International Brigades estimate that there were "only a few hundred" who fought in the CNT's militias, while Lincoln Battalion historian Peter Carroll mentions a handful of individual Americans who served in Spanish militias, noting in passing that "a few Italian-American anarchists also fought for the Spanish Republic"–a gross underestimation as well as a misreading of the anarchists' motives.[33] As a eulogy penned by a fellow Ascaso Column member noted, Michele Centrone had not died in defense of the Spanish Republic or for the redemption of Italy but "had gone to Spain to fight for the Social Revolution."[34]

As late as September 1938, the Republican government counted 1,946 foreign-born fighters enlisted in units outside of the International Brigades. There was, in fact, a "seeming ubiquity of… foreign elements in the ranks of the Spanish militias."[35] The number who served over the entire course of the war may be as high as 5,000, although Augustin Souchy, a prominent German-born CNT member, believed the total "did not exceed 3,000."[36] Regardless, at least 1,600 to 2,000 foreign anarchists fought in Spain, most of them in the ranks of the CNT's militias. These

[31] Stanislao G. Pugliese, Carlo Roselli: Socialist Heretic and Antifascist Exile (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 201–5; Fabrizio Giulietti, Il movimento anarchico italiano nella lotta contro il fascismo, 1927–1945 (Rome: Piero Lacaita Editore, 2003), 248; and L'Adunata dei Refrattari (Newark, NJ), 17 October 1936.

[32] Mario Gianfrate and Kenyon Zimmer, Michele Centrone, tra vecchio e nuovo mondo: Anarchici pugliesi in difesa della liberta' spagnola (Sammichele di Bari, Italy: SUMA Editore, 2012); Umberto Marzocchi, Remembering Spain: Italian Anarchist Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, trans. Paul Sharkey (London: Kate Sharpley Library, 2002), 8–9; and L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 12 September 1936.

[33] Verle B. Johnston, Legions of Babel: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968), 151; R. Dan Richardson, Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1982), 29; and Carroll, Odyssey, 72.

[34] L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 19 September 1936.

[35] Michael Jackson, Fallen Sparrows: The International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1994), 68; and Richardson, Comintern Army, 29.

[36] Hugh Thomas, The Spanish Civil War, rev. ed. (New York: Random House, 2001), 942; and Augustine Souchy, Nacht uber Spanien: Burgerkrieg und Revolution in Spanien (Darmstadt-Land, Germany: Verlag die Freie Gesellschaft, 1954), 140.

included 500 to 1,000 Italians, at least 250 to 300 Frenchmen, 230 to 250 Germans, and another 100 or more volunteers from elsewhere in Europe, as well as at least one Chinese anarchist.[37] Several hundred Latin American anarchists also participated.[38] In addition, more than 100 anarchists traveled from the United States to take up arms. Although some took advantage of the logistical support provided by the organizers of the International Brigades, most availed themselves to preexisting transatlantic anarchist networks constructed over previous decades through migration, exile, correspondence, publications, and international collaboration.[39] As an anarchist source later noted, these volunteers "made their way to Spain in silence, by their own means or with the aid of comrades. Their names are not always famous, and they could not make themselves known without also exposing themselves to reprisals."[40]

The total number of foreign anarchists who enlisted in Spain was less than one-tenth the size of the International Brigades. This reflects not only the relative strength of communism during the Popular Front period but also the greater obstacles facing anarchists. The Comintern coordinated an international recruiting effort organized and financed by national Communist parties, whereas the anarcho-syndicalist International Working Men's Association (IWMA), to which the CNT belonged, managed to recruit just two foreign centurias (units of approximately 100 soldiers), who served with the anarchist 26th Division on the Aragon front, and financed an additional two centurias "drawn from youth groups."[41] Most

[37] Bruno Mugnai, I volontari stranieri e le brigate internazionali in Spagna (1936–1939): Foreign Volunteers and International Brigades in Spain (1936–39) (Zanica, Italy: Soldiershop Publishing, 2010), 17; Giulietti, Il movimento anarchico italiano, 245–46 n. 551; David Berry, "French Anarchist Volunteers in Spain, 1936–1939: Contribution to a Collective Biography of the French Anarchist Movement," Research on Anarchism, 1997, http://raforum.info/article.php3?id_article=2721 (accessed 20 November 2015); David Berry, "Volunteers in Spain, 1936–1939," in A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917–1945 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 237–52; Dieter Nelles, "Deutsche Anarchosyndikalisten und Freiwillige in anarchistischen Milizen im Spanischen Burgerkrieg," Internationale wissenschaftliche Korrespondenz zur Geschichte der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung 33, no. 4 (1997): 500–519; and Gregor Benton, Chinese Migrants and Internationalism: Forgotten Histories, 1917–1945 (New York: Routledge, 2007), 64, 69.

[38] Gerold Gino Baumann has identified 1,424 Latin American volunteers and established the political affiliations of 148 (10.4 percent) of them; if the 45 anarchists in his sample are representative of the larger whole, then approximately 30 percent, or 423, of the total were anarchists. The Volunteer, December 2002.

[39] On transatlantic anarchist networks see Teresa Abello i Guell, Les relacions internacionals de l'anarquisme Catala' (1881–1914) (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1987); Davide Turcato, "Italian Anarchism as a Transnational Movement, 1885–1915," International Review of Social History 52 (2007): 407–45; James A. Baer, Anarchist Immigrants in Spain and Argentina (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015); and Zimmer, Immigrants against the State.

[40] Un trentennio di attivita' anarchica (1915–1945) (Cesena, Italy: L'Antistato, 1953), 171.

[41] Robert W. Kern, Red Years, Black Years: A Political History of Spanish Anarchism, 1911–

anarchists, however, had to find their way without such support. Moreover, few anarchists traveled to Spain after the "May Days" of 1937; the International Brigades, by contrast, received volunteers for a period nearly twice as long. In September 1936, CNT representatives in the Anti-Fascist Militias Committee, the de facto ruling body of Catalonia, also explicitly discouraged foreign anarchists from coming to Spain. The militias lacked weapons, not soldiers, they argued, and support from abroad would be better directed toward raising funds and working to end Western neutrality. Yet CNT spokesman Diego Abad de Santillan said of those who came regardless, "We could not deny their desire to fight and die with us."[42] The exception to the CNT's position was an unsuccessful effort to recruit foreign anarchist pilots for the Popular Front air force, which was controlled by Soviet advisers who excluded CNT members and often refused air support to anarchist units. In response to an appeal from the CNT, more than a dozen Spanish and Italian anarchists in New York state secretly began flight training in the winter of 1937. The dire military situation, however, prompted half the aspiring pilots to leave for Spain before their training was complete.[43]

This group was representative of the American contingent in Spain as a whole, which was composed mainly of Italian and Spanish immigrants, many of whom had resided in the United States for decades. Unfortunately, precise details about most of these volunteers are scarce. Scant records exist of foreigners who served outside of the International Brigades, and most anarchists sought to remain anonymous to avoid potential charges under the Neutrality Act or to prevent being barred from reentry to the United States. My research has identified 37 by name, and sources indicate that they belonged to a larger group of some 100 to 200 volunteers.

Approximately 50 Italian American anarchists undertook the journey to Spain, evenly divided between longtime American residents and recent antifascist refugees.[44] Among the latter were Giuseppe Esposito, a participant in the factory takeovers of Italy's biennio rosso (1919 to 1920) who fled to America in 1925; Domenico Rosati, a miner formerly active in Italy's paramilitary antifascist organization Arditi del Popolo; Croatian-born Italian sailor Giuseppe Paliaga, who

1937 (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Affairs, 1978), 212.

[42] Diego Abad de Santillan, Por que perdimos la guerra: una contribucion a la historia de la tragedia espanola (1940; repr., Madrid: G. del Toro, 1975), 211–15.

[43] Abe Bluestein to Emma Goldman, 1 July 1937, box 2, Warren Van Valkenburgh Papers, Joseph A. Labadie Collection, Special Collections Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor; and Un trentennio, 171–72.

[44] Un trentennio, 171; and Fraser Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism and the Shaping of National and Ethnic Identity: Italian American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War," Journal of American Ethnic History 27, no. 1 (2007): 9–31.

jumped ship in New York in 1929; and Patrizio ("Comunardo") Borghi, son of exiled anarchosyndicalist Armando Borghi, who joined his father in the United States in 1932.[45]

Details about Spanish return migrants are sketchier. Historian James A. Baer notes, "The anarchist revolution that began in reaction to the military uprising by General Francisco Franco brought many Spaniards home from abroad." Italian-born anarchist Valerio Isca recalled that the Cultura Proletaria Group "was the largest in New York, containing maybe two hundred members, some of whom went back to Spain during the Civil War."[46] But these returning Spaniards served in regular Spanish units, making them difficult to identify in the documentary record. Only when they met tragic ends, like the unfortunates onboard the Mar Cantabrico, did their names appear in the anarchist press. If we assume that those who died represented only a fraction of those who returned, then the total must have been at least several dozen. One, who signed a letter to Cultura Proletaria with the initials J.P.G., served in the CNT's famed Durruti Column.[47] The remaining volunteers included perhaps two dozen native-born Americans, many of them members of the IWW, as well as Irish-born IWW member Patrick Read.[48]

Not included in these numbers are those Italians and Spaniards who previously lived in the United States but had, like Michele Centrone, returned to Europe before the outbreak of the war. For example, Ilario Margarita, the former editor of New York's Italian-language L'Adunata dei Refrattari (Call of the Refractaries), left the United States in 1932 and joined the Ascaso Column in Spain.[49] Spaniard Alvaro Gil, who became an anarchist in New York and was the former secretary of Cultura Proletaria, repatriated after the declaration of the Second Republic in 1931, fought against the Nationalist uprising in the streets of Madrid, and became a commander in the Republican Army's 70th Division.[50] Gil's close friend, sailor Claro J. Sendon Lamela, had likewise lived in New York and written for Cultura Prole-

[45] Giuseppe Esposito file, busta 1895, CPC; La Spagna nel nostro cuore, 1936–1939: tre anni di storia non dimenticare (Rome: AICVAS, 1996), s.v. "Paliaga Giuseppe"; and Antonioli et al., Dizionario biografico, s.v. "Borghi, Patrizio."

[46] Baer, Anarchist Immigrants, 161; and Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 148.

[47] Cultura Proletaria, 11 December 1937.

[48] David Porter, ed., Vision on Fire: Emma Goldman on the Spanish Revolution, 2nd ed. (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2006), 321 n. 17. Matt White identifies 13 American IWW members who fought in Spain, though only 6 of these are described as anarchists in the available sources. Matt White, "Wobblies in the Spanish Civil War," Anarcho-Syndicalist Review no. 42/43 (2006): 39–47; and Matt White, "Wobblies in the Spanish Revolution, Pt 2," Anarcho-Syndicalist Review no. 45 (2006–7): 26–28.

[49] Antonioli et al., Dizionario biografico, s.v. "Margarita, Ilario."

[50] Cultura Proletaria, 8 May 1937; and Jose Romero Cuesta, "El comandante Alvaro Gil, se sinti6 por primera vez revolucionario en Nueva York," Mundo grafico, 15 September 1937.

taria before returning to Galicia in 1932 and becoming a prominent member of the CNT's National Committee. During the war, he returned to the United States to raise support for the CNT but succumbed to chronic respiratory problems and died in New York on 1 December 1937.[51]

In some respects, American anarchist volunteers resembled the Communists and fellow travelers of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion. Maritime workers predominated in both groups, accounting for more than 40 percent of anarchists whose occupations are known. This should not be surprising, as anarchism and syndicalism persisted among American seamen and dockworkers well into the 1930s, and maritime workers had familiarity with and access to transatlantic transportation.[52] Another ten percent of anarchists were miners (three times the proportion among the Lincolns), and an equal number were unskilled laborers. Most of the remainder were independent skilled workers including a barber, an engraver, an electrician, two journalists, a goldsmith, and a baker–in addition to a single shopkeeper. Many of these occupations required frequent travel or were subject to high levels of instability, making most of these volunteers what International Brigades historian Michael Jackson calls "marginal men": migratory workers, independent craftsmen, and political exiles, often unmarried, who were "available for recruitment."[53]

The preponderance of immigrants among the anarchists, however, stands in sharp contrast to the Lincoln Battalion. Only about one in ten of the anarchists were American born, compared to 60 to 70 percent of the Lincolns.[54] Fewer than ten percent of Lincolns were from Italian backgrounds, and virtually none were Spaniards. Conversely, 25 to 46 percent of Lincoln Battalion volunteers were Jewish, most of them American-born children of Eastern European immigrants.[55] By contrast, America's largely immigrant Jewish anarchist movement was advanced in age and far less militant than its Italian and Spanish counterparts, and it in-

[51] Cultura Proletaria, 18 and 25 December 1937; and Pepe Send6n, Falando Claro: a historia do anarquista Claro Jose Sendon Lamela (Santiago de Compostela, Spain: Alvarellos Editora, 2014).

[52] Robert A. Rosenstone, "The Men of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion," Journal of American History 54, no. 2 (1967): 331; Stephen Schwartz, Brotherhood of the Sea: A History of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific, 1885–1985 (Somerset, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1986); Bruce Nelson, Workers on the Waterfront: Seamen, Longshoremen, and Unionism in the 1930s (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988); Bieito Alonso Fernandez, "Migraci6n y sindicalismo: Marineros y anarquistas espanoles en Nueva York (1902–1930)," Historia Social no. 54 (2006): 113–35.

[53] Jackson, Fallen Sparrows, 29, 48.

[54] Carroll, Odyssey, 16; John Gerassi, The Premature Antifascists: North American Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War 1936–1939, an Oral History (New York: Praeger, 1986), 23; and Cecil B. Eby, Comrades and Commissars: The Lincoln Battalion in the Spanish Civil War (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2007), 268.

[55] Rosenstone, "Men of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion," 331–32, 334; and Gerassi, Premature Antifascists, 46.

cluded few members prepared to kill or be killed in Spain. These disparities illustrate not only the immigrant character of American anarchism but also communism's greater success in attracting younger radicals. The average anarchist volunteer was in his mid- to late thirties, whereas only about a third of Lincoln Battalion volunteers were over 29. Several anarchists were in their 50s, and only one, 19-year-old Douglas Clark Stearns, was under 20. Nearly 18 percent of Lincolns, by contrast, were college students.[56] Moreover, once in Spain, the experiences of anarchist volunteers diverged significantly from those of Communists and fellow travelers.

Militias and the International Brigades

Many anarchists arrived in Spain months before the International Brigades appeared. Most of these early militiamen were Italian Americans who joined the Ascaso Column, including Bruno Bonturi and Domenico Rosati. Others joined the International Group of the Durruti Column, a unit composed of some 250 to 400 foreign anarchists.[57] Its roster included an American named John Girney, born in 1893, and Italian American anarchist Giuseppe Paliaga, who probably took part in the defense of Madrid in November 1936, where the International Group lost three-quarters of its members and Buenaventura Durruti was killed.[58] (The International Group also included a Sacco and Vanzetti Centuria, but despite frequent claims to the contrary, this unit was not composed of Americans.)59

Sailor Justus Kates fought with an unidentified anarchist militia on the Huesca front, and Vanguard Group member Gilbert Connolly, a metalworker who claimed Irish revolutionary James Connolly as a relative, also served in an unknown unit.[59] More unusual was the experience of American-born Douglas Clark Stearns, who was attending preparatory school in England when the war broke out and joined a group recruited by the Independent Labor Party. These volunteers fought on the Aragon front with the 29th Division of the anti-Stalinist Partido Obrero de Unificaci6n Marxista (Workers' Party of Marxist Unification, or POUM) in the same unit as writer George Orwell. However, Stearns soon transferred into the Batallon de la Muerte (Battalion of Death), a mostly Italian unit within the Ascaso Column, and

[56] Rosenstone, "Men of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion," 328, 331.

[57] Abel Paz, Durruti in the Spanish Revolution, trans. Chuck Morse (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007), 488, 761 n. 113; and Alexander, Anarchists, 252.

[58] La spagna nel nostro cuore, s.v. "Paliaga Giuseppe"; and Paz, Durruti, chap. 18–22. My thanks to Dieter Nelles for information on John Girney.

[59] Carroll, Odyssey, 72; and Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 448. Gilbert Connolly was not the grandson of James Connolly, as Vanguard member Sidney Solomon later claimed, though he may have been a relative; my thanks to Evan Wolfson for help researching this question.

survived its annihilation on the Huesca front in June 1937.[60] (The disastrous fate of the Batallon de la Muerte was likely premeditated; its founder and commander, Candido Testa, was actually an informant for Mussolini's secret police.)62

At least five anarchists joined the Abraham Lincoln Battalion, including Italian sailor Guerrino Fonda, who departed New York with the first group of Lincoln volunteers on 26 December 1936.[61] The other known Lincoln Battalion anarchists belonged to the IWW: Marine Transport Workers members Virgil Morris, Harry Owens, and Raymond Elvis Ticer and 37-year-old Irishman Patrick Read.[62] Read was a veteran of both the First World War and the Irish War of Independence and in the United States had become a committed anarchist. He initially traveled to Spain as a volunteer for the Eugene V. Debs Column, a Socialist Party attempt to form a non-communist alternative to the International Brigades that was endorsed by Carlo Tresca, among others. However, only about 25 of the original 200 recruits ever made it to Spain, where most of them, like Read, joined the International Brigades after the Debs Column failed to materialize.[63] Read was first attached to a French section, but his political views got him into trouble and he was transferred into the Lincoln Battalion, where he became head of the transmissions unit and was renowned for his courage. Harry Fischer thought Read was "probably the best soldier in the battalion," and battalion commander Lenny Lamb recalled, "The anarchists I knew were incredibly courageous… [Read] would argue with anybody that was willing to argue with him, which I wasn't, but in his actions he was brave and wonderfully generous and very, very likable. He never seemed to fear death, or at least he didn't show it."[64]

Other anarchists tried to sign up for the Lincoln Battalion but were turned away. Enrico Arrigoni set out to join it but "smelled the stink of totalitarian communism under their democratic cover" and changed his mind, later traveling to Spain as a reporter for the American anarchist press.[65] Many Italian American anarchists, however, did join the Italian-language Garibaldi Battalion, which under the leadership of Republican antifascist Randolfo Pacciardi was the most politically tolerant

[60] Christopher Hall, In Spain with Orwell: George Orwell and the Independent Labor Party Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939 (Perth, Scotland: Tippermuir Books, 2013), 103, 118, 225; and Mugnai, I volontari stranieri, 15–16.

[61] Guerrino Fonda file, busta 2103, CPC; and La spagna nel nostro cuore, s.v. "Fonda Guerrino."

[62] White, "Wobblies in the Spanish Civil War"; and White, "Wobblies in the Spanish Revolution."

[63] M. S. Venkataramani, "American Socialists, the Roosevelt Administration, and the Spanish Civil War," International Studies 3, no. 4 (October 1961): 406, 410–13; and Carroll, Odyssey, 72.

[64] Harry Fisher, Comrades: Tales of a Brigadista in the Spanish Civil War (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1998), 23, 67; and Gerassi, Premature Antifascists, 125.

[65] Avrich, Anarchist Voices, 458; and Enrico Arrigoni, Freedom: My Dream, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, CA: Ardent Press, 2012), 231.

section of the International Brigades. In addition, Giuseppe Esposito, a sailor and individualist anarchist who fled to the United States in 1925, served in a medical unit of the International Brigades.[66] Some of these men took part in the defense of Madrid, where the International Brigades are credited with turning the tide of battle, and most participated in the Battle of Guadalajara in March 1937, where the Garibaldi Battalion played a decisive role in defeating Italian troops supplied by Mussolini.[67] In the fall of 1938, the Garibaldi Battalion also fought in the Battle of the Ebro, for which Italian American anarchist Alvaro Ghiara was decorated for bravery.[68]

An estimated 1,000 women fought in Popular Front militias as well, despite government prohibitions.[69] The international anarchist press largely ignored the role of women on the battlefield, but a number of female anarchists joined the International Group of the Durruti Column, and at least ten Italian anarchist women fought in Spain.[70] Italian American anarchist Maria Giaconi appears to have been one of those to break this gender barrier. Giaconi migrated from central Italy to join a brother in Jessup, Pennsylvania, in 1912 and was soon active in the local Italian anarchist community. She became a noted radical speaker and corresponded with such anarchist luminaries as Errico Malatesta and Camillo Berneri. After the outbreak of the war, she abruptly disappeared, eluding federal agents and private detectives monitoring her activities. Then, in October 1936, Italian authorities received word from "confidential sources" that Giaconi had gone to Spain and joined "a fighting detachment against General Franco's uprising." In March 1937, she reappeared in New York, living "with a daughter married to a sailor"–a maritime connection that could have provided her with passage to and from Spain, where her relationship with Berneri would have facilitated entry into an Italian militia section.[71] If she did fight in Spain, Giaconi was the only American woman of any political persuasion known to have done so.

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[66] Giuseppe Esposito file, busta 1895, CPC; and La spagna nel nostro cuore, s.v. "Esposito Giuseppe."

[67] Robert Garland Colodny, The Struggle for Madrid: The Central Epic of the Spanish Conflict (1936–37) (New York: Paine-Whitman, 1958); Thomas, Spanish Civil War, 465–66; Beevor, Battle for Spain, 478–80; and Nunzio Pernicone, "The Battle of Guadalajara: Italian Anti-Fascists in the Spanish Civil War," La Parola del Popolo, November–December 1978, 132–40.

[68] La spagna nel nostro cuore, s.v. "Ghiara Alvaro."

[69] Lisa Margaret Lines, Milicianas: Women in Combat in the Spanish Civil War (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 57–58.

[70] Paz, Durruti, 487; Lines, Milicianas, 81; and Franco Giannantoni and Fabio Minazzi, eds., Il coraggio della memoria e la guerra civile spagnola (1936–1939): studi, documenti inediti e testimonianze, con la prima analisi storico-quantitativa dei volontari antifascisti italiani (Milan: AICVAS, 2000), 52–53.

[71] Maria Giaconi file, busta 2378, CPC; Roberto Lucioli, Gli antifascisti marchigiani nella guerra

Other women took up more traditional roles. David Koven recalled that several Jewish anarchist women he had known in New York "took themselves to Spain when the anti-fascist struggle broke out in 1936 and worked as nurses in the field hospitals set up by the revolutionary forces." Little additional information is available, but these women helped meet what was an arguably more critical need than that filled by foreign-born soldiers. Moreover, "many women who served in the front lines primarily as nurses were also armed and undertook limited combat duties."[72]

Militia Democracy and Militarization

Historians have not treated the anarchists' militias kindly. They usually portray these units as comically incompetent, disorganized, unwilling to fight, and "in general… of little military value."[73] Without question, the improvised militias lacked military experience and training, and on the battlefield were inferior to a professional army. Some also refused orders to advance into dangerous positions. Italian American volunteer Carl Marzani, a socialist and later Communist who joined the Durruti Column (but was not placed in its International Group), was "dismayed to see the total disorganization. There were discussions and polemics and arguments and pamphlets being distributed defending all sides. But it seems to me there was no military training, no preparation whatsoever."[74] Yet volunteer militiamen and women were all that stood between Franco and victory for more than a year. George Orwell observed: "The journalists who sneered at the militia-system seldom remembered that the militias had to hold the line while the Popular Army was training in the rear. And it is a tribute to the strength of 'revolutionary' discipline that the militias stayed in the field at all. For until about June 1937 there was nothing to keep them, except class loyalty."[75] Within days of the Nationalist up-

di Spagna (1936–1939) (Ancona, Italy: ANPI/Instituto Regionale per la Storia del Movimento di liberazione nelle Marche, 1992), 153; and Antonioli et al., Dizionario biografico, s.v. "Giaconi, Maria."

[72] David Koven, "On Hanging In," unpublished manuscript, 1986, folder 131, David Koven Papers, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Mary Nash, Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War (Denver: Arden Press, 1995), 151–53; and Lines, Milicianas, 90.

[73] See, for example, Colodny, Struggle for Madrid, 36, 74–75; Gabriel Jackson, The Spanish Republic and the Civil War, 1931–1939 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965), 329; Richardson, Comintern Army, 19–20; Carroll, Odyssey, 154–55; Thomas, Spanish Civil War, 303, 469; Seidman, Republic of Egos, 49–54; Bolloten, Spanish Civil War, 254–60; and Michael Alpert, The Republican Army in the Spanish Civil War, 1936–1939 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 52.

[74] Gerassi, Premature Antifascists, 145. See also Carl Marzani, The Education of a Reluctant Radical, bk. 3, Spain, Munich and Dying Empires (New York: Topical Books, 1994).

[75] George Orwell, Homage to Catalonia (1938; repr., New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1980), 28–29.

rising, moreover, anarchist-led militias marched from Barcelona into Aragon and reconquered half that region in what was to be the Popular Front's most successful offensive of the entire war–despite the fact that the fighting in Aragon was "a war without artillery, without plans, without reconnaissance, without definable fronts."[76]

Furthermore, the structure of the CNT's militias "reflected the ideals of equality, individual liberty, and freedom from obligatory discipline… There was no officers' hierarchy, no saluting, no regimentation." Each ten-person section elected its own corporal, each centuria elected its own delegate, and assemblies of these delegates collectively made decisions–though once engaged in battle, militia members were expected to obey the orders of their elected commanders.[77] These units were thus organized "on the organic principles of self-management and self-organization," attempting, as Orwell observed, "to produce within the militias a sort of temporary working model of the classless society."[78] This prefigurative model of revolution, based on the principle that means must coincide with ends, was a central feature that differentiated anarchism from Marxism and was precisely what most foreign anarchists sought out in Spain. According to historian Anthony Beevor, "Much has been made of the fact that leaders were elected and political groupings maintained in the militias. But this was not so much a difficulty as a source of strength."[79]

Nevertheless, lack of coordination between the militias of different political factions was a serious problem. By September 1936, some CNT leaders and militia commanders were calling for a centralized command structure and greater military discipline.[80] Other anarchists, however, strongly resisted the transformation of the militias to a regular army, a change decreed by the Republican government in October 1936 and largely implemented by June of the following year. Foreign volunteers were among the most intransigently opposed to militarization. The Italian section of the Ascaso Column declared "with the requisite absolute clarity that, in the event of the authorities' deeming us liable to implementation of [militarization], we could not but regard ourselves as released from any moral obligation and invoke our complete freedom of action."[81] They clashed with CNT leaders over this issue, revealing, in one Italian section member's view, "deep seated doctrinal differ-

[76] Alexander, Anarchists, 145, 161–63; and Jackson, Spanish Republic, 263.

[77] Bolloten, Spanish Civil War, 261; Beevor, Battle for Spain, 125; and Alexander, Anarchists, 169.

[78] Pages i Blanch, War and Revolution, 49; and Orwell, Homage to Catalonia, 27.

[79] Beevor, Battle for Spain, 125.

[80] Fraser, Blood of Spain, 133–34; Bolloten, Spanish Civil War, 262–65; and Alpert, Republican Army, 54, 140–43.

[81] Daniel Guerin, ed., No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology ofAnarchism, trans. Paul Sharkey (San Francisco: AK Press, 1998), 2:254.

ences and glaring psychological contrasts between the Italian anarchists and their Spanish colleagues." But with the Republican government refusing to deliver supplies to those who resisted, the outcome was a forgone conclusion, and the Ascaso Column was incorporated into the new Republican Army's 28th Division.[82]

Michael Alpert dismissed the efficacy of the militias by observing that "an army is victorious because it is stronger than its adversary in commanders, numbers and quality, or because it handles its resources better than the enemy… The Republican militias were neither of these two kinds of army."[83] But the Republican Army that replaced the militias was also neither of these; it attempted to carry out conventional warfare against an enemy that possessed superior troops, resources, and commanders, with predictable results.[84]

The Implosion of the Popular Front

Militarization and asymmetrical warfare were not the only dilemmas anarchists faced. In September 1936, representatives of the CNT entered into the Popular Front government of Catalonia, and in November the anarchists also joined the national government in Madrid. This decision generated intense debate within the international anarchist movement, but the CNT justified its abandonment of anarchist principles on the grounds that the organization was not strong enough to simultaneously fight against both Franco and the various parties of the Popular Front, and that so long as there was to be a government, CNT representatives could stymie its efforts to curb their revolution. The anarchists also hoped their collaboration would secure adequate materiel for their militias.[85]

Soviet sources corroborate anarchist claims that it was lack of armaments, not lack of discipline or will to fight, that prevented the Durruti Column from marching on the Aragonese capital of Zaragoza in the first days of the war before Nationalist reinforcements could arrive. Military attache Iosif Ratner found that Durruti's forces had only 30 cartridges per rifle by the time they reached the outskirts of the capital; he believed Durruti was "absolutely right" when he said that if the Republican government supplied his troops with sufficient ammunition (which was not forthcoming), "they could take Huesca without difficulty" and then move on to Zaragoza. Soviet journalist Ilya Ehrenburg noted that on the Aragon front there

[82] L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 13 August 1938; and Alpert, Republican Army, 68–69, 142.

[83] Alpert, Republican Army, 314.

[84] Beevor, Battle for Spain, 205.

[85] Wayne Thorpe, "Syndicalist Internationalism before World War II," in Revolutionary Syndicalism: An International Perspective, ed. Marcel van der Linden and Wayne Thorpe (Brookfield, VT: Scholar Press, 1990), 203–5; Guttmann, Wound in the Heart, 137–39; Zimmer, Immigrants against the State, 201–4; and Kern, Red Years, Black Years, 192.

were "volunteers but no guns."[86] With their counteroffensive stalled, the 30,000 anarchist troops on the Aragon front endured more than a year of inaction in the trenches.[87]

Italians in the Ascaso Column were "living amid rats, hardships and lice, careless of the sores afflicting their bodies (often the products of dysentery, blood poisoning and other commonplace trench ailments)." In early 1937 one of these Italians complained, "My battalion cannot stand this stagnation any longer. We foreign anarchists came here to fight and not to rot in trenches."[88] Outraged at the abrogation of the militia structure, exasperated by "the damned inactivity… contrived by the central government and the Bolsheviks," and stung by the "rather dismal opinion of the Italian volunteers" held by Spanish anarchists, most of the 200 Italians in the Ascaso Column left the front in April 1937–but only after agreeing to participate in a final offensive at Carascal, where 9 of their number were killed and 43 were wounded. Enrico Arrigoni, who visited what remained of the brigade at the end of that month, reported, "most of them had returned to Barcelona a few days ago, upset by the forced inactivity in which they have remained for many months." In Barcelona, this group began working with Camillo Berneri to organize a new, independent anarchist battalion to return to Aragon.[89]

The lack of arms at the front resulted from both insufficient munitions production capacity in Barcelona and the withholding of Russian-supplied arms–themselves of questionable quality–by the government. Arrigoni believed this was "because the government doesn't want the anarchists to win victories."[90] Spanish and Soviet Communists, meanwhile, complained of anarchists' unwillingness to launch attacks.[91] As Beevor noted, "The Communists made sure that none of the new equipment went to the Aragon front, certainly no aircraft or tanks, which were reserved for their own troops… Under such conditions it was unrealistic to expect conventional offensives to be mounted."[92] In other words, anarchists on the Aragon front were unwilling to launch a major offensive, but only because the Catalan and national governments were consciously refusing to arm them; these

[86] Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed, 26, 87.

[87] Julian Casanova, Anarchism, the Republic, and Civil War in Spain, 1931–1939, ed. Paul Preston, trans. Andrew Dowling and Graham Pollok (London: Routledge, 2005), 109; and Pages i Blanch, "The Formation of the Popular Militias and the Aragon Front," in War and Revolution, 44–53.

[88] Marzocchi, Remembering Spain, 19–20; and Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed, 183.

[89] L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 13 August 1938; Cultura Proletaria, 3 July 1937; and Marzocchi, Remembering Spain, 23.

[90] Cultura Proletaria, 3 July 1937.

[91] See, for example, Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed, 126, 132, 410.

[92] Alexander, Anarchists, 172–73; and Beevor, Battle for Spain, 205.

government suspicions were logical, however, because the anarchists did intend, sooner or later, to use those arms to push their revolution forward. The incompatible goals of the Popular Front coalition led to a stalemate based on well-founded, mutual distrust.

In October 1936, Andre Marty, now commissar of the International Brigades, cautioned the Comintern "to fight with [the anarchists] in the face of fascism–this [would be] the end… after the victory we will get even with them, all the more so since at that point we will have a strong army."[93] Similarly, in a letter probably written in early 1937, anarchist Anna Sosnovsky confided to a friend, "The situation of our movement in Spain is not in the best of shape, [and] a secret call has been issued for comrades to come over and help them in the anticipated fight with the Marxists after the fascists are defeated."[94] The source of this "secret call" was almost certainly discontented Italians in Spain. Anarchists and Communists were preparing for an inevitable postwar struggle at the expense of a united effort against Franco. However, this infighting would not stay contained until after the war.

By early 1937, the growing Spanish Communist Party was looking to "hasten… and if necessary, to provoke" a crisis with the anarchists. On 3 May 1937, Barcelona's Communist chief of police dispatched officers to evict CNT members from the city's Telephone Exchange, as part of an ongoing effort by the Catalan government to dislodge anarchists from strategic positions.[95] Workers resisted, and shots were exchanged. The fighting quickly spilled into the streets, where anarchist defense committees and members of the POUM erected makeshift barricades to battle police and Communist troops. Sporadic violence consumed the city for five days.[96]

The Italians who had left the Ascaso Column arrived in Barcelona on the eve of the fighting, and during the May Days they manned the barricades alongside their Spanish comrades "to defend the revolution." Among them was Armando Vecchietti, one of the would-be pilots from New York, who was known as "Amerigo" or "Americo" because of his years in the United States. Many of the Italians opposed CNT leaders' calls to end the unrest and were "against the letting slip of this chance

[93] Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed, 55.

[94] Anna Sosnovsky to Rose Pesotta, n.d., folder 62, box 3, Rose Pesotta Papers, Record Group 1469, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, New York.

[95] Radosh, Habeck, and Sevostianov, Spain Betrayed, 174; Bolloten, Spanish Civil War, 430–31; Cattell, Communism and the Spanish Civil War, 145; Payne, Spanish Civil War, 271; Helen Graham, "'Against the State': A Genealogy of the Barcelona May Days (1937)," European History Quarterly 29, no. 4 (1999): 485–542.

[96] Augustine Souchy, The Tragic Week in May (Barcelona: Oficina de Informaci6n Exterior de la CNT y FAI, 1937); and Guillam6n, Ready for Revolution, 177–78.

to deal a decisive blow to put paid to the counter-revolutionary provocations and maneuvers" of the Communists and their allies.[97] The Garibaldi Battalion was ordered to Barcelona to suppress the anarchists during the fighting, but Randolfo Pacciardi instructed acting commander Carlo Penchianati to refuse; as a result, "among the Italian Anarchists in his brigade, Pacciardi's popularity, which was high to begin with, was now even greater."[98]

By the time the CNT negotiated a ceasefire, at least 400 people were dead, 1,000 wounded, and thousands imprisoned. Italian anarchists were especially dismayed to learn that Camillo Berneri and his associate Francesco Barbieri had been assassinated in Barcelona on 5 May 1937, an act immediately attributed to Communists.[99] The Catalan government, which viewed the fighting as a threat to the republic's ability to sustain the war, falsely claimed that the May Days had been an attempt by the POUM and its anarchist allies to seize power. In the aftermath, the POUM was outlawed, the CNT was forced out of the Catalan and national governments, and the Communist Party's power increased. In Barcelona, George Orwell discovered that "there was a peculiar evil feeling in the air–an atmosphere of suspicion, fear, uncertainty, and veiled hatred."[100]

A wave of armed repression followed, and Communist troops forcibly dissolved several agricultural collectives, ending all hopes of expanding the anarchists' revolution. According to Beevor, "as a result of communist power the repression of dissenters was far greater than it had been during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship."[101] Foreigners as well as Spaniards were caught in this crackdown. Enrico Arrigoni was arrested in October 1937 after confronting police who were firing on CNT members being evicted from a building. Imprisoned without charges for two months, he was released only after the American consul intervened on his behalf.[102] That November, CNT activist Bruno Bonturi was arrested on the pretext of

[97] Casanova, Anarchism, 125, 144; Marzocchi, Remembering Spain, 25–26; Guerra di Classe, 26 July 1937; and L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 13 August 1938.

[98] Randolfo Pacciardi, Il Battaglione Garibaldi: volontari italiani nella Spagna repubblicana (1938; repr., Rome: La Lanterna, 1945), 217; and Johnston, Legions of Babel, 108.

[99] Guerra di Classe, 5 May 1937; and L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 29 May 1937. Several alternative theories of Berneri's assassination exist, but none are definitive. See Howson, Arms for Spain, 225–27; Roberto Gremmo, Bombe, soldi e anarchia: l'affare Berneri e la tragedia dei libertari italiani in Spagna (Biella, Italy: Storia ribelle, 2008); Bolloten, Spanish Civil War, 875–77 n. 32; and Graham, Spanish Republic, 294–96.

[100] Orwell, Homage to Catalonia, 195.

[101] Beevor, Battle for Spain, 303.

[102] Arrigoni, Freedom, 343–80; Peter Lamborn Wilson, "Brand: An Italian Anarchist and His Dream" (unpublished manuscript, 2003), 5, copy in author's possession.

violating an expulsion order from 1934, issued by the right-wing government that had been swept out of power in 1936.[103]

The International Brigades also attempted to impose ideological discipline, although enforcement varied according to commander.[104]

Members of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion were informed by Communist Party official (and erstwhile anarchist) Robert Minor that the May Days had been "started by the Trotskyite POUM, and the 'uncontrollables' among the Anarchists, under the direction of Franco's fifth column and Italian and Nazi secret agents." Most battalion members therefore "despised the anarchists and considered them virtual enemies of the Republic."[105] IWW member Virgil Morris, who was vocally critical of the battalion's Communist commanders, was repeatedly disciplined, imprisoned for attempting to desert, and suspected of being a spy.[106]

Patrick Read, despite his stellar service record, was eventually ejected from the Lincoln Battalion for "always talking against the Communist Party."[107] One Lincoln volunteer was even slated for execution after he began attending anarchist meetings and spreading anti-communist ideas within the unit; however, a blizzard intervened and the unsuspecting soldier was repatriated due to severe frostbite.[108] Deserter Albert Wallach made contact with the CNT and tried to stow away onboard the SS Oregon, but he was discovered, arrested, and allegedly executed by another Lincoln Battalion member.[109] IWW sailor Lloyd Usinger, an anarchist who had run the naval blockade as part of the crew of the Oregon, spent several weeks in Barcelona working with the CNT and helped to hide Wallach an act for which he, too, was arrested and threatened with execution before his captain secured his release.[110]

Rumors reached anarchists in the United States about additional "men, officers as well as privates," who "were deliberately killed by the I.B. administration be-

[103] Bruno Bonturi file, busta 743, CPC.

[104] Rob Stradling, "English-Speaking Units of the International Brigades: War, Politics and Discipline," Journal of Contemporary History 45, no. 4 (2010): 744–67.

[105] Steve Nelson, The Volunteers: A Personal Narrative of the Fight against Fascism in Spain (New York: Masses and Mainstream, 1953), 118; and Carroll, Odyssey, 154.

[106] Eby, Comrades and Commissars, 99; Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, The Secret World ofAmerican Communism (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995), 182.

[107] Carroll, Odyssey, 165–66; and Fisher, Comrades, 119.

[108] Rosenstone, Crusade of the Left, 310.

[109] Carroll, Odyssey, 185–87; and Klehr, Haynes, and Firsov, Secret World, 155–63.

[110] Schwartz, Brotherhood of the Sea, 123; United States Congress, House of Representatives, Special Committee on Un-American Activities, Investigation of Un-American Propaganda Activities in the United States, vol. 13, 76th Congr., 3rd sess. (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940), 7828; and West Coast Sailors (San Francisco), 15 August 1938.

cause of their independent attitude." According to accounts of an incident in April 1938 that appeared in both anarchist and IWW publications, three IWW members in the Lincoln Battalion, including Ivan Silverman and anarchist Harry Owens, were killed by enemy fire after being intentionally ordered into an exposed position. These men may, however, simply have fallen victim to what one historian has called the "lethal incompetence demonstrated by brigade high command."[111] On the other hand, IWW member Raymond Elvis Ticer, who "hated communists" and was a veteran of anticommunist fights on San Francisco's waterfront, was promoted within the Lincoln Battalion and, according to one volunteer under his command, "made a great sergeant in Spain," where he was wounded at Quinto.[112]

Meanwhile, demoralization and desperation plagued foreigners in CNT units. In June 1937, an Italian member of the militarized Ascaso Division wrote to L'Adunata dei Refrattari, "Soon others will leave, including some of those who came from America."[113] But many were unwilling to give up the fight and joined the new Italian division within the CNT's 25th Division or the International Shock Battalion of the 26th Division (the former Durruti Column), the unit Berneri began to organize before his murder. The Shock Battalion–which included Italian American anarchist Armando Vecchietti–fought on the Aragon front near Teruel, where Vecchietti was killed in action in mid-June 1937.[114] According to Shock Battalion volunteer and Canadian IWW member Bill Wood, "The government sabotaged us since we were formed in May and made it impossible for us to stay at the front… Our arms were rotten, even though the Valencia government has plenty of arms and planes. They know enough not to give arms to the thousands of anarchists on the Aragon front. We could have driven the fascists out of Huesca and Saragossa had we had the aid of the aviation."[115]

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[111] Challenge (New York), 13 and 17 August 1938; Industrial Worker (Chicago), 10 September 1938; and Michael Petrou, Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 64. Challenge lists those killed as Harry Owens, "Morris," and Ray Steele, whereas the Industrial Worker lists only Ivan Silverman by name. The inclusion of Steele is an error, as he died in April 1937. However, rumors did circulate among Lincoln Battalion members that Steele, officially the victim of a sniper, was killed by Anthony De Maio, the same man implicated in Albert Wallach's death. The article's author, Abe Bluestein, heard these tales as the English-language representative of the CNT-FAI's Foreign Information Bureau in Barcelona and likely conflated two different stories. On the rumors about Steele, see William Herrick, Jumping the Line: The Adventures and Misadventures of an American Radical (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2001), 211–12.

[112] White, "Wobblies in the Spanish Revolution," 27; and Thelma Ruby and Peter Frye, Double or Nothing: Two Lives in the Theatre (London: Janus, 1997), 112.

[113] L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 10 July 1937.

[114] Industrial Worker, 24 July 1937; L'Adunata dei Refrattari, 17 July 1937, 25 September 1937; and Guerra di Classe, 26 July 1937.

[115] One Big Union Monthly, September 1937.

Orphans of a Failed Revolution

In November 1938, a group of Italians who had quit the Aragon front, including Italian American anarchist Armando Rodriguez, founded an orphanage outside of Barcelona to house the war's increasing number of parentless children. The Colonia "L'Adunata dei Refrattari," named for and funded through the American publication of the same name, operated for only two months before Barcelona fell to the Nationalists.[116] Most of the foreign anarchists who had remained in Spain ended up as orphans of a different sort, corralled into French refugee camps, which were transformed into concentration camps after Germany occupied France in 1940. Italian American anarchists Pietro Deiana, Guerrino Fonda, Alvaro Ghiara, Benedetto Mori, Domenico Rosati, and Armando Rodriguez were all interned by the Vichy regime. Deiana, Ghiara, and Rodriguez were transferred to Nazi camps in Eastern Europe, but all three survived until the end of the war, and Deiana eventually made his way back to the United States.[117] Many others never returned.

Most anarchist volunteers were not American citizens and could therefore be excluded by immigration officials as alien anarchists. Enrico Albertini, one of the many Italian-born veterans who was refused reentry, ultimately took refuge in Cuba. Bruno Bonturi and Pietro Fusari were likewise detained at Ellis Island in early 1939; Bonturi, who had lived in the United States for so long that he was nicknamed "l'americano," eventually departed for Chile and later petitioned Mussolini's regime to allow him to rejoin his wife and child in Italy.[118] Guerrino Fonda escaped internment in France only to be held at Ellis Island for six months after arriving as a stowaway in June 1939 before finally departing for Argentina.[119]

A few, however, were aided by "a transnational network… established by Italian anarchists to aid comrades who needed to leave Europe for North America" at the end of the war. Based out of Belgium, this network provided refugees with Cuban passports that were used for travel to Canada, from whence their carriers either sneaked across the U.S.-Canada border or presented their false documents to immigration authorities and claimed to be passing through the United States on their way back to Cuba. In 1938, Carlo Tresca also helped smuggle Virgilio Gozzoli, who had collaborated on Camillo Berneri's paper Guerra di Classe in Barcelona, to

[116] Un trentennio, 172–73; Muratori Matteo, "L'Asilo della rivoluzione: Enrico Zambonini e la Colonia 'L'Adunata dei Refrattari'" (thesis, Universita' di Modena e Reggio, 2009).

[117] La spagna nel nostro cuore, s.vv. "Deiana Pietro" and "Ghiara Alvaro"; and Un trentennio, 172–73.

[118] Ottanelli, "Anti-Fascism," 22, 30 n. 60; Nicolas Guillen, En la guerra de Espana: cronicas y enunciados (Madrid: Ediciones de la Torre, 1988), 136; and Bruno Bonturi file, busta 743, CPC.

[119] Brooklyn Eagle, 8 June 1939; and Guerrino Fonda file, busta 2103, CPC.

New York.[120] But physical escape did not necessarily free veterans from the trauma of the Spanish battlefield. Batallon de la Muerte survivor Douglas Clark Stearns spoke at numerous fund-raising events for the CNT after his return to New York in 1937, but, according to Vanguard Group member Sam Dolgoff, he "was a very unhappy and frustrated young man… and he was beset by other anxieties. We were shocked when informed that he had committed suicide by jumping off the ship where he was employed as an able-bodied seaman."[121]

The struggles and fates of these volunteers–both the miraculous and the grisly–do not fit within the narrative of the Abraham Lincoln Battalion and "the good fight," or within the counternarrative purveyed by anti-communist critics. Historians of the Spanish Civil War are only just beginning to move beyond stories of Comintern-organized international solidarity and Machiavellian international maneuvering to uncover the bottom-up transnational networks also at work in the conflict.[122] Far more than just a domestic conflict, more even than an international stage upon which the Soviet Union and other great powers vied for position, the Spanish Civil War was also the revolutionary culmination of decades of transnational anarchist struggle. American anarchists lost their lives defending this revolutionary project, and in its aftermath more were lost to exile, imprisonment, concentration camps, and suicide. The anarchist movement itself barely survived the fall of Spain, which, according to Sam Dolgoff, "disastrously undermined not only the morale of the readers [of Vanguard] but the morale of the members of the Vanguard Group itself."[123] Vanguard, along with six other American anarchist newspapers, had disappeared by the end of 1940, and only a few scattered individuals and groups carried anarchist ideas through the postwar decades.[124] For these and subsequent generations of anarchists, the brief-lived achievements of the Spanish Revolution remained among the most compelling evidence of the practicability of their ideals, but Americans' contributions to that revolution were forgotten. Recalling them opens up "the good fight" to new, more complex interpretations and highlights the transnational ties that linked the revolutionary Left in Spain to its counterpart in the United States.

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[120] Travis Tomchuk, Transnational Radicals: Italian Anarchists in Canada and the U.S., 1915–1940 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2015), 163–68; and Antonioli et al., Dizionario biografico, s.v. "Gozzoli, Virgilio."

[121] Dolgoff, Fragments, 19.

[122] See, for example, Baer, Anarchist Immigrants; and Lisa A. Kirschenbaum, International Communism and the Spanish Civil War: Solidarity and Suspicion (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

[123] Dolgoff, Fragments, 21.

[124] Andrew Cornell, "A New Anarchism Emerges, 1940–1954," Journal for the Study of Radicalism 5, no. 1 (2011): 105–32.

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