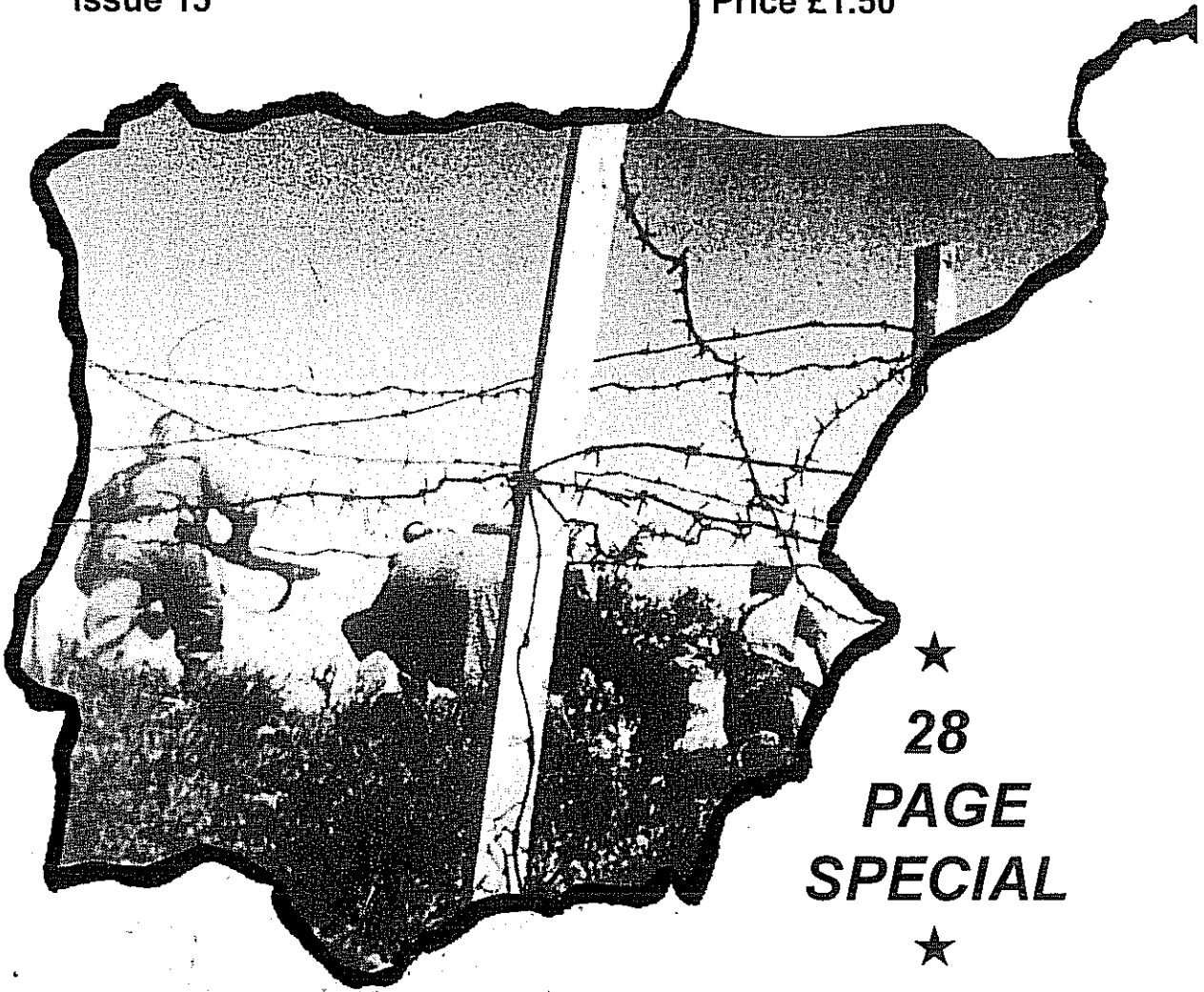


# FIGHTING TALK

Issue 15

Price £1.50



★  
28  
PAGE  
SPECIAL  
★

# ANOTHER SPAIN

**Anti-Fascist  
Action**

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## AFA are on the Internet

<http://www.foobar.co.uk/users/ankh/afa>

# APPEAL FOR INFORMATION

**WE URGE ALL OUR READERS TO SEND ANY INFORMATION ON FASCISTS IN THEIR AREA DIRECT TO AFA. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY TO GUARANTEE THE MILITANT ANTI-FASCIST MOVEMENT HAS THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO SUCCESSFULLY BEAT THE FASCISTS.**

# JOIN AFA

In the fight against fascism in Britain, Anti-Fascist Action has a record that is second to none. Our unique combination of physical confrontation and ideological struggle has produced results time and again.

We say no platform for fascists - no meetings, no marches, no paper sales, no leafletting - and we mean it, as the fascists know only too well. Our aim is to cause the maximum disruption to fascist activities.

But that doesn't mean that AFA only needs street-fighters. Far from it. Everyone has a role to play in AFA, whether they feel confident in physical confrontations or not.

None of our successes in physically confronting the fascists would have been possible without the contribution of non-combatants. From legal observers to scouts, from leafleters to people who can write articles or speak at meetings, AFA needs people with a whole range of skills if it is to continue to succeed.

There's a lot to do, so don't wait around. Join today.

Contact your local group for affiliation rates and activities.

## AFA CONTACTS

MIDLANDS AND WALES		SCOTLAND	THE SOUTH
Cardiff AFA c/o Wolverhampton AFA	Birmingham AFA PO Box 3311 25 Howard Road East Birmingham B13 ORZ	Edinburgh AFA PO Box 421 Edinburgh EH11 1QD	Fife AFA c/o Edinburgh AFA
Leicester AFA PO Box 320, Leicester LE1 5WS	Nottingham AFA PO Box 192, Nottingham NG1 1FJ	Glasgow AFA PO Box 797, Glasgow G1 5JF	Brighton AFA c/o London AFA
Wolverhampton AFA c/o PO Box 3311 25 Howard Road East Birmingham B13 ORZ	Bolton AFA c/o Manchester AFA	Exeter AFA c/o The Flying Post, PO Box 185 Exeter EX4 4EW	Bristol AFA PO Box 1076 Bristol BS99 1WF
Leeds AFA PO Box 127, Leeds LS3 1TS	Huddersfield AFA Po Box 310 Huddersfield HD1 3YL	Gloucester AFA c/o Bristol AFA	Colchester AFA c/o PO Box 87 Ipswich IP4 4JQ
Liverpool AFA PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP	Lancaster AFA c/o Manchester AFA	Herts AFA c/o London AFA	Ipswich AFA PO Box 87 Ipswich IP4 4JQ
Manchester AFA PO Box 83, South West PDO, Manchester M15 5NJ	Leeds AFA PO Box 127, Leeds LS3 1TS	Kent AFA c/o London AFA	Exeter AFA c/o The Flying Post, PO Box 185 Exeter EX4 4EW
Preston AFA c/o Liverpool AFA	Liverpool AFA PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP	London AFA BM 1734 London WC1N 3XX	Gloucester AFA c/o Bristol AFA
Teeside AFA PO Box 1TA, Newcastle NE99 1TA	Manchester AFA PO Box 83, South West PDO, Manchester M15 5NJ	Norwich AFA c/o Oxford AFA	Herts AFA c/o London AFA
Sheffield AFA c/o Black Star, PO Box 446 Sheffield	Preston AFA c/o Liverpool AFA	Oxford AFA PO Box 854 Oxford OX1 3US	Ipswich AFA PO Box 87 Ipswich IP4 4JQ
Tyne & Wear AFA 4, The Cloth Market, Newcastle upon Tyne NE11EA	Teeside AFA PO Box 1TA, Newcastle NE99 1TA	Southampton AFA c/o London AFA	Kent AFA c/o London AFA
Wigan AFA C/o Manchester AFA	Sheffield AFA c/o Black Star, PO Box 446 Sheffield	Surrey AFA c/o London AFA	London AFA BM 1734 London WC1N 3XX
York AFA PO Box 306, York YO3 7GH	Tyne & Wear AFA 4, The Cloth Market, Newcastle upon Tyne NE11EA	AFA (Ireland) PO Box 3355 Dublin 7 Ireland	Norwich AFA c/o Oxford AFA

# IN THE AREA

Welcome to Issue 15 of *Fighting Talk*, and we start with our usual round up of news and views from the front line against fascism.

As the General Election gets closer, the BNP have been busy trying to get the 50 candidates required for a television broadcast. A series of meetings have been held round the country, selecting candidates, organising fund-raising, sorting out publicity. A lot of familiar faces will be standing, and in Glasgow's Govan local AFA members are particularly keen to make the acquaintance of BNP candidate Jim White, having heard about his somewhat 'horizontal' role during the 1992 election in South London.

The BNP have been bragging about their activity in the South West and hail their Bristol branch as "the best new unit", leafletting the Kingswood and Fishponds areas in preparation for the coming election. For our part we have had an important boost from two events held over the last couple of months. A branch social attracted 60 people and apart from having a congenial little session new contacts were made and some older ones re-established.

A public benefit gig held in October was an unqualified success, with over 400 people attending the event under the AFA/Freedom of Movement banner. Well known and popular local DJs, as well as a posse from Southampton, ensured a lively and sweaty night. The AFA stall did well, shifting a load of FTs and T-shirts. Security was well provided for by local resources and with the backing of others in the AFA Southern Region. Bristol branch is now better placed than ever to become more (pro-)active and intervene in areas the fash like to consider 'their' territory.

Please note the Bristol branch now has a new address, and they should be contacted at: Bristol AFA, PO Box 1076, Bristol, BS99 1WF. Oxford AFA have also changed their contact address to: PO Box 854, Oxford, OX1 3US, and in the North East the new AFA contact address is: North East AFA, PO Box 1TA, Newcastle, NE99 1TA. This replaces the old Tyne & Wear Anti-Fascist Association

address which has been used previously as an AFA contact. (TWAFA can be contacted at: 4.The Cloth Market, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1EA.).

In London, AFA organised a major weekend of events to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street and the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. The idea to put together this weekend's events first came about when we realised that AFA, the only organisation of militant anti-fascists on this island today with any legitimate claim to the traditions of 1936, were possibly going to be the only organisation not commemorating them. Other groups have condemned the actions of militant anti-fascists on numerous occasions, and have called on the State to deal with the 'fascist threat'. It would appear that the irony of their public stance was totally lost on them as they celebrated the events of October 4th, 1936.

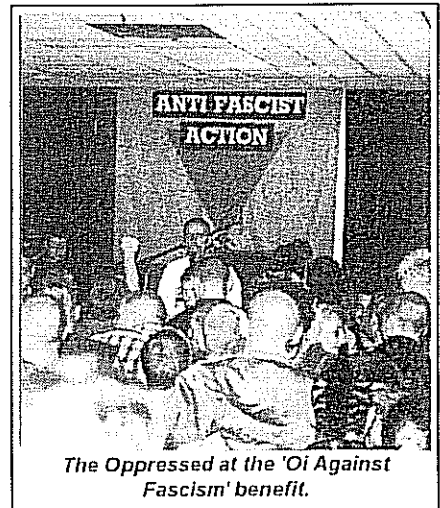
The first event was a rally on Friday 4th October, held in a hall in Camden near the scene of a major clash between the 43 Group and Mosley's Union Movement in 1948. The purpose of the rally was to establish that there has been a tradition of militant anti-fascism in this country since the 1930s, and that AFA are the current upholders of this tradition. We approached a number of veterans from the anti-fascist struggle to speak at the rally and endorse the actions of the present day militants in AFA.

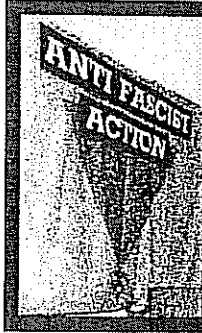
To the disappointment of all present, Cable Street and International Brigade veteran Charlie Goodman was too ill to speak at the meeting as had been arranged. Fortunately we were able to film a short message of support from Charlie and his wife Joyce which was shown at the rally. A message of support was then read out from Bob Doyle, another International Brigade veteran and lifelong activist, and this was followed by Tony Hall, an activist from the 62 Group who explained how they effectively stopped Mosley's comeback in the East End of London in the 1960s, using very direct methods. After a minutes silence for the late Mickey Fenn, a key player in the ANL squads of the 1970s, the main AFA speaker finished off by outlining AFA's analysis of the coming period and

what needs to be done (see next page). The evening then continued with a social which featured a highly entertaining video showing various anti-fascist 'actions', from Cable St. to Waterloo.

The next day started with a film show, and as the AFA stewards arrived at the cinema they were greeted with specially made fascist stickers on the entrance with the catchy slogan, 'AFA = ZOG's Boot Goys'. Considering this was the only fascist intervention over the whole weekend it has to be seen as a sign of weakness. The films were 'Land and Freedom', AFA's 'Fighting Talk', and a film about American volunteers in the International Brigade, 'The Good Fight'. As at the rally the night before there were three AFA exhibitions on display - about Spain, Cable Street, and the history of AFA.

In the evening a sold out 'Oi Against Fascism' gig was held, featuring The Oppressed and the Stage Bottles. Anti-fascist skinheads from all over the world turned up, from France, Belgium, Malaya, Germany, the Basque country, and the whole show provided the sort of alternative to Blood and Honour that is needed. All in all it was a great weekend, showing AFA's ability to operate on all levels. A special mention must go to Time Out for refusing to advertise the rally, and Melody Maker wouldn't carry the advert for the gig, presumably still sulking about the Beggars. Despite their efforts to undermine AFA all the events were well attended and provided the necessary boost for the coming period.





# NO MIDDLE GROUND

Here we reproduce extracts from the main AFA speech given at the October 4th rally in London.

"On May 1st 1996 the Front National presented itself as the "trade union of the French". The link unfortunately is not entirely rhetorical. The FN is now the largest working class party in France. In the 1995 presidential elections 27% of blue collar workers voted for Le Pen. In Austria 41% of industrial workers voted for the Far-Right Freedom Party. The same trend is applicable throughout Europe. The long cherished belief that fascism's constituency was exclusively drawn from petit-bourgeois elements has been shattered. In fact the reverse has happened. It is not only primarily but exclusively from this strata that the conservative Left recruits. AFA has long recognised these developments are not coincidental. The rise of the Far-Right in Europe is not the cause of the Left's failure, but the consequence of that failure. By definition anti-fascism is a rearguard action.

In Britain we had the situation in the early 1990s where the strategy of the ANL was to invite people to vote Labour in order to electorally crush the BNP. The result was that people who sought change were being stampeded in the BNP's direction by the ANL's strategy. Despite the relative success of the BNP on the Isle of Dogs they have as yet been unable to repeat this success across the country. An objective assessment would (as the fascist themselves often do) point to AFA nationally as a major stumbling block. This is not simply because AFA has a cutting edge, denied to others by their own strategies, but because the problem of fascism is approached from a class perspective. Essentially AFA regards the working class as its constituency and that determines how the issue is politically addressed.

Recently a French anti-fascist magazine ruefully admitted to the wide support for the FN among the French working class. Here is what it proposes as the basis for the resistance: "The social base for an anti-fascist movement can only be found among those who are fascism's

targets; mainly immigrants, but also gays and lesbians, people with disabilities and others". It goes on to point out that simply bashing the fash is pointless - orientating to the unions while recruiting "feminists and intellectuals" is considered much more rewarding.

You don't have to be a genius to recognise that it is precisely this formula, this recipe for paralysis, that got them into trouble in the first place. For the armchair anti-fascist, attitude, consciousness or simply navel gazing has historically proved rather more attractive than dealing with reality by attempting to change it. Similarly "bringing it to the labour movement" is always the cry of those eager to shed themselves of responsibility. And when the TUC fail to arm anti-fascist militias then this is a sign that they must redouble their efforts in the lobbying department.

Fascism's victims are selected not because they appear to be vulnerable, but precisely because they are vulnerable. To argue that a selection of scapegoats hand picked by the fascists themselves is the only social basis for anti-fascism is in reality passing the buck. A theoretical rat run invented to avoid the unseemly business of actual confrontation and resistance. The only social basis for anti-fascism is the working class and for real anti-fascists the only categories that matter are pro-working class or anti-working class. And if you are not with us you are against us. There is no middle ground.

For over a decade the French Left have sought to deny this, and having convinced themselves now acknowledge that the fascists "outrageous policies seem increasingly banal, even legitimised. They are present on school governors committees, they make proposals about the municipal budget ... everywhere you turn you see them." Of course the analysis does not examine why you see them everywhere you turn, how in a period of just over ten years they have been allowed to establish a mass base in France and a bridgehead for fascism in Europe. This is no mystery. History is known to be pitiless.

So on the face of it the contrast between Britain and France could not be greater. But this analysis would be superficial and dangerously premature. This is no time for self congratulation. Remember it was under the French Socialist Party regime in the mid-80s that the FN began their steady climb to the top. Undoubtedly a distinct advantage in establishing their radical credentials was that the primary anti-FN organisation - SOS Racisme - was directly linked to, and sponsored by, Mitterand himself. The ANL not only campaigns for Labour but is sponsored by a possible future cabinet minister in Labour MP Peter Hain. This is one reason the BNP and others are literally rubbing their hands in glee in anticipation of a Labour victory in May.

On top of that the BNP would appear to be making a decisive change of direction. No longer a battle for control of the streets but a battle for hearts and minds. And AFA was hamstrung. The strategy of confrontation that had been so devastating against the old BNP way of doing things proved impotent against the new. If indeed the new (fascist) politics mean success and the old failure, then AFA too must take this on board, otherwise in ten years time it is us who may also share in the experience of seeing them at every turn.

The first step towards clawing back the situation is to recognise that throughout Europe and beyond, the opponents of militant anti-fascism are organised. The Far-Right, the State, and the law-abiding pacifists of the conservative Left all network separately and sometimes together to defeat, criminalise, and marginalise the militants. Ironically the only people not organised along international lines are the people who need this solidarity the most. The militants must be organised.

We need to recognise that throughout Europe the old Left is in meltdown and that following a Labour victory the British Left, already displaying the symptoms, will prove equally vulnerable. This situation has arisen not because the conservative Left are bad anti-fascists, but because they are bad revolutionaries. Ultimately this means that the Left both here and in Europe must re-invent itself. Historically the anti-fascist movement was created from a coalition of the Left. Increasingly it appears that an authentic working class initiative can only spring from the forces of militant anti-fascism. In the late 1980s AFA drew a line in the sand; here and no further. We have been true to our word, and as a result we stand on a firm foundation. Now we must build on it.



# THE STAGE BOTTLES

The 'Oi Against Fascism' gig was a great success, and while The Oppressed's anti-fascist credentials are well known, here we have a look at the excellent support band. The Stage Bottles are a 5-piece anti-fascist band from Frankfurt in Germany. They don't like being labelled an Oi band but that is probably the easiest way to describe them. The band started in 1993 and had a political edge from the beginning, partly due to the fact that one member used to be in The Beggars.

Three of the band are active anti-fascists and by 1994 the fascists copped on to this so they had to organise their own anti-fascist security at gigs. Things came to a head when they played with Cocksparrer in Stuttgart in April 1995. The fascists started to make threats before the gig, warning the Stage Bottles

"not to come to Stuttgart". On the night about 20 fascists managed to slip into the gig but stayed quiet until the band launched into "Dead But Not Forgiven" - their song about Ian Stuart which is not over popular with the Forces of Darkness! At this point the fascists started performing. The bass player fronted the main bonehead (Stefan Hammer from the nazi band Noie Werte, an old friend of Ian Stuart's) and the fascists backed off. People then found out that a punk had been attacked by the fascists outside, the other support band said they wouldn't play until the fascists left, and an eighty-strong anti-fascist skinhead army decided enough was enough and proceeded to butcher the fascists. The gig then went ahead, minus fascists, and to this day the fascists have never stopped threatening revenge.

The Stage Bottles are a good example of how to combine music and politics - and still have a good time. With Blood and Honour being fairly active in Germany it is important to have an anti-fascist alternative. The Stage Bottles' logo is a swastika getting crushed and they always play under a "Love Music - Hate Fascism" banner so the message is clear. Although some of the band are active anti-fascists none of them are directly involved with any organisation, partly due to anti-skinhead prejudice they have experienced. Because most of the band and a lot of their supporters are skinheads they have even been asked to stay away from some left wing events in case they frightened people - despite their track record of effective anti-fascism! Some of the local football hooligans, who used to run with the fascists, now follow the band when they realised not all anti-fascists fit into the middle class lefty stereotype.

There are many ways to be part of the militant anti-fascist movement and Stage Bottles are active in areas largely ignored by others. The fact that they paid all their own travelling expenses to come to London to play the 'Oi Against Fascism' AFA benefit puts most bands to shame.

The band have released one album and one single, with another single to be released shortly. For more information write to:

**Stage Bottles, c/o Knock Out Records, Postfach 10 07 16, 46527 Dinslaken, Germany.**

## FILM SHOW

# The Good Fight

The AFA film show featured three films, and while 'Land and Freedom' and the AFA film 'Fighting Talk' are probably familiar to many readers, the opening film was equally good. 'The Good Fight' is the story of the 3,200 men and women who fought with the American Lincoln Brigade during the Spanish Civil War. Along with archive film footage, photographs and newsclips, veterans of the war tell how, as little more than working class "just chickenshit kids", they fought to defeat fascism and how they saw so many of their colleagues killed or injured.

Longshoreman Bill Bailey laughed as he described how, during an anti-Nazi demonstration in New York in 1935, he and a friend boarded a German ship and

tore down its swastika flag. A number of black volunteers said they loved Spain because it was the first, and last, time they ever felt they were truly equal, soon forgetting that they were actually of another colour to the majority of the population, with many of them rising through the ranks to serve as officers, something that would have been impossible in America.

Despite the suffering they had witnessed and gone through themselves (many of the volunteers were persecuted with some of them only ever being able to hold down a job for a week or so before the FBI ensured they were sacked) many of them could still see the humorous side of things and were also obviously proud of the role they had played. In short, an inspiring film.

### THE SPIRIT LIVES ON!

*"My heart goes out to all of you who are carrying on the fight, and those of you who really are putting everything of your lives into this struggle against this creed of fascism. All the best to everybody and may the rally be a great success."*

(Charlie Goodman, Cable St. and International Brigade veteran)

*"I took part in Cable St. when I was only 12 years old. I know that there are many youngsters today who are carrying on this fight against fascism, and we both want to wish you all the very best of luck."*

(Joyce Goodman, Cable St. veteran)

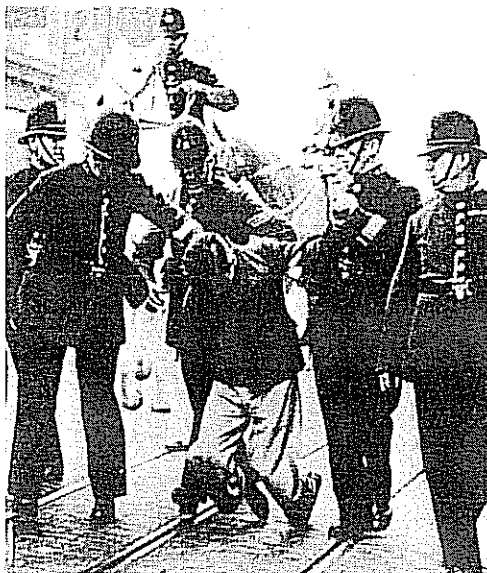
*"I give tribute to the good men and women in AFA who I believe are the natural successors of the 62 Group. You are the morality and muscle on the streets, all power to you in the coming struggles."*

(Tony Hall, 62 Group veteran)

## THE CABLE STREET FUND

The rally provided AFA with the opportunity to announce the launching of the 'Cable Street Fund'. The Battle of Cable Street is obviously a potent symbol of militant anti-fascist history, and an occasion where over 80 anti-fascists were fined or jailed. Throughout history, to be effective in fighting the fascists usually means breaking the law and always means rejecting the power and legitimacy of the forces of law and order. Thus the actions of the anti-fascist streetfighters will always be seen as dangerously radical in the eyes of the State, especially when it involves a form of behaviour - physical violence - which the dominant culture condemns in everyday life on the part of everyone except the State itself.

AFA's attitude is that having encouraged people to adopt this strategy we will certainly not abandon people if they get arrested. As the cutting edge of militant anti-fascism in this country for the last 11 years, AFA has inevitably endured its fair share of jailings and fines. In the past we have responded to each occasion as it occurred. But with what



we believe will be an increasingly reactionary period following the next General Election, and the continuing harassment of AFA members by the police and other State agencies, we have decided to put in place a permanent welfare fund that will collect money on an ongoing basis.

Donations should be sent to 'AFA (CSF)' (cheques payable to 'AFA') at BM1734, London WC1N 3XX.

## AFA STATEMENT

In recent weeks two people connected with AFA have been approached by Special Branch in different parts of the country. This is part of an ongoing police strategy to gather information on Anti-Fascist Action and the people that are involved. Needless to say, both individuals made no comment and contacted AFA immediately.

If anyone in AFA is approached by the police it is absolutely vital that they contact the organisation, both in their own interests and those of the organisation.

## End of Story

It appears the case against the Göttingen anti-fascists in Germany is over. Despite AFA's political and financial support for the defendants since they were arrested, in July 1994, we have not been directly contacted about the outcome. This is hardly an acceptable way of operating in the militant anti-fascist movement.

We understand some of the charges have been dropped and a large sum of money will be paid to survivors of a Nazi concentration camp instead of a fine.

## Obituary MICKEY FENN: "ONE IN A MILLION"

Many nice things have been said about Mickey Fenn since his untimely death in July of this year, at the age of 58. Praise from all political quarters has been lavish. The eulogies were eminently respectful, clearly many would like to claim him as their own. There was, of course, fulsome praise for his work on the docks, trade union struggles, Pentonville 5, anti-racism, etc. Every event dutifully logged, but read back to back you would hardly recognise him, the descriptions were drained of all energy. He came across as a worthy but slightly dull time-server. Mickey was anything but that, he liked confrontation, he enjoyed the class struggle. He took everything to its logical conclusion. Mickey was by nature an extremist.

If he embarked on a fitness regime he would end up running marathons. If he took on the employers it was all flying pickets and wildcat strikes. If involved in anti-fascism it was inevitably at the sharp

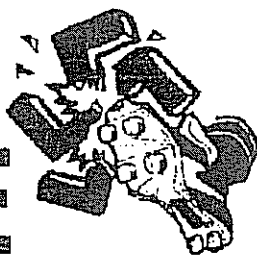
end. This led to a series of intimate encounters with the constabulary particularly during the late 70s and early 80s, including one celebrated trial at the Old Bailey. In the incident that led to his being charged with GBH with intent, affray, etc. Mickey suffered a broken hand. Luckily the following Monday six of his very best friends were on hand, so to speak, to witness a frightful industrial accident. He still complained about the compensation until it was pointed out that he had got more than Henry Cooper for his last defence of the British Heavyweight title. He was also acquitted.

Following his acquittal he received a series of threatening phone calls from, as it turned out, a genuinely notorious British Movement organiser, Albert Chambers. Mickey was completely unfazed. On discovering who was behind it Mickey rang him up. His wife answered, Albert was in bed - could she take a message? "Yes" came the reply, "if you

can get a pen and paper I've got a recipe for him. First you need a bottle, any bottle will do, but a milk bottle is best ...". Mickey went on to calmly read out a very specific list of ingredients. Albert got the message all right, there were no more phone calls.

When it came to the editing of the AFA programme on Open Space in 1992 the most difficult part was chopping it down to 29 minutes, particularly when, in order to make it as comprehensive as possible, this meant cutting out Mickey's reminiscences one by one. Especially because we were aware that the easiest way of making the wholly entertaining and politically enlightening advertisement for militant anti-fascism that we wanted was by cutting out everything but Mickey's contribution. Mickey had hundreds of stories and there are hundreds of stories about Mickey. He was a diamond. A real communist. One in a million.

# LEVELLING THE SCORE



## HOME and AWAY

Celtic recently played Hamburg SV in the first round of the UEFA Cup, losing both legs 2-0. However most of the excitement took place off the park as the match became a rallying point for fascists from various parts of northern Germany. Our friends at St. Pauli (HSV's city rivals) warned us that the fascists would target the games due to the republican and anti-fascist element among the Celtic support and the strong rapport between Celtic fans and the anti-fascist St. Pauli fans.

HSV fans have not exactly been idle when it comes to developing links with Right-wing elements at other clubs. When HSV hooligans came to Glasgow for the first leg their relationship with the worst element of Rangers fans was confirmed. The main 'firm' spent most of the day in the notorious Loyalist drinking den, The Loudon Tavern, a pub frequented by UVF and Red Hand Commando loyalists. After drinking all day with such people the HSV hools then attacked Celtic supporters on their way to the game, picking on old men and kids. At the game there were dodgy looking banners and flags and the obligatory nazi salutes you would expect from this scum.

After the match 20 of our casuals, the Celtic Soccer Crew, confronted 40 HSV

hooligans who were armed with batons and knuckledusters. In the ensuing fight one of the HSV mob was stabbed in the stomach. This was enough to unnerve the rest of his mates who took off double quick. That was the end of round one; round two followed 2 weeks later in Hamburg.

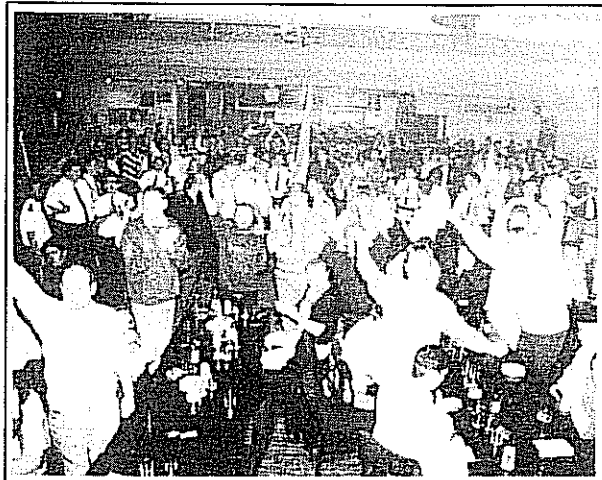
The night before the match 40 fascists, believed to be from Berlin, attacked the main St. Pauli pub 'Zum Letzen Pfennig'. There weren't that many in the pub and a couple of people got hit by bottles and glasses. The fash disappeared as quickly as they had appeared, achieving a small, albeit temporary, victory. At the game the next day the HSV hooligans had a big mob who taunted the Celtic supporters with Loyalist chants, and at one point the Celtic fans tried to fight their way through the riot police to get at them.

The police estimated that around 200 fascists were in and around the St. Pauli area after the match and there were several minor skirmishes between fascists and Celtic supporters on the Reeperbahn. About 60 fascists again attacked the 'Zum Letzen Pfennig', but this time the St. Pauli and Celtic fans were waiting for them and it was the nazis who came off worst. As they approached the pub a big mob came out to meet them and pelted them with bottles and glasses. Some were pursued and beaten, others attacked on their way out of the vicinity by anti-fascists on their way in. Once again Celtic fans had shown their commitment to anti-fascism.

## NEIGHBOURS

75 St. Pauli fans from Hamburg visited Glasgow in mid-October as the guests of Celtic Anti-Fascists and TAL fanzine. The weekend was very successful with other fans travelling from Hamburg and Berlin. The 75 on the bus from Hamburg included a group of fans from Rostock in the east, a city with more than its fair share of fascist problems. As well as attending Celtic's match against Motherwell, the St. Pauli fans were made welcome on their first night by members

of the Govan Emerald Celtic Supporters Club. On Saturday around 500 people attended a party organised by TAL and the South West Support Group, which went brilliantly. Lots of interest in AFA and Celtic Anti-Fascists was shown by the amount of merchandise that was being snapped up. A totally successful and enjoyable weekend was had by both the St. Pauli and the Celtic fans, united in anti-fascism.



## IT'S CATCHING

In April, three members of RASH (Red and Anarchist Skinheads) were arrested at the Meadowlands Arena in New Jersey (USA) after a confrontation with boneheads at a soccer game. As people were leaving the game members of RASH noticed a group of 5-6 boneheads, some of them wearing swastikas. RASH militants approached the boneheads to confront them about the swastikas. A fight broke out and the boneheads beat a hasty retreat towards the parking lot, licking their wounds. As the vanload of RASH members were waiting in traffic, the police stopped them and made them get out. The boneheads drove by and identified them to the police, at which point the police made 3 arrests. In addition to the criminal charges, 10 people are banned from the Meadowlands permanently. RASH are still working out their overall legal and political strategy. They need your support to help pay for legal and organising costs. They are also seeking support from soccer supporters organisations. Write for more information or send contributions to:

RASH,  
PO Box 365, Canal Street Station,  
New York, NY 10013, USA

## OUT NOW!

**RED ATTITUDE**  
Man. Utd. anti-fascist fanzine  
Issue 10. £1.00 from:  
Red Attitude,  
PO Box 83, SWDO,  
Manchester, M15 5NJ.  
Cheques payable to 'Red Attitude'.

## REVIEWS



### GRAFFITI TONGUE

Christy Moore

Grapevine Records - CD/Cass/LP - £12.99

A new Christy Moore album is always awaited with a certain amount of expectation and must be said, rarely disappoints. With his new offering, *Graffiti Tongue*, the outcome was less certain with this being the first album that has been self-produced and entirely written or co-written by himself.

Christy Moore, whether on record or in live performance has always included a whole range of political songs among his repertoire. Of particular interest to FT readers is his interpretation of a famous anti-fascist poem: "Phyllis McGee was a woman I knew who died a few years ago. She sent me this card and on it were the words of a man who was a victim of the nazis. His name was Pastor Niemoller. The song was inspired by that card and its about what happens if we remain silent. Its a horrible subject, but I need to remember that silence is a dangerous thing. We cannot observe things in silence because the consequence of observing the suffering of others in silence is that we become victims ourselves."

This is another powerful recording from Christy which will not disappoint any of his legion of fans and sees him remain firmly at the top of his field. Any AFA members uninitiated in the Christy Moore back catalogue should pick up the *Ride On* album which contains one of the all time great anti-fascist anthems 'Viva La Quinta Brigada', penned by Christy in tribute to his fellow countrymen who fought and died in the International Brigades.

### BETTER READ THAN DEAD

Various artists

Benefit for AK Press

CD/LP £12.95/£9.95

AK Press are in the words of their own press release "an anarchist publishing company and distributor of left-wing extremist reading matter" and that includes our very own esteemed organ...Fighting Talk! With a whole number of progressive and left bookshops closing down in recent years the work of people such as AK has become all the more important.

The proceeds from this particular venture "will go to help AK Press continue its selfless battle against the multitude of fascists, racists, misogynists, imperialists, homophobes and other right-wing bastards!" So there you have it.

The album includes previously unreleased or live tracks (twenty two in all) from the likes of NOFX, Napalm Death, The Levellers, Propagandhi, and Wayne Kramer. Amongst the highlights for this listener included

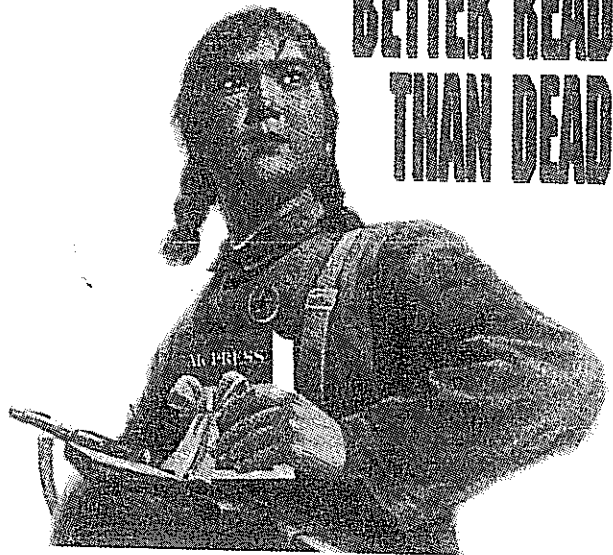
another one of Snuff's natty little covers, this time 'I Can See Clearly Now' gets the treatment, and a live demo of 'Gonna Be A Lynchin' by the gone, but not forgotten, Beggars ITA. But it was a version of Abba's 'Waterloo' by Bjorn Baby Bjorn that really had me chuckling to myself and reminiscing back to a certain day in September 1992!

Also included is an enhanced CD-ROM track (Macintosh only) which contains the full AK catalogue, which is also printed in the double gatefold of the LP.

Buy this album and support the publishers that support you.

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## BETTER READ THAN DEAD



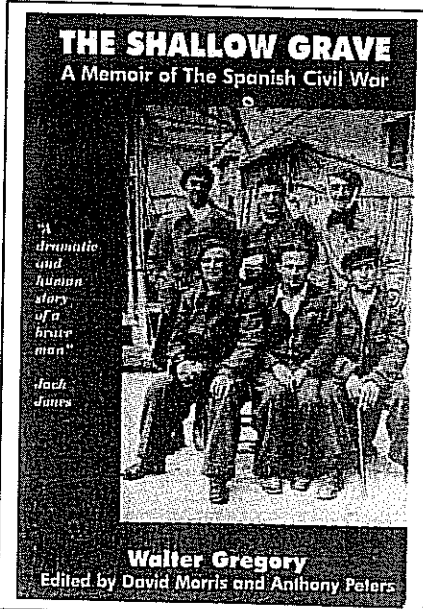
### SHALLOW GRAVE - A Memoir of the Spanish Civil War

Walter Gregory

Published by Five Leaves

Publications. £6.99

Walter Gregory grew up in Lincoln and Nottingham during the 1920s and 30s,



and like so many others became unemployed. First joining the National Unemployed Workers Movement and then the Communist Party, he watched the growth of fascism in Europe. He became active in the fight against Mosley's Blackshirts, getting injured when he was part of an anti-fascist 'squad' that attacked a fascist meeting in Nottingham.

He travelled to Spain in 1936 to fight with the British Battalion of the International Brigade. He was wounded in battle three times, captured, sentenced to death, caught trying to escape, but finally released in early 1939 and deported to France.

The book is well written, describing events in great detail, never boring, and with the touches of humour that you find in real life. Throughout the book background information is provided to give the reader an overall picture of what was happening in the war. This book does not provide a political analysis of the Spanish Civil War and the forces involved, but it does tell the dramatic story of one man's involvement.



## REVIEWS

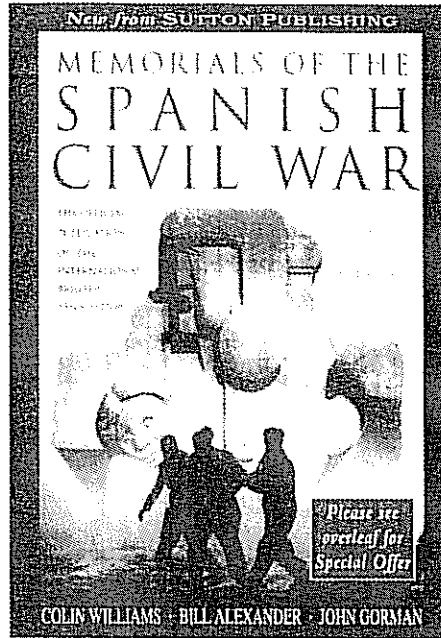
### MEMORIALS OF THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

The official publication of the International Brigades Association. Colin Williams, Bill Alexander, John Gorman  
Sutton Publishing Ltd. £17.99

This book has been produced to mark the 60th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War and the sacrifices made by the men and women who left these shores to fight fascism as part of the International Brigades, many of whom were never to return.

The book combines pictures of the memorials, from massive sculptures in city centres to a simple plaque in a town council chamber, with informative text about the memorials and the volunteers who fought and died from each particular area. No memorial has ever been erected under the initiative of

any government in this country, Labour or Conservative.



In all there are fifty five memorials included as well as sections on banners, memorials in Spain, 'where did they die?', and the Roll of Honour that lists all of the 526 men and women who fell in Spain. There is also a brief history of the war illustrated with archive photos.

My only real gripe with the book centres around the choice of Michael Foot (ex-Labour leader) to write the forward. In praising the then Prime Minister of Spain, Felipe Gonzalez, as a great defender of freedom, he overlooks the fact that his government ran the state sponsored death squad 'G.A.L.' during the 80s, torturing and executing Basque militants.

Still, this is an extremely well produced book and if you can afford the price well worth getting. The book is designed as a tribute to the International Brigaders, and in this it succeeds.

### THE ANARCHIST RESISTANCE TO FRANCO and THE UNSUNG STRUGGLE: The assassination attempt on Franco from the air (first in a series).

Both from The Kate Sharpley Library, BM Hurricane, London WC1N 3XX. £1.00 inc P&P, £1.50 IMO overseas

The Kate Sharpley Library has produced a number of pamphlets over the years but the two above share an obvious connection to this issue of FT.

The Anarchist Resistance to Franco is actually a catalogue from a photographic exhibition shown in Spain. Alongside portrait pictures of various individuals involved in the Libertarian Resistance of the 1939-51 years is a brief history detailing their lives and deaths in the struggle against Franco. The introduction states - "Any small selection of names among hundreds of thousands of victims is arbitrary. All could be remembered but materially it is impossible. With the presentation of some names we would like to remember all those who fell in the struggle against tyranny, in defence of freedom." - and it serves its purpose surprisingly well. Although this is an Anarchist pamphlet detailing the contribution of Anarchist militants, it still serves as a good little general introduction into the spirit of the Resistance and the nature of the campaign - and those mugshots (don't ask me why) seem strangely familiar.

The Assassination Attempt on Franco from the Air is the story of a group of Anarchist

militants who tried to do exactly what it says in the title. Three of them flew across the Pyrenees, in a light aircraft they'd nicknamed "the push-bike", armed with twenty shrapnel bombs and four incendiaries, with the intention of ruining a regatta held in San Sebastian, 1948, presided over by the General himself and a large number of his aides. The mission didn't come off (obviously), but the story and the daring of the characters involved makes for a cracking little read. There's plenty of detail, and the style is that of a personal account, rather than an academic one. For instance, as the "push-bike" nears the drop-zone things are getting a touch surreal :

" The nose of the plane was in line with Monte Igueldo. Primitivo cut their speed and lost height until he was just 300 metres off the ground, hoping to mingle with the other light aircraft which would be overflying La Concha Bay. 'Valencia' cried Ortiz 'give me a hand'. The safety straps holding fast the bombs had come loose and El Valencia, who was quite short, had to indulge in some tricky acrobatics before he could clamber into the back seat... It all happened

very fast. El Valencia, thanks to his acrobatics, was halfway into the rear of the plane.

'Let's go to it!' cried the pilot, his gaze fixed on the coast..."

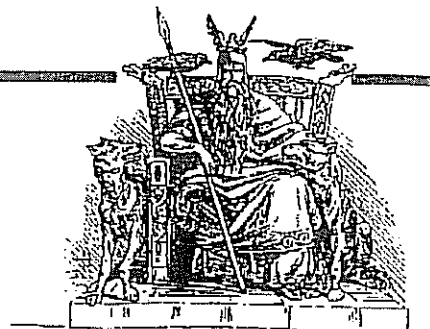
To find out what happened next you'll have to get yourself a copy.

There is a small criticism of the last pamphlet in that a tribute to the anti-fascists who fought at Waterloo (44 years to the day after the attempt on Franco's life), neglects to mention that AFA were the ones who organised it. It's easy to see how this happened, and we've spoken to the Kate Sharpley Library, who assure us there was no sectarianism or malice involved. We were satisfied, so don't let that put you off.



Francisco Franco (centre) during the Civil War.

# A VIEW FROM VALHALLA



Issue 15 of *Fighting Talk* sees AFA mole and regular contributor, Dan Woinsaiker back from his latest undercover operation. He's wondering if C18 can regain their slippery hold of the Fascist music scene, and whether he'll be slippery enough to get back into his chainmail tights now he's finally got them off (see below).

I have been covering the ongoing problems in Blood & Honour since 1994, when the first murmurings against C18's takeover started appearing. In the last issue I pointed out that the B&H/C18 monopoly on the lucrative nazi music scene was now openly challenged and the two sides are starting to take shape. The influential magazines Resistance (USA) and Nordland (Sweden) are openly hostile to C18, but the thing that seems to have upset C18 more than anything is the defection of English Rose and Squadron. Both bands were popular on the B&H circuit and they are using that popularity to stir things up, privately telling anyone who will listen that C18 are "pathetic".

B&H/C18 band No Remorse replied with the production of their own newsletter, and most of it is devoted to slagging off C18's enemies. They've even printed photographs of their opponents, including members of Squadron, English Rose, and Paul Burnley (former B&H boss). Recent police raids on C18 members are blamed on Brad Hollanby (of Squadron) and come with the warning, "the best form of defence is attack AND ATTACK WE WILL! HAIL C18!". Brad is also accused of setting up Browning for arrest when he went to collect a load of B&H CDs. Browning and Sargent's subsequent court case at the Old Bailey, which keeps getting put back, will now apparently take place in December. Martin Cross, the B&H activist and Razor's Edge guitarist, will be joining the other two in the dock as he has now also been charged.

Apart from denouncing all the people opposed to them, and issuing endless threats, C18 are keen to promote themselves as an active and effective National Socialist organisation in order to win back some credibility. As well as stealing all the money and grassing

everyone up, their opponents are also accused of not doing anything politically. Mind you, C18 are selling the Resistance produced Ian Stuart tribute CD featuring none other than Squadron and Paul Burnley - so there's a bit of political integrity for you! Obviously they'll be sending all the money on to George Burdi at Resistance, won't they?! Apart from that minor distraction, C18 are keen to point out that they have rescued B&H and "smashed the reds"! The two most recent examples of this that C18 highlight are an apparent 'invasion' of Manchester (?) and chasing off the opposition when they tried to attack a "nationalist" march in London. Now, the Manchester operation remains a complete mystery to me, but presumably the "nationalist" march refers to the Loyalist demonstration in London in April. Well, there was a certain amount of chasing, but I think C18 should check with their Loyalist friends as to who was chasing who! I've heard that the Loyalists weren't too impressed with C18's security on the day.

One thing C18 did do was attack The Business gig in London's Kings Cross during the summer. Various suggestions have been put forward as to why The Business were attacked, and there may be some truth in the suggestion that it was because they have played an anti-racist gig in Europe, but it seems more likely that C18 felt they needed to prove they were still active and a force to be reckoned with. A small gig in Central London with little chance of any opposition obviously presented an easy opportunity. Of the 100 people in the gig nearly half were fascists, which shows that some considerable effort was put into the operation, and I am reliably informed that C18 regulars like Sargent, Browning, and O'Connell were running the show. When Sargent arrived he went round the pub pointing out the people he considered targets. After the support band had finished the fascists made their move, attacking members of the audience and Business' security, smashing equipment and wrecking the pub. Although the band themselves were drinking in the pub C18 didn't touch them.

When a similar attack was made on the Upstarts in 1988 the band and AFA worked out a plan that meant that the

Upstarts were able to continue playing when they wanted to. The Business' reaction was to cancel the rest of the tour and bury their heads in the sand - refusing to even talk to AFA. Giving in to fascist violence is exactly what C18 wanted - and bearing in mind what happened with the Upstarts, completely unnecessary. The fascists must not be allowed to decide who plays or not.

Another interesting development involves No Remorse again, a band with a particular allegiance to C18, as the guitarist is Sargent's right-hand man Will Browning. The new No Remorse CD, 'Barbecue in Rostock', has moved B&H in a new direction with its completely over the top lyrics. In the past most B&H bands followed Ian Stuart's lead and wrote about Viking warriors and flags fluttering in the breeze, but 'Barbecue in Rostock' changes all that. As the band say themselves, "what's the point talking about smashing ZOG (Zionist Occupation Government) if you're too scared to even break the Government's race laws?" and the "lyrics are guaranteed to incite racial hatred". One example of the lyrics is the chorus from 'The Niggers Came Over' - "Shoot the Niggers! The Pakis too! Hang the Reds! And we'll gas the Jews!" The rest of the CD is full of the same, and the music's shit too. But the point is, what are C18 trying to achieve by doing this? Obviously breaking the law and then challenging the State to arrest you is designed to get people sent down and so create martyrs for 'the cause'. But then what? There seems to be something strange going on here, don't you think?



AFA mole Dan Woinsaiker (undercover).

# FIGHTING TALK BACK

## LIP SERVICE?

Dear London AFA,

We were somewhat bemused to see space in Issue 14 of Fighting Talk given over not to attacking fascists but to attacking ourselves.

We thought Anti-Fascist Action was a broad based movement and were disappointed to see the pages of Fighting Talk being used to attack a long term player in the anti-fascist movement. The successes of AFA - Waterloo 1992, Bow Road 1994, etc, have involved people of varying political viewpoints - Anarchists, Marxists, Republicans - fighting together to no platform fascists. Sectarianism therefore can only hinder the anti-fascist cause.

AFA has correctly stressed the danger of a resurgence of fascist activity should a Labour government come to power. Given this it is all the more exasperating to see one section of the movement attack another.

Yours,  
London Class War

FT Reply: AFA is a broad based movement but London Class War took a decision some years ago not to be part of it. Their decision to produce 'Class War Hooliganz' stickers in the run up to Euro 96 got them some free publicity in the media, but because everyone knows it was just a gimmick it undermines the real hard work that is being done at football grounds around the country. As we said in the last issue, "you need more than a snappy soundbite to fight fascism at football". Now that Euro 96 is over,

and 'Class War Hooliganz' never materialised, what is Class War going to do at football now? If we don't criticise people when they promise everything and deliver nothing then we will be tarred with the same brush. AFA believes in setting the agenda, and to do that takes hard work and a long term strategy. The work that has been done by AFA at Celtic is a good example of what can be achieved; racist elements at Parkhead have been confronted head on, anti-fascist propaganda has been produced and distributed to supporters, an organisation 'Celtic Anti-Fascists' has been set up so supporters can get involved, real links have been made with other anti-fascist supporters in Europe (eg. St.Pauli in Germany), fascists have been fought at home and abroad, socials put on, money raised, etc.,etc.

Criticism is essential when mistakes are made. We use our work at Celtic as a direct alternative to the sloganeering of 'Class War Hooliganz'. This is nothing to do with sectarianism, its about different approaches to anti-fascism, and as other Class War members who are in AFA around the country could tell London Class War - it works.



## TONGUE-TIED

Dear Fighting Talk,

The BNP have recently filmed part of their (possible) General Election broadcast outside Stepney Green School in London's East End. As an AFA supporter I'm sure you would agree the best remedy for this would have been a radical interpretation of the 'director's cut' and no more filming. As it was all we got was a Labour Councillor complaining in the local paper that the BNP filming outside the school was "like stalking". What an insult to anti-fascism (and the victims of stalking). All manner of politicians film outside schools but don't get accused of stalking. What is it with liberals that they can't criticise fascists politically? They are always "violent thugs" or "evil", and now they're "stalkers". The fact is they are "fascists", which means they represent the ultimate form of reaction. You can call them the "class enemy", "ultra-conservatives", "a razor in the bosses hands", whatever, but let's keep it political.

To make matters worse she then goes on to say that "in Tower Hamlets Bengalis out perform white children" - like the answer to racism is to take sides amongst the different races that make up the working class. The BNP use racism to divide us - and if we are divided we aren't strong enough to change things for the better. Fascism is a purely anti-working class ideology and until we can get the argument back to 'class' rather than 'race', the Right will remain in the driving seat.

Mr. E. Torr, London

## Easy to Swallow

Hello,

I used to be involved with my local AFA group, but for a variety of reasons drifted away some years ago. The recent anniversary of Cable Street and the BNP's plan to stand enough candidates to get a Party Political Broadcast have combined to get me off my arse.

I don't have the time or energy to get into "active service" but I have got a bank account and have decided that the easiest thing to do would be to set up a standing order to your account. Please send me the relevant details.

N.P., London

FT Reply: This is what we want to hear! We urge other readers in the same position to follow this example.

# BEHIND ENEMY LINES



our message, to attract new recruits, to provide them with a sense of belonging, and to demoralise the opposition. The new methods required may best be described as political guerrilla warfare."

From this point on the article gets glossed over with Nick getting all excited about Guerrilla Warfare, even to the point where he compares the BNP's 'ambitious' plans to stand 50 candidates in the General Election to the North Vietnamese Army/Viet Cong 'Tet' offensive during the Vietnam War. The more serious point for militant anti-fascists, is that they are looking to outflank us, and believe that this is one way they can do so.

On a lighter note it was good to see a letter (two months later) in the October issue of *Spearhead* from ex-Cabin Boy/Mad Bomber Tony Lecomber. After (rather magnanimously) congratulating Griffin for "quite the best article he's written so far" in reference to the piece referred to above, he also warns:

*"One small point, however. This is not what most people perceive as the 'twin-track strategy'. That is quite different and involves the kind of swaggering machismo and associated violence which most British people find alien and abhorrent. It is not politics, it is a dead end suitable only for the creation of a street gang."*

Now I don't know about you, but this isn't the old pavement kisser I used to know. I'm not sure, but I'm wondering if what we have here is a White Racial Pacifist, Tony 'don't want any trouble lads' Lecomber. I'm sure AFA members will miss his athletic dives into the tarmac.

I can't finish this column without at least a small reference to Ms. Ellen Strachan, one of the best providers of pure insanity to the Aryan Race today. In the August 1996 edition of *Spearhead*, she deals with the question of white racial survival in an article entitled *Nature's Eternal Morality*. In this article she states, in all seriousness, that if we want to talk about race, about evolution, about morals and ethics, then we need look no further than the vampire bat?:

*"A bat with a full stomach will regurgitate blood to another adult in the roost who has failed to feed. Usually, this is done for a close relative such as a sister, daughter or mother, but help is also given to less closely related companions who hang nearby."*

And apparently that's why white people help each other. I don't know about you, but I'm carrying round a crucifix and hanging some garlic on my bedroom door; just as a precaution.

Fighting Talk 15 finds Bill Gothrocks asking questions. Is Nick Griffin a Stalking Horse or a Cabin Boy? Is Tony Lecomber a pacifist? And is Ellen Strachan a descendant of Vlad the Impaler?

As the next General Election draws near, *Spearhead* - the organ of the BNP's Leader, John Tyndall - is labouring to get itself upbeat. Since the summer, every issue has contained at least one article of a 'positive' nature, aimed at rallying the ranks of White Racial Nationalism on to new and greater heights. Nick Griffin - the man tipped as a Stalking Horse for the BNP leadership by everyone from C18 to Searchlight - has been making much of the running.

Griffin is now referred to in *Spearhead* as 'Regular Staff Contributor', which might be of interest for two reasons. The first is that Tyndall loves titles, a read through *Spearhead* will very rarely reveal a BNP name without a title before it - National Organiser Richard Edmonds, Prospective Candidate John Peacock, Local Organiser So-and-So - maybe a translation from the Tyndalesque is something like Haven't Given Him a Proper Job Yet Nick Griffin. The second interesting point though, is he's obviously just that little bit further into bed with the old Athlete, hence the insertion of 'Staff' between 'Regular' and 'Contributor'. There's also a further clue that Nick might be reaching full 'Cabin Boy' status, with the somewhat conspicuous absence in the pages of *Spearhead*, of the previous occupant of that position, Tony Lecomber.

In the August 1996 edition of *Spearhead*, Griffin poses the question 'Will no-one rid us of these turbulent Reds?'; and of course, reckons he's supplied the answer. This isn't however, another one of those '5,000 stout types to clear the streets' articles which we've seen before, as that idea seemed to backfire a little. Instead Griffin is arguing for "political guerrilla warfare" against what he sees as the soft underbelly of Marxism and Liberalism: Political Correctness. Again before anybody sees 'Political Soldier' in all this, Nick's dropped that hot brick as well

(at least for the time being). He uses to illustrate the basis for his article, the following quote from the 'American White Majority Movement' magazine, *Instauration*, which when talking of the need to tackle the "P.C . Perverts" suggests the following:

*"Our most dangerous enemies have white faces and names like Smith and Jones. They are the ones who support affirmative action and race-mixing because it is the easy path to take. We must deal with these vermin with the utmost severity.... When they speak up at a school board meeting, they must be shouted down. They must be made to feel unwelcome in churches, clubs and sports leagues. You wouldn't invite a child molester to your house for a barbeque, so why stay on friendly terms with a man or woman who is working to wreck your country and your race, and in doing so leave your children without a future?...they must be made odious in the eyes of their neighbours."*

Griffin then takes up the argument, by saying that what is needed is confrontation. Not physical confrontation as such (at least in the short term), but 'hit-and-run' leafletting and demonstrations against things like the building of Mosques, the inclusion of Homosexuality in school sex education, the use of council money for advice centres for refugees, etc. His argument is running along the lines that while right-wing papers and Tory party Central Office staff complain of such things, BNP activists can show a capability to do something about them. This, he suggests, will have an added advantage for the BNP under current conditions:

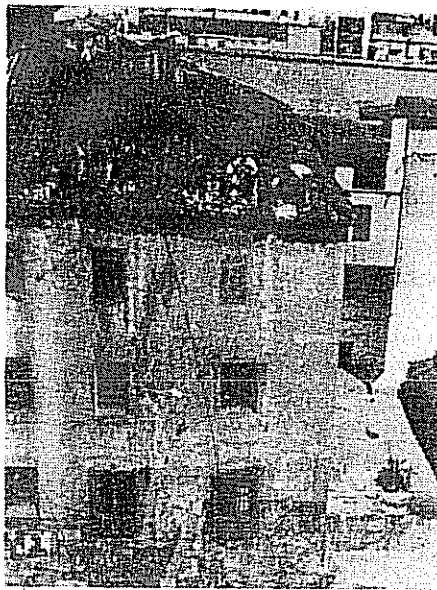
*"Twenty years ago or so, we could make our point to the public with large-scale marches, big meetings in public halls and similar activities. More recently though, bans by the authorities, police pressure and surveillance, Zionist and police threats against hall and hotel owners, and violence from the state's licensed Far Left boot-boys, have all combined to make such tactics largely ineffective under present conditions. We must therefore look for other ways in which to publicise*

# ANOTHER SPAIN

entrenched after Mussolini took power in 1922; by 1933 Hitler's nazis controlled Germany; in Britain Mosley's Blackshirts were attacking Jewish immigrants and the Left; in Ireland the Blueshirts represented the ultimate reaction. In Spain the situation was no different, and 60 years ago the struggle between the forces of Left and Right erupted into open warfare.

In this issue of *Fighting Talk* we feature a number of articles that look at events surrounding the Spanish Civil War/Revolution. The courage and commitment of the men and women who went to Spain to fight with the International Brigades is well known, and in an interview with a member of the Connolly Column we get an idea of what inspired the thousands of volunteers, who came from fifty two countries. Over 2,000 volunteers left Britain to fight fascism in Spain, over 500 were killed. Despite the important military role the International Brigades played in the actual war, they were not the driving force. There wouldn't have been a civil war if the armed workers' militias hadn't resisted the military coup in the first place. The militias, like AFA, were not fighting the fascists to maintain the status quo - they had their own radical agenda. The article *The People Armed* is all about this revolutionary movement and shows what the militants were fighting for, rather than just what they were fighting against.

Conventional history tends to be very black and white - there was a civil war, it lasted from 1936-1939, the fascists won, and that was the end of it. This isn't true. After the compromisers had sent the International Brigades home, and the war was lost, the people who had started the resistance to the fascists in the first place, the militant working class movement, carried on the fight. Despite the mass arrests, mass executions (over 200,000), and mass exodus of refugees, the Resistance fought on. This story is largely unknown but the two articles - *The Rattle of the Thompson Gun* and *Forgotten Heroes* - throw some light on this period. The reason this section of the magazine has been called *Another Spain* is partly because it shows what the militants were fighting for and also because it investigates some aspects of the struggle that aren't widely known.



*For many people the fight against fascism was part of a much more radical political agenda. The women's prison in Barcelona being destroyed, 1936.*

The capitalist crisis that gripped Europe in the 1920s and 30s saw strong working class movements threaten the established order in many countries - and fascism was unleashed as the cutting edge of counter-revolution. In Italy fascism was firmly

In 1931 the Spanish king was forced to stand down and retreat into exile, and a republic was established. The next five years saw the balance of power swing between the conservative reactionaries of the Spanish establishment and the progressive working class movement. In 1934 a working class uprising in Asturias was only defeated after the bloody intervention of the Spanish army.

In February 1936 the Popular Front (made up of liberal and left wing elements) was elected to govern Spain, which led to an increase of activity by working class militants and poor peasants. The rulers of Spain could see their power (and property) slipping away and on the 17th July a group of extreme right-wing Nationalist generals made their move, starting with a military rising in Morocco which spread immediately to the mainland. Working class militants armed themselves and the military coup was smashed in Barcelona and Madrid, although the generals' troops did seize large areas.

Initially the Nationalists put much emphasis on capturing the capital Madrid, but after failing to break



*Female soldiers on the Estremadura front, 1936.*



*The International Brigades' farewell parade through Barcelona in November 1938.*

through at the battles of Jarama (Feb.'37) and Guadalajara (March '37) Franco moved on to other priorities, launching his northern offensive against Asturias and the Basque country. This included the infamous destruction of Guernica in April '37 by German planes. The Republican army launched attacks on the Aragon Front in May 1937 to try and deflect Nationalist troops from their successful campaign in the north, but this failed and by August 1937 the Nationalists had conquered northern Spain and the Basque country. The Nationalists' air and artillery superiority, supplied by Hitler and Mussolini, was proving unstoppable, and by April 1938 Franco's forces reached the Mediterranean coast near Valencia, splitting the remaining Republican controlled area in half.

The last major military initiative by the Republican forces was at the battle of the Ebro (July - Nov.'38) but the Nationalist counter-attack was successful. In a failed attempt to get the German and Italian support withdrawn, the Republican government ordered the International Brigades to disband, and they left in November 1938. In January 1939 Barcelona fell, followed by Madrid in March. The Spanish Republican army unconditionally surrendered to Franco's fascist forces on 1st April 1939.

Throughout the war the role played by the international powers influenced the eventual outcome. If the war is seen as one between democracy and fascism, the western 'democracies' were noticeable by their absence. The Conservative government in Britain, with Labour support, was committed to a policy of non-intervention, as were the French, so in other words while

Franco received massive military aid from Germany and Italy the anti-fascist forces were starved of weapons. The reason is clear. The British and French governments feared a 'Red Spain' and wanted the strong Spanish working class movement smashed, and were determined to avoid confrontation with the fascist powers.

Italy and Germany exploited the situation fully, by the end of July 1936 Italian planes had already been supplied. In December '36 3,000 Italian Blackshirts arrived in Spain, and the number of Italian troops soon rose to 50,000. Hitler sent communications equipment, anti-aircraft guns, infantry, tanks, tank instructors and the most effective air group - the Condor Legion. Mexico and the Soviet Union were the only foreign source of arms to the

Spanish Republic, but Stalin's international manoeuvrings meant that by 1938 Soviet supplies started to dry up in line with the moves towards a German - Soviet non-aggression pact. For political reasons a lot of Soviet aid was withheld from the anarchists and the POUM, and the lack of military equipment is well illustrated by the fact that in the final Catalan offensive the anti-fascist forces only had 37,000 assorted rifles between them.

Apart from the militant anti-fascists of the Spanish working class and their supporters virtually everyone else was satisfied with the outcome of the war. Britain and France had managed to avoid getting drawn into a conflict with the Fascist Axis, who had gained valuable experience in perfecting the techniques of modern warfare, and capitalism was safely restored on the Spanish peninsula. The way the Spanish revolution was first isolated and then smashed leaves us with important lessons to be learnt today.



*The British Union of Fascists demonstrate against a Spanish Aid convoy, January 1939.*

# The Connolly Column

Mick O'Riordan was a young member of the Communist Party of Ireland when he went to Spain with the International Brigade. Here he describes the background which saw Irish fascists and anti-fascists mobilising around the events in Spain.

In Ireland the reaction to the Spanish war was to greet it as a crusade for religion. In 1934 we had the beginning of the Blueshirt movement, which took a great grip in the political life of the country. They were eventually defeated not by the government but by the Republican Movement, the Communist Party and other progressive groups who fought for possession of the streets and therefore dented the so called militancy of the Blueshirts. They were completely in accord with the fascist movements throughout Europe. When the Spanish war broke out in 1936 they immediately began to resurrect themselves and issued a call for volunteers to fight for Franco. O'Duffy was the leader of the Blueshirts, and the ex-Police chief who had been sacked by the De Valera government. He raised the cry for people to become involved in the crusade for religion in Spain. The initial appeal was greeted with 5,000 applications, eventually only 700-800 went to Spain. The leadership of the Blueshirts was composed of ex-officers of the old Free State army and were the core of fascism in Ireland and of the Irish assistance for Franco.

I was born in Cork city, my parents came from the Cork/Kerry border area. I was involved in Fianna Eireann, which was the youth branch of the Republican Movement. At one stage the man in charge of the Fianna was Frank Ryan, who later led the first Irish contingent of volunteers to Spain in 1936. I was involved from an early age in the question of resistance to the Blueshirts. Cork was a county which was dominated by whether you were a Blueshirt or an anti-Blueshirt, this was as a result of the question of Free State versus Republican ideology. When the Spanish War broke out I was 18 and I was immediately interested in the parallels with the war in Spain and with O'Duffy's Blueshirts. On the matter of creating a crusade for Spain there was another organisation called the Irish Christian Front. This used to have huge rallies, they never talked about

fascism or blueshirtism, they always talked about Christ the King and the so called horrible outrages against nuns and priests, church burnings, etc, in Spain. At the big meetings, when they had raised people to a certain degree of hysteria, they used to salute. It was not the salute the fascists used, but they raised their crossed hands over their heads in the form of a cross. That was clerical fascism, although not officially part of the catholic theology. They held many meetings and formed a pogrom type atmosphere.

The Communist Party was refounded in 1933 in Connolly House, which was burned to the ground by a pogrom incited against it. Religion was always used against anyone with left wing or communist ideas, they were regarded as a stereotype of the devil in all senses, physically, morally and intellectually. That was the atmosphere and when O'Duffy decided to organise a group for Spain there was reaction from the Communist Party first of all and from people in the Republican Congress, which was composed of left Irish Republicans. It was from these ranks that Frank Ryan came and took over the leadership of the first group to go to Spain. They went quietly enough but they released a manifesto which stated what their reasons were for going. *"The Irish contingent is a demonstration of revolutionary Ireland's solidarity with the gallant Spanish workers and peasants in their fight for freedom against Fascism. It aims to redeem Irish honour besmirched by the intervention of Irish fascism on the side of the Spanish fascist rebels. It is to aid the revolutionary movements in Ireland to defeat the fascist menace at home, and finally, and not least, to establish the closest fraternal bonds of kinship between the Republican democracies of Ireland and Spain."*

The attitudes of the Church would make your blood boil and your hair stand on your head. It was real incitement, as I look back on it it was frightening in many respects, like the Salem witchunts. Rumour mongering, admonitions' from the altar. When the nazis landed in Portugal at Lisbon they were greeted by the Dominican prior

of the Irish church, Fr. Paul O'Sullivan. He delivered the following address which was circulated by the Blueshirts at the time to guarantee their religious credentials. *"Never have we heard, even in the dark days of Nero, never even among the most barbarous hordes, that innocent children were cut to pieces, the bodies of the dead exhumed, insulted and profaned, you are going to fight these monsters who are more like demons let lose from Hell than mortal men. More fierce, more depraved, more godless, than Turks or Moslems."* This is interesting because one of the initial forces who fought for Franco were the Army of Africa, which was composed of Muslims and it was a contradiction that they were the people who were 'saving christianity'.

There were 145 Irish (anti-fascist) Volunteers, they were going from December 1936 until the last battle on the Ebro front in 1938, when we were repatriated by the Spanish government. 63 were killed in various battles. The first main battle in which a large number of Irishmen were killed was the Battle of Jarama in 1937. 19 of our people were killed, a large number of the international volunteers were killed in this fierce battle. The first group that went to Spain were called the James Connolly Section, they were with the 15th Brigade which was composed of English speaking people. After the first battles, there were so few left, there was no basis for the Connolly Column but the name was still retained and we are known as the Connolly Column. We named ourselves after Connolly because of adherence to his ideology and because he was a man who bore arms in defence of the working people.

Today, 60 years after the first International Brigades came to Madrid, there are only 5 left of the Irish who went to support the Spanish struggle. Time has taken its toll.

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For reasons of space we are unable to publish the whole interview. A full transcript is available by sending an S.A.E. to the AFA (Ireland) address.



A group of the Connolly Column, Jarama, 1937

# THE PEOPLE ARMED

## Women in the Spanish Revolution

The events of 1936 - 1939 brought massive upheavals to the daily lives of Spanish people. Working class women, in particular, participated in and witnessed great changes as the old order of Church and domestic culture were swept away by social revolution and war. Thousands of ordinary women were propelled by necessity into revolutionary events, from front line fighting and organising community defence to collectivising and running farmland and factories. When the revolution was crushed in 1939, the memories and bonds formed in the revolutionary period sustained them through long years of the Fascist dictatorship, in prison, exile, or continuing the struggle in the resistance movements.

Much has been written about the war and the political organisations during this period. References to ordinary women and their activities are scarce. We have used first hand and eye witness accounts as much as possible because these stories are best told by those who lived them.

### The July Uprising

Workers, unions, and working class communities were swift to react to the Fascist's attempted coup on 17/18 July 1936. Men and women in Barcelona slept in union halls during the week before the uprising, expecting a call to arms. In Catalonia, Madrid, and Asturias, men and women both young and old stormed the armouries to grab the weapons that the government had refused to provide them with. Cristina Piera entered the armoury at San Andreas at dawn on the 19th with her son and his friends in the FIJL (libertarian youth organisation) and was caught up in the excitement: "I woke up in the morning and heard that people were in the armoury...so I went there...everybody went...I took a pistol and two ramrods (for rifles) what I could carry. They had gunpowder there too...Even me, with the little I knew, and could do, I was there. People took arms and ammunition, and I took what I could."

Enriqueta Rovira, a young woman of 20, jumped the first train back to Barcelona when she heard the news: "Most of the action was in the centre of Barcelona. I had a pistol...and I was prepared to use it. But they soon said no...I didn't know how to use it and there were companeros without arms. So they sent me - and all the women, all families - to build barricades. We also took care of provisions. Women in each barrio (district) organised that, to make sure that there would be food for the men...Everyone did something."



Women were at a disadvantage in having no experience of weapons handling. In the heat of the battle and with limited arms it was only logical that guns went to those who already knew how to use them. But in building the barricades women continued to play a vital role. A group of five or six militant women set about fortifying one of the city's most elegant buildings, "...when the (CNT) companeros returned - victorious, of course - (from storming the military barracks at Atarazanas, at the foot of the Ramblas) and saw how beautiful it was, they took it over as the casa CNT-FAI." (Soledad Estorach). Other women took to the rooftops with loudspeakers, calling on the soldiers to take off their uniforms (!) and join the people.

The Fascist uprising was crushed in Barcelona, but the workers knew that this was only the beginning. While the government urged people to stay at home rather than actively defend the city and rely upon the notorious Guardia Civil (who later used their rifle butts to disperse



Come & have a go if you think you're hard enough...

demonstrations of Barcelona women against rising food prices), Miguel Garcia and others were involved in efforts to organise a people's army:

"...But by this time every man and woman in Barcelona knew that we had stormed the heavens. The generals would never forgive us for what we had done. We had humiliated and defeated the Army, we - an 'unorganised, indisciplined rabble.' We had altered the course of history. If Fascism won, we knew that we would not be spared. Mothers trembled for their small children. When the news came from the South that the invading rebels were using Moorish troops to put whole towns to the sword, many of these women, even elderly ones, struggled and fought to obtain a rifle so that they could take part in the defence of their homes. Indomitable, inscrutable, they sat together in pairs, chatting among cronies, with a rifle across their lap, ready for Franco and his Moors 'and if Hitler comes, him too!'"

Garcia goes on to describe how old scores were settled as women discovered new freedoms: "In Barcelona, down in the slum quarters of the Barrio Chino, the whores were carried away by the general enthusiasm. They made short work of the ponces and pistoleros who had preyed upon them for so long. 'Away with this life, we will fight on the side of the people!' they cried. It was a great joke to the foreign journalists, who regarded the unfortunate women as less than human and anything they did ridiculous of itself...In fact, they volunteered to fight in the front lines. Later, this proved an embarrassment. Gradually their units were disbanded..." Some say that they inflicted more damage than enemy bullets at the front line, as companeros succumbed to a variety of interesting diseases!

While some women headed for the front with the newly formed militia columns, others were widely involved in the social revolution back home, requisitioning buildings for communal eating halls, schools, or hospitals, or collecting and distributing food and other supplies. Women took manufactured goods to barter with farmers in rural areas in exchange for food. Taxis and trams were repainted with revolutionary insignia as communities brought local services back under their control. "The feelings we had then were very special. It was very beautiful. There was a feeling of - how shall I say it? - of power, not in the sense of domination, but in the sense of things being under our control, if under anyone's. Of possibility. A feeling that we could together really do something." (Enriqueta Rovira).



*"We took the first steps...towards emancipation...we couldn't take the 'giant steps' because of the war and the exile, which cut our struggle short... Our children have to be the pacesetters for the future...But our memories, such beautiful memories, of that struggle so hard and so pure... (Azucena Barba).*

Other commentators noted the self-assurance of Barcelona women in August 1936, previously unusual for Spanish women in public. There were also conspicuous changes in Madrid. Young working class women took to the streets in their hundreds, collecting money for the war effort, enjoying their new found liberty to walk up and down the streets, talking without inhibitions to passers by, foreigners, and militia men. This contrasts strongly with accounts of nationalist areas. For example, in Vigo, under nationalist occupation, it was unusual to even see a woman out on the streets.

## In the Front Line

Despite traditional disadvantages women continued to take part in actual combat against the Fascists. *Mujeres Libres* supported them in Madrid by setting up a shooting range and target practice for women "disposed to defend the capital" while the Catalonia group's "War Sports" section offered: "preliminary preparation for women so that, if it should be necessary, they could intervene effectively, even on the battlefield." It was.

Armed women were always most noticeable in urban defense, when the Fascists threatened cities like Madrid. But during the first year of the war women also served as front line combatants with the militia columns, in addition to nursing and, in the usual militia system, working alongside the rural population to ensure a common food supply. Their bravery at the front cannot be over-stated because, if captured alive, they inevitably faced rape, mutilation and death. It was only after the battle of Guadalajara, in May 1937, that women were asked to leave the front, as the government demanded incorporation of the militia into regular army units.

Donald Renton, an English volunteer with the International Brigades in Figueras in November 1936 recalls the impact of seeing militia women: "While we had often talked about the role to be played by women in the general struggle, there for the first time we saw the militia women, comrades who like ourselves were either going to have or already had had, first line experience in the battle against the fascist enemy. These were wonderful comrades, people who had - so far as I was concerned at least - a very, very powerful inspirational effect on arriving inside Spain itself."

Foreign women also served in the international sections of the columns. Abel Paz refers to four women "nurses" in the "International Group" of the Durruti Column. They were captured by Moors in a fierce encounter at Perdiguera. As prisoners of the fascists they were as good as dead: "Georgette, militant of the *Revue Anarchiste*, Gertrude, a young German woman of the POUM who liked to fight with the anarchists, and two young girls whose names haven't been recorded in the war chronicles. Durruti was very close to all of them....and he was deeply moved by these deaths. The death of Georgette, who was a sort of mascot of the Column, filled the militiamen with rage, particularly the "Sons of Night". She had carried out many surprise attacks on the enemy rearguard with the latter. They vowed to avenge her and during a number of nights made fierce



Emancipation by dynamite...

attacks against the Francoists." The "Sons of the Night" were a specialised group operating behind enemy lines - women were not just at the front as nurses.

In the defence of Madrid in early November 1936, women were also prominent in the fighting. The Women's Battalion fought before Segovia Bridge. At Gestafe, in the centre of the Northern Front, women were under fire all morning and were among the last to leave. Fighting with the Italians of the International Column in Madrid was a 16 year old girl from Ciudad Real, who had joined up after her father and brother were killed. She had the same duties as the men, shared their way of life, and was said to be a crack shot.



Militia women receiving weapons training

Back in Madrid itself, women were organising in defence of the city, building barricades, providing communication services, and organising, through local committees, the distribution of food and ammunition to the barricades and throughout the city. Collective meals, crèches, and laundry facilities were set up. Women also played a major role in anti-aircraft observation and surveillance of suspected fascist sympathisers.

An International Brigade volunteer, Walter Gregory, who fought in Madrid in July 1937 recalls that: "A frequent sight in the area of Las Cibeles was of the Women's Militia coming on and off duty. In twos and threes they would make their way down the Gran Via which ultimately led to the University City and the Madrid front line. The Gran Via was too often shelled to be used by vehicles, nor would the women have risked marching down its length in formation. In small groups and chattering away to each other, they looked very like women the world over, and only their dishevelled khaki uniforms after several nights in the trenches marked them out as being something special. These brave girls were such a common sight that they did not attract comment, nor did they appear to want to. Yet Madrid remained the only place in Spain where I saw women in the front line, although it must be remembered that the first British subject killed in the war was Felicia Brown, who died on the Aragon Front as early as 25/8/1936." Felicia was caught by machine gun fire while attempting to blow up a Fascist munitions train.

During the bitter battle at Jarama in 1937, another International Brigader Tom Clarke, described the courage of a small group of Spanish women: "I remember there was a bit of a retreat. There was a rumour round... and they started retreating. We'd gone back a bit, and some of them were actually running. And here we came across three women who were sitting behind a machine gun just past where we were, Spanish women. I saw them looking at us. I don't know whether it shamed us or what. But these women - they sat there... We sort of stabilised the line."

They were certainly an eye-opener for foreign men! Borkenau describes a lone militia woman serving with a POUM column: "She was not from Barcelona, but a native of Galicia (who had)...followed her lover to the Front. She was very good looking but no special attention was given to her by the militia men, for all of them knew that she was bound to her lover by a link which is regarded among the revolutionaries as equal to marriage. Every single militia man, however, was visibly proud of her for the courage she seems to have displayed in staying in an advanced position under fire with only two companions. 'Was it

## ANOTHER SPAIN

an unpleasant experience?' I asked. 'No, solo me da el entusiasmo' (to me it is only inspiring) replied the girl with shining eyes, and from her whole bearing I believed her. There was nothing awkward about her position among the men. One of them, who was playing an accordion, started *la Cucaracha*, and she immediately began the movements of the dance, the others joining in the song. When this interlude was over, she was again just a comrade amongst them."

By late December 1937 there were still women serving in the militias, but their numbers were diminishing fast. Orwell noticed that, by this time, (male) attitudes towards women had changed, citing an example of militia men having to be kept out of the way while women were doing weapons drill, because they tended to laugh at the women and put them off. However, if women were becoming less active on the front line, this was not the case elsewhere.

### Mujeres Libres

There were a number of womens' journals and groups in revolutionary Spain, including Anarchist, Socialist, and Communist organisations, which also had their own women's and youth sections. Because of the information available concerning its role, this article concentrates on the activities of the anarchist *Mujeres Libres*.

In the years prior to the revolution, women active in the anarcho-sindicalist movement had begun organising and meeting, preparing the groundwork for *Mujeres Libres* (Free Women) - a local, regional, and national network of women which grew to over 20,000 strong. It played a vital role, not only in the war against Fascism, but in building the foundations of the new libertarian society which its members hoped to create.

Anarchist women had been actively organising and promoting a women's network since 1934. Despite their involvement with and commitment to the existing networks of unions, *ateneos* (storefront schools/cultural centres), and youth groups, women were finding themselves always in a minority and without the full equality and respect which they demanded from their (male) comrades.

In late 1934 a group of Barcelona women met to overcome these problems and encourage greater activism among existing CNT women: "What would happen is that women would come once, maybe even join. But they would never be seen again. So many compañeras came to the conclusion that it might be a good idea to start a separate group for these women...we got concerned about all the women we were losing...In 1935, we sent out a call to all women in the libertarian



Militia Women on guard duty

movement." (Soledad Estorach). They organised *guarderías volantes* (flying day-care centres), offering childcare to women wanting to serve as union delegates and attend evening meetings.

Meanwhile, Madrid women, calling themselves *Mujeres Libres*, were trying to develop women's social consciences, skills, and creative abilities. Towards the end of 1936, the two groups merged as *Agrupación Mujeres Libres*. The initiative was met with enthusiasm but there was also scepticism. Was this a "separatist" group? Would they encourage women to see liberation in terms of access



Militia men & women dancing during a lull in the fighting

to education and professional jobs, like middle-class Spanish "feminists"? Far from it. "The intention that underlay our activities was much broader: to serve a doctrine, not a party, to empower women to make of themselves individuals capable of contributing to the structuring of the future society, individuals who have learned to be self-determining, not to

follow blindly the dictates of any organisation". (Federación Nacional (M.L.) Barcelona 1938)

Responding to some middle class American feminists' attempts to claim *Mujeres Libres* as their political ancestors, or to criticise them for failing to achieve "sexual equality", Susceso Portales, (a CNT and FIJL activist who joined *Mujeres Libres* in central Spain in 1936), states their position: "We are not - and we were not then - feminists. We were not fighting against men. We did not want to substitute a feminist hierarchy for a masculine one. Its necessary to work, struggle together because if we don't, we'll never have a social revolution. But we needed our own organisation to struggle for ourselves."

These were women who had as their goal a complete social and political revolution. Their means of achieving this was to ensure that women were included and preparing to be included at every step. By July 1936, a network of anarchist women activists had been established for some time, ready and able to participate in the July events, and encourage other women to take part in creating the new society.

### Secciones de Trabajo

*Mujeres Libres* ran training programmes for new workers in co-operation with the local unions. Their *Secciones de Trabajo* developed apprenticeship programmes, bringing women into traditionally male factories and workplaces, improving skills and participation, and equalising paylevels to increase women's independence. "The *secciones de trabajo* (labour sections) were probably the most important activities. We started in that area immediately, because it was essential to get women out of the home. Eventually there were *Mujeres Libres* groups in almost all the factories." (Soledad Estorach)

Labour sections were organised specific to trades or industries at local, regional, and national levels, with the co-operation of the relevant CNT unions. From July 1936 onwards, women rushed to fill new factory jobs in the chemical and metallurgical industries. By September 1936 *Mujeres Libres* had 7 labour Sections. In Madrid and Barcelona women ran much of the public transport system. Pura Prez Arcos described her

elation at being one of the first group of women licensed to drive trams in Barcelona: "They (the Transport Workers Union) took people on as apprentices, mechanics, and drivers, and really taught us what to do. If you could only have seen the faces of the passengers (when women began serving as drivers), I think the compañeros on transport, who were so kind and co-operative towards us, really got a kick out

of that". In the Aragon collectives the first delegates to the village committees were women. Here women were running the villages on a day to day basis anyway, since the village men were often away tending the flocks (no change there then!).

The *secciones* also set up childcare facilities at workplaces, arguing that the responsibility for children belonged to the community as a whole. They encouraged this as a widespread practice and produced booklets explaining how to set these up in other areas.

In Catalonia union organisations collectivised virtually all production, drawing on a long history of workers' organisation and struggle. Industries and workplaces were reorganised to reflect the needs of the people who worked in them. Recreation centres for workers and their families were built by timber and construction workers; churches were requisitioned to provide day-care centres and schools for children. The mostly female textile industries were collectivised, abolishing piecework, while the CNT was active in organising homeworkers, bringing them back into the factories to receive a daily wage.

## Education

However, years of tradition and inexperience of workplace or political activism would not disappear overnight. *Mujeres Libres* saw one of its major tasks as developing women's confidence and skills to speak at meetings, take full part in discussions and debates in village committees, factories, etc., and put themselves forward as delegates.

Programmes developed and implemented included basic literacy and numeracy, mechanics, business, sewing, agriculture, childcare, health, typing, languages, history, union organisation, general culture, and economics. *Mujeres Libres* set up farm schools for women who had left rural areas to enter domestic service in the cities, to enable them, if they wanted to, to return to their villages and participate in collectivised farming. They operated on both a city-wide basis, and in individual districts, running day and night classes for all age groups, also encouraging women who studied to take their new skills with them to hospitals, battlefronts, and other areas and pass these on to others. Members also set up libertarian schools and universities in buildings requisitioned from or abandoned by the Church and bourgeoisie.

"By work and with arms we women defend the peoples freedom"  
8th month of the Revolution



## Family & Healthcare

Responsibility for nursing, healthcare, and child education had traditionally been held by the Church. *Mujeres Libres* were committed to bringing these back into community control, developing libertarian practices, and distributing information about contraception, pregnancy, child development, and parenting through their journals and a range of pamphlets. Their attempts to meet health care needs and educate women for motherhood went beyond the written word. Within the first days of the revolution, Terrassa activists set up a nurses' school and an emergency medical clinic to treat those injured in the fighting, later creating Terrassa's first maternity clinic. Barcelona MLs ran a lying-in hospital with birth and postnatal care for women and babies, and its own health education programmes.

## Sexual Equality

Spanish anarchists - both men and women - had promoted sexual liberation for many years prior to the revolution. Now they were active in distributing information on sex and sexuality, contraception, sexual freedom, and the replacement of legal and religious marriages with "free love" - voluntary relationships which could be terminated at will by either partner. Legal marriage ceremonies continued on many collectives, because people enjoyed it as a festive occasion. Comrades went through the procedures, later destroying the documentary proof as part of the celebration! The revolution enabled thousands to experience some degree of liberation in their personal relationships. Women felt able to refuse offers of marriage without causing offence to male friends or their families. It was a time of openness and experimentation. The double standard, of course, did not disappear, let alone vanish overnight. Many men used "free love" as a license to extend their sexual conquests, while more puritanical elements labelled women who openly enjoyed their sex lives with several partners as "*mujeres liebres*" (rabbits)!

Modern feminist criticism of Spanish women's "lack" of achievement in these areas ignores both the traditional stranglehold of the Church and the fact that people were effectively running their communities and fighting a war on several fronts. The women involved felt justly proud

that they were in charge of supplying food and clothing to barricades and battlefields, and caring for the sick and wounded. "Traditional" as these roles were, they were vital to the continuation of the war and revolution.

## Propaganda

Consciousness raising and support for these activities was spread by means of literature, including booklets, the "*Mujeres Libres*" journal, exhibitions, posters, and cross-country tours, especially to rural areas. There are many accounts of urban *companeras* visiting rural collectives and exchanging ideas, information, etc. (and vice versa). Produced entirely by and for women, the paper *Mujeres Libres* grew to national circulation and, by all accounts, was popular with both rural and urban working class women. Each issue encouraged its readers to develop a libertarian vision, and to participate fully in the events around them; the paper consistently spelled out the "revolution and war" position of the movement.

## Nationalist Repression

The nationalists were well aware of the opposition they faced from women. General Queipo de Llano, in his radio broadcasts from Seville, raved against and threatened the "*wives of anarchists and communists*". As they consolidated their power, the Fascists wasted no time in reversing the liberalisation of divorce and introducing strict dress codes for women - including the banning of bare legs! The Repression, of course, was much more terrible, with up to a third of Spain's population ending up behind bars, and countless men, women, and children massacred in fascist reprisals. In 1945, there were still eight jails for women political prisoners in Madrid alone. A Falange newspaper reports a baptism ceremony in Madrid in 1940 for 280 children born in prison. Many Spanish women fled to the French refugee camps, where they pooled food and established communal kitchens. Others joined the Resistance.

In their struggle against fascism and for a radical political and social alternative the "Free Women" of Spain provide an example that is still relevant today: "*To be an anti-fascist is too little; one is an anti-fascist because one is already something else. We have an affirmation to set up against this negation...the rational organisation of life on the basis of work, equality, and social justice. If it weren't for this, anti-fascism would be, for us, a meaningless word.*"

*Mujeres Libres* issue #5, 1936.



# FORGOTTEN HEROES

## Spanish Resistance in France 1939-45

"How many lands have my feet trod and my eyes seen! What terrible scenes of desolation of death I witnessed in those years of continual war. Adverse circumstances had made us, anti-militarists, the most battle hardened soldiers of the Allied armies" (Murillo de la Cruz)

There are many myths and controversies concerning the French Resistance during the Second World War. The "official" line, from the point of view of the Gaullists, ascribes great significance to the radio appeal broadcast by Charles de Gaulle on June 18th 1940, calling on the French people to continue the fight against the Germans. But for at least one major component of the Resistance movement the armed struggle against Fascism began not on June 18th 1940 but on July 17th 1936. It is a little known fact that over 60,000 Spanish exiles fought alongside the French Resistance, in addition to thousands of others who served in the regular forces of the Free French army. This article pays tribute to the forgotten heroes of the Spanish Resistance and explores the wider origins and development of the French Resistance.

### >> Defeat, Exile & Internment >>

Fascist victories in Spain led to several waves of refugees crossing the French border. By June 1938 some 40-45,000 refugees had crossed and an alarmed French government ordered the border to be closed. However, with the fall of Catalonia in January 1939 a human tide flowed northwards. Behind them came the retreating Republican Army covered by a rearguard composed of the 26th Division (Durruti Column) and elements of the Army of the Ebro. The right wing press in France went into near hysteria with banner headlines proclaiming, "Will the Army of Riot Reorganise Itself in France?" and "Close our Borders to the Armed Bands of the F.A.I. and the P.O.U.M.". However, with the town of Figueras about to fall to Franco, the French Left and humanitarian sensibilities prevailed and the border was opened to admit hundreds of thousands of civilians and combatants into France.

The population of the *Pyrenees-Orientales* Department more than doubled due to the influx of Spaniards. French troops in the area had already



Spanish Refugees at French Border 1939

been reinforced and further reinforcements were brought in as the 26th Division reached the border. As one of its members, Antonio Herrero, recalled, "...we were considered the most dangerous of the refugees". Sections of the French establishment clearly feared that the "Reds" and "Anarchists" would bring social revolution to France.

Whilst the refugees were now safe from Franco's army, they were by no means to be allowed their liberty. Instead they were confined in concentration camps on the beaches at *Argelles-sur-mer*, *St Cyprien* and *Barcarès*, penned in by stakes and barbed wire. French police hunted for those who escaped confinement. Inside the camps, shelter, supplies and medical care were virtually non-existent. Strict military discipline prevailed, with frequent roll calls, patrols and constant surveillance. Distribution of left wing papers was forbidden (but not right wing newspapers). Moreover, those identified as "criminals" or "radicals" were taken to separate prison camps, such as the fortress of *Collioure* and the camp at *Le Vernet*. Here, Communists and Anarchists were held as prisoners under a regime of hard labour. Those who experienced these camps later recalled that, although they



One of the beach concentration camps

were not places of mass extermination, in many other respects they were every bit as bad as the German concentration camps.

The French government tried to encourage repatriation, both voluntarily and by threats. But by December 1939 there were still at least 250,000 Spaniards in the camps. Building work meant an improvement in conditions, though health, sanitation and food supplies were still dismal. The Spaniards organised themselves collectively as best they could through the main political groupings.

### >> Blitzkrieg & Vichy France >>

With a general European war looming and recognising the vast pool of industrial and agricultural skills confined on the beaches, the Spanish exiles were given the option to leave the camps from April 1939. But this was on the condition that they either obtained an individual work contract with local farmers/ employers or enlisted in "workers companies" (labour battalions), the Foreign Legion or the regular French Army. Although the first option was the most desirable, around 15,000 joined the Foreign Legion, including elements of the 26th Division (Durruti Column) who were offered a choice between this and forced repatriation.

Thus many Spanish exiles found themselves at the sharp end of Hitler's Blitzkrieg in 1940. Over 6,000 died in battle before the Armistice and 14,000 were taken prisoner. Spaniards captured by the Nazis were not treated as prisoners of war but sent straight to concentration camps, primarily Mauthausen. Of 12,000 sent to that place of murder only 2,000 survived until liberation. Other Spaniards in the French army found themselves serving in Norway, as part of the expeditionary force to Narvik and Trondheim. They distinguished themselves by their bravery, but at a heavy price. Of 1,200 only 300 survived.

Following the German military triumph in Paris, 14th June 1940, the country was split into occupied and unoccupied zones. The latter, comprising central and southern France and the Mediterranean coast, was governed directly by the Vichy Government of Marshal Petain. At first many French people saw Petain as a national saviour, rescuing the country from the humiliation of total defeat. But the Vichy regime not

only pursued a policy of co-existence and collaboration with the Nazis but had many of the trappings of a Fascist state itself. Petain's so-called "National Revolution" operated under the slogan "Work, Family, Fatherland" and pursued nationalist and authoritarian policies.

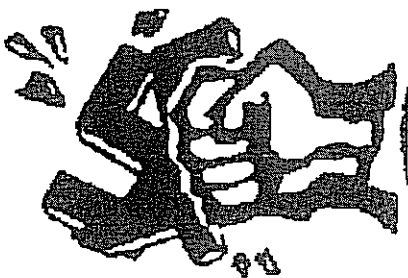
In August 1940 all trade union organisations were dissolved in favour of the "organic" corporate structures of employers and employees favoured by Fascism. The model for these policies could be easily seen in Italy, Spain (cordial relations with Franco were quickly established) and Portugal and, as in those countries, support for the National Revolution came mostly from the upper and middle class, from small industrialists and financiers, local business and landed property and from high status professions. Such supporters were quickly installed at every level of the administration. Peasant and family life was idealised, as was the Catholic Church as a model of moral life, communal values and obedience. Youth camps and Corps were set up. And, of course, lists were drawn up of Communists, Socialists etc. - some for immediate arrest, others to be arrested at the first sign of any threat to public order.

The Vichy regime was to actively collaborate in choosing hostages and recruiting labour for the Germans, arresting resisters and deporting Jews. The SS and Gestapo swiftly made contacts with French anti-Semites and Fascists, gathering information on Jews and the Left. No single Fascist style party ever emerged, partly because Hitler didn't want any basis for a resurgent French nationalism. But members of the P.P.F. Fascist party went to fight (and die) on the Russian front, and were also used internally as paramilitary units against the Resistance.

But the most important formation was to be the *Milice* - formed in January 1943 (from the veterans association *Legion des Anciens Combattants*) by Joseph Darnard, Vichy minister in charge of all internal forces of law and order. The *Milice*, a paramilitary vanguard of the "National Revolution", became a 150,000 strong force, acting as an auxiliary to the SS and Gestapo and characterised by Vichy-style Fascism. By 1944 they were the only French force the Germans could rely on. Most surviving *Miliciens* were summarily executed by the Resistance just before or just after liberation. They deserved it.

## ➤➤ Resistance ➤➤

Many French people awoke only slowly to the real nature and ideology of the Nazi



occupation and its Vichy sidekicks. Apart from a demonstration in Paris, 11th November 1940, and an impressive Communist led miners strike in the North East in May 1941, there was very little public confrontation with the Germans in the first 2 years after defeat.

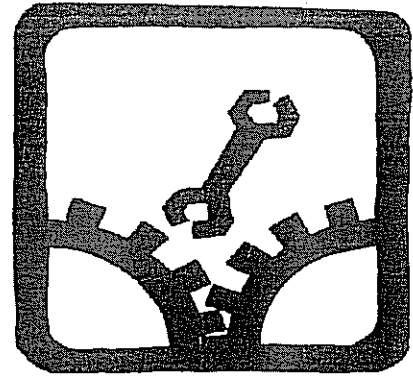
De Gaulle's famous radio broadcast was to be only one of several starting points of resistance. In fact, until 1942 de Gaulle was by no means a major player. Although Churchill backed him, the Americans seemed more interested in winning over French Vichy commanders in Algeria. De Gaulle was not even informed of Allied plans for Operation Torch, the landing in Algeria. He had to shift some in order to consolidate his position. To do this he sought increasing links with the internal Resistance during 1942 and had to recognise both the diversity and independence of resistance groups and the importance of the Communists as established facts.

The French Communist Party had been stunned by the non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin in August 1939, and was then declared illegal under the Vichy regime. This meant that organisationally they played little role in the first stirrings of the Resistance, although individual grassroots militants were involved from the outset as in the miners strike. Only after the invasion of Russia was the C.P. able to regroup - but it quickly became a main player in terms of the politics, organisation and tactics of the Resistance.

In its first roots the Resistance grew from the bottom up. "Early resistance was almost entirely a matter of secret initiatives by individuals and small groups..." The first act of resistance was often graffiti, for example that reversing the German declaration that 10 Frenchmen would be shot for every German assassinated ("One Frenchman Murdered Ten Germans will Die!") or simply turning around or removing signposts to confuse the enemy. Equally important, once a group formed, was the production and circulation of clandestine pamphlets and newspapers. This propaganda built up a solidarity of attitude uniting the individual acts of resistance.

These small groups of like minded individuals gradually evolved into the wider movements of sabotage and armed struggle and the more diffuse networks which ran escape routes and gathered intelligence on German dispositions. In the North they suffered severe repression from the Gestapo, but in the South the movements took on a more expansive character. This was partly due to geographical factors and partly due to the zone not being under direct German control prior to November 1942. However, there was one other vital factor - the Spanish.

The Vichy regime wanted to make use of the vast amount of Spanish labour available in the South, so they established the *Travailleurs Etrangers* (T.E.) - basically forced labour corps of between 2-5,000 men. By the end of 1940 over 220,000



Spaniards were engaged in forced labour for French and German enterprises in France. But for the Vichy authorities the revolutionary working class history of the Spaniards posed a problem - the labour corps would provide a natural organisational focus for those intent on rebuilding their movement. And they were right - for the political organisations of the Spanish exiles were soon consolidating their position within the T.E., despite attempts by the Vichy police to identify and weed out Communists, Anarchists and "anti-nationals".

The presence of this vast body of exiles, many of them hardened anti-Fascist fighters, cannot be underestimated. "Resistance was the natural state of the Spanish exiles in France. For them the French dilemma over loyalty to Petain was non-existent..." They were continuing a war that had begun behind the barricades in Barcelona, had already fought German and Italian troops in their own country, and were now about to do the same in France. As much, if not more so, than British agents of the Special Operations Executive it was the Spaniards who instructed their French comrades in armed struggle.

As Serge Ravanel of the French Resistance in the Toulouse area acknowledged: "During the War of Spain our comrades had acquired the knowledge that we did not possess; they knew how to make bombs; they knew how to set ambushes; they had a profound knowledge of the technique of guerrilla war". In addition to this expertise it was said of the Spaniards that their bravery was unequalled in combat and that there was no question of treason or desertion.

Within the *Travailleurs Etrangers* low level sabotage, the universal symbol of working class defiance, rapidly became the norm. In one incident 50 French mechanics suspected to be engaged in monkey wrenching were replaced by Spaniards. The level of inexplicable vehicle failure increased as the Spanish pleaded ignorance of the rudiments of motor mechanics. AFA comrades will be pleased to know that The Mechanic has such worthy predecessors! Such incidents as this were part of a wider and growing movement of sabotage, a movement that rapidly progressed to dynamiting of industrial installations and railways; grenade attacks on German military parades, canteens and barracks, not to mention individual assassinations.

## ANOTHER SPAIN

In a typical progression, Spanish Anarchists in the Massif Central organised resistance in the T.E. corps working on a huge dam (*Barage de la Aigle*). From sabotaging roads and tunnels the group eventually grew into an armed resistance battalion 150-200 strong, named after the dam.

By 1942 the Resistance was firmly established, as any final illusions about the Nazis disappeared - with the SS increasingly in control in Paris; decrees demanding workers for German factories; the beginning of the deportation of Jews to the death camps and, in November, German military occupation of the Vichy zone. These events strengthened the motivation to resist and ensured a mood of protest and revolt among the French working class as a whole.

By the end of the year the independent and local Resistance movements had begun to co-ordinate more closely. Previously, the only movement covering both zones was the Communist led *Front National* established in May 1941. Its armed wing was the *Franco-Tireurs et Partisans Francais*. Other groups combined to form *Mouvements Unis de la Resistance* (M.U.R.), whose armed wing was the *Armee Secrete*. The M.U.R. recognised de Gaulle as leader but the Communists retained their independence. Both groups formed part of the *Comite National de la Resistance* (CNR).

It was through the C.N.R. and M.U.R. that de Gaulle was able to cement his position inside France. Arms supplies from London and Algiers went to groups which recognised his leadership and accepted a degree of tactical control from the British S.O.E. The guerrillas of the F.T.P.F. were left to arm themselves with weapons captured from the Germans or by intercepting Allied supply drops intended for the *Armee Secrete*. Alongside political differences, there was a difference over tactics. The *Armee Secrete* argued that the Resistance should hold itself in readiness to support an Allied landing. The FTPF argued for an immediate campaign of harassment, sabotage and ambush of German troops. They also wanted to assassinate individual German officers, a tactic de Gaulle rejected.

The Spaniards, primarily active in the South & South-East, organised themselves, although some individuals fought in French units. Spanish formations were recognised as an independent but integral part of the French Resistance within the C.N.R. The main grouping was the Communist led *Union Nacional Espanola* (U.N.E.) formed in November 1942. In 1944 its name changed to *Agrupacion Guerrillera Espanola*. A second organisation, the *Alianza Democratica Espanola*, rejecting Communist control, was formed by the Anarchists (CNT / FAI); Socialists (UGT / PSOE); Left & Independent republicans and Basque & Catalan nationalists.



### ➤➤ The Maquis ➤➤

The critical moment of expansion for the Resistance came in 1943 with an influx of new recruits fleeing forced labour. In June 1942 a decree had been issued requiring French workers for German factories. This was extended in February 1943 with the setting up of the *Service du Travail Obligatoire* (S.T.O.) to meet the ever increasing numbers demanded by the German labour ministry. The S.T.O. was resisted by individual evasion, strikes and even angry crowds freeing arrested workers from the French police. It also proved the vital ingredient in the formation of armed groups in the countryside, the *Maquis*.

Between April and December 1943, 150,000 workers were on the run from the S.T.O., and by June 1944 this had swelled to more than 300,000. The Resistance movement encouraged non-compliance and supplied shelter, supplies and arms to the evaders who took to the hills and countryside. The *Maquis* were supported by the rural population - alienated by constant requisitions of produce and the imposition of the S.T.O. on agricultural labourers. This swelling of guerrilla strength in the countryside throughout 1943 inaugurated a new and more ferocious phase of armed struggle, which in the conflict between the *Milice* and the *Maquis* increasingly took the form of a civil war.

Whilst the long term plan was to prepare a national insurrection in support of the expected Allied landings, there was disagreement over the best tactics to employ in the meantime. Some favoured massing in large formations, in effect local insurrections. Others argued for small mobile units of 20-30 men as the only viable tactic. The latter was undoubtedly the right policy. On three occasions when the Resistance in the South did mass for conventional warfare, on the *Plateau of Glieres*; at *Vercors* and at *Mont Mouchet* they were both heavily outnumbered and

outgunned by the Germans. Spaniards participated in these actions, but had warned against them - knowing full well from the war against Franco that lightly armed troops could not engage in conventional warfare without armour, artillery and air support.

Despite these setbacks resistance in the 18 months before D-Day inflicted massive damage on infrastructure and tied down German troops across France. The Resistance could far more easily neutralise railways, industrial sites and power stations than Allied air power, and their intelligence networks, at first lightly regarded by the British, were of decisive importance. Between June 1943 and May 1944 nearly 2,000 locomotives were destroyed. In October 1943 alone, over 3,000 attacks were recorded on the railways, 427 resulting in heavy damage, with 132 trains derailed. In the South West such sabotage was so effective that by June 6th 1944 it took 3 days to travel from Paris to Toulouse!

Whilst the guerrillas were less numerous in the North, between April and September 1943 some 500 resistance efforts were recorded, 278 against railways and other infrastructure, killing 950 Germans and injuring 1,890. In Normandy and Brittany, Spaniards blew up electrical transformers, a railway station and switching yard and part of an airfield. Spanish resistance fighters in Paris assassinated General von Schaumburg, commandant of Greater Paris and General von Ritter who was responsible for the recruitment of forced labour.

### ➤➤ Liberation! ➤➤

The effectiveness of the guerrilla campaign was to lead Eisenhower to comment that the Resistance effort around D-Day was worth a full 15 regular army divisions. Likewise *Maquis* support of the northern drive of the American 7th army was estimated as worth 4 or 5 divisions of regular troops. It should also be remembered that Allied troops never entered the South of the country. The whole area west of the Rhone and South of the Loire rivers was liberated by the national insurrection of the *Maquis*, as also was Brittany, save for the Atlantic ports with their strong German garrisons.

In the Department of *L'Ariege* the 14th Spanish Corps of Guerrillas (reformed April 1942) played a key role in evicting the Germans. Between June 6th and August 1944 they attacked German convoys and liberated several villages before taking *Foix*, the Nazi HQ in the area. A strong German column attempted a counter attack but were caught in an ambush. Despite their logistical superiority they were pinned down by machine gun fire and 1,200 surrendered. A key role was played by a solitary machine gunner who held his post raking the Germans with bullets. One resistance fighter recalls this man, "*firing like a crazy one*", and adds, as if by way of explanation, "*...but he was a Spaniard, a guerrillero*". Allied observers of the engagement commented that the Spaniards were "*uniquely perfect guerrillas*".



Other examples of the Spanish contribution include the Anarchist Libertad battalion which liberated Cahors and other towns and the participation of 6,000 Spanish guerrillas in the liberation of Toulouse. One notable encounter occurred as the Germans attempted to withdraw through the Gard area, following the fall of Marseilles. A group of 32 Spaniards and 4 Frenchmen tackled a German column (consisting of 1,300 men in 60 lorries, with 6 tanks and 2 self propelled guns), at *La Madeleine*, on August 22nd 1944. The *Maquis* blew up the road and rail bridges and positioned themselves on surrounding hills with machine guns. The battle raged from 3.00pm till noon the next day. 3 *Maquis* were wounded, 110 Germans killed, 200 wounded and the rest surrendered. The German commander committed suicide!

Over 4,000 Spaniards took part in the *Maquis* uprising in Paris that began on August 21st 1944. Photographs show them armed and crouched behind barricades in scenes one could easily mistake for the street fighting in Barcelona in July 1936. Before long they were supported by regular troops from the Normandy beach-heads. The first units to enter Paris and reach the *Hôtel de Ville* were from the 9th Tank Company of the French 2nd Armoured Division. But the lead half tracks bore the names of Spanish battlefields - "*Guadafajara*"; "*Teruel*"; "*Madrid*" and "*Ebro*". They were manned by Spaniards, of whom there were 3,200 serving in the 2nd Armoured. Many of these were veterans of the 26th Division (Durruti Column) who had entered the French army from the prison camps in 1939 and gone on to fight in North Africa.

Captain Raymond Dronne, commander of the 9th Company, remembers that the Spanish Anarchists were "*both difficult and easy to command*". In accordance with their libertarian principles "*...it was necessary that they accept for themselves the authority of their officers ... They wished to understand the reason for that which was asked of them*". However, "*...when they granted their confidence it was total and complete*". "*They were almost all anti-militarists, but they were magnificent soldiers, valiant and experienced. If they had embraced our cause spontaneously and voluntarily it was [because] it was the cause of liberty. Truly they were fighters for liberty*".

The 9th Company featured prominently in the victory parade through Paris with its tanks drawn up at the *Arc de Triomphe*. They went on to see action on the Moselle and were the first to enter Strasbourg, supported by American infantry. Their campaign ended in Germany at Berchtesgaden, Hitler's "Eagles Nest". Having fought from the streets of Barcelona, across the battlefields of Spain, North Africa and France they stood as victors in the final bolt hole of the Nazi scum.



Spanish guerrillas behind the barricades in Paris August 1944

## »» Epilogue »»

Liberation saw a brief period of euphoria, with the Resistance bridging the vacuum of power in the South - dealing with collaborators and remnants of the *Milice*; setting up local committees to administer supplies and re-establishing communities on a more equal footing. Ordinary men and women were momentarily in charge of their own history. But this was not to last. De Gaulle and his allies had no desire to see Southern France controlled by revolutionary elements. The *Maquisards* represented a threat because "*an army of guerrillas is always a revolutionary army*". De Gaulle feared for revolution in Toulouse where 6,000 Spanish guerrillas were "*...still imbued with the revolutionary spirit they had brought from beyond the Pyrenees*". To deal with this explosive situation the *Maquis* were offered the choice of disarming or joining the regular French forces for the attack on German garrisons in the Atlantic ports. This would show America that there was a regular national army and no need for Allied occupation, and it would also remove the armed bands whilst a smooth transference to Gaullist power took place. This was easily achieved because de Gaulle had cemented his position in key sections of the Resistance by control of the arms supply.

In all 25,000 Spaniards had died in the camps or fighting in armed units. With the German surrender in 1945 the Spaniards believed, understandably, that the Allies would turn their attention to Franco and that, without German and Italian support, he would be swiftly crushed. In fact many had been fighting all along in anticipation of returning to Spain for some unfinished business. Anti-fascist guerrilla activity had continued in Spain throughout the war. Meanwhile, exiles in Algeria and France had been preparing for a return - stockpiling arms "borrowed" from American depots. Likewise, as the French 2nd Armoured Division advanced north from Paris, its 9th Company was secretly joined by six members of the Durruti Column who had been with the Resistance in Paris. Whilst fighting alongside their old comrades in the 9th Company they hid arms and ammunition from the battlefields in secret caches. These were later collected and taken to Spain.

1945 saw Franco very much alone, condemned by Britain, Russia and the USA and excluded from the United Nations. The British Labour government, prior to their election in 1945, had promised a quick resolution to the Spanish question. But sadly history proved that the British were not to be trusted. The Labour government, despite its promises, used delaying tactics in the United Nations to stop effective action, arguing that it was purely an internal matter of the Spanish people and that they had no wish to "*permit or encourage civil war in that country*".

Economic blockade and international isolation would have finished Franco off within months - but Britain and US would not support this; despite protestations from other countries who favoured, if necessary, armed intervention. For the British and Americans, as in 1936-1939, the real problem was not Franco but the possibility of a "Red" revolution of the Spanish working class. This attitude solidified as the Cold War developed. A gradual rehabilitation of Franco took place, ending in full recognition and incorporation into the United Nations in 1955. Fascist Spain took its place at the table of the not so new world order.

Even in 1945, whilst some continued to believe that diplomacy would restore the Republican government, many militants opted to renew the armed struggle. Between 1944 and 1950 approximately 15,000 guerrillas fought in Spain, bringing half the country into a state of war. But, despite strikes in Barcelona and the Basque areas, involving over 250,000 people, the population as a whole, wearied by war and repression, were not prepared to rise, or had placed their faith in the diplomacy of Western "democracies". The guerrillas were left to fight alone and inadequately armed against Franco's impressive police and military apparatus, which was always well supplied with intelligence on guerrilla movements from the other side of the French border. It was an unequal struggle. As Juan Molina lamented: "*The prisons consumed a generation of fighters, defeated this time irremediably ... All strength in life has its limits and this limit was amply exceeded by the Resistance, in almost inhuman endurance. But it had to succumb*".

These working class militants, who bore arms for ten or even twenty years against Fascism and Capitalism, deserve far more than just remembrance, though even that has been denied them. The struggle for which they gave their lives has not ended - it falls to us to continue that struggle and keep alight the flame of their resistance.



# THE RATTLE OF THE THOMPSON GUN

*Resistance to Franco, 1939-1952*

The Spanish Civil War officially ended in 1939, but the struggle against Franco continued. The following article tells the story of the guerrilla war waged by working class militants who refused to let the subsequent suppression and murder of their class go unchallenged. The article was supplied by the Spanish anarchist historian Antonio Tellez, himself a veteran of the Civil War and subsequent struggles.

The guerrilla struggle against Francoism actually arose in the days following the army revolt against the Spanish Republic on 18 July 1936. In areas which fell immediately to the mutinous army, a bloody repression was promptly set in motion and this obliged many anti-fascists to take to the hills to save their skins. This was repeated over nearly three years of civil war as areas were conquered, one after another, by the Francoist army and it extended to virtually the entirety of the Peninsula after the Republican troops surrendered in the Centre-Levante zone on 31 March 1939.

Very little has been written about the scale of the armed struggle against Franco following the civil war. It was and still is known to few. A thick blanket of silence has been drawn over the fighters, for a variety of reasons. According to Franco's personal friend Civil Guard Lieutenant-General Camilo Alonso Vega - who was in charge of the anti-guerrilla campaign for twelve years- banditry (the term the Francoists always used to describe the guerrilla activity) was of "great significance" in Spain, in that it "disrupted communications, demoralised folk, wrecked our economy, shattered our unity and discredited us in the eyes of the outside world".

Only days before those words were uttered General Franco himself had excused the blanket silence imposed on reports of armed opposition and the efforts mounted to stop it, when he had stated that "the Civil Guard's sacrifices in the years following the Second World War were made selflessly and in silence, because, for political and security reasons it was inappropriate to publicise the

*locations, the clashes, casualty figures or names of those who fell in performance of their duty, in a heroic and unspoken sacrifice."*

This cover-up has continued right up until our own day. In a Spanish Television (TVE) programme entitled *Guerrilla Warfare* and broadcast in 1984, General Manuel Prieto Lopez cynically referred to the anti-francoist fighters as bandits and killers. Not that this should come as any surprise -during the period described as the political transition to democracy (November 1975 to October 1982) all political forces, high financiers, industrialists, the military and church authorities decided that references to the past were inappropriate and that the protracted blood-letting of the Franco era should be consigned to oblivion. That consensus holds firm in 1996, and historians eager to lift that veil run up against insurmountable obstacles when they try to examine State, Civil Guard or Police archives.

We have no reliable break-down of the overall figures for guerrillas or for the casualties sustained by or inflicted upon the security forces and Army. If we are to have some grasp of what this unequal struggle against the Dictatorship was like, our only option is to turn to figures made public in 1968 - a one-off it seems - according to which the Civil Guard sustained 628 casualties (258 deaths) between 1943 and 1952: some 5,548 bandits were wiped out in 2,000 skirmishes, many of which amounted to full-scale battles. The figures for this eradication are as follows: killed - 2,166; captured or surrendered - 3,382; arrested as liaisons, accessories or for aiding and abetting - 19,407. An embarrassed silence shrouds the earlier years between 1939 and 1942, when units from the regular army, the Foreign Legion and the Regulares, with artillery support



attempted to wipe out the guerrillas. The aforesaid figures given for Civil Guard casualties at the guerrillas' hands can be discounted. If we compare the lists of deceased Civil Guards during these years where no cause of death is listed, with peace-time death-rates, we find a surplus of deaths which are (assuming they were the results of illness or accident) inexplicable and arrive at what is unquestionably a figure closer to the truth: some 1,000 deaths on active service.

The escalation of guerrilla activity began in 1943, when the widespread belief that the Third Reich had victory in its grasp was starting to fade, following the bloody rout of the German Army's elite divisions at Stalingrad. As the tide of the Second World War turned, the anti-Franco guerrillas, as might have been expected, bounced back in terms of morale and dynamism, and from 1944 onwards flourished to a considerable extent. Its heyday was in 1946-1947. After that, partly as a consequence of international policy which sought a rapprochement



with Franco, a decline set in that ended with the demise of guerrilla activity in 1952. In Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia and other cities, urban guerrilla activity persisted for a decade or so longer.

After 1944, guerrillas operating inside Spain received considerable reinforcements from their exiled countrymen who had played an active part in the liberation of France. These were well-trained and experienced men equipped with up-to-date weaponry and easy to use high explosive substances such as plastique. Most of them were drawn from France and a smaller number from across the seas in North Africa. Communist leaders charged with politicising guerrilla activity came in from the Americas via Lisbon and Vigo. The Communists who took it for granted that the war-cry of "Taking Spain back!" would be the signal for a general popular uprising against the Franco regime made a great song and dance about this comparatively massive aid.

Some 3,000 guerrillas organised in France with the very same weaponry they had used in their fight against the Nazis, mounted two main attacks across the Pyrenees in 1944. The first incursion was into Navarre on 3 and 7 October: the second came via Catalonia, the object being to establish a bridge-head in the Vall d'Aran and install a provisional Republican government. It was also taken

for granted that, confronted by such a fait accompli, the Allies would be prompted to step in to bring down Franco. These incursions were easily repulsed - having been heralded in advance - for the Spanish government had taken all appropriate measures. Even so, there were lots of guerrillas who refused to return to their bases and opted instead to infiltrate into the interior in small groups. There they reinforced existing guerrilla bands and set up new ones where none existed.

The weapons they brought in were a lot more effective and better suited to guerrilla fighting. The most commonplace weapon was the British Sten gun, or the German M.P. 38. Both were rapid-fire weapons and used 9mm ammunition which was the most plentiful sort. American weapons like the Colt pistol flooded in, as did (in lesser numbers) Thompson sub-machineguns, a heavier but highly effective weapon. One burst of Thompson gunfire in the hills was reminiscent of an artillery salvo. The fighters entering Spain also brought with them a tried and tested morale forged in victories scored against the Nazis and in the staunch belief that Franco could not survive the downfall of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini. They also had organisational experience behind them and solid ideological convictions, anarchist, socialist or communist, qualities that would quickly transform

the guerrilla phenomenon as they afforded increased cohesiveness to countless scattered guerrilla bands.

The main areas of guerrilla activity were those whose geographical features made defence and survival most likely ie: mountains ranges and areas which provided adequate cover. For example in Andalusia there were guerrilla bands aplenty, some of them over 100-strong. In Asturias, the guerrillas displayed tremendous enterprise, not unconnected with a deep-rooted political consciousness: the revolution by the Asturias miners in October 1934 had not been all that long ago. In many areas, guerrilla activity was intermittent and random as guerrilla bands moved around for a number of reasons, such as the encroachments of counter-insurgency forces.

The style and nature of the guerrilla struggle varied with the terrain and the resources of the individuals and groups involved. Activities included the bombing of strategic objectives, *attendats* (political assassinations), the movement of arms, the protection of individuals and groups involved in underground political activity; bank robberies and forgery to fund the struggle and destabilise the economy; as well as some more spectacular actions: rescue missions to free captured comrades, open fire-fights with fascist forces; and even an attempt to bomb



Until the next time... Refugees cross the French Border after Franco's victory in 1939.

## ANOTHER SPAIN

Franco from the air! (three men in a light aircraft came within a hair's breadth of dropping incendiary and fragmentation bombs on the General and his Aides during a Regatta in 1948).

An example that sums up the mentality and spirit of the guerrilla movement of the time is provided by a small team of Anarchist guerrillas, led by the veteran fighter Francisco Sabate Llopart (El Quico). On their return to Spain after the end of the Second World War one of their first missions was the 'expropriation' of money and valuables in a series of aggravated robberies of local big-businessmen. On completion of 'business', those 'visited' would be left a note like the following one, left at the home of a wealthy big-store owner, Manuel Garriga:

*"We are not robbers, we are libertarian resistance fighters. What we have just taken will help in a small way to feed the orphaned and starving children of those anti-fascists who you and your kind have shot. We are people who have never and will never beg for what is ours. So long as we have the strength to do so we shall fight for for the freedom of the Spanish working class. As for you, Garriga, although you are a murderer and a thief, we have spared you, because we as libertarians appreciate the value of human life, something which you never have, nor are likely to, understand."*

A small example of how, despite the loss of the war, and despite the ruthlessness of the fascist repression, those involved in the resistance still managed to maintain their politics, their humanity, and their self-respect.

The armed opposition to Franco was no longer a serious problem after 1949 and, as we have said, it petered out around 1952. Aside from the severe blows dealt by the Civil Guard and the Army, the absence of a logistical system capable of keeping the fighters equipped, and, above all else, the fact that the opposition political parties had chosen to gamble upon diplomacy as a substitute for weapons, made it impossible for the resistance's offensive activity to continue.

Another highly significant element in the winding-up of the guerrilla struggle was the arrival on the scene in 1947 of superbly trained and schooled security force personnel in the shape of "counter-guerrilla bands", dressed and armed in the guerrillas' own style and sowing confusion and terror on their home ground. These "counter-gangs" even carried out savage killings that were ascribed to the guerrillas proper, the aim being to bring them into disrepute and

strip them of popular support. Then again, the infiltration of police plants into the guerrilla bands was extraordinarily effective and made it possible to dismantle some of the more important groupings.

In Asturias, in 1948, around 30 socialist guerrillas boarded a French fishing smack which had arrived specifically to collect them and deliver them to St Jean de Luz in France. In Levante, the last remaining guerrillas in the area, around two dozen survivors, made it out to France in 1952. In Andalusia, a few bands survived until the end of 1952, but their leaders - like the anarcho-syndicalist, Bernabe Lopez Calle (1889-1949) - had already perished in combat. A few managed to escape to Gibraltar or North Africa, but, for the most part, they were wiped out in armed clashes: others were executed by the garrote vil (death by strangulation) or firing squads: those who escaped that fate served prison terms sometimes in excess of 20 years.

In 1953, the United States signed a military and economic assistance treaty with Franco. Two years later, Franco's Spain was welcomed into the United Nations. However, even though all was lost, a few die-hards refused to give up the fight: in Cantabria, the last two guerrillas, Juan Fernandez Ayala (Juanin) and Franciscxo Bedoya Gutierrez (El Bedoya) met their deaths in April and in December of 1957 respectively. In Catalonia, Ramon Vila Capdevila (Caraquemada), the last anarchist guerrilla, was gunned down by the Civil Guard in August 1963. But the honour of being the last guerrilla has to go to Jose Castro Veiga (El Piloto) who died, without ever having laid down his arms, in the province of Lugo (Galicia), March 1965.

**There are a number of reasons for the failure of the Guerrilla campaign against Franco, and although open guerrilla warfare had all but ended in the 50's, the movement against Franco continued, as did underground political activity, until the regime's eventual collapse. What the guerrillas had wanted to achieve was open insurrection against Franco. What they show us today, through their ambition and their sacrifice, is that the brutal repression of the progressive working class after the Civil War did not go unchallenged. The full story of the guerrilla struggle, as Tellez states in this article, is still being uncovered. All we can do today is salute the men and women of the resistance who gave their lives, not only in the defence of their class, but for a future where the social structures that create the Francos, are buried along with them.**


### The usual suspects.



Three of the main faces in the anarchist resistance. From the top: Francisco Sabate Llopart, Jose Lluís Facerias, Ramon Vila Capdevila.

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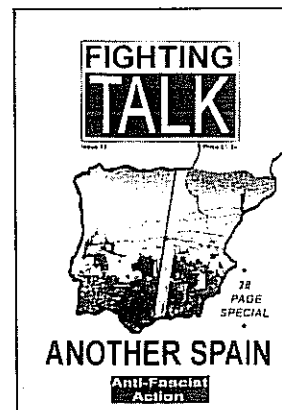
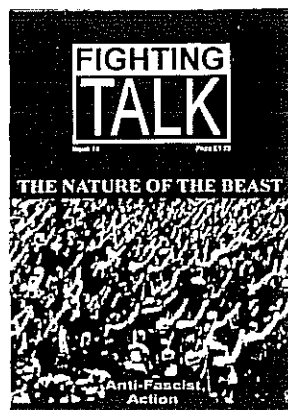
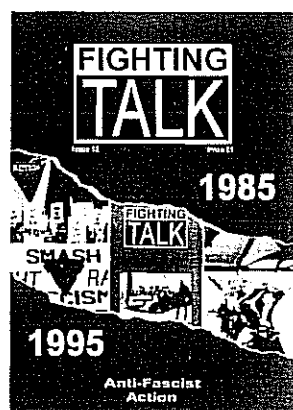
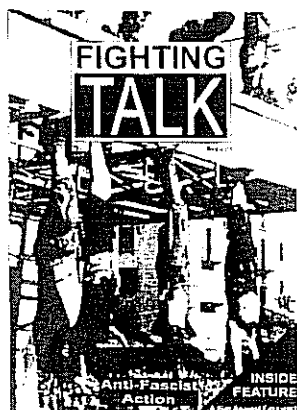
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