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# Spanish Civil War Tribute

to the victims and fighters for freedom



Pedro Cuadrado: Catalan Republican Guard in Spanish Civil War 1936-39 at home in Bolton, Lancashire, in November 2005.

*Trade unionists and members of Trade Union Councils in the North West of England have produced this booklet. The Committee of trade union activists behind it have not sought funds from either Government or party political organisations. We are totally independent of stipends from established institutions. We have, however received help from the following libraries, museums and research bodies: The Working Class History Library; the Peoples' History Museum; Alice Lock and the Tameside Local Studies Archive; the Bury Times archives; Bury Library; the Rochdale Library; the Manchester Local Studies Library; Dave Chapple, Bridgewater TUC who sent us some research material from the Moscow Archives; Pedro Cuadrado for his personal memorabilia and **Northern Voices** journal for supplying some of the funding to make this all possible.*

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Homage to the victims of Franco & Barcelona's May Day Martyrs

2<sup>nd</sup> edition reprinted (May 2007)

## 70<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF SPANISH CIVIL WAR & COUNTER-REVOLUTION

1937-2007



- Buenaventura Durruti -

Commemorative booklet on the Spanish Civil War  
by North West Trade Unionists

Editorial by Brian Bamford, electrician and Secretary of Tameside TUC (in his personal capacity)

## España, Dígame—Spain speak to me?

**THE EARLY 1960s** was still an age of *coitus interruptus* and for me it was a phase of *premature ejaculation*. Had this not been so then in the terrible winter of 1962-3, I may well have raced Stuart Christie on his trip to a cell in Madrid's Carabancel jail. How our sins can save us from the worst of fates! When in Paris I informed Salvador Gurrucharri, a leader of the Libertarian Youth in exile, that my wife was three months pregnant, he dispatched us to the Barcelona barrio of Barceloneta to photograph shanty towns, then to gather information on Spanish working conditions in Alicante. In 1963, those young exile Spaniards of the Libertarian Youth would not put an expectant mother or a child at risk: resisting Franco had its limits.

Editing this booklet has been difficult because it does not reflect any of the standard products of the official trade unions which are often stiff stereotypical caricatures. They lack the dynamic growth of ethnographic anthropology.

That is why the Ralph Cantor diary is so valuable as it shows a young man growing up in Spain wrestling with the problems of war and a foreign culture. It was the same with Stuart and me growing up in Spain in the 1960s: him in a Spanish jail, me working for the Casa Such in Denia, Alicante and raising a child under Franco. Pedro Cuadrado's story is another story of a man growing up quick first in Catalonia, then in exile in France and England. All of us, International Brigader: Ralph Cantor; Catalan socialist: Pedro Cuadrado; English and Scottish anarchists: Bamford and Christie, were gad-flies in the rich mix of Spanish civilisation. No attempt to isolate the contribution of one of these elements or gad-flies from the context of Spain and its culture, can do justice to our understanding of the Spanish Civil War.

We trade unionists involved in this project hope that we have made a honest and useful contribution to this debate. ●

Introduction by Stuart Christie:

## The Spanish War that never died!

**STUART CHRISTIE** was part of a young Spanish anarchist group that made the last attempt on the life of General Franco in 1964. A recent Spanish television program dealing with the various attempts to kill the Spanish dictator after his forces won the Spanish Civil War in 1939 described the efforts of Mr Christie's group as 'brave but innocent'. Stuart Christie was born in 1946 in the working class district of Partick in West Glasgow as he says in his autobiography 'at a time before deep-fried Mars bars, curried-mutton pies and the urban blight set in'. He was a young apprentice member of the Union of Shop Distributive & Allied Workers (USDAW) and USDAW representative on Glasgow Trades Council. It was there he 'met Harry McShane a legend of "Red Clydeside" and...the old Clyde Workers' Committee of 1919'. He became involved in CND and the anti-nuclear campaigns such as Scots against War. He later came into contact with radical pacifists, Scottish and English anarchists, and later the young Spaniards of the Iberian Federation of Young Libertarians: sons and daughters of Spanish Civil War exiles. Stuart left for Paris at the end of July 1964 to meet with those resisting Franco there. In his recent autobiography Mr Christie says: 'Me? I was off to Spain; like George Orwell in 1936, because at that time and in that atmosphere it seemed the only conceivable thing to do.'

By the 11th, August 1964, after having met in Paris former civil war veterans such as brickie Cipriano Mera (described by Antony Beevor as 'the most effective anarchist commander in the civil war'), Stuart Christie was in Madrid carrying explosives. At the American Express Office where he went to get information he fell into a trap and was arrested by Franco's *Brigada Politico Social police*. He was later charged and found guilty of '*Banditry and Terrorism*' and was to serve 3 years of a 20-year sentence: he was released on the 21st, September 1967. He later created the Anarchist Black Cross aid for prisoners and continued to have an active interest in left-wing politics. He is now publishing in English the 3-volume history of Spanish trade unionism by José Peirats '*The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*' of which Noam Chomsky's in his essay 'Objectivity and liberal scholarship' said: 'This highly informative book should certainly be made available to an English speaking public.' Stuart is living down South now, but is probably better known in Spain and Scotland than he is in England, and it is a privilege that he has agreed to write an introduction to this pamphlet. ◆

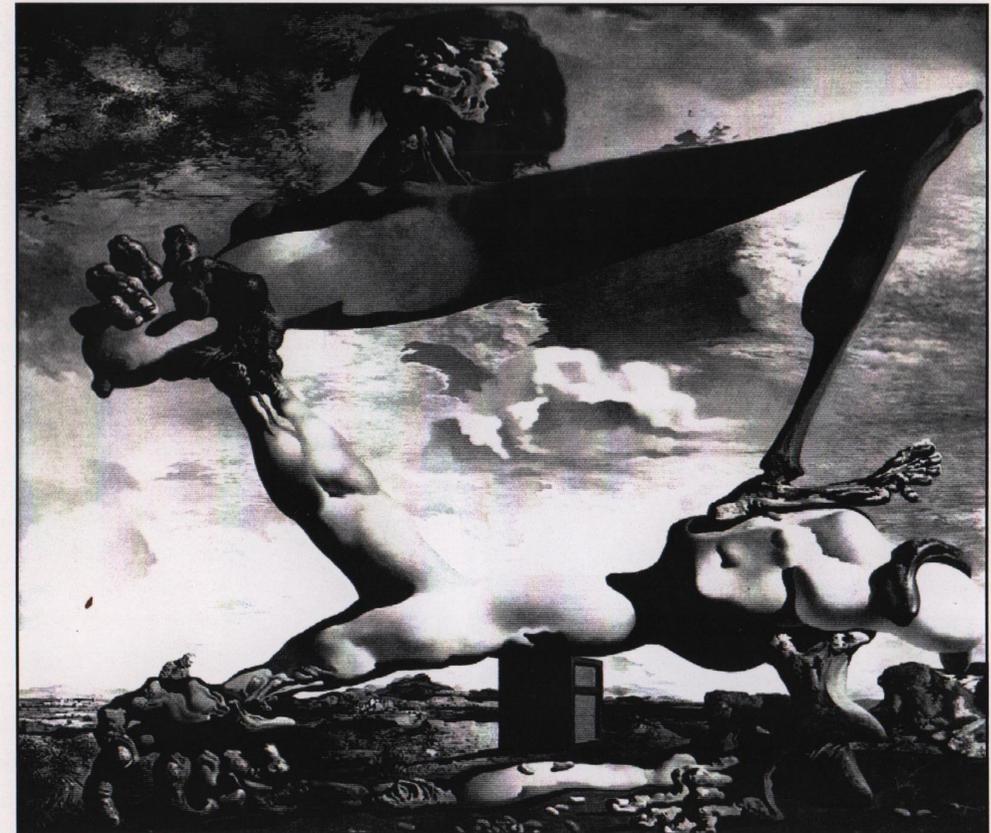
**THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR** did not end on 1st, April, 1939. It did not even end on November 20th, 1975, with the death of Franco. There remains much unfinished business; in particular the still unpaid debt to the victims of Francoism. It is now a matter of morality.

The transfer of power from Franco to Juan Carlos was seamless. Not one of Franco's enforcers, such as General Eduardo Blanco, the head of the hated secret police, or Carlos Aria Navarro, the butcher of Malaga and the architect of Francoist repression since the 1960s, a war criminal of the first magnitude — or any of the thousands of people responsible for the barbarous and legal spoliation of Spain and its people since 1939 has ever been brought to justice.

Even now, over thirty years since the dictator's death, the crimes of the Franco regime have never been addressed. The last statue of Franco in a public place may have disappeared, but his countless victims — many still lying in unknown and unmarked mass graves — and their relatives remain frustrated in their quest for justice.

We owe an enormous debt to the hundreds of thousands of brave men and women who fought, suffered, died and lost loved ones in the cause of freedom, resisting the reactionary priest-ridden, gun and prison-backed Franco regime. They are the forgotten dead of generations to whom we owe a profound obligation of remembrance — and a duty of commemoration.

Continued ►►



*Soft Construction with Boiled Beans: Premonition of Civil War by Salvador Dalí.*

►► Over the past three or four years, democratic Spain has begun to recover the memory of what the years of dictatorship meant, and official Spain is slowly beginning to make up for the thirty lost years since the dictatorship ended. But legislation and acts rehabilitating the victims of Francoist repression have not had the impact they ought to have had, nor have they any real historic or legal value. Laudable as these gestures have been, the rehabilitation of the victims of Francoist repression will not be complete, morally and legally, unless there is public and institutional acknowledgment of the fact that it was their sacrifices that made possible the freedoms that Spain's constitution enshrines today. An inter-ministerial commission has now been set up specifically for the purpose of rehabilitating Franco's victims which allows us to hope that democratic Spain might finally pay off its outstanding debt to all those Spaniards and people of other nationalities who fought for its cause both during the Civil War and during the dictatorship.

And so, on the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Civil War and the 30th anniversary of the death of the last fascist dictator, the battle for the recovery of historical memory and dignity remains to be won — and that battle will not be won until all the victims of Francoist repression have been fully rehabilitated —

morally and judicially.

**'Freedom is more than a word, more than the base coinage Of statesmen, the tyrant's dishonoured cheques, or the dreamer's mad Inflated currency. She is mortal, we know, and made In the image of simple men who have no taste for carnage But sooner kill and are killed than see that image betrayed. Mortal she is, yet rising always refreshed from her ashes: She is bound to the earth, yet she flies as high as a passage bird To home wherever man's heart with seasonal warmth is stirred: Innocent is her touch as the dawn's, but still it unleashes The ravisher shades of envy. Freedom is more than a word.'**

*The Nabara by Cecil Day-Lewis*

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## Spanish Revolution and Civil War Background

### Pistoleros shoot trade unionists and peasants starve.

THE 20TH Century opened with a 'hunger pact' or lockout of trade union activists by the bosses in Barcelona in 1901. Spain's industrial revolution was based in Barcelona in Catalonia and Bilbao in the Basque country. At that time Barcelona was the most important centre of the cotton industry outside Manchester and Lancashire. Catalonia had by 1930 also developed light industry, machine shops and shipping.



Spanish Peasant Woman

When, in April 2005, the Manchester electricians spoke at a union meeting of blacklisting in the local building trade, a Catalan speaker, invited by *Tameside Trade Union Council*, told me of 'el pacto de hambre' (lockout or hunger pact) that was used in the old days against trade union militants in Barcelona.

In 1902 a General Strike was launched against the Barcelona bosses to increase pay. The Government in Madrid then declared martial law and 371 labour activists were jailed and fighting between pickets and the army left 17 dead and 44 injured. The use of the army on the streets of Barcelona as a policeman, combined with the conscripting of young men to fight disastrous wars in Spanish Morocco, combined to create an anti-military spirit among the workers of Barcelona. In July 1909, what started as a peaceful general strike by the unions against the war in Morocco ended in what was called the 'Tragic Week'.

This was provoked by a decision by the War Office to call up reserves from Catalonia. Ever since the disastrous war in Cuba led to the return of thousands of starving malaria-ridden troops to Barcelona, the people had been anti-war. As the troops left for Morocco there were sad scenes at the station and next day riots broke out across the city. The regime responded by shooting 175 workmen and in the executions that followed, Francisco Ferrer, the famous founder of the *Escuela Moderna* in Barcelona, was shot. Public reaction brought down the Maura government.

These events, and the failed general strikes of 1901 and 1909, led to the foundation, in 1911, of the *National*

#### Confederation of Labour (CNT).

The Socialist Party had founded the *General Union of Labour (UGT)* in 1888 in Barcelona, but owing to lack of support it had moved to Madrid in 1899.

Then began a trial of strength between the CNT and the local employers and Madrid Government which was to go on till the Civil War in 1936. Because of its

resistance to the Moroccan War the CNT did not regain its right to legal existence until 1914. Across Spain there were local general strikes and an insurrection by workers in the province of Valencia.

In Barcelona in 1918, the Employers' Federation, fearing the growth of trade union activity after the First World War, planned a lockout, hired pistoleros (gunmen) to shoot leading trade unionists and tried to stir up trouble to provoke the workers. The *Sindicatos Libres* (Scab unions) in 1920 were taken under the protection of the new Civil Governor of Barcelona, Martínez Anido, its affiliated gunmen armed, and set to rival the *Sindicatos (Unions)* of the CNT. The bosses began sacking CNT members and replacing them with members of the scab *Sindicatos Libres*. Anido is said to have had a list of 675 trade unionists in Barcelona who, he declared, should be shot on sight.

For five dismal years the killings went on, till in March 1923 the leader of the CNT, Salvador Seguri, was gunned down in a street in Barcelona. After this murder, the Cardinal Archbishop of Saragossa was shot in revenge. The Archbishop was one of those behind the terror against the unions. Gerald Brenan (1943) says of this carnage in Spain: 'the Church, the Army, the employers, the landowners, the State itself have all at different times, whenever their interests have appeared to them to be jeopardized, put their hands without scruple to actions of this sort. If therefore I have devoted so much space to these five sordid years in Barcelona, it is because they can be regarded as a sort of rehearsal for the recent infinitely more destructive and tragic civil war.' ● ● ●

## Rural Spain in Crisis

In his classic book *The Spanish Labyrinth: an account of the Social and Political Background of the Spanish Civil War* (1943) Gerald Brenan wrote:

'Under all the unrest and revolutionary action of the last hundred years lies the agrarian question. Reactionary farmers in Navarre (Carlists), peasants with a grievance in Catalonia (rabassaires), insurrectionary day labourers in Andalucia (anarchists), revolutionary peasant farmers and labourers on the Central tableland and in Extremadura (socialists) — all have made their contribution to the witches' cauldron.' Without a solution to the problems of the workers on the land Mr Brenan writes: '...there could be no hope of peaceful life or development for Spain.'

WE KNOW that the Daf electricians in dispute in Manchester suffered abuse, intimidation and blacklisting. We know in London, the Gate Gourmet workers were set-up by their own employers to avoid paying redundancy pay. But though they may have been manhandled by the police or courts they didn't have to face a hail of bullets when they came home from a strike meeting or picket. What happened in Spain and Catalonia makes Manchester's Peterloo look like a picnic.

Despite the bullets of the bosses' gunmen the Confederation (anarcho-sindicalist CNT) had 500,000 members by 1919. An alarmed Government was already using internment without trial against trade union militants. In January 1919 the management of the Canadian-controlled electrical power company in Barcelona cut some workers' wages without notice. Then when eight office workers complained, the firm sacked them, they appealed to the Confederation for support and the CNT replied by calling out the power workers in solidarity on 4th, February. The strike went from a sit-in solidarity strike by workers at the *Energia Electrica de Catalunya* to a city-wide general strike by the 21st, February with textile workers on the streets and most factories paralysed. This left Barcelona as a city without electricity and the authorities declared a state of siege, calling out the army to take over the power supply and arresting up to 4,000 trade unionists. In the middle of March the bosses caved-in and reinstated the sacked workers, paying part of their lost wages. The Government released some imprisoned trade unionists and introduced a 8-hour-day: thus Spain became the first country in Europe to bring in the 8-hour-day and Barcelona became possibly the most unionised city in the world.

While in Barcelona and Catalonia the industrial workers were fighting for trade union rights and emancipation, in southern Spain, in Andalucia, there had been a famine in 1905. A federation of peasants and farm labourers—the F.N.A.E.—was founded at Cordova in 1913. In 1917 the movement took off, not just in Andalucia, but in Levante in the East of Spain and later that year the F.N.A.E. went national and joined the CNT. The policy of these new farm unions was not just wage increases, but abolition of piece-work and the cultivation of land in common—collectives. This business of not having the land cultivated in common and collectivised was where the new republic failed most visibly when the moderate republicans came to power in 1931. After the victory of the republican parties in the elections of

1931 a Law of Agrarian Reform began its passage in September 1932. The success or failure of the Republic depended on its ability to put through Land Reform that would satisfy the working classes and give the regime the stability it needed. The problem for the Republican government was the world crisis and slump in agricultural prices. The resulting unemployment in Spain reached a previously unknown level as land went out of cultivation. The land workers of southern Spain were not impressed. Having expected the big estates would be broken up into collectives, they were disappointed when it became clear this was not going to happen. In April 1932 the Labour Minister, the Socialist Largo Caballero, imposed compulsory arbitration which was a camouflaged ban on the right to strike.

Largo Caballero had been head of the other big union federation - the General Labour Union (UGT) - it was an ordinary trade union confederation like the British TUC without any immediate revolutionary aims. It was smaller than the CNT, but it was strong in the mining and steel-producing areas of the Asturias and Bilbao.

The failure of the Republic to form collectives to cultivate the land in common so that the difficult dry terrain of the south, east and central Spain could be irrigated through investment, was something which came back to haunt it. In the small Andalucian town of Casas Viejas the peasants belonged to the CNT. On 8th, January 1933 a small anarchist rebellion took place in Barcelona, but the planned general strike to accompany it down in Andalucia did not take place. I lived and worked in Spain in the 1960s and it was difficult to get news on events in different parts of the country then, one can easily imagine how hard it was in the 1930s particularly in the countryside. The peasants of Casas Viejas mistakenly believed a revolution had occurred in the rest of Spain and took over their town hall. The Republican Government over-reacted and the civil guard killed 25 villagers. Raymond Carr says: 'It was the long-term effects of Casas Viejas that destroyed Azañas government in September 1933...the Republic was presented as other governments of the past—corrupt, incapable of preserving public order, yet violent.' The elections in November 1933 led to a big defeat for the Left. The Right won a landslide victory up from 42 to 207 seats in the Cortes (parliament) in Madrid. ● ● ●

# Civil War Setting: July 1936

by Brian Bamford: Secretary of Tameside TUC in his personal capacity

'Everything was rotten in Spain except the hearts of the poorer people.'  
Napier, *History of the Peninsular War*.

'The deepest tragedy for the intelligentsia involved in the Spanish struggle was that truths and lies were inextricably entangled, that the deceivers were also deceived.'

'It has been said that those who fought and died in Spain, with the bloom of their illusions untouched, were the lucky ones.'

Julian Simmons,  
*The Thirties: A Dream Revolved*

...then begins a bothersome and exhilarating second need, to go beyond himself and take on the otherness of the world in works that remain his own yet offer rights of way to everybody else... What poets do is to encourage our inclination to credit the prompting of our intuitive being. They help us to say in the recesses of ourselves... "Yes, I know something like that, too. Yes, that's right. Thank you for putting words on it and making it more or less official!"

Seamus Heaney, *The Government of the Tongue* (1988)

**THE RIGHT-WING GOVERNMENT** lasted two years from November 1933 to February 1936. From February 1936 up to the revolt of the generals in July 1936, Spain was ruled by a pure republican government without socialist participation.

On July 17th, 1936, the Spanish Legion spearheaded an attack in Spanish Morocco. The slaughter of workers and well known leftists began immediately. On July 18th, 1936 Seville was seized by the army and later that day Spain's Republican Government of Casares Quiroga resigned.

On July 19th the CNT trade union daily *Solidaridad Obrera* came out, disfigured by the Censor, with a headline entitled 'Down with fascism' and reading: 'Comrades we must be thorough in our action. The people must rise *en masse* like a single man to bar the way to fascism. In the face of the insolence of reactionary forces: death to fascism.' All of this was completely blotted-out by the Censor, but the following CNT regional communiqué went in: '**CNT of Catalonia! People of Catalonia! Be vigilant and on a war footing! The time has come to act and be constructive. Months and months we have spent criticising fascism, pointing out its shortcomings and issuing hard and fast watch-words to the effect that the people must rise up in arms when Spain's black reaction tries to foist its loathsome dictatorship upon us. That moment has arrived, people of Catalonia...We, the authentic**

representatives of the CNT in Catalonia...cannot hesitate in these grave times, in these times of action. The CNT instructs all to back the revolutionary general strike the very instant anyone revolts, while at national level the guidelines of the national committee are to be abided by...In Seville, fascism has assumed control of the situation. There is a mutiny in Cordoba. North Africa is under their control. We, the people of Catalonia, let us be on a war footing and ready to act. Be valiant! Arm yourselves and do battle. Long live the CNT! Long live libertarian communism! Launch the revolutionary general strike against fascism'

*The Regional CNT Committee.*

That very day July 19th, 1936, a part of the Barcelona garrison left its barracks and occupied key points in the city and took over some buildings such as the Hotel Ritz and telephone exchange. Troops from the Atarazanas and La Maestranza barracks took over the port district and some officers loyal to the Government were imprisoned. This was the position early hours on the Sunday morning.

The first clash took place near the CNT premises of the Woodworkers' Union where a barricade had been put up across the Paral.lel Avenue where the workers kept the troops at bay for four hours. The military then used old men, children and women as human shields to destroy the union premises. At noon the CNT began a counter attack on the enemy's rear and regained the union office. In the city centre CNT workers from Barceloneta and security forces challenged other rebel soldiers from the dockyard area and Sant Andreu barracks, who had come with reinforcements. CNT historian, José Peirats says the armed resistance of trade unionists in 'hand-to-hand fighting' broke the morale and 'military discipline' of these troops who began to break off hostilities with the workers and turn their guns on their own officers. ▶▶

▶▶The Secretary of the Metal Workers' Union, Tejedor Delgado recalls the attack on the Atarazanas barracks:

'On July 20th comrade Durruti shouted to everyone: "Forward the men of the CNT!" So began the epic attack which overshadowed the capture of the Bastille by the people of Paris. As the tremendous struggle continued hour upon hour, a boy appeared not more than 12-years-old. Amid a hail of gunfire, he...came and went,

ferrying ammunition to the fighters. When the last shot had been fired this Barcelona urchin vanished from our side.'

Events in Barcelona in Catalonia, were repeated in the Basque region, the Asturias and Madrid, as trade unionists seized guns and took to the streets.

Valencia had a stand-off for a few days while

the troops made up their minds. In the navy, though the top brass backed the rebellion, the crews knew better than the soldiers how to organise themselves to oppose their officers. The crew of the destroyer Churruca, that took the African troops to Cadiz on July 19th, rose on the 20th and shot their officers. Everywhere Sailors Committees were in control and the sailors were taking over from their officers.

In Andalucia in the South, historic home of Spanish anarchism, and in Galicia in the North, the trade unionists had no weapons and could not offer serious resistance. In Malaga, the Civil Guard colonel, unusually was arrested by his own officers, and they and the Assault Guard resisted the army when it rebelled. Then the CNT/UGT workers set fire to the army barracks and the garrison gave up. In the capital of another Andalusian province, Jaén, the Civil Governor disarmed the Civil Guard and gave their guns to the CNT and UGT trade unions. Thus, the city was saved. Antony Beevor writes: 'Obviously many more towns

would have been saved if such a course had been followed...' The Spanish Civil War began on the day of the Feria (Fair) in La Linea in Cadiz, as on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1936 troops from Morocco started landing across the Bay of Gibraltar near to Algeciras. Because of this the frontier town of La Linea was full of Gibraltarians, who on learning of the military rising by Spanish army Generals, fled back

across the border into the British Colony of Gibraltar. Some Gibraltarians normally resident in Spain and about 4,000 Spaniards joined them in their flight. When the Republican government tried to retake naval control of the Straits of Gibraltar dividing Spain from Morocco on 21, July 1936 with a naval force including the battleship *Jaime I* the



**Madrid trade unionists of the socialist UGT and anarchist CNT leave for front**

acting governor, Brigadier W.T. Brook, ordered the Spanish government ships to leave Gibraltarian waters. It seems that the Brigadier did this on learning that the crew on the *Jaime I*, loyal to their Republican government, had taken over their ship and either arrested or killed some disloyal officers. Of the Royal Navy in Gibraltar, Antony Beevor writes: 'The Invergordon mutiny of 1931...was fresh in their memories...' and the actions of the Spanish crews 'sent shudders down their spines'.

British sympathies seemed to lie with Franco and Sir Peter Chambers-Mitchell who visited Gibraltar during the Civil War claimed it was a Francoist base. Harold Nicolson, a Conservative, said 'the propertied classes in this country (Britain) with their insane pro-Franco business have placed us in a very dangerous position.' He further agreed that 'the second German war began in July 1936, when the Germans started their intervention in Spain'. Thus the British State put class interest before the national interest. ●●●

# Manchester Volunteers for Spain

## Who were they and why did they go?

LAST YEAR - 2006, the Families of the Victims of Franco asked that it be dedicated as a year of homage to all the victims of Franco. This year—2007—is the 70th anniversary of the Barcelona May Days. In May 1937 the communist police and assault guards attacked the workers in the telephone exchange in Barcelona which was under workers' control.

In Spain the first victims of General Franco occurred in October 1934, when a rebellion began in the Asturias following a National General Strike called by the Socialist trade union federation - the UGT. Anthony Beevor in **'The Battle for Spain'** writes: 'The Asturias revolution had lasted no more than two weeks, but cost around 1,000 lives.' He adds:

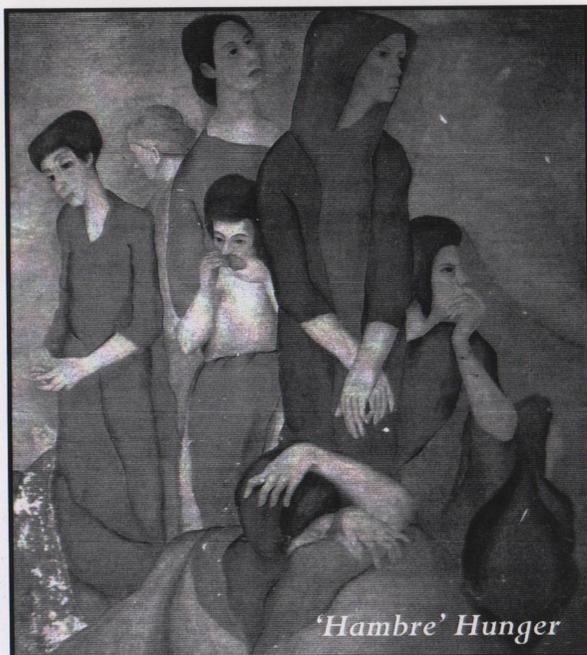
'Thousands of workers were sacked for having taken part in the rising and several thousand were imprisoned...Responsibility for the appalling brutality of the security forces lay more with their commanders, especially Yagüe and Franco, than the politicians in Madrid.'

With the rising of the Generals on July 1936 there were to be more victims, many more. Jack Jones, former General Secretary of the Transport & General Workers' Union and President of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, says: 'When Spaniards rose up to resist General Franco's military rebellion, it was an inspiration to millions of people across the world.'

While Antony Beevor claims '5,000 foreigners served outside (the International Brigades), mostly attached to the CNT or the POUM', Richard Baxell author of **'British Volunteers in Spain'** says most estimates reckon 'over 35,000 people from perhaps 53 nations left their homes to join the Republican forces.' Of these, Baxell claims, over 2,300 were British. Though most of these were recruited to the International Brigade Baxell says: 'Most members of the ILP (Independent Labour Party) fought either with the Anarchist militias or with the *Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM)*, such as George Orwell..., who was refused entry to the International Brigade being "politically suspect", and Bob Smillie, who died, probably of appendicitis, in a Republican jail in Valencia in June 1937.'

Richard Baxell estimates volunteers from the north-west of England 'numbered approximately 370'. Most of these came from Manchester, Oldham and Liverpool. Hugh Thomas in his

by Brian Bamford (Editor)



*'Well, to me it was elementary. Here was fascism spreading all over the world, the rape of Abyssinia, the rise of fascism in Germany and the persecution of the Jews there and the rise of the Blackshirts in Britain with their anti-Semitism, and especially their anti-Irishism. I felt that somebody had to do something to try and stop it.'*

*Sam Wild, Manchester leader of the British Battalion*

were not having it all their own way.' At the start of the civil war Baxell says: 'the two sides were relatively balanced and there seemed a genuine chance that, at last, the seemingly irrevocable advance of fascism might be held back.' As Sam Wild says above: *'Here was fascism spreading all over the world, the rape of Abyssinia, the rise of fascism in Germany and the persecution of the Jews there...'* AJP Taylor observed: 'What men believed at the time was more important than what was actually happening.' Most of the British volunteers saw the Spanish war as a war against fascism and Spain as merely a battleground in this international conflict. The *News Chronicle* stressed the international aspect of the war and gave the International Brigades sympathetic coverage. Leslie Preger from Salford explains his decision to go: *'I saw an account in the News Chronicle of a trade union meeting which set up a Medical Aid Committee and an appeal for lorry drivers and Spanish speaking people. So I hared off to London to volunteer and was accepted.'* ▶▶

book **'The Spanish Civil War'** says 'over 80% were working class, many were unemployed and over 60% were communists.' Baxell claims: 'The level of trade union membership supports Bill Alexander's remark that '[a] high rate of trade-union membership was not untypical.' Many of their jobs were manual working class: bricklayers, metal and engineering workers, miners, electricians, labourers and painters.

### Why did they go?

Well before the military rising in Spanish Africa civilian agents of the plot of the Generals against the Spanish republic hired a *de Havillan Dragon Rapid* in London with the money of the banker Juan March. The plane was used

to take General Franco to Tetuan to join the Spanish army of Africa. As the rising first occurred on July 18th, 1936 in Spanish Morocco, Anthony Beevor says: 'The hesitancy of the republican government was fatal in a rapidly developing crisis...The prime minister did not dare arm the UGT and CNT (trade unions). On the 18th, July the CNT and UGT declared a General Strike against the military rebellion. Towns such as Jaén where the civil governor distributed arms to the CNT and UGT were secured.'

Richard Baxell writes: 'In Spain, for the first time in continental Europe, the "fascists"



Poster of collectivised public transport services which were under CNT control in Barcelona

▶▶ Albert Charlesworth, a metal polisher from Oldham, Greater Manchester declared: 'I was, and still am, inclined to side with any little party where I think any injustice is being done, and this, I think, is what took me to Spain...' Others, like Manchester volunteer Maurice Levine from Cheetham, joined-up because their friends were going: 'One of the prime factors in me making an application to go to Spain was that Eddie Swindells, a glass worker friend of mine, was very friendly with Arnold Jeans (from Manchester) who had already gone to Spain with Clem Beckett.'

Levine worked for the Manchester clothing manufacturers Marshall & Crosslands with Julius 'Jud' Coleman. Levine and Coleman travelled to Spain with Ralph Cantor (formerly Cantorovitch) from Manchester (see Ralph Cantor's journal below), George Westfield (Cheetham), Bill Benson (Eccles) and Eddie Swindells (Salford). Of Maurice Stott from Rochdale who died in Spain George Brown says: 'Maurice Stott was...a sound confident man, who didn't hesitate for business reasons to come out and take the greatest personal risks in the battle against a foul autocracy.' Others like Joe Norman, a Communist Party Organiser with the British Battalion, had been involved in many earlier protests in the North of England such as the mass trespass in 1932 and the Unemployed Workers' Move-

ment. Joe Norman said: 'My first real experience of political activity was the mass trespass on Kinderscout in Derbyshire which eventually led to the designation of the area as a National Park. Dozens of those that fought the police and landowners on that trespass were later to fight and die in Spain—men like Clem Beckett (from Oldham) and George Brown.' Joe Norman, who was an amateur boxer, was imprisoned in Spain (see Dave Chapple's comments on inside back cover). Since our 1st edition, South West England trade unionist Dave Chapple has been interviewing a nurse who served in the Spanish Civil War and in Lancashire relatives of *International Brigade* volunteer James Keogh, killed in March 1938, are in touch with *Tameside TUC*.

A telling admission is made by André Marty, the *International Brigades'* Controller and chief communist Comintern representative in Spain, he said that he had ordered the shooting of 500 *International Brigade* volunteers. This was, says Anthony Beevor: 'nearly one-tenth of the total killed in the war...' A shadow hangs over this Spanish war and it is not helped by the attitude of communists who are often anxious to cover up the truth and even tried to prevent the publication of this commemorative booklet. Dave Chapple, in his *Afterword*, says the 'Spanish Civil War deserves a decent debate'. But some still think ignorance is bliss. ●

# Manchester's Spanish Civil War Volunteers

This list of volunteers was first compiled by Christopher J. Carson on behalf of *Eccles & District History Society* with the help of Ruth and Eddie Frow, founders of the Working Class History Library, it has been edited: Leslie Preger and Mike Brown, for example, have been added based on information in Richard Baxell's book *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War (2004)*. Many on the list were in the *Communist Party* and the *Young Communist League* as both these organisations, together with the *Independent Labour Party*, openly supported intervention on the side of the young Spanish democracy. Both the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress opposed intervention on behalf of the recently elected Spanish Republican Government. Yet, as you will see, several members of the *Labour Party*, such as Salford lad Michael Goodison—a *Transport & General Workers' Union* member—who has been described as a 'syndicalist', served in Spain on the republican side. Arnold Jeans was a member of the *Socialist Party of Great Britain* and is distinguished in being one of the first British volunteers to arrive in Spain and one of the first to die, his efforts seem to have influenced others such as Eddie Swindells and Maurice Levine. Walter Sproston and Arthur Clinton, both from Swinton, were members of the *Independent Labour Party*. Clinton was one of about thirty Englishmen who fought with the *POUM* militia which was portrayed in the Ken Loach Spanish Civil War film *'Land and Freedom'*. Arthur Clinton stands out because he fought with George Orwell and was mentioned in Orwell's book *Homage to Catalonia*:  
**'The English had got into the habit of saying that this wasn't a war, it was a bloody pantomime. We were hardly under direct fire from the Fascists. The only danger was from stray bullets...All the casualties at this time was from strays. Arthur Clinton got a mysterious bullet that smashed his left shoulder and disabled his arm, permanently, I am afraid.'**

*Unless otherwise stated, these men fought with the International Brigades, but in 1936 some may have served with either the Anarchist or POUM militias before being transferred to the Brigades:*

**Armstrong, Alex:** Manchester. Young Communist. Took part in Mass Trespass at Kinderscout in 1932. Was killed at Jarama in 1937.

**Booth, Syd:** Manchester. Secretary of Greater Manchester Trade Union Spanish Solidarity Committee.

**Brown, George:** Secretary of Manchester Communist Party Branch. Political commissar in Spain. Killed at Villanueva de la Cañada in July 1937.

**Brown, Michael:** Manchester. Brother of George Brown above. Deserted in December 1936, declaring: 'this isn't a war, this is bloody madness. I've had enough.'

**Cantor, Ralph:** Cheetham. Jewish Lads' Brigade. *Young Communists League*. Took part in Mass Trespass in 1932. Interpreter and machine gunner in Spain. Killed at Brunete in 1937.

**Coleman, Jud:** Manchester *Young Communist League*. Said of the attempt to break the stalemate at Jarama 1937: 'Most of the attacks were almost suicidal, because there's no way you can send men against machine guns without losing some.'

**Fanning, Tommy:** Hulme. *Communist Party* member, National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Lost a leg at Jarama in 1937.

**Goodman, Benny:** Cheetham. Born 1918. Motor mechanic. Member of Jewish Lads' Brigade. Captured by General Franco's Nationalists in Spain but escaped. Worked in cookhouse while in the International Brigades, but was eventually sent home for being underage.

**Jordan, Lawrence:** Miles Platting (or Rochdale: see *Brigadas Internacionales* by Antonio Diez). Died at Brunete 1937.

**Kenny, Patrick:** Anglo-Irish from Manchester. National Unemployed Workers' Movement and *Young Communist League*.

**Killick, Fred:** Manchester. *Young Communist League* Committee Member. Killed Jarama in 1937.

**Levine, Maurice:** Cheetham. *Communist Party* member and took part in Mass Trespass. Fought at Cordoba, Jarama and wounded at Brunete. Political commissar and 'a sort of welfare officer...' in the International Brigades.

**McKenna, Bernard:** Hulme. Member of the *Young Communist League*. He served in Spain from February 1937 till October 1938. Was at battles of Brunete, Quinto Fuentes de Ebro, Teruel and retreat on the Aragon front. Was twice wounded. Taken prisoner with Joe Norman in March 1938.

**Masky, Bert:** Cheetham. Barber. *National Unemployed Workers' Movement*. Killed Jarama 1937.

**Moor, Thomas:** Miles Platting. *Young Communist League*. Killed Teruel 1938.

**Morgan, Charles:** Moss Side. Wounded and returned home in 1937 after a 'disastrous attack' on 27th, February at Jarama.

**Parkes, Albert:** Manchester. Killed Brunete in 1937.

**Porter, Arthur:** Rusholme. Sheet metal worker who worked for the Co-op. Killed Jarama 1937.

**Rosenfield, Monty:** Cheetham. Went to Spain aged 19 and fought with the *International Brigade*.

**Shammah, Victor:** Didsbury. Secretary of *Young Communist League* and local trade unionist. Killed Belchite in 1938.

**Silvert, Sidney:** Cheetham. Member of the *Communist Party* and friend of Ralph Cantor who returned home and later became critic of the *Communist Party*. Seen as a 'Black Sheep' by the *Communist Party* (see Antonio Diez: '*Brigadas Internacionales*').

**Ward, Robert:** Moss Side *Young Communist League* and *National Unemployed Workers' Movement*. Sheet metal worker. Killed in June 1937 (see Cantor's journal).

**Westfield, George:** Cheetham. *Young Communist League*. Killed Belchite 1938.

**Whitehead, Frank:** Wythenshaw. *Labour Party* member. Killed Jarama 1937.

**Wild, Sam:** Ardwick. Served in the navy. Became Battalion Commander when Bill Alexander was wounded (see Dolores Long's account of her father).

**Wilkinson, Norman:** Miles Platting. *Young Communist League* and *National Unemployed Workers' Movement* member. Killed Jarama in 1937.

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# Salford's Spanish War Volunteers

**Banks, William:** Eccles. *Communist Party* and *Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU)* member. Worked at Gardeners Ltd., Eccles. Killed at Ebro in 1938.

**Benson, William:** 1911-1968. Eccles. Electrician and member of the *Electrical Trade Union*. Chairman of National Unemployed Workers' Movement and participated in Mass Trespass in 1932. Stood as *Labour* Candidate for Eccles Borough Council.

**Brown, Frank:** Salford. *Salford Labour League of Youth*. National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Killed at Ebro 1938.

**Clinton, Arthur:** Swinton. *Independent Labour Party*, National Unemployed Workers' Movement. Fought with George Orwell in the *POUM (Marxist Workers' Party)* in Catalonia: wounded in action.

**Fink, Sydney:** Salford. Born 1917. Lived in Fenny Street and attended Waterloo Road School. Member of Workers' Arts Club. Killed Belchite in 1938.

**Goodison, Michael:** Salford. Worked as a docker and although he was a *Labour Party* member has been described as a 'Syndicalist'. He was a member of the Transport & General Workers' Union. Killed at Ebro in 1938.

**Goodman, W. Robert:** Salford. Engraver. Member of *Young Communist League* and *Workers' Support Federation*. Involved in Mass Trespass in 1932. Killed at Jarama in 1937.

**Greenhalgh, Walter:** Wounded in neck in an attempt to retake the Madrid-Corunna road on 15th, January 1937.

**Jeans, Arnold:** Salford(?). Of Russian origins. Member of the *Socialist Party of Great Britain*. One of the first

British fighters to arrive in Spain. He fought and led a small group in the Thaelman Battalion and as he knew six languages he acted as an interpreter. Killed in November 1936.

**Newbury, Fred:** Salford. Born 1900 on Whit Lane. Builder and property repairer. *Labour Party* member. Killed Jarama in 1937. (see Obituary in *Salford City Reporter*: 19th, March 1937)

**Norman, Joe:** Salford. Attended Ordsall Board School. Engineer and active trade unionist. Lancashire District Committee of the *Communist Party*. Amateur boxer. Captured in Spain and spent time in captivity. (See *Salford City Reporter*: 8th, July 1938 and 4th, November 1938)

**Preger, Leslie:** Salford. He was influenced by a friend who had been at the Workers' Olympiad in Barcelona when the war broke out. The Barcelona Workers' Olympiad was the 'socialist riposte to the Berlin Olympics'. Preger said of a mate of his who came from Manchester: 'He came back towards the end of July full of stories about the uprising and brought back cartridge cases, flags, and the rest of it.' Preger later rejected the *Communist Party* saying: 'I just drifted away, especially because of their attitude to the *Poumists* and anarchists.'

**McGinley, W.L.:** Salford. Leader of *National Unemployed Workers' Movement* and member of *Communist Party*.

**Sproston, Walter:** Swinton. Engineer and *Independent Labour Party* member. Killed Belchite in 1937.

**Swindells, Eddie:** Pendlebury. *Communist Party* and *Workers' Arts Club* member in Salford. Craftsman in glass. Killed Jarama in 1937.

# The Oldham, Rochdale, Tameside, Bury, Bolton and Stockport Lads

## OLDHAM:

**Beckett, Clem:** Oldham. Joined the *Communist Party*. Speedway rider known as the 'Red Devil' and invented the Wall of Death. Killed at Jarama in 1937.

**Bradbury, Ken:** Oldham. Founder of Oldham *Young Communist League*. Killed at Teruel in 1938.

**Charlesworth, Arthur:** Oldham. A metal polisher. Sent home for being under age, returned later to join International Brigade and fought against the Moors at 'Suicide Hill', Jarama in February 1937: 'There weren't many to go back...' he said.

**Jackson, William:** Oldham. Killed at Gandesa in April 1938.

**Lees, Joseph:** Oldham. Secretary of local *Labour Party*. Played tenor horn in Oldham Territorial Band. Killed at Brunete in 1937.

**Rawson 'Heap', Harry:** Oldham. Killed Cordova in 1936

**Wolstencroft, Clifford:** Oldham. Killed Belchite in March 1938.

## ROCHDALE:

**Ferguson, Alex:** Smallbridge, Rochdale. Survived the Spanish Civil War and lived in Smallbridge where he worked as

a caretaker. He died a few years ago.

**Stott, Maurice:** Smallbridge. Killed at Jarama in February 1937. No obituary found in the *Rochdale Observer* at the time. He was a friend of George Brown, who was a political commissar in the International Brigade in Spain.

## TAMESIDE:

**Keogh, James:** Ashton-under-Lyne. Died at Calaceite in March 1938. No obituary found in *Ashton Reporter*.

## BURY:

**Fillingham, Joe:** Bury. Member of *Bury Trades Council* executive committee, General & Municipal Workers' Union, and *Communist Party*, and often wrote letters to the *Bury Times* on the Spanish Civil War. Went to Spain in August 1937, served in Major Attlee company and was made Sergeant December 1937. Killed Teruel: 20th, January 1938. See *Bury Times* and *Daily Worker* for obituaries at the time.

## BOLTON:

**Alwyn, James:** Bolton. Died at Jarama in February 1937.

## STOCKPORT:

**Brown, William:** Stockport. Killed at Jarama in February 1937.

## SAM WILD: ARDWICK VOLUNTEER

by his daughter Dolores Long of the International Brigade Memorial Trust

**SAM WILD** was born in Ardwick in 1908. His mother died when he was 2 year-old, and he was brought up by his dad, a fitter and turner, who worked in Gorton. His mother had been an Irish immigrant and he was aware of the struggles of the Irish people for independence, often, going to Stevenson's Square to listen to speakers calling for Home Rule for Ireland. Life was hard and unstable, and Sam left school at 14. At this time his father was unemployed, his brother in an orphanage, his sister was in Service. Thus Sam decided to join the navy; he did so not out of enthusiasm for a life at sea, but because it was a secure job that provided accommodation and food.

The navy was the start of Sam Wild's political education. He saw appalling poverty in some of the countries he visited. He realised that the officers in the navy saw themselves as superior to foreigners and to the lower ranks within the navy. He hated the rigid class system that existed on the ship. He read widely and finding it impossible to tolerate the navy with its outdated attitudes and values he deserted.

Returning to Manchester and unemployment he became involved in the Unemployed Workers' Movement. It was through attending meetings that he became aware of the struggle in Spain. With his friend Bert Maskey he left for Spain in November 1936, reaching Albacete on December 29th, 1936.

Sam was involved in many of the major battles, leading with 'conspicuous

wisdom and courage' and when Bill Alexander was wounded Sam was promoted to Battalion Commander (Bill Alexander suffered a shoulder wound on the 16th, February 1938 during a night attack on Segura de Baños).

On 25th, July 1938 the Republican army took the offensive. They crossed the Ebro and advance rapidly. Sam's battalion fought with such gallantry and courage that they earned the title of the 'Shock Brigade'. Under his leadership the battalion took part in the famous defence of Hill 666 in the Sierra Pandols. Although wounded in his right hand, Sam refused to leave the front line and carried on fighting. He was awarded the Spanish Medal of Valour for his leadership and gallantry, and was mentioned in despatches for 'His untiring energy, efficiency and sangfroid, giving an example of bravery to the whole battalion.'



*Grenade-throwers of the Durruti column*

In a speech on leaving Spain Sam said: 'The British Battalion is prepared to carry on the work begun here to ensure that our five hundred comrades who sleep forever beneath the Spanish soil shall serve as an example to the entire British people in the struggle against Fascism' In the final days the Battalion had pledged: 'We are returning to our respective countries not for celebrations in our honour, not to rest, but to continue the fight we helped to wage in Spain. We are merely changing the fronts and the weapons.' In different ways, individually and through other organisations, the great majority of the volunteers kept that pledge. ●

## Memoria Historica

**IN SPAIN, today**, the debate over the *memoria historica* (historical memory) of the victims of Franco is very much alive among the Spanish people. Many trade unionists were executed when General Franco took power in 1939. Antony Beevor (2006) writes: 'We do not have the final figure for the Franquist terror, but recent researches in more than half the provinces of Spain indicate a minimum there of 35,000 official executions.' Thus he estimates the 'generally accepted figure of 50,000 (official executions) after the war may be low.' But if one takes the 'random killings, and those who died during the war from execution, suicide, hunger and sickness in prison, the total figure probably approaches 200,000'.

On 30th, July 2006, in the Spanish daily *El Pais*, the historian Julián Casanova said: 'The Civil War was followed by a long

dictatorship and an enormous disequilibrium between the memory of the victors and the vanquished.' Señor Casanova claims: 'On the 50th anniversary of Civil War in 1986, most of the commemorations were a homage to the International Brigades' and avoided the political debate. He says 'in the 1990s the victims', the victims on the republican side, began to call for 'homage to the vanquished'. He also talks of 'un pacto de olvido': 'a pact of forgetfulness', because 'the left has failed to assume the struggle for human rights'.

In Spain, as a consequence of this neglect, the Association for the Recuperation of the Historical Memory has been set up. Yet in England, it seems, on the left and right there are those who still want to ignore the historical memory and implications of the Spanish Civil War. ● ● ●

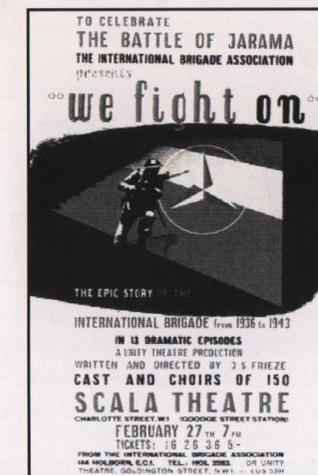
## International Brigade Volunteer Ralph Cantor's Unpublished Diary.

**RALPH CANTOR**, originally Cantorvitch, from Cheetham arrived in Barcelona on the 1st, December 1936. He was a member of the Young Communist League and had been in the Jewish Lads Brigade. Christopher J. Carson says of Cantor 'he was one of the first Mancunians to arrive in Spain and was only 21 years old when he was killed' in 1937. Arnold Jeans, however, from Salford, was already dead in November: killed at Boadillia. When he got to Albacete two days later, capital of a poorer Valencian province that the International Brigades were using for induction of new recruits, his first duty was to attend the funeral of Hans Beimer, a well known German communist.

In 3rd, January 1937 he attended the trial of his

commander De Lasalle, who he says 'proved to be receiving money from the Italians (Franco's allied enemy army)'. He adds: 'Verdict...sentence and execution within 20 minutes.' Recent writers such as Anthony Beevor now think De Lasalle was really guilty of incompetence rather than treachery. On 10th, January Ralph Cantor moved to the Madrid front and was involved in the battle there where 'Wally Greenhalgh (from Manchester) was wounded'. In the centre of Madrid on 16th, January he writes: 'Puerto del Sol heavily bombed.' He reported on 17th, January: 'Sixty Fascist planes fly over' and next day that he 'visited anarchist comrades at Hotel Europa - very friendly and hospitable especially to a Communist.'

On Sunday 24th, January 1937 he arrived again at Albecete and says 'had a royal welcome with band addressed by Andry (sic) Marty.' On Tuesday 26th, January he reports: 'Nathan now Chief of Staff of 15th Brigade'. Nathan had been a commander with the Black & Tans. Then on 5th, February he tell us: 'Today (I was) attached to Brigade General Headquarters Guard Company' and the next day left for the front. By 11th, February he is 'moving to Jarama on San Martin front - scene of heaviest battle of the war.' The Salford lads suffer and he reports on 15th, February: 'Swindells, Goodman and Benison (all from Salford) wounded' and that 'Killick (Manchester)



*British International Brigade post civil war commemoration*

*As Ralph Cantor and the International Brigade lads in the trenches moaned about the Commissars, the Moscow Commissars told their own tales of the International Brigade attitude to the Spaniards. Document 70 in the Moscow Archives by Colonel (Walter): 'Everyone was superior to the French, but even they were superior to the Spanish...' or that 'the Spanish were "cowards".' Colonel Walter reports: 'This is just slander'. Walters says: 'The English...soldiers...were smoking "Lucky Strikes," not paying attention to the Spanish fighter standing next to them, who had spent days looking for a few shreds of tobacco...' Civilised sharing of food with others in a spirit of camaraderie is basic to Spanish culture.*

reported missing.'

On 22nd, February he writes: 'Sydney and Bob Ward (from Manchester) move up to front.' His entry of 28th, February says: 'Casualties include killed: Wilkinson (Miles Platting), Macky (may be 'Masky' from Cheetham), Goodman (Cheetham), Porter (Rusholme), Armstrong (Manchester), Swindells (Pendlebury), Killick (Manchester),

Kenny (Manchester), Beckett (Oldham). Wounded Benson (Eccles), Barker (Greater Manchester).'

In March 1937 during a lull in the fighting Ralph Cantor reports 18th, March: 'Place appears full of American journalists and newsreal men, same type as depicted by films' and goes on about visits by politicians like Harry Pollitt the Communist Party leader, writers such as Ste-

ven Spender and the Indian broadcaster Anand. Of Professor Haldane Cantor writes: 'Professor J.B. Haldane stays here. Why do professors stutter? Eccentricity!' He adds on 31st, March: 'Some disgusting characters sent out from various countries. No selection. Drunkards, thieves, hypocrites. Glasgow, Manchester, London and France worst culprits...' Stephen Spender's secretary who joined the International Brigade told Spender some of the Glasgow recruits 'turned out to be razor-slashers': 'They drank heavily, passed out, and then drank again.' (see *A World Within*).

After Professor Haldane left on 2nd, April there was a battle with '3 killed, 5 wounded', but by 4th, April a '48 hour standby order (was) given in preparation for big attack...against Italians', but he says this 'attack gives no material advantage'. Cantor's entry on 8th/9th April: 'American correspondent "New Masses" gets all information from office 6 kilometers (sic) to rear of line. Typical of all these journalists.' In this way journalists, according to Cantor, got hold of false information. Then his entry on 10th, April: 'Political Commissariat make grave errors or show favouritism in sending comrades to England...much grumbling.' Political commissars were mainly Communist Party appointees reporting back to Moscow.

continued ►►

The 11th, April entry: '...those sent out direct to big (command) positions fail. Boys (are) all conscious of this McCartney, Winterington, McDade, Kerrigan etc. Men from ranks produce best and most courageous leaders Nathan, Cunningham, Copeman, Goodfellow, Meredith etc.' On 12th, April Cantor commented: 'It appears that only workers who are free from bourgeois influence and upbringing can really lead such sharp struggles.' His misgivings continued on 15th, April: 'News we get now totally soaked in propaganda... propaganda department both of Government and International Brigade especially overstepping the mark.' Then on 16th April: 'Political Commissars persist in treating us as children or political ignorants (sic).' His doubts about his own party propaganda doesn't stop him from 'teach(ing) Spaniards propaganda and politics' while 'win(ning) 450 pesetas gambling' from them.

Cantor's assessment on 24th, April: 'Political Commissariat of Battalion and Brigade definite failures due to inexperience...wrong approach and wrong line.' He adds: 'English Battalion Commissars succeed in provoking discontent in some decisions (sic).' On 26th, April his entry is: 'It seems as if military mistakes of a character such as in the great war must occur owing to difficult circumstances, but Political Commissariat all along fed us with lies. Political Commissars are the most disliked men in the Brigade. Spirit of men notwithstanding excellent...Some comrades suggest abolition of Political Commissars in conversation.'

By 2nd, May 1937 he is complaining about disturbing feature of the war such as 'distinctions which are too acute for justification.' For instance: 'A Sergeant receives more than double a volunteer. An officer three times as much and higher officers more. Also acute distinctions in food and accommodation.' Compare what Anthony Beevor (2006) writes: 'Probably the greatest contrast between Madrid and Barcelona was in the use of hotels. In the capital Gaylords was later taken over by the Communist Party as a luxurious billet for its senior functionaries and Russian advisers. In Barcelona the Ritz was used by the CNT and the UGT as Gastronomic Unit Number One - a public canteen for all those in need.'

On 3rd, May Cantor writes: 'Brigade newspaper almost a fashion plate weekly for the officers.' As he stands by expecting a big offensive he objects to 'further exhibition of bad organisation' and poor food 'no clean clothes, no boots after 7 days in line...Men all lousy...Conditions worse than I experience in... December. No baths.' On 9th, May he puts in an entry: 'Political Commissars ask lads to retrieve the low name of the (Communist) Party. Political leadership of our Brigade entirely CP (Communist Party).'

With a lecture by Ralph Bates, a Political Commissar, senior Communist Party official and English writer who had a good understanding of Spanish life in Andalucia, to the troops in an entry on 14th, May Ralph Cantor, it seems, has his doubts put to rest:

'Bates lectures on "Disorders in Cataloña". Speech shows that the POUM (Workers' United Marxist

Party), Trotskyists and spies engineered it. Machine guns, tanks, rifles etc. in abundance and we after 3 months at front still using antiques. What is Caballero doing?' The Political Commissar Ralph Bates' lecture had done the trick since Cantor's entry on 15th/16th, May: 'Arising out of Bates' lecture that Spain has always been the most bloody and reactionary country even ignoring the inquisition. Always feuds, sects, parties and church factions...Events now show with clarity the whole trend. I am able to see a complete vision of the causes leading to the war, the building of the "Frente Poplar", the various phases of the war. If we had a united command the war would already be won.'

On 21st, May he writes: 'Ralph Bates (sic) lectures on the New Government in the trenches. UGT leaders and all CNT abstain from Government. It is clear that despite Bates denials that the Government problem is still unsettled...'

On 22nd, May: 'Very evident now Government of Caballero (Socialist/UGT) was a sort of compromise government. No offensive on the Aragon front. Failure to disarm the rearguard Battalion. Failure to build an army in Basque country—all fault of Government. Also I believe from good signs that Caballero was promised help from outside countries if he would shelve the Communists. This he accepted. Biggest failure of the old (Government) was its failure to create a new army and reserves.' On the 23rd, May: 'Anarchists provoke trouble in Catalonia. Madrid full of Tailors Generals. Automobiles needed for front. New Government seems strong enough to change this.'

On 12th, June: 'Bob Ward (Manchester) hit by mortar 3 hours before leaving line outside his blockhouse.' Then on 14th, June: 'Aitken and Williams by hard work relieve the tense political feeling. Old indignation against Old Guard (political commissars?) remains.'

Ralph Bates, assistant Political Commissar of the 15th International Brigade, clearly had a critical impact on Ralph Cantor. Bates, a British intellectual who had lived in Spain and knew Spain was not part of the aristocratic Grand Tour in the 18th Century having been historically damned by the 'Black Legend' as being by nature reactionary. It seems he fed this old tale of Spain and the Spanish people as backward to Cantor and the other comrades in the trenches: 'Arising out of Bates' lecture that Spain has always been the most bloody and reactionary country even ignoring the inquisition. Always feuds, sects, parties and church factions...'

Bates may have convinced Cantor of the hopelessness of Spanish civilisation, but, it seems, he was not entirely convinced himself by his own blackballing of Spain, as Burnett Bolloten writes: 'Ralph Bates...wrote to me after he had severed his ties with the Communist Party: "The CP drive against the collectives was absolutely wrong, for while there were plenty of abuses, forced collectivisation..., there were plenty of good collectives, i.e., voluntary ones".' The honest soldier, Ralph Cantor, met his death during the Brunete offensive that failed in July 1937. There were 331 volunteers in the British Battalion at the start and only 42 at the end. Later General Kléber reported to Moscow: 'I have begun to worry a great deal about the International Brigades.' ●

# Spanish War: Them Who Got Away!

INTERVIEW WITH PEDRO CUADRADO

PEDRO CUADRADO, now 85, did not always live in Bolton on Halliwell Road: in July 1936 his family was plunged into the midst of the Spanish Civil War in Barcelona when he was only 15-years-old. His family had migrated to Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, from Murcia and his father worked at a factory making fertilizers and was a member of the famous trade union confederation: the CNT. Pedro, who had been born just outside Barcelona at Mongat, told us: 'The (Socialist) UGT' trade union federation was very small in Barcelona. His older brother, Antonio, died of typhus while serving in the Spanish republican army in the war in 1937.

Pedro worked in a rug making factory for a year or so and worked as a volunteer with the Red Cross at night. Later he joined the Republican Police or local Guardia in Barcelona at the age of 17. Once in the police he went on duties seeking out smugglers, Fascists and the '5th Column': agents of Franco working against the republican government in Catalonia.

He said that though his family was in the CNT national trade union confederation he was 'not an anarchist as he didn't understand that philosophy', but he was a 'trade unionist'. Pedro said the CNT was the most 'important trade union in Barcelona' and Barcelona was the biggest and most modern city in Spain. The UGT (socialist) was bigger in Madrid he said, but 'Barcelona' he claimed, 'is the first town that won against the fascists'. 'You have Durruti', he added, 'he belonged to the anarchists and Ascaso, and when Durruti died he had maybe 1 million people go to his funeral because he liberated Barcelona: good fighter you see. People who supported the Revolution.'

He tells us there were not many communists in Spain in 1936: 'a few thousand' (in February 1936 the party put its own membership at 30,000). Pedro told us: 'The Commissars came from Russia during the Civil War and were taking over everything'. Undermining 'the Socialists, the Spanish republicans and the CNT' trade union confederation'.

When asked why he kept referring to the Spanish Civil War

as a 'revolution', Pedro said: 'Because a revolution is where you throw the rich people out and the Civil War is just the fight against Franco'. But Pedro insisted that in 1936 that what happened in Barcelona 'definitely it was a revolution!'

In July 1938 he was sent to the battle of the Ebro but owing to an accident in which their truck turned over, he arrived too late. He later went with the refugees across the frontier into France, and crossed the frontier on the 7th, January 1939. There they were kept in camps such as Batares, and dug holes in the sand to shelter from the sun. He said that had he gone back to Spain he would 'have been shot' and that 'thousands died like that'.

When the Second World War started in September 1939 Pedro became 'a volunteer in working companies on the Luxemburg border with Germany.' When the Germans entered France Pedro retreated to Switzerland, but wasn't allowed in. Afterwards he was captured by the Germans who accused him of being 'a communist'; Pedro truthfully said 'I am not communist!' and untruthfully claimed he 'was a young Spanish grape-picker'. He later escaped from the Germans and lived rough with other Spaniards in the French countryside. As the Germans retreated and the allies took them as 'prisoners of war' and sent them to England, first to Colchester military camp. Pedro told a British officer that they weren't 'prisoners of war', and he was sent by the British intelligence officer with a Spanish delegation to the Ministry of War in London to describe the German fortifications in France. From Colchester he went to Addlington Camp near Chorley, in Lancashire.

From Lancashire they sent telegrams to Tito in Yugoslavia and President Cardenas in Mexico asking for support and Manchester trade unionists like Horris Newbold came to help. On his release Pedro got a job with Grundy (father of Bill Grundy) in Salford's Langworthy Road and later with Friedman in Back Turner Street in Shudehill on £6 a week. In 1964 he opened a Taverna in Bolton, which closed in the 1990s. ●

## José Rovira

PEDRO CUADRADO mentioned the name of another inmate in the Addlington Camp with him called José Rovira. José Rovira was well known in anarchist circles in the north of England in the 1950s. He visited James Pinkerton who was a Father of Chapel on the Sunday People and had earlier worked as a copy-taker on the Daily Herald. Jimmy Pinkerton who lived in Ashton-under-Lyne was a well known anarcho-syndicalist as was his friend Jack McPhearson in Dukinfield, who Rovira also visited. Jack's wife Margaret still remembers Rovira.

Robert Alexander (1998) reports a José (Josep) Rovira commanding the Lenin Column sent by the POUM to fight alongside the Durruti Column in July 1937. Later in June 1937, Antony Beevor (2006) writes: 'On 16 June, when the POUM was declared illegal, the communists turned its headquarters in Barcelona into a prison for "Trotskyists". The commander of the 29th Division, Colonel Rovira, was summoned to army headquarters and arrested. POUM leaders who could be located, including Andrés Nin, were also arrested.' Beevor records that the Communists Party's 'bitter attack was launched

against Prieto for having freed Rovira, the POUM commander, from prison.' We know José Rovira was arrested by the Germans while fighting with the Forces Françaises, but later escaped.

What we don't know for sure is if the José Rovira who was with Pedro at Addlington, was the same José (Josep) Rovira referred to by Alexander and Beevor as the POUM commander who fought alongside the Durruti Column in Aragon. In his Document 46 (30/7/37) to Voroshilov, the Russian agent Dimitrov reports: 'The most disgraceful and scandalous fact is the case with the Trotskyist Rovira, commander of the 29th Division. This is a POUMist division and its commander was one of the leaders of the POUM...they freed this Rovira from prison and again appointed him commander of the 29th Division.' In spite of the arrest of 1,000 POUM militants, historian Ronald Radosh says: 'Historians of the POUM have explained, its strong local base allowed its members to gain protection from other worker militants.' (see 'SPAIN BETRAYED: The Soviet Union in the Spanish Civil War') ●

## 'NO TIME FOR ROMANCE UNTIL WAR IS OVER'

Account of Stalybridge girl—Lillian Urmston's part in Spanish Civil War  
by Derek Pattison: President of Tameside TUC in his personal capacity

ALTHOUGH never involved in party politics, nurse Lillian Urmston, from Stalybridge, always sympathised with 'the underdog'. Born in 1915, Lillian had lived on Copley Street and had attended St. Paul's elementary school. She had also trained as a nurse at the Lake Hospital in Ashton.

As one of a number of qualified British nurses, she arrived in Spain in June 1937. Her train journey through Spain had been hazardous and difficult as the train frequently came under fire from enemy aircraft. Both Lillian and a fellow travelling companion, Dorothy Low, an Australian nurse, had also been detained in Port Bou.

In Spain, Lillian was attached to a medical unit and worked on the Aragon front rendering medical assistance to injured government troops. She was also a member of the Territorial Army nursing services for Britain.

When on leave from Spain, Lillian often addressed many local meetings and organised fundraising in order to obtain medical and other supplies to take back to Spain.

In October 1938, she addressed a Labour meeting at Stalybridge Town Hall and appealed for funds. A number of speakers referred to the 'splendid and heroic work' that Lillian had undertaken in Spain. In nearby Hyde, a womens' committee had been fundraising and making woollen garments and socks to send to the Republican troops in Spain. In Ashton, a benefit night was held at the *Palais de Danse*.

At the various meetings where she spoke, Lillian referred to the house-to-house collections which had raised money

for medical and other supplies for Spain. She told the local 'Reporter' newspaper that in 'certain quarters' in Stalybridge:

"I have had a great deal of hostility to meet but in spite of it all, our efforts to obtain funds have met with a lot of appreciation from people not only in Stalybridge but Hyde, Dukinfield, Ashton, Manchester and Kendal. The Stalybridge Committee formed to help the medical aid fund has done nobly. The house-to-house and other collections have had a splendid response and it is mainly due to the efforts of the working class that I am getting financial success."

Shortly before returning to Spain, Lillian told the local newspapers: "Something has been said here about romance. I have many friends in this country, but I have no time to think about love, romance, or marriage, until this war is finished."

After leaving Spain, Lillian Urmston was interned in a French camp with Spanish medical staff before being released. During the Second World War she worked as an army-nursing officer and was badly injured by shellfire in Anzio, Italy. In later life, she became a writer/journalist and with her husband, who she married in 1945, she travelled to Kuala Lumpur to give nursing assistance to the Chinese Indian survivors who had worked on the railways. After the war she returned to Spain on several occasions. She died in 1990. ● ● ●

## MUJERES LIBRES: FREE WOMEN OF SPAIN

by Barry Woodling and others

'A notable phenomenon of the war', says Anthony Beevor, 'was the spontaneous growth of a women's movement after the 1936 elections.' Mr Beevor claims: 'It was born, not of...theory from abroad, but of women's instinctive conviction that the overthrow of the class system should mean the end of the patriarchal system as well.' The anarcho-feminist organisation *Mujeres Libres*, that grew to 38,000 strong during the war, had been sticking posters up in the red light areas calling on prostitutes to give up prostitution and offering to train them to acquire skills for productive work.

*Mujeres Libres* was concerned with issues of the subordination of women such as illiteracy, economic decency, and ignorance about health care, child care and sex education. In Barcelona they set up 'flying day-care centres' to provide in-home child care for women, allowing them to attend union meetings. Most of their activity focussed on combating economic exploitation. *Mujeres Libres* organised a huge literacy campaign for women. Their institutes and centres, besides fighting illiteracy, held advanced classes in languages, typing, stenography, 'professional courses' such as nursing, child care, craft skills: electrical and mechanical, and general weekly discussion groups.

In August 1937 the first conference of the *National Federation of Mujeres Libres* took place in Valencia and its

statutes became:

- ◆ To create a conscious and responsible feminine force that will act as a vanguard of progress.
- ◆ To establish for this purpose schools, institutes, lectures, special courses, etc., to train the woman and emancipate her from the triple slavery to which she has been and still is submitted: slavery of ignorance, slavery of being a woman and slavery as a worker.

In Barcelona, the anarchists took over the *Fomento del Trabajo Nacional*, this became their headquarters and that of the regional CNT committees, the committees of *Juventudes Libertarias* (Libertarian Youth) and the *Union de Mujeres Libres* (Union of Free Women). In December 1936, there was collaboration between the Libertarian Youth, and the *POUM* youth movement and on 11th, February 1937, a front of revolutionary youth was formed, consisting of anarchist and *POUM* youth groups, co-operative youth, young people from the *Syndicalist Party* and *Mujeres Libres*. Three days later, writes Robert Alexander: 'it presented itself to the masses at an enormous meeting in the Plaza de Catalonia.' A meeting of this youth body planned for Valencia in May 1937 to set a national basis was prevented by the 'May events' and suppression of the *POUM* youth and the *POUM* itself by the *PSUC* (Communist) police. ● ● ●

## 70th Anniversary of the 1937 May Day Murders ending Barcelona's Days of Hope and Revolution

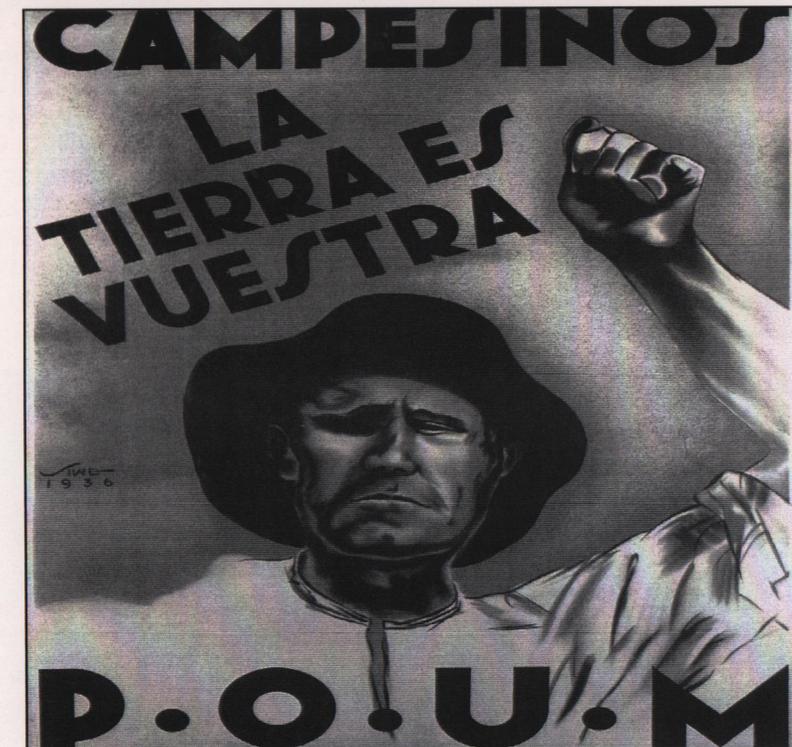
by Brian Bamford Secretary of Transport & General Workers' Union Bury Branch

THE Spanish Communists who had been weak numerically — Gerald Brenan puts their party membership in March 1936 at 'no more than 3,000'\*—had been trying to grab power since the winter of 1936. Their method was to stop ministers exercising control over the People's Army. But the anarchists had made it clear that any attempt to put non-anarchist officers on their troops would be met by force. Thus the communists sucked up to the regular army officers. Enticing the most ambitious and wangling their own

placemen into key positions. A Moscow report in March 1937 suggest that 27 out of 38 key posts on the Central Front were held by communists and three more by sympathisers.

Anthony Beevor writes: 'The secret police was taken over by NKVD (Soviet Secret Police) agents in the late autumn of 1936 and soon became the communists' most feared weapon.' He adds: 'Even Wenceslao Carillo, the director-general of security, found himself powerless against them.' It seems many of the Spaniards who were employed in this work 'could hardly be described as "anti-fascist", but they were given party cards nevertheless.'

These communist secret coppers, incited by their NKVD bosses, arrested and interrogated members of other parties. Just after the battle of Brihuega, Antonio Verrardini, the chief of staff of Cipriano Mera's 14th Division, went to Madrid on a 24-hour leave. Once there he was detained and charged with treason and espionage on the authority of José Cazorla the communist councillor of public order. With a heavily armed escort and Sanz, commander of the 70th Brigade Mera went to the capital. He told General Miaja that if Verrardini wasn't re-



Peasants "The land is yours"

\*During the Dictatorship of Primo de Rivera between 1923 and 1930 the Communist Party had been so insignificant, according to Gerald Brenan, that 'the Government had not even troubled to suppress their newspaper, *Mundo Obrero*'. In the *Cortes* (Spanish parliament) in 1933 the Party had only returned one deputy. In their 15 years of existence they had only got a working class following in Seville and the Asturias. In both cases they had captured trade union syndicates from the CNT during internal conflicts in that trade union confederation. Their membership in Seville was among dock hands and café waiters where they were at war with the CNT with the socialist UGT union confederation looking on. Brenan says: 'the coincidence can scarcely be accidental—that Seville and Cadiz were also the birthplaces of the *Falange*. Even allowing for the fact that the taverns and brothels, was not propitious to the formation of a disciplined proletarian movement, it must be agreed that the Communist penetration had destroyed all possibility of working class solidarity. The consequences of this were felt when in July (1936) General Queipo de Llano was able to capture the city—with a handful of men.' ●

leased by the communists he would be freed by force. Miaja had him freed immediately. Beevor writes: 'Mera was to return to Madrid on similar mission when the communist persecution of the *POUM* reached its height.' One time he obtained the release of Mika Etchebehere, the woman militia commander, who had been arrested for 'disaffection to the Republic'. On seeing the director-general of security he had her released and brought to his headquarters so she could not be 'snatched again'. Beevor says: 'During that spring of 1937 the communist police and the anarchist militia con-

fronted each other in Madrid in an increasingly bitter struggle.'

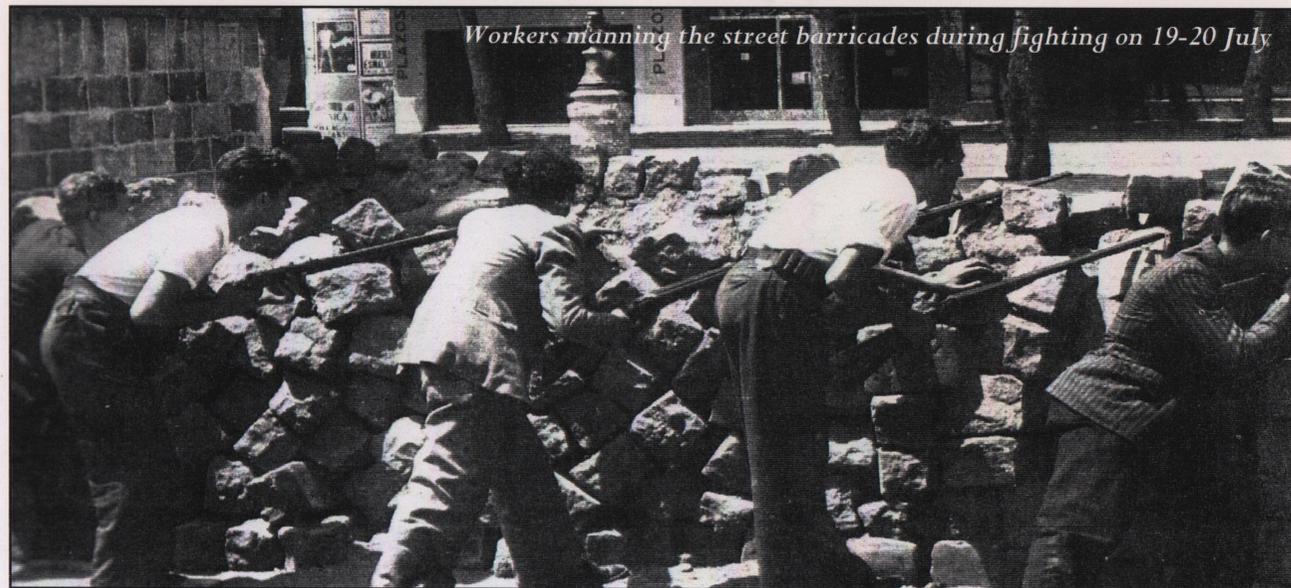
Melchor Rodriguez, the delegate in charge of the prisons, and the CNT press exposed José Cazorla, the communist in charge of public order, for organising secret prisons for holding socialists, anarchists and republicans and torturing and executing them as spies and traitors after they had been freed by popular tribunals.

Some anarchists such as 'The *Friends of Durruti*' denounced the 'Stalinist counter-revolution', but called for a government made up of the UGT and CNT. With the decision in the winter of 1936 to exclude the *POUM* from the Catalan government the anarchists realised they too were at risk from the communists and their allies on the right. On March 4th, 1937 the Catalan *Generalitat* (Government)

dissolved the anarchist control patrols and the security council dominated by the Iberian Anarchist Federation. The anarcho-syndicalist CNT newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera* announced: 'We have made too many concessions and have reached the moment of turning off the tap.' Yet still the communist control continued. On the 16th, April 1937 the Catalan government was reshuffled and Juan Comorera, leader of the communist *PSUC*, was made Minister of Justice. ▶

► On 25th, April *carabineros* were sent by Juan Negrin to take over control of the Pyrenean frontier posts from the *CNT* militias. In Madrid, José Cazorla, angry that his secret prisons had been denounced by the *CNT* newspaper, closed it down. The same day the communist union boss, Roldán Cortada, was killed (Beevor says 'probably by an anarchist, but their have been other theories'). The trade union May Day parades of 1937 were cancelled to avoid more trouble and on 2nd, May, *Solidaridad Obrera* asked workers not to allow themselves to be disarmed.

Next day the Catalan Government, intent on taking back all power it had lost since 19th, July 1936, decided to take control of *Telefónica* in the Plaza de Cataluña. It was managed by a mixed committee of the *CNT* and *UGT* trade unions and the anarchists had considered it their own since July 1936. Three



Workers manning the street barricades during fighting on 19-20 July

trucks of assault guards led by the communist commissioner Rodriguez Salas went to *Telefónica* and surprising the sentries disarmed them. But the workers were alerted and a burst of machine gun fire scattered the assault guards stopping their advance. Next word got round the working-class districts and people began to pull up paving stones and cobbles to make barricades in *Las Ramblas*, the *Paralelo*, the old city, the *Via Layetana* and the outer barrio of *Saints* and *Sant Andreu*. The communist *PSUC* and government lined up against the *CNT* unions, the anarchist *FAI* and *FIJL*, and the *POUM*. Peace negotiations between the *CNT* and the Government ended in stalemate and the *CNT* declared a general strike throughout the city. A German *Comintern* agent reported to Moscow: 'No vehicle which did not belong to the *CNT* was allowed to pass and more than 200 police and assault guards were disarmed.' Beevor says: 'Government forces and the *PSUC* occupied only a few areas in the centre, while the anarcho-syndicalists and their allies controlled the greater part of the city as well as the heavy guns in the fortress of Montjuich.' He adds: 'Whenever the assault guards attempted to seize a building, they were met with a hail of bullets.'

The anarchist leader Garcia Oliver and Mariano Vázquez, the national secretary of the *CNT*, got to Barcelona with two leaders of the socialist *UGT*. The central Government in Valencia had asked them to try to settle the serious situation in Barcelona. The anarchist leaders made an appeal for a ceasefire over the radio and the anarchist intellectual Abad de Santillán

went to talk to the control patrols. But as the anarchists were trying to calm the situation, Beevor writes: 'La Batalla, the *POUM*'s newspaper, argued that the best method of defence was attack and called for the immediate establishment of committees for the defence of the revolution.' On the 5th, May, the anarchist leaders agreed a compromise with Catalan president Companys in which Artemi Aiguader, the Catalan councillor for internal security, would resign. But still the streets remained tense. At 1pm the general secretary of the *UGT* was shot and later the dead bodies of the Italian anarchists Camillo Berneri and Franco Barbieri were found, as well as those of Francisco Ferrer, nephew of the libertarian educationalist executed in 1909 after the *Semana Trágica*, and Domingo Ascaso, brother of the anarchist trade unionist hero killed in July 1936 in the momentous assault on the *Atarazanas* barracks.

Largo Caballero, leader of the central government in Valencia, who some see as the real victim of the communist attempted takeover, decided to agree to send the Assault Guard. Anthony Beevor says: 'The reinforcements which had meanwhile arrived in Barcelona...increased the government's forces towards the level of the rebel (Franco's nationalist) troops (of the previous July, but they had even less hope of taking the city.' Yet in the interests of the war effort the *CNT* brought about a ceasefire and on the 7th, May 1937 the barricades began to be taken down. At a cabinet meeting on 15th, May the communist minister, Uribe, demanded on Moscow's orders that the *POUM* be suppressed and its leaders arrested. The Prime Minister, Largo Caballero, would not outlaw a working-class party against whom nothing had been proven. At the same time he resurrected the idea of a National Defence Council, original proposed by the anarchists in 1936, of most ministerial posts shared between the *UGT* and *CNT* union bodies. But this was impossible now because Stalin would have cut off the supply of arms and with both the right-wing republicans and socialists against him Caballero was forced to resign. Thus as Juan Negrin took over the government of the Republic it became what Negrin and the communists called a 'controlled democracy'. This led to control from above, an end to parliamentary debate and any freedom of the press. On his first day in power Negrin closed the *POUM*'s *La Batalla* newspaper and allowed the communist NKVD-controlled secret police a free hand in persecuting Moscow's critics. ●

Afterword:

## Somerset socialist thoughts on the Spanish Civil War

by Dave Chapple.

Postman, Secretary of Bridgewater Trades Council and Executive member of South West TUC Regional Council

**MANCHESTER'S SPANISH CIVIL WAR** contingent has been important to my life as a Somerset socialist. In the early 1980s Manchester International Brigade veteran Joe Norman, living in retirement in my home town of Clevedon, was to us in Clevedon Youth CND, our mentor. We would gather at his flat every fortnight, where his advice was always welcome and wise. He was modest and reticent about Spain, more interested in telling me how he boxed his way across the Soviet Union in a workers' Olympiad in the 1920s—I think he won the middle-weight division, which makes him a bit more



Andy and Bob Crow leader of the RMT at Tolpuddle 2006

than an 'amateur boxer'! Later I found Judith Cook's account of his time as Franco's prisoner of war:

*'What a horrible place! It was controlled by the German Gestapo, and more than 600 (International Brigaders) from 20 different countries were all crammed into one long room. It looked like a dungeon and had walls six feet thick and floors made of stone...I decided to form an education committee to take peoples' minds off things, and classes started in chess, economics and maths...meanwhile dysentery ran through all of us and men died like flies of that and typhoid, and influenza...the toilets were shocking. A sunken room, it was, without water or paper. Men started tearing their clothing to use as paper. The inevitable happened. The sunken room flooded 5 feet deep and in the interests of health volunteers were asked to go and free the blockage. I volunteered with a Canadian and a Scot. I had to dive under all that piss and shit, naked, but we succeeded in clearing the drain and I got an extra 8-ounce loaf as a reward. But my two comrades died of typhoid within a week...'*

Another Mancunian friend is Henry Suss of Swinton. Henry is now at a home for the blind in Burnham on Sea. In my book on Henry's life (see *Henry Suss & the Jewish working-class of Manchester & Salford: interviews with Dave Chapple*) there is a chapter on Cheetham Hill Spanish Aid Committee: *'It would be weekend work...eight of us would meet up on a street corner...mostly young communists...when you talked about Spanish children going hungry, most people would give food...6 or 7 out of ten would give...and we carried this on for about 2 years. My father, who was not political, gave a bob (5p) a week out of a ten shillings' (50p) pension...I was so proud of him.'*

Howard Andrews (nick-name: Andy), now 99, of Taunton, who rang me up to order the Henry Suss book is my most recent Spanish Civil War friendship. Andy got to Spain in August 1936, well before the International Brigades were

formed, and he worked in field hospitals till the end. Andy, a Communist, was jailed for a week by his Doctor and Commanding Officer, Julian Tudor Hart, for failing to salute two visiting Political Commissars (usually communists) and exclaiming "Shit!" when challenged about it. Andy worked with the brave Stalybridge nurse, Lillian Urmston. Alas, Medical Political Commissar, Winifred Bates was there on one of her puritanical spying missions for Moscow and the Communist Party, sending off damning reports on Lillian or anyone she didn't approve of: as they risked their lives daily!

The Spanish Civil War deserves a decent debate. Thus far in Britain debate has been strangled by our notorious left-wing party loyalties and the indifference of lots of Labour Party and TUC activists and officials. In my personal view the Communist Party, whose 2006 descendants, whilst admitting Stalin's crimes and murder of Andrés Nin, still fiercely defend the conduct of Commissars like Winifred Bates and Wil Paynter, the overthrow of Caballero's Government (Caballero was Spanish Prime Minister up to the May Days of 1937 and leader of the Socialist Trade Union Confederation of the *UGT*) and their unprovoked attack on the Barcelona Telephone Exchange in May 1937.

Did British Communist Commissars, indirectly or directly, cause the battlefield executions or subsequent torture by secret police of British International Brigaders? Why do some insist on calling the *POUM* 'Trotskyist', when Andrés Nin and the *POUM* leaders believed they had broken from Trotsky, and Trotsky himself criticised them as ideological renegades? Why is there no proper discussion of when Communists, Anarchists and Socialists were working together both in Caballero's Government in Madrid and in Catalonia? Why do many, including the *CNT* anarchist supporters, ignore the Asturias' revolution of October 1934: savagely put down by General Franco, with whole mining communities, totalling 30,000 workers, tortured and imprisoned? Was it because the *CNT* in Madrid and Barcelona saw itself superior to the socialists of the *UGT*? Why is this Asturian working-class history being ignored in Britain?

'Afterwords' should be disturbing not comforting, and in welcoming this pamphlet I hope that some of my questions can be answered, and in the comradely Somerset spirit I ask them, by those more knowledgeable than myself. ●