CHRISTOPHER OTHEN

FRANCO'S INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES

Adventurers, Fascists, and Christian Crusaders in the Spanish Civil War



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Christopher Othen

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1. Introduction

European Civil War

Karol Swierczewski was a true believer. Better known as 'General Walter', a nom de guerre inspired by his favourite Walther PP pistol, Swierczewski turned communist as a young exile in Moscow. He cheered on the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 and joined the Red Army to defend the revolution. When the last of the reactionaries who threatened the Soviet dream had fled, Swierczewski requested a transfer west to join the Russian troops galloping through his native Poland in the name of the proletariat.

The Pole did not lose faith when his homeland fought off the Bolshevik invasion. Communism ran in his veins like blood. Not even the Soviet Union’s mutation from revolutionary utopia to despotic tyranny could shake Swierczewski’s devotion to Karl Marx and all his works.

In 1936 the seasoned Red Army commander, now a shaven-headed thirty-nine-year-old with rolls of fat around his neck, was sent to Spain. On 18 July that year General Francisco Franco *y Bahamonde* and his fellow Army officers had attempted to overthrow Spain’s left-wing Popular Front government. The Nationalist insurgents believed the country was speeding towards anarchy, atheism, and Communism under the Popular Front's rule. The government and its supporters saw the rising as a fascist assault on democracy.

On the side of the insurgents were conservatives, monarchists, devout Catholics, and the far-right. The Popular Front could count on liberals, Communists, Socialists, and Anarchists. Spain became an arena for opposing political ideologies to hack and slash at each other. Soon the rest of the world came to watch and cheer on the gladiators. When Franco’s propagandists claimed he was fighting a crusade to save the Catholic Church, the Hungarian-born but Paris-based journalist Arthur Koestler retorted that the

rising ‘smelt of incense and burning flesh’ and urged his readers to help the Spanish government.[1]

For Koestler and others like him, Spain was a straight fight between democracy and fascism. Left-wingers across the world supported the beleaguered Spanish republic. Thirty-five thousand foreign volunteers from fifty countries joined the International Brigades to crush the rebellion.

The volunteers may have believed they were fighting for democracy but the guiding hand behind the Brigades was the oppressive dictatorship of Joseph Stalin’s Soviet Union, also the source of 1,000 advisers, pilots, and technicians, and millions of pounds worth of war material. 'General Walter' was one of the few senior Red Army figures judged ideologically trustworthy enough by the paranoid Soviet dictator to talk tactics with the Republic.

The Pole was cool under fire, ignoring the bullets that flew past his head on the front line. 'A splendid man and a splendid soldier', said the American writer Ernest Hemingway.[2] He only ignored the bullets because he was too drunk to notice them, said his enemies.

And Swierczewski had a lot of enemies. When a division crumbled during the May 1937 assault on Segovia, north of Madrid, the Pole ordered his machine-gunners to shoot anyone who retreated. It was rumoured he used his Walther PP pistol to execute shell-shocked men who refused to return to the front. Not even those behind the lines were safe. When Republican soldiers died in hospital, Walter accused the medics of murder and talked about Trotskyite terrorist rings. Hemingway may have liked him but many of his own men would happily have seen him dead.

The Pole's ruthlessness and a deliberately low profile saved him from the fate of more popular advisors. His contemporary Manfred Stern was a superspy in Soviet Military Intelligence who had earned his stripes stealing top-secret American tank plans in New York and advising Chinese Communists in their struggle against Chaing Kai-Shek. In Spain he became ‘General Kléber’. His brilliant leadership of the International Brigades saved Madrid from Franco's assault in the early months of the war.

At the peak of his battlefield fame, Stern was recalled to a Moscow. Stalin sensed a rival. A show trial handed down fifteen years hard labour. ‘The Saviour of Madrid’ died in a Siberian gulag.[3]

Swierczewski’s belief in the Soviet cause was unaffected by Stern’s fate. In 1938 his Moscow masters decided this devout communist and experienced soldier was the right man to write a confidential report on the International

Brigades. For once, it was not a propaganda effort. The Soviet authorities wanted the truth on their foreign volunteers. Were they reliable? What were their attitudes to the Spanish? What did they think they were fighting for? The Pole opened a bottle of vodka and got to work.

Politburo apparatchiks looking for evidence of international solidarity found the report hard reading. According to Swierczewski, the International Brigades' commanders knew the exact casualty figures for their foreigner volunteers but had no idea how many Spaniards died fighting alongside them in the same battle. The volunteers themselves did not seem to care which country they were in; they treated the land of Cervantes and El Greco as little more than scenery for their own ideological war. Some even thought the Spaniards should be grateful for 'receiving our aid and allowing us to fight against our own national and class enemies on their soil'.[4]

The International Brigades, the report concluded, saw themselves as soldiers in a European Civil War. Spain's job was to provide the setting for a titanic battle to the death between Communism and fascism.

*

If a copy of the Swierczewski report had been blown from a Kremlin desk by an icy blast of wind and carried across Europe to General Franco at his headquarters in Burgos, much of it would have struck the Nationalist leader as unpleasantly familiar. He knew the foreign troops in his own forces shared the Brigaders' view of Spain. They also saw his country as a sun-drenched arena for their personal battles.

Seventy-eight thousand Moroccans joined Franco's army, many believing that he would grant their nation independence after victory, something the Nationalist leader had no intention of doing. Eight thousand Portuguese crossed the border to enlist in the Spanish Foreign Legion, among them ex-members of the Blue Shirts, a fascist group too extreme even for Portuguese ruler Dr António de Oliveira Salazar who disbanded them after a 1935 attempted coup d'état. Some former Blue Shirts planned to use their military experience back in Lisbon when the fighting was over.

Over three thousand volunteers from other nations joined the Nationalist insurgents, few knowing or caring much about Spain. Oxford graduate and Law student Peter Kemp believed that Franco's defeat would be a disaster for Christianity, justice, and the security of Britain but understood nothing about

the causes of the war or Spanish history. The 250 Frenchmen who served in the *Jeanne D'Arc* company of the Foreign Legion had an escape clause written into their contracts that allowed them to leave immediately a civil war broke out in their home country, something they believed inevitable. Spain was their training ground. White Russian exiles from Communism planned to sharpen their military skills in Franco's army before marching off to Moscow. The one hundred Polish volunteers who joined the Nationalists saw it as a religious battle that would provide invaluable experience for future wars with Germany or Russia. General Eoin O'Duffy, a watery-eyed alcoholic, led 700 members of his Irish Brigade to Spain as part of a campaign to become dictator of Ireland.

Not all of Franco's foreigners were volunteers. Thirty-five thousand German conscripts served in the *Legion Condor* of aircraft, naval, and tank units. The Third Reich sent them to assure a quick victory for Franco. When that failed the Nazi military saw the training potential of a long war.

'It was seen that Spain would serve as the "European Aldershot",' said Colonel Willhelm von Thoma.[5]

Fascist Italy sent 80,000 troops, much to Franco's disgust as he had not asked for the Black Shirt soldiers. Mussolini intervened in Spain to expand his influence in the Mediterranean and to toughen up his nation. He believed Italians could only be made into warriors by the constant 'kicks on the shins' which involvement in the Spanish conflict would provide.[6]

Spain was a vortex which sucked in right-wingers from Europe and beyond, and gave them a chance to fight their own battles on someone else's soil. Italian Fascists and exiled Italians Communists came face to face in the grounds of a country house during the March 1937 battle of Guadalajara. Peter Kemp fought British International Brigade units in the 1938 offensive that divided the Republic and took Franco's forces to the Mediterranean. After the war he asked a surviving brigader what would have happened if he had been captured. 'We'd have shot you,' came the reply. 'Sorry'. Kemp assured him he would have done the same if the positions had been reversed.

Meanwhile, *Jeanne D'Arc* Frenchmen kept an eye on the news from Paris for signs of a coup and Romanian volunteer Ion Mota wrote letter after letter to his fascist *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* comrades back home exhorting them to learn from his example and take the battle to their enemies in Bucharest.

When Europe did become the victim of a genuine continent-wide civil

war in 1939, only months after Franco claimed victory in Spain, the kaleidoscope had been shaken so much that any plans made by foreign volunteers for their nations were redundant. Patriotic Briton Kemp found himself fighting against former German and Italian comrades as the World War raged, while *Jeanne D'Arc* veterans had to decide whether a fascist revolution in France was worth the price of collaborating with Nazi invaders. In Ireland, General O'Duffy's dream of becoming fuehrer was over before it began when Dublin heard about what really happened in Spain. German generals sat and watched as Mota's Romanian comrades were chased out of power, refusing to let ideological similarities get in the way of more practical considerations. Salazar's Portugal remained neutral rather than take a chance with the Axis powers, so Blue Shirts joined the Nazis on the Eastern front, where they fought alongside White Russian veterans of the Spanish Foreign Legion. Their new Russian friends were so horrified by the Third Reich's path of destruction through the motherland that some wondered if they had chosen the right side.

In a mirror image of the civil war Spanish fascist volunteers joined Hitler's forces. Franco was not revolutionary enough for them and they hoped to use their service with the Reich as leverage for a German-approved coup in Madrid. Instead they found themselves fighting to the death in the burning ruins of Berlin as the Soviets encircled the city and Hitler, days away from death, raged in his bunker deep beneath the streets.

*

Few people would disagree that the besieged Spanish fascists in Berlin were on the wrong side of democracy. A more ambivalent attitude exists towards those who signed up for Stalin's International Brigades.

In February 2001 the unveiling of a commemorative plaque for local volunteers in the American state of New Hampshire was disrupted by arguments about the brigaders' political beliefs. The state legislature's Joint Historical Committee had voted to display the plaque, Californian artist David Ryan had designed it, and state Senator Burton Cohen was ready to present it to the media at a dedication ceremony, when protests began.

'The courage demonstrated by these brave Americans,' said Senator Cohen, who thought the plaque would impress the youth of New Hampshire, 'should stand as a role model for young generations to come'.[7]

His role models were members of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade, an American section of the International Brigades. But *The New American* magazine (motto: 'That Freedom Shall Not Perish'), voice of the fanatically anti-communist John Birch Society, was outraged by the commemoration of men linked to the Soviet dictatorship. It whipped up opposition to the plaque. Before the unveiling a coalition of local politicians, concerned citizens, and war veterans' groups picketed the state house.

'It doesn't matter how many times we say the name of Abraham Lincoln,' State Representative Tony Soltani told reporters, 'it does not validate the act of fighting shoulder to shoulder with the murderous Communist Party led by the likes of Joseph Stalin'.[8]

His colleague Ralph Rosen, who had done his share of fighting against fascism as a Second World War Naval pilot, made his feelings clear by referring to 'comrade Cohen' during a press conference.

The protests made the New Hampshire political establishment think again. The plaque, which featured a red star, a clenched fist, and a quote from Spanish Communist Dolores Ibarruri ('*La Passionara*'), was never unveiled. On 20 February a legislative committee shelved the project.

Despite concerns about the role of a Communist dictator in supporting a democratic cause, other states across America already had their own memorials to the International Brigades. More can be found in Britain, France, Sweden, and other nations whose citizens volunteered to help the Republic.

Foreign soldiers made up only 2.2% of the 1.8 million men in the Republican army but formed at least 13.2% of the 1.4 million who fought for the Nationalists.[9] But only four monuments to Franco's internationals exist, a symbolic representation of how little they are known in the wider world.

One memorial stands near Majadahonda, north-west of Madrid. A stone cross and archway honour two Romanian fascists who died in the ranks of the Spanish Foreign Legion. A commemorative plaque for General O'Duffy's Irishmen in the town of San Domingo has survived since the civil war. Few Irish churchgoers notice a smaller plaque on a pew in Dublin Cathedral for Gabriel Lee, one of O'Duffy's men, killed by a shell near Titulcia, south of Madrid. On the wall of Manila's Casino Español another plaque, in silver, lists forty Filipinos who fought for Franco.

Franco's foreigners have been forgotten. His regime would not admit it needed outside help to win and the Republic's followers were equally

unwilling to remind the world of the Spanish dictator's international support. For a long time anyone interested in the other side of the foreign volunteer phenomenon, in men whose vision of modern Europe did not involve democracy, had to dig deep into history book footnotes. Even then they would find only the sketchiest of details.

This book resurrects the forgotten lives of those men. It places them in their wider European and international context. It was not Spanish politics that sent most of the volunteers to the battlefield but conditions in their home countries. The civil war was a microcosm of European politics which impacted on believers from all parts of the spectrum.

*

'Franco's International Brigades' would not have been possible without the help of Dai Jones; my parents, Maureen and Michael Othen; my brother Phillip and my nephew Jacob; Peter Wood; and Rebecca Lewis. It is for Magdalena Wywiałek, with all my love.

Invaluable assistance was provided by Sarah Inglis, who is researching Greek participation in the Spanish Civil War; Bill Nangle, source of fascinating information on his relative Gilbert Nangle, the first foreign recruit to make officer in the Spanish Foreign Legion without working his way up through the ranks; Eric Norling, who supplied useful background on the Finnish volunteer Carl von Hartmann; Bernt Rougthvedt, biographer of Norwegian fascist volunteer Per Imerslund; Jean-Pierre Sourd, expert on Spanish volunteers for Hitler; Dr. Joan Maria Thomàs of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili who provided information about the Boston-educated Spanish fascist José-Antonio 'Joe' Serrallach; and Jeff Wallder and John Warburton from The Friends Of Oswald Mosley, who produced photographs and correspondence from their archives (John Warburton died before this book was published; he is the centre medical helper in the Peter Keen photograph).

Part 1: Mola's Coup D'État
17 July 1936 – 31 March 1937

The desert lion antiphonally roared;
The tiger's sinews quivered like a chord;
Man smelt the blood beneath his brother's skin
And in a loving hate the sword went in.

James McAuley, 'The Incarnation of Sirius' (1946)

2. KINGS AND CONSPIRACIES

The Plot to Overthrow Spanish Democracy

The airstrip at Gando in the Canary Islands was baking in the afternoon sun and the two-man crew of the Dragon Rapide bi-plane sheltered in the shadow cast by the craft on the tarmac. The pilot, Captain Cecil Bebb, was careful to avoid the sun's rays. Red-haired and fair skinned, he burned easily. His companion, flight engineer George Bryers, was having trouble staying awake. They had been waiting for their passenger, a mysterious Arab chieftain, since three o'clock in the morning.

Finally, in the late afternoon, a group of army officers approached the aeroplane. One of them was introduced to Bebb as his passenger. The officer wore the uniform of the Spanish Foreign Legion and did not look like an Arab chieftain. He was short, plump, and balding with liquid brown eyes and a European complexion. The other officers told Bebb that his passenger had to get to Tetuán in northern Morocco as quickly as possible.

It was 18 July 1936 and the man in a hurry was General Francisco Franco *y Bahamonde*, forty-four-year-old career soldier and veteran of the Moroccan wars. Bebb and Bryers were unwittingly involved in the overthrow of the Spanish government.

Captain Bebb was a former Royal Air Force pilot now flying for Olley Air Service Limited, a Croydon-based business that supplied aeroplanes for private charter. On 9 July he was hired by a publisher called Douglas Jerrold to collect an Arab leader from the Canary Islands and fly him to the Spanish Protectorate of Morocco to start a revolution. In case the Spanish authorities asked any awkward questions about Bebb's presence in their airspace, Jerrold supplied three 'tourists' who would claim the pilot was taking them on an exotic holiday. The whole operation was top secret.

The money was good, the work exciting, and Bebb accepted. As he

stood on the Gando runway shaking hands with a passenger who was obviously not Arabic, Bebb was baffled. Jerrold had lied to him.

*

Douglas Jerrold was more than just a publisher. The beak-nosed forty-three-year-old, his dark hair in a slick side-parting, was also a writer, a devout Catholic, and a right-wing political activist.

Jerrold saw action in the First World War, getting his first taste in the 1915 Gallipoli campaign when Britain opened a new front against the Ottoman Empire with a sea-born assault on the Dardanelles, the narrow strip of water that separates Turkey from Europe. He was one of thousands of British soldiers who lived for months in fly-infested trenches laying siege to the Gallipoli peninsula but returned home defeated. The following year Jerrold was badly injured on the western front in France by a bullet that shattered his left arm.

'Just three miles of retreat in Gallipoli and thirty yards of advance in France,' he wrote in his autobiography, 'net gain to the enemy, 5250 yards!' [10]

The tone was breezy but he was in constant pain for the rest of his life. In the post-war years Jerrold made his name as a journalist and novelist who wrote from a hardline Catholic perspective. His bestseller, *The Lie About the War*, savaged books like *All Quiet on the Western Front*, *Goodbye to All That*, and *Le Feu* for exaggerating officer-class mismanagement of the conflict. Jerrold was swimming against the current of public opinion but had no doubts he was right. Anyone who criticised his opinions about the war, or anything else, would recieve a long letter pointing out the flaws in their arguments and morals.

'Douglas gets as much pleasure from writing me a pompous letter,' journalist Hugh Kingsmill complained, 'as other people do from having a good fuck.'[11]

Jerrold had been involved with right-wing Spanish circles since the abdication of the Spanish king Alphonso XIII in 1931. The king was popular with British monarchists. His abdication after elections returned a mass of anti-monarchy candidates was seen as a sporting thing to do. Alphonso endeared himself further by playing polo and was commander-in-chief of a British lancer regiment.

The *English Review*'s Foreign Affairs Editor, Sir Charles Petrie, was fascinated by Spain and introduced Jerrold to a circle of Alphonsist Spaniards in Britain headed by Luis Bolín, the dapper London correspondent for monarchist *ABC* newspaper who had picked up his English as a pupil at Stonyhurst, a Jesuit school in Lancashire.[12]

Few Spaniards shared Bolín's conviction that Alphonso XIII should return to the throne. The King was fond of military uniforms and ceremonies but had been a weak ruler, easily manipulated by the army, and admired solely by upper-class royalists. Out of touch with his nation, he was the only person in Spain surprised by the anti-monarchist vote in the April 1931 elections. His picturesque land of olive groves and bullfights, white-washed houses and siestas, was also a place of poverty, inequality, and violent resentment.

*

Under Alphonso's rule Spain had entered the twentieth century with little industry and an inefficient agricultural system. Few paid tax and the rich bribed their way out of any financial obligations. Fraud regularly deprived the government of between fifty to eighty percent of its taxes.[13]

The Catholic Church believed it bound Spanish society together like egg yolk in a mixing bowl but its power created as much resentment as respect. Philosopher Miguel de Unamuno *y Jugo* dryly claimed 'We are all Catholic, even the atheists', but the Church's greed and subservience to the establishment tarnished it in the eyes of some.[14] It controlled schools, preached poverty but amassed riches. By the start of the twentieth century the Church owned thirty percent of Spain's total wealth. Rumours spread that church schools deliberately retarded the reading ability of peasant children so they would not understand left-wing propaganda when they grew up.

In rural areas the huge inequalities of wealth between rich landowners and poor peasantry led to unrest. Three landowners in southern Spain owned 600,000 acres between them. The ideas of Anarchy and Socialism encouraged many peasants to believe that a utopian society, fair and just, could be created in their lifetimes.

Conditions were better in the towns, where the industrial sector had grown fat on the back of an export boom after the First World War, but strikes were common and businessmen paid corrupt policemen to arrest trade

union activists. Workers retaliated with violence.

The government was unable to stop the class warfare and the military intervened in 1923 with the King's blessing. General Primo de Rivera became dictator, although his main military achievement had been to murder a fellow officer during the recent Moroccan wars for selling weapons to the enemy. Not having the stomach for a court martial, the government promoted him for bravery in the field.

Primo de Rivera's dictatorship trod a cautious path between the radical reform called for by the working-class and the reactionary stagnation demanded by the rich, pleasing neither. Thanks to the General's economic incompetence the country's deficit had doubled by the end of the decade. Primo de Rivera's response was to change the accounting system, wiping out the debt, but only on paper.

The dictator was forced out when the army turned on him in January 1930. He died in French exile. His eldest son José Antonio remained in Spain and created the fascist Falange movement whose blue-shirted militants would play a significant role in the conflict to come.

Alphonso XIII continued the dictatorship with General Berenguer, a figure more acceptable to the military, but the new arrangement could not hold the nation together. In 1931 democratic elections were held for the first time in over a decade and anti-monarchy candidates took every major town except Cádiz in the south-west.

Alphonso abdicated on 14 April, telling the world's press he did so to avoid bloodshed. Spain became a Republic whose new regime was antagonistic to the aristocracy and suspicious of the Catholic Church.

*

Luis Bolín introduced Jerrold to the exiled King. The Spanish monarch blamed leftist extremists for his abdication.

'I heard enough to convince me then of the absolute truth of the King's view,' said Jerrold, 'that he had been deliberately faced by a minority with the threat of a civil war.'[15]

Jerrold put the *English Review* magazine at the disposal of the Alphonsists to propagandise for the Spanish right in Britain. Blistering attacks on Spain's new Republic appeared among the *English Review*'s usual conservative comment and literary criticism. The Alphonsist articles had little

impact. Jerrold fumed at the ‘shattering and stupendous ignorance’ of the British concerning Spain.[16]

The hacks in Fleet Street paid no attention to him. The *English Review*’s editor was always fuming about something. The Bolshevik revolution had convinced Jerrold that Britain would eventually succumb to Communism and his sense of impending doom, combined with his war wounds, made him aggressive and short-tempered.

‘He had a tongue like an asp’, a colleague said, ‘and he could be extremely rude’.[17]

Most British journalists regarded Spain as a backwater. Guidebooks and even basic histories were thin on the ground for a nation which had not participated in the bloodletting of the First World War. It was, in journalist Rebecca West's words, 'a country not at all interesting to the man in the street; it is a long way off, it is not easy to visit, its economic ties are neither many nor obvious'.[18] Journalist John Langdon-Davies, an expert on Catalan culture and a Communist sympathiser, kept *News Chronicle* readers informed about Spain’s industrial unrest but he was one of the few to see its importance.

Officially, the British Foreign Office treated Spain as an ally in its attempts to prevent French and Italian domination of the Mediterranean. Unofficially, it regarded Spain was too weakened by internal instability to provide any useful support.[19]

Among the few ordinary Britons who visited Spain in the years before the war was Laurie Lee, later a well-known poet and writer. His first view of the country was the northwest port of Vigo rising from the sea like a rust-covered wreck. Homeless men slept in doorways and there was a photograph of Karl Marx in the barber's window. Lee hiked through Spain down to the towns on the southern coast. The capital Madrid did not impress him. It was, he wrote, just 'tram bells and wire, false marble and dilapidation'.[20]

The rural south had its own demons. In a village whose squat houses looked like cubes of pink sugar he realised the casual cruelty of peasant life when he watched a father half drown his baby son in a tin bath for amusement. Lee broke his walking tour to stay with South African poet Roy Campbell in Toledo, central Spain, a town that would assume worldwide significance in July 1936. Lee told friends back in London that many working-class Spaniards he met saw left-wing revolution as the only way out of their poverty.

There was an ocean of difference between Lee's political views and those of the *English Review*'s editor but both could see violent change in Spain's future. Jerrold believed only a Christian counter-revolution that addressed the most obvious social inequalities and strengthened traditional hierarchies could stop Communism swallowing up Spain, then Europe.

'The only living issue in world politics today,' he wrote in the February 1932 issue of the *English Review*, 'is between the Christian social organization and economic materialism, between a society based under God on the dignity and responsibility of the individual, with the family as its basic unit, and a society which places the State above the family and equality above liberty and which, because it denies God, does not hesitate to degrade man to the [level] of machine'.

The man who stood on the tarmac at Gando shaking hands with Captain Bebb fully agreed with Jerrold's words and was about to start a war to prove it.

3. LONG LIVE DEATH

General Franco and the Spanish Foreign Legion

The mystery passenger took his seat in the Dragon Rapide. The inside of the aeroplane was cramped and he had to stoop low as he made his way up the aisle. In the cockpit, Bebb and Bryers pantomimed confusion about his identity to each other then turned to the controls. The engines caught, the props turned, and the aeroplane began to roll down the runway. The passenger watched intently through the cabin's oblong windows as the Rapide left the ground and Gando airstrip fell away beneath them.

Engine noise in the cabin would have made conversation difficult if the passenger had wanted to talk. He did not. Up in the nose of the plane Bebb kept his eyes on the instrument panel and wondered how much trouble the man masquerading as an Arab chieftan had brought with him.

At a stop-over back in Casablanca, where Luis Bolín climbed on board, the passenger finally introduced himself to Bebb. He was General Francisco Franco of the Spanish Foreign Legion. The name meant nothing to the pilot.

*

Francisco Franco was born in Ferrol, 1892, to a drunken father and over-protective mother. He joined the army in 1907 and graduated from the military academy at the Alcázar in Toledo three years later.

The Spanish army was a stagnant pond which gave promotions on time served rather than merit; the only area individual action could lead to advancement was Morocco where the Spanish authorities were fighting a guerrilla war against rebellious tribesmen. Officers were said to earn one of two things from their time there: '*la caja o la faja*' (the coffin or the general's

sash). Franco arranged a transfer in 1912. Fuelled by bravery and ambition he rose through the ranks to become, in turn, the youngest captain, major, colonel, and general in the Spanish army.

The Spanish treated northern Morocco as a colony but it was officially a protectorate ruled by an independent Sultan. The Islamic nation of Morocco had a proud past, being the first country to sign a treaty with the new-born United States of America in 1777, but a succession of pampered, incompetent sultans had encouraged European powers to invade its sovereignty. By the end of the nineteenth century Spain had a prominent presence on the coast and France wielded influence elsewhere.

In 1912 Sultan Abdelhafid allowed his country to be split into two Protectorates, the French in the south and the Spanish the north, to enforce his crumbling authority and stabilise the nation. The Europeans signed treaties, exchanged gifts with the Sultan's court, and turned their attention to exploiting Morocco's natural resources for their own benefit.

Bribery bought the Sultan and his successors but their subjects rejected the Europeans' gold and rebelled. Spanish troops were soon experiencing major defeats and for several years were confined to cities in the north. They persevered and began to impose their authority with a chain of forts built across the hard landscape.

Madrid's empire building experienced a major setback in 1921. A coalition of Berber tribes from an inhospitable north-eastern area known as the Rif declared indepedence. They slaughtered thousands of Europeans and created an autonomous Rif Republic which rejected their own Sultan as well as Spain. Loyalist Moroccans were outraged and some went in with the Spanish to end the threat to Abdelhafid's throne.

The Rif battles made Franco's reputation. The previous year he had met Lieutenant-Colonel José Millán Astray *y Terreros*, a Moroccan war veteran never happier than when being shot at as he led an attack. The Lieutenant-Colonel would end up with only one eye and the hand on his remaining arm missing several fingers. The two founded the *Legión Extranjera Española* (Spanish Foreign Legion), modelled on the famous French outfit, and made it the sword point of Spanish campaigning in the Rif.

The Legion was made up of two *tercios* containing various *banderas* (equivalent to a battalion) whose number grew and shrank according to requirements, politics, and money. In its earliest days few foreigners enlisted

so the Legion filled its ranks with Spaniards, volunteers from neighbouring Portugal, and a handful of adventurers from Germany and France. Legion volunteers were subject to stricter discipline than regular Army troops. The whip was used liberally for minor mistakes. In the front line an officer could kill a soldier for insubordination.

The Foreign Legion became the Spanish Army's toughest fighting force. It was better paid, better equipped, and better fed than other units. Animated by a dark, pervasive worship of death in battle, the legionnaires called themselves the 'Bridegrooms of Death'. The Legion's credo, written by Millãn Astray, described a Legionary's spirit: 'It is unique and without equal, blindly and fiercely combative, seeking always to close in on the enemy with the bayonet'.[21] The Legion's motto was '*Viva le Muerte*!' (Long Live Death!).

Legionnaires went in as the spearhead of Spain's assault on the Rif. Despite heavy casualties they broke the tribesmen's resistance. The final thrust came in a September 1925 amphibious landing at Alhucemas Bay where Lieutenant-Colonel Francisco Franco led his men through the surf onto the beach before being buried by soil thrown up by an artillery shell. His men thought he was dead but he emerged, spitting out sand and blasphemy, to lead them to victory.[22]

After the defeat of the Rif separatists Franco was promoted. He became the youngest Spanish General and was given directorship of a training academy at Zaragoza in mainland Spain. He enjoyed the posting until Niceto Alcalá-Zamora's new centre-left government closed the academy after the king's 1931 abdication.

Minister of War Manuel Azaña *y Diaz*, a selfless, intellectual, and ugly man, was determined to limit the army's power. Franco bit his tongue and professed loyalty to the new regime. Privately he and many other officers seethed at the left-wing direction Spain had taken since the departure of Alphonso XIII.

Azaña disliked the Catholic Church as much as he disliked the army. When anti-monarchist riots in May threatened to destroy religious buildings he refused to intervene on the grounds that all the convents in Madrid were not worth one Republican life.[23]

His colleagues in the Alcalá-Zamora government pushed the anti-church line further. Church and state were officially separated; religious orders were forced to register and only allowed enough money for their immediate needs;

divorce was legalised and civil marriage introduced; the Jesuits were disbanded. Many Spaniards approved. In 1931 less than twenty percent of the country attended mass.[24]

In August 1932 General José Sanjurjo *Sacanell*, a fat right-wing officer fond of showing off the medals that had made his name in the Moroccan wars, attempted a coup. It failed and Sanjurjo spent time in prison before exile to Portugal. Mainstream politicians disowned the coup but Sanjuro's plot indicated the strength of rightist opposition. Few Spaniards were surprised when the elections of 1933 were won by a conservative coalition.

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The new government was dominated by the *Partido Republicano Radical* (Radical Party), with the help of *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (Spanish Confederation of the Autinomous Right - CEDA), a collection of monarchists and conservatives backed by landowners. CEDA's posters declared its mission was to 'save Spain from Marxists, Masons, Separatists, and Jews'.[25]

The coalition rolled back the liberalising measures of the previous government. All agrarian reform was reversed and peasant income dropped dramatically. Reports circulated in Madrid of peasant families forced to eat grass to stay alive.

On 5 October 1934 left-wing groups, predominately Anarchists and Socialists, tried to overthrow the government. One of the coup leaders was *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party - PSOE) head Francisco Largo Caballero, known as the 'Spanish Lenin'.[26]

The coup failed in all areas except the Asturias in northern Spain where local miners deposed the authorities, set up revolutionary councils, and planned to march on Madrid. Their uprising was stamped out by Foreign Legion troops and Moroccan auxiliaries under General Franco.

The Asturian miners became martyrs for the left and their 2,000 strong death toll proof of the barbarity of the Foreign Legion. The right hailed Franco as a saviour who had held back a wave of revolutionary terror. The country polarised further.

In the elections of February 1936 the country lurched back to the left when the Popular Front was voted into power. Created from an alphabet soup of left-wing and Republican parties - the PSOE, *Partido Comunista de*

España (the Communist Party of Spain - PCE), *Unión General de Trabajadores* (Workers' General Union - UGT), *Partido Obrero Unificación Marxista* (the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification - POUM), *Izquierda Republicana* (Republican Left - IR), and *Union Republicana* (Republican Union Party - UR) – the Popular Front sprang from the Soviet Union's decree that european Communist parties should create alliances with other left-wing groups in the name of anti-fascism.

The Popular Front's margin of victory was thin as a cigarette paper. The left got 34.3% of the vote to the right's 33.2%, but the Front ruled as though it had won by a landslide.[27]

Conservatives were horrified that the new government's first act was to release prisoners who had been involved in the 1934 failed coup. Many on the right began plotting their own coups and the country entered a period of violent disturbances. José Antonio's fascist Falange fought bloody street battles with radical leftists. Madrid rocked to the sound of gunfire.

General Emilio Mola *Vidal*, a bat-eared Army officer based in northern Spain whose round glasses gave him the look of a disgruntled academic, organised a new conspiracy to bring down the government. It involved many of his fellow army officers, along with Falangist militia, Alphonsist monarchists, and other right-wingers. General Sanjurjo, the leader of the failed 1932 coup, was chosen as head of the conspiracy. The role was mostly symbolic. Mola was the man in charge.

Franco was on the peripheries of the conspiracy, one moment supporting it, the next claiming loyalty to Madrid. He was careful and wily.

'A less straightforward man I never met,' said an American journalist.[28]

The Popular Front was sufficiently suspicious of rumours about a coup to cut Franco off from any contact with the Moroccan garrison by assigning him to the Canary Islands. The conspirators were just as suspicious of his failure to take sides. Some wanted to exclude him altogether. Mola ignored them. Franco commanded the loyalty of the Foreign Legion, necessary to take North Africa.

A few weeks before the uprising Franco told the conspirators he was on board. Mola revealed his plan. The garrison in Morocco was to rise on 18 July and the mainland would follow the next day.

Luis Bolín volunteered to get Franco from the Canaries to Morocco. He had contacts in British Catholic circles, out of sight of the Spanish government, and knew a man called Jerrold who could help him hire an

aeroplane.

4. STORM OVER EUROPE

Britain and the Coup in Morocco

When Douglas Jerrold was approached for help in June 1936 he had his hands full with a West End play he had written about right-wing Catholic revolutionaries overthrowing a left-wing government in a fictitious European country.

Storm Over Europe was set to open in November and Jerrold was juggling last minute re-writes with his regular jobs as a magazine editor and director of Eyre & Spottiswoode publishers. A coincidence, but Jerrold was the kind of man who believed he was nudged along by the hand of God. He was not surprised when Bolín asked him to enact *Storm Over Europe* for real.

Only two weeks previously Jerrold had been approached by another Spanish contact and casually asked to obtain fifty machine-guns with 500,000 rounds of ammunition. The publisher agreed, although he had no clue about arms dealing or why the weapons were required. The order was cancelled before he got very far. A new group had joined the plotters in Spain. The Alphonsists had rivals for the throne.

The Carlists were extreme-right monarchists who supported the claim of the descendents of Don Carlos, an authoritarian challenger for the kingdom defeated by Alphonsists in the nineteenth century. Carlism had a large popular following in the northern province of Navarre and a 60,000 strong militia known as the Requetés, distinctive figures in their blood-red berets. The Carlists joined the conspiracy to restore their version of the monarchy and brought with them a cache of weapons that made Jerrold’s efforts unnecessary.

The Carlist presence panicked supporters of Alphonso XIII. General Mola assured Bolín that no promises had been made about a restoration but the journalist was worried. It was to ensure Mola did not forget how much the

conspiracy owed to Alphonso's supporters that Bolín offered to transport Franco to Morocco.

On 9 July 1936 Bolín and Juan de la Cierva, inventor of the autogiro (a smaller cousin of the helicopter which used the principle of autorotation), took Jerrold to lunch at Simpsons in the Strand. They told him they needed 'a man and three platinum blondes to fly to Africa tomorrow'.[29] Jerrold bargained them down to two blondes, and rang his friend Major Hugh Pollard.

'Oldish, grey-haired, Major Pollard, a spirited man who used to be in the Secret Service,' wrote Priscilla 'Pip' Scott-Ellis, an upper-class socialite who knew him. 'He produced the aeroplane for Franco to fly from the Canaries to Spain to start the revolution. He also dealt with [the dictator] Porfirio Diaz in Mexico and various other revolutions, knows all about efficient tortures, and would use them without a qualm, etc.'[30]

A fellow Catholic, Pollard was the laconic veteran of assorted wars and revolutions. He owned a large farming business but was best known for his books on firearms. Before the First World War he rattled around Spain and Mexico as a land agent and amateur spy, although the Foreign Office was unimpressed with the reports he forwarded. He made captain in the intelligence section of the War Office in 1916 and joined the Secret Intelligence Service (better known as MI6) when the fighting stopped. For the next few years he combined spy work with journalist assignments to hotspots like the Ango-Irish war.

In Ireland his *Weekly Summary* newspaper was so obviously full of propaganda that it became a joke. Subsequent unsuccessful attempts to fake an Irish Republican newspaper and stage a sham battle ('The Battle of Tralee'), in which British soldiers played the role of gallant heroes for a photographer, battered his reputation further.[31]

Pollard admitted his political sympathies lay on the far-right. His MI6 colleagues regarded him as 'definitely unreliable' and 'indiscreet', particularly when money and drink were involved.[32] His habit of firing revolvers into the ceilings of offices he visited did not help.

Still on the Service's books in 1936, it is unlikely he was involved in active operations. Farming and writing took up most of his time. Pollard would always deny that he informed his bosses of Bolín's plan and insisted he took part as a private adventurer.[33]

Jerrold asked him if he would like to fly to Africa with two girls.

‘Depends on the girls’ was the response. It was decided to bring along Pollard’s daughter Diana and her friend Dorothy Watson, a free-spirited blonde who, Jerrold could not help noticing, kept her cigarettes tucked in her knickers.

In the early morning of 11 July the group arrived at Croydon airport. Pollard and the girls boarded the De Havilland D.H.89 Dragon Rapide hired by Jerrold two days earlier and piloted by Captain Cecil Bebb. Although misled about the purpose of the flight Bebb knew it was dangerous. Bolín had insured the pilot’s life for £2,000.

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On 12 July the Dragon Rapide reached Casablanca in North Africa. The next morning the passengers heard about the murder of prominent Spanish right-winger José Calvo Sotelo, leader of the *Renovación Española* monarchist party and linked to the conspiracy.

Sotelo’s murder was a body blow to the Spanish right. He was a sour conservative theorist notorious for the molten fury of his oratory against the Popular Front. *Renovación Española* was dedicated to returning Alphonse XIII to his throne but Sotelo had wider ambitions. He worked hard to create an alliance of authoritarian monarchists and other rightists, his ultimate aim to weld all parts of the fragmented conservative right into an effective opposition to the government. Even the Carlists, who regarded most Alphonsists with contempt, were impressed.

To the Popular Front he represented the threat of a well-organised extreme-right bloc led by an experienced politician known for his intellectual rigour. The threat ran deeper. Only a few weeks before the murder, General Mola talked of Sotelo as possible leader of Spain after the coup.

Sotelo was another victim of the political violence that in the spring and summer of 1936 reached crisis levels. It was routine for Madrid residents to read about assassinations in their morning newspapers. Fascist Falangists shot dead a judge who had sent one of their friends to jail; six right-wingers were killed by Socialist gunmen at a funeral; fascists publicly lynched left-wing leaders in the northern town of Palencia; in the countryside peasants occupied farmland and murdered the owners.

There were close to 300 political murders in Spain between February

and mid-July, most of them senseless attacks or tit-for-tat reprisals. On 2 July two Falangists were shot dead from a passing car as they sat outside a café. In the evening two left-wing workers were sprayed with submachine gun fire by the dead men's friends. Ramón Serrano Súñer, General Francisco Franco's brother-in-law, was asked years later why the war had started.

'We just couldn't stand one another,' he said.

When news of Sotelo's death reached Casablanca, Pollard ordered Bebb to head for the Canaries immediately but the aeroplane's engines needed an overhaul and they would not depart until three days later. In Gran Canaria, Pollard and the girls came to the end of their roles and headed home by boat, the girls' suitcases stuffed with French dresses bought cheap in the Kasbah. Bebb and his flight engineer were left to wait at Gando airport.

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Despite Mola's faith in him, Franco intended to arrive in Morocco on 19 July, a day later than planned and then only after he was sure the rebellion was successful. But while still in the Canary Islands, in the early hours of 18 July, he received a telegram announcing the rising in Morocco had already taken place.

The Falange leader in the Moroccan port of Melilla, Alvaro González, had turned informer and talked to the local authorities. The police, unsure what they were dealing with, began a clumsy search for arms that alerted the conspirators and set off the coup a day early.

Morocco fell to the rebels with little fighting. The Foreign Legion supported the conspiracy and dominated the Protectorate. Despite Gonzáles' warning, workers and left-wing groups were unprepared and unarmed. The Commander-in-chief of Morocco, General Agustín Gómez Morato, gambled away at a casino through the drama and only found out his men had mutinied when a messenger arrived at the table. He was arrested by foreign legionnaires shortly afterwards. By the time the Dragon Rapide touched down in front a crowd of cheering soldiers at Tetuán the next day rebels were already combing through membership records of trade unions and Masonic lodges to compile arrest lists.[34]

After his one crucial intervention, Douglas Jerrold, the hirer of the aeroplane, turned to propagandising for the rebels' cause in Britain. His most

significant effort was the Friends of National Spain, an organisation that supported Franco with publications and meetings.

Defenders of the rebels were in the minority in Britain but the Friends was able to give a respectable sheen to the rising by attracting important establishment figures, including a number of politicians and members of the aristocracy. At one meeting, the coup was defended by a galaxy of establishment figures, including the Right Hon. Lord Phillimore, M.C; the Very Rev. W.R. Inge, D.D; Captain Victor Cazalet, M.C., M.P; Sir Henry Page Croft, Bt., C.M.G., M.P; and Maj.-Gen. Sir Walter Maxwell-Scott, C.B., D.S.O.[35] The Friends had their work cut out for them. Public opinion in Britain was overwhelmingly sympathetic to the Spanish government.

Captain Bebb had a further role to play. Some pilots would have headed straight back to Croydon after discovering Jerrold's lies but Bebb, a right-wing type with a family to support, stuck around when the rebels promised to top up his fee. Short of aeroplanes and pilots Franco enlisted him on 20 July to fly his representatives to a meeting with the conspiracy's leader General Sanjurjo in Portugal.

Once there, Bebb was asked to fly Sanjurjo back into Spain. The British pilot refused on the grounds that the runway, a disused racetrack near Lisbon, was too short. Spanish pilot Juan Antonio Ansaldo volunteered to risk his two-seater light aircraft but Bebb had been correct about the airstrip and the aeroplane clipped a wall taking off, crashing into a field. Ansaldo was knocked unconscious. He awoke to find the aeroplane on fire and Sanjurjo motionless in his seat. The badly burned pilot struggled free but Sanjurjo died in the fiery wreckage and the rebels were left without a leader. Later some of Sanjurjo's entourage speculated the light aircraft had been overloaded by the suitcases of dress uniforms and gold braided hats which the general wanted for a ceremony in Madrid to celebrate the coup's success.

Bebb hung about the fringes of the conflict for several more weeks making easy money ferrying rebel supporters around the south of France from a base in the resort town of Biarritz. The French police warned him off and he returned to Croydon to tell pilot friends stories about his part in the Spanish coup.[36]

The success of the conspiracy in Morocco would not be duplicated in Spain. Despite Mola's careful planning Franco would have to rescue the rising with the help of thousands of Moroccan volunteers and an impoverished German businessman. The motives of these unlikely helpers

for becoming involved were very different to those of the original conspirators.

5. WE ARE GOING TO SPAIN TO DIE

The Recruitment Campaign in North Africa

During the rising Arab men met in the small, cool cafés of Tetuán, capital of Spanish Morocco, to drink sweet mint tea, smoke a bubbling hookah, and talk about the conflict across the water. In lulls from more serious conversation a good talker could raise a laugh from his companions with a popular story about a Moroccan who joined General Francisco Franco's army on the mainland but was captured by Spanish government soldiers.

The Spaniards' commander interrogated the prisoner. What was he doing in Spain? Why was he involved in a conflict that did not concern him?

The Moroccan replied, with great dignity, that he had always fought for his ideals. The commander was impressed by the prisoner's obvious sincerity and rather than have him shot gave the man a job in the field kitchen.

Later the same day the commander toured the front lines and was outraged to see the Moroccan with a rifle in his hands firing on rebel positions. The commander dragged the Moroccan out of his trench and accused him of fighting for Franco one day and against him the next.

'You have no ideals at all!' he said.

'My ideals have always been the same,' said the Moroccan, again with great dignity. 'To kill Spaniards'. [37]

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At first the Spanish government did not take the Moroccan rebellion seriously. On 18 July 1936, while Franco was still en route to Tetuán in Captain Bebb's Dragon Rapide, the Spanish government announced it would

soon crush the mutinous Foreign Legion. The task had been made easier, it claimed, because no-one on the mainland had joined the rebellion. The government was wrong on both counts.

A few hours later a radio announcer broke into the bouncy jazz of 'The Music Goes Round And Round And Comes Out Here', the latest hit tune, to announce that rebel officers led by General Emilio Mola were rising up against the Republic across Spain. The Prime Minister, Casares Quiroga, could not see any immediate danger.

'They're rising?' he said. 'Very well, I shall go and lie down!'[38]

In south-western Andalusia General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano *y Serra* seized Seville and Colonel José Varela *Iglesias* took the important port of Cádiz. Andalusian fascists on horseback hunted down peasants in the countryside. The islands of Majorca and Ibiza fell to the rebels. In Toledo, south of Madrid, instructors took over the Alcázar military academy, from where Franco had graduated in 1910. Mola was the most successful of the conspirators. He captured most of northern Spain with a coalition of army officers, Falange paramilitaries, and Carlist Requetés.

The rising ripped families apart. A Nationalist soldier later reflected that 'almost everyone had someone on the other side'.[39] Franco's cousin and boyhood friend, Major Ricardo de la Puente *Bahamonde*, died loyal to the Republic. Even the Anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti, who became famous for wiping out the bourgeoisie of southern Spain, had two brothers fighting in the fascist Falange.

Despite the rebels' successes it was obvious by the evening of the next day that Mola's coup had failed. Over half of the country remained in government hands. Sixty-eight thousand soldiers, 3,000 members of the Air Force, and 13,000 sailors stayed loyal to the government. The rebels could count on 61,000 soldiers, 2,000 members of the Air Force, and 7,000 sailors.

Political militias rallied to both sides. Falangists and Carlist Requetés joined the rebels while the Anarchist *Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* (National Confederation of Labour - CNT), Trotskyite POUM, and various Socialist groups united with the government. The manpower was welcome but the militias ultimately weakened their respective sides by preferring to settle scores with political enemies instead of taking orders.

The most important Spanish cities remained in government hands. In Barcelona, a hotbed of left-wing activism on the east coast whose capture

would have closed the border with France, the rebels were defeated after fierce street fighting. Even without Barcelona the coup could have worked if Madrid had fallen but Colonel Valentin Galarza, head of the conspiracy in the city, had been arrested by a suspicious policeman several days previously. He observed the rising through the bars of his cell.

Leaderless and short of ammunition, the Madrid rebels were overwhelmed in their barracks by city police and left-wing militia. A muscular militiaman threw rebel officers to their deaths from the roof into the courtyard below. Hundreds of other rebels were shot as they tried to surrender. In the aftermath, armed mobs surged through the streets of the capital looking for enemies of the government. Not requiring any proof, they usually found them. Hardened revolutionary Valentín González, known as 'El Campesino' (The Peasant), later found it difficult to believe one day could have held so much bloodshed.[40] Mola's forces drove south towards Madrid but encountered fierce opposition from government troops at the Guadarrama mountain range. The 34,000 men in Franco's Army of Africa could have tipped the balance in the fighting, but they were stuck in Morocco.

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When General Franco arrived in Tetuán on 19 July he issued a proclamation calling for 'blind faith in victory', before being forced to take cover from a surprise Republican aerial bombardment. Three converted Douglas DC-2 civilian aeroplanes without bombsights attacked the town. The crews aimed for Franco's headquarters in the High Commission but their explosives fell on the Moroccan quarter. Mosques were destroyed, seventeen people injured, and three children died in the rubble of their house.

While Franco's men dug out the bodies, their leader analysed his position. Two elements were essential for success: build a political powerbase in the Protectorate, and save the coup with a rapid assault on the Republic. He needed to persuade the Moroccan people he was on their side and find men prepared to fight for his cause.

Franco delegated political measures to Colonel Juan Beigbeder *Atienza*, head of the Department of Native Affairs in Tetuán, and soon to be Spanish Morocco's next Secretary-General. Tall, thin, and moustached, Beigbeder hid his Machiavellian nature behind a nervy but cultured manner. He was a

veteran of the 1920s Rif wars, spoke fluent Arabic, and had good local contacts. The Colonel immediately declared martial law and set about charming the Moroccan political establishment.

Mohammed V, sultan of Morocco, had inherited the title in 1927 after the death of his brother Yusef ben Hassan from uremia. A cautious man who distrusted Europeans, Mohammed announced he would remain neutral in the Spanish conflict. Privately he regarded the rebellion as ‘un-Islamic’ and advised aides that Moroccans should not become involved. But the botched bombing of Tetuán had outraged his subjects and the Sultan’s pampered life in French Morocco undermined his authority.

Beigbeder concentrated his charm on Mohammed V’s *caliph* (personal representative) in the Spanish zone, an ambitious man called Moulay Hassan Bel Mehdi. The *caliph* was bribed with gifts, lavish feasts, and carefully staged public displays of support. He gave his backing to the rising.[41]

With the *caliph* under control, Beigbeder addressed the problems of religion and independence. To assure the imams’ loyalty, he persuaded Franco to establish a Ministry of Islamic Justice to enforce *sharia* law. All aspects of the Moroccan legal system, from marriage to inheritances, were now governed by the Qur'an as interpreted by scholars of the Maliki doctrine. Europeans were exempt.

Beigbeder then brought the Moroccan nationalist movement to heel. Although much smaller in the Spanish zone than the French (a 1931 petition for more political freedom gathered only 800 signatures), Moroccan nationalism could still turn the country against the rebels if not handled properly.

The main nationalist group *al-Islah* (Reform), run by journalist Abdelkhalek Torrès, was an underground organisation built around a cadre of educated young men. Torrès and his rival Sheikh Mohamed El-Mekki Naciri formed the intellectual core of Moroccan nationalism, a mix of authoritarian politics and Islam with a literary flavour. Neither believed the Moroccan people were ready for democracy.

Al-Islah was not an obvious supporter of Franco. Shortly before the rising its representatives had visited the authorities in Spain to pass on rumours about a conspiracy to overthrow the government. The warnings were ignored. Officials even told *Al-Islah*’s messengers that the group’s dream of a united, independent Morocco was futile as the French would never give up their share of the country.[42]

Torrès should not have been surprised by the government's reaction. The Spanish left had a complex relationship with the North Africa. Moroccan nationalists remembered the events of 1931 when Spanish trade unions persuaded Protectorate authorities to recruit Spanish workers ahead of natives. Troops opened fire on a Moroccan protest march and killed demonstrators.[43]

Despite the rejection, Torrès contacted the Popular Front again within days of the rebellion and offered to organise an uprising against Franco.[44] Torrès had contacts with tribal leaders in the interior who had no love for the Spanish. With enough guns and money Franco could have been pushed into the Mediterranean.

Madrid declined the offer. It was negotiating with France for munitions and did not want to sour the deal by sponsoring a native uprising that had the potential to roll southwards into the French zone. In November Azaña, who had replaced Alcalá-Zamora as President of Spain in early summer, underlined the refusal with an imperialistic speech. He claimed his country had 'undertaken for the Protectorate of Morocco immense sacrifices' and was morally bound 'to impose the rights of Spain on Morocco'.[45]

Only the CNT tried to talk to the inhabitants of the Protectorate on their own terms. A 10 September radio broadcast called on loyal North Africans to crush the rebels in the name of a *jihad* for democracy. Few heard the broadcast and those who did ignored it.

A final attempt by Torrès to reach an agreement with the government via a POUM agent based in Paris was rejected.[46] The leader of *al-Islah* turned to Beigbeder and offered his support. He was welcomed.

Beigbeder legalised *al-Islah*, which became Morocco's first officially tolerated nationalist movement, and approved the publication of two independent local newspapers.[47] Moroccan nationalists received political appointments in the Protectorate. Mohammed Daud became Inspector of Education, a post he used to create closer tries with Egypt, and Torrès took the newly created position of Minister of *Habous* (Islamic management of land and property). The leader of *al-Islah* showed his appreciation by creating a Green Shirt youth wing to his movement that mimicked European Fascism.[48]

Despite the politics, overall power remained in the hands of the rebels and would stay there. Franco had no intention of allowing Morocco its freedom. He was happy to tell Moroccan nationalists that they could expect

'resplendent roses when the blossoms of peace unfold', but independence was unthinkable to his imperialist mind.[49]

Beigbeder earned his pay by darkening the waters around Franco's intentions towards North Africa. He promised that the rebels would restore a 'one and indivisible' Morocco to its former glories. 'Indivisible' was the cardinal point of the promise. Beigbeder insisted that Morocco had to be united before it could be independent. This could not happen until France agreed to dismantle its African empire. Despite being a rehash of the Popular Front's argument, the Secretary-General convinced Morocco's new politicians.

'[Franco's] Spain, far from persecuting the natural and healthy [Moroccan] nationalist movement,' the *caliph* told a Syrian journalist, 'welcomes it warmly and gives it constant proofs of its sympathy'.[50]

Behind the grand words, Beigbeder practised a policy of divide and rule. By the end of 1936 *al-Islah* had recruited 9,000 new members. The Secretary-General allowed Torrès' rival Sheikh Mohamed El-Mekki Naciri, who had watched alienated from the sidelines as the *al-Islah* leader became increasingly autocratic, to form his own nationalist movement. *Hizb al-Wahda* (Party of Unity) flourished at *al-Islah*'s expense until Beigbeder undermined it by funding a new Liberal Party.[51] The political manipulation was skilful, but would ultimately lead to disillusionment and rebellion.

That lay in the future. During the first weeks of the rebellion Torrès, Naciri, the *caliph*, and the imams did all they could to help Franco overthrow the Spanish government.

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Franco needed soldiers and transport to south-western Spain if he was to save Mola's coup. The Army of Africa had 18,000 European troops and 16,000 Moroccan auxiliaries, but some were needed for garrison duties in the Protectorate and there was no guarantee its Moroccans would even fight in Spain. Their contracts specified service in North Africa. Franco needed volunteers.

The *caliph* suggested recruitment in the Rif region. He wanted to appease his sultan, not pleased with the *caliph*'s support for Franco, by sending the region's rebellious former separatists off to Spain. Beigbeder liked the idea. He activated a network of long-serving colonial officers who

had regular contacts with Rif tribal leaders. Since the rebellion, Spain had been buying peace by distributing regular payments to tribesmen, both pro- and anti-Sultan. The tribesmen listened when their paymasters propagandised for Franco.

Twelve thousand recruits had signed up by the end of August. Most were former Rif guerrillas. Franco's role in crushing the separatist republic was overlooked in the quest for vengeance against the Spanish government. The volunteers took their places alongside the 8,000 Moroccan auxiliaries already in Spanish service who had agreed to fight.

'The guerrillas joined to get back at the Christians for what they did to us in the war of the Rif,' said volunteer Mohammed Ben Othman. 'Those who felt like that were mainly over thirty, and had seen many friends and relatives killed by the Christians'.[52]

Franco bribed tribal leaders from elsewhere in Morocco into sending troops with gifts of weapons. A Spanish government spy claimed chieftains received three automatic rifles, 250 bullets, two hand grenades, and a bayonet for each man who joined up. Any chieftain who persuaded 7,500 of his men to enlist got three anti-aircraft guns.[53]

Other volunteers came from towns on the northern coast. The *caliph* opened recruiting stations whose sun-bleached outer walls were decorated with Islamic crescents and crude drawings of hooded men carrying rifles to advertise their purpose to the illiterate. Long lines of Moroccans in red fezzes and dusty robes formed outside. Age was no barrier, at least in the early weeks, with some volunteers well over sixty.

The Nationalists used both carrot and stick in North Africa. They arrested any Moroccan leaders who obstructed recruitment for Franco, like the *Pasha* of Alkazar in western Morocco, but lavished money on a pilgrimage to Mecca for important Moroccans. The Spanish government damaged the pilgrim's boat when it bombed Ceuta harbour and Nationalist propaganda made sure everyone knew about it.[54]

Torrès, of *Al-Islah*, made radio broadcasts claiming the Republican government was atheist and anti-Islamic. He told his listeners independence would only come once they had proved their loyalty to the rebels and the best way to do that was through enlisting. Imams declared in the mosques that the rising was a *jihad* in which every Muslim had a duty to fight. Spanish government soldiers learnt to fear the shouts of '*Allah Akhbar*!' (God is great!) shouted by the Moroccans before they attacked. Not every unit had its

own imam, as promised, but the Moroccans were not bothered.

'We had better things to do in the frontline than pray,' said one veteran.

Rebel supporters in Spain were already describing the uprising as a Christian crusade against Communism. They tied themselves in knots justifying the Moroccan presence. Right-wing newspaper *ABC de Sevilla* took the abstract route: 'paths of the Spanish war; paths of the Spanish empire; paths of Islam; trinity resulting in the sole goal of a struggle without end'.[55]

Franco's Muslims were aware of the theological problems their presence raised. Some took advantage. A Turkish volunteer in the Foreign Legion made a habit of shyly hinting to Catholic civilians that he wanted to convert. There would be feasts, parties, and gifts from the jubilant Christians before his baptism. A week later the volunteer would approach another group of Catholic civilians. He wanted to convert, could they help?

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Religion, politics, and tribal loyalties were not the only motivations for enlisting. In the parched economy of northern Morocco money was a powerful draw. A drought earlier in the year had wrecked crops and left agricultural workers unemployed. In the cities, everyday life ground to a halt when the rising began and workers found themselves unemployed. Five pesetas a day for the army, with a six peseta signing-on fee, was an attractive offer. Bonuses in food and oil were promised to recruits' families.[56]

Volunteers had mixed levels of military experience. Rif war veterans knew how to handle a rifle but those who followed them into the rebel ranks often had no military skills. Tribesmen and farmers from the bleak interior who had never heard a shot fired in anger enlisted alongside teenage shoeshine boys from northern coastal cities. Training was brief, and for some non-existent.[57] Volunteer Cheld Uld Alí Omar remembered getting only a week's worth of rifle practice before setting off for Spain.

According to Frank Thomas, a Welshman in the Foreign Legion, those from the interior were 'better than the [city dwellers] while in a victorious advance [but] not so hesitant about retreating if hard pushed'.[58]

The rebels asked no questions about the origins of their volunteers. Some came from Ifni in the Western Sahara. At least 7,000 volunteers crossed the border from French Morocco. The French government, which favoured

Madrid, closed the border and gaoled returning veterans.

Volunteer Mohamed Tadlaoui came from the French zone and joined the Spanish Nationalists 'not for any cause or money or anything similar. I mostly did it in the spirit of adventure'.[59] Tadlaoui was arrested by the French authorities when he returned home after having fought for a year and been wounded in the hand. He was sentenced to three months in prison. His parents told him the letters he sent from Spain had been intercepted and destroyed.

Regardless of where they came from, most Moroccans were poorly educated men, often illiterate. They were superstitious enough to wear embroidered sacred hearts made by Catholic women in Seville, a town whose cathedral was built on the site of a fifteenth century mosque and retained a minaret as its bell tower.[60]

Franco joked with his officers that the Moroccans were happy to be allowed to kill Jews (ie. Republicans) and to prove it wore the heart of a Jew, but there was little religion in the sacred hearts. The Moroccans wore them as good luck charms, a common trait in soldiers. One Muslim, lying injured in a rebel hospital, weakly told the nurses not to remove a medallion of the Virgin Mary from his shirt as the 'Virgin is good for everyone'. Even a well-educated volunteer like Englishman Peter Kemp carried a good luck African idol with him through his time as a rebel volunteer.

The Moroccans' eclectic religious taste puzzled their opponents. Åge Kjelsø, a Danish Trotskyite who fought in Andalusia for the government through the autumn of 1936, found 'numerous dead Moroccans with a hand closed around a Madonna figure. It was quite strange that these primitive Mohammedans were equipped thus with Catholic saint figures'.[61]

Some on the government side saw nothing but ignorance in the phenomenon. '[Moroccans] were told by the Nationalists that if they wore the Christian Cross bullets wouldn't hurt them,' said Briton Charles Morgan. 'The poor little bastards believed it'.[62]

Few Moroccans believed they were bullet proof. They wore good luck charms because they faced a hard fight and wanted every advantage they could get. Volunteers sang a song as they embarked for Spain: 'Guard your belt and put another over it/ For we are going to Spain to die/ Spain has a blood feud and its villages are divided/ Franco and the Reds are both fighting for them!'[63]

By the end of the month, thousands of Moroccan volunteers had joined

the rebels. Their numbers would swell to 20,000 by the end of August, and 50,000 volunteers by January 1937.[64] Eventually 78,000 Moroccans, usually referred to by Spaniards as *Moros* (Moors), would fight for Franco, seeing combat where the bullets flew thickest, wriggling on their bellies through the dust with rifles across their backs and knives in their hands.

But in July 1936 Franco's forces were stuck in North Africa while the rising faltered on the mainland. The Army of Africa needed foreign help to cross the Mediterranean.

6. THE COMEDIAN MEETS THE CARPET CHEWER

Reaching Out to the Third Reich and Fascist Italy

On the evening of 25 July 1936, three men waited in the Villa Wahnfried at Bayreuth, southern Germany. Captain Francisco Arranz *y Monasterio* was staff chief of General Franco's Air Force, a handful of battered bi-planes in a hanger at Tetuán aerodrome. Johannes Bernhardt was a fat, bald Prussian in his late thirties whose job supplying stoves and rifle range targets to the Spanish garrison in Morocco gone so badly in the last year he considered emigrating to South America. Sitting away from them was Adolf Langenheim, a sun-dried sixty-four-year-old mining engineer and head of the Nazi party in Tetuán, busy regretting his decision to accompany the other two to Germany.

Bayreuth's annual celebration of nineteenth-century composer Richard Wagner was in full swing. Outside the Villa Wahnfried, the town's baroque buildings and public parks were packed with music lovers. Inside, the three men awaited the return of the Wagner Festspiele's most famous patron.

At the opera house enjoying *Siegfried*, the tale of a fearless dragon killer, was Adolf Hitler, Fuehrer of the German Third Reich.

*

Arranz, Bernhardt, and Langenheim were in Bayreuth to beg Hitler for the aeroplanes Franco needed to transport his men to mainland Spain. General Mola's Army of the North had stalled at Guadarrama and without the support of Franco's forces the coup was doomed.

Langenheim was apprehensive about Hitler's reaction. The Fuehrer had accepted neither criticism nor opposition since he joined the fledgling *Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (German Workers' Party) in 1920 as an embittered

Austrian veteran of the Kaiser's army. The Munich-based far-right party had few ambitions beyond protesting Germany's defeat in the First World War until Hitler's oratory made it a star of the Bavarian political scene. He became leader, changed the party name to *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (National Socialist German Workers Party - NSDAP) and shook up its ideology. Dominated by an obsessive anti-Semitism and sprinkled with revolutionary rhetoric, the Nazis pushed nationalism, racial purity, and a burning desire to prove Germany could win a war.

In the 1920s the party established itself across the country. Its paramilitary wing of brown-shirted storm troopers battled Communist opponents in violent street fights. German voters flocked to Hitler when he claimed to be the only politician who could bring stability to their divided country.

By 1932 the Nazis were the largest party in the German parliament. The following year President Hindenburg offered them a place in government with Hitler as Reich Chancellor. Hindenburg's advisors thought they could control the Nazi leader but Hitler out maneuvered them after the President's death in August 1934 and assumed dictatorial powers. Opponents were imprisoned, murdered, or driven into exile. Germany became a one-party totalitarian state.

Despite their gangster tactics the Nazis were bidding for respectability when the rebellion began in Spain. The XI Olympic Games was due to open in Berlin on 1 August. Anti-Semitic measures had been temporarily suspended and even the capital's gay bars had been re-opened. Propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels was keen to present Germany as a land of friendly sports lovers under a benevolent dictatorship. His hope was that the thousands of international athletes and visitors would leave the Olympic Games having forgotten about the remilitarisation of the Rhineland, massive arms programmes, and the prisoners in concentration camps.

Privately, Langenheim believed the German government would not risk its new image by becoming involved in a Spanish coup d'état, but greed had overwhelmed his caution. If the Third Reich decided to supply aeroplanes to the rebels then middlemen like himself and Bernhardt could make a lot of money. When *Siegfried* ended, Langenheim would either reap the rewards of agreeing to help Franco or face the Fuehrer's wrath. He suspected the latter.

*

Hitler was Franco's last chance to rescue the coup. The easiest path to Spain from Africa should have been by sea but Franco did not have any ships. Naval officers had not been included in the conspiracy. Mola's plan for the coup envisioned a quick victory in Spain with no need for Franco's forces to fight on the mainland.

One of the few conspirators concerned about the omission of the navy, Alphonsist writer Eugenio Vega *Latapié*, editor of the *Acción Española* journal, independently approached senior Naval figures. Although the reaction was positive he did not reveal any concrete details and the rising was as much a surprise to the Navy as it was to the Popular Front government.

On 18 July, the day after the rebels took control of the Protectorate, the Spanish government sent three warships (the *Sánchez Baracaíztegui*, the *Almirante Valdés*, and the *Churuccato*) to the straits of Africa and ordered them to bombard key towns on the North African coast. Instead, their captains headed for Melilla in northwestern Morocco to join the rebels.

Naval officers were right-wing but their crews were leftist, well-organised, and vigilant. Only a week earlier, a sailors' conference had discussed how to resist a rebellion against the government. The crews of the *Sánchez Baracaíztegui* and *Almirante Valdés* mutinied when they discovered their destinations. Only the *Churucca*, whose crew remained unaware of the rising thanks to a broken radio, remained in its officers' hands. It docked at Melilla and was given the task of transporting rebel soldiers to Andalusia. After one journey the crew mutinied on the way back to Morocco and took over the ship.

The following morning the government ordered the rest of its warships into the Straits of Gibraltar to stop any seaborne attempt to reach the mainland. The officers on these ships proved as right-wing as the previous day and the crews just as left-wing. Bullets ricocheted off metal bulkheads during violent struggles for control in the warships' confined corridors. The crews on all ships triumphed and asked the Admiralty how to deal with the corpses. They were advised to 'lower bodies overboard with respectful solemnity'.[65] The crews threw them into the sea, mopped blood off the decks, and steamed back to Spain.

Franco's troops were marooned in Morocco. The rebels' only consolation was that the fleet had been crippled by the loss of its most experienced officers. Two hundred and thirty officers out of 675 on active duty were murdered by their crews or killed during a mass execution of

prisoners on the mainland in August.[66]

Franco ordered the seven Breguet bi-planes that made up his Air Force to fly troops to Andalusia where they could link up with General Queipo de Llano in Seville and Colonel Varela in Cádiz. Each aeroplane carried only sixteen men. Franco needed outside help.

The Italian dictator Benito Mussolini was a former socialist schoolmaster from Predappio who turned warmonger during the First World War. When the bullets started flying he abandoned his pacifism to create the right-wing *Milan fascio*, a platform for attacking anyone who opposed Italian intervention. Mussolini's own war ended in 1917 when an accident with a mortar bomb in a frontline trench peppered him with shrapnel.

After the war the *fascio* embarked on a new mission to stop Communism getting a foothold in Italy. Its street fighting tactics attracted right-wingers as diverse as Filippo Marinetti's avant-garde Futurist artists and the reactionary *Squadrismo*, who represented the interests of rural landowners. Hungry for power, Mussolini changed the *fascio* into the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* (National Fascist Party - PNF) and the group turned to parliamentary tactics.

The PNF did poorly in the 1920 elections and the violence began again. The worst was in the countryside. Fascist squads surrounded isolated villages and murdered left-wing activists; those just suspected of leftist sympathies were force-fed castor oil. The Left paid back the Fascists with interest.

'There's a lot of fighting between Fascists – the young bloods of the country – and the Socialists whom they try to suppress,' wrote English painter Christopher Wood to his mother while holidaying in Florence during 1921's burning hot summer. 'Unfortunately a lot of Fascists have been killed. Two boys aged 19 and 20 who dined here last week were captured by the Socialists and strapped in a railway tunnel and had to wait two hours for a train to come and cut them to pieces'.[67]

In 1922 Mussolini threatened to march on Rome and take power by force. The Italian king Vittorio Emanuelle III caved in rather than risk civil war and appointed Mussolini's party to power. The king's belief he could control Fascism did not last. In 1925 opposition parties were outlawed and Italy became a bureaucratic PNF dictatorship whose propaganda fetishised war and violence.

In 1935 Mussolini invaded Abyssinia, north-west Africa, one of the last independent nations on the continent. Powered by modern armaments, aeroplanes, and mustard gas Italy's victory gained it territory under the

African sun but the world's sympathy lay with defeated Abyssinian Emperor Hailie Selassie. The new Italian empire was admired only by the extreme-right and unrepentant imperialists.

Franco was one of the admirers. On 20 July he asked the Italian military attaché in Tangier, Major Giuseppe Luccardi, for transport aeroplanes. Luccardi passed the request to Mussolini. The shaven-headed and granite-jawed Italian dictator, lauded by own propaganda as the 'man who never slept', was the generous sponsor of far-right groups across Europe and an obvious backer.[68]

Unfortunately for Franco, Mussolini was reluctant to become involved in the chaotic Spanish situation. The rebels' chances of success were unclear in the confused first weeks of the rising; Mussolini told Luccardi to ignore any requests for help.[69] This level-headed decision from the usually impulsive *Duce* sprang from his jaundiced view of Spanish right-winger plotters. Since the failed Sanjurjo coup of 1932, a steady stream of would-be conspirators had come to Rome with requests for help. Any money the Italians gave them disappeared in the bars and brothels of the capital with little to show in the way of right-wing revolution. Franco would have to prove he had more to offer.

The day after Mussolini's refusal, a delegation lead by Luis Bolín and flown by Captain Cecil Bebb arrived in Rome to plead for help in person. Mussolini liked the journalist but dismissed his request.

On 22 July a desperate Franco turned to Germany. He sent a telegram to the German military attaché for France and Spain, General Erich Kühlental, requesting ten transport planes to fly his men to mainland Spain. The telegram ended: 'The contract will be signed after. Very urgent! On the word of General Franco and Spain'.[70]

The telegram was communicated to Berlin the next day where unimpressed Nazi diplomats filed it in a drawer.

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The man who saved the rebels' cause was an overweight Prussian businessman based in Tetuán. Johannes Bernhardt had gone bankrupt back in 1929 and by July 1936 was again heading the same way. Income from his job as frontman for a group of German firms in Morocco had recently nosedived after the French banned him from their zone, suspecting him of spying. They

may have been right. He earned extra money by writing confidential reports for the German embassy about the French Moroccan economy.

Bernhardt's plan to start a new life in Argentina had been foiled by the uprising. He was stuck in North Africa. Through one of his business ventures, which supplied equipment to the Spanish garrison in Morocco, he had become friends with Beigbeder, the Moroccan Secretary-General. Bernhardt was sympathetic to the coup's aims but clear sighted about its money-making potential. By providing the Nationalists with aeroplanes, at suitably inflated prices, he could save both the rising and his own finances.

Franco approved a flight to Germany after Beigbeder explained that his businessman friend had good contacts with Hitler's inner circle. The Prussian had exaggerated. Bernhardt's political connections in the Third Reich were less extensive than he claimed and he had to enlist the help of Adolf Langenheim, the Nazi party representative in Tetuán.

Langenheim was a thirty year veteran of Morocco. He had explored the country extensively, often on foot, staking mine claims as he went. He wore a burnoose and spoke Arabic. Some thought he had gone native. The British Consul-General in Tetuán was not fooled and warned London that Langenheim was 'virtually the German Consul in Morocco'.[71]

The mining engineer, who had enough British in his family tree to name his son Heinrich Cromwell, would have taken that as a compliment to his spycraft. Langenheim was actually a top *Abwehr* (Military Intelligence) man with experience of causing trouble in Morocco on behalf of Berlin as far back as the First World War. He used his mining job as cover to run agents, bribe Moroccan tribal leaders in the French zone, and distribute anti-Semitic propaganda.[72]

He was reluctant to help Bernhardt. Langenheim knew enough about the political situation in Berlin to doubt Franco would find any friends there. And overthrowing the Spanish government was not a good way of keeping a low profile in the spy world. In particular, Langenheim did not want Franco to find out that the French government, among others, strongly suspected the mining engineer had supplied arms to Arab rebels during the Rif War.

Bernhardt kept pressing and talked about the money they could make. Langenheim gave in. He organised an audience with the Fuehrer through Rudolph Hess in Berlin.

The day the trio left for Bayreuth, emissaries from General Mola arrived in Rome, unaware their compatriots had visited only a few days before.

Mussolini was surprised to find himself again approached to provide war material. The group, whose most prominent member was Antonio Goicoechea *Cosculluela*, head of the *Renovación Española* monarchist party after Calvo Sotelo's death, was more interested in bullets than aeroplanes but its presence helped convinced Mussolini that the rising was a serious concern.

Mola did not benefit from the Italian dictator's interest. His group was outflanked by Louis Bolín, who had remained in Rome to plead on behalf of Franco. The worldly journalist was congenial company. Mussolini listened when Bolín described Franco as the star of the rising and dismissed Mola, the coup's architect, as an ineffectual plotter.

While Bolín persuaded *Il Duce*, Bernhardt, Langenheim and Arranz steeled themselves for their task in Germany. It was late in the evening of 25 July when Adolf Hitler returned to the Villa Wahnfried. The German dictator, toothbrush moustache and sleek wing of black hair familiar from hundreds of newsreels, asked the trio what they wanted from him. They explained General Franco's request. Hitler questioned them about Franco's politics and was unimpressed by the rebels' lack of finance. 'That's no way to start a war!'

Langenheim, convinced they would be rejected, prepared himself for one of the Führer's infamous temper tantrums that had earned him the nickname of *teppichfresser* (carpet chewer).[73] The talks went on until two a.m. Finally, to Langenheim's surprise, Hitler agreed to supply twenty transport aircraft to fly Franco's army into southern Spain.

The wheel of fortune continued to carry Franco up high. Shortly after, Mussolini independently told Bolín he would supply the rebels with aeroplanes.

Ideology dovetailed with geopolitics for both dictators. In the east the Soviet Union cast its shadow. In the west, Spain and France shared Popular Front governments. A rightist Spain could break that encirclement. Both men were convinced, Hitler instinctively and Mussolini through long conversations with Bolín, that Franco could deliver.[74]

Hitler and Mussolini had other reasons for becoming involved in Spain. Hitler found it hard to contain his contempt for western democracy. Nothing would prove the real weakness of those who defeated the Kaiser in 1918 more than Nazi Germany supporting right-wing rebellion in the same month it hosted the Olympic Games, an event Hitler privately derided as 'an

invention of Jews and Freemasons'.[75] For his part, Mussolini wanted to prove Italy a major player on the European stage. Perhaps most of all, he liked drama.

'It is better to live one day as a lion,' the Italian dictator said, 'than a hundred years as a sheep'.[76]

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Hitler and Mussolini were both aware the new Spanish Prime Minister, Jose Giral *y Pereira*, already the second replacement for Casares Quiroga since the rising began, had approached France for assistance. The French Popular Front government, which had taken power in May 1936, was an alliance of left-wing parties dominated by the Communist Party, the Socialists, and the Radical Party. Like the Popular Front government in Spain, it had been instigated by the Soviets. Already damned in the eyes of the right, the French government aroused more fury when it appointed Jewish Socialist Léon Blum as Prime Minister.

'Your arrival in office *M. le Président du Conseil*, is incontestably a historic date,' rightist Xavier Vallat, a one-legged war hero, told Blum at the first meeting of the French Chamber. 'For the first time this old Gallic-Roman country will be governed by a Jew. To govern this peasant nation of France it is better to have someone whose origins, no matter how modest, spring from our soil than to have a subtle Talmudist'.[77]

The French right despised Blum so much that some used the slogan 'Better Hitler than Blum', a serious declaration from a country invaded by Germany only twenty years previously.[78] Both left and right talked about the possibility of a French civil war.

Blum was less radical than he seemed. When the Front took power French workers went on strike to hurry along the Marxist revolution they thought Blum wanted. The Prime Minister persuaded them back to work. His most extreme measures were to introduce a forty-hour working week and ban a number of far-right groups. But he was sympathetic to the beleaguered Spanish government.

On 22 July, Madrid's ambassador in France, Juan de Cárdensas *y Rodriguez de Rivas*, gave Blum a shopping list that included twenty Poetz bombers, 1,000 Lebel rifles, and a million bullets. Blum agreed to supply them but protests from right-wing opponents caused him to cancel it the next

day. He declared neutrality in the Spanish conflict but quietly allowed Cárdensas to buy from private sellers.

The Spaniard's shopping list was fulfilled by a parade of arms dealers and gun-runners who soon wore out the carpet in the Paris embassy. Sympathetic government officials helped the purchases across the border. By 8 August seventy French bombers had been flown into Spain, their French pilots promised salaries of up to 50,000 pesetas a month.[79]

On the other side of the coup, Franco was racing to get his men to the mainland. The first group of eight German transport Junker JU 52s, known as *Eisen Annie* (Iron Annies), flew from Dessau to Tetuán on 29 July. Operation *Feuerzauber* (Magic Fire), a reference to *Siegfried*, was underway.

Bernhardt was on the first aeroplane to land. As he climbed down onto the runway he was met by General Alfredo Kindelán *y Duany*, the comander of Franco's Air Force. A cynical monarchist who disliked the Prussian, Kindelán called Bernhardt 'a comedian trying to make money'. Bernhardt told him to take his suspicions to General Franco.

A few days later the German businessman flew to the northern zone to inform Mola that Hitler would only supply war materials to the rebels through Franco in order to avoid factionalism. Mola was unable to hide a look of defeat. His coup plan had failed and now Franco, a minor cog in the original machine, had military backing from abroad.

On 30 July Mussolini sent twelve Italian bombers to help Franco's airlift, Louis Bolín sitting in the rear gunner turret of one as it touched down at Tetuán. Franco set them to work and asked for more. Eight days later Mussolini supplied a further twenty-seven fighter planes, five tanks, and forty machine-guns. By the end of August Germany had sent an additional twenty-six bombers and fifteen fighter planes.[80]

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Support for Franco drew Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy closer together. Ideologically, the two dictatorships were branches off the same tree. The Nazis had been impressed by Mussolini's rule since their earliest days, and borrowed the Fascist salute along with some of Italy's political theatricality.

'I conceived the profoundest admiration for the great man south of the Alps,' wrote Hitler in his 1926 political autobiography *Mein Kampf*, 'who, full of ardent love for his people, made no pacts with the enemies of Italy, but

strove for their annihilation by all ways and means.’ [81]

Mussolini was more wary of Hitler. After Nazi involvement in the July 1934 assassination of Austrian Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss, Italy moved troops to the border, prepared for war. In April the next year Italy, France, and Britain agreed to safeguard Austrian independence at a Conference in Stresa, northern Italy. Mussolini lost confidence in the pact two months later when Britain signed the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, allowing the Nazis to increase their naval power. Relations between Mussolini and Hitler then warmed when Germany was one of the few nations not to condemn the Italian invasion of Abyssinia.

As German and Italian aeroplanes touched down in Morocco, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the head of Nazi Military Intelligence, met his Italian counterpart, General Mario Roatta, to discuss their respective efforts. Canaris wanted the use of Italian airfields for refuelling. Once this was granted the two communicated daily on how to co-ordinate support for the rebels.[82]

In Rome, Hitler’s personal lawyer, Hans Frank, assured Mussolini that the Germans had no territorial interest in the Mediterranean. The Fuehrer was only supporting Franco in order to fight Communism. Mussolini was reassured. The foundation stone of the Rome-Berlin axis had been laid.

A loss for Franco would be a loss for Fascism and National Socialism. The dictatorships had committed themselves to supporting Franco to the end. Their aeroplanes had to get his men to the mainland before the Spanish government launched a counter-attack.

7. AIR POWER

German and Italian Aeroplanes in Spanish Skies

German pilots were astonished by the situation at Tetuán when they landed. Thousands of soldiers camped in the hills above the town. Thousands more sat around the airport, threatening to spill onto the runway. Officers tried to keep order but as soon as an aeroplane touched down it was stormed by Moroccan tribesmen, a mob of flowing chilaba robes, red fezes, and tightly wound turbans. They clambered aboard, burning their hands on the hot aeroplane skin.

'We took off whenever somebody yelled 'Voll' [full],' said a pilot. 'Nobody counted passengers until they arrived in Spain. Sometimes forty-two tumbled out'.[83] The planes were designed to carry seventeen.

The Moroccans had never been on an aeroplane before and sat on the floor in long rows, knees drawn up to their chins, mumbling prayers as the craft bounced through strong winds. Many were sick, on the floor and each other. The crews did not have time to mop up the vomit before the aeroplanes were back in the air for another trip.

By 29 July only 850 of Franco's men had reached mainland Spain. Between that date and 5 August, over 1,500 soldiers were transported. When German and Italian aeroplanes arrived en masse they carried 500 across daily.

Operation *Feuerzauber*'s remaining eleven Junkers were crated up, along with six Heinkel He-51 fighters, and shipped to Spain on the German freighter *Usaramo*. Eighty-six *Luftwaffe* personnel went with them, including ground crew, Junker pilots, technicians, and six fighter pilots under the command of Oberleutnant Krafft Eberhardt. The men travelled under the cover of vacationing photographers on a cruise arranged through the Nazi *Kraft durch Freude* (Strength Through Joy) workers organisation. Their families were told to write to them care of 'Max Winkler, Berlin S.W. 68'.[84]

Hitler supplied a small number of ground troops to hurry along the coup. A unit of 200 Panzer Mk I tanks, crewed by volunteers from the 4th and 6th Panzer regiments under Colonel Willhelm von Thoma, entered south-western Andalusia in early September, as ‘Operation Otto’. All the men were nominally enrolled in the Spanish Foreign Legion to camouflage German involvement.

The Spanish government still outnumbered the rebels in the air, with 150 pilots to the rebels’ ninety, and was able to call on private pilots. Franco’s agents searched for experienced flyers to man the recently arrived German and Italian fighter planes. One of the men they found to escort transport aeroplanes from North Africa to Andalusia was a dark-eyed and lantern-jawed young American.

*

Vincenzo Patriarca was born in the Bronx, a northern borough of New York rapidly filling up with immigrants, in January 1913. His Italian parents ran a barbershop. Patriarca helped out after school, sweeping up hair from the tiled floor and stropping cut-throat razors on a leather belt. His father had a tough time supporting the family when the Depression hit and Patriarca developed a chip on his shoulder about the inequalities of life in America.

From an early age he wanted to fly. To Patriarca’s disgust, his father suggested he get a menial job at an airline. ‘Maybe it satisfies some fellows to gas up planes, to sit at the controls while the engine's warming up, to pull the chocks from the wheels and watch someone else zoom off, but I don’t care for that sort of heartbreak’.[85]

His money ran out after a few flying lessons at Long Island airport. Patriarca was preparing to give up the dream when he heard about Mussolini’s ‘Italians Abroad’ programme, which encouraged expatriates to return home with the promise of jobs. If Patriarca moved to Rome he would be allowed to join the Italian Air Force.

By November 1934 the American was flying observation aeroplanes over Trieste. When Italy invaded Abyssinia the next year he transferred to a fighter squadron. It was so hot under the African sun that pilots fainted getting out of their cockpits. The Abyssinian airforce barely existed. The only action Patriarca saw was a Christmas day attack on an enemy anti-aircraft gun.

An ulcerated stomach invalided him out of the Air Force. In August 1936 a Spanish rebel supporter approached the recuperating American as he sat with a group of friends at a café in Rome. Patriarca was offered $200 a day plus expenses to fly a fighter plane escorting Junker transport aeroplanes from Morocco. He shipped out via Genoa and joined the rebel Air Force under the nom de guerre ‘Cesar Bocalari’.

Patriarca flew an Italian Fiat bi-plane with an Indian brave's face painted on the fuselage. He boasted to his ground crew he would add a feather to the head-dress for each enemy aeroplane he shot down. To the Spaniards this was stereotypical Italian bravado and few believed he could back it up. They preferred the icy efficiency of his German counterparts.

The German pilots under Krafft Eberhardt had initially been instructed to train Spanish pilots but the Spaniards crashed three Heinkel fighters and the Germans took back their aircraft. Krafft Eberhardt asked Berlin to allow his instructors to fly combat missions.

Hitler agreed and the *Luftwaffe* pilots soon roamed Spain, attacking government aeroplanes in both northern and southern zones. All pilots were supposed to see action but in practice it was Eberhardt, Oberleutnant Herwig Knüppel, and Oberleutnant Johannes Trautloft, the senior pilots, who did most of the flying. Their first engagement was 25 August. Within six days the Germans had shot down ten government planes. Trautloft’s fighter was machine-gunned to pieces around him but he parachuted to safety over the northern Guardarama front and was back in action the next day.

On 28 September another member of the German team, Leutnant Ekkehard Hefter, was at the controls of a Heinkel flying low over the Basque town of Vitoria in the north when his wing clipped the bell tower of the town hall and sent the machine spinning into the main street. Hefter died in the cash. He was the first German casualty in Spain.

Also flying for Franco were several squadrons of Italian fighter pilots sent by Mussolini. Patriarca had old friends amongst them from his days in the Air Force and at the end of August arranged a transfer. He had spent the previous weeks flying fighter support out of Seville, once drifting over the border into Portugal where friendly locals dismantled his aeroplane, loaded it on a truck, and drove it back to Spain.

On 13th September Patriarca’s patrol encountered a convoy of government bombers and fighter escorts over Madrid. In the ensuing dogfight Patriarca went gunning for Felix Urtubi *Ercilla,* a well-known fighter ace.

Patriarca was chasing Urtubi through the sky when their planes collided. Urtubi died still strapped into his seat. Patriarca leapt from his cockpit as the Fiat fighter plane tumbled to earth.

'My first parachute jump,' he said later. 'I grunted loudly with relief when my body jerked into space and at the same time released the rip cord. Floating in a light breeze I felt no fear. Below me, Urtubi's plane still burned. Mine, only a few feet away had telescoped, the tail well into the fuselage. Too bad, I thought, I can never finish the feathers on that Indian head'.[86]

Patriarca landed in the no-man's-land between rebel and government forces. The government soldiers who took him prisoner would have shot him on the spot if he had not waved his American passport. He was transported at gunpoint to Madrid.

Visitors reported the young pilot was on the verge of a nervous breakdown, expecting to be executed at any moment. Each evening he heard fellow prisoners marched out to a firing squad.

Two American journalists, Jay Allen and Louis Fischer, visited him after his capture and alerted the United States embassy. Diplomatic pressure was exerted. After weeks of beatings and interrogation the Republic released Patriarca, although not until he had spilled his guts in a detailed statement about his fellow pilots.

'Six fighter pilots and six German bombers, six fighter pilots and three Italian specialists, fifteen or more German specialists, six Heinkel fighters, three Junkers bombers, nine Fiat CR.32, a Douglas Bréguet, and three Spaniards'.[87]

With time and a diet of candy bars Patriarca recovered enough to run into the embassy gardens each time he heard a dogfight overhead.

'God, if I were only up there,' he said. 'I'd show them!'[88]

Back in New York at the end of the year, Patriarca returned to sweeping up the hair and stropping razors at his father's barbershop. He found time to co-author a series of articles about his adventures with journalist Avery Strakosch for *American Cavalcade* magazine. The pilot ended on a bitter note.

'Although I have had four years of the finest aviation training, in two of the best military schools of Italy, the unique experience of the discipline of two wars in one year, I can't get even a pilot's license in my own country, without going to aviation school all over again! I can get a job as a chauffeur, as a sailor on a pleasure boat, as a painter at a local shipyard at seventy cents

an hour. But to earn my living at the job I know thoroughly, flying, that's out. Grounded. There is no more tragic word to a fellow who lives to fly.'[89]

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The rebels now called themselves 'Nationalists', a term adopted by the world press although the right-wing British *Daily Mail* referred to them as 'anti-reds' for the first weeks. Spanish government forces were known as 'Loyalists' or 'Republicans'.

In August the eyes of the press were drawn to a confrontation of the two sides on the island of Majorca off the eastern coast of Spain. Republican troops had invaded Majorca after it declared for the Nationalists at the start of the rising. Franco's men clung on but the clock was ticking.

The Falange had a strong presence on the island and two party activists flew to Rome to ask Mussolini for help. Lacking contacts, they were unable to get an audience and one was briefly imprisoned trying to buy weapons from an armaments factory. Threatened with deportation, the pair was able to make contact with Spanish exiles well connected in the Fascist hierarchy who arranged a meeting with the Italian dictator.

Mussolini was intrigued by the prospect of exercising power over Majorca, an island well placed for increasing Italian control of the Mediterranean. He demanded three million liras as payment. Majorcan businessman Juan March supplied the money.

On 19 August the Nationals received three Savoia Marchetti S55 hydroplanes with Italian crews. The hydroplanes boosted defenders' morale as they cut through the skies overhead but handled like airborne cows and were easily outmanoeuvred by Republican fighter support. The situation worsened.

On 23 August the Majorcans in Rome requested an Italian military advisor. A few days later the Black Shirt militia veteran and self-proclaimed *Conte Rossi* (the Red Count), Arconovaldo Bonaccorsi, flew in to Majorca airport.

A lawyer by trade, Bonaccorsi got his name from a bushy ginger beard rather than any political ideology. Mussolini chose him over a regular Army officer so he could be disowned as an adventurer if the defense failed. On Majorca, Bonaccorsi found the Nationalist Army command resigned to defeat and abandoned them to work directly with the Falangist militia. The

swashbuckling Italian, hung with hand grenades, pistols, and knives like a Fascist Christmas tree, was worshipped by young Falangists. He formed his admirers into a unit called the ‘Dragoons of Death’.[90]

Bonaccorsi’s dramatic leadership reinvigorated the defenders and the invaders were pushed back. The Red Count later boasted to Italian journalists that he single-handedly saved Majorca, but fifty better qualified Black Shirt instructors and tacticians followed him to the island. Decisively, a unit of Italian fighter planes arrived to support the hydroplanes and soon dominated the skies. The Republican government had never been confident about the invasion and pulled its troops out in September. They left the beaches littered with their dead.

Majorca became an Italian stronghold. The main street was renamed the *Via Roma* and decorated with kitsch statues of Roman youths in togas. The Bay of Pollensa became an Italian naval base and the whole island was fortified and mined.[91]

Bonaccorsi ruled the island like a private kingdom, racing around in a red sports car wearing a black Fascist uniform with a stark white cross at his neck. A priest rode shotgun. Bonaccorsi swapped his sports car for a white horse to lead parades.

Behind the theatricality was a vicious repression of Majorcans suspected of supporting the government. Wounded invaders being treated in a convent were dragged out and shot in front of the Mother Superior. The scale of the repressions horrified Georges Bernanos, right-wing French Catholic supporter of the rebellion and local resident. He claimed 3,000 died. Even the Italian consul in Palma estimated at least 1,750 had been murdered by Bonaccorsi.

Mussolini was unmoved by the death toll. Fascist newspapers celebrated Majorca’s victory. The Red Count, ego inflated to bursting point, made speeches attacking Britain virulent enough to prompt official complaints from London.

Italian influence in Majorca was obvious to everyone but Rome denied any involvement, admitting only that private Italian citizens had helped the Nationalists. Mussolini refused to censure Bonaccorsi either for his comments or for planning a coup after the Nationalist military governor tried to assert control on behalf of Franco. To avoid bloodshed, the Nationalists were forced to replace the governor with someone more favourable to Rome.

Bonaccorsi’s fatal mistake was to threaten the son of Juan March, who

was active in the island's Falangist militia, after the two argued about the Red Count's policies. When March heard about the incident he put pressure on the Nationalists to remove the Count. March was too rich to ignore. An ultimatum was issued to Rome. Mussolini recalled Bonaccorsi towards the end of the year and the Nationalists re-established control of their own territory.

Mussolini's Majorcan adventure was the first step in a long Spanish road for the Italian dictator. It began in glory and would end with domestic unrest, the Italian army weakened, and *Il Duce*'s closest advisors wishing they had never heard of Franco.

The repression on Majorca stained Mussolini's reputation but it claimed fewer victims than the murders in Andalusia, south-west Spain, where Franco's men were flooding into the country. There, most executions took place in cemeteries to save time burying the corpses. As *Luftwaffe* aeroplanes carried Moroccans and Foreign Legionnaires through the Andalusian skies, lorryloads of Republican prisoners on their way to the firing squad rolled in convoy across the countryside beneath.

Local Falangists and sympathetic rural policemen of the *Gardia Civil* (Civil Guards) used terror tactics against the anarchist groups who waged guerrilla warfare in the olive groves and sherry vineyards of western Andalusia. Hundreds of prisoners and suspected leftists were murdered. Although later the executions would become more discreet, in the early days crowds gathered to watch. Sometimes enterprising locals set up stands selling hot food. Onlookers filled their bellies while the condemned cried, prayed, spat insults and political slogans, soiled themselves, or waited stoically for the end.

The murder of prisoners was against the 1929 Geneva Convention but widespread on both sides. In the chaotic first months of the rising, the captured expected no mercy. In 1979 a mass grave containing 7,000 corpses was uncovered Saragossa, once held by Nationalists. Thousands of priests and alleged Nationalist supporters were murdered in Madrid and other Republican cities. The episode in Ernest Hemingway's 1940 novel *For Whom The Bell Tolls* in which anarchists throw 500 suspect members of a town over a cliff to their deaths was based on a real incident at Ronda in Andalusia.

The majority of the murders occurred in the first six months of the rising and the Falange was responsible for a disproportionately large number of

those in the Nationalist zone. They also made up a disproportionately large number of victims on the other side, notably at the November 1936 massacre in Paracuellos del Jarama, referred to by later Nationalist propagandists as the ‘Spanish Katyn’, after the infamous Soviet massacre of Polish soldiers during the Second World War.

Not everyone had the stomach to murder unarmed prisoners and some men had to be drafted into firing squads. One unwilling Andalusian Falangist remembered how he was forced to spend ‘ten days “cleaning up”, which meant work with the execution squad […] They were executed in batches. Sometimes women were among them.’[92]

The Falangist stood out not just for his squeamishness but for his nationality. Rupert Bellville was an upper-class British bullfighting enthusiast living off shares in the Colman’s Mustard Company. A blunt, hard-drinking playboy, he was heir to Papillon Hall, a seventeenth-century Leicestershire country house with a stagnant moat and a pair of cursed slippers hanging in the drawing room.

Bellville was the first of a small number of British volunteers, at least thirty and possibly as many as fifty, who fought for the Nationalists. Along with compatriot Peter Kemp, he became well known for his involvement in Spain and never regretted it, despite the atrocities he witnessed.

Bellville knew Spain from before the rising. A funeral he attended during the country’s last days of peace turned into a gunfight between mourners and the police. It would not be long before the playboy from Papillon Hall picked up a gun himself.

8. FLOWERING RIFLES

Rupert Bellville in Andalusia

In the last, stifling hot, summer before the rising, Madrid was a field of dry grass waiting for a spark. Tempers were at breaking point. The town's construction workers downed tools and refused arbitration. In the countryside crops went unharvested as landowners and peasants argued over pay. Even the bullfighters went on strike. Those still working walked to their jobs with an ear cocked for the sound of gunfire.

On Tuesday 14 July 1936, three days before the Foreign Legion rose up in Morocco, the tension was raised to a new high at the East Cemetery. Two funerals took place, one following the other.

The first funeral was for Lieutenant José Castillo. A recently married member of the *Guardia de Asalto* (Assault Guards), a unit formed by the government to keep order in urban areas and provide a loyal counterweight to the rightist Civil Guards, Castillo went to the top of a Falange death list when he trained the Socialist Party militia. The day before her wedding, Castillo's wife received a note asking her why she was marrying a corpse. Her husband died in a mess of gunsmoke and blood outside his front door. Colleagues and crowds of socialists gave the left's clenched-fist salute as his coffin, draped in a red flag, was lowered into the ground.

The second funeral was for Calvo Sotelo, leader of *Renovación Española*. A gang of policemen bent on revenge came for him the night Castillo died. They claimed he was wanted at police headquarters and Sotelo went with them unaware their commanding officer Captain Fernando Condés was Castillo's best friend.

In the doorway of his home Sotelo turned to his wife and in a moment of bleak humour promised her he would call as soon as he could, 'unless these gentlemen are going to blow my brains out'.[93] The group drove off into the

Madrid night. Five minutes into the journey the policeman and socialist Luis Cuenca shot Sotelo in the neck.

The body was dumped near a cemetery. The murderers were arrested within days but for the Spanish right Sotelo's death was proof the Popular Front assassinated its opponents. Hundreds of grim-faced people attended his funeral, all in mourning black and many with their arms extended in the fascist salute. Amongst the mourners was Rupert Bellville.

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The Briton's connection with Spain dated back to his teens when his family packed him off to wealthy friends in the Andalusian sherry business to avoid a horsewhipping from the outraged father of a girlfriend. He returned home in his early twenties with a bullfighting obsession and a love of the privileged, comfortable lives of the Spanish rich.

As a young man Bellville was good-looking and arrogant, a pale, broad-shouldered blond who enchanted English rose debutantes. But years of good living thickened his figure and flushed the face beneath the shell of brilliantined hair. By 1936 he was just a 'tall heavily-built man with a florid complexion'.[94]

Bellville occupied his time as an occasional pilot. In 1926 he earned his commission in the dilettante ranks of 601 (County of London) Squadron, a part-time Auxiliary Airforce outfit based at the Northolt airbase. There he mixed with other rich young men about town who piloted de Havilland DH9A biplane bombers at the weekends and spent their weekdays frittering away trust funds in London café society. He was a talented but undisciplined pilot with enough of a reputation that a letter from abroad addressed simply to 'Rupert Bellville, RAF' reached him without delay.

He summered in Biarritz, the wealthy resort town in the south of France patronised by the British royal family. Socialites and aristocrats mixed in the casino, promenaded along *la grande plage*, and conducted discreet affairs in the resort's hotels. Spanish friends kept Bellville updated about the growing violence in their country, nervous about the danger to the Andalusian sherry industry posed by Anarchist unrest. Firmly opposed to Spain's left-wing government, Bellville travelled to Madrid to witness Sotelo's funeral.

It was an emotional affair. In contrast to Castillo's ragged mourners, those who paid their respects to Sotelo were well-dressed and affluent. They

represented all parts of the right-wing spectrum, from *Renovación Española* militants to Falangists. A note of hysteria was in the air. Aristocratic women physically attacked the vice-president and permanent secretary of the Spanish parliament when the men tried to speak.

At Sotelo's graveside his deputy Antonio Goicoechea vowed, 'before God and Spain', to avenge him.[95] There were shouts of approval from the crowd, tears rolling down well-fed cheeks. As the speeches continued, scuffles broke out with policemen on the edges of the throng. Police reinforcements drew up on motorcycles. The crowd shouted political slogans and insults at the new arrivals, then shots rang out between Falangists and policemen. No-one knows who fired first but when the crowd stampeded away four mourners lay dying on the grass.

Bellville returned to Biarritz. In the casino he titillated well-heeled gamblers with dark stories of the chaos in Spain and his eyewitness account of the funeral. He pronounced that things would only get worse. A few days later on 18 July, the day after General Franco's men seized Morocco, General Mola's uprising began in northern Spain.

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Mola was a former colonial officer in the regular Army, known for his devious intellect and love of literature, neither common in Spanish generals. He was so hated by the left that during anti-monarchist riots of 1930 the rioters' most popular slogan was 'Shoot Mola!'

The General declared a state of war at the Carlist stronghold of Pamplona in Navarre, triggering scenes of religious fervour more appropriate to a medieval crusade than a modern coup d'état. Church bells tolled, crosses were raised, and priests blessed Carlist Requeté militiamen as they headed into the town centre. Pamplona was a sea of Carlist red berets, like poppies in a field.[96]

Much of the north was strongly Catholic and opposed the Popular Front's anti-clerical measures; town after town came out for the Nationalists. Burgos, the old capital of Castile, fell to Mola without a shot being fired. In the cathedral city of Valladolid, south of Burgos, the military commander remained loyal to the government but was overpowered during a gunfight in his offices. The city fell that night.

Oviedo in the far north was a centre of left-wing agitation but

unexpectedly went to the Nationalists thanks to the cunning of rebel Colonel Antonio Aranda. He posed as a friend of the government, persuaded local miners and other Popular Front supporters they were needed to defend nearby towns from the uprising, then declared for the Nationalists once they marched out of sight.

Mola sent his columns of Requetés, Falangists, and regular soldiers to capture as much territory as possible. Within a few days he controlled the north-west and central northern regions of Spain, with the exception of a strip of land on the coast containing the now besieged Oviedo, and reached the western part of the border with France. His troops had taken control of western Spain down to Caceres, south-west of Madrid, near the border with Portugal, and had probed as far east as Teruel in the Pyrenees. Despite these victories, Mola knew that everywhere else on the mainland, apart from the south-western corner of Andalusia, the rising had failed. The Republic was reeling but the rebels had to land a knockout punch before the government fought back.

Bellville had access to a Leopard Moth light aircraft and on 24 July he flew into Mola's headquarters at Burgos with an old Eton friend, Edward Arthur Donald St George Hamilton Chichester, the Marquess of Donegall. Bellville's motive at this stage was war tourism, not far removed from the actions of Gordon Selfridge Jr, member of the famous London department store family, who flew into Burgos with friends on 5 August and picnicked on a hill watching troops repulsing a Republican attack. The Marquess of Donegall had more serious ambitions to play a role in the war.

Donegall was a graduate of Christ Church, Oxford who dabbled in journalism, aviation, and jazz club management. He saw the rising as the monarchy's revenge on Marxism and was anxious to assist. His request to join Mola's army was brusquely refused by the General, who anticipated a rapid end to the fighting.

The next day Mola found a role for Donegall and Bellville. He asked the pair to fly Captain Pedro Autori, head of the northern Air Force, over the Guadarrama front, north of Madrid, for an observation run. Autori had a Caudron bi-plane which he had confiscated from its French owner (as Donegall observed, 'the wretched fellow' was in prison). Donegall and Bellville agreed, and took Autori for a look at the action.

They cruised over the battle at Somosierra Pass, an important bridge through the Guadarrama mountains and the key to any attack on the capital

from the north. Donegall coolly flew the Caudron through puffs of anti-aircraft fire while they viewed the fighting below. He was disappointed with the lack of drama.

'The actual battle in the pass was not very exciting from the air. One could see people shooting at each other and only a very few in uniform. The volunteers on both sides were in old costume – with belts containing cartridges and a revolver – and wearing straw sombreros.'[97]

The experience convinced Donegall that the war was on a smaller scale than he had hoped, a premature judgment. 'Neither side seems to have enough combatants to be remotely called an army.'[98]

The pair flew back to France that evening and Donegall moved on to England where he wrote up his experiences in an article for the *Daily Mail*, which contained some good sense, such as his opinion that airpower would prove the deciding factor, and a little nonsense when he claimed a guillotine had been erected in the heart of Madrid.

Bellville was reluctant to leave the war behind and also turned his hand to journalism. He took a characteristically bold approach and flew across the Republican sector of the border with France to Barcelona, hotbed of Socialism in the government zone, where he gathered information for an article about the city's political situation in his usual brash manner.

The Republican authorities became suspicious about an amateur journalist waving around a British passport and Bellville found himself refused permission to leave for three weeks. Eventually the authorities let him go. The Republicans would have kept him longer if they had known his unsympathetic *Daily Telegraph* article characterised Barclelona's militia groups as an 'armed rabble'.[99]

British journalists headed for Spain as soon as they heard about the rising but in their absence newspapers made do with any eyewitness who could hold a pen, hence Donegall and Bellville's presence in the popular press. Bellville's pro-Nationalist views clearly showed in his article. He painted a picture of chaotic dysfunction in Barcelona, with rampant inflation, mob rule and the murder of prisoners 'carried out as promptly as a bullfight – one of the few things in Spain which begins at the advertised time'.[100] He reckoned Madrid would fall in two weeks.

The *Telegraph* claimed neutrality but most of the British press came out in favour of the Republic. Only the *Daily Mail*, *Morning Post*, *Daily Sketch*, and the *Observer* openly supported the Nationalists.[101] On the print

battlefield Bellville was outnumbered by left-wing journalists, like John Langdon-Davies and William Forrest, who believed they were watching fascist barbarians crashing the gates of civilisation.

British opinion polls were in their infancy in the 1930s but early surveys indicate the views of Langdon-Davies and Forrest had widespread support. In a poll taken in January 1937, 86% opposed recognising the Nationalists as the rightful government of Spain. Even as late as January 1939 surveys showed 64% of Conservative voters were behind the Republicans.[102]

While the left and some elements of the right engaged heart and soul with the conflict, most ordinary Britons were less passionate. Spain remained the place of 'Spanish practices' (Fleet Street slang meaning payment for non-existent work), the Armada, and cruelty to bulls.

'A few excitable Catholics and ardent Socialists think this war matters,' said Winston Churchill's journalist son Randolph, 'but for the general public it's just a bunch of bloody dagoes killing each other.'[103]

One of the few artistic expressions of Francoist support to come out of Britain was South African poet Roy Campbell's work *The Flowering Rifle*. Other literary types who sympathised with the Nationalists, like Hilaire Belloc, James Lees-Milne, Anthony Powell, Sacheverell Sitwell, and J.R.R Tolkein, were more cautious about making their feelings public.[104] Campbell was a Catholic convert living in Toledo who narrowly escaped death when the war began. His poem was an unfocused blast of fury against the left which some readers, including Campbell's biographer, thought damaged the Nationalist cause.[105]

Campbell's *Rifle* soon submerged beneath a sea of left-wing poems about Spain: Stephen Spender's 'Pictures in Spain', Herbert Read's 'Bombing Casualties in Spain', George Barker's 'Elegy on Spain', W H Auden's 'Spain', Rex Warner's 'Arms in Spain', Bernard Gutteridge's 'Spanish Earth', Jack Lindsay's 'Looking at a Map of Spain on the Devon Coast', and literally hundreds more.[106]

Journalists, poets, and agitators on all sides thought they could influence British government policy. The Labour Party, and smaller groups like the Communist Party and the Independent Labour Party, wanted assistance for the Republic. The right wanted recognition for the Nationalists. Neither got what they wanted.

Following the near collapse of the pound in 1931 Britain had been ruled by a coalition National Government in which all major parties played a role.

Initially dominated by the Labour Party, by 1936 it was firmly in Conservative hands. The Tories shared their leader Stanley Baldwin's view that Britain should not get involved in foreign conflicts. With domestic interests their main priority, the Conservatives' only concern abroad was to avoid another world war, an aim which would not be helped by taking sides in Spain.[107]

For the first month of the fighting the National Government did its best to ignore the rising, but it would be forced into action when the Spanish firestorm grew so fierce it threatened to set Europe ablaze.

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August in southern France was warm and peaceful. But Rupert Bellville found the pleasures of the casino and the hotel bar less appealing than previously thanks to his newfound relish for the adrenaline of the war zone. He was a playboy, but a tough and self-reliant one who genuinely loved Spain. Letters from his friends in the Andalusian sherry business talked of class war, counter-revolution, and the battlefield. He joined the fight.

Many thousands of Moroccans had already enlisted with the Nationalists in support of Franco, followed by volunteers from Portugal, France, Russia and other countries. Bellville was the first of the very few Britons to help the Nationalists. The Nationalist rising inspired many British men and women to take up arms, but most in defence of the Republic.

The earliest British volunteers to reach Spain were Nat Cohen and Sam Masters, communist activists in London's rag trade, on a cycling holiday in France when the war broke out. Cambridge graduate John Cornford fought with a Trotskyite militia on the Aragon front in August. Felicia Browne, a talented British sculptor working on the Costa Brava, was killed after bullying her way into an operation to blow up a train track. Winston Churchill's nephew Esmond Romilly sold his possessions and bought a ticket from London to Marseilles in October, where he joined a motley crew of Europeans waiting for a passage to Republican-held Valencia.

All saw the Spanish conflict as symbolic of a wider battle between left and right in Europe. Cornford fantasised about bringing home the revolutionary violence he saw in the Republic.

'It's as if in London armed workers were dominating the streets,' he said. 'It's obvious they wouldn't tolerate [British Union of Fascists leader]

Mosley or people selling *Action* in the streets'.[108]

In the last weeks of September Bellville arrived in the southern half of Nationalist territory via Portugal. Andalusia was the heartland of Spanish Anarchism, the soil where the transplanted ideals of the nineteenth-century Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin and utopian Anarchist philosophy of 'no gods, no masters' took deepest root in western Europe.

The major towns fell to the Nationalists in July, notably Seville which was captured by the cunning and foul-mouthed General Quiepo de Llano who used the city's radio station to harangue the opposition, in his sherry-rich voice, as 'rabble' and worse.[109]

By the time Bellville arrived in Andalusia, the Spanish Foreign Legion and thousands of Moroccan volunteers were fighting their way through Anarchist-held countryside, aided by sympathetic locals. The biggest assistance given to Franco's forces came from the Falangist militia. Bellville's friends were already members, and he joined up too. He claimed no political sympathy.

'Let me emphasise that I am not a fascist. I joined the Falangist ranks because all my Spanish friends were with them and if you are going to war you may as well go with your friends.'[110]

Spanish fascism was a recent phenomenon. The earliest inspirational figure was the avant-garde aesthete, Ernesto Giménez Caballero, who modelled himself on Gabriele D'Annunzio, the libidinous Italian poet and adventurer whose popularity in his homeland once rivalled that of Mussolini. In September 1919 D'Annunzio put aside pen and mistress to seize the Adriatic port of Fiume (now Rijeka in Croatia) with a group of war veterans. Fiume had a sizeable Italian population and many believed Italy rather than Yugoslavia should have been given the city at the end of the First World War.[111] D'Annunzio was welcomed by cheering crowds. Although he was forced out in December 1920, Fiume showed what could be achieved by decisive action that took no notice of international opinion. Mussolini and others took notes.

Giménez Caballero proclaimed himself a fascist in 1929 to the surprise of the left-leaning cultural establishment which had hero-worshipped him for his critiques of Spain's colonial war in Morocco. His conversion to fascism cost him the literati's support and he became, in his own words, a 'literary Robinson Crusoe' marooned on an island of fascist rhetoric in a sea of liberal culture.[112]

An admirer of Mussolini, fascism for Giménez Caballero meant modernity: avant-garde art, machines, speed, change. ‘Currently Spain can be considered one of the most liberal nations in Europe,’ he said, ‘consequently, Spain is at this moment one of the most backward countries on the European continent.’[113]

His ultimate goal was a vigorous unified nation, an authoritarian state, and a strong army, bound together by the Catholic Church. Although his 1932 call for Fascist Italy to absorb Spain lost him many friends, the influence of Giménez Caballero cast a long shadow over the ideas espoused by future Spanish fascists.

The first mass organisation, the *Falange Española*, was formed in 1933 as a vehicle for charismatic lawyer José Antonio Primo de Rivera, known to all as José Antonio. Early Falange was packed with middle-class students and supported by rich landowners, a membership which blocked plans for the radical social reform, wage increases and land redistribution, described in party propaganda.

In 1934 José Antonio instigated a merger with the *Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista* (JONS), Spain’s other significant fascist group, believing the injection of more radical blood would shake up the staid Falange, whose inaction had led critics to label it a monkish product of ‘Franciscanism’ rather than fascism. The new Falange got livelier, if no more successful. In the 1936 elections it received only 0.7 percent of the vote.

Enraged by its lack of electoral success the Falange plunged into the murderous nationwide chaos of left-right violence that blighted the Popular Front’s brief rule. The blue-shirted party militants took on their leftist enemies bomb for bomb and bullet for bullet. The underground Falangist newspaper *No Importa* published rabid articles with titles like ‘The Justification of Violence’ alongside hit-lists of enemies. Paramilitary units were raised and trained in secret. In July 1936 the Falange’s membership reached a peacetime high of 30,000 members.

The Falangists plotted alongside General Mola to overthrow the government but its leadership was in Republican jails when the coup began and most would die there, the biggest loss being José Antonio himself. Manuel Hedilla *Larrey*, a minor Falange figure - working-class, level-headed, unimaginative - took over the leadership and compensated for José Antonio’s loss by bulking up the membership.

By December 1936 the Falange had close to a million members but

many who joined were under suspicion of being Republican supporters and did so only to prove their loyalty to the Nationalists. The blue Falange shirt was mockingly known as a 'life jacket'.

The Falange delivered food to prisoners captured by Nationalist forces and never missed an opportunity to enlist new members.

In the aftermath of one successful Nationalist advance, American journalist Virginia Cowles watched Falange food trucks roll up and feed captured government soldiers while propagandists moved amongst them handing out leaflets.

'Later [I] learned that thousands of these men had been given [Falange] uniforms and drafted into the ranks. In spite of the humanitarian appeal, it was part of the programme to expand Fascist power.'[114]

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Bellville spent ten days fighting with the Falange in the dry Andalusian countryside. Anarchist strongholds fell one by one. Then he was drafted into an execution squad. The Falange murdered any political opponents who fell into their hands by lining them up against a wall and shooting them to rags. Bellville had made a point in his *Daily Telegraph* article of emphasising the left-wing militias' barbarity in executing prisoners. Now he was expected to do the same.

What disturbed him most was how the bodies twitched on the ground after they had been shot. They looked as if they were still alive. Bellville found it hard to cope. His commanding officer advised him to aim his rifle into the air and let others do the killing.

'When we were not with the squad we used to hear the executions. Early in the morning, usually about dawn, the squad would go marching past our rooms with the prisoners, whose arms were pinioned behind them. Tramp, tramp, tramp, a brief silence and then the crash of rifles. Silence again and then bang, bang, bang, the revolver shots giving the *coups de grace*. "Three this morning," someone would murmur and then turn over to sleep again.'[115]

Each historian has a different figure for atrocities committed in Spain. Doyen of Spanish fascism studies Stanley Payne believes Republican wartime repression claimed 60,000 lives and that of the Nationalists 55,000.[116] Edinburgh University's Julius Ruiz claims a minimum of 37,843 Republican murders and a maximum of 100,000 by the Nationalists. Hugh

Thomas says the Nationalists killed 75,000, and the Republicans 55,000, while Ramon Salas Larraza holds the Republicans responsible for 72,000 executions and the Nationalists for only 35,000.[117] Bellville's actions were a small drop of blood in a very large ocean.

After three weeks of duty Bellville could take no more and disengaged himself from the Falange's ranks, easier to do in the chaotic early days than it later became. One evening in early October, back in Burgos, he was in the crowded bar of the Hotel *Norte y Londres* ('full of nothing but wives and sweethearts sitting on their bums and exchanging rumours and gossip') when he heard an English voice ordering a drink in poor Spanish.[118]

Bellville introduced himself to the speaker, a yellow-haired twenty-one-year-old with a ready smile. The young man told him he was on his way to Toledo to join the fighting.

Bellville bought him a drink. He was going to need it.

9. THE CARLIST FROM CAMBRIDGE

Peter Kemp arrives in Spain

Peter Kemp was blond, good-looking, well-spoken, and right-wing. The Cambridge graduate was half-heartedly studying for the Bar when the Spanish uprising began. Kemp was not academic, an early school report from Wellington noting acidly that he 'gives no trouble and takes none'.[119] At Trinity College his main achievement was emerging unhurt from a car crash that took down a telegraph pole and cut all communications between Cambridge and London.

The prospect of adventure in a foreign land appealed more than a career in law but volunteering for Spain was not the act of a bored dilettante. Those who knew him remember he was absolutely serious about what he believed in.[120]

'I was not a Roman Catholic,' Kemp said, 'but it seemed to me that Christian values, law and order, and the security of my own country alike would be threatened by a Republican victory'.[121]

Kemp followed the conflict in the newspapers for three months, mixing the Republican stance of most papers with unapologetically pro-Franco reports from the *Daily Mail* and *Observer*. A chance meeting with a Nationalist representative at a London drinks party furnished him with a letter of introduction to the authorities at Burgos. He made his own way to Spain to fight. He expected to be back home by Christmas.

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To be a Nationalist supporter in Britain was to be in a minority, albeit a larger and more socially diverse minority than the left liked to admit. Asked what kind of British people supported General Franco and the Nationalists,

communist film director Ivor Montagu painted a broad-brush stereotype: ‘Fox hunters, people who shoot down birds, dukes, bankers, like Franco. Cocktail parties are given for him.’[122]

Authoritarian conservatives and some members of the aristocracy were certainly pro-Nationalist. The Tory MP Sir Henry Page Croft alleged atrocities in Spain were being ‘organised by large numbers of agents imported from Moscow’.[123] Many in his party shared the sentiments. Leopold Amery regarded the Nationalists as a rampart against Communism. His sons John and Julian visited Franco-controlled territory. The well-connected Tory diarist Henry ‘Chips’ Channon declared ‘I am pro-Franco and I hope that he wins.’[124]

Further to the right, Sir Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists was less impressed by the rising. Its *Action* newspaper described the conflict as ‘nothing but the old nineteenth-century class war: a war between rich and poor’.[125] Many members supported the Nationalists but the leadership kept its distance.

Britain’s Catholic community had large pockets of Nationalist support that cut across class barriers. Labour party meetings were sometimes broken up by Catholic members when other attendees showed enthusiasm for the Republic. A *Catholic Herald* survey of East End dockers discovered all were staunch Labour men who had supported the Spanish Socialists in the 1936 elections but turned to the Nationalists after hearing of atrocities against the church.[126]

Up in Edinburgh, Charles Saroléa, a Belgian academic, wrote pro-Franco pamphlets read by both Catholics and Protestants, although Scottish nationalists were too busy complaining about England to pay much attention to Spain.

Meanwhile, the middle-class readership of British Catholic paper *The Tablet* agreed with editor Douglas Woodruff’s description of the war as a ‘new crusade against the destructive power of Moscow’. Woodruff was horrified that 4 September saw Largo Caballero, the ‘Spanish Lenin’ and leader of the 1934 coup attempt, appointed Prime Minister. The same month the Soviet Union began to supply the Republic with arms, munitions and men. The first war materials arrived by ship in crates marked ‘pressed meats’.[127]

Even those who stuck to their Nationalist enthusiasms were not necessarily in favour of Franco’s fascist allies. Major Geoffrey McNeill-

Moss came close to propaganda with his books *The Epic of the Alcazar* and *The Legend of Badajoz*, but he was also the author of *Standing Up to Hitler*, an unambiguously anti-Nazi work. Travel writer Robert Bryon, a sardonic member of Evelyn Waugh's 'Brideshead Generation' and one of the few commentators to have experienced pre-war Spain, was pro-Nationalist until he realised Franco was receiving Nazi aid. He became violently supportive of the Republic.[128] And Winston Churchill, then a backbench Conservative MP in his wilderness years having been ousted from the government in 1929, gradually wound up his support for the rising because of his distrust of Germany, all without backsliding on his hatred of Communism. His journalist son Randolph remained a partisan of the Nationalists, but made his feelings about the Third Reich clear while on a tour of Spain in 1937 when he bellowed 'Is there not one Jew left in Germany capable of shooting that bastard Hitler?' while sitting next to a table of German diplomats.[129]

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Kemp arrived in Spain to join the Carlist Requetés, a 'romantic anachronism' which appealed to his old-fashioned conservative views.

'I felt, naively perhaps but strongly,' he said, 'that if I had been prepared to proclaim my opinions in the safety of the Cambridge Union, I should also be ready to defend them on the battlefield.'[130]

The Monarchism and religious fervour of Carlists caught the imagination of many foreigners. Belgian fascist newspapers devoted more space to them than the Falange and in Catholic Ireland they were heroes. Despite their foreign support the Carlists lacked influence at home. The majority of Nationalists favoured a Republican system of government. '*Viva España, y Viva la República*' was the common war cry of both Nationalists and Republicans in the first weeks of the war. Rebel General Quiepo de Llano always signed off his infamous radio broadcasts from Seville with a curt '*Viva la República'*.

Kemp set off to the Carlist HQ in Toledo with a knapsack containing Hugo's *Spanish In Three Months Without A Master*, a huge 1918 vintage .44 service revolver smuggled past distracted customs officials, and a small African idol carved out of black wood pressed on him by his father. The idol was supposed to bring good luck. Kemp carried it in his pocket through his Spanish adventure until it failed to ward off a mortar shell that knocked the

teeth out of his head.

On the road to Toledo he met a young English artist called James Walford, who was hiking towards the front lines to do some drawings. Kemp was glad of his company. Walford was already in Spain when the civil war started. He had family connections in the country; his mother was a Spanish aristocrat related to the arms dealer Sir Basil Zaharoff.

Walford was quiet and sardonic but the two men hit it off. After just one day in Kemp's militant company Walford abandoned his plans to become a war artist and decided to join the Requetés instead. Standing on the medieval ramparts of Avila he announced conversationally: 'I've been thinking I might join the Requetés with you. After all this war concerns me personally. Three of my relations have already been killed in Madrid.'[131]

In Toledo Walford eased the pair through the chaos of Carlist headquarters with the help of a woman in a white hospital coat whom he recognised as the Marquesa de San Miguel, his cousin 'Blanquita'. After a short interview they were enlisted men in the militia, now obliged to buy their own uniforms: a blood-red Requeté beret, green shirt, and *cazadora*, a battlefield blouse with the Cross of Burgundy beneath a double-headed, crowned Hapsburg eagle sewn to the left breast pocket.

They parted ways. Walford joined a newly formed unit, the *Tercio del Alcázar* and was posted to Madrid. According to Kemp he 'acquitted himself well in the ferocious battle that raged […] when the *Tercio del Alcázar* was surrounded and beat off repeated attacks by Republican infantry and Russian tanks'.[132]

Kemp spent a quiet two months with a Carlist cavalry unit guarding the Toledo to Talavera road, seeing little action. He learnt Spanish and posed heroically on his black horse. It was a peaceful life.

His fellow troopers were peasants, cheerful, uneducated, and slow to learn. They patrolled through brown fields and olive groves. At dawn the light of the sun turned the olives from black to silver. The only action Kemp saw was a cavalry charge against a mass of enemy who appeared unexpectedly over a nearby hill. His dreams of glory evaporated when the enemy turned out to be a herd of goats.[133]

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On 10 August General Franco's Army of Africa broke out of its bridgehead

in Andalusia, pushed through Republican lines to the north and linked up with General Mola's forces. All of western Spain was now in rebel hands. The main target of the newly combined Nationalist army was Madrid.

Both Generals believed the smashing of the capital would inflict a wound the Republic could not survive. The city's defenders pasted up posters with the slogan 'No Pasarán' ('They shall not pass') and constructed barricades from trams filled with rocks.[134] The battle for the capital began in November.

At Christmas Kemp was transferred to the Carlist infantry of the 8th *Batallón de Argel* and dropped into bloody, house-to-house battles in the Carabanchel Bajo suburbs of Madrid.

Carabanchel Bajo lay in the south-west of the city. Nationalist actions in that area were diversionary attacks to drain defenders away from the main assault in the west. In the Carlist sector the once pleasant suburbs had been reduced to mounds of brick rubble held together by sandbags and timber.

Carlist snipers knocked loopholes through bricked-up windows and waited for an enemy to show himself. Men scurried from position to position through a network of covered trenches, hurrying past barricades made of household junk regularly sent flying into the air by mortar shells, inaudible until seconds before they hit.

Kemp spent New Year's Eve 1936 crawling to his new post, a two-storey house surrounded by the enemy on three sides. 'Not exactly the kind of New Year's Eve my friends would be celebrating at home.'[135]

Kemp was in the house for two weeks, a period which brought home to him the nature of war: long periods of boredom punctuated by moments of extreme horror. He spent his time ducking bullets and sitting in the dark listening to the plaster drop off the walls during artillery bombardments.

All traffic to and from the house had to go through a tunnel of sandbags roofed with planks and more sandbags, which was only safe to use at night. Injured men died in the time it took to manhandle their stretchers through the tunnel to a medical post.

Food was mule steak or dried cod. It was always cold by the time it reached the house. So little water was available the Requetés were forbidden to clean their teeth. Conditions were filthy and Kemp was soon infested with lice. Anybody venturing out was at risk from a sniper's bullet or a mortar shell.

'Too often,' Kemp said, 'we would hear an explosion outside, followed

after a moment's silence by a pathetic sound of scuffling and childlike whimpers.'[136] Once he stood helplessly watching as the victim of a sniper slowly died, white brain matter dripping from a hole in the back of the man's head.

During one evening of heavy fighting Kemp helped repel an attack by Republican infantry, blazing away into the dark with his bolt-action rifle, aiming first at the yellow-orange muzzle-flash of enemy guns and then at silhouettes illuminated by the white light of exploding grenades. On quiet nights he was kept awake by the subterranean tapping of enemy miners tunnelling under the house to plant a mine. Two weeks after he was withdrawn the house was blown up. His replacement died in the explosion.

For his efforts, Kemp was promoted and given two silver fleur-de-lys to pin to his beret. He was now an *Alférez* (second lieutenant). A day later he received a telegram informing him that his father had died. Kemp requested leave to return to England. It was granted.

Thousands of Portuguese volunteers were flooding into the ranks of the Nationalist army and hundreds more foreigners from around the world were making their way to Spain to fight for the rising. Franco would not miss one British soldier away on leave.

10. WE CAN'T HAVE REDS IN PORTUGAL AT THE MOMENT

Dr António de Oliveira Salazar and the Spanish Question

Francisco de Barcelos Rolão Preto had shiny black hair, slicked back with pomade, a small but dapper moustache, and eyes that burnt with fanaticism. The Portuguese exile knew more about coups and the consequences of their failure than anyone else in Spain.

The previous year, the Gavião-born journalist and his blue-shirted *Movimento Nacional-Sindicalista* (National Syndicalist Movement) had risen up against Portuguese Prime Minister Dr António de Oliveira Salazar. This was not Rolão Preto's first coup d'état. He was still a teenager when he took part in a failed 1911 attempt to re-establish the monarchy and had to flee to Belgium. He was back in time to play a role in the May 1926 rebellion that overthrew the Portuguese republic and established military rule.

For a few brief years on his long political march from reactionary monarchism to the revolutionary right, Rolão Preto had shared Salazar's politics. But by the mid-1930s the journalist was in vigorous opposition, ready to dispell the torpid conservatism that had hung over Portugal since Salazar's 1932 appointment as Prime Minister and replace it with something more radical.

The National Syndicalists emphasised social justice ('it is necessary that the very rich people will be less rich, so that the very poor people will be less poor') but still enjoyed torch lit parades, Roman salutes, and absolute obedience to Rolão Preto as the *Chefe* (Chief).[137] At the Blue Shirts' height, the party had 25,000 members, compared to only 20,000 in Salazar's own party, the *União Nacional* (National Union).[138] The Portuguese leader was not pleased to be outnumbered. Salazar criticised Rolão Preto's 'exaltation of youth, and the cult of force through direct action, the principle of the superiority of the state's political power in social life, [and] the propensity for

organizing masses behind a single leader'.[139]

In 1934 Salazar banned the movement and took its more pliable members into the *União Nacional*. The next year Rolão Preto's remaining supporters, armed and angry, crept into the hilly capital of Lisbon and declared a National Syndicalist revolution among the rattling tram cars and public parks.

The coup failed. Rolão Preto was exiled to Spain, his followers were jailed. The Blue Shirt leader was aware he escaped lightly for his failed coup. The penalty for Franco and Mola would be the firing squad.

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Salazar could afford to be merciful to his would-be replacements. Since becoming Prime Minister the former professor of Political Economics at the University of Coimbra had crushed numerous coups from both left and right. He did not want to create martyrs.

The Portuguese leader's ideal was a placid, feudal land whose happy peasant population, undisturbed by the twentieth century, was uneducated, apolitical, interested only in working their land and going to church. In 1930 sixty-one percent of the Portuguese population could not read or write. It was the poorest and most backward nation in Europe. When told the Portuguese colonial possession of Angola in West Africa had discovered enough oil to fund schools and roads, Salazar shook his head sadly and said 'Oh! What a pity'.[140]

Salazar's style of leadership was a far cry from Rolão Preto's political drama. Only the presence of the *Polícia de Vigilância E Defesa do Estado* (State Defense and Surveillance Police - PVDE) secret police kept the crowds cheering when the Prime Minister, black-eyed, lipless, and dressed like an unshowy funeral director, stared pointedly away from those who turned up to greet him at the few, drab political events he attended.

Across the border, Rolão Preto became a fixture in the Spanish right-wing. He met prominent figures like writer Ernesto Giménez Caballero and collaborated on policy with Falangist leader José Antonio. Present at the ground zero of Mola's coup plot the exiled National Syndicalist leader, who still commanded the loyalty of many Blue Shirt die-hards, expected to be called on when the rising began.

It should have sounded an alarm for both Rolão Preto and the Falangists

that the National Syndicalists were not asked to help when the Army of Africa broke out of Andalusia in the south-west and powered north along the Spanish-Portuguese border. Instead, General Franco turned to Salazar. The Army of Africa leader had more in common with the Portuguese dictator's conservatism than he did with fascist social revolution.

Neither Rolão Preto nor Falange leader Manuel Hedilla appreciated the significance of Franco's decision. Both would pay for their inattention.

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For the Portuguese, the first sign of the Nationalist rising's bloody character was a glut of wristwatches in the south-east of their country. Portuguese travellers bought them in bulk from Moroccan soldiers in Franco's army and sold them across the border. The poorest farmers in Europe sported Swiss designs leather strapped across their wrists as they ploughed the fields. The watches came from Badajoz, a town in south-western Spain, where they had been wrenched off the wrists of murdered Spaniards.

The mass killings at the walled town of Badajoz following its capture on 14 August 1936 were the first Nationalist war crimes to be widely reported. American journalist Jay Allen visited the area in the aftermath and wrote a horrified account for the *Chicago Tribune*. Readers were sickened by the news of public executions. Dutch journalist Johannes Brouwer, a supporter of the rising whose love of Spain extended to writing his doctorate on the 'Psychology of Spanish Mysticism', pinpointed Badajoz as the moment he and others lost faith in the Nationalist cause.[141]

Allen's account was the best known but the first report of atrocities came from Portuguese *Diario de Lisboa* correspondent Mario Neves, who visited the town shortly after it was captured by Franco's subordinate Colonel Juan Yagüe *Blanco*.

The white-haired, bespectacled Yagüe was part of the conspiracy from its earliest days and first to call it a *Cruzada* (crusade). Son of a doctor, Yagüe earned his reputation as a brutally efficient commander under Franco in Morocco. Sympathetic to the Falange, he spoke at several of their pre-war rallies.

Airlifted into Andalusia by German Junker transport aeroplanes in the last days of July, Franco gave Yagüe the task of leading 7,500 Foreign Legion and Moroccan soldiers north into Estremadura province to link up

with Mola's men. Yagüe's troops advanced 185 miles in four days. On 10 August they captured the town of Mérida, creating a bridge between the Army of Africa and the Army of the North, sealing off Spain's western border.

In his haste to reach Mérida, Yagüe by-passed Badajoz. Colonel Ildefonso Puigdendolas Ponce *de Léon* commanded the town for the Republic. His militia defenders were hastily trained, some armed only with shotguns and scythes. Yagüe returned four days later. Outside the walls of the town on the morning of 14 August he addressed his legionnaires.

'Gentlemen of the Legion! The Reds affirm that you are not soldiers but monks in disguise,' Yagüe told them, a reference to government propaganda that blamed the Catholic Church for the rising. 'Very well – enter Badajoz and say Mass!'[142]

Nationalist artillery blew a breach in the town walls. Foreign legionnaires rushed the gap but were cut down by rifle fire. Bodies lay so thick on the ground that the attackers built a parapet of corpses to shelter from enemy bullets. When hand grenade smoke blinded the defenders, legionnaires stormed the breach and hacked down their opponents with machetes. Republican militiamen were chased into Badajoz cathedral and shot by the altar. Resistance collapsed but the killing continued. The streets ran red with blood.

The Nationalists controlled the town by evening. Guided by a letter from Franco ordering senior commanders to destroy all resistance in the 'occupied zones', Yagüe ordered the execution of surviving defenders.[143]

Hundreds of Portuguese sympathisers, come to cheer on Franco's advance, wandered Badajoz's streets, pushing past Moroccans wrapped in burnooses, deeply tanned Foreign legionnaires, and victorious Nationalist supporters. Some could be found in the bullring, site of mass executions. Jay Allen reported that a band played *Cara el Sol*, the Falangist anthem composed by poet Dionisio Ridruejo, as a Moroccan firing squad shot dead hundreds of Republicans in front of a cheering audience. The bodies were rolled into a pit dug into the sand. Prisoners waited to die, hands bound. The bullring had the air of a fiesta, soiled by the smell of blood and emptied bowels.

Portuguese journalist Mario Pires, who had gone to Badajoz to celebrate the Nationalist victory, suffered a breakdown when he was unable to save a fifteen-year-old girl from a Moroccan soldier.[144] Fellow journalist Mario

Neves' articles in the *Diario de Lisboa* exposed the horrors of Badajoz to the world a few days later.

Neves' articles had to dodge state censorship on their way to the printing press and many wondered how they had been published at all. Portugal's 1933 constitution promised freedom of the press, but with 'special laws [to] regulate the exercise of press freedom […] in order to avoid distortion of public opinion in its social function'. Neves himself half-expected the government to step in. But Salazar saw no need to play censor.

In the first weeks of the rising the Portuguese Prime Minister and the army officers who advised him were not sure how they felt about the Spanish rebels. They had given house room to right-wing exiles before the coup attempt but knew there were plenty of imperialist military types among the rebels who regarded Portugal as rightfully part of Spain. If the Nationalists won the fight their next move might be to attack Lisbon. While Salazar investigated the depth of rightist solidarity, it would not do much harm, in mostly illiterate Portugal, to allow Neves to share newsprint with the likes of correspondent Leopoldo Nunes of *O Século*, for whom Republicans were 'monsters', 'assassins', 'inhuman', and 'Marxists'.[145]

In smoky Lisbon cafes, *Diario* readers shook their heads over the horrors at Badajoz but secretly agreed with the views of Nunes. Sympathy for the victims did not stop them hoping the rebels defeated the Spanish government.

'Of course we are handing [Republican refugees] back,' a Portuguese border guard told Jay Allen. 'They are dangerous for us. We can't have Reds in Portugal at the moment'.[146]

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Salazar's ministers laid out his options for dealing with the fighting across the border. His Under-Secretary for War, Colonel Fernando dos Santos Costa, narrowed it down to three choices.

'The first was indifference, or collaboration with the Spanish Republican government and the various left-wing forces, including the Communists,' said Santos Costa. 'The second was to use the conflict to break up the unity imposed on Spain by Castile for more than two centuries, and to foster the division of Spain into small separate states, in a word, Balkanisation. The third was to work to establish the whole peninsula as a primary element in the defense of Christian civilisation: two separate nations allied in a solidarity

pact’.[147]

Support for the Republic, balkanisation, or support for Franco. Salazar was worried enough about a potential invasion to hold talks with London to discuss British protection in the event of an attack. By now he was convinced that whoever won in Spain would subsequently attack Portugal. He outlined a hypothetical invasion by victorious Republicans. The elegant Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden was lukewarm, regarding the scenario as unlikely.[148]

Salazar pointed out that before the war Madrid had given sanctuary to Portuguese left-wingers and allowed them to plot against him. Spanish Communist newspaper *Mundo Obrero* had forecast a joint Spanish-Portuguese Popular Front government. During the war, over 500 Portuguese, many exiled communists, fought for the Republicans while others broadcast calls for the overthrow of Salazar.

Eden countered with the observation that Salazar had provided a haven for right-wing Spaniards involved in anti-government conspiracies since 1932, notably General Sanjurjo, who had died on Portugal soil when his over-loaded aeroplane clipped a wall. Britain and Portugal turned out to share little more than a common time zone and discussions ended.

Although tempted to balkanise Spain, Salazar decided long term instability in the penninsula was undesirable and settled on option three. He would help the Nationalists. Salazar’s gloomier advisors, having read Falangist propaganda about Spain’s mission to rule a united Iberia, wondered if that was a mistake.[149]

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From 20 August war material sent from Germany to Franco’s forces travelled smoothly through Portuguese territory. Nicolás Franco, elder brother of the General, set up an office in Lisbon to buy weapons. Rebel Spaniards gave propaganda talks over the airwaves. Hostile crowds made Republican ambassador Claudio Sánchez Albornoz a prisoner in his own embassy.[150]

Even with German weapons and 20,000 Moroccans in his ranks, Franco needed more men for his drive to Madrid. Before the rising the largest overseas contingent in the Foreign Legion had been 200 Portuguese volunteers.[151] Franco authorised his commanders to recruit more into the Legion.

Some were already making their own way into the Nationalist ranks. As he waited to attack Badajoz, Yagüe told Portuguese journalist Félix Correia he knew of at least 300 of Correia's countrymen who 'wanted to fight for the Spanish forces, that is to say, for civilisation' waiting over the border.[152] His first act after securing Badajoz was to open a recruiting office.

Among the earliest arrivals at the office was a group of seven friends who had done their national service together. Led by a man with the unusual name of John Peel (his parents were English) they over-powered a gang of fleeing Republican militiamen near the border and escorted them to Badajoz. The prisoners were handed over to be shot and Peel's men enlisted in the Foreign Legion.[153]

Unknown to Yagüe, a separate recruiting drive for volunteers was taking place in Portugal itself. On 28 August 1936 the *Rádio Clube Português* (Portuguese Radio Club), a popular station broadcasting a mixture of music, talks, and children's entertainment from Lisbon, interrupted its regular programming for a special announcement from station president Major Jorge Botelho Moniz. Portuguese listeners expecting an hour of *Fado*, their country's mournful folk music, found themselves lectured about the Nationalist rising in Spain.

Moniz was a regular Army officer seconded to the privately owned *Rádio Clube*. Officers were often posted to private companies to gain experience of the business world and use their military connections for the employer's benefit. Moniz earned his pay when he helped the *Rádio Clube* dodge 1935 legislation banning radio advertising, intended to drive private stations off air.

The *Rádio Clube* had already organised a food and clothing appeal for Franco's Andalusian supporters but this broadcast was different. Moniz announced the creation of a legion of Portuguese volunteers to fight alongside the Nationalists. Called the *Legião Viriato* (Viriatos Legion), after a second century BC hero who defeated Roman invaders, the unit was to be commanded by General Raúl Esteves.

It was the duty of every Portuguese man, said Moniz, to help the Spanish rebels fight Communism.

The *Clube*'s main competitor, the government's own *Emissora Nacional* station, which broadcast a dull mix of religious lectures and propaganda, made no mention of the *Legião Viriato*.

The following week a *Legião* recruitment rally took place in Lisbon at

which Moniz gave a speech describing the Nationalist cause as a ‘holy war’. The *Legião Viriato*’s insignia was unveiled: a square black cross whose arms sprouted into anchors on a yellow background. The Portuguese were to join Moroccans, Germans, and Italians in helping the Nationalists overthrow the Spanish government.

But within a matter of days, before any volunteers could be enrolled, the *Legião Viriato* ceased to exist. The *Rádio Clube Português* never mentioned it again.

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The *Legião Viriato*’s demise began at sea. On 8 September 1936 two Portuguese warships mutinied under the influence of Communist Party cells and set sail for Spain to help the Republic. A navy destroyer sank both.[154]

Salazar may have been Portugal’s Prime Minister but the army remained its kingmaker. Senior officers occasionally blocked his proposals. The Portuguese President, Marshal António Óscar Fragoso Carmona, was a veteran of the army’s Fourth Division and officially had more powers than Salazar, although they were rarely exercised. Despite disapproving of open intervention in Spain, Salazar kept quiet when the *Viariatos* project was announced. The armed forces had overthrown the government in 1926 and Salazar was aware they could do so again.

The mutinies gave Salazar the opportunity to lecture senior officers on their folly. Rebellion was not just a threat in the Navy. Portuguese soldiers had stopped their own border police from deporting a number of Spanish Republican officers sheltering in the Portuguese town of Elvas.[155] And the civil governor of Badajoz, receiving medical treated in the same town, had been saved by the director of the hospital who refused to hand him over to a Portuguese lieutenant and a group of Spanish Falangists. Entering the war on Franco’s side, argued Salazar, would only encourage more Republican sympathisers to rebel.

Just as importantly, the presence of *Viriatos* in Spain would be a provocation to the Republic, effectively guaranteeing an invasion if they defeated the Nationalists. And the British, who Salazar still had hopes would rescue Portugal in the event of a Spanish attack, from whatever side, disapproved of foreign intervention.

The armed forces capitulated, cowed by the level of support for the

Republic amongst its own ranks and the realisation that coup attempts like that of Rolão Preto could easily escalate into civil wars their side of the border. Salazar took the opportunity to move further towards his goal of a civilian dictatorship. On 10 September he demanded all armed service personnel and civil servants swear an oath of allegiance to his regime. He appointed himself Minister of War.

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Franco had played no part in the *Viriatos* project and was not unhappy when he heard it had failed. An autonomous Portuguese unit would have complicated his military situation. But he still needed more cannon fodder.

In September Franco's agents approached Salazar in Lisbon. Several hundred volunteers had joined the Spanish Foreign Legion through Yagüe's recruitment office at Badajoz. The agents explained that the Nationalist forces would be grateful for more.

Salazar was reluctant until Franco's agents held out the bait of a non-aggression treaty when they took power. The Portuguese dictator gave permission but warned the agents he could not risk provoking another mutiny with a public recruitment campaign. The Nationalists would have to organise recruitment themselves and keep it covert. No radio announcements, no rallies.

The Foreign Legion appointed Manuel Faronda and Carlos Valencia in northern Portugal, and Miguel Morlan in the south. The recruiters in turn employed Portuguese collaborators and discreetly advertised for recruits. Despite the *Legião Viriato*'s collapse, around 8,000 Portuguese would serve in Franco's forces.

The main draw for Portuguese volunteers was money. Most were young unemployed men from the rural poor, often illiterate. A minority of volunteers were right-wing students, young army officers whose senior officers looked the other way when they applied for lengthy leave, and former National Syndicalists looking for fascist revolution. Some of Preto's men in exile had already joined the Falange.

Religion also played a part. Portuguese Catholics saw the Madrid government as an atheist tool of Stalin. And as with all wars, adventurers fleeing the law or family issues saw enlistment as a way out of their problems.

The *Rádio Clube Português* could be picked up in Spain so Portuguese volunteers became known there as *Viriatos*. Spanish recruiters took them by car to Foreign Legion offices in Spain, opened near the border specifically for this purpose. The Carlists were interested enough in Portuguese volunteers to have Count de Aurora recruiting in the northern town of Porto, a monarchist stronghold, through the early months of the war. The recruiter Morlan also did work on the side for both the Carlist Requetés and the Falange. When his Foreign Legion contacts found out, he lost his job.[156]

The age of majority in Portugal was twenty-one (compared to eighteen in Spain) and younger Portuguese volunteers needed parental consent before they could enlist. The Foreign Legion ignored this and in some cases pressed a rifle into the hands of volunteers as young as fifteen. One Spanish veteran described the *Viariatos* as 'extremely young, and unfit to be thrown, without solid training, into the ferocious fights at close quarters characteristic of the [war]'.[157]

The demand for volunteers was high. Some Portuguese were even misled by unscrupulous recruiters into believing they were headed for safe jobs behind the lines. They found themselves in Foreign Legion barracks being trained for combat.[158] The Portuguese authorities managed to repatriate six Portuguese men who abandoned jobs in Porto on the promise of well-paid guard duty, only to be put into the frontline.

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Former Blue Shirt leader Rolão Preto toured the trenches as a journalist attached to the Falange. He wrote pro-Nationalist articles, gathered material for his book *Revolução Espanhola* (Spanish Revolution), and made radio broadcasts about National Syndicalism. He dropped heavy hints that the rising could be a Blue Shirt training ground for a future reckoning with Salazar.

The Portuguese Prime Minister ignored Rolão Preto's threats. He was deep in a diplomatic fencing match with Madrid which had been ongoing since the start of the rising. The Republic maintained Salazar was helping Franco. This was true, but Salazar denied every accusation against Portuguese neutrality. On 23 October relations finally ruptured when the Spanish government accused Portugal of breaking an agreement recently adopted by Europe to prevent foreign support reaching either side in the

conflict.

The Non-Intervention Agreement came into force in the autumn of 1936 and was a botch from start to finish. The Republicans saw it as a tool to help them win the war. The Nationalists simply ignored it. Their new supreme leader cared nothing for international opinion. But he was happy to exploit the starving defenders of the besieged Alcázar in Toledo to secure his position. He did not care if he crippled Mola's coup plan in the process.

11. THE DREAM AND LIE OF FRANCO

Non-Intervention, the Alcázar of Toledo, and more British Volunteers

The Alcázar military academy squatted on a hill in the centre of Toledo and glowered at the town. Over centuries the original Roman fort had been rebuilt and extended into an imposing castle with a retinue of outbuildings and stables. Observers of its western façade could admire the renaissance work of King Charles V's architect Alonso of Covarrubias. On its medieval eastern walls Moorish flourishes survived from the long Islamic occupation of Spain. The Alcázar had its own kitchens, schoolrooms, and swimming pool. It was built to withstand a siege.

Below, Toledo was a place of baroque churches and narrow streets. Its long reputation for serenity had been shattered in March 1936 when anarchist anti-clerical riots rocked the town. Churches burned, priests were attacked, and residents known for their religious piety became targets. Foreigners did not escape the violence. South African poet and new arrival Roy Campbell was beaten by Assault Guards, while pistol-toting anarchists threatened his wife on her way to church.

Campbell, wife Mary, and their two young daughters had fled Britain two years earlier, one step ahead of bankruptcy. The tall, raw-boned, and bald South African was a hard man from the veldt who wrote classically influenced verse about man's relation to nature, drank heavily, and knocked down anyone who got in his way. Edith Sitwell, godmother of British avant-garde poetry, admired Campbell's style and called him a 'typhoon in a beer bottle'.[159]

The poet and his family hesitated too long leaving Toledo after the riots and were caught in the town when the rising began, unwilling witnesses as the Alcázar made front-page news around the world. Colonel José Moscardó *Ituarte* and 1,300 of his men had been trapped in Toledo since the first day of

the mainland rebellion when they marched into the town square and announced their support for the Nationalists. They found the townspeople firmly with the government. The outnumbered rebels retreated into the academy and for the next two months their world would consist of its stone walls, eroding in a constant hail of shells and bullets.

Campbell's house was halfway up the hill and caught in the crossfire. In a bid for neutrality he created a Union Jack from rocks in his back garden. It was shot at by both sides.

As government artillery reduced the Alcázar to rubble, left-wing gangs purged the town. Political opponents, the wealthy, and members of the Church were murdered. Campbell saw executed Carmelite monks lying in the road under a tarpaulin.

On 22 July militiamen searched Campbell's house. They looked through his library. One found an edition of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

'Italian! Fascist!' the militiaman shouted.

The squad levelled their rifles at Campbell. He pulled a Dostoevsky novel off the shelf and shouted back 'Russian! Communist!' After a tense moment the militiamen decided Campbell was neutral. They chatted good-naturedly then left. The poet was appalled at how close he had come to being shot.

Not everyone was so lucky. Next morning, in his sandbagged office at the Alcázar, Moscardó received a telephone call from Republican lawyer Candido Cabello. The government man threatened to execute Moscardó's twenty-four-year-old son Luis unless the Alcázar surrendered.

Luis spoke to his father. 'Hello Papa'.

'What is happening my boy?'

'Nothing. They say they will shoot me if you don't surrender. But don't worry about me'.

'If it is true then commend your soul to God, shout '*Viva España*' and die like a man.

Good-bye my son, and a last kiss'.

'Good-bye Father. A very big kiss'.[160]

Luis Moscardó was shot the following month but the Alcázar's defenders fought on. Their diet of horseflesh and homemade bread made them so weak they had to be hauled to positions in the castle's towers by pulley.

The siege was front page news across Europe. Even left-wing writer Eric

Blair, better known as George Orwell, admired the defenders' courage. 'There is no need because one's sympathies are on the other side to pretend that this was not a heroic exploit'.[161]

The Republicans sprayed the Alcázar with flaming gasoline and its outer walls melted like wax. The purge continued down below in Toledo and Campbell wondered how long it would be before he heard another knock at his door. The family's Catholic faith was sustained by the view from their back garden at night: an iron cross on the Carmelite monastery roof, black against the flames of burning buildings.[162] Then an unexpected saviour appeared.

At the end of July a local man with learning difficulties called Angel Monico, to whom Campbell had given free poetry lessons, gave the family 3,000 pesetas he had taken from a dead priest.[163] Campbell bribed a militiaman and the family left Toledo in a truck used to carry corpses to the cemetery, a skull and crossbones painted on its side. As they drove, the towers of the Alcázar burned behind them.

The family left Spain on the British Navy's *HMS Maine* and Campbell became a minor celebrity back in England. A brief period he had spent working in a bull ring was a gift to journalists looking for colour. Under headlines like 'British Bullfighter Trapped By Rival Armies', the South African told readers about the horrors of Republican Spain and condemned any Britons who supported it.[164]

The Alcázar's defenders ('gangrened and rotting to the bones' in a poem Campbell wrote about the siege) would last until the end of September. When General Franco's forces fought their way to Toledo among the first soldiers into the town were a pair of whom Campbell would have approved: Gilbert Nangle and Noel Fitzpatrick, British volunteers in the Foreign Legion.

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Nangle and Fitzpatrick joined the Legion at a time when Europe's democracies were trying to prevent outside intervention in Spain. Memories of the First World War still rubbed raw. The graves of 8.5 million men were scattered across Europe, from neat cemeteries in western France to mass graves in Eastern Europe; others died in forgotten African battles, at the cliffs of Gallipoli, at sea. Britain and France lost 2.5 million men between them with more disabled or disfigured. Even tiny Montenegro lost a fifth of its

army dead or missing in action.

The democracies feared that foreign intervention in Spain could pull Europe into another war. French and German pilots were already duelling in the skies over Madrid. In August an international accord to stop all foreign assistance was born.

The Non-Intervention Agreement had its roots in the French Popular Front's decision not to supply war materials to the Spanish Republic. The policy made it few friends. Left-wingers accused the Front of caving in to fascism, a bitter insult when the French government was ideological brother to Madrid. Prime Minister Léon Blum suffered stomach pains and insomnia over the decision.

'We are bastards if we don't keep out promises,' he told his confidants.[165]

The French right continued to hate Blum for allowing arms dealers to make private sales with the Republicans. 'Pay attention. We will never forgive this crime,' Catholic writer François Mauriac warned him in a cold fury.[166] Mauriac's words carried a hidden threat. In 1934 rightist rioters had come close to overthrowing the French government.

By early August it was obvious neither Nazi Germany nor Fascist Italy shared France's restraint. Blum drew up an international plan to stop war materials or troops reaching Spain. Stanley Baldwin's National Government in Britain immediately gave its support. The agreement reduced the risk of world war and saved Britain from backing the wrong horse in the conflict. His Majesty's government could not afford, in the words of a senior civil servant, to create 'a hostile Spain or the occupation of Spanish territory by a hostile power [which] would make our control of the straits and the use of Gibraltar as a naval and air base extremely difficult'.[167]

Before Non-Intervention the British government had put a blind eye to the telescope when its citizens became involved in the conflict. No attempt was made to stop Britons like John Cornford or Esmond Romilly joining the Republican forces. Nor was Tom Campbell Black hindered when he sold aeroplanes to General Mola.

The pencil-moustached Campbell Black was a regular in British newspapers. Marriage to the actress Florence Desmond in March 1935 had piled more celebrity on his already well-established reputation as a pilot. Originally a coffee planter in Kenya, Campbell Black pioneered air transport in East Africa after the First World War. His best known achievement was to

take the £10,000 first prize in the gruelling 1934 East Anglia to Melbourne MacRobertson Air Race, an event sponsored by an Australian chocolate magnate who had made a fortune with ‘Freddo Frog’ bars.

The month before the rising Campbell Black had been endorsing products in the Daily Mirror. ‘I am very satisfied with the Berkley Superlax Arm Chair.’[168] He was right-wing and familiar with Spain, having sold aeroplanes to flying clubs there before the rising.

In partnership with Juan de la Cierva, the autogiro pioneer who dined at Simpson’s in the Strand with Douglas Jerrold back in July, Campbell Black sold British aircraft to Mola’s Army of the North. Ferry pilots, including Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton, Richard L’Estrange Malone, and Grand Prix driver Richard Seaman, flew the aeroplanes into Spain then made their way back across the French border by car.[169]

In a break from overseeing deliveries, Campbell Black flew the Marqués de Rivas *de Linares* from Burgos to Lisbon on a diplomatic mission. The Marqués acquired several friends for the return journey so Campbell Black hired Captain Steel, a British pilot running a charter service in Portugal, to take the extra passengers. Local paramilitaries tried to shoot the planes out of the sky as they made an unscheduled landing at Nationalist-held Valladolid. The Marqués soothed the gunmen’s nerves but when he left Campbell Black and Steel at a restaurant the pair were arrested as spies by jumpy local Falangists and bundled into a car. The Marqués rescued them just as an execution squad cocked its rifles.

A shaken Steel returned to Portugal. Campbell Black sold his story to the *News of the World*. On 19 September the propeller of a taxiing biplane tore him to pieces at Liverpool Municipal Airport. The loss was greater to British aviation than the Nationalists.

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Blum’s non-intervention plan had come into effect shortly before Campbell Black’s death. The UK government would no longer look the other way and aeroplane sales immediately stopped. Even Portugal gave the agreement its support as a concession to British diplomats in ongoing negotiations about military aid. Only Germany, Italy, and the Soviet Union refused to sign.

Mussolini capitulated on 21 August, giving the impression he had been humbled by world opinion. In truth, *Il Duce* had realised Non Intervention

would be impossible to enforce. Italian aeroplanes continued to bomb Republican towns.

The Soviet Union was next. Josef Stalin was creator of the Popular Front concept but had so far held back from aiding the Spanish Republic. Restraint was uncharacteristic for the former seminarian, who showed little concern for world opinion as millions of Soviet citizens died at the hands of the *Narodnyy komissariat vnutrennikh del* (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs - NKVD) secret police.

The Bolshevik apple was already rotten to the core when Stalin assumed power in 1928 but under his leadership the repression increased. Political enemies and the unjustly accused died in the chain of Siberian labour camps writer Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn called the 'gulag archipelago'. No dissent was tolerated. Osip Mandelstam died for a poem which compared Stalin's moustache to a cockroach.[170]

The Soviet Union's hesitation in signing the Non-Intervention Agreement gave hope to leftists in Spain and elsewhere that Stalin would support Madrid. But on 23 August the Soviet Union joined other European signatories. The ideological satisfaction of helping the Spanish government had to be balanced with the need to neutralise Nazi Germany. Stalin did not want to jeopardise negotiations for an anti-Nazi pact with the west by meddling in Spain.

Simultaneously, German ambassador Joachim von Ribbentrop was doing the rounds of London diplomatic functions, pushing for an anti-Soviet alliance with Britain. Although Baldwin had accepted Hitler's 1935 reoccupation of the Rhineland with the words 'Even if there was one chance in a hundred of a war, I would not take that chance', Ribbentrop's quest was doomed.[171] Downing Street had no intention of doing a deal with Germany.

Unaware of Baldwin's true feelings Hitler agreed to Non Intervention on 24 August, hoping to impress London. Germany continued to secretly supply war materials to Franco. By 29 September 1936 the Germans had provided seventy-three aircraft to the Nationalists, and the Italians sixty-eight.[172] Von Ribbentrop's hopes of an alliance collapsed the following year, the final nail in the coffin lid being a Nazi salute by the ambassador that nearly took out King George VI's eye.

A Non-Intervention Committee met to enforce the agreement on 9 September in London. Every European nation except Switzerland took part.[173] It soon became obvious the Committee was more interested in the

appearance of Non-Intervention than in preventing outside interference in Spain. The Committee was so ineffective that Von Ribbentrop, rarely witty, called it the ‘Intervention Committee’.[174]

Within a few days the Soviet Union broke the Agreement and began sending military aid to the Republic, Stalin having realised his failure to support Madrid was feeding the cancer of disillusion among western Communists. In October, Soviet tanks and drivers arrived in Spain, along with Polikarpov I-15 fighters which the Republicans nicknamed ‘Chatos’ (snub-nosed boys). Stalin would eventually send the Republic 772 pilots and 351 tank operators, plus a number of military advisors. The Germans soon discovered their tanks were inferior to the Soviets’ and Colonel Von Thoma offered 500 pesetas for each captured Russian model.

The Non-Intervention Committee quickly degenerated into a forum for Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and Fascist Italy to attack each other’s intervention in the war while defending or minimising their own. Their task was made easier by Non-Intervention not being a treaty, merely an agreement with no legal force. It relied on the good faith of governments. In its early days it did not even target foreign volunteers.

No-one tried to stop Britons Nangle and Fitzpatrick when they joined the Spanish Foreign Legion in September 1936 at Caceras.

*

Nangle was a dark, serious, handsome man from an Ulster military family connected with the Ghurkhas. His family was friendly with the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VIII. Nangle joined the British Army as a young man and spent the 1920s on dusty tours of duty in India, protecting the north-west frontier from insurgent tribesmen and Russian spies.

Outwardly Nangle was a typical establishment figure, the loyal professional soldier from a good family keeping the British flag flying over the furthest reaches of the Empire. Inside was an adventurer. In 1928 his last report as senior officer in charge of Fort Alexander, written in the dry as stale bread style required by the army, was livened up by a postscript. 'How much string does it take to go round St Pauls?'[175]

The answer - 'balls and balls and balls' - summed up his attitude to British military life. By the time the report was read Nangle had taken a leave of absence and joined the French Foreign Legion.

He enjoyed the free booting spirit of the *1er Regiment Etranger*, with its isolated forts manned by volunteers in white *kepis*, everyday French colonial brutality, and sudden native ambushes triggered by jihad or tribal pride, but picked up what the French called *le cafard* during his service, a depression brought on by too many days cooped up in sweatbox outposts. The psychological damage was permanent. For the rest of his life Nangle was prone to unpredictable bouts of rage or misanthropic drunkenness. Peter Kemp tactfully described him as an occasionally 'awkward' companion.

The Foreign Legion was not the career his parents wanted for their son. The Prince of Wales intervened with Legion authorities and Nangle was discharged. He returned to the British Army but was unable to settle down to peacetime duties and in 1934 resigned his commission. Restless, he began then dropped out of a veterinary course at Edinburgh University before setting up a riding school in Buckinghamshire. The rising in Spain provided an opportunity to return to soldiering. He asked his old friend from Sandhurst military school, Noel Skeffington-Smyth, to accompany him to Caceras.

Where Nangle was superficially conventional, Skeffington-Smyth was openly eccentric. A lanky man with a moustache that see-sawed under his nose as if it had independent life, he was frank about his military shortcomings. He would happily tell new acquaintances his former commanding officer's opinion about him: 'No men would ever follow this officer, except out of idle curiosity'.[176]

After inheriting land from an Irish relative, Skeffington-Smyth adopted the more celtic name of Fitzpatrick. He gave up his military career in the early 1930s, although he remained in the supplementary reserve attached to the Irish Guards, and started a business selling cars in London until an unhappy romance with his secretary soured the motor trade for him. Like Nangle he wanted adventure and escape.

As experienced soldiers they were appointed lieutenants, the first foreigners to be commissioned as officers in the Foreign Legion who had not risen through the ranks. Fitzpatrick was introduced to Legion life by the sight of a soldier repeatedly smashing a corpse in the mouth with his rifle butt. When Fitzpatrick pointed out the man was dead the soldier replied 'Yes sir, but see! He has several gold teeth'.[177]

By September 1936 Franco's forces had taken much of Andalusia in the south-west and linked up with Mola's Army of the North to seal off the border with Portugal. Both forces headed towards Madrid. The Spanish

government had already left for Valencia on the east coast but the capital remained the strategically important gateway to central Spain.

Taking the city could cripple the Republic and save the coup. Halted north of Madrid, Mola was shocked to discover Franco had diverted his forces to relieve the beleaguered defenders of the Alcázar.

*

Nangle and Fitzptarick joined a convoy of coaches driving through the heat and dust toward Toledo. Their fellow legionnaires stank of sweat, bad breath, and black tobacco. Luggage and loot, including a nervous goat, were strapped to the roofs. Crucifixes, Virgin Mary medallions, and odd bits of popular culture, like a tatty Mickey Mouse doll, were tied to the radiator grills.

The commander of V Bandera was Colonel Varela, who had captured Cádiz at the start of the uprising. A dandy who went into battle wearing soft kid gloves and slept with medals pinned to his pyjamas, Varela halted his men at the outskirts of Toledo on 27 September and sent scouts through enemy lines to make contact with the Alcázar's defenders. The filthy and emaciated defenders embraced them. The legionnaires distributed cigarettes and Alcázar defender Lieutenant Tomãs Rabina brought out a platter of rotten horseflesh tarts.

'Is this what you eat in the Alcázar?' one of Nangle's comrades asked incredulously.

'Only when we are celebrating'.[178]

Varela's forces assaulted the town. They took no prisoners. The mutilated bodies of two Nationalist pilots had been found outside the town during the night and Varela wanted revenge. Moroccans were at the forefront of the attack, hacking Republican defenders with machetes. Fitzpatrick saw gutters running red with blood. A legionnaire bayoneted a surrendering Republican so violently the rifle went through the man's chest up to the bolt. Wounded men were shot in their hospital beds and the defenders of another building were driven onto the roof by incendiary grenades. As the flames climbed higher they threw themselves off the parapet and their bodies smashed open on the street. Intestines fried like sausages on the boiling cobblestones.[179]

With the taking of Toledo, Franco revealed his political ambitions. Before the relief of the Alcázar, journalists treated Mola as Nationalist leader,

if only because his headquarters in northern Spain was easily accessible from France. Now the press came to Franco for interviews. He made sure he was photographed with skeletal Alcázar veterans as they emerged from the rubble.

The Republican defenders in Madrid dug trenches, erected barricades and loaded rifles, and gave thanks for the extra time Franco's diversion to Toledo bought them.

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At Salamanca airstrip in late September, Air Force head General Kindelán proposed to a meeting of senior Nationalist figures that they elect an overall commander for the war effort. Kindelán suggested the man of the moment: Franco.

The only other options were Mola and General Queipo de Llano, the satrap of Seville famous for his radio speeches. Republicans and Nationalists alike listened to Queipo de Llano's venomous nightly broadcasts. The French President was 'that Jew Blum'; British journalist and Republican supporter Noel Monks was 'a drunk'; the Republican militia were all 'rabble'.

Queipo de Llano had the disconcerting habit of breaking off in the middle of a violent verbal assault to send greetings to his family. 'And now, if my wife and daughters who are in Paris happen to be listening, I should like to say I hope they are well and to assure them that we here in Seville are thinking of them. *Buenas noches señores*!'[180]

It was barely a contest. Mola was discredited because of the failure of his coup plan and Quepo de Llano enjoyed his broadcasts too much to look for political support outside Seville. Franco commanded the Army of Africa, the most powerful military force on the Nationalist side, was sole conduit for German and Italian aid, and had made newspaper front pages across world as the saviour of the Alcázar.

On 1 October Franco was confirmed as *Generalissimo* of all Nationalist forces. Posters went up in Nationalist territory – 'One State, One Country, One Chief'.[181] By giving a human, if podgy, face to the rising, Franco became a symbol of fascist barbarism to the left. Pablo Picasso caricatured him as a priapic midget obsessed with money and God in his 1937 etchings sequence 'The Dream and Lie of Franco'.

In November, Nationalist forces poured into Madrid's southern and

eastern suburbs. Nangle and Fitzpatrick had been removed from the ranks to join a top-secret project involving an Irish general but another Briton was amongst Legion troops in Madrid.

Wales' only contribution to Franco's crusade was doing his best to end democracy in Spain.

12. WELSH LEGIONNAIRE

Frank Thomas on the Madrid Front

Frank Thomas was the black sheep of a prosperous middle-class family from Wales. The Thomases were known for their liberal views. Frank was not. Right-wing, restless, and immature, he devoured *Boy's Own* adventure stories. His favourite book was PC Wren's *Beau Geste*, in which a falsely disgraced public school hero finds redemption through the French Foreign Legion.

'Frank has always been interested in fascist political beliefs,' his father told the Western Mail in November 1936, 'but more than that, he has been restless, unable to suit himself to everyday life'.

Thomas joined the family business selling farming equipment in 1935 as a commercial traveller. He was a successful salesman but a profoundly bored one, 'browned off' in his words.[182] A Beau Geste without a cause, he was excited by the Spanish coup.

'As a welcome relief the Spanish war 'broke out'. This point would be the expected one for proclaiming heroics about how touched I was by the sacredness of General Franco's cause; but conscience compels me to say that it seemed to me the opportunity to enquire into a professional soldier's life. The more I thought of it, the better the idea seemed'.[183]

Wales was dry soil for Nationalist support. A land of rolling green hills and remote sheep farms scarred by the industrial scaffolding of open face coal mines, the country was blighted by poverty and unemployment. Left-wing convictions went so deep that when London socialists organised the Spanish Workers' Fund in 1938 the majority of its £70,000 collection came from Welsh miners. In a land where even the middle-classes were left wing, it was unusual to find a conservative, less a Francoist.

Even the few who did support Franco were not enthusiastic about him.

Welsh novelist Anthony Powell, married into the English aristocracy, told his friend George Orwell: ‘Little as I liked Franco, in the last resort I should have supported the Nationalists against the Communists’.[184]

After stewing in his dreams for three months Thomas abruptly left job, family, and home for a Thomas Cook tour to Lisbon.[185] He spoke no Spanish, although he soon acquired a working knowledge, and his enlistment papers were filled out after a faltering conversation in French. In October he was sent to Talavera, where he joined VI *bandera*.

In the Legion Thomas was surrounded by characters straight out of *Beau Geste*. Frantisek Shostek was a Czech who joined the Legion after losing the proceeds of robbing his father’s safe to better thieves; Georges Kozma, a defrocked Hungarian missionary; Dimitri Ivanov, a brutal Bulgarian lieutenant who proudest possession was a stuffed leopard looted from a museum.

Training was brief but, in Talavera, Thomas encountered two fellow volunteers who had just joined neighbouring VII *bandera*. 'Tug' Wilson, a Canadian, and Yartlett, English, were a pair of Royal Navy sailors who deserted HMS *Barham* at Gibraltar by swimming ashore.

Franco’s relations with Great Britain were tense but naval officers at Gibraltar supported the uprising, finding common cause after the mass slaughter of Spanish rebel naval officers in the early days of the fighting. Gibraltar passed on intelligence about Republican shipping to their opposite numbers in Burgos. The instinctive anti-Communism of Royal Navy officers was encouraged by the hunting and golf made available to them in the Nationalist zone.

The Royal Naval base at Gibraltar supplied three other British volunteers for the Nationalists during the conflict, all deserters. On 27 August 1937 a harassed Nationalist official cabled his superiors for advice on how to deal with two Royal Marines who wanted to volunteer. The authorities cabled back that the men were to be enlisted under false names and they joined the Legion as ‘Little’ and ‘Stewart’. Another Gibraltar deserter appeared several months later. The Nationalist authorities were reluctant to accept him as the Royal Navy was one of the few friends they had left in Britain by this time but eventually he was allowed to enlist. Reginald Kelleth signed up with the 61st company of XVI *bandera* in December 1937 and a few months later was on the Lerida front in north-eastern Spain.[186]

Wilson and Yartlett’s experience was less permanent. The day before

Thomas' arrival a drunken sergeant beat them with a whip for allegedly 'poisoning wells'.[187] In a snatched conversation they told trhe Welshman they planned to desert. He wished them luck.

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Thomas received only a few days of rifle practice before he was sent to the trenches at Navalcarnero, east of Madrid, to cut the main road to the capital. His first taste of combat left a vivid impression.

'[T]he sight of a dead man (the first I had seen) lying in a wood we had passed through; clothed as a peasant, apart from his cartridge belt and smashed rifle; a dry stream bed exposed to view from Navalcarnero where 'bees' [bullets] kept humming around us; and the anticlimax that night, after a hot meal of haricot beans and coffee, of sleeping beside the mules with the mule-packs as a pillow'.[188]

Thomas was a competent soldier, liked by his comrades and quick to adapt to the brutality of war. He could strip a tunic off a corpse to keep himself warm, calmly watch the murder of prisoners, and make jokes on grim subjects.

'One comical interlude […] was the discovery, in the deep well of a farmyard from which we had been drawing our drinking and washing water for some days, of the body of the farmer evidently thrown down there by the Reds. No wonder the water had seemed strange to the taste!'[189]

Condemned as 'kulaks', after the Soviet term for hoarding peasants, many farmers were murdered in the early months of the war. 'In order to prevent a Fascist outbreak,' British Communist John Cornford, a contemporary of Peter Kemp from Cambridge University, wrote in a letter home, 'every night splits [Trotskyites], unpopular bosses, and known fascists are taken for a ride. Assisted by the militia there is a peasant war raging in the countryside and thousands of Kulaks and Landlords have been killed'.[190]

By 7 November VI *bandera* was in the outskirts of Madrid. Thomas found himself on night guard in the National Institute of Hygiene and Sanitation in Madrid's University City district. His comrades told him that if he saw sparks in the darkness it meant homemade Republican bombs, dynamite packed into empty tomato tins, would soon be flying.

The easy victory the Nationalists envisioned in Madrid did not materialise. The invading troops were stopped by the International Brigades,

a new volunteer force of left-wing men from around the world.

*

Foreign volunteers fought in the Republican forces from the start of the uprising. Hundreds of left-wing Europeans in Barcelona for a ‘Popular Olympiad’, planned for 19 July as a protest against Nazi Germany’s hosting of the Olympics, joined militia groups when the fighting began. French athletes formed a ‘Paris’ battalion, while German exiles organised the ‘Thaelmann’ centuria.

As the Nationalists closed in on Madrid in October the Spanish government accepted the Soviet Union’s offer of full-scale international volunteer units to fight alongside Republican troops. The International Brigades were born.

Madrid expected veterans of the First World War. It got raw recruits. Thirty-five thousand volunteers, made up of communists, democrats, and apolitical adventurers, most unemployed and working-class, from fifty different countries fought in the Brigades. Winston Churchill called them ‘armed tourists’.[191]

Volunteers were marshalled in Paris, where the Soviet Union had set up underground recruiting centres ordered by region. Croatian Communist Josip Broz (future Yugoslavian dictator Tito) provided assistance, money, and fake passports for Eastern European volunteers. Their real passports, and those of the other volunteers, were taken away for safekeeping. Few were ever returned. Brigaders were then sent across the border to a training camp in Albacete, south-western Spain, sorted into national legions, like the Polish *Dabrowski* Battalion or the French *Commune de Paris*, and formed into brigades.

‘You could pick out the British by their nervous jerking heads, native air of suspicion, and constant stream of self-effacing jokes,’ said Laurie Lee, who had returned to Spain to fight for the Republic. ‘These, again, could be divided up into ex-convicts, the alcoholics, the wizened miners, dockers, noisy politicos and dreamy undergraduates busy scribbling notes to their boyfriends’.[192]

Volunteers were blooded in the battle for Madrid. Britons fought from building to building across the campus of University City, discovering in the ransacked libraries of the Philosophy and Letters department that a volume of

Indian metaphysical thought could stop an enemy sniper bullet, and bringing down fleeing fascists from positions in rooms decorated with Spanish tourism posters. ‘Spain! The charm of the East! The comfort of the West!’

Under the nom de guerre ‘General Kléber’ the Ukrainian Manfred Stern commanded XI International Brigade in Madrid and his inspired leadership stopped the Nationalists in the former royal hunting park of the Casa de Campo, strategic gateway to the city.

Thomas’ *bandera* was among Kléber’s opponents. It took heavy casualties crossing an open asphalt drive in an attack on the Model Prison, where over a thousand Nationalist prisoners were murdered by guards as the legionnaires approached.[193] As the *bandera* reached cover some Nationalist bombers, confused by the smoke and brick dust, mistook them for the enemy. The unit was so badly damaged it was pulled out of Madrid to refit, withdrawing shortly before Peter Kemp, the other British volunteer in the city, arrived with his Requetés. A third of Kléber’s XI Brigade died in the capital but Franco’s forces were halted and forced to probe for alternate routes before digging in for a siege. On 16 April 1937, after several months away from the action, Thomas was promoted to *cabo* (corporal) and returned to the front lines with a squad of his own. After jolting around the area south of Madrid in a bone-shaking lorry, the *bandera* was sent in to defend Toledo against a Republican counter-attack. Incompetent artillery support allowed Republicans to rush waves of troops at the *bandera'*s positions and both sides took heavy casualties.

A Russian legionnaire was hit by a tank shell and exploded like a bloody fountain. Thomas found himself alone in a forward trench snatching bullets from among shredded corpses on the floor to feed his rifle. As darkness was falling and it seemed the attack was beaten back he was shot in the face.

‘A bullet now struck me under the right nostril, coming out again just below the ear and, momentarily, I was literally knocked off my feet. The blood pouring down and feeling as if my whole head had been blown off I picked myself up and lifted myself out of the trench in order to pass backwards for treatment’.[194]

As he struggled through barbed wire Thomas was shot in the kneecap. His fellow legionnaires slung him over the saddle of a pack mule and took him to the omnibuses that served as ambulances.[195]

Jolting over rough roads towards a first aid station Thomas drifted in and out of consciousness. His confused thoughts floated from dead friends in the

Legion to family back home and the people he had met in Spain. On the verge of passing out, he thought about a group of Romanians with whom he had spent Christmas Day at Boadilla del Monte, exploring a ruined church. He had been struck by their horror at the desecration. He wondered what had happened to them.

13. HOLY CRUSADE

King Carol II's Romania and the Legion of the Archangel Michael

On 13 February 1937 a funeral procession choked the streets of the Romanian capital Bucharest. Black horses drew two oak coffins down the snowy *Calea Victoriei* on a pair of gun carriages. Thousands of mourners walked silently behind them. Thousands more lined the road. The *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* (Legion of the Archangel Michael) was burying two of its own.

The funeral procession had already passed Byzantine-styled Orthodox churches, white Modernist cubes, and wooden Wallachian mansions so old they had seen Romania pass back and forth between Christian Europe and the Turks like a gambling token. Now the procession reached the Athénéé Palace Hotel. The elegant French-style façade, of 1914 vintage, always drew the eyes of passers-by. Today the mourners did not look up.

The hotel's gilded interior of marble and gold pillars, heavy chandeliers and velvet settees, was the haunt of aristocrats, playboys, gigolos, and spies.[196] Chambermaids sold themselves for a handful of *lei*, fox-furred adventuresses from good families for more. Its louche, decadent residents fawned on Romanian monarch King Carol II and enjoyed the spoils of his corruption.

Outside, the *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* marched in silence. The violent and obsessively anti-Semitic *Legiunea* was locked in bloody political struggle with Carol II for Romania. The king's support came only from upper-class monarchists, and liberals who approved the way he kept the *Legiunea* out of power through blatantly manipulated elections. No-one knew how long Carol II would last.

Ambassadors from Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, Salazar's Portugal, and Imperial Japan walked in the funeral procession. An onlooker thought that

‘all of Romania was taking Holy Communion’ with the legionaries.[197]

The Athénéé Palace’s guests retreated to their rooms and shuttered the windows. The funeral procession brought a pall of mourning black, like a shadow on the sun, into their privileged lives. The thousands of spectators with their arms extended in the fascist salute who watched the coffins roll along the *Calea Victoriei* were Romania’s dispossessed. Starving peasants, unemployed graduates, the women who swept the hotel steps with witches’ brooms. They represented the dark heart of Romania, the superstition and blood which hated Carol II for his corruption, his Jewish mistress Magda Lupescu, and for whom the ‘Paris of the East’, as Bucharest was known, was foreign poison in Orthodox Christian soil. They owned the Romanian capital that day.

The dead men were Ion Mota and Vasile Marin, senior *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* figures who died in the ranks of the Spanish Foreign Legion. Their deaths meant little in Spain, where their bodies were dumped in a stinking shed converted into a mortuary, but in Romania they were heroes.

*

The son of an Orthodox priest, Ion Mota grew up Romanian in the province of Transylvania when it was still part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Persecution by the Hungarian authorities fixed his adult persona of an angry, intense man dedicated to Romanian nationalism and its pilot fish anti-Semitism. Nationalist rage burned in his chest even when Transylvania returned to Romania after the First World War.

The 1919 Versailles Treaty had re-drawn the map of Europe and rewarded Romania with fresh territory that doubled its size. The population jumped from 7.7 million to 14.6 million. The move brought home ethnic Romanians like Mota living outside its borders but at least thirty percent of the newly enlarged population, many Jewish or Hungarian, were non-Romanian and resentful of their new government. Their presence exacerbated the country’s ethnic tensions.

As a student at the University of Cluj, Mota organised protests demanding a limit to the number of Jewish students at Romanian universities. Graduates in Romania had increased fivefold after the war but there were few suitable jobs. The country was full of well-educated young men forced into unemployment or jobs they felt beneath them.[198] The right-wing looked for

scapegoats.

The 1923 protests were unsuccessful but attracted the attention of Cornelieu Zelea Codreanu, a charismatic rightist agitator from Bukovina on the slopes of the Carpathian mountains. Like Mota, Codreanu grew up under Austro-Hungarian rule and embraced Romanian nationalism, despite his own heritage being mysteriously vague. Some claimed he was Ukrainian. While studying Law at the University of Iaşi, Codreanu fell under the spell of Professor Alexandru Cuza, a lecturer who preached a mystical nationalism which appealed to many young anti-Semites. Cuza believed Romania could only become spiritually pure when it expelled outsiders.

Codreanu discarded Cuza as his mentor when the academic expressed moral qualms about using violence. The darkly handsome but haunted-looking Codreanu moved from student activism to terrorism.

He found a kindred soul in Mota. The younger man confided he was plotting the assassinations of prominent government officials and Jewish businessmen. Codreanu had his own plans in that direction and urged him on, but Mota's campaign was thwarted when one of his gang turned informer. In court Mota pulled a revolver smuggled in by an admirer and wounded the man. Nationalist and anti-Semitic feeling in Romania ran so deep the jury freed Mota on lack of evidence.

Codreanu's murderous plans were more successful. The idea for the *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* first came to him in 1924 when he was awaiting trial for assassinating a police chief he thought unpatriotic. His sense of messianic destiny grew when a sympathetic jury found him not guilty. Codreanu's belief in the redemptive power of violence to cleanse the nation proved too extreme for many Romanian nationalists and it took three years to gather enough supporters to launch his new movement. Mota was one of the first recruits.

The *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*, more commonly known as the *Garda de fier* (Iron Guard) after its strong-arm militia, mixed Cuza's xenophobia with Christian mysticism. Its declared aim was to save the souls of all true Romanians by purifying the nation of outsiders. On a political level the *Legiunea* called for an end to the cancerous corruption that riddled every aspect of Romanian life.

Its mix of the spiritual and the political attracted some Romanian Orthodox priests but the Legion grew most rapidly among the disillusioned and desperate. In Codreanu's words: 'a poor peasant, suffering bitter

privation in his village, an unfortunate sick worker, and a searching intellectual astray – these were my people'.[199]

Known as *Căpitanul* (The Captain), Codreanu became an almost religious figure to his legionaries. A statue of the Archangel Michael placed behind Codreanu's chair at *Legiunea* headquarters made wings appear to sprout out of *Căpitanul*'s own back.

Mota was Codreanu's second-in-command and leader of *Legiunea* youth movement *Frăţia de Cruce* (Brotherhood of the Cross). The ties between the two men became closer when he married Codreanu's sister Iridenta, a good-looking girl with short black hair and dark eyes. Mota became the *Legiunea*'s political ideologue. He had a martyr's obsession with sacrifice.

'We all of us have the most formidable dynamite, the most advanced weapon of war, more powerful than tanks and machine guns,' he said. 'It is our own ashes!'[200]

Mota's lean-faced comrade, Vasile Marin, was *Legiunea* head in Bucharest. A native of the Romanian capital, brought up by his widowed mother, Marin's high intelligence provided an escape from poverty. He attended Bucharest University on a scholarship where his brilliance attracted the attention of Ion Lugojeanu, leader of the mainstream *Partidul Naţional Ţărănesc* (National Peasant Party). When the National Peasants entered government Marin went with them to head the Secretariat of the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. At heart he was a Romanian nationalist who admired the activists of the *Legiunea* more than his own party. In 1932 he abandoned his promising career to join Codreanu's men.

By the early thirties the *Legiunea* had grown into a threat to King Carol II's power. The king ordered the arrest and torture of many legionaries. Codreanu retaliated with the assassination of government officials. Despite the bloody exchanges, the Legion got 200,000 votes in the 1933 elections. It was now the country's third largest party, even with rigged results for the king in many districts. By 1937 one and a half percent of the Romanian population belonged to the *Legiunea*.

Codreanu pursued power through the ballot box but he was prepared for revolution. He told his Legionaries they were the *omul nou* (new man), an idealised mix of 'a hero, a priest, an ascetic, and a pure, virtuous knight'.[201] New members drank thimbles of each other's blood when they joined 'nests' (the *Legiunea* term for local branches) and wrote oaths using it as ink.

All pledged to sacrifice their lives if *Căpitanul* ordered.

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‘The vast majority of Romanians,’ wrote the British consul in 1936, ‘prefer the Nationalists or the military elements in Spain’.[202]

An accurate observation. There were few Republicans in Romania. Carol II signed the Non-Intervention Agreement and ordered his police to arrest any volunteers going to Spain but these measures were aimed at supporters of the Republic. The King shared his people’s sympathy for Franco and personally intervened to stop Madrid using Romanian tankers to import oil.

The Romanian government even bankrolled Spanish ambassador in Bucharest, Pedro de Prat *y Soutzo,* when the Republic cut off funding because of his pro-Franco views. Carol’s men warned the replacement ambassador from Madrid, Manuel Lopez Rey, to stay clear of the embassy.

The siege of the Alcázar at Toledo was front-page news in Romania. When the Alcázar was relieved bells rang in Bucharest as the Romanian Orthodox Church held thanksgiving services. Articles glorifying the defenders rolled off the presses. Hundreds of young Romanian men sought out Prat and volunteered to fight for Franco. The Nationalist representative turned them away. He had no funds to transport them to Spain and did not want to cause trouble for his Romanian backers with the Non-Intervention Committee.

A handful of Romanians outside the country joined Franco’s forces, including Joan Nereki, who deserted the French Foreign Legion in Morocco to join its Spanish counterpart across the border. Only one group of Romanians journeyed across Europe from their own nation. They came from the *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*.

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Codreanu saw parallels between Franco’s fight against the Spanish government and his organisation’s own position in Romania, although to foreign observers the reactionary Carol II had more in common with Alphonso XIII than the Popular Front. At *Legiunea* meetings the Nationalist flag hung next to the blue, gold, and red of Romania, and orators emphasised the lessons to be learnt from their fellow Christian nationalists fighting Communism in Spain.

In November *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* representatives approached Prat for assistance with a diplomatic initiative. General Gheorghe

Cantacuzino-Granicerul, white-haired hero of the First World War and senior *Legiunea* figure, wanted to present the Alcázar defender General José Moscardó with a ceremonial sword. A small group of legionaries, paying their own way, would travel with him to Toledo for the ceremony.

It was a small symbolic gesture but a larger political one. The *Legiunea* was starting to lose ground to newer far-right groups, all influenced by its religiously charged racial nationalism. Carol II even created *Straja Ţarii* (Guards of the Fatherland), a sham fascist movement, to drain off Codreanu's support. Associating the *Legiunea* with the triumphant relief of the Alcázar would re-establish its importance.

The Spanish embassy had its own reasons for helping the *Legiunea*. Prat saw the elderly general's request as an opportunity to bring his own work to the attention of General Franco. He made arrangements.

In December, Cantacuzino-Granicerul and a seven man team from the *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*, led by Ion Mota and Vasile Marin, set off from Bucharest to Spain. Bancia Dobre was a schoolmaster from Transylvania, Nicolae Totu a cheerful lawyer, Gheorge Clime, an engineer, and Prince Alexandru Cantacuzino, a distant relative of the general, was a lawyer in the diplomatic service. Orthodox priest Fr. Ion Dumitrescu-Borsa accompanied them.

Codreanu's plan was to honour the *Legiunea*'s Spanish heroes in Toledo and boost his profile at home. En route and away from his influence, the nature of the mission dramatically changed. Mota began to see mystical signs, such as a statue of St Michael in Hamburg and the *Garda de fier* cross hatch symbol in the weave of a Portuguese tablecloth, which he interpreted to mean it was God's will they should join Franco's forces. He felt sure 'the destiny of Christian Nationalists in Romania was directly tied to the victory of the Spanish Nationalists'.[203]

Not usually adverse to seeing messages from God, the other legionaries were unsure. General Gheorghe Cantacuzino-Granicerul, in his seventies, refused. Marin was the first to be convinced by Mota it was their duty to help Franco fight 'the Red Beast of the Apocalypse'.[204]

At a small ceremony near Toledo the legionaries presented their sword to General Moscardó. General Cantacuzino gave an emotional speech about the similarities between Francoist Spain and Legionary Romania. Cantacuzino returned to Bucharest alone. In the infectious martial atmosphere of wartime Spain, Mota's arguments won over his companions. All seven

enlisted in the Foreign Legion.

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The Romanians were assigned to the 21st company of VI *bandera* at Talavera de la Reina. Over December they were based in a desecrated monastery at Boadilla del Monte, west of Madrid, which they investigated with Welsh Legionnaire Frank Thomas on Christmas Day.[205] Mota was obsessed with documenting their crusade and wrote so many letters to *Libertatea*, a magazine he edited in Romania, the backlog ran for the next two years.

Legionary training was often rushed and inadequate. Frank Thomas received only a few day's instruction before being sent into combat. Later in the war some Legionnaires claimed they were used as cannon fodder, first into the attack while their officers followed behind. Thomas agreed.

'I had come to Spain willing to accept fair risk of death or serious injury, but the permanent use of the *bandera* as shock-troops converted the risk into certain death, which I was not prepared to accept'.[206]

The Romanians found military life hard. The Foreign Legion was low on supplies and the new recruits had to loot what they needed from the battlefield. They slept on the cold ground wrapped in blankets. Only Mota seemed to enjoy the lifestyle, writing to *Libertatea* that he was ready with 'gun or grenades or machine-gun in hand in the arduous struggle against those who have tried to blind the Saviour and defile the Mother of God and her Holy Child'.[207] The others grumbled and wondered what Codreanu would say when he found out.

The frontal assault on Madrid had stalled and the Nationalists turned their attention to the land around the capital. They controlled territory to the south and west of the city, and were pushing in from the north. The Republic held land to the north-west of the capital along the highway that lead to Corunna but in early January the Nationalists captured seven kilometres of the road after days of fighting in which Republican ammunition ran so low soldiers had to mix live rounds with blanks.

The Nationalists had little time to celebrate their victory. On 10 January fresh Republican troops arrived from Madrid and launched a surprise counter-attack east of the Nationalist gains. They succeeded in pushing back Franco's troops as far as the town of Majadahonda. On the afternoon of 13th

January the Romanians were amongst other Foreign Legion troops ordered up to positions on the Majahonda road.

The Romanians had just occupied their trenches when a Republican artillery bombardment began. Mota shouted to the others over the roar of falling shells that if surrounded they should refuse to surrender and die together as Romanian patriots. His comrades were digesting his words when shells crashed into the trench. Mota and Marin were thrown about like rag dolls. Cantacuzino wildly fired a machine-gun over the top of the trench at the Republican lines until he ran out of ammunition. When he looked back he saw Mota and Marin lying face down in the dirt at the bottom of the trench.[208]

Mota's watch stopped at the moment of his death: four-thirty p.m. The Romanians gathered around the corpses to pray but were interrupted by a Spanish lieutenant who ordered them back to their positions with the words 'Bad luck! That's war!'[209]

The pair's bodies were dumped in a filthy makeshift mortuary. Prince Cantacuzino and the others suffered religious agonies at the idea of Mota and Marin ending up in a common grave without full Orthodox rites. A captain swigging a bottle of cognac chased Cantacuzino back to his post when the Romanian tried to locate the corpses.

Senior Foreign Legion officers from the presentation ceremony in Toledo telegraphed news of the deaths to General Cantacuzino in Bucharest. The general managed to contact Franco the next day, stressed his stature as a fellow war hero, and asked the Generalissimo to release the legionaries from service.

Unaware he had any Romanians in his army, General Franco was reluctant to discharge anyone before the end of their service. Cantacuzino won him round by explaining the political advantage in forging a closer relationship with a movement that could one day be the next ruler of Romania. Franco agreed to help.

The bodies were recovered and the other Romanians released from service to accompany the coffins home. At a ceremony in Toledo, Franco's foreign minister José Antonio Sangróniz *y Castro* presented the surviving Romanians with awards for bravery. He assured them Franco would always be a friend of the *Garda de fier*. Their train pulled out of the station to a wobbly version of the Romanian anthem played by a military band.

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In Romania, the deaths of Mota and Marin had a huge impact. Codreanu proclaimed them martyrs. Prat's propaganda hailed their contribution to the civil war. When the coffins arrived in Romania the *Legiunea* maximised the effect with a slow train journey to Bucharest, greeted by legionaries knelt at prayer on every station.

The capital was taken over by the *Legiunea* and its supporters for the funeral. Mota and Marin were buried in the Ilie Gorgani church, the holiest site of Romanian Orthodox Christianity, where Codreanu preached the need for permanent sacrifice in the service of the nation.

The deaths of two men in Franco's forces did not help the Nationalists defeat the Republic but it boosted the *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*'s chances of taking power in Romania. On the Jarama front, south of Madrid, an Irish general in command of 700 men hoped to reap the same benefits from his exploits.

Eoin O'Duffy entered Spain a broken down alcoholic at the end of his political career. He intended to return home as dictator of Ireland.

14. A HOLIDAY IN SPAIN

General Eoin O'Duffy and the Irish Brigade

The Carlist flag was a white field split corner to corner by a crimson cross. Originally the sixteenth century standard of Castilian king Philip the Handsome, the Carlists adopted it three hundred years later during their wars with Ferdinand VII. The ailing Ferdinand's crime was to pass the Spanish throne to his daughter rather than his brother Carlos as tradition demanded.

More was at stake than dynastic rivalry. Ferdinand was liberal by the standards of his time. The Carlists represented an ultra-conservative strand of monarchist Catholicism that regarded most European history since the French Revolution as a mistake.

Defeated on the battlefield, Carlism morphed into a political movement, less relevant with each passing year. But back in September 1936 Carlist flags had once again cracked in the wind among the spires of Valladolid, a cathedral town in the movement's heartland of northern Spain.

The Nationalist rising had brought the Carlists back to political relevance. Requeté troops in General Emilio Mola's army had a hard won reputation for bravery in battle. The General seemed sympathetic to their cause and had expelled Don Juan de Borbón, third son of Alphonso XIII and rival to the Carlists, from Spain when the young man attempted to enlist in his forces. As they pushed south to Madrid, Carlist leader Manuel Fal Conde hoped it would not be long before the Carlist claimant Don Alfonso Carlos was crowned king.

Carlist optimism received a fresh boost on the evening of 27 September when General Mola emerged onto the balcony of Valladolid's town hall and announced to the crowd waiting below that the Alcázar in Toledo had been relieved. Screams and shouts of joy echoed around the plaza. The crowds chanted '*Viva España*! *Viva España*!'

When Mola tired of the applause he gestured to another figure on the balcony, a flabby, watery-eyed man with sparse blond hair, to step forward. The crowds changed their cry. '*Viva Irlanda*! *Viva Irlanda*!'

Mola's companion was forty-six-year-old General Eoin O'Duffy, a hero of Ireland's struggle for independence whose political career had once been so successful many thought of him as a future leader of his country. A devout Catholic and recent convert to fascism, O'Duffy called himself 'Europe's Third Greatest Man' (after Hitler and Mussolini) and had come to Spain to offer General Mola 5,000 Irishmen for the Nationalist cause. If the promise bore fruit it would be the largest foreign volunteer unit in the Francoist ranks.

O'Duffy was the former Irish Republican Army (IRA) Chief of Staff and first commander of the *Guarda*, Ireland's police force. His presence in Valladolid seemed to provide proof of powerful international support for the Nationalist cause and gave a sentimental reminder of the long standing ties between the two nations.

Two hundred years ago Irish mercenaries, known as the 'Wild Geese', had left the Emerald Isle in their hundreds of thousands to join the armies of Catholic Europe. Over 20,000 found a home in Spain. Centuries later Spaniards proudly pointed out the O'Donnells and O'Neills who hung from branches of their family tree.

Mola and the cheering crowd did not realise that the self-elected leader of 1936's Wild Geese was an alcoholic exiled to the peripheries of public life with his fascist party, desperate for a lifeline to save his dying political career.

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O'Duffy's path to Spain began in Dublin. In 1916 Irish rebels tried to overthrow British rule. They had been promised support from Germany but at the last moment the Kaiser kept his troops in the trenches of France. The Easter Rising went ahead, and failed.

More interested in sport than politics, the young O'Duffy watched the action from the sidelines but was as shocked as the rest of the country when the British government executed the rebel leaders. He was among the first to join the newly created IRA. O'Duffy had a talent for organisation and rose through the ranks to become Chief of Staff, where he directed a guerrilla war of ambushes and assassination.

‘There is nothing particularly fine,’ wrote MI6 agent Major Hugh Pollard in journalist disguise, ‘about a group of moral decadents leading a superstitious minority into an epidemic of murder and violent crime’.[210]

Not fine, but successful. The IRA’s tactics worked. In 1922 the British offered a compromise peace treaty in which Ireland got its independence but Ulster in the north remained part of Britain. O’Duffy was one of many who accepted the deal and settled down to life in the new Irish Free State. A rump of the IRA led by Éamon de Valera, an American-born veteran of the Easter Rising, fought on. The government crushed them in a short but bloody civil war.

In newly independent Ireland, O’Duffy was appointed commander of the *Guarda*. A good police commissioner who moulded the force into an efficient law enforcement agency, he ruled by decree rather than example. Hypocrisy ran like marrow in his bones.

The *Guarda* chief insisted on peak physical fitness from his men but had a serious alcohol problem and smoked forty cigarettes a day. The man who preached Catholic family values was a lifelong bachelor who preferred homosexual adventures in Dublin’s theatre world. A pair of his lovers were so notorious that fellow actors called them ‘Sodom and Begorrah’. Another boyfriend remembered how O’Duffy turned religious pictures in his parlour to face the wall before accompanying him upstairs to bed.[211]

Few issues of the *Guarda* newspaper did not feature O’Duffy’s photograph or a sycophantic article praising his talents. The cult of personality spread beyond police ranks, leading some observers to tip O’Duffy as a future leader of Ireland, despite concerns about his admiration for Mussolini.

Hopes of high office abruptly nosedived in 1932 when Eamon de Valera and his IRA rebels, having renounced violence and reformed into the political party *Fianna Fáil*, were elected to power in a surprise result. O'Duffy lost his job the following year.

Out for revenge, the General took over the Army Comrades Association, an ex-servicemen’s group full of *Fianna Fáil* opponents. O’Duffy set free his admiration for Italy and transformed the organisation into a mass movement with fascist trimmings. The army comrades got blue shirts, Nazi salutes, slogans (‘*Hoch O’Duffy*!’), and a dose of political flexibility when their new leader changed his long standing live-and-let-live policy regarding Ulster.[212] Welsh journalist Gareth Jones attended a 1933 Blue Shirts meeting in rural

Ireland, where the Army Comrades were pelted with stones by IRA supporters, and saw the slogan ‘O’Duffy Will Unite Ireland!' in white paint on the road.[213] The 50,000 strong Blue Shirts became a dynamic force in Irish politics. In August 1933 they amalgamated with anti-government parties *Cumann na nGaedheal* and the Centre Party to form *Fine Gael*. As its president, O’Duffy oversaw important gains against *Fianna Fáil* in local elections the following year. His political career seemed to be back on track.

But by the summer of 1934 the rest of the *Fine Gael* leadership was shouting for his head. The Blue Shirts had remained an autonomous movement within the party and were disturbing their new political friends by fighting De Valera supporters on the streets. *Fine Gael* moderates were even more unnerved by O’Duffy’s efforts to set a course away from democracy and towards European fascism. Some of his speeches came close to calling for a coup d’état.

The internal dissent became too loud to ignore. The General offered his party the choice of expelling the critics or accepting his resignation. *Fine Gael* took the resignation. Some Blue Shirts followed their leader out of the party but others remained and the former army comrades broke up in acrimony.

O'Duffy formed the National Corporate Party (NCP). Smaller and more radical than the Blue Shirts, the NCP was committed to fascist revolution on the Italian model. The General’s remaining followers dyed their shirts green.

‘Blue is not our national colour no more than yellow or red,’ said O’Duffy. ‘All over the world green is, and ever shall be, recognised as the national colour of the Emerald Isle’.[214]

Despite its new colour scheme the NCP had little support in Ireland and depended on Italian subsidies to survive. In 1935 O’Duffy tried to muscle his way back onto the political stage by offering a volunteer unit to assist Italy’s invasion of Abyssinia.[215] Irish newspapers were intrigued by the idea but the affair backfired when Rome turned him down. Enough Italians had been motivated to enlist by dreams of empire (and photographs of attractive Abyssinian women circulated by Mussolini’s propaganda department) to make foreign help unnecessary.[216] The NCP dwindled to insignificance until the Nationalist rising in Spain provided another opportunity for the General to reclaim the political limelight.

O’Duffy would be a bird of ill omen for the Carlists. First, Fal Conde’s dreams of Carlist resurrection took a battering. A week after the Irishman’s

appearance on the balcony of Valladolid town hall, the eighty-eight-year-old claimant Alfonso Carlos died in a car crash in Vienna. Xavier, Duke of Parma was appointed Regent while the movement debated the old pretender's successor.

Then Carlist champion Mola was sidelined by Franco's election as *Generalissimo*. The new Nationalist leader had a more subtle approach to dynastic politics. When the Alphonsist Don Juan de Borbón tried to enlist with Franco's forces he was again turned away, this time with the more tactful excuse that royalty should represent all Spaniards and not be compromised by having fought for any one faction.[217]

Franco wanted to unite, not divide, Nationalist Spain. Anyone who threatened that unity would regret it.

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Ireland was a poor country. The majority of its three million population lived in rural areas. They scratched a living on agricultural holdings while the daylight lasted and illuminated their celtic twilight with flickering oil lamps. City dwellers benefited from the Ardnacrusha power station at Limerick and a decent roof above their heads, but even those with a few farthings in their pocket were never far from poverty. Dublin had the worst slums in Europe.

The Catholic Church cast a conservative shadow over Ireland's green pastures. Officially a secular country, priests effectively dictated government policy from the pulpit. It was their sermons that pushed through a 1925 law banning divorce. The country's largest seminary at Maynooth, west Ireland was, in the words of the Communist playwright Sean O'Casey, 'the brain, the body, the nerves and the tissue of the land, controlling two thirds of the country, influencing it all'.[218] No-one could afford to fall out with the Catholic hierarchy.

The Irish Church and its flock regarded the Spanish Republicans as unleashers of atheism and anti-clerical violence. In October 1936 the Church raised £43,331 to help Spanish Catholics. The Irish also gave generously to the Irish Christian Front, which rattled the collecting tin for Francoist causes. The Front enjoyed both priestly and public support despite the far-right views of its leaders. At one rally 40,000 people heard Monsignor Patrick Sexton, Dean of Cork, blame the conflict on 'a gang of murderous Jews in Moscow'.[219] The crowd saluted Sexton by making the sign of the cross with

their forearms.

It was an article of faith among Irish priests that their country was next in line for Communist revolution. ‘It is folly,’ said the influential *Father Matthew Record* newspaper, ‘to assume that what happened to the land of Loyola and Teresa and John of the Cross could not occur in ours’.[220] Father Dennis Fahey of the Holy Ghost Fathers society spied on ‘subversives’ (everyone from the Fabians to Radio Éireann’s film critic Michael Farrell) for signs of sedition.[221]

The Irish media did its bit for the Nationalists. The *Irish News* printed twenty-seven pro-Franco editorials in the rising’s first five months, while atrocities against Spanish Catholics by left-wing militia were front page news.[222] Readers learnt bloody details of the thirteen bishops, 4,184 priests, 2,365 monks, and 283 nuns murdered in Republican territory, most in the opening months.[223]

The Spanish poor were strongly anti-clerical and revenged themselves on the Catholic Church for its perceived links with landowners, big business, and fascism. Many killings were sadistically carried out. A priest was gored to death in a corral of bulls near Madrid; militiamen forced rosary beads into the ears of monks in Cervera until their eardrums burst; other priests were buried alive.

‘Two Anarchists once told me how they and some comrades captured two priests,’ wrote Simone Weil, the French philosopher who joined the anarchist Durruti Column. ‘They killed one of them on the spot with a revolver, in front of the other, and then told the survivor that he could go. When he was twenty yards away they shot him down. The man who told me this was surprised when I didn’t laugh’.[224]

Catholicism was so deeply rooted in Ireland that, despite the Church’s red-baiting, even left-wingers supported the Nationalists. Those who favoured the Republicans kept their views to themselves. When trade union leaders were challenged by British comrades about their silence they pointed to the example of Ulster’s Harry Midgley, leader of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. Catholic support melted away when he sided with Madrid. At one meeting he was drowned out by a band playing ‘Franco’s here’ to the popular tune ‘Blues Are Here’ and a crowd baying ‘We Want Franco! We Want Franco!’ Midgley lost his seat at the next election.[225]

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In the early days of August 1936 Spanish aristocrat Count Ramírez *de Arellano* of Navarre wrote to Cardinal MacRory, the Irish Primate. General Franco's airlift into Andalusia had barely begun and the Nationalists needed more troops. Carlist Ramírez asked the Cardinal for military aid.

MacRory supported the Nationalist rebellion but warfare was not his area of expertise. He recommended O'Duffy, who had impressed the Primate by his organisation of the 1932 Eucharistic Congress.[226]

A meeting was arranged. The count came away believing O'Duffy was full of religious zeal for a crusade at the Carlists' side, ready to fight and die for Christendom.[227] A priest close to the venture thought the General had different plans for the unit.

'Instead of fighting, the Brigade would do more good if it had a Band and went round on a Propaganda tour of Spain. O'Duffy wanted to avoid casualties and liabilities, and to give his men what they wanted – a holiday in Spain!'[228]

Further encouragement for an Irish unit was provided when the Italian legation in Dublin offered to put up the money for a recruitment network.[229] The Irish Christian Front was then persuaded to divert some of the £30,000 it had raised for the Nationalists to the Brigade's medical support.

On 10 August a letter from O'Duffy in the *Irish Independent* floated the idea of an Irish Brigade to fight alongside the Nationalists in an 'Anti-Red Crusade'. O'Duffy graphically described supposed Republican horrors.

'In Madrid Priests are battered to death on the altar and their heads stuck on the railings outside the Churches by howling mobs of youths armed by the Government. In Barcelona Convents are sacked, the nuns stripped of their clothing and forced to walk naked before the mob. Men, Women, and Children are being hung up alive and fires lit under them'.[230]

O'Duffy shot down accusations the project was fascist. 'Does this interpret democracy by the massacre of priests and nuns? If these atrocities are carried out in the name of democracy, then the sooner Fascism triumphs, the better'.[231]

The idea of a volunteer unit electrified the country. Clonmel town council in western Ireland passed a resolution on 21 August offering to help O'Duffy's recruitment efforts. The resolution was copied by other towns until Irish Prime Minister De Valera declared it unlawful, a decision most ignored.[232] O'Duffy had been a laughing stock the year before. Now he was

toasted with pints of Guinness throughout Ireland as a defender of the faith.

One of the few hostile voices belonged to Frank Ryan, left-wing leader of 150 Irishmen who would fight for the Spanish Republic. He called O'Duffy 'a traitor ex-General [who] induced a body of Irishmen to help the Fascist Generals of Spain'.[233] Few listened. Even the party which expelled O'Duffy had no disagreements with him about which side to support in Spain. A *Fine Gael* MP declared Franco was 'fighting to save Christendom'.[234] The bad blood ran too deep for the party to give its former leader any practical assistance but they were both on the same side.

In late September Ramírez arranged for O'Duffy to visit General Mola. The reception was chillier than the Irishman expected. The military situation had changed since the Carlists' first approach. On 10 August Mola's Army of the North and Franco's Army of Africa had met along Spain's western border. More manpower was flooding into the combined Nationalist forces through Franco's recruitment of Moroccans and Portuguese volunteers. The urgent need for Irish volunteers had ceased.

O'Duffy did not know it, but his Spanish crusade hung by a thread. Mola intended to send him away. The Irishman was saved by Franco. Hustling for the role of supreme Nationalist commander at the time of O'Duffy's visit, Franco controlled the Foreign Legion, Moroccan troops, some regular Army troops, and the Falangist militia in the southwest. He had little authority over the Carlists in the north. Supporting O'Duffy would build bridges with the Navarre Royalists. Franco advised Mola to accept the Irishman, and made sure everyone knew about it.

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Back in Ireland, O'Duffy began the recruitment process. NCP activists had claimed potential volunteers could run as high as 7,000 but the men who signed on numbered in the hundreds. The Irish press called the embryonic unit the 'Blue Shirt Brigade', after O'Duffy's best known political venture. In Spain, Mola briefed his staff to expect the arrival of a 'Green Shirt Legion', a more accurate description as NCP activists had bagged the choicest officer ranks in the unit.

The NCP may have been in control but the majority of O'Duffy's volunteers came from elsewhere. The queues at the recruitment offices were made up of IRA gunmen prepared to forgive the General's acceptance of the

1922 treaty, former Blue Shirts still loyal to their former leader, adventurers who saw themselves as the twentieth century's Wild Geese, and rural lads talked into enlistment by rhetoric from the pulpit. Most volunteers came from small towns and villages in the rural south-west of Ireland. Religion was their main fuel.

'The Irish Brigade was a very fair cross-section of Irish life of the period, including a number of prominent members of the Old IRA', wrote brigader Matt Doolan years later. 'The number of brigade members who were totally uncommitted to any political group came as a surprise to me, but on the other hand those who most earnestly believed in the nobility of our cause in fighting for the freedom of religious expression were the large majority and many of them of unimpeachable character'.[235]

The Irishmen were outraged at Republican atrocities against the Church. Volunteer Ivan O'Reilly spoke for many when he talked of 'fighting for your faith'.[236] Encouragement came from parish priests, the *Irish Independent* newspaper, and pamphlets like *For God and Spain* written by Aodh de Blacam, a journalist whose closeness to De Valera illustrated sympathy for the Nationalists even in the political establishment.

The IRA banned its members from fighting for either side but the organisation was compromised in the eyes of Nationalist supporters by a recent flirtation with Communism. Gunmen more loyal to the church than the IRA command joined anyway.

The Irish Church's open enthusiasm for O'Duffy's Brigade contrasted with the complexity of the Vatican's position. The Holy See claimed neutrality in Spain but its newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* (the Roman Observer) criticised the Nationalists frequently enough for Franco to officially complain.[237] Pope Pius XI condemned the Republic's 'truly satanic hatred of God' but in the same speech told Nationalist refugees to forgive leftist death squads and praise those trying to end the conflict.[238]

Despite the even-handedness, there was no doubt the Pope leant to the right. His hatred of Communism had been fixed during his time in Poland after the First World War when he watched invading Bolsheviks defeated in the suburbs of Warsaw. Pius XI and many of the Church hierarchy ultimately supported Franco but, unlike the Irish Catholics, understood the necessity of hiding their feelings.

Religion and politics were not the only reasons to volunteer for Spain. Brigade armourer Sam McCaughey enlisted to escape the consequences of a

bigamous marriage. Another volunteer believed the Spanish sun would help his tuberculosis. He died of the disease in a Nationalist hospital.

Whatever their motives, all Irish volunteers had parts to play in O'Duffy's political scheming. The General envisioned a short military engagement followed by a triumphant parade through Dublin. He intended to outmanoeuvre *Fianna Fáil* and *Fine Gael*, and put the NCP's fascism at the forefront of Irish politics. With luck and a good showing on the battlefield, power was within his grasp.

15. THE CLIFFS OF TITULCIA

The Irish Brigade in the Front Line

The Irish soldier pulled the pin out of the handgrenade. The other men in the barracks froze, then scrambled for cover, ducking behind the wooden bunks, running for the door. It had been a hard slog to get to Spain in the first place. Now it looked like they were going to get killed by one of their own.

They should not have taunted him. He had been upset enough when he got the letter from back home. What a fine time you're having in Spain, it said, while here in Ireland we're all shivering in the bitter cold and wet. After the problems of the past few months - the ship that had not appeared, the dreadful storm, too much wine on the train – that was a terrible thing to write in a letter to someone who already homesick enough. Then some of the other lads had ribbed him about it and before anyone could stop him, he pulled out a grenade and threatened to blow himself up and the barracks with him.[239]

Sean McNamara was reaching for the handgrenade when it happened, telling the man not to do anything silly. Then the pin came out. McNamara grabbed the grenade. The pin lever was down. Gripping it tight, he walked the length of the barracks towards the door. The men still in the building flattened themselves against the walls as he passed.

McNamara carried the grenade to the wall that surrounded the parade ground and threw it over. Everyone dived to the ground until they heard the explosion and saw the smoke rising from the other side of the wall. Then they were all around McNamara, slapping his back and congratulating him.

The Spanish liaison officers watched the celebrations and shook their heads. The Irish had been nothing but trouble since they arrived. No wonder Franco had tried to stop them coming to Spain.

*

O’Duffy’s first draft of 700 men had been ready to leave Ireland in October 1936. In the middle of the month volunteers left their jobs, homes, and families to wait at a quayside in western Ireland for a ship chartered by Mola. The rain lashed down. The ship did not appear. It had been cancelled by the Nationalists.

O’Duffy made another trip to Spain to find out what had gone wrong. Attempting to see Mola, the Irishman was directed instead to Franco in Salamanca. O’Duffy found the fraternal temperature had dropped further. Franco told him the ship had been cancelled to avoid the attention of the Non-Intervention Committee. He showed no enthusiasm about chartering another. The Irish had served their purpose in cementing Carlist support for Franco’s leadership bid and their actual presence in Spain would only complicate matters.

O’Duffy turned on the charm and eventually prevailed. What swayed the Spanish leader was not talk of the historic links between Spain and Ireland but a more calculated argument that the Carlists, a powerful bloc within the Nationalist alliance, were expecting the Irish and would not appreciate the *Generalissimo* blocking their arrival.

Franco decided on a compromise which would minimise Irish involvement without openly appearing to do so. O’Duffy’s volunteers would have to make their own way to Spain in small groups and enlist in Franco’s own Foreign Legion, not the Requetés. O’Duffy reluctantly accepted the new plan and cheered up a little when Franco made a half-hearted promise to arrange a new transport vessel. The pair then made plans for O’Duffy’s 5,000 Irishmen, should they make it to Spain. The men would be divided into eight *banderas* of the Foreign Legion, each with Irish officers, medical staff and chaplains, and O’Duffy as their Inspector-General.

Back in Ireland O’Duffy despatched 200 men, mostly officers, to the Francoist zone via Portugal. In November, after prolonged nagging by O’Duffy, the Nationalists agreed to send another transport ship. It failed to arrive. The General was told not to bother Franco again.

O’Duffy refused to give up. He sent representatives to Nazi Germany to arrange an independent charter and presented Franco with a fait accompli: a shipload of men was on its way. Having accepted eight *banderas*’ worth Franco could not object.

On 12 December the SS *Urundi* cargo ship, flying the swastika, dropped anchor outside Galway port in a violent storm. In the driving rain 500

Irishmen swarmed up rope ladders onto the *Urundi's* deck from a local tug. The weather did not improve for the voyage to El Ferrol in Galicia. A medic attending seasick Irishmen broke his ribs when the ship pitched. O'Duffy took a more leisurely trip via Liverpool and Portugal.

On arrival the Irishmen were transported by train to Caceres to join their officers. They passed the time with red wine and whores. A brigader leaning out of the train window was sick down the neck of a Spanish General standing to attention on the platform. Others searched out brothels whenever the train stopped and tipped the girls with rosary beads.[240]

At Caceres the 700 reunited Irishmen were trained, equipped, and transformed into XV *bandera* of the Spanish Foreign Legion. Split into four companies, 'A' to 'D', they wore surplus First World War German uniforms dyed light green, with silver Irish harp badges on the lapels.

The Nationalists had rounded up a group of interpreters from Spaniards of British descent and resident British citizens; men like Walter Waller and Charles Hoke found themselves attached to the Brigade. A more exotic character was involved in O'Duffy's project, if only for a short time. Mulchand Sobhraj Sita was an Indian from Hyderabad, based in Cádiz when the rising began. He joined a Falange militia group in the town and fought in Andalusia until the Nationalists recognised his fluency with English and seconded him as a translator, with the rank of sergeant, to the Brigade.

The Irish had barely arrived when Sita and two other interpreters were arrested and charged with espionage and drug smuggling. After several months in jail Sita talked his way out of the charges (his comrades were deported to Gibraltar) and returned to the Falange. He later joined VII *bandera* of the Foreign Legion under the nom de guerre José Juan España as a mortar crewman. When not on the battlefield he engaged Nationalist High Command in a lengthy but unsuccessful correspondence to regain his interpreter rank of sergeant.[241]

British volunteers Noel Fitzpatrick and Gilbert Nangle were also attached to the Brigade. IRA veteran O'Duffy regarded the pair as agents of British imperialism and made pointed complaints about their unreliability to Legion officials. In return Fitzpatrick described O'Duffy as 'a shit'.[242] Nangle, quiet and solitary, kept his thoughts to himself.

Both men discovered that the Brigade's mix of farmers, gunmen, and Catholic crusaders were reluctant to take orders from British officers, particularly when those orders were given in upper-class accents. Even

Spanish instructors found it hard to instil a sense of discipline. The handgrenade incident was dramatic proof that many Irishmen were homesick and unhappy. They disliked Spanish food (too much olive oil) and Spanish customs. At a bullfight specially arranged for the Brigade an Irishman in the front row was disgusted to be presented with a severed bull's ear by a toreador in a green cape.

While the Brigade trained, O'Duffy's dreams of eight *banderas* took a kick in the head. In January 1937 a second draft of 600 men was ready to ship out from Ireland. They collected on a quayside in western Ireland waiting for a Nationalist transport ship. It never arrived. Franco promised to reschedule but the following month saw more cancellations.

The *Generalissimo* no longer needed to humour the Irish. On 8 December 1936 the Carlists had set up a Royal Military Academy to train their officers. Franco closed it, expelled Carlist leader Fal Conde to Portugal, and claimed the academy was tantamount to a coup d'état. He ordered that all future foreign volunteers who entered Spain would join the Foreign Legion. Weakened by massive losses on the battlefield the Carlists could not challenge his actions. They were finished as a political force. Their eclipse removed any motivation for Franco to indulge O'Duffy.

The Irishman chose to believe that Franco was waiting for the Brigade to prove itself in battle. But no more ships would reach Ireland. O'Duffy's projected eight *banderas* remained an amputated stump of 700 men.

*

On 19 February the Irish Brigade set off for Ciempozuelos on the Jarama front, south of Madrid. They found the forced march exhausting. Father McCabe caustically noted the brigaders were 'soft […] limp, spineless, worthless'.

Advancing along a shallow valley the Brigade was mistaken for enemy troops by a recently formed Canary Island Falangist unit. In an hour-long fire fight the Irish lost four dead and the Falangists thirteen.

The Spanish fascists were blamed for the incident and the unit disbanded, although O'Duffy deserved some blame for muddling his departure time. Franco expressed his sympathies over the incident but rumours spread through the Nationalist zone that the Irish had been responsible. Marcelo Gaya *y Delrue*, an officer in the regular Army, heard

that ‘whisky, intended to stimulate their courage in an attack, went to their heads to the point where they unleashed a bewildering barrage of fire at our own troops’.[243]

The Irishmen marched on to Ciempozuelos, where they dug in at the outskirts of the town. Every church was desecrated.

'You should see the chapels here,’ volunteer Leo McCloskey wrote home. ‘Their altars torn down and burned and the skulls of the nuns all about the place. It's awful. It would make your blood boil'.[244]

The inmates of the Ciempozuelos mental hospital lived in the centre of town, looked after by nuns. Some of the brigaders convinced themselves the inmates had ended up in the asylum as a result of reading too much pornography circulated by the Popular Front in pre-war Spain.[245]

The Irishmen strung barbed wire, carved dugouts from trenches ankle-deep in mud, and endured the constant rain. Their positions looked out on a marshy no-man‘s land. A towering cliff dominated the skyline. At its peak was Republican-held Titulcia, a fortified village protected by artillery batteries.

O’Duffy and his staff settled into a Ciempozuelos hotel.[246] The General was never a fighting commander and only visited the trenches a few times. Brave enough in the Irish fight for independence (he once coolly stepped through a smoking hole blown in the side of a police station to accept the surrender of its occupants), O’Duffy’s military activities in Spain were limited to staff work. He was most often seen at the hotel bar in conversation with a journalist.

On 13 March the Brigade received its baptism as a frontline combat unit. The battle of Jarama was Franco’s attempt to isolate Madrid by capturing the road that ran from the capital to the western coastal town of Valencia. The Irish Brigade’s role was to take Titulcia.

The attack took place in a rainstorm. Men struggled through the swamp of no-man’s land, their equipment sucked down into the mud, enemy artillery shells falling amongst them. A shell which exploded next to Noel Fitzpatrick shredded his legionnaire’s cloak and left him dazed but unharmed.[247] A flooded river capsized boats and swept men downstream. As the Irishmen approached the cliff face, a Republican armoured train rolled around a track at its base and flung shells over their heads. They lay praying in the mud until a brigader used a mine to blow a hole in the track and the train steamed away.

The Irish could not get any further. They were exhausted and soaked,

stuck in the bog of no-man's land as Republican artillery thundered from the clifftop. When night came they crawled back to their lines. In the trenches a headcount revealed the Brigade had taken only two dead and nine injured, light casualties by the standards of fighting in Spain. Another attack was scheduled for the next morning. The demoralised Irish refused to go back into the valley.

Commander of 'A' company Captain Thomas Cahill led the mutiny. The Spanish liaison officers urged O'Duffy to obey his orders but Cahill had the support of the Brigade. The Irish volunteers would not fight. Franco was furious. Cahill was ordered home and on 23 April the XVth *bandera* moved to positions in the small village of La Marañosa. Their new role was strictly defensive.

Shortly before the Brigade left Ciempozuelos, Gilbert Nangle, now a captain, interrogated a Republican deserter. The deserter refused to believe him when Nangle introduced himself as an officer of XV *bandera*. No-one from the Irish Brigade, the man said, could have survived the fire of the Republican guns in the attack on Titulcia.[248]

*

Over a tumbler of whisky in the hotel bar O'Duffy wondered if Spain was the place to make his political fortune. The Republic boasted of its foreign support. A famous poster showed European, African, and Asian soldiers side by side over the slogan 'All the People of the World Are in the International Brigades!' O'Duffy's Irishmen were learning the hard way that Franco did not feel the same pride about his foreigner volunteers.

The Irish had proved little help to the Nationalist war effort, although the *Generalissimo* had the consolation that their presence helped secure Carlist support for his leadership. Franco could also congratulate himself that his handling of the Romanian fascists had created a hotline to any forthcoming *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail* government. Cornelieu Codreanu also benefited, despite the deaths of his top lieutenants. The publicity from Mota and Marin's deaths established the Legion as the biggest right-wing movement in Romania. But Spain was a poisoned cup and *Căpitanul* would not live to take advantage of his political capital.

Static had begun to interfere with Franco's relationships with his other foreign troops. Thousands of Portuguese provided the backbone of the

Foreign Legion but rumours of poor treatment by the Spanish had filtered back to Lisbon. Relations with Salazar soured further when Franco's tolerated Rolão Preto's inflammatory radio appearances and Falangist talk of Spain's mission to rule the entire Iberian Peninsula.

Fifty thousand strong by early 1937, the Moroccans had proved their worth when they carved out the bridgehead in Andalusia and fronted the drive to Madrid. But news of heavy casualties slowed the flow of recruits. It would slow even further when *al-Islah* and other nationalists groups wised up to Franco's inherent colonialism.

The handful of British and other foreigners without national units or significant numbers were too small to be relevant to Franco's war aims. He did not recruit them, help them or encourage them to join his forces. Even pilots were no longer essential. Short of aeroplanes and flyers in the early weeks Franco scouted for foreign help, like Vincenzo Patriarca and Tom Campbell Black, but German and Italian assistance in the autumn sated that need. The death of autogiro inventor Juan de la Cierva in a plane crash at Croydon airport in December was barely noticed.

The Nationalists had enough pilots they could afford to turn away those who came knocking at their door. James Douglas Hamilton, a Swedish count of British descent, offered himself and his aeroplane to the Nationalists in the first weeks of the rising and was accepted. Before the experienced pilot could fly to Spain an air crash seriously injured him and destroyed his aeroplane. Recuperation took a year. When Hamilton repeated his offer the Nationalists turned him down. They no longer needed his services, but thanked him for his interest.[249]

Franco's indifference extended to Hamilton's fellow countrymen. Had the Nationalists mimicked the International Brigades and set up recruitment centres in Scandinavia they could have had hundreds more volunteers. But only a handful of Swedes served in the Foreign Legion, as did an even smaller number of right-wing Danes. Anker Jepsen and H Claus Hansen are the only Danish names in Nationalist records.[250]

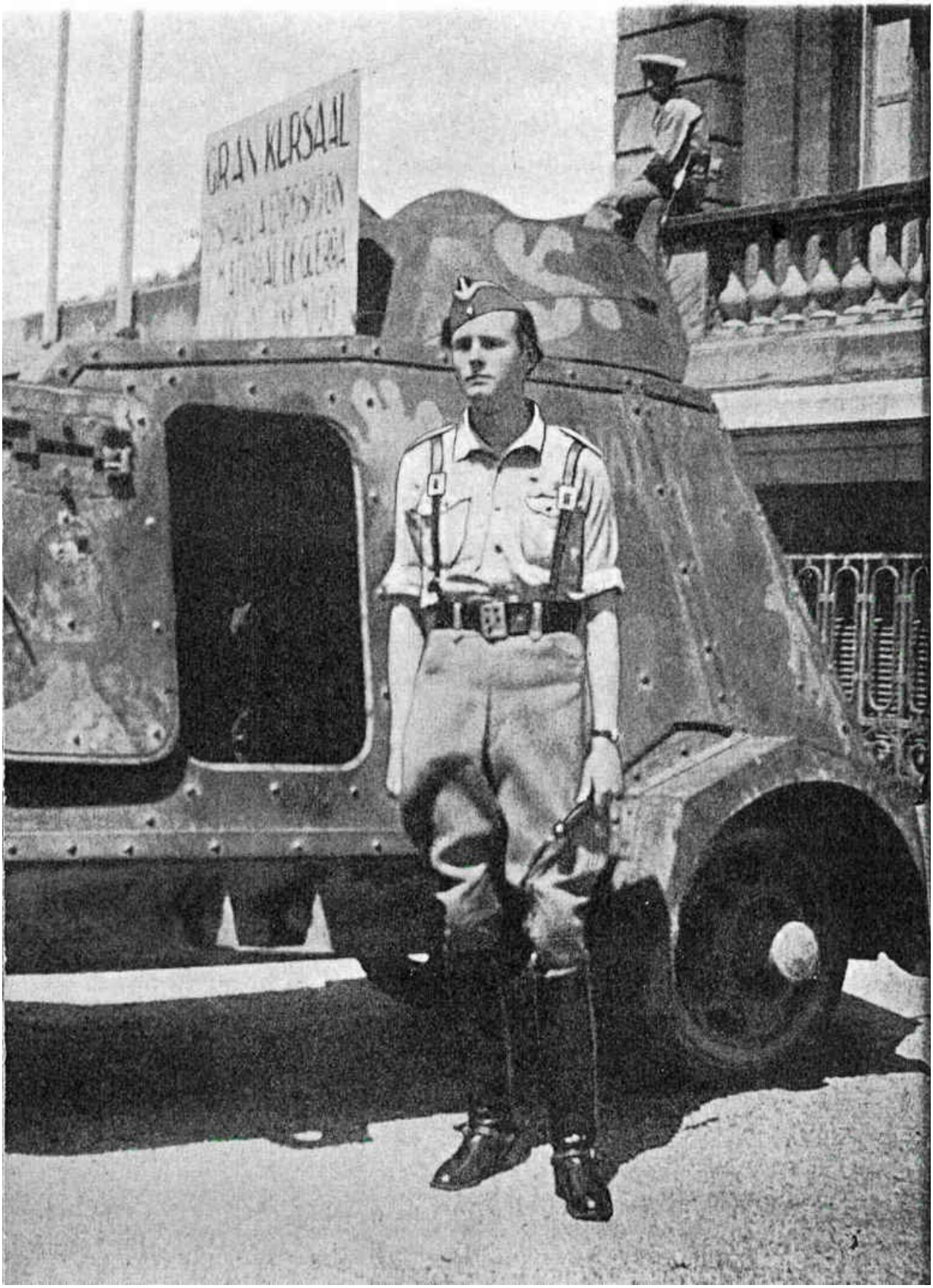
The Irishmen who dug in at La Marañosa were disillusioned and unhappy. The rising was a black hole that had sucked them in and would soon vomit them back out, bloodied and poorer for the experience. Mussolini's Black Shirts, the French right, Belgian fascists, and White Russian exiles would learn the same lesson.

*

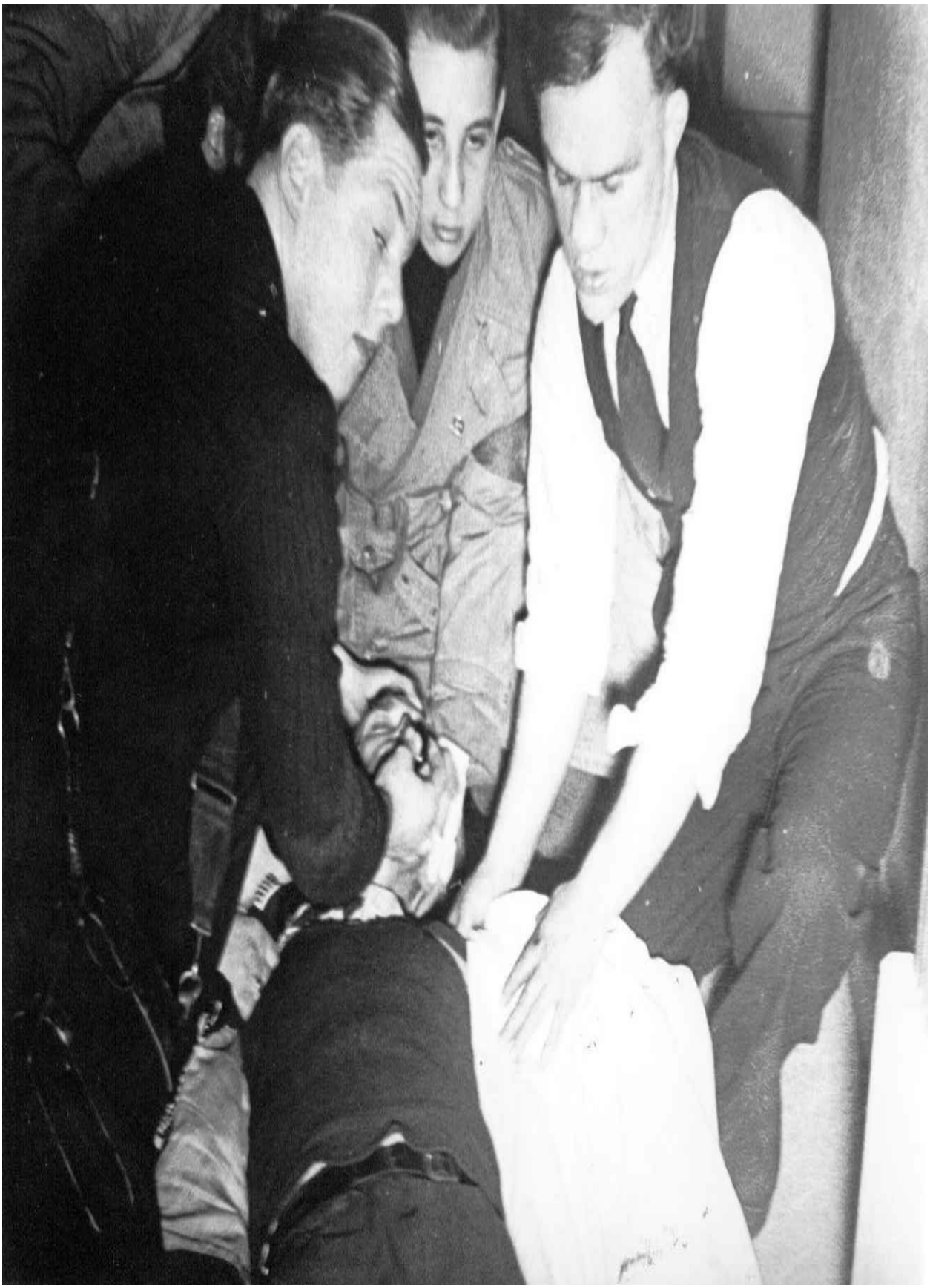
The battles around Madrid in the spring were the last spasms of Mola's original plan to topple the government with lighting assaults on Spain's major cities. Franco fixed instead on a slow, methodical war of attrition. Spain would be fought for inch by inch, its towns besieged, its grass watered with the blood of the opposition, and Republicans treated as mercilessly as insurgent tribesmen in a colonial war.

On 26 April 1937 a small Basque town in the north-eastern Spain called Guernica was destroyed from the air by German and Italian pilots. The town's buildings were smashed with high explosive bombs and its inhabitants dismembered by shrapnel and flying glass. The incident reverberated around the world.

It was the start of total war in Spain. No-one and nowhere was safe. The coup was over. The civil war had begun.



Peter Kemp as a Foreign Legion officer, 1938 (Author's collection)



British Fascist Peter Keen (left) helps the victim of a London street fight, 1935 (John Warburton)

FALANGE ESPAÑOLA TRADICIONALISTA y de las JONS
DELEGACION en la GRAN BRETAÑA

25, Harp Lane,
LONDON.E.C.3.

17th March,1938.

Dear Mr.Waters,

We are much obliged for the letter of the 12th instant signed by you and Messrs Smith and Sheen expressing your satisfaction with the terms in connection with the Spanish ships.

As you known we were asked by the owners to find suitable men to man these ships and we therefore naturally approached you knowing that we have the same cause at heart. The terms of payment were not arranged by us but by the owners and we think as you that they were very fair especially considering the very great amount of money the owners have already spent in law costs etc in an endeavour to save their ships from the "Reds

We would like you to know that we consider the attitude of the few who caused unpleasantness does not represent the feeling of the true members of the B.U.F. and we take this opprortunity of thanking the B.U.F. for their sympathy and help in this matter which is greatly appreciated.

Cordially yours,
FALANGE ESPAÑOLA TRADICIONALISTA y de las JONS

FALANGE ESPAÑOLA TRADICIONALISTA
JEFATURA DE INGLATERRA
DE LAS
J.O.N.S.

Delegate for Great Britain.

¡ARRIBA ESPAÑA!

Letter from the Nationalist representative in Britain to the British Union of Fascists thanking them for hijacking a Republican owned ship, 1938 (John Warburton)



German General Wilhelm von Faupel in an edition of his anti-Franco newspaper Enlace from the last months of the Second World War (Jean-Pierre Sourd)

Ragnarok

November 1937

Specialnummer om Spania ved Per Imerslund

Nr. 7

Arriba España!

Per Imerslund : Militære, borgerlige og fascister i det nasjonale Spania

Franco fører krig, ikke borgerkrig

Francos krigere og de rødes agitatorer

De internasjonale brigadene

Betraktninger omkring Spanskrigens vesen. Skrevet under inntrykk av Gijons fall.

Julian Hernandez : Spansk Marokko og dets menn

José Berruezo : Når det siste skuddet er falt — hvad så?

Maurerne i krigen — Ord av Franco — Bøker om den spanske borgerkrig — Spansk krigsjå

1937 • 3. ARGANG

50 øre

UTGITT AV RAGNAROKS FORLAG

4.50 pr. år

November 1937 edition of the Norwegian Nazi magazine Ragnarok, featuring articles by Falangist volunteer Per Imerlsund (Jean-Pierre Sourd)



Carl von Hartmann, Finnish volunteer in the Falangist militia, pictured during the Second World War (Erik Norling)



Belgian fighter pilot Count Hemricourt de Grunne, 1938 (J-L Roba)



British volunteer Gilbert Nangle photographed at Harrods, 1930 (Bill

Nangle)



Irish Brigade leader General Eoin O'Duffy in Spain, 1937 (Monaghan County Museum)



Rupert Bellville (left) and American writer Ernest Hemingway discuss

the Spanish Civil War, 1959 (John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston)

Part 2: Franco’s Civil War 1 April 1937 – 1 April 1939

You are all had. Spain is an emotional luxury to a gang of sap-headed dilettantes.

Ezra Pound (1937)

16. THE DEVIL'S OWN FRYING PAN

The Legion Condor, the Corpo Truppe Volontarie, and Guernica

On 26 April 1937 Nationalist aeroplanes attacked the pretty Basque town of Guernica in northern Spain. Political and spiritual heart of the Basque country, the town was packed with refugees fleeing General Mola's Army of the North. In three hours over 100,000 pounds of high explosive and incendiary bombs fell from the sky.

Medics and firemen were cut down by shrapnel as they ran through the streets. Incendiary bomb smoke and brick dust darkened the air until it became twilight in the afternoon. Buildings collapsed on rescuers and a fire storm took hold that melted flesh. Overhead, calm pilots flew their aeroplanes in neat circles.

The air raid killed 300 Basques and smashed the town into smouldering rubble.[251] Miraculously spared were the old oak tree in the heart of Guernica (*Gernikako Arbola*) on which Spanish kings once swore to uphold the rights of the Basques, and the *Casa de Juntas* (Basque parliament). [252] The raid turned the rest of the town into a ruin that stank of burnt flesh. A greasy black cloud of smoke and human ash hung in the sky.

'When I returned, the house had disappeared,' said ten-year-old Ricardo Arrien. 'Our photographs were burnt, the brown coat I had got for Easter, my mother's sewing machine, the marbles I had played with and some gold my father had hidden under the table. All gone'.[253]

The deaths of so many civilians outraged world opinion. 'Guernica was not a military objective,' wrote George Steer in *The Times*. 'The object of the bombardment was seemingly the demoralisation of the civil population and the destruction of the cradle of the Basque race'.[254] Even Mola, ruthless as he was ('If I see my own father in the opposing ranks,' he said, 'I will shoot him'), was shocked when he entered the town three days later.[255]

The Nationalist assault on the Basques, devout Catholics whose desire for independence led them to side with the Republic, undermined Francoist talk of a Christian crusade. Nationalist propaganda counter-attacked with claims the Basques blew up their own town to deny it to Mola's men. A few foreign sympathisers pushed the narrative. Briton James Holburn insisted, also in *The Times*, the craters he inspected were caused by exploding mines.[256] British volunteer Peter Kemp always maintained Republicans were responsible for the destruction.

To support his story Franco ordered engineering crews to remove bomb fins and unexploded shells from the area before outsiders arrived. One crew failed to do their job and journalists discovered three shell cases bearing the German eagle. Newspaper headlines wrote themselves. The ruins of Guernica became a symbol of the brutality unleashed on Spain by Franco and his Nazi allies.

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The Germans who bombed Guernica were members of the *Legion Condor*, an expeditionary force of aeroplanes, tanks, and artillery. Hitler first suggested a unit to supplement existing German forces in September 1936 but Franco believed victory was close and declined. When the Nationalist advance stalled at Madrid towards the end of the year Franco changed his mind and suggested that German volunteers join the Foreign Legion. But Berlin now doubted his abilities as a commander. Hitler, who regarded Franco's tactics as 'hesitant and routine', told the *Generalissimo* to accept the *Legion Condor* or lose German support.[257]

The Republican Air Force outnumbered the Nationalists in the skies, its pilots swelled by foreigners. French writer Andre Malraux formed the *Escadrille España* from foreign mercenary pilots; the Republic was grateful even if rival writer Jean-Paul Sartre sneered that Malruax's exploits were 'heroic parasitism'.[258] Other mercenary pilots, like the American Hilaire du Berrier, Briton Charles Kennett, and New Zealander Eric Griffiths, earned good money flying fighter planes for the Republic. Griffiths received £200 for each enemy aeroplane he shot down.[259]

Franco saw the sense in strengthening his airpower and accepted the Fuehrer's offer. The first pilots left for Seville on 6 November commanded by Major-General Hugo Sperrle, a fat and monocled fifty-one-year-old who

looked like a badly drawn caricature of his boss, *Luftwaffe* chief Hermann Göring. Hitler called him Germany's 'most brutal-looking general' and meant it as a compliment.[260] The unit was initially codenamed *Eiserne Rationen* (Iron Rations), then *Eiserne Legion* (Iron Legion), before Göring intervened with *Legion Condor*.[261]

The Legion was officially top secret. Flak gunner Alfred Lent claimed he only heard the name *Condor* after he had been chosen to join. Others were better informed. As Lent and his comrades strolled down to the Hamburg docks disguised as a football team off to a foreign match local children asked them to bring back Spanish oranges from the pitch.[262]

At full strength the *Legion Condor* had 136 aircraft, forty-eight tanks, sixty anti-aircraft guns, 1,500 vehicles, a searchlight section, and five companies of air-communication specialists. Over 19,000 Germans would serve in the *Legion*, although due to the regular rotation of troops through the unit every three to seven months it was never more than 5,000 strong at any one time, with fewer than 600 in the frontline.

The *Legion Condor*'s men came from the *Luftwaffe*, paid extra and promoted a rank for their tour of duty. None were volunteers but most were happy to go and some badgered their commanders to sign them up. German airpower had been outlawed after the First World War and the *Luftwaffe* had only officially come back into existence in 1935. Its men were greedy for experience.

'It occurred that one or another comrade disappeared, without anyone knowing about his transfer or command,' said Adolf Galland, then a twenty-five-year-old pilot. 'And after about half a year he came back in good spirits with a suntan, he bought himself a new car and told his most intimate friends under the greatest degree of confidentiality remarkable things about Spain.'[263]

In Spain, the cigar chomping Galland flew a ground attack Heinkel He 51 with a Mickey Mouse emblem painted on the fuselage. It was so hot he flew in swimming trunks.

The new battlefield's dazzling blue mornings, golden mountains, and days as warm as 'the Devil's own frying pan' reminded Galland and his comrades of Karl May's western novels about Old Shatterhand the gunfighter, best sellers back home.[264] The men of the *Legion Condor* liked to imagine they were modern cowboys, spurs jingling and a revolver heavy on the hip, stalking through a European version of May's Wild West.

The *Legion*'s understanding of Spain was as deep as May's legendarily limited knowledge of America. They travelled from front to front in their own special train, eating German food, drinking German beer, and socialising only with each other. Apart from occasional contact with Franco's Moroccan soldiers, who called the Germans '*Moros rubios*' ('blond Moors'), a night with a Spanish whore was the closest the *Legion* got to the culture of the country they fought over.

The few glimpes *Legion* men got of their Spanish allies did not impress them. 'The first native soldier we ever saw,' said Alfred Lent, 'with his tasselled cap, a cloak made from a striped blanket and canvas shoes with straw soles, almost looked comical to us pampered members of the *Luftwaffe*, accustomed to spit and polish and the best of everything'.[265]

Despite their bravado the Germans did not have mastery of the skies. Their Junkers 52 bombers and Heinkel He 51 biplane fighters were slow and unwieldy. Some lacked radios and their machine-guns needed a manual reload. The Soviet Polikarpov I-16 fighter, *Mosca* (fly) to its pilots and *Rata* (rat) to the Nationalists, could out manoeuvre anything in German hands. Any aerial victories would be down to skill and luck.

On 13 November they had both when nine German pilots got the best of eleven Soviet fighters. One German pilot shot down four aeroplanes before catching a bullet in his lung. He landed, crawled out of the cockpit, and died on the wing.

Under the impression victory was down to technical superiority the *Luftwaffe* despatched more Heinkels. For four months the Germans flew obsolete aircraft against forces superior in both quality and number, before the *Luftwaffe* finally sent a match for the Polikarpov I-16 in the new Messerschmitt BF-109.

In the spring of 1937 Major-General Sperrle got a chance to try out his theories on terror bombing when the Nationalists entered Basque territory in the north. The German ordered a massive aerial bombardment to block the Republican escape route through Guernica. The Nationalists were aware of his plan. Colonel Wolfgang von Richthofen, von Sperrle's deputy and nephew of First World War pilot the Red Baron, liaised closely with Mola's deputies.

Evidence for Nationalist involvement in Guernica piled up but Franco's propaganda machine denied everything. The bluster wore thin when Republicans shot down a German pilot ten days after the bombing. In his

diary for 26 April was one word: GARNIKA.

The Germans had not been alone in the Basque skies. Among the fleet of aeroplanes that attacked Guernica were Italian craft of the *Aviazione Legionaria* (Legionary Air Force). The number of Italian aeroplanes on the Nationalist side had grown like a tumor since Luis Bolín convinced Mussolini to help the North African airlift in the first weeks of the rising.

Close to 800 would fly on every front of the civil war, concentrating their missions on Republican supply lines, but Italian pilots complained they never got the glory. At Guernica their presence was overshadowed by the Nazis. Elsewhere the dramatic rise and fall of Mussolini's foot soldiers in the *Corpo Truppe Volontarie* (Volunteer Troop Corps - CTV), a group of adventurers who had joined up for a rainbow of reasons, hogged the front pages.

*

One day at school Licio Gelli, a strong-willed Italian teenager, got into a physical confrontation with his teacher after the man accused him of copying an essay. A desk was knocked, an ink pot spilled, the teacher fell to the floor. Gelli was expelled.

Too scared to tell his parents, he spent days pretending to attend school while trying to hide the news from them.

'I gave chase to the postman, hoping to intercept the principal's letter informing my family of what happened,' Gelli said. 'Then I met Fabio Fronzoni, a friend older than me, who had enlisted for the war in Spain. "Perhaps I'll volunteer," I thought. And I thought of my brother, who had enlisted earlier. "You know what?" I said to my friend. "I'll join up too".'[266]

Spain seemed an easier option than talking to his parents. In December 1936 there were plenty of recruitment offices across Italy and thousands of men were signing up for money, adventure, or, like Gelli, to escape. They were on their way to Spain as part of Mussolini's plan to show the Nationalists how to win a war.

The Italian dictator had supported Franco in July convinced the rebellion would be victorious in a few weeks. Months later success seemed no closer. Salt was rubbed in the wound by Italian Communist radio broadcasts from the Spanish Republic calling for the overthrow of his regime.

The Fascist leader had no respect for Spanish fighting prowess and made

his view clear: Italian military aid was essential for a quick victory. In September Antonio Magaz, the Nationalist agent in Rome, got the hint and approached the Fascist government with an appeal for an Italian volunteer force to fight on the side of the rebels. Mussolini accepted the plan and appointed General Ezio Garribaldi to head the unit. Magaz told Franco to expect 20,000 volunteers.[267]

The project was aborted the day Franco became supreme leader of the Nationalist armies. It is unclear who took the lead in the cancellation. Mussolini's advisors were against large scale involvement in Spain; Franco may have been using the Italians, like O'Duffy's Irishmen, as ammunition in his leadership battle. The ostensible explanation was neither side wanted to give the Soviet Union an excuse to pull out of the Non-Intervention Agreement, although that had not stopped the arrival of the *Legion Condor* or *Aviazione Legionaria*.

In November the Italian dictator lost patience. Dismissing the caution of his advisors ('Spain is like quicksand,' warned Intelligence Service head General Mario Roatta, 'if you stick in a hand, the rest will follow') Mussolini told Franco the continued supply of Italian war materials depended on the *Generalissimo* accepting an Italian ground force. [268] Even worse was Mussolini's insistence the troops be controlled by Rome, not Franco's commanders. Franco managed a compromise: Italian volunteers would join the Spanish Foreign Legion as a national unit.

On 26 November a Legion recruitment office opened at the home of Spain's vice-consul in Rome's *Piazza Navona*, a baroque city square in an upmarket part of town.[269] The Spanish set an enlistment limit of 150 officers and 1,000 other ranks, and insisted on previous military experience. Volunteers were offered a generous 3,000 lire sign-up bonus. The Italian government had received 4,000 letters from potential volunteers since July and was confident it would meet the target.[270]

The first days were encouraging. Avellino Fascist leader Rafaele Maestrogiacomo made headlines when he came forward with a band of fifty-two followers. But only a few hundred men had been inducted into the Legion when volunteers stopped appearing at the Piazza Navona. Mussolini had changed his mind. Without informing Franco he opened rival recruitment centres for a separate, purely Italian unit in Naples, Cagliari, and other provincial cities. *Il Duce* had decided Franco needed Italian leadership as well as Italian soldiers. The CTV was born.

Volunteers in the CTV received twenty lire a day and a 20,000 lire life insurance policy. Forty percent of recruits came from the regular Army, with some from the *Partito Nazionale Fascista*'s own Black Shirt militia. [271] The rest were poor Italians with families to feed. The average age was twenty-eight to thirty-two-years-old, older than their Spanish counterparts. The poorer a city, the more likely a recruitment centre.

Numbers declined after a strong showing in the first weeks and many subsequent recruits were '*voluntarios sin voluntan*' (volunteers without volunteering).[272] Physically impressive Black Shirts found themselves conscripted to make the CTV look better. Those who refused were expelled from the PNF. Some recruiters used outright deception. Men told they were colonising Abyssinia only discovered the truth when they docked in southern Spain.

Volunteers joined for many reasons. Licio Gelli was seventeen-years-old when a recruiting centre opened at the local militia barracks in his home town of Pistoia and gave him a way out of confessing to his parents. While still at school he had watched as the older men of the town signed up. Even his older brother Raffaello, an officer in the army, was on his way to Spain, having requested a transfer from Abyssinia.

Gelli went to the recruitment office, lied about his age, and was accepted under the fake name 'Livio Gommina'. He got a civilian suit and directions to a steamer docked at Genoa where he told passport control he was headed to Spain in search of work. The immigration officials pretended to believe him as they pretended to believe all the other men climbing on board.

It was not just Italians who used Genoa as a gateway to Spain. Many volunteers from Austria passed through the port in the first year of the civil war.

Kurt Schuschnigg's Catholic corporatist state, then struggling to maintain independence from Germany, sympathised with the Nationalist cause. Trade unionists who raised funds for the Republic were arrested, although 900 Austrians still managed to join the International Brigades. A number of Nationalist volunteers were recruited by Austrian aristocrats connected to Catholic Action. All ended up in the ranks of the Falange.[273] One of the volunteers, Rudolf Penz, a *Heimwehr* officer from Innsbruck, returned to Austria after his tour to recruit more men. At least 200 volunteers had travelled to Nationalist Spain by August 1937.[274]

On 22 December the initial 3,000 Italians of the CTV arrived in Cádiz.

Franco first heard about them when he received a telephone call announcing their arrival. ‘Who requested them?’ he asked in amazement.[275]

Mussolini repeated his threat that rejection of the CTV would lead to the cessation of military aid. Over the course of the civil war Mussolini would send 9,000,000 bullets, 10,000 machine-guns, 800 artillery pieces, 729 aeroplanes, 150 tanks, and 1,672 tons of bombs. His aeroplanes had helped airlift Franco’s Army of Africa to mainland Spain and Conte Rossi saved Majorca. Franco had no choice. He grudgingly agreed to add an extra two pesetas a day to his new volunteers’ salary.

By January 1937, 17,000 Italians were in Spain, among them Licio Gelli. Once in Cadiz, the scrawny teenager got a uniform and a rifle. He arranged a transfer to his brother’s unit.

Raffaello was shocked to see Licio in the CTV. He had been sending him military postcards, plain green rectangles that gave no details to the sender’s whereabouts, since his arrival in Spain. The last one had asked about Licio’s schoolwork. Rafaello was sure his younger brother would end up a lawyer.

‘Why are you here?’ he asked and clouted Licio around the head. ‘To give me a headache?’[276]

When his anger subsided, Raffaello agreed to look after his brother in Spain. Together they would fight for Fascism.

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Franco wanted the Italians in mixed brigades with Spanish soldiers under his leadership but Mussolini insisted the CTV fight as a separate unit. Remembering Count Rossi’s enthusiasm for his Majorcan fascists, Mussolini allowed a few thousand men to be placed in two brigades with Falangist troops. The Italians in charge ruined any fraternal good will by feeding the Spaniards pasta for every meal and banning Falange insignia.

Despite his reservations about intervention, General Roatta found himself in charge of the CTV. Mussolini suggested a dramatic thrust from Teruel in the north to the eastern coast, sealing the border with France. Franco persuaded the Italian leader to test his troops on the southern coast with a small-scale campaign to expand the Nationalist zone as far as the Andalusian port of Málaga.

Famous for its Phoenician walls, Roman theatres, and a Moorish

fortress, Málaga had been a Nationalist target for months. ‘Tonight I shall take a sherry,’ General Quiepo de Llano regularly told listeners, ‘… and tomorrow I shall take Málaga’.[277]

Colonel José Villalba *Rubio* defended the town for the Republic. Villalba was a hate figure to the Nationalists for betraying a pre-war promise to bring his garrison to the rebels. General Mola claimed Villalba demanded a 100,000 pesetas bribe to join the rising. The colonel’s subordinates believed their commander hated Franco so much he changed sides rather fight alongside him.

Villalba led 12,000 demoralised Republican troops with only 8,000 rifles between them. He shared his office with a Soviet advisor, a Red Army colonel using the pseudonym ‘Kremen’, but the Spaniard refused to take his advice and the two had not spoken for weeks.

On 7 February the Italians crushed Villalba’s defense and Málaga fell. The Italians lost 130 dead, light by the standards of Spanish battles, and Roatta was lightly wounded by a stray bullet. Jubilant Italian officers printed business cards with the legend ‘Victors of Málaga’.

Several hundred Francoists had been murdered under Villalba’s rule and Nationalists who followed the CTV into town revenged themselves on captured Republicans. Italian ambassador Randolpho Cantalupo estimated 4,000 dead and complained to Mussolini’s Foreign Minister Count Galeazzo Ciano that the killings tarnished Italian military honour. No-one in Rome cared.

Some prisoners escaped execution. Hungarian-born Communist Arthur Koestler spent months in a Falangist jail before being sprung by the British consul.

Fresh troops arrived from Italy and the CTV reorganised. Its 35,000 men were sorted into four divisions: the Black Flames, the Black Feathers, *Dio lo vuole* (God Wills It), and *Littorio*, the last a regular but under-strength Italian army unit plumped up with volunteers. Some *Littorio* soldiers had been in Africa as extras on the Italian film *Scipione l’Africano*. Recruiters convinced the more gullible they were off to Spain for more movie work.

No could ever call Renzo Lodoli gullible. He was in *Littorio* to fight not act. Born in Venice to a Naval officer father and Austrian mother, the engineering graduate with dark wavy-hair and thick glasses grew up fascinated by war.

‘I believe,’ he said, ‘that war is indispensable for the formation of an

individual.’[278]

The fascination was nutured by his godfather, Gabriele D'Annunzio, the one-time satrap of Fiume. Lodoli listened to D'Annunzio's stories of adventure. He wanted to be a hero too. He attended university to study engineering, wearing the Fascist black shirt with the student emblem: an eagle with a book and gun beneath. The invasion of Abyssinia occured shortly after his graduation. He put his engineering career on hold and joined a student battalion. He enlisted with his glasses hidden in his pocket as he was so short-sighted the army would not have taken him otherwise.

There was no adventure in Africa. Lodoli spent eight months guarding sand dunes near Mogadishu and returned to cheering crowds in Rome and women who dropped flowers down the barrel of his rifle.

'We were all wearing the black shirt,' he said. 'We were beautiful. Oh, no doubt about it. We were beautiful. Even Mussolini - watching us, as he usually did, from his balcony - came down to the street to applaud us.'[279]

Beautiful but ashamed he had seen no action. Lodoli was twenty-four-years-old when the civil war began in Spain. He volunteered and joined the Littorio division as a lieutenant. The men were transported to Cadiz in January 1937 on a ship that had no name or registration details ('A ghost ship!') wearing the khaki uniform of Italian colonial troops.[280]

Lodoli had no doubts he was on the right side.

'We Italian soldiers were convinced that our cause was correct. First, because we were Catholics and churches had been burned and priests killed, so we fought in defense of civilization. Then there was the risk that we would be shut out by Spain in the Mediterranean. And finally because we were Fascists.’[281]

Even with volunteers like Lodoli the division still had to be fortified with conscripts, some peasants in their thirties or older. Commander General Annibale Bergonzoli (known as *Barba Elettrica* – ‘Electric Whiskers’) complained he had 2,000 soldiers with grey hair.

Franco had not been notified of the Italian re-organisation. ‘First, I was told that companies of volunteers were coming to be included in the Spanish battalions,’ he said. ‘I agreed. Then I was asked to form Italian battalions and I agreed. Next, senior officers and a general arrived to command them, and, finally, already formed units began to arrive. Now you want to gather all these troops to fight together, under General Roatta, when my plans were quite different’.[282]

The Italians ignored his objections, confident their arrival had turned the tide in favour of the Nationalists.

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Before Spain, the Italian people were enthusiastic about foreign adventure. Mussolini's Abyssinian exploits grabbed Italy's imagination. Even regime enemies like the former Liberal Prime Minister Vittorio Emmanuele Orlando supported the invasion.[283]

Children's board games celebrated the African war. 'Attacked by a lion: back three spaces'. *L'Azione coloniale* magazine tracked the creation of village after white neoclassical village across Libya. In Rome a quarter of a million Italians gave up their wedding rings after the government asked for help against League of Nations' sanctions.[284] But Spain was different.

The ideological nature of the civil war polarised Italian society. Some, like Renzo Lodoli, believed it was a war to save civilisation from Communist barbarism. But those who had swallowed leftist sympathies to support Italian colonialism could not do the same for Franco's *cruzada*. Secret International Brigade recruitment centres opened Rome. Even Fascists who believed in social revolution hated Franco's conservatism.

'We speak of a proletarian revolution,' wrote a young Fascist, 'while we defend the most reactionary generals, landlords and exploiters in Europe'.[285]

As casualty figures mounted among CTV conscripts (4,000 would die in the civil war) resentment rose back home. 'What a beautiful honeymoon mine has been!' wrote a young wife to her husband in Spain. 'Two days of marriage and twenty-five months of interminable waiting […] I pray God that one day He will make it possible for you both to serve your country and provide bread for your family'.[286]

Not all Nationalist Spaniards welcomed the Italians, who they saw as arrogant rivals for control of the Mediterranean. A popular joke: what does CTV mean? It means *Cuando Te Vas?* (When Are You Going Home?).[287]

Mussolini dismissed grumbling from both sides and told Roatta he wanted to rebrand Italy as a land of aggressive soldiers, not guitar playing seducers.[288] In March 1937 the CTV went into action at Guadalajara, a town on the Henares River northeast of Madrid, already levelled once by Napoleon Bonaparte's troops during the Peninsular War.

Renzo Lodoli was at Guadalajara. He remembered the first Republican

casualty, a lost farmer with a rifle who wandered towards the Italian lines by mistake and was shot down as he took cover behind a tree. The farmer crossed himself as he lay dying. Lodoli found pictures of saints in his wallet. The first Italian to die was a soldier shot by a sentry as he returned from pissing behind a tree. He had forgotten the password.

The real battle began when some Italians sleeping in the Ibarra Palace, a grandly named country house full of paintings and thick carpets, were over run and killed.

'They were surprised in their sleep, horrible!' said Lodoli. 'It is best forgotten.'[289]

The Italian counter-attack took place in driving sleet that reduced visibility to 100 metres. Carlists fighting alongside the Italians accused them of cowardice for taking cover. The Spaniards marched in a straight line behind a priest with a cross. In the bullet storm at Guadalajara they did not last long.

The CTV cut through Republican lines but shuddered to a halt when it encountered the International Brigades. Men of the Black Flames division advancing towards Italian voices near the Ibarra Palace were cut down by machine gun fire.

'Why are you firing at us?' their leader shouted.

'*Noi siamo italiani de Garibaldi!*' ('We are Garibaldi's Italians!') replied the voices.

The CTV had encountered the International Brigades' Garibaldi Battalion. Formed from Italian Communist exiles, its recruitment was run from Paris by long time Mussolini enemies Carlo and Sabatino Rosselli. The two units fought their own Italian civil war in the Ibarra Palace grounds until night fell when Garibaldi loudspeakers in the surrounding forests came to life.

'Brothers, why have you come to a foreign land to murder workers?'[290]

Raffaello Gelli, the Italian volunteer so annoyed by the arrival of his younger brother Licio in Spain, claimed the Garibaldi unit wore Francoist uniforms to infiltrate Nationalist lines. Pamphlets dropped by Republican aeroplanes promised fifty pesetas and safe conduct to any CTV man who surrendered.

On 18 March fresh Republican troops launched a counter-attack. The Fascist frontline began to crumble. CTV soldiers shot off toes and bandaged uninjured limbs to escape the fighting. Franco refused Roatta's request to pull

his men out. A huge air strike by 100 Republican aeroplanes destroyed CTV morale and the unit cracked. Men fled along the only road still open, abandoned weapons and equipment littering the roadway behind them.

Lodoli made it out in one piece, bullets lodged in his gas mask and blanket, and a chip taken out of his steel helmet. Others were less lucky. The Italians claimed 400 dead. The Republic counted 3,000 corpses.

'I have been studying the battle for four days, going over the ground with the commanders who directed it,' said Ernest Hemingway, 'and I can flatly state [it] will take its place in military history with the other decisive battles of the war'.[291]

Some Nationalists also enjoyed seeing the swaggering victors of Málaga humbled. The former secretary-general of the Falange, Raimundo Fernández Cuesto, was among them. Arrested a week before the July 1936 rising by policemen who correctly suspected he was involved in a plot to overthrow the government, the forty-year-old Falangist had been in a Madrid prison ever since.

In late March he received a representative of the Spanish government who wanted his opinion: would Franco agree to peace talks? Fernández Cuesto told his guest that from what he knew of Franco the civil war would be a fight to the death.

On his way out of the cell the Republican representative remarked on the recent defeat of Mussolini's troops at Guadalajara. The remark was meant to hurt but he was surprised when Fernández Cuesto happily replied that the Italian defeat was the only satisfaction he had felt during the war.[292]

Fascist Italy had been humbled. It was the Republic's last major victory in the civil war.

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Mussolini bowed to Franco's demands to incorporate more of his men into mixed units with Spanish officers. The Black Arrows division opened its ranks to Spaniards and the CTV ceased to be an independent unit.

'Act like any other general under Franco's command,' the Italian dictator told Roatta. [293] But Mussolini wanted revenge for Guadalajara. 'There is no way I shall withdraw any men from Spain until both the military and political failure […] is avenged.'[294] The next month the *Aviazione Legionaria* took part in the bombing of Guernica.

The Republic paraded its Italian prisoners before the international press. At the next Non-Intervention Committee session the Soviet representative read out letters found on dead Italians. ‘Dear Armando,’ read one, ‘I can only pray that God and the saints keep you and if you return in good health we can go back to Rome and open the shop’.

To the Committee’s astonishment the Italian representative Count Dino Grandi admitted the CTV was in Spain and would not leave until the Republic was defeated. Such candour did not belong in European diplomatic circles.

The Non-Intervention Committee extinguished the political blaze by refusing to accept the documentary evidence of Italian involvement supplied by Republican Spain. It was not a committee member. The blind eye returned to the telescope and Non-Intervention was saved.

Guadalajara diverted the Committee’s attention from a scandal in France. Police had discovered that groups of Russian exiles were crossing the Pyrenees to join Franco. General Evgeny Miller, leader of the most important White Russian organisation in Paris, was boasting to his followers that Spain was the training ground for a new march on Russia. He was confident the Bolshevik Revolution could be reversed.

Miller’s dreams of Tsarist restoration would soon collapse, sent crashing to the ground by the joint efforts of General Franco and a Bolshevik double agent at the heart of the émigré community.

17. RUSSIA, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE

Double Cross in the Paris of Russian Exiles

The Russian civil war spread mass murder and war crimes from Helsinki to Vladivostok. Siberian Bolsheviks hammered nails into the shoulders of captured enemy officers. One nail for each epaulette star. In Moscow, Lenin's secret police perfected the art of skinning prisoners alive. On the other side, Baron von Ungern-Sternberg fed suspected Reds into the firebox of his armoured train and General Bulak-Balakhovich ordered Bolshevik prisoners to hang themselves rather than waste his bullets.

Until the Tsar's overthrow in 1917 the biggest thing General Evgeny Miller had commanded was a desk. The Bolshevik seizure of power inspired the tall, bald, and heavily moustached military attaché to frontline action. Miller set up government in the northern port of Archangel and joined the coalition of anti-Bolshevik forces known as the White Armies.

Miller's war was cleaner than those of his brother officers. His crimes were less savage, although prisoners still died before firing squads, and his politics flexible enough to build bridges with anti-Bolshevik leftists in northern Russia.[295] But the General's territory was small and could survive only as long as White victories in the west and east kept the Red Army on the defensive. In 1919 the Bolsheviks, inspired by Trotsky's promise to machine-gun anyone who retreated, gained the upper hand and began to push the Whites back.

The anti-Bolshevik cause overflowed with Tsar-worship and anti-Semitism but lacked the battlefield discipline to dig in and stop the advance. Its battlecry of 'Russia, One and Indivisible' grew fainter by the day. The White Armies collapsed completely the following spring, although isolated remnants clung to Russian soil for another four years. General Miller was one of over a million Russians who fled their homeland for Europe, America, or

Asia to wait for the fall of Communism.

Many left with nothing more than the clothes on their backs. Exile life was a post-war hangover of former colonels driving taxi-cabs, aristocrats scratching for rent, and Russian tea rooms frozen in Tsarist amber. In the back streets of Harbin, northern China, Russian women whored themselves to support families while their men worked like slaves down the Songhua docks.

The exile communities began to fade as the years passed. In 1929 over 75,000 White Russians lived in Berlin. Four years later only 10,000 remained. The Nazi rise to power helped along the Berlin exodus but similar declines occurred in Harbin, Constantinople, and other émigré centres as the diaspora dispersed or died off.

By 1936 Paris was home to the largest White Russian group. Around 100,000 men and women lived in the French capital, many in a seventeenth *arrondissement* enclave near St Alexander Nevsky Orthodox cathedral on the *Rue Daru*.[296] It was a life of vodka shots, pickled mushrooms, and paper icons pinned up in rented rooms, isolated from everyday life behind a wall of memories and regret.

A thirties White Russian guide to France gave a snapshot of émigré life. It contained lists of Paris post offices, useful for those with no fixed address; currency changers, for crossing borders to a cheaper cost of living; White Army veterans groups, nostalgic social centres for ageing ex-soldiers to daydream about marching back to Moscow; and Orthodox churches, so the spirit could remain strong while the flesh got weaker. Most telling were the twenty pages of doctors, dentists, and hospitals, to minister the slow death rattle of war wounds.

Like fish thrashing for room in a shrinking pond, exile society grew increasinly desperate. Conspiracy, intrigue, and backstabbing became part of daily life.

‘The taxi drivers and workers in the automobile factories made their way right across Paris to read the memoirs of their former leaders in the Russian Library,’ wrote journalist Vladimir Pozner. ‘They surrounded the page with exclamation marks and comments such as ‘Traitor!’ ‘Jew!’ ‘Coward!’ Everything that might be read between the lines of these books was shown up here, pencilled in, rubbed out, and scrawled in again by subordinates bursting with retrospective rage’.[297]

All that sustained the Paris community was a dream of returning home

and overthrowing the Bolsheviks. Hopes centred on the *Русский Обще Воинский Союз* (Russian Armed Services Union - ROVS), which kept contact with White Army veterans scattered across the globe.

In July 1936, General Miller was head of the organisation.

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ROVS members and other rightist émigrés supported Franco's Nationalist rising. *Chasovoi* (Sentinel) magazine applauded Francoist victories and reprinted the *Generalissimo*'s speeches. Fund raising events and lectures in Paris, Berlin, and Belgrade were well attended. When journal *Novi Grad* (New City) published an article criticising Francoist repression it met a storm of protest and the theologian author had to fight Orthodox Church authorities to keep his job.[298]

Republican sympathisers existed but kept their views quiet, mindful of the diaspora's murderous past. In 1922 the novelist Vladimir Nabakov's father, known for his liberal politics, had been shot dead at a meeting in Berlin by a pair of embittered Russian monarchists.

Nikolai Skoblin, General Miller's advisor and next in line to head the organisation, saw the Spanish conflict as an opportunity to reinvigorate the White Russian movement. The smooth forty-four-year-old cavalry officer, husband of famous gypsy folk-singer Nadezhda Plevitskaya, convinced his boss the ROVS could use Spain as a military academy to sharpen veterans' skills and blood a younger generation.

Other ROVS members were suspicious of Skoblin's motives. His dark-eyed wife, her wavy hair held back by a headscarf, had been a Bolshevik until she met Skoblin during the civil war. Some suspected she never abandoned those sympathies. Skoblin himself had dubious friends. He could be seen drinking in the cafés near *Gare Saint-Lazare* with Captain Zavadski-Krasnopolski, the amoral proprietor of a private intelligence agency which sold information to the highest bidders, including the Soviets.[299] Some of the Captain's employees boasted that they would inform on their own families for the right price.

But Skoblin was not alone in urging help for Franco. Military-minded White Russians were aware the ROVS's armed might was thin as tissue paper. One unit was a group of Cossacks reduced to marching in parade formation through the Paris streets every morning to their jobs as porters at

the *Gard du Nord* railway station. A good war could reinvigorate both the ROVS and exile community. The road to Moscow could first divert through Madrid.

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Forty Russian volunteers joined the Nationalists independently of the ROVS in the early months of the war. Paul Rachewsky, the first recorded volunteer, entered Spain in August 1936 and enlisted in the Carlist *Tercio Doña María de Molina* as a sergeant. Hit in the lung during November's fighting in the north, Rachewsky accepted death with a mystical belief in fate that puzzled his Spanish comrades but recovered to be repatriated to France.

Others followed Rachewsky into the *Tercio Doña María de Molina* where they wore homemade red, white, and blue Tsarist flag arm shields. The Carlists' devoutly Christian monarchism was appreciated by Orthodox Russians still mourning their dead Tsar. Three Orthodox priests joined the Carlists to fight. One of them, Prince John Shakhovsky, later became Archbishop of San Francisco.

Volunteers were forty and older. Those who had held high positions in the White Armies during the Russian Civil War annoyed their Spanish commanders by demanding former Tsarist ranks. When the Nationalists refused, Russians honoured the ranks amongst themselves, leading to the confusing sight of sergeants saluting corporals.

British volunteer Peter Kemp encountered a senior volunteer in the Carlists. 'He wore on his beret the two gold fleurs-de-lys of a Requeté lieutenant-colonel and proved to be the White Russian colonel who was nominally in command of the squadron. I say 'nominally' because he only visited the squadron once when I was there, spending the rest of his time in the comparative comfort of Seville. When told I was British he shook his head sadly. It turned out he had never forgiven the British for their refusal, or failure, to rescue his Tsar from the Bolsheviks. A compatriot and friend of his who felt the same way once told me he was so disgusted by the British behaviour that since those days he had never drunk a drop of whisky'.[300]

A handful of White Russians living in Italy joined the Black Arrows division. An even smaller number enlisted in the fascist Falange. One of these was Michael Pridon Zulukidse, a forty-year-old Georgian prince, who had been working as a truck driver in France when the civil war began. A

former battalion commander on the Romanian front, Zulukidse had fought the Austro-Hungarian army, Bolsheviks, Armenians, and Turks by the time he was forced out of Georgia in 1923. The shaven-headed and thuggish-looking Prince emigrated to Paris with his wife and son. The Nationalist uprising seemed an opportunity for revenge on the 'Bolshevist-Anarchists' who now ruled his homeland.[301] He crossed the border and joined the Falange.

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General Miller was a cautious man. Despite Skoblin's enthusiasm for involvement in Spain only news of an independent German initiative to create a Russian volunteer unit spurred the General to action.

In the autumn of 1936 Boris Toedtli, a half-deaf photographer of Swiss ancestry whose family lost everything in the Bolshevik revolution, began talks with Berlin-based White Russian émigrés about forming a Francoist unit. Toedtli was active in the promotion of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a Tsarist forgery which claimed Jews were behind the world's evils. His violent anti-Semitism gave him pedigree with far-right exiles.

The Berlin discussions degenerated into squabbling about funding and collapsed completely in December when the Swiss issued an arrest warrant for Toedtli on charges of espionage, sending him into hiding.[302] By that time Miller and Skoblin had announced their own White Russian brigade. Both men were confident Russian Civil war veterans would join in their thousands.

In December, Miller sent a trio of officers to see Franco.[303] Inspired by the example of Paul Rachewsky and his comrades, Miller wanted the Russian unit in the ranks of the Carlists.

Delegation leader General Chatilov told Franco the ROVS could raise a minimum of 2,000 volunteers. When the offer was greeted with silence he reminded the *Generalissimo* this was not the first time exiled Russians had volunteered to fight for Spain. In the summer of 1924 General Peter Wrangel, the ROVS founder, offered 100,000 White Russian soldiers to fight the rebellious Rif tribes of Morocco. Franco pointed out that Spain had turned Wrangel down and asked what the ROVS wanted from him. Chatilov asked for 290,750 francs in travel costs for the first thousand volunteers. The interview was terminated.

Franco had no need for further foreign help. Moroccans, Portuguese, and

Germans provided all the manpower the Nationalist army needed. He had only reluctantly opened a recruiting office in Rome and later tried to wriggle out of his commitment to the Irish Brigade. He was not going to pay White Russians to join his forces. The *Generalissimo* used the same formula which had seen off eight *banderas* of Irishmen and told Miller's emissaries he would accept small groups of Russians, provided they paid their own way and joined the Foreign Legion. No national unit would be considered until a substantial number of Russians arrived.

Disappointed, Miller and Skoblin issued a worldwide appeal in January 1937 for volunteers from the ROVS membership. The response was muted. Many veterans felt too old to fight another war. Falling birth rates in the diaspora meant younger exiles were thin on the ground. No volunteers came forward from the sizeable ROVS constituency in Bulgaria, and only two from Yugoslavia.

'[Exiles] had sunk so far into despair in migrant life,' thought Captain Anton Prokoveich Yaremchuk, 'that they had come to believe there was nothing they could do to make a change'.[304]

Those who wanted to serve in Spain could not afford it. In Yugoslavia General Zborovskii of the Kuban Cavalry Division offered to send his entire officer corps if the ROVS paid their fares, with the Cossack rank and file to follow.[305] Miller did not have the money.

The ROVS marshalled volunteers from the community in France and in spring 1937 Captain Petr Savin began smuggling groups of eight across the Pyrenees into Spain. Only thirty-two men made it before the French police raided the safe houses, where more volunteers were waiting, and arrested ROVS organisers. Miller was warned to have nothing more to with Spain.

The crackdown made the newspapers but was quickly forgotten. To jaded French readers it was just another scandal with political overtones, like the Stavisky affair of 1934 or the gossip about Louis-Théodore Lyon, a well-connected Paris restaurant owner who had somehow avoided arrest when a laboratory on his property exploded and coated the *Rue St. Honoré* with heroin.

Some exiles suspected the police action had been arranged to embarrass both the Nationalists and the ROVS. Activists from the *Национально Трудовой Союз* (National Alliance of Russian Solidarists - NTS), a rightist group popular with younger émigrés, claimed that Skoblin, influenced by his wife, had betrayed the operation. Nothing could be proved. Publicly, the

couple's only vices were Plevitskaya's love of luxury and Skoblin's obvious ambition to succeed Miller.[306]

The ROVS head ignored the claims and kept Skoblin as an adviser. On 24 September Skoblin escorted Miller to a meeting with two German Nazis to discuss closer links between the Third Reich and the Russian diaspora. The General would never be seen again.

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Miller should have listened to the rumours about his adviser. The Nazis were NKVD men in disguise and Skoblin had been their agent for ten years. They drugged the ROVS leader and smuggled him out of France bent double in a steamer trunk. Miller was executed in Moscow two years later.

Skoblin's assumed leadership of the ROVS and talked confidently about a new dawn for the organisation. The spymasters in Moscow toasted his success with champagne. Then one of Miller's subordinates discovered a note in the General's apartment, penned just before he went out of the door for the last time.

'The meeting was arranged at Skoblin's initiative,' Miller wrote. 'This is perhaps a trap, which is why I am leaving this note'.[307]

Skoblin was confronted but denied everything. When his accusers, common sense fogged by vodka, stepped into another room to discuss how to handle the situation, Skoblin ran. The men stood around waiting for him to come back.

'We thought he had only stepped out for a moment,' one said.[308]

Skoblin fled across the border to Republican Spain, one step ahead of the French police and Miller's bodyguards. He died in a *Legion Condor* bombing raid on Barcelona, although rumours circulated he was murdered by the Soviets after outliving his usefulness.

The French arrested Nadezhda Plevitskaya in Paris. Chain-smoking Parisian journalists crammed into the courtroom to hear the singer plead her innocence. Her trial was a sensation. A White Russian taxi driver who claimed he would tell the court the truth about the affair was found floating face down in the Seine before he could testify. His mistress broke down in the witness box and the judge had her dragged away. Plevitskaya claimed she could not be guilty because she and her husband were in *Caroline's* dress shop when the abduction took place. And besides, she had once been a nun.

The press ate up every detail. Perhaps she was telling the truth. Did nuns lie? Then the police presented Soviet secret codes they had found in her appartment. The nun turned nightclub singer got twenty years hard labour.[309]

Skoblin's betrayal broke the back of any concerted White Russian volunteer effort. A few recruiters tried to keep the ratlines open. A former cab driver who had fought in the Foreign Legion could be found in the cafés of the seventeenth *arrondissement*. And a gigolo who lived off rich women, earning good money for his skills on the dancefloor and in the bedroom, was known to have contacts in Spain.[310]

Despite the pair's efforts only 150 White Russians would fight for Franco's forces during the civil war. A handful of Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian names also appear in Foreign Legion records but they refused to associate with White Russians. A 'one and indivisible' Russian empire left no room for Baltic nationalism.

The White Russian contribution to the war was negligible compared to the military aid sent by Stalin: 1,000 aircraft and pilots, 900 tanks, 1,550 artillery pieces, 15,000 machine guns, 500,000 lorries, 30,000 mortars, 1,000 million bullets.[311] Before the war the Spanish government had the fourth largest gold reserve in the world. By 1939 two thirds of it, worth £500 million, was in a Moscow bank vault to pay for Stalin's help.

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Franco had reason to regret even the small number of White Russians who made it to Spain. As well as demanding their own national unit, former colonels and generals in the ROVS contingent refused to salute their Foreign Legion commanders because they 'outranked' them. Franco broke his own December 1936 law banning the enlistment of foreigners in militia groups and transferred the most difficult Russians to the Requeté *Tercio de Marco de Bello*.

General Anton Shinkarenko, the highest-ranking Russian officer in Nationalist Spain, refused to leave the Foreign Legion. A veteran of the White Army cavalry, the lanky and moustached Shinkarenko had lived in a Paris apartment with his mother since fleeing Russia. Like many White Russians he lived a lonely life, associating only with other exiles. The war in Spain promised adventure but he soon discovered he had as little in common with the Spanish as he did with the French.

Nationalist Spaniards were profoundly ignorant about Russia. One Spanish legionnaire told his White Russian comrade that ‘King Stalin had overthrown the previous Tsar’ and all Russians were Communists. Welsh legionnaire Frank Thomas knew Serge Tchige, a brave and capable veteran of the Crimea, who was passed over for promotion many times in Spain because of anti-Russian prejudice.[312] Others were turned away from recruitment offices on spurious reasons, the recruiters suspecting they had leftist sympathies. Restauranters in the Francoist zone served up ‘National Salad’ rather than Russian salad.[313]

Suspicions were reversed on the Republican side. Leftist Russian exiles who joined the International Brigades found themselves accused of Francoist sympathies. British Communist John Cornford met a group in Barcelona early in the war. They called Stalin ‘little father’, a nickname for the Tsar.[314] Other Brigaders kept a watchful eye on them.

General Shinkarenko became increasingly disillusioned with the Nationalists. When his commanding officer commended him for bravery he told the Spaniard his praise meant little to a Russian general.[315] In the spring of 1937 he petitioned Franco to establish a White Russian national unit, with its own officers, in the Foreign Legion. The request was denied.[316] Shinkarenko’s attempts to change the *Generalissimo*’s mind ended abruptly in October. The Russian believed it was cowardly to take cover in the front line and was badly injured when a sniper shot him in the head.

Spain never became the training ground for a new anti-Bolshevik army that exiles envisioned and many ended the civil war disillusioned. Despite *Chasovoi*’s Christian crusade rhetoric, service with the Nationalists offered volunteers little more than a chance to wear Tsarist medals and risk their lives for ungrateful Spaniards. A third of Russian volunteers died in Spain.

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In the spring of 1937 both Nationalist and Republican zones experienced violent political upheavals when festering political abscesses finally burst. In both zones revolutionary idealism lost out to authoritarian dictatorship.

In Barcelona the POUM went toe-to-toe with Spain’s Communist Party. On the other side, as human ash continued to drift to earth from the sky above Guernica, Falangist leader Manuel Hedilla found himself on trial for treason, his movement split in two, and the Nationalist zone on the verge of its own

civil war.

18. HEDILLA AT 120 KILOMETERS AN HOUR

The Falangist Revolt in Salamanca

‘When I joined the militia I had promised myself to kill one Fascist’, wrote British author George Orwell, a volunteer for Republican Spain. ‘After all, if each of us killed one they would soon be extinct’.[317]

Ex-Eton, ex-Burma police, Orwell abandoned upper-crust life to propagandise for the cause of democratic Socialism. In December 1936 he arrived in Spain. His only military experience was the school Officer Training Corps but within weeks he was in the frontline with the POUM militia group, trading bullets with Franco’s men. Six months later he was on the roof of Barcelona’s *Poliorama* cinema guarding against a new enemy: his fellow Republicans.

The dissident Marxist group Orwell joined was the brain child of Trotsky’s former secretary Andrés Nin. Part of the pre-war Popular Front and a key member of Largo Caballero’s coalition government, the POUM wanted Marxism without dictatorship. Its quarrels with PCE Communists were widely regarded as a distraction from the task of winning the civil war.

The POUM alleged the PCE was a tool of Stalin. The PCE alleged the POUM expended more energy on working-class revolution in its Catalan powerbase than in fighting fascism. On 3 May 1937 an argument over control of the Barcelona telephone exchange escalated into violence and the two sides went to war.

A week of bloody fighting that saw Orwell up on the *Poliorama* and 500 dead in the streets below ended in a compromise peace. Later that month the Socialist Minister of Finance, Dr Juan Negrín *López*, replaced Caballero as President. Negrín appreciated Communist discipline. With his support the PCE took a larger share of government. The party proved so indispensable that no-one objected when they settled scores with their enemies on the left.

Amid accusations of fascist plots, a wave of arrests in June decimated the POUM leadership. Nin died in a prison camp near Madrid and his party was suppressed. The Communists established an iron grip on Republican Spain that would last until the final weeks of the civil war. Orwell fled the country, one step ahead of the secret police.

Orwell's account of his time in Spain, *Homage To Catalonia*, was not well received on its 1938 publication. 'The value of this book,' wrote John Langdon-Davies in the Communist *Daily Worker* newspaper, 'is that it gives an honest picture of the sort of mentality that toys with revolutionary romanticism but shies at revolutionary discipline.'[318]

Langdon-Davies was stung by an unflattering, if accurate, description of himself as a fellow traveller. But he was not alone in believing discipline (ie. the assassination or repression of those who would not follow policy) was necessary to win the civil war. He and others borrowed W H Auden's pose of cold-eyed experience, casually accepting what the Communist poet called 'the necessary murder'.[319]

Orwell refused to accept that morality came second to politics. '[His] brand of amoralism is only possible,' he wrote about Auden and those like him, 'if you are the kind of person who is always somewhere else when the trigger is pulled.'[320]

Orwell left Spain bitter and disillusioned. The revolution had devoured its children. It was little consolation that May's fratricidal fury amongst the Republicans had a mirror image on the other side of the lines.

The Hedilla Affair had torn apart the Nationalist zone in April. As Orwell defended the Barcelona POUM headquarters, Falange leader Manuel Hedilla was in a Nationalist court room on trial for attempting to overthrow Franco. Two of his closest advisors were hiding near Salamanca, afraid for their lives. One was Finnish, the other claimed to be American.

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On 13 December 1936 a *New York Times* reporter encountered the Falange *Centuria Catalana* unit licking its wounds near Burgos after a mauling in the Basque country. When he asked for its commander, a tired-looking officer with a faintly familiar accent directed him to a local hospital. Propped up in bed with a bullet in his arm and a monocle in his eye was Carl 'Goggi' von Haartman, a crop-haired Finnish adventurer who flew bi-planes in the First

World War, acted alongside Jean Harlow in the film *Hell's Angels*, and abandoned his wife and children to fight for Franco.

'He was about forty-five, slim, clean shaven, and he bowed and clicked in the best Potsdam manner,' recalled journalist Karl Robson. 'Soldiering was the only life he knew'.[321]

Von Hartmann was born to an aristocratic military family when Finland was still part of the Russian empire's frozen north-west. His father was a Tsarist general, as authoritarian at home as on the parade ground. On the rare occasions his parents allowed their son to have dinner with them, Von Hartmann had to eat standing up.

In the First World War Goggi took the German side and waged war on his father. He fought Russian troops on the eastern front as a cavalryman, then strafed them from the air in the *Luftwaffe*.

In 1917 came the Russian revolution. Finnish Bolsheviks declared solidarity with Moscow. The right preferred independence. When the shooting started Von Hartmann joined General Mannerheim's right-wing White Guard. In the resulting civil war 40,000 died. Mannerheim's men had won by March 1918 but it was a dirty conflict. Three-quarters of the dead fell before execution squads.

After the war Von Hartmann discovered he had no interest in peacetime army service and went abroad. Although impressed by Fascist Italy he preferred America and ended up an advisor and actor in Hollywood. His best-known role was 'Zeppelin Commander' in Jean Harlow's 1930 blockbuster *Hell's Angels*. The Finn picked up his English from film crews. Peter Kemp recorded a typical snatch of conversation: 'Goddamnit! I see you two bastards crossing the foyer half an hour ago, so I order these two whiskies. It's a local whisky and it's terrible! See if you can drink it.'[322]

Von Hartmann was married, bored, low on funds. A brief career producing and directing his own movies in Finland drained him financially. The Nationalist rising provided escape. He borrowed ticket money from friends and went to Spain.

'I volunteered because I have an old grudge against radicals dating from the Finnish civil war in 1918,' he said. 'Our Reds, aided by Russians, were fighting our Nationalists, aided by Germany. This time it is in Spain – Spanish Reds against Spanish Nationalists'.[323] His wife, sick with tuberculosis, and children remained behind.

Although trigger fingers on the Finnish right remained itchy, few others

joined Von Hartmann. Finland had sailed into more liberal waters since the civil war and the right-wing did not like it. In February 1932 an attack by members of the *Lapua* movement on a meeting of the leftist Social Democrats in Mäntsälä, southern Finland, was the starting flare for a coup attempt. A second Finnish civil war failed to materialise when the army took the side of the government. Despite the defeat, combative rightists who might have fought for Franco stayed home polishing their rifles in case they were needed again. Only about thirty Finnish volunteers served in the Foreign Legion, with a few more, including Von Hartmann, in the Falangists.

The Left also remained on guard in Finland. Almost all 350 Finns who joined the International Brigades were exiles who had fled to the Soviet Union in 1918.

In September 1936 the *Centuria Catalana* militia unit got its new military advisor. Von Hartmann had joined the Falange after an encounter with German-speaking Falangist officers in Burgos (he did not speak Spanish) who suggested he enlist in their outfit. The 118-strong *Centuria*, under the command of Captain Martin Busutil, set off for the northern front.

The unit took heavy casualties in the Basque provinces: thirty-five dead including Busutil, and fifty wounded. Von Haartman took command but was shot in the arm and spent Christmas in hospital, where the *New York Times* journalist discovered him. Pumped full of morphine, the Finn claimed his unit contained only Catalan noblemen and had been regularly bombed by a 'ravishing blonde' Russian female pilot named Olga.

The *Centuria* officer who directed the journalist to the hospital was Von Hartmann's translator and had been cited for bravery in the Basque fighting. He manned a machine-gun post 'on the extreme left flank, where he held up the enemy advance in his sector until reinforcements arrived'.[324]

There was a reason his accent seemed familiar to the journalist, Von Hartmann explained. He was American.

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Except he wasn't. Born José-Antonio Serrallach *Julia* in Barcelona, Von Hartmann's translator seemed compelled to tell every English-speaker he met in Spain that he had been born Joe Serrallach in Boston.[325] He actually grew up in Catalonia, north-eastern Spain but an education in America gave him a convincing command of the language.

In the early 1930s Serrallach had studied for a ph.d in Chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At MIT he was outwardly all-American, even giving a talk on 'The Importance of Mother' at the local Presbytarian church. [326] Things changed after his studies when he moved to Germany to work as a chemist. Already inclined to the right, Hitler's National Socialist revolution wiped out any lingering affection for liberal democracy and turned Serrallach into a full-blooded fascist.

After a few years in the Nazi ideological blast furnace he decamped to Spain and joined the far-right JONS. Serrallach remained with the party when it merged with the Falange and campaigned in Catalonia. The province had strong separatist leanings and proved hard soil for the Falange to break. The Republic held the area when the civil war began. Serrallach and comrades formed the *Centuria Catalana* militia column and joined General Mola's forces in neighbouring Aragon.

Only ten or so genuine Americans fought for the Nationalists. Albin Arnold, of Yugoslav descent, enlisted in VII *bandera* of the Foreign Legion in the early days of the war and was badly wounded in late 1936. Some Hispanic names (Manuel Martin, Francisco Noriega, and others) appear in Legion records. Thomas P Krock, son of a Pulitzer Prize winning *New York Times* journalist, moved to Spain with his new bride in 1934 and three years later was back in America claiming to have been a Nationalist general, possibly in the Falange. A rocket-fuelled rise for a twenty-four-year-old, if true.[327]

In August 1936 Guy Stuart Castle joined V *bandera*. Badly wounded in September 1937 his request for repatriation to America was denied. Castle attempted to swim to Gibraltar but was caught and sentenced to death. He spent anxious days in his cell before the judgment was reduced to imprisonment.

The Republic had more volunteers. Around 3,000 Americans fought for the Spanish government, shipping out through New York docks under the Communist Party USA's watchful eye. Split between the *Abraham Lincoln* and *George Washington* battalions of XV International Brigade, the men fought bravely, but were hurt by poor leaders.

Abraham Lincoln commander Robert Merrimam, chosen for Communist sympathies rather than tactical abilities, was nicknamed 'Captain Murderman' by his troops. Oliver Law of the *George Washington* battalion was one of the first black Americans to command white troops in battle.

When he took a bullet in the guts on 9 July 1937 during fighting near Madrid some believed he had been shot by his own men.[328]

Most Brigaders were party members but not everyone joined for political reasons. ‘Man what a feeling of power you have when entrenched behind a heavy machine gun!’ Joseph Dallet wrote to a friend. ‘You know how I always enjoyed gangster movies for the mere sound of the machine guns. Then you can imagine my joy at finally being on the business end of one.’[329]

Back home, the politically aware saw Spain’s importance. Ernest Hemingway and his mistress Martha Gelhorn became war correspondents, Gelhorn for *Collier’s Magazine* and Hemingway for the North American Newspaper Alliance syndicate.[330] The North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy counted writers Sinclair Lewis, Dorothy Parker, and Upton Sinclair among its members.

But most Americans cared little about Spain’s politics or its civil war. The United States had only just put the horrors of the Depression behind and its citizens preferred to lose themselves in Hollywood movies, yearning after Gary Cooper and Barbara Stanwyck. A February 1937 Gallup poll on the war showed sixty-seven percent of Americans neutral, while twenty-two percent supported the Republic, and eleven percent the Nationalists.[331] Isolationism and ignorance ran hand in hand. What the average American knew about modern Spain came from Hemingway’s best-selling 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*: a backwater of bull-fighting, trout-fishing, and superstitious peasants.

America’s most prominent Nationalist supporters could be found in the Catholic community. The *Brooklyn Tablet* compared Franco to George Washington. An editorial in *Catholic World* magazine condemned the Republic as ‘an anti-clerical government that has unleashed its fury against the Church’.[332] When Catholic magazine *The Commonweal* published articles in support of the Spanish government it was deluged with letters of complaint and cancelled subscriptions. Archbishop of Cincinnati John T. McNicholas banned the magazine in his diocese.

Twenty-five percent of American Catholics admitted supporting Franco, although pollsters suspected the real number was higher.[333] After years of prejudice, Catholics were cautious admitting their beliefs. In the nineteenth century Protestant children played a game called ‘Break the Pope’s Neck’.

President Franklin D Roosevelt sympathised with the Spanish Republic but his 1932 election victory had been achieved with Catholic votes. He could not be seen to take sides. His grasp of the political situation in Spain

was weak.

‘I hope that if Franco wins, he will establish a liberal regime,’ he told the Spanish Republican ambassador.[334]

Secular support for Franco was loudest in newspapers owned by publishing magnate William Randolph Hearst, model for the anti-hero of Orson Wells’ 1941 movie *Citizen Kane*. Hearst’s newspapers played fast and loose with facts. Journalist Cornelius Vanderbilt jnr claimed that ‘the outskirts of Madrid were alive with […] Red Amazons, many of them actually stripped to the waist, carrying modern rifles, and with blood in their eyes’.[335] Another Hearst hack put a capitalist spin on the war. ‘The Rebels’ cause is the cause of Christianity and Free Enterprise’.[336]

Joe Serrallach was not in the Spanish civil war to fight for Free Enterprise. His Nazi-influenced politics demanded state planning at every level of society. Not long after Von Hartmann got out of hospital, Serrallach’s ideological purity and command of languages (he spoke fluent Spanish, English, German, and some Italian) brought him to the attention of Falange leader Manuel Hedilla.

The *Centuria* officer was catapulted into the highest levels of Nationalist politics and he took Von Hartmann with him.

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Refined to the last, Falange founder José Antonio shook hands with his firing squad before his execution in the courtyard of a Madrid gaol. His death on 20 November 1936 left Hedilla in charge. The Republic did not publicly acknowledge José Antonio’s death and a clique of anti-Hedilla Falangists around José Antonio’s cousin Sancho Dávila pushed the rumour that *El Austante* (the absent one) still lived and would return to take back his party.

By April 1937 Hedilla headed a movement nearly a million strong. The Falange owed its massive expansion to his determination to increase numbers at any cost. In some districts of Andalusia seventy percent of party members were former anarchists. Opponents called Falangists 'White [ie. right-wing] Communists' and membership had become such a common escape route from Nationalist repression that Franco’s policemen routinely asked freshly arrested political prisoners for their membership cards.[337]

‘The past is not important to us,’ said Hedilla. ‘There is room in our ranks as comrades for all who share our goals and the desire to redeem the

Patria’.[338]

Hedilla was out of his depth. German ambassador General Wilhelm von Faupel, a droopy-eyed Nazi whose face was frozen in an expression of permanent rage, believed only the working-class could be fascists and preferred proletarian Naval engineer Hedilla to his aristocratic predecessor. But even he could see the new Falange leader’s drawbacks.

‘Hedilla was a completely honest person, but by no means equal to the demand imposed on a leader of the Falange,’ said Von Faupel. ‘He was surrounded by a whole crowd of ambitious young people who influenced him instead of being influenced and lead by him’.[339]

The Falange head was under attack from two directions. The Dávila clique wanted a change of leadership, and Franco had begun to worry about the Falange’s power. In March the Nationalist leader dismissed suggestions by Italian emissary Roberto Farinacci that he form a single party on the Fascist model with himself as *Duce*. Farinacci’s intense anti-clericalism angered Franco too much for him to take any advice. But news that Dávila had begun secret, ultimately unsuccessful, talks with the Carlists about a possible merger under new leadership re-awoke the idea.

Ernesto Giménez Caballero, the flamboyant Spanish aesthete who admired Mussolini’s ‘Mediterranean Fascism’, was part of Franco’s inner circle and sang the praises of the Italian system. Franco’s brother-in-law Serrano Súñer, recently sprung from a Republican prison, supported him. Together they convinced Franco.

Oblivious to the coming storm, Hedilla made Joe Serrallach his secretary and promoted him to his circle of advisors (the MIT graduate was one of Von Faupel’s ‘ambitious young people’) while the *Centuria Catalana* reorganised in Burgos. Along with journalist Victor de la Serna, Serrallach brought an openly Nazi flavour to Hedilla’s propaganda. Dávila was particularly horrified by an article called *Hedilla at 120 Kilometers an Hour* which promoted a Fuehrer-like cult of personality.[340]

On Von Hartmann’s discharge from hospital in the spring of 1937 Serrallach used his influence to appoint the Finn head of the new Falangist military academy at the *Pedro Lien* ranch outside Salamanca. The academy was an ideological hothouse designed to equip graduates with the military and political skills they would need to become the next generation of Falange leaders. Serrallach doubled up as Hedilla’s advisor and the Finn’s interpreter.

Von Hartmann was a well-liked but eccentric instructor. He took

saccharine pills in his coffee rather than sugar (‘sugar is fattening’) but poured a glass of sherry in his soup every evening.[341] He made poor jokes that Serrallach had to translate for stone-faced Falangist officer cadets.

The academy’s first group of fifty-seven students graduated in April 1937 and were replaced by a fresh entry that contained former members of the *Centuria Catalonia*. General von Faupel, a former military adviser in Argentina and Peru, produced sixty *Wehrmacht* instructors under Oberstleutnant Walter von Issendorf to assist Von Hartmann.[342]

Von Faupel had his own reasons for supporting the academy. In February he had told the Italian ambassador Cantalupo it might be ‘necessary to eliminate Franco in order to give power to the Falange, which, for the Germans, meant Hedilla’.[343]

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In early April, Franco announced plans for a single Nationalist party under his control. Hedilla called a national Falange conference to debate the issue. Dávila took the *Generalissimo*’s side out of hatred of Hedilla and called the conference treasonous. He denounced Hedilla for ‘making monstrous propaganda on behalf of himself […] gearing his activity towards the creation of personal followers […] showing evident ineptitude, worsened by illiteracy’.[344]

The Dávila clique took over the movement’s headquarters in Salamanca, a beautiful Renaissance city whose sandstone buildings bathed the streets in a golden glow. On the evening of 15 April Hedilla ordered Von Hartmann to re-occupy the Falange headquarters with his *Pedro Lien* cadets. The Finn did it without spilling blood. The building was soon full of Hedilla supporters and, keeping a low profile, a representative of Von Faupel. Hedilla then ordered the Finn to arrest Sancho Dávila and his followers.

The Falange rebels resisted. A firefight broke out in Dávila’s apartment and his bodyguard was shot dead. Salamanca swayed on the cliff-edge of a Falangist civil war. Von Hartmann and Serrallach went to the Grand Hotel on a secret mission, which neither ever revealed. Both were arrested by Francoists then released.[345]

Falangists loyal to Dávila claimed Von Hartmann was part of a plot to arrest senior Nationalist officials and possibly Franco himself. Hedilla loyalists believed the Finn, nervous about the consequences of the Salamanca

fire fight, had double-crossed them and taken Franco's side.[346]

The *Generalissimo* sent in troops during the early hours of the morning to restore order. Von Hartmann and Serrallach remained at the Grand Hotel. A 19 April Falange grand council meeting reaffirmed Hedilla as head of the movement and dismissed his opponents. Franco telephoned to congratulate the Falange leader.

Victory was brief. That same evening the *Generalissimo* announced all Nationalist parties would be amalgamated into the single movement *Falange Espanola Tradicionalista y de las JONS* (FET) with Franco as supreme leader. Giménez Caballero and Serano Suñer wrote the text of the formal decree. Italy had some influence behind the scenes. Press attaché Guglielmo Danzi told Rome he 'met General Franco at the Headquarters and together we planned the union of the parties into a single one led by [Franco]'.[347] And through his Italian wife, Giménez Caballero had contact with Mussolini.

A stunned Hedilla ordered the Falange's provincial branches to obey only his orders while he discussed the announcement with senior figures in the movement. The act reflected his mental confusion at Franco's duplicity but to the *Generalissimo* it looked like treason. Hedilla was arrested, charged with a basket of offences, and sentenced to death, later reduced to life imprisonment. Those who protested on his behalf were detained. Hedilla spent the rest of the civil war in gaol. Franco became unopposed leader of Nationalist Spain.

The Carlists accepted the decree. The fight had been knocked out of them by Fal Conde's exile. The Falange was angrier. Some *camisas vieja* (old shirts – veterans of the movement's early days) targeted Giménez Caballero for assassination. Only the last minute intervention of senior Falangist and poet Dionisio Ridruejo stopped gunmen shooting down the author on the street.[348]

Alphonsists supported the new FET but when Vegas Latapié, the monarchist writer who tried to involve the Navy in the rising back in 1936, hinted at an Alphonsist restoration Franco exiled him to northern Morocco. Rinsed of Falangist, Carlist, and Alphonsist ideology, the FET became Franco's power base.

Von Haartman and Serrallach hid at General von Faupel's house for eight weeks while the Falange was purged of Hedilla supporters. While in hiding, the Finn heard of his wife's death from tuberculosis. He began to drink heavily. Serrallach discovered he had been accused of manufacturing

poison gas for use in a coup. Things looked bleak but in June Franco pardoned the pair and allowed them to rejoin the Falange. Von Hartmann served as commander of the 3rd Falangist battalion's machine-gun company with Serrallach as his adjutant.

As the blood dried on the Hedilla Affair, General Roatta and Von Faupel met to discuss the situation. Encouraged by Italy's presence at the FET's birth Roatta suggested both nations seize the chance to shape Nationalist Spain. The men despatched framework documents to Franco: Fascist Italy's constitution and the Nazi labour laws.

The *Generalissimo* ignored them both.[349] He had his own concerns.

At the hamlet of La Morañosa, south of Madrid, trouble was brewing. General Eoin O'Duffy's Irish Brigade was on the verge of mutiny for the second time. And across the border, the quiet French spa town of Bagnoles-de-l'Orne was host to a double murder. The dead men were enemies of Franco and Mussolini, and the perpetrators right-wing French terrorists. The paths of France, Ireland, and Nationalist Spain were about to intertwine.

19. VIVA FRANCIA!

France and the Spanish Civil War

Bagnoles-de-l'Orne was an upmarket spa town of leafy avenues and bow-fronted *belle époque* villas in northern France. Nurses wheeled affluent invalids round the town centre. The art deco *Casino du Lac* catered for moneyed types who preferred more excitement in their rest cure. For those who could afford it the clean and crime-free Normandy town provided a secure refuge from the outside world.

Or so it seemed. On 10 July 1937 the bodies of two men were discovered in nearby woodland. Both had been shot at close range then stabbed with butchering ferocity. One corpse had twenty-one knife wounds. Fearing a serial killer, Bagnoles-de-l'Orne's invalids bolted their doors. The police knew better. The dead men were Carlo and Sabatini Rosselli, wealthy Jewish Italian Socialists prominent in the anti-fascist exile community. The Rossellis' car had been found near the murder scene. The fuse of a bomb intended to destroy it had fizzled out in the rain. This was a political assassination. Moon-faced and bespectacled Carlo had fought in Spain, where he organised the *Matteotti* battalion of Italian volunteers and was wounded in the battles around Aragon. The brothers came to Bagnoles-de-l'Orne in late May to treat blood clots in Carlo's legs, a legacy of his injuries. The killers struck on the evening of 9 July as the Rossellis drove down a quiet road on the outskirts of town.

'I thought at the time I was acting for France,' said Ferdinand Jacubiez, one of their attackers.[350] The Italians were dragged from their car, shot and stabbed.

Jacubiez and his fellow assassins belonged to rightist terror group *Comité secret d'action révolutionnaire* (Secret Committee for Revolutionary Action - CSAR), recently split from *Action Française*, a monarchist

movement in decline. Nicknamed *La Cagoule* (the hood) by its enemies, the group stockpiled weapons and trained for combat, certain a civil war between left and right was on its way.

The Rossellis died because of Spain. *La Cagoule* got money from a variety of French sources, including the L'Oréal cosmetic company's slush fund, but its most regular payments came from Italy. Carlo's *Giustizia e Libertà* (Justice and Liberty) group was a thorn in Mussolini's side. Both Rossellis were liberal Socialists but they had put aside their differences with Communism to propagandise for the International Brigades. The men who heeded their call had humiliated Mussolini's Black Shirts at Guadalajara. The Italian leader ordered a revenge killing. *La Cagoule* agreed to kill the brothers in exchange for a shipment of weapons.

The Rosselli assassinations began a short period of direct action for the terror group. A bombing campaign in the autumn of 1937, including an attack on aeroplanes destined for the Spanish Republic, rocked France. Two policemen were killed in an explosion at *Rue de Presbourg* in Paris. The body of a Cagoulist suspected of embezzling money turned up in a forest. A young woman connected to the group was found in a Paris metro carriage with a stiletto in her neck.

CSAR was expert at murder but amateur at keeping its mouth shut. Lax security dropped clues into the lap of the police. By the end of the year *La Cagoule*'s leaders were in prison.

The *Cagoulists'* brief rampage galvanised their former comrades in *Action Française*. As Carlo Rosselli's wife identified his body on a mortuary slab, an *Action Française* militant was in Nationalist Spain with plans for a French volunteer unit, determined to prove his organisation was still a political force.

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In the spring of 1937 Nationalist authorities in Burgos received yet another letter from Captain Henri Bonneville de Marsagny, a forty-one-year-old *Action Française* war correspondent. The Frenchman had been launching petition after petition at the Francoist high command since November offering to raise a volunteer *bandera* for the Foreign Legion. Bonneville de Marsagny's mournful face and dark semi-circle of a moustache gave him the appearance of a silent film comedian but he was deadly serious.

‘When we enter Madrid,’ he wrote, ‘I want to see not only Italian and German flags, but also a French flag’.[351]

The newspaper that sent Bonneville de Marsagny to Spain was the only legal manifestation of the *Action Française* movement. Banned by the Popular Front in February 1936, *Action Française* existed like an iceberg, nine-tenths out of sight.

Founded at the turn of the century and led by Charles Maurras, a bearded misanthropic intellectual with a gift for acidic abuse, *Action Française* was an unashamedly elitist group dedicated to authoritarian anti-Semitic monarchy. The movement’s sharpest weapon was its high-brow paper, admired even by enemies.

‘There was a daily article by Leon Daudet, racy, violent, joyous, full of witty sayings which provoked laughter, and were easily remembered,’ recalled liberal writer Yves Simon. ‘There was the daily article of Charles Maurras, sententious, grave, doctrinal, and coldly ruthless; and there was the daily article of Jaques Bainville, who wrote as well as Voltaire.’[352]

At the organisation’s height in the mid-1920s Maurras’ influence reached across the world. Calvo Sotelo’s *Renovación Española* and Rolão Preto’s pre-National Syndicalist efforts owed intellectual debts to Maurras, as did the Integralists in Brazil and *Plaid Cymru*, the Welsh nationalist movement. A political ideology thought rotting in its tomb, French monarchism had made a triumphant resurgence.

Reactionary to his fingertips, Bonneville de Marsagny found his natural home in *Action Française*. A career soldier decorated for bravery in the First World War, he was part of the French mission that advised Polish forces in their 1920 battle for independence against Soviet invaders. After the Poles’ victory Bonneville de Marsagny spent years skirmishing with rebellious Rif tribesmen among the sand dunes of French Morocco.

In 1934 he left the Army to concentrate on full-time political activism. The following year Bonneville de Marsagny tipped a bucket of pig’s blood over Paris’ left-wing Police Prefect Eugène Frot.

‘Of course, I got the blood at a slaughterhouse,’ was his only comment as the police dragged him off to gaol.[353]

Bonneville de Marsagny’s attack on Frot, *La Cagoule*’s split from *Action Française*, and that organisation’s decline all sprang from one event: the Stavisky Affair. Russian Jewish conman Alexander Stavisky (‘Handsome Sacha’) was able to defraud French investors for years thanks to protection

from members of Edouard Daladier's liberal government. Daladier compounded popular anger by dismissing the rightist Police Prefect of Paris, Jean Chiappe, when he waded into the row. Chiappe was replaced by Frot, who threatened to shoot anti-government protesters.

On 6 February 1934 over 40,000 rightists gathered in Paris' *Place de la Concorde* to defy the new police chief. Dominated by the Obelisk of Luxor, which stood in the square's centre like the style on a sundial, the *Place de la Concorde* was home to the Paris guillotine during the Revolution. Blood again ran in the square. Police opened fire when marchers broke through barricades and a riot erupted that lasted through the evening.

That night Daladier's government needed only a push to fall but no right-wing leader was prepared to risk civil war and the riot burned itself out. Police killed sixteen rioters and hundreds were injured. A left-wing backlash brought the Popular Front to power at the next election.

Action Française militants were at the centre of the Paris fighting but Maurras refused to give his support. Cornered in his office on the night of the riot by youthful supporters, the old monarchist would not commit himself.

'I don't like people to lose their self control,' he said.[354] Defections began soon after, culminating in the creation of *La Cagoule*.

Another right-wing movement did better out of 6 February. Colonel François de la Rocque's *Croix de Feu* (Cross of Fire) began life in 1928 as a war veterans' association but transformed into a rightist paramilitary force with torch-lit parades, fascist salutes, and uniformed storm troopers. De la Rocque was a war hero who had fought with distinction in North Africa and on the western Front. The colonel commanded intense personal loyalty from his followers but outsiders were more sceptical.

'A soup in which little croutons float,' said pilot and writer Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 'those are his ideas!'[355]

More conservative than fascist, De la Rocque was as reluctant as Maurras to tip France into a civil war over the Stravisky Affair. But thanks to an ambiguous pre-riot telegram - 'the goal we pursue is to put an end to the dictatorship of the Socialist influence and to call to power a clean government free of politicians of whatever kind' – and the disciplined performance of *Croix de Feu* militants during the disturbances, he emerged from the events with reputation enhanced.[356]

Action Française had suffered setbacks before. In the late 1920s Pope Pius XI's condemnation of the organisation caused a mass exodus of

members. After the riot its militants were determined to show they were still a force. But a 13 February 1936 physical attack on Leon Blum when his car crossed an *Action Française* funeral procession only got the organisation banned. In October, Maurras was jailed for inciting the attack and his movement drifted liked a rudderless ship.

The *Croix de Feu* was banned four months after *Action Française* but De la Rocque rode the wave, claimed to have rediscovered his taste for parliamentary democracy, and reinvented his party as the *Parti Social Français* (PSF – French Social Party). In 1937 it had close to half a million members and was the biggest right-wing movement in France.

For both parties the Spanish Civil War was a taste of what might have happened had they pushed harder in February 1934, and what could still happen in France if right-wing resentment with the Popular Front boiled over.

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Bonneville de Marsagny left prison to find *Action Française* moribund and war raging in Spain. Credentialed as a war reporter for the movement's newspaper, which had escaped the ban, he sent back reports from the northern front. On one occasion he took command of a Spanish unit when its officers were killed. Flitting back and forth across the border with France, he found time to assist French volunteers who wanted to join the Nationalists.

Action Française sympathised with the Alphonsists but the grey bereted Spanish royalists lacked a militia. Monarchist Frenchmen joined the Carlists. Guy Coutant de Saisseval and Baron de la Guilloniere fought with the Requetés in the north. Killed at Vizcaya in October 1936, De la Guilloniere was given an elaborate funeral in San Sebastien, French flags flying alongside those of Nationalist Spain and an impassioned eulogy from a Spanish nobleman. 'Viva Francia!'

Some volunteers associated with *La Cagoule* also joined the Carlists. Pierre de Bénouville, a twenty-two-year-old former *Action Française* militant, had spent the mid-1930s drifting around the fringes of the terrorist group with his friends Michel de Camaret and François Mitterrand. None of them officially joined, although all had the right political pedigree. Bénouville, who added 'de' to his name at age sixteen on the basis of an imagined aristocratic connection, had taken part in both the 1934 riots and the assault on Blum.[357]

When the civil war broke out in Spain, Bénouville and Michel de Camaret joined the Carlist cavalry. They spent several months fighting in the north. François Mitterrand, more cautious, stayed home.[358]

Several recruiting networks existed to send French volunteers to Spain. Paris councillor Charles Trochu and secretary Jacques Pecheron, both of the *Front National*, an umbrella organisation for some of the smaller far-right groups, operated a route from their municipal office in Paris.

The Francoist cause was popular with PSF members but De la Rocque opposed involvement in foreign wars. The party's only effort was a clandestine network in Oran, Algeria. De la Roque's opposition did not deter PSF members crossing the border. Party member Edmond Lapegne was one of at least 200 Frenchmen who joined the Nationalist forces in the first year of the war. Interviewed by Spanish newspaper *El Pensiamento Navarro* in October 1936 Lapegne claimed Franco would win by Christmas. He was fighting in Spain, said Lapegne, to help the 'real France' against Frenchmen who fought for the International Brigades.[359]

French volunteer numbers for the International Brigades dwarfed those for the Nationalists. *Parti Communiste Français* (French Communist Party) leader Maurice Thorez was credited with inventing the International Brigade concept, and the party ran the Paris reception centres for foreign volunteers. At least 8,500 Frenchmen crossed the Pyrenees to fight for the Republic, the largest national contingent. Over 1,000 died.[360]

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In April 1937 Franco again rejected Bonneville de Marsagny's offer of a French unit. The Frenchman conferred with General Paul-Louis Alexandre Levigne-Delville, senior *Action Française* war correspondent in Spain, and together they added value to the proposal. French Dominican nuns at Valladolid would care for the wounded; *Action Française* sympathisers would fund the unit's setting up costs; other right-wing parties in France would supply weapons, trucks and equipment; they guaranteed 3,000 French volunteers.

The reworked proposal would have been rejected out of hand if it had not landed on Franco's desk shortly after the *Generalissimo*'s decision to repatriate General Eoin O'Duffy's Irish Brigade. Entangled in negotiations with the Non-Intervention Committee, and frustrated with mutinous

Irishmen, Franco decided he needed a new foreign volunteer unit.

The Nationalist leader had a plan to deal with Non-Intervention. The French were just pawns on the board.

20. REMEMBER THE IRISHMEN IN SPAIN

The Last Days of General O'Duffy's Brigade

The village of La Morañosa, north of Ciempozuelos, fried in the sun like an egg. A single dusty street ran between a few abandoned houses and the local well was polluted with the corpses of a farmer and his family. The Irish Brigade sat in trenches on a ridge overlooking the village and picked red ants and lice off their bodies as they listened for the incoming scream of enemy artillery.

Shells had been intermittently smacking down on the ridge since the Irishmen's transfer to La Morañosa on 23 March as punishment for their poor performance at Jarama. The Brigade's role was to stop the Republic retaking territory south of Madrid. On one occasion a shrapnel fragment killed a young Spanish priest officiating at Mass. The Irish had been luckier, so far.

'We had to repel a number of attacks by Red Militia and Red planes strafed us every day and some times more than once,' Matt Beckett remembered, 'but the only casualties they inflicted were on the buildings. One of the planes crashed just short of our lines'.[361] Falling bombs were not the only enemy. The Brigade was wrecked with dysentry. A third of the men were on sick parade, with over 100 hospitalised. The latrines overflowed and uniforms hung off the Irishmen like rags.

Even the propagandists back in Ireland could not glamorise the miserable weeks at La Morañosa. 'Week by week wounds, dysentery, rheumatic fever and sometimes-complete physical exhaustion were taking their toll of the Bandera,' wrote a *Sunday Independent* hack. 'Sleep, whenever it was allowed, would not come to men who were tired almost beyond endurance. Their dug-outs hewn out of the sides of trenches were dens of vermin'.[362]

In April things got worse when O'Duffy's adjutant Captain Thomas

Gunning deserted with the unit's wages and passports.[363] Replacement adjutant Captain Arturo O'Ferrall, a Canadian of Irish-Spanish descent ('glassy, fishy eyes and a bulldog face and expression, a bumptious bounder full of himself,' according to one brigader) was assumed to be a spy for Franco's secret police. The Irishmen congratulated themselves on their insight into the murky world of espionage until O'Ferrall also deserted.[364]

As his tree threatened to topple, O'Duffy hacked away at its roots by transferring two of his most experienced officers out of the Brigade. Gilbert Nangle, head of 'C' company, and his friend Noel Fitzpatrick had infuriated their commander by reminding him the Nationalist cause was more important than Irish politics.

'Whatever the ostensible purpose of the Irish Brigade,' said Englishman Peter Kemp, a friend of both men, '[O'Duffy] never lost sight of its real object, which was to strengthen his own political position'.[365]

A position that was weakening day by day.

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'There cannot be the slightest doubt as to where the sympathies of the overwhelming majority of the Irish people lie in this unhappy Spanish conflict,' said The *Cork Examiner*'s 27 February 1937 editorial. 'They all sincerely hope for the sake of European civilisation and for the ultimate security of their religion, their families and their homes, that General Franco will win […] The tragedy of the affair is that for the few brave men we can send, a score will be despatched by the nations that debase the sacred name of democracy by covertly and overtly supporting the camarilla that has unloosed infamies against religion'.[366]

The Irish people may have sympathised with Franco but their enthusiasm for O'Duffy was fading. The General's National Corporate Party had recently admitted that brigaders' wives were writing in requesting financial help. Money promised by husbands in Spain had not arrived and some were facing destitution.

The *Irish Independent* urged 'Irishmen and Irishwomen at Home/ Remember the Irishmen in Spain' and sold replicas of the Brigade's silver harp badges at sixpence each to raise money for volunteers' families. Despite the *Independent*'s efforts, the family of Martin Bradley, a corporal in 'D' company, were evicted from their cottage in Galloway for seven weeks

missed rent.[367]

O'Duffy's thinning group of supporters had given up organising further drafts of volunteers and limited themselves to symbolic gestures, like sending a box of shamrock to the Brigade. The gift failed to impress soldiers who were now openly calling their commander 'O'Scruffy' and 'Old John Bollocks'.

Ultimately it was marmalade and coffee that ended the Irish adventure. Colonel Juan Yagüe, new commander of the Foreign Legion, loathed O'Duffy and his men. He thought them incompetent, badly led, and more interested in Irish affairs than the war in Spain.

'We are making ourselves the pawns of a political manoeuvre,' he told Franco, '[…] which is very dangerous to us'.[368]

The focal point of Yagüe's rage was the Irish dinner menu. Brigaders chose from marmalade and coffee or rice with milk, a selection which drove the Spaniard into a fury. It somehow demonstrated great, if indefinable, immorality.[369]

Yagüe wrote a report recommending the Brigade be disbanded and the Irishmen distributed through the Legion. While Franco considered the suggestion, Yagüe informed O'Duffy he was putting a Spaniard in charge of the Brigade. Faced with losing his authority, O'Duffy sent a letter to the Generalissimo in the first week of April and requested the Brigade be repatriated.

'I am forced to believe, unfortunately, that Your Excellency does not trust the battalion any longer,' he wrote. 'I feel we can no longer stay here unless we enjoy Your Excellency's total confidence'.[370]

O'Duffy offered to form an Irish company from those volunteers who wanted to remain. He had already started on a speech to be given when the Brigade arrived in Dublin.

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When news of O'Duffy's letter reached La Morañosa discipline collapsed. A drunken cook beat up an officer; a chaplain preaching about the dangers of drink was shot at after the sermon; a drunken officer publicly threatened to murder another in a café; senior Brigade officer Dermot O'Sullivan was arrested for telling a Spanish liaison officer he was so disgusted with Franco he was taking his men to fight for the Spanish Republic. Yagüe raged he

would ‘pack them all into aeroplanes and send them over to the Reds’.[371]

The Brigade was pulled out of the frontline and sent to Caceres to await repatriation. O’Duffy left his men and went sightseeing. His diary recorded a carefree few weeks: ‘North Portugal, fishing villages – casino tonight’. Spare moments were spent drawing up a long list of untrustworthy Brigade members.

When the Brigade left Spain on 20 June aboard the SS *Mozambique* it had two stowaways. Welsh volunteer Frank Thomas had been recuperating from his injuries in Caceres when the Irishmen arrived. He was disillusioned and sick.

‘If Spaniards could not stand their ground – and Fascists and hundreds of others in civilian jobs were hanging about risking nothing – why should I, a mercenary adventurer, do so and risk death or capture?’[372]

Thomas had been persuaded to desert with the Irish by ‘Tug’ Wilson, the Royal Navy runaway he had met during basic training in Talavera. Wilson and his friend Yartlett’s plans to desert VII *bandera* came to nothing and they ended up in the frontlines. Yartlett was killed in action and Wilson wounded in the leg. Hospitalised in Caceres he socialised with the Irishmen and decided to skip out with them. Thomas came with him.

The two men looked on as O’Duffy and his opponents sniped at each other through the long voyage home. The cooped up confinement was stretched out when an anonymous telegram reached Dublin customs claiming the Brigade was infected with a contagious disease. The ship was quarantined on arrival in Ireland until a doctor gave the all clear. Customs officers searched O’Duffy throroughly, despite his protests, and eleven members of the Brigade were arrested trying to smuggle guns into the country.

‘Just souvenirs,’ said the General.

The crowds which cheered the Irishmen off the boat were in their hundreds, not the thousands O’Duffy had promised. An air of anti-climax, even embarrassment, hung over the homecoming. The *Irish Catholic* newspaper decided it was a little ashamed of the Brigade’s early return from Spain. Dublin gossip was already saying O’Duffy had been thrown out of Spain for incompetence. Far from being the springboard to political glory, O’Duffy’s Spanish adventure looked like ending his political career.

At least nine Irishmen chose to stay behind in the Foreign Legion. Three died in battle.[373] The Irish Brigade’s equipment was handed over to a new foreign unit - the French *Jeanne d’Arc* company.

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On 25 May 1937, as the Irish Brigade had settled into Caceres to await repatriation, Franco agreed to Bonneville de Marsagny and Levigne-Delville's new proposal for a French volunteer unit. The *Action Française* journalists saw this as a sign the Nationalists recognised common ground in the Spaniards' struggle against Communism and the Frenchmen's hatred of their own Popular Front government.

They were wrong. Franco's only motive was to gain advantage over the Non-Intervention Committee.

The Nationalists' attitude to Non-Intervention was simple. 'A way must be sought of strengthening [the Non-Intervention] position by accepting the plan in principle', said Francisco Jordana *y Souza*, vice-president of Franco's cabinet, 'but by skilful reservations and counter-proposals, to win as much time as possible to prosecute the war in the meantime'.[374]

In the spring of 1937 the Committee floated the idea that both sides in the conflict repatriate foreign volunteers. On 29 June Britain officially suggested withdrawing an equal number of volunteers from both sides. After protests from Italy and Germany, a revised proposal in July offered 'belligerent rights' to the Nationalists if they complied. Being recognised as an opposing government, rather than rebels, would allow Franco to blockade Republican ports and stop foreign shipping.

Franco agreed to the French unit when talks about foreign volunteer repatriation were at an early stage but he could see the way negotiations were heading. The *Generalissimo* did not want to part with his Moroccans or Portuguese. German and Italian troops were not officially in Spain. The Irish Brigade was a mess and its leader determined to return home. Franco needed his own International Brigade. The French would be ideal.

Bonneville de Marsagny planned to call the new unit *Phalange Jeanne d'Arc* after the fifteenth century French heroine appropriated by the right. Franco supporter Maxime Réal del Sarte, France's greatest, and probably only, one-armed sculptor, was obsessed with her. All pinned up sleeve and belligerent, moustached face, he gave out *Jeanne d'Arc* medallions to every important Francoist he met. For Réal del Sarte and many French rightistsst, Jeanne was a symbol of the Latin soul that bound together France, Spain, and Italy.

The core of *Jeanne d'Arc* was to be fresh volunteers from France,

reinforced by any Frenchmen still in the Falange or Carlists who could be persuaded to join. Bonneville de Marsagny was not allowed to get his hands on Frenchmen already in the Legion.

Renamed the *Jeanne d'Arc* company to avoid confusion with the Falange, the unit's uniforms had thin blue, white, and red piping on the shoulder straps. The Trochu and PSF Oran recruiting networks now directed volunteers to the new unit, as did a covert network in Algiers run by members of the *Parti Populaire Français* (French People's Party - PPF) behind the back of their leader Jacques Doriot, a former Communist.

Doriot's position was non-intervention. 'Mothers: reclaim your children,' he urged. Only a year old in 1937, the PPF was formed by disillusioned leftists opposed to Moscow and attracted to the socialist aspects of fascism. Many of its intellectual supporters, like the writers Pierre Drieu de la Rochelle and Jean Fontenoy, were former men of the left.[375] De la Roque and Maurras regarded the PPF as a nest of Communists; the left saw little Socialism in the group's intimidating marches and Nazi salutes.

There was plenty of room for the PPF in France's crowded far-right scene. Support for all rightist parties had grown during the Popular Front years. An economic crisis had seen the cost of wheat skyrocket, from fifty-five francs for 100 kilos in 1932 to 160 francs five years later. Crisis was in the air and many of the Frenchmen who signed up for *Jeanne d'Arc* believed they were rehearsing a war in Spain they would soon fight for real in France. Bonneville de Marsagny guaranteed that volunteers would be released from service if civil war broke out in their homeland.

Most of *Jeanne d'Arc*'s eventual 250 volunteers were members of De La Roque's PSF. Doriot's PPF was a small organisation with confused attitudes to Spain (although it became more pro-Franco as the war progressed) and few of its members volunteered. Jean Auguste Hérold was one of those who joined up. Wounded in action he became a radio broadcaster using the name Jean Hérold-Paquis on a Francoist network in April 1938, with listeners in both France and Spain.

Action Française's smaller and older militant base had been exhausted by the time the company got off the ground. Those who wanted to fight had already joined the Carlists. One of the party's few *Jeanne d'Arc* volunteers was a Greek and Latin teacher at a Toulouse high school who ignored political tensions in the unit and described his comrades as 'excellent, chivalrous and utterly devoted to the Nationalist cause'.[376]

Chivalry was pushed to the limit when a PSF volunteer from Alsace, the border territory claimed by both France and Germany, who had fought for the Kaiser in the First World War, enlisted in *Jeanne d'Arc* with the black and silver of the iron cross at his throat.

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To make *Jeanne d'Arc* a credible International Brigade the Nationalists steered other foreign volunteers into the unit. One was Australian. Sporty right-winger Nugent Bull was the scion of a rich family that owned Australia's biggest undertaking firm W.N Bull.[377] He attended an upscale Catholic school where the priests taught him Communism was the enemy of the Church.

In the early 1930s a stroke disabled Bull's father and the young man took over the running of family business. Bull had distinctive ideas about branding. He introduced shiny white hearses and pallbearers in white suits, at which point his family passed the top job to his brother and paid Bull to go abroad. Catholic support for the Nationalists resonated with the Australian searching for a purpose in life. The twenty-nine-year-old set off for Spain.

Australian Catholics were strongly behind Franco. At a Melbourne University debate in March 1937 the young journalist Batholomew Santamaria told an audience of 750 that Franco was fighting a crusade against Communism, a message repeated uncritically in all of Australia's major Catholic newspapers and magazines.[378] Spain, as seen from Melbourne, was a battle between the Pope and Stalin.

In October 1937 Bull enlisted in the Legion at Talavera de la Reina. Legion officials had never heard of Australia (they guessed it might be part of America) and sent him to the *Jeanne d'Arc* company. Bull's schoolboy French came in handy for political discussions with his new comrades. They told him 'Masonic Jewry' ran France and Léon Blum's real name was Finklestein.[379]

Another citizen of the Empire fought for the Nationalists. The magazine *Cracuum* noted in their 5 May 1938 edition that a New Zealander named Cross had served with Franco's forces.

A few Greeks who lived in Paris joined the *Jeanne d'Arc* company. But most of the 155 volunteers from Greece served elsewhere in the Foreign Legion, including George Kapetanakis in XVII *bandera*.[380] Franco's cause

was popular in Greek dictator General Ioannis Metaxas' far-right dictatorship. Metaxas came to power in August 1936 and used the paraphernalia of fascism (youth movements, Nazi salutes, secret police) in an attempt to rebirth the glory of Ancient Greece. National newspapers carried daily stories on Spain, with an emphasis on photographs of Republican atrocities, to fire up Greek anti-Communism.[381] But sympathy for Franco did not translate into military aid.

Attempts by Greek right-wingers to form a national unit fell apart for financial reasons before Franco could turn them down. Enough individual volunteers were interested that the Nationalist representative in Athens cabled Burgos on 30 November 1936 for advice on how to treat any Greeks who wanted to join Franco's army. Most volunteers changed their minds after discovering the Nationalists would not pay travel fares. Jorge Stefanatos wrote to Burgos offering to make his own way to Spain, but only if they reimbursed him afterwards.[382]

Five volunteers came from Holland to join the Nationalists. Eighteen-year-old old Lambertus Cornelis Maria ('Bob') Dellemijn, a member of Holland's small Catholic minority and devout enough to make pilgrimages to Lourdes, fought in Falangist militia group *Bandera General Sanjurjo* and was killed in action near Alcubierre in October 1936.[383] Dellemijn, born in the Dutch East Indies but brought up in Amsterdam, became a martyr for Dutch Francoists. Prayer cards were printed for him.

Holland's mainstream political parties turned a neutral face towards the civil war but the main fascist party *Nationaal-Socialische Beweging* praised Franco as a fighter against the left. Leader Anton Mussert claimed Holland would have gone communist if the Italians had not scared off leftists by intervening in Spain.[384]

In September 1936 the Swiss armed forces' official journal announced the death in Spain of *oberleutnant* Emanual Rudolph Vischer, a thirty-five-year-old former Army officer. Vischer had lived only one year longer than his lawyer father, who died in 1904 from an accident while on a scavenger hunt. The *oberleutnant*, who lived in Spain before the war, had picked up a reputation as a painter since leaving the army, with a talent for lush landscapes and bullfight scenes. Vischer was Jewish, one of the few who fought for the Nationalists.[385]

Switzerland had a galaxy of far-right parties in the thirties but only fielded a handful of volunteers, generally Germanic-speakers like Joseph

Thauman and Adolfo Spiegelhalder. Most served in the Foreign Legion, with a few Francophones in the *Jeanne D'Arc* company.[386]

The Foreign Legion's procedures for funnelling volunteers into *Jeanne d'Arc* were sloppy. In the wake of the Hedilla Affair Franco ordered all foreigners in the Falange and Carlists to join the Foreign Legion (and thus *Jeanne d'Arc*) or leave Spain, but he never shook the tree hard enough to dislodge everyone. Even those who obeyed the order did not necessarily join the Frenchmen. White Russians approached to transfer to the unit in summer of 1937 simply refused, and other foreigners dodged the net. *Jeanne d'Arc* remained a mostly French concern.

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Colonel Yagüe disliked the French as much as he had the Irish. At the end of June he decided agents from France's secret service *Deuxieme Bureau* were posing as Nationalist supporters to infiltrate *Jeanne d'Arc*. He may have been right (on the other side, members of *La Cagoule* were posing as Communists to infiltrate the International Brigades) but his order to scrupulously background check every volunteer seemed intended more at limiting the French unit's numbers. Yagüe thinned out volunteers further by refusing to accept Frenchmen who lacked the backing of a rightist political party.

Bonneville de Marsagny's disorganisation compounded Yagüe's delays. The Frenchman spent much of the early days of the unit driving around Nationalist Spain in a car flyng his personal standard (a French tricolour with a fleur-de-lis on the white stripe) unable to locate barracks, weapons or uniforms. He gathered together groups of French volunteers then abandoned them. He would be spotted days later mixing with Spanish high society with a pretty girl on his arm while the discarded Frenchmen pooled their money to buy a loaf of bread. One disgruntled volunteer, imprisoned when he tried to desert, dubbed *Jeanne d'Arc* the '*La Bandera Fantôme*' (the ghost *bandera*). By August 1937 the company was only seventy-five strong.

Action Française representative General Lavigne-Delville made a surprise inspection in the summer and discovered Bonneville de Marsagny's reports on the readiness of the unit had been over optimistic. Rows ensued. Levigne-Delville and others in *Action Française* came to believe Bonneville de Marsagny had embezzled funds intended for *Jeanne d'Arc*.

In autumn 1937 the French company was blooded in fighting near

Oviedo, in the Asturias. Oviedo declared for the rebels after the rising and became an isolated spot of Nationalist resistance in a strip of Republican territory along the north coast. Mola's Army of the North eventually lifted the siege, then spread like damp at the Republic's expense.

Jeanne d'Arc found itself part of an attempt to push the stubborn rump of government troops into the sea. Bonneville de Marsagny was killed in the last days of the fighting, shot while commanding a group of his men during a government counter-attack. He refused treatment until the enemy was pushed back and died in a first aid station.

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Bonneville de Marsagny's death broke the link with *Action Française*. The movement liked to claim it ran the French unit but promised medical care, equipment, and 3,000 further volunteers failed to materialise. Any set up funds had long since been spent and the company's predominately PSF members, already acting against the wishes of Colonel De la Roque, had no loyalty to Maurras. It was well known in the unit that *Action Française* journalists had spent the previous months trying to prove De La Roque took bribes from the French government. *Jeanne d'Arc* cut itself adrift from France to sail on Spanish seas.

Prominent Oran PSF member Major Victor Monnier took over the company. Well liked, he died not long after his appointment in a bombing raid on Getafe near Madrid. According to company rumour, Monnier was given away by a lit cigarette in the blackout.

Command passed to Captain Jean Courcier, a PSF member from Algeria. Courcier had served in the Spahis, France's troops in Africa. He combined hardline discipline on duty with reckless pleasure seeking off it.

Troubled by disorganisation, political squabbles, and bad luck *Jeanne d'Arc* got off to a poor start, but at least the French right-wing had found a place in Franco's crusade against Communism. Other European rightists in search of a fascist Shangri-la would find only disappointment.

A Belgian national unit collapsed before it could take flight, a bisexual Norwegian Nazi had his illusions shattered in the Falange, and others lost their lives, limbs, and ideals.

21. FOR THE WRONG REASONS

International Fascism, South America, and Spain

Per Imerslund was never the same after Mexico. The expatriate Norwegian spent his teenage years in Colima, a town founded by sixteenth century Conquistadors in the shadow of the country's most active volcano. His seduction by an older man in the family home lit the fuse on a life of tormented bisexuality. It was all made worse by the knowledge that his lover, German teacher Johannes-Dietrich Disselhoff, was simultaneously having affairs with Imerslund's mother and bi-sexual father.[387]

A striking young man with a blond fringe, calm Nordic face, and chilly blue eyes, Imerslund escaped the dysfunctional sexual merry-go-round with long treks through rural Mexico. The unstable country had swapped governments at a record-breaking rate since the early twenties, going through fifteen administrations in eight years. The revolutions's promises of equality were long forgotten. Peasants sweated on rich men's haciendas as little more than slaves.

'It is better to die on your feet than live on your knees,' said Emiliano Zapata, the fallen champion of the poor, but those who stood up to landowners' militias were hunted down like dogs.[388]

The young Norwegian had literary ambitions but what began as a search for material to fill his notebook mutated into something deeper. Confronted with Mexico's injustice and abuse some would have turned to the left. The Norwegian went right. His politics became a mix of Pancho Villa and Nazi Brown Shirt, a fascism that sought to help the poor and dispossessed as it eliminated Jews, Freemasons, and Communists.

Imerslund returned to Europe for the thirties. In pre-Nazi Berlin he stood side by side with Hitler's stormtroopers in their street fights against Ernst Thälmann's *Rotfrontkämpferbund* (Red Front Fighter League). In 1933 he

took his politics back home.

Norway already had a far-right party. Vidkun Quisling's *Nasjonal Samling* (National Union - NS) got 28,000 votes in the previous year's elections. Imerslund thought Quisling's men were moderates. He imported a carbon copy of Nazism with the *Norges Nasjonalsocialistiske Arbeiderparti* (Norwegian National Socialist Workers Party - NNAP) but his attempts to outflank Quisling on the right were unsuccessful. The NNAP remained a flea on the skin of the larger party, reduced to personal attacks on the NS leader. Quisling's devout Christianity was a particular irritant to Imerslund, a pagan convert to the old Norse gods.

In 1936 Norway elected a left-wing government and the NNAP's extremists drifted to the outer fringes of national politics. The only media attention the party got came from Imerslund's recent literary celebrity. A best-seller, his first novel *Hestene Star Salet* (The Horses Are Saddled) preached youthful rebellion against a backdrop of Mexican trails and Inca ruins. Imerslund's picture stared from the dust jacket, aloof and boyish. The face that had infatuated Disselhoff photographed well.

Far-right artists were nothing new in Norway. Veteran writer Knut Hamsen, famous across Europe for the novel *Sult* (Hunger), was openly fascist. Artist Edvard Munch had sympathies.

Fame did not deflect Imerslund from politics. In 1935 Leon Trotsky, exiled from Stalin's Russia and fearing assassination, gained asylum in Norway. Imerslund intercepted Trotsky's mail, followed him around the country, and kept a record of who visited his home. 'Mostly Jews'.[389] On 6 August 1936 he sent a team of far-right militants to break into Trotsky's house near Oslo.

'The Fascists arrived at midnight, displayed fake police badges, and sought to begin the "house search" right away,' wrote Trotsky. 'Our host's daughter found this suspicious, did not lose her presence of mind, and stood with arms outspread in front of the door to my room, declaring that she would let no one enter. Five Fascists, still inexperienced in this kind of thing, found themselves put out of countenance by the courage of a young girl. Meanwhile, her younger brother gave the alarm; neighbours appeared on the scene - in their nightclothes. The frightened invaders fled, taking with them a few papers snatched at random from the nearest table. The next day, and without difficulty, the police established their identity.'[390]

The NNAP burglars claimed they were patriots protecting their country

from a dangerous revolutionary. At their trial they proved Trotsky had broken the terms of his asylum agreement by involving himself in political activity. The revelation did not keep them out of jail but it gave the government an excuse to expel its controversial guest. Trotsky shipped out to Mexico, appealingly left-wing since the 1934 election of Lázaro Cárdenas.

Imerslund also went abroad. The day after the burglary he left for Germany with copies of Trotsky's documents, which he handed over to Gestapo contacts. He went on to Paris where he masqueraded as a Trotskyite to get articles the Bolshevik veteran had written for French magazines while living in Norway. They provided useful defense material for his comrades' burglary trial.[391]

Back home the police were sniffing around Immerslund's role in the affair and life was getting difficult. In December he set off hoping to find fascist revolution in Franco's Spain. Six months later he lay shivering and disillusioned under a blanket in the back seat of a car making the long journey home. He was not the first fascist to be chewed up and spat out by Franco's regime, and he would not be the last.

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Trotsky had chosen the right continent to visit. South and Central America nations contributed 3,000 volunteers to the Republic. Only 500 fought for Franco. Nationalist support was strongest among the Catholic Church and the wealthy. They believed in *Hispanidad*, a pride in cultural and family links with Spain, and trumpeted Spanish rule as a golden age.

'Spain preserves its historical prestige by means of the present rebellion,' Mexican law professor and journalist Rubén Salazar Mallén wrote, convinced western culture could not mix with Communism.[392]

Imerslund's teenage home was among the most enthusiastically pro-Republican. Around 460 Mexicans joined the International Brigades while only ten enlisted with the other side, most rich expatriates resident in Spain.[393] In August 1936 President Lázaro Cárdenas, a lozenge-faced former jailkeeper, sold the Republic 20,000 rifles and 20,000,000 cartridges, with a further two million dollars worth of military aid following the next year.

Cárdenas' support was matched only by Paraguay which sold the Republic war material captured from the Bolivians in the 1920s Chaco war. Paraguayan help was less generous than it seemed. The rifles they sent

(M1927s, originally made in Spain a decade before) had a tendency to explode, earning the nickname ‘Paraguyan Killers’ from the men who used them.[394]

To demonstrate further goodwill Cárdenas sacked his ambassador General Manuel Pérez Treviño for sheltering 1,500 Nationalist supporters in the Madrid embassy grounds. The new ambassador Rámon de Negri presented his credentials to the government flanked by two bodyguards in sombreros with revolvers on their hips. De Negri’s efforts to expel Nationalists from the embassy to certain death at the hands of militia groups made both left and right wonder if he was a German agent out to discredit the Spanish Republic. Cárdenas stopped him, some thought reluctantly.[395]

The Colombian government backed the Republic and so did many of its citizens. Demand for news of the war was so great that newspaper *El Colombiano* ran out of ink and had to use inferior imports that blurred its copy. Popular support survived the August 1936 murder of seven Colombian students in Madrid. The Republic paid 250,000 pesos compensation to each family.

Franco’s contempt for democracy made even Colombian conservatives uneasy. ‘From Spain we are separated only by profound, almost instinctive, republican and democratic sentiments,’ right-wing newspaper *El Siglo* editorialised. Only one Colombian is known to have served with Franco’s forces. Luis Serrano Mantecha was studying military aviation in Granada when the war began.[396]

Things were different back in Europe where, in some circles, democracy seemed a worn-out anachronism.

‘Many people have come to me asking for help in enlisting in Nationalist Spain,’ said Belgian fascist Paul Hoornaert in the civil war’s first autumn. A former *lieutenant-patrouiller* decorated for his work clearing German trenches in the First World War, lawyer Hoornaert, eyes ringed with black circles like a panda, was head of the *Légion Nationale* (National Legion), a far-right movement from French-speaking Wallonia.

‘Among these visitors were – I am sure – a number of agents provocateurs. But the great majority were sincere men. To all of them, I replied: - ‘Nationalist Spain does not need men […] You, Belgian, stay in your own country. Soon perhaps, you will be needed here, to defend Belgium against the attempts at Red revolution which the Comintern schemes.’[397]

Hoornaert’s stance of non-intervention contrasted with his left-wing

opponents. The Communist parties of Europe and America manned and supported the International Brigades. Of the 35,000 men who fought in the Brigades, a third were members of their national Communist parties, and another 4,000 specially trained cadres ordered into Spain from exile in the Soviet Union.[398]

Rhetorical clichés about 'heroism in battle' and 'the glorious dead' condemned by the left in the First World War became acceptable when used about Spain. 'Get yourself killed,' the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) told Stephen Spender when the poet asked what he could do for the Republic, 'we need a Byron'.[399]

The deaths of men like John Cornford, Ralph Fox, and Christopher St John Sprigg created heroes (International Brigader Sid Quinn remembered Cornford as a 'bloody Greek god') but the deader the heroes, the weaker the party. [400] CPGB leader Harry Pollitt's oratory could bring tears to a glass eye and sent many to Spain but by 1937 he was hunting for more disposable volunteers amongst Labour Party activists.

Europe's fascist parties held back from sending militants into the mincing machine. Quisling threatened to expel *Nasjonal Samling* members who fought for Franco. British Union of Fascists (BUF) leader Sir Oswald Mosley declared 'Spain is not worth one drop of British blood!'[401] Jacques Doriot's PPF and De La Rocque's PSF forbade followers from joining Franco's army, as did Hoornaert's archrivals, the Wallonien Rexists of Léon Degrelle.

Hoonaert and his fellow would-be dictators could hear the drums in the distance: the sound of approaching civil war at home. The *Légion Nationale* prepared by stockpiling arms across Belgium while Doriot's men took part in military manoeuvres and drew up hit lists of politicians. Even Mosley daydreamed of meeting a Communist uprising with force. In late 1936 the artist Wyndham Lewis introduced Roy Campbell to the BUF leader. Mosley asked the South African technical questions about the use of mortars around the Alcázar. Campbell asked why he wanted to know.

'Because we may have to use them before long,' replied Mosley.

Campbell returned home depressed. 'He's on our side,' he told his wife, 'but for the wrong reasons'.[402]

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At the end of 1936 Per Imerslund arrived in Lisbon accredited as a journalist for Norwegian newspaper *Tidens Tegn*. His arrival coincided with a brief crackdown on Nationalist support by the Portuguese authorities designed to impress the Non-Intervention Committee. The blond Norwegian Nazi was an obvious target. Imerslund spent three days in prison on bogus charges of espionage before the Portuguese kicked him across the border.

In January 1937 he met fellow countryman Lars Gunnæs in Seville. Gunnæs, an organiser for Quisling in Telemark, disobeyed his party leader to serve in the Foreign Legion, one of only twenty or so Norwegians who volunteered for the Nationalist forces. Names like Roy Rossland and Sverre Gisvold appear in Legion paperwork.[403] Naval pilot Arnulf Holta Bjohnsen flew a German aeroplane as part of the Moroccan airlift but his warm welcome evaporated at the end of the year when he demanded 1,000 pesetas a day for combat missions. With the *Legion Condor* and *Aviazione Legionaria* in the air the Nationalists had no reason to agree. Bjohnsen was expelled from Spain for his cheek.[404]

Although fascists like Gunnæs were prepared to disobey their leaders, far-right parties lost few members to the war for one practical reason: no international network existed to transport them to Spain.

'Having decided to join the Nationalists I had no idea how to set about it,' said Peter Kemp, conservative not fascist but facing the same problems. 'Had I wished to join the International Brigades there would have been no problem; in every country there were organisations to attract volunteers. But the Nationalists showed no interest in recruiting in Britain'.[405]

Potential volunteers for the Nationalists had to make their own way to Spain. It was not cheap, especially for those with oceans to cross, and on arrival they faced an uncertain welcome. Carlists sent *Légion Nationale* member Paul Kehren back across the border in the autumn of 1936 when they discovered he wanted to join the Falangists. Two Irish pilots who offered their services in late 1937 were arrested as spies.

Some fascists made it. The only two BUF members to disobey Mosley and volunteer for Franco both served in the Falange. 'Charlie' Smith belonged to BUF Central Hackney branch and was a former member of Mosley's archrivals the Imperial Fascist League. Smith returned to London with a Falange uniform stuffed in his bag.[406] Peter Keen was born in Streatham, South London and worked in the theatre as a stage manager. Remembered by colleagues as a 'likeable character who was handy with his

fists' he served as a member of Mosley's bodyguard, the Special Detachment.[407] He earned a medal with the Spanish fascists.

Imerslund also ended up in the Falange. The Norwegian had not intended to fight but in February *Tidens Tegn* terminated his contract and failed to inform him. On journalist duty in Málaga he discovered his wages had failed to arrive. Funds soon ran low. Gunnæs, who would die during a March bombing raid on Toledo, suggested he join the war.

On 12 April Imerslund and seventy Spaniards arrived at a Falange unit stationed near Villa Nueva del Duque, northern Córdoba, Andalusia. Imerslund had his fascist illusions crushed in six weeks at the front. His fellow Falangists were not revolutionaries. Thuggishly uninterested in social issues, they preferred to brag about guns and dead Republicans. The poorest members of society, the peasants Imerslund thought fascism should help, were caught in the cross-fire and shot by both sides.

Imerslund's disenchantment deepened when news of the Hedilla Affair reached him in late April. The radicalism of the Falange was a dim enough bulb but Franco had revealed himself to be an open reactionary. Imerslund saw no hope of right-wing revolution in Spain.[408]

Others felt the same way. But they were happy about it.

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Where Per Imerslund saw stagnation, others saw stability. The BUF Limehouse, East London branch was formed by local Catholics who thought fascism synonymous with the *Generalissimo*'s religious conservatism.

'[My friend] was saying about all the Civil War in Spain, and the Reds killing the priests and burning the nuns,' a Limehouse founder said. 'Of course the newspapers were full of it. He said, "You know, it's very serious this" […] he said, "I am going to join the British Union" […] so I went along'.[409]

Non-Catholic Christians saw much to admire. Wealthy Norfolk landowner and Tory Party stalwart Andrew Fountaine fought for Franco. Although later a leading light in the British far-right, he opposed fascism and Communism equally in the pre-war years to the point where he drove an ambulance for Haile Selassie during the Italian invasion of Abyssinia. Like Imerslund he recognised Franco's conservatism. Unlike the Norwegian he agreed with it.[410]

Equally at home in the Francoist zone were eight members of the Belgian aristocracy, most of whom joined the Foreign Legion. The Duc de Fernan-Nunez died near Madrid as an officer in the Legion and in 1937 Baron Bausouin Greindl shared his fate. Bausoin Greindl's name was given to a fleet of ambulances organised for the Nationalists by the Wallonien far-right. Also in Legion uniform was Edouard de Paul de Barchifontaine, notorious in Belgium for organising a 1928 attack on a Soviet exhibition in Brussels.

Belgium was two separate nations, French-speaking Wallonia and Flemish-speaking Flanders. They were bonded by common government, the Catholic Church, and King Leopold III but separated by culture, language, and temperament. Flemish extreme-right separatist movements, like Gustave de Clerq's *Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond* and Joris van Severen's *Dinaso*, showed little interest in Spain.

Wallonien fascists passionately supported Franco but kept their followers on a tight leash, Léon Degrelle more successfully than his rival Hoonaert. Only Rexist militant Celestin Hastir is known to have disobeyed Degrelle's prohibition on volunteering. Never above rewriting history, Degrelle would later claim 'we were against the Reds who terrorised Spain. Some of our comrades enlisted in the ranks of Franco's volunteers'.[411]

The Belgian aristocrat whose star shone the brightest was Rodolphe, Count de Hemricourt de Grunne. Short, dark, and bushy browed, the playboy abandoned a life of idle luxury to fight a personal crusade against Communism, becoming a fighter ace in the Nationalist Air Force.

De Grunne had spent his adult years enjoying himself in Brussels night clubs. At twenty-five all he had to show for life was an aching liver and a pilot's license, only earned to spite his sister after she boasted about her flying lessons. The civil war awoke in De Grunne a previously unknown desire to fight 'for the Right and for Religion'.[412] Beneath the dilettante shell was a devout Catholic for whom the war was a religious crusade.

On 7 October he joined the Falange *Centuria Argentina*, a volunteer Argentinean infantry unit, around fifty strong. In one of his first letters home the aristocrat asked contacts in Belgium to send over examples of Rexist propaganda for his fellow soldiers (De Grunne's uncle was one of Degrelle's senators) 'because the Rexists have lots of support here'.[413]

De Grunne had no opportunity to distribute Rexist propaganda. Wounded in late November on the Santander front in northern Spain he spent

the rest of 1936 in hospital. A Spanish pilot in the next bed suggested the Belgian's talents would be better used in the Air Force. De Grunne agreed. He had no unit to rejoin. Most of his Argentinean comrades were crippled or dead.

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Argentina had strong connections with Spain. Fifteen percent of the population were Spanish immigrants and everyday staples like olive oil, soap, and ham came from the mother country.[414] Nationalist support was strong. Two hundred Argentineans resident in Spain when the rising began fought for the Nationalists and another 100 volunteers travelled from Argentina.[415] *Legionarios Cívicos de Francos* (Civilian Legionnaires of Franco) collected millions of pesos for the Spanish rebels. Rich dilettante Alonso de Drysdale gave the Burgos government £20,000 sterling and 400,000 tins of Argentinean corned beef.

Argentinean diplomats retained links with the Republic. When Uruguay broke off relations with the Republic after a mob murdered the three sisters of its vice-consul, Argentina took over its neighbour's diplomatic duties. A handful of Uruguayans, including pilots Antonio Arribas, Benito Arribas, and Bernardo Corrosso, fought for Franco.

To the north, the right-wing *Açâo Integralista Brasileira* (Brazilian Integralist Action) magazine *Offensiva* (Offense) eulogised Argentinean and other South American volunteers passing through Rio de Janeiro on their way to Spain.

'I saw them when, attracted by the force of our common ideal, they came to look at the writings of *Offensiva*,' wrote a hack for the magazine. 'I greeted them, as Integralists, in the name of the head of our movement. Seeing them, I saw how much the serious, sublime and transcendental illuminated them'.[416]

The Integralists combined jackboots, uniforms, and nationalism with odd flashes of liberalism. They supported women's rights, a novelty in Brazil, and had black activists like João Cândido, the son of former slaves.

The movement's solidarity with Franco's South American volunteers did not extend to recruitment. The Integralists were too busy fighting off the attempts by Brazilian dictator Getúlio Dornelles Vargas, a former ally, to crush their movement. He got his chance in May 1938 when an early

morning Integralist coup failed after the army intervened. The movement disintegrated in the ensuing crack down. Only twenty Brazilian volunteers fought for the Nationalists, most influenced by Portugal's support for Franco.

The Peruvian government, too absorbed in a bloody civil conflict with native Indians to pay much attention to Spain, registered some pro-Franco sympathies. Peruvian rightists saw parallels between the two struggles.

'Today they are fighting at the gates of Madrid', said a *Le Prensa* journalist. 'They could just as well be fighting at the gates of Lima'.[417]

Peruvian journalist and poet Felipe Sassone lived in Madrid before the civil war and had contacts with the Falange. Arrested after the rising, only intervention by the Peruvian ambassador saved him from execution. Sassone then devoted himself to radio propaganda from the Nationalist zone. Brothers Carlos and Guillermo Arnaiz Gallo joined the Nationalist ranks, as did the Jesuit son of a politician, José Panizo, who fought with the artillery on the Madrid front. Pascual Obando Delgado fought for Franco but ended up in a Republican prison cell.[418]

Cuban strongman Colonel Fulgencio Batista, a glossy-haired former tailor, supported Franco but kept his feelings private. His soldiers were known for their liberal sympathies. Outside the barracks, civilian Cuba had a strong vein of Nationalist support and 100 Cubans fought for Franco, including José Rivero, son of a prominent Havana newspaper editor, and José Maria Ozores Laredo, later to reinvent himself as fashion designer Miguel Ferreras.[419]

The Philippines, a former Spanish colony now part of the commonwealth of the United States, provided at least 40 Nationalist volunteers.[420] Most were from Manila's ethnic Spanish community but some, including Don Luis Gonzalez, were of mixed Spanish and Filipino background.[421] Gonzales met Franco in the frontline and remembered how pleased the Nationalist leader was to find Filipinos in his army. A stronger, darker memory was the way captured Communists sang the Internationale as they stood before the firing squad.[422]

The Spanish pilot Ignacio Jiménez, married into a Filipino family, started a Falange branch in Manila before joining the war with his brother when they heard Republican militia had executed their father in Barcelona. Martin Pou took over as Falange leader but lost the post after local conservative members, unhappy with his radicalism, intrigued with contacts

in Nationalist Spain.[423]

The Filipino Catholic Church, especially the Dominican order, supported Franco, as did local oligarchs like Andrés Soriano, who ran the San Miguel brewery in Manila. Reactions to Spain on the Filipino right were coloured by the May 1935 Sakdal uprising, when a radical political movement popular amongst peasants and the urban poor rose against the government and demanded independence from America. Soriano and his friends saw the failed uprising as Communism, only lightly diluted, while others saw pale shades of fascism in Sakdal links with Imperial Japan.[424]

Guatemalan leader Jorge Ubico ('crazier than a half dozen opium smoking frogs' in the opinion of Nicaraguan politician Tomás Borge) sent an ambassador to Franco in 1937 to assure him that 'Guatemala was following with sympathy and interest the Nationalist uprising's development'.[425] At least one volunteer, Monzon Toledo, joined the Nationalist forces. In 1936 Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua recognised Franco's government. Chile remained pro-Franco until 1938 when the Chilean Popular Front took power. The right-wing's predictions that Chile would share Spain's fate came to nothing. A handful of Chileans fought in the Nationalist ranks. Dr Juan Francisco Jiménez was executed by the Republicans when captured, despite the pleas from Santiago. Pilot Luis Omar Page was in the Republican zone when the war broke out, where he was known for right-wing sympathies. Anarchists attacked his house and killed his young son. Sentenced to death for counter-revolutionary activities, Page escaped and hid in the Chilean embassy. In the Francoist zone he formed the *Squadron Blanca* and avenged his son by dropping bombs on Republican cities.

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In May 1937, Per Imerslund disappeared from the front line. Disillusioned by Spanish politics and worn down hiding his sexuality from macho comrades, he entered hospital with a recurrence of malaria caught in Mexico years before. Norwegian newspaper *Aftenposten* announced he had been killed in action and NNAP comrades in Oslo held a wake.[426]

The eulogies were barely over when a letter arrived from Imerslund begging for help. His friends drove through Europe to pick him up at the border. Imerslund returned to Norway shivering with fever in the back of the car.

His exit from the Falange coincided with the order for all foreigners to join the Foreign Legion in the aftermath of the Hedilla Affair. *Légion Nationale* militant Paul Kehren, a champion motorcyclist back home, and five other Belgians from the Falange were guided into the French *Jeanne D'Arc* company, among the few non-French to join.

Kehren had crossed the border in May 1937 with the help of Italy after the Carlists expelled him the previous year. He had earned Rome's gratitude for agreeing to help an Italian consulate official assassinate the Spanish Republican ambassador in Brussels. The plot fell through after details were leaked to Hoornaert, who objected to murder, but the Italians showed their appreciation by smoothing the way of Kehren and five comrades into the Falange.

In Belgium, Kehren had idealised the Falange as fellow fascist revolutionaries. He joined them at their lowest ebb, within weeks of the Hedilla episode.

'They were not the miraculous army which I had imagined,' he said. 'A shirt, trousers and a cap were our uniform. Add to that a blanket and slippers. Soldiers in slippers!'[427]

Transferred into the *Jeanne D'Arc* Kehren met Juan Alfonso Van Horrembeke, a Belgian with Spanish family connections. Van Horrembeke spent more time trying to talk the quick tempered motorcyclist out of trouble than he did cleaning his rifle. Despite Van Horrembeke's efforts Kehren regularly found himself on punishment duty for insubordination. Kehren's attitude got worse after his friend Robert Sechehaye from Brussels, who wanted to fight '*pour Dieu et pour L'Espagne*', died in the *Jeanne D'Arc* at the autumn 1938 battle of the Ebro.

Kehren was one of fifty Belgians, most from the *Légion Nationale*, who fought for Franco. The number could have been greater. In July 1937 a Belgian veteran of the Falange militia and *Légion* activist, Jean de Bie, approached Nationalist agents in Brussels with an offer of military assistance: a 500 strong Belgian legion.

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Jean De Bie had gone to Spain in late 1936 as a war correspondent for conservative newspaper *XXe Siècle* but abandoned his typewriter to join the Falangist *Bandera de Madrid*. Stationed near Santander when the Hedilla

Affair went off De Bie was arrested by Franco's troops. Given the choice of *Jeanne d'Arc* or Belgium he chose to return home.

Impressed by the concept if not the reality of the French unit De Bie set up the barebones of a recruitment network among fellow *Légion Nationale* militants. The figure of 500 volunteers was plucked out of the air (he had only a fraction of that) but De Bie's idea was popular enough with Wallonien fascists to make him believe the Belgian Legion could be a going concern. A Nationalist representative in Brussels referred the idea to Franco. The *Generalissimo* turned it down.

As Hooneart had pointed out, Nationalist Spain did not need any more men. De Bie returned to Spain but refused to join the Foreign Legion. Believing the Italians possessed more revolutionary spirit, he became an instructor in one of the mixed Spanish-Italian units formed after the CTV's humiliating defeat at Guadalajara. He was joined by other *Légion* militants disillusioned with Franco's fascist credentials but unwilling to give up the fight.

The *Légion Nationale* would eventually claim the glory for its disobedient militants. In 1938 Hoornaert gave up on non-intervention when his personal bodyguard Eugène Durinx enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion. He appointed Durinx leader of all *Légion* men in Spain. Not long after, the death of Robert Sechehaye became an occasion for Hoonaert to claim he had 'died for western and Christian civilisation'.[428] By 1939 Hoornaert had convinced himself the *Légion* had been actively recruiting for the Nationalists.

Belgian aristocrat De Grunne had already left the Falange and become a fighter pilot by the time Franco ordered out its foreign volunteers. After an uneventful year flying patrols in northern Spain he was hit by anti-aircraft fire while flying in sub zero temperatures over Teruel in early 1938 and forced into an emergency landing that wrecked his aeroplane but left him unhurt. He shot down his first plane in March that year. Nine more kills followed. A Polikarpov I-15 machine-gunned out of the sky, a Grumman Delphin sent spiralling into the ground in plumes of smoke, others clinically despatched through the gun sights. A fighter ace, De Grunne would fly 425 missions and 794 flying hours, his appetite for war diminishing with each pilot he shot down.

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Per Imerslund recuperated from his attack of malaria in the company of former Quisling followers around Hans Jacobsen's magazine *Ragnarok*. The group, which included the composer Geirr Tveitt, was strongly pagan and propagandised for a political alliance between all Nordic racial stock in northern Europe. They admired Nazi Germany but refused to be subordinate to Hitler.

Ragnarok published Imerslund's articles about Spain that *Tidens Tegn* had refused to print. The August 1937 edition of the magazine was devoted to the civil war and had an undiluted pro-Franco favour. But after the Spain issue mentions of the *Generalissimo* grew fewer and fewer. Privately, Imerslund raged against the reactionary clericalism descending like fog over the Nationalist zone [429]

Not every fascist shared Imerlsund's disenchantment. Aristocratic British right-winger Unity Mitford attended a 10 April 1938 'Save Peace, Save Spain' rally in Hyde Park to heckle leftist Stafford Cripps and his call to arm the Republic. Her bodyguard of BUF men gave fascist salutes. The crowd turned on them and the fascists had 'to fight like tigers', in the words of BUF photographer John Warburton, to get Mitford onto a passing bus.[430] Among the bloodied BUF men speeding down Park Lane was Peter Keen. The Hedilla Affair had not blunted his appetite for Spanish politics.

Other BUF members disobeyed Mosley to help the Nationalists. At the start of 1938 the British government impounded Spanish ships owned by both Franco and the Republicans pending litigation about their ownership. Franco's representative contacted BUF Director General of Organisation Neil Francis Hawkins to suggest hijacking the Nationalist-owned *Rita Garcia* and sailing it to contacts in Hamburg. After a false start when BUF members loyal to Mosley rebuffed the Spaniard, Hawkins got around non-intervention policy by putting him in touch with East End members who could be trusted to keep their mouths shut.

'Westminster [branch] said, "You might find some of the boys sympathetic, but we believe in Britain for the British. We don't believe in getting involved in foreign affairs, not good for our image. But, if you'd like to find some chaps, you'll very likely find someone sympathetic down there",' recalled Archie Wilson. 'So they came down to Bethnal Green and Limehouse'.[431]

In early 1938 twelve BUF men overpowered *Rita Garcia*'s crew at Immingham Dock, Grimsby and sailed it to Hamburg. The East End fascists

were supposed to be merchant seamen but few of the group had ever been to sea.

'The waves were three times higher than [a] house,' said Wilson, 'and the boat was up there, next minute it was down there.'[432]

Encouraged by their success the East Enders tried to seize an impounded Republican ship in Cardiff but Welsh dockers ambushed them and chased the fascists back to London.

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On 3 June 1937 General Mola's aeroplane smashed into Alococero hill, near Burgos while he was overseeing operations against the last scraps of Republican territory on the north coast. His death removed from the scene the only military leader with a public profile approaching that of Franco.

The *Generalissimo* took control of the northern operations. His troops brushed Republican resistance aside as they raced towards the sea. They advanced so fast those behind the lines could barely keep track of the towns falling day by day to the Nationalists.

On a bellyful of wine and a good lunch, Englishman Rupert Bellville played cheerleader to Franco's men with an aeroplane, a crate of sherry, and some incorrect information from a waiter. It was a miscalculation that would put him in front of a firing squad.

22. BULLET IN THE HEAD

Rupert Bellville, Peter Kemp, and the Polish Right

On 25 August 1937 Rupert Bellville stepped unsteadily out of an aeroplane at Santander airfield, northern Spain with a glass of sherry in his hand. Richardo Gonzales, a friend from Andalusia, tumbled out behind him. Bellville raised his glass to a group of soldiers waiting for them and yelled '*Viva Franco*!' The reception committee's leader slapped Bellville's drink to the tarmac. Santander still belonged to the Republic.

The war was just over a year old. The Nationalists held the west and most of the north. Franco had spent the summer of 1937 mopping up the remaining spots of Republican territory on the northern coast. In July he was interrupted by a surprise attack on Brunete, west of Madrid. What initially seemed to be a diversionary attack quickly became something bigger as a huge Republican force, commanded by General Janos Gal, ploughed into the town.[433]

Brunete fell on 7 July and Gal forced Franco's men back to Boadilla del Monte village. The *Legion Condor*'s Messerschmitt 109 fighters went into action and proved to be the fastest aeroplanes in Spanish skies, outclassing opposition *Ratas* as they dropped high explosive on the Republican advance. When both sides collapsed exhausted at the end of the month the Republic had gained twenty square miles, paid for with 25,000 casualties and 100 downed aircraft. The International Brigades took heavy losses and the Polish XIII Brigade was so badly mauled it mutinied. Commanding officer Vincenzo Bianca had to shoot dead one of his own men to restore order. The Nationalists took 17,000 casualties and lost twenty-three aircraft. Both sides claimed victory.

In August the Nationalists returned to their northern assault with an attack on Santander, a town named after a fourth century saint whose

decapitated head, according to local legend, had washed up on the shore. Once the summer vacation spot of Alfonso XIII, the wealthy and well-fed town was home to an organised underground force of Francoists waiting for the right moment.

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Since his days in a Falangist firing squad Rupert Bellville had become rich. His father died in September 1936, leaving Papillon Hall and £105,000. Bellville drank hard and acted dumb. In August, the American journalist Virginia Cowles prised him away from Biarritz's roulette wheel to fly her down to San Sebastián. Bellville swigged gin all the way then abandoned Cowles when the airport authorities detained her. She talked her way out of trouble and found Bellville, oblivious to her problems, drinking with a bullfighter in a local bar.

In late August, Bellville was having an alcoholic lunch with Richardo Gonzales in San Sebastián when their conversation was interrupted by the clanging of church bells. Their waiter announced Santander had fallen. With wine singing in their veins the pair decided to fly in a celebratory case of sherry for Franco's victorious troops.

Santander had not fallen. Republican militia arrested the pair at the airfield. Bellville claimed to be a journalist while Gonzales posed as Englishman 'Richard Gilbey' and stuffed papers identifying him as 'specially authorised by the Franco government to investigate crimes committed by the Marxist canaille' under the pilot seat.[434] As the pair was interrogated they could see shell bursts from Nationalist artillery landing on nearby hills.

Militia chiefs forced Bellville to pilot senior officers to government-held Llanes, west of the besieged town. A revolver at his back, Bellville flew low, skimming waves 100 yards off the coast. Three Nationalist Heinkel fighter planes picked up his scent.

'Like a flushed snipe I zigzagged about,' he wrote in the *Evening Standard*, 'over first the sea and then the land, with the rat-tat-tat of the machine guns in my ears'.[435]

He shook off his pursuers and earned a drink at Llanes airport bar from his passengers but the backslapping stopped when engineers found Gonzales' papers in the cockpit. Militia arrested Bellville as a Francoist spy.

At Santander airfield Gonzales aka Gilbey, who claimed not to speak

Spanish, listened poker-faced as two Republican officers debated whether to shoot him. They were still talking when a motorcyclist roared up and announced Nationalist troops had entered the town.

Alongside Franco's men were 25,000 Italians of the CTV (now reorganised into the *Littorio* division, the Black Flames, and the XXIII Marzo Division) and the Black Arrows, an 8,000 strong mixed Italian-Spanish unit. Seventy aircraft of the Condor Legion flew in support. Nationalist attackers totalled 90,000 and Republican defenders 80,000 but the latter had little air support and morale was low. Many were Basques, the fight knocked out of them after the bombing of Guernica. Ships steamed away from the docks as the Nationalist forces closed in. Defenders swam into the Bay of Biscay to drown rather than surrender.

'One of the officers turned to [Gonzales],' wrote Virginia Cowles, who got the story from Bellville, 'ripped the insignia off his own coat, and said dramatically: "It is not you who will die today." Then he took out his revolver, went to the other side of a hill, and shot himself'.[436]

Gonzales dropped his English charade when Nationalist troops overran the airport. Amongst them was Peter Kemp, driving a confiscated Citröen coupe.

*

Kemp had returned to Spain in February 1937. Sent to a unit manning the La Marañosa heights over the valley of Jarama, the Englishman restarted his war squatting in a shallow trench as he waited for International Brigade troops to attack from an olive grove. Wave upon wave of men rushed Requeté positions but were shot down as they broke cover. 'Sheer bloody murder'.[437]

He moved to another besieged position in the spring of 1937, missing the Irish Brigade's arrival at La Marañosa by a few weeks. His new companions of the *Tercio de Nuestra Señora de Begoña* put more faith in God's protection than in fortifications. Company commander Captain Santo Domingo calmly directed fire silhouetted against the skyline and bloodthirsty chaplain Father Vicente pointed out targets – 'Don't let him get away! Ah! Don't let him get away! Shoot, man, shoot!' - often jumping out of the trenches to give the last rites to a dying Requeté.[438]

'Father Vicente would leap from the trench and run down the hill to where the body lay, the purple tassel of his beret flying in the wind,' said

Kemp. ‘There he would kneel, oblivious to the bullets churning the earth around them, while he prayed over the dead or dying man’.[439]

In the summer of 1937 Kemp transferred to another Carlist unit on the Bilbao front. Fighting alongside the Nationalist and Italian troops storming Santander, he looted a car and drove into town as resistance collapsed. Nationalist supporters shook his hand, wives kissed him, their daughters kept a respectable distance. Shell-shocked defenders wandered the streets.

Also in action for the Nationalists along the northern coast was South African Pieter Krueler, a far-right Boer embittered by the deaths of his family in the Anglo-Boer War. In June 1937, already in his fifties, he offered his services to Franco.

Hard as granite, the Boers were self-reliant racists transplanted from Holland to southern Africa. In 1899 their strained coexistence with the British Empire broke down. Three years of guerrilla warfare across the veldt killed 4,000 Boer soldiers and 20,000 women and children. Krueler’s mother, sister and younger brother died in a British concentration camp, his father passed away as a prisoner of war, and his elder brother was killed in battle. Krueler saw action in the early months of 1900 as a teenage messenger and had his horse shot out from under him at the battle of Kimberley. At the end of the war he was a fifteen-year-old orphan.

Krueler moved to Hoachanas in German South-West Africa (now Namibia) and became a policeman. When the First World War began he offered his services to Britain’s enemy and served in a German scout unit. Under the command of Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck the scouts waged hit-and-run warfare against the Allies through Africa’s malarial river tributaries. Krueler saw action in Northern Rhodesia and the Congo, and was decorated for his part in holding back the British at Mgela in German East Africa. He was still standing, having fought off disease, ambush, and snake bite, when von Lettow-Vorbeck ceased operations on 17 November 1918, a week after the armistice in Europe.

By the 1930s Krueler was married and working in the South African mines as a demolitions expert. In 1936 a miscalculation with a stick of dynamite put him in a hospital bed. He spent the time reading about Spain.

‘I remember trying to work out who was on the side of right, General Francisco Franco Bahamonde or the Republicans,’ he said. ‘I then heard there was a good deal of money to be made as a mercenary, so I volunteered’.[440]

Few Nationalist volunteers made any money out of the war and Krueler

was no exception. From June 1937 he fought with mountain fighters loyal to Franco from the recently conquered Basque region. Krueler's unit saw action in skirmishes with Republican border police in the Pyrenees. Krueler thought his men 'incredible and very brave'.[441]

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A congratulatory telegram from Mussolini to his CTV commanders appeared in Italian newspapers after the fall of Santander. It was the first public acknowledgement of the unit's presence in Spain. Foreign Minister Ciano ordered Italians soldiers to send back Republican guns and flags.

'A flag taken from the enemy,' he wrote in his diary, 'is worth more than any picture'.[442] While Ciano planned a victory display, Rupert Bellville was in prison at Gijon, a humid coastal town, locked in a cell with only a damp-paged history of Socialism for company. The gaoler quizzed him on his politics.

'Conservative.'

'Just another name for a Fascist,' said the gaoler. [443]

Crowds gathered outside the prison shouting for blood. A firing squad was assembled. Bellville tried to think of some suitable last words.

'I decided that I would just say that an Englishman, too, knew how to die. And I remembered that that, in any case, it would be dark and they would not be able to see if my hands shook or my knees knocked together'.[444]

Bellville never had the chance to test his courage. Sympathisers in Gijon informed the British embassy in Madrid about the situation and His Majesty's diplomats arranged Bellville's release. Expelled from Spain on HMS *Foresight*, the *Evening Standard* paid him £500 for his story when he got to France. Bellville lost it in one night at Biarritz casino.

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'Although not gifted with exceptional foresight, even I could see the Second World War was looming over the horizon, and I felt it was high time I began to prepare myself for it,' said Peter Kemp. 'Besides, I thought, if I was going to fight this war I might as well do it properly'.[445]

On 26 October Kemp transferred into the Spanish Foreign Legion with his officer rank of *Alférez*. He was assigned to the 56th (machine gun)

company of XIV *bandera*.

The soldiers under Kemp's command were insubordinate drunk gamblers. Money changed hands on who could piss the highest or eat the biggest piece of glass. His fellow officers were brave but brutal.

'I shit on Englishmen,' Kemp's superior Captain Guiterrez Almajach told him.[446] Almajach's counterpart in neighbouring 55th company shot up bars when drunk and was once discovered fighting a bull in Málaga when he should have been in the front line.

Suspecting he was a *turista de guerra* (war tourist) the Spanish legionnaires treated Kemp with suspicion. One of the few friendly faces was a Polish aristocrat, another Requeté transfer.

Urbane horseman Count Ludwik Karol Lubicz-Orłowski spoke English 'in a careful, precise manner, as though each word were a trip-wire that might set off an explosion'.[447] The count was anxious to correct the impression given by Poland's recent sale of $36 million worth of weapons to the Spanish Republic. His homeland, he assured Kemp, was a full-blooded supporter of Franco.

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In November 1936 right-wing Polish newspaper *Dziennik Bydgoski* (Bydgoszcz Daily) proposed the creation of a Polish legion in the Nationalist army. In France, a Polish exile newspaper claimed Franco had said he would welcome Polish volunteers into his forces. It looked like Lubicz-Orłowski was right.

With the exception of a few failed rebellions and a doomed alliance with Napoleon, Catholic Poland had spent the last 150 years partitioned by Russia, Germany, and Austro-Hungary. The First World War ruined the three empires but Poland had to fight a bloody war with the Bolsheviks, stopped at the gates of Warsaw in 1920 by Marshal Józef Piłsudski, before it could secure its independence.

The former socialist Piłsudski ('Comrades, I took the red tram of Socialism to the stop called Independence, and that's where I got off') soon became dictator of Poland on a right-wing populist platform with just enough elections to give a cloud-cover of democracy.[448] After his death in 1935 Piłsudski's followers fragmented into squabbling cliques under new leader Edward Rydz-Śmigły, trading government positions and arguing over the

Marshal's legacy. The post-Piłsudski administration was officially the *Sanacja* ('cleansing') regime but contained so many army officers that Poles knew it as the 'Rule of the Colonels'.

In July 1936 the entire staff of the Spanish embassy in Warsaw went over to the Nationalists. Ambassador Juan Serrat y *Valera* compared Franco's cause with the Poles' defense of their country against the Soviets. The comparison resonated with the Polish government. Although *Sanacja* sold weapons to the Republic, better quality munitions were secretly funnelled to the Nationalists. In Madrid, Polish diplomats sheltered 200 Francoists in their embassy grounds.

The Polish Church supported Franco. 'On its victory or defeat hangs in great measure the collapse or triumph of the Red minions of the Antichrist', said the influential Father Franciszek Kwiatkowski about the Nationalist cause. War crimes were overlooked.

'Cruelty, crime, and all sorts of atrocities were to be found exclusively in the Red camp,' wrote Jesuit publication *Przegląd Powszechny* (General Review), '[whereas the Nationalists committed no more than] acts of perhaps severe but necessary repression'.[449]

Dziennik Bydgoski''s Polish legion failed to get off the ground for the same reasons that crippled similar a Greek effort: lack of finance, Franco's indifference, and a trickle rather than deluge of volunteers. Polish rightists supported Franco but their political crystal ball predicted a coming war with the Red Army or Germany.

'If I were to follow the reflex of my feelings, I would put on a red beret of the Requetés and enlist in their fighting ranks,' said rightist politician and journalist Jedrzej Giertych. 'Unfortunately I am not allowed to follow this reflex. We are in an extraordinary position. We are absent from Spain not because we would not like to go there but because the exceptionally great tasks, which await us at home, do not allow us to abandon our posts. I must be at home, and we must all remain here. Nothing but duty dictates this to us'.[450]

German military aid for the Nationalists dampened but did not drown Francoist support in Poland. 'Wouldn't we prefer for Franco to defeat the Soviet tanks and the airplanes of [French Prime Minister] Mr Blum, without the assistance of the Krauts?' asked monarchist newspaper *Słowo* (Word). 'But of course yes. But should we switch to the pro-Bolshevik camp at the moment of the appearance of the German volunteers on Spanish territory? Of

course not …’[451]

The Communist Party had been illegal since 1920 but pockets of Republican support existed in Poland. Polish trade unions, even those backed by the government, opposed Franco. When a mill-owner donated 2,000 *złoty* to Nationalist Spain, local left-wingers blockaded his mill and had to be dispersed by the police. Over 5,000 Polish men fought in the International Brigades, most exile members of the Polish Communist Party in Paris. Only 500 made their way to Spain from Eastern Europe. Brigade recruitment in Poland was so low key that some volunteers had to visit more liberal Czechoslovakia to enlist.

One enthusiastic left-winger who joined up in Prague was not what he seemed. Tadeusz Ungar was really a radical-right law student on the run from the Polish police. Ungar wanted to fight for Franco but lacked the funds to get to Spain. He got there as a member of the Brigades then deserted and joined the Foreign Legion.

‘Communism is the worst mutation of cancer-rabies of the brain,’ said Ungar. ‘General Franco was right to have said it could only be exterminated with very drastic measures: a bullet in the head’.[452]

Around 100 Poles fought for Franco, a third of them pilots. Tadeusz Bujakowski and the pseudonym ‘Kadet’ are mentioned in Nationalist records in connection to 1937 bombing missions. The Warsaw newspaper *Nowy Wieczór* (New Evening) serialised bomber pilot Tadeusz Strychowski’s exploits dropping bombs on Madrid.

Back in August 1936 Stefan Czarnecki, a Polish arms dealer from Danzig, contacted British Airways at Gatwick to buy four Fokker F.XIIs. Czarnecki claimed he was setting up an airline in Katowice, southern Poland. He handed over £33,000. The aeroplanes were worth more but British Airways was anxious to get rid of them after a previous buyer had lied about their destination and tried to ship them to Nationalist Spain. They were impounded in Bordeaux and returned, with some strong words from the French police.

British Airways were about to get tricked again. Czarnecki’s Polish pilots turned up at Gatwick with a Katowice flight plan but once in the air they headed for Francoist territory. Two made it to Spain but one Fokker smashed its undercarriage landing in fog at La Rochelle’s military airport and the other, flown by Count Kazimiercz Lasocki, crashed at Biarritz, killing the aristocrat and one of Czarnecki’s representatives.[453]

Other Polish volunteers were found in the land forces. Antoni Pardo joined the Spanish Foreign Legion and was wounded, decorated, and promoted to lieutenant. Legion recruiting paperwork also contains names like Raviski, Sroka, and Szypula. Colonel Andre Radziwill fought alongside White Russians in the Carlists.

The Polish group that might be expected to show the most enthusiasm for fighting in Spain was pre-occupied with events back home. Bolesław Piasecki's *Ruch Narodowo-Radykalny* (National Radical Movement – RNR) was popularly known as the *Falanga* after the title of its main publication. The Spanish connection, which pre-dated the civil war, was less emphatic than the name implied. José Antonio's movement had little influence on RNR policy.

The blond and self-confident Piasecki believed his small fascist movement, with its beige shirts and green stylised sword logo, had a chance to take power in Poland. He planned a coup with renegade members of *Sanacja* for October 1937, seeing himself as the eastern General Franco. Pre-emptive arrests quietly snuffed out the plan before it could take place.[454]

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The Spanish civil war haunted the Polish imagination for many years. Ksawery Pruszyński ran the ashes through his hands in the short story *Różaniec z granatów* (Rosary of Grenades).

A fierce opponent of government hypocrisy, the Catholic Pruszyński had supported Zionism since his days at university when he battled anti-Semitic thugs in the lecture halls. He travelled to Palestine, lived amongst Jewish settlers, and wrote a best-selling book about it on his return. Leftist by temperament, he appreciated the conflict stirred in Poland's soul by the civil war.

Pruszyński visited Republican Spain as a war correspondent for the liberal *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News) and was impressed by the 'great, necessary revolution'.[455] His newspaper reports boosted the Basque Catholics and criticised the Polish right for supporting a rising whose original leader (General Sanjuro) had been a Freemason. But Pruszyński was even handed enough to admit the murder of civilians by Madrid's execution squads sickened him.

Różaniec z granatów concerns a young Pole in the International Brigades

who is captured by Francoist forces. They are about to execute him when he shows them his rosary.

‘Are you a good Catholic?’ they ask him. ‘Do you believe in God?’

‘Of course,’ he tells them. ‘When I look at this cross and think about my mother I believe in God. But when I see a fat priest standing among you with a revolver at his hip I believe in nothing’.

Despite his reply the Nationalists decide he is a good Catholic and send him to prison. Friendly Moroccan guards take him out of his cell for a night and he visits a house where foreign observers and soldiers - French, German, Italian, and Polish - are playing cards. A Polish officer sees the young man and shouts at him: ‘You are not a Pole anymore! You are a Bolshevik! Poland is ashamed of you!’ The Moroccans are ordered to return him to his cell.

Later volunteers from the Irish Brigade visit and ask why a good Catholic is fighting against Franco’s holy crusade. They decide to help him escape.

Seven years later the young man is an Allied soldier dying in a French hospital after fighting the Germans during the Second World War. A Polish Colonel visits him to pin on a medal. ‘Poland is very proud of you!’ It is the officer from the house in Spain. The young man whispers weakly ‘Don’t you remember me, Colonel?’

The Colonel’s face crumples up in confusion. The two men can find no words.[456]

*

Franco valued Polish support enough not to complain when it sold weapons to the Republic. When liberal Czechoslovakia did the same he raged at the Prague government. Czechoslovakia favoured the Republic but produced ten Francoist volunteers. Most joined the Foreign Legion, although a Czech called Cejka was connected with the Falange in San Sebastien. Eighteen-year-old Frantisek Shostek joined the Legion in 1936 after robbing his father’s safe and fleeing to Italy. There he fell in with tougher criminals, lost the money and contracted venereal disease. Welsh legionnaire Frank Thomas thought he was ‘impecunious, a criminal without hope, taking to the Legion for shelter and obscurity’.[457]

In late 1936 Shostek took part in the battle for Madrid but broke his

glasses when he fell asleep on sentry duty at the Casa de Velázquez. Half blind, he was put on punishment duty with the mule column. In mid-December the Czech borrowed money from his comrades and deserted. In January 1937 he was caught and disappeared into a Nationalist prison.

Another eastern European in VI *bandera* was Georges Kozma, a twenty-three-year-old former Society of the White Fathers missionary from Hungary. He was educated at the universities of Budapest, Rome, and Louvain. Thomas also knew him. 'A philosophical religious crusader'.[458]

Hungary was ruled by right-wing dictator Admiral Miklós Horthy and sympathised with the Francoist cause. Memories of Béla Kun's bloody 1919 Soviet Republic were still raw. Despite the sympathy only fifteen Hungarians volunteered. Most fought in the Foreign Legion, although Peter Andreas, who died in combat in May 1938 and was buried in the Cebrillas, reached the rank of lieutenant in the Falange.

Thomas' friend Kozma had been expelled from the White Fathers for chasing women in Algiers. He joined the Legion and fought in Madrid. Shot in the groin by a British member of the International Brigades, he died in hospital. At their last meeting, Thomas claimed, the mystic Hungarian had a vision he would die in combat.

A few Yugoslavs joined the Nationalists. Mirkpo Sekso, son of a Serbian magistrate, joined VII *bandera* in 1936 along with his friend Chatlec. Sekso died in action at the end of November but Chatlec was promoted to the rank of sergeant. A Croatian called Ilija Pellercido also fought in Spain.

Bulgaria forbade its citizens from enlisting in foreign wars, although these measures were aimed at the Republic than Francoist Spain. Nationalist records mention only Augusto Jakob Roosz of VII *bandera* joining after the outbreak of the war.[459]

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By the summer of 1937 Francoist propaganda was promoting the Nationalist cause as a modern *Reconquista* (reconquest) of Spain from the clutches of a corrupt Republic. The radio and press took every opportunity to compare Franco's war with the original *Reconquista*, a 700-year-long fight to expel the Muslims who had occupied Spain in the eighth century. The historical parallel resonated in a country where the expression 'moors on the coast' was still used to warn of imminent danger.

But the soldiers at the sharpest edge of the Nationalist scimitar were descendents of Islamic warriors driven from the country centuries before. Accused of rape, murder, and torture by the Republic, thousands of Moroccans had been in the front lines since the start of the civil war. After huge losses their morale was falling, supporters back home were disillusioned with Franco, and few fresh volunteers were coming forward. Republicans hurled racist abuse and even Nationalist officers kept a wary eye on them.

Franco’s Muslim shock troops had joined up in the hope of an independent Morocco but the longer the civil war continued, the firmer the Spanish grip became on their country.

23. YOW HI! BRUDDER EUROPEANS

Moroccan Atrocities and Republican Racism

The Children's Orthopaedic Hospital in Madrid haunted legionnaire Frank Thomas' dreams when he returned to Wales. The Hospital stood in the western suburbs of the capital. Its thick stone walls had been struck by so many bullets the surface looked like coral. In December 1936 it was in Nationalist hands, sandbagged and fortified, with machine-guns on the roof.

One night the Welshman was on guard at a barricade. He was tired and tetchy from lack of cigarettes. Legionnaires who fell asleep on duty faced execution but as the hours passed Thomas' eyes began to close.

Nearby a man began to scream. Moroccan troops were torturing a Republican prisoner to death for fun. Thomas snapped awake.

The screams continued all night. Sleep was no longer an option.[460]

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'My years in Africa live with me with indescribable force,' said Franco in a 1938 newspaper interview. 'There was born the possibility of rescuing a great Spain. There was found the idea which today redeems us. Without Africa, I can scarcely explain myself to myself, nor can I explain myself properly to my comrades in arms'.[461]

A colonial possession in the disguise of a Protectorate, Morocco was central to the Nationalist world view. At its sixteenth century peak Spain's empire sprawled across the globe with tentacles wrapped most tightly around the Americas. All things decline and Spain's international power was no exception. The loss of the Philippines and Cuba to America in 1898 was the final humiliation.

Franco and his fellow Africa hands were determined never to lose

Morocco. Some legionnaires considered themselves more African than Spanish. They sported elaborate Moroccan tattoos and carried pornographic photographs of Arab girls in their backpacks.

Francoist propaganda held up the civil war as the start of a rebuilt empire for Spain, a return to the glory of the past. Themes of *Reconquista* and *Cruzada* echoed through Franco's speeches, even as Moroccans fought in the front line. Nationalists ignored the contradictions. When the south-western town of Castańo de Robledo was captured by a Moroccan force in late 1936 the Bishop of Pamplona ordered a statue of traditional Spanish hero 'Santiago the Moor Killer' erected in thanks. The Moor was replaced with a cowering Lenin.

Foreign Franco supporters adapted just as smoothly. Some overlooked the Moroccans. 'Never since the Moors were driven from Spain has there been such a Catholic army in this country as there is today,' wrote Irish journalist Captain Frank McCullagh. Others made them honorary Christians. 'All the Moors love Christ, for they say he was a great prophet,' said Dutch writer Catherine de Hueck.[462]

French sculptor Réal del Sarte thought the Moroccan presence was 'living proof of the glory of Franco's crusade' and they had joined up because their religion was also menaced by a 'frightful Jewish and Asiatic invasion'.[463]

In Morocco, Beidberger schemed and manipulated to keep the population behind Franco. He created the Institute for Moroccan Studies to push Moroccan culture. He built new Mosques and Islamic schools. Moroccan nationalist newspapers were subject to only light censorship. But Beidberger was careful to prevent tribal chiefs and nationalist organisations becoming too influential. Money dispensed to buy loyalty was abruptly choked off if the recipient showed signs of independence.

Beidberger did his job well. In autumn 1937 Alvarez del Vayo, the Republican Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared the Moroccans 'immune to all political propaganda of a democratic nature.'[464] The Republic tried other measures to destabilise the Protectorate. Del Vayo asked the French government to release Abd el-Krim, former Emir of the Rif Republic and a long-time enemy of Spain, and herd the Berber leader towards Nationalist territory. The French could then pursue him and 'accidentally' invade northern Morocco. Del Vayo's plan had more holes than a cobweb and Paris turned him down.

The Republican minister fell back on misinformation. He circulated a false report that the Germans had built a military base in the Protectorate. The news put the French on a war footing and German diplomats had trouble convincing the international community they had no imperialist plans for Africa. The tension eventually died down but for a short period the Nationalist authorities had to divert Moroccan volunteers to the border in case of a French invasion.

In late 1937 a more desperate plan was discussed at the highest level of the Spanish government. Madrid decided to offer France territory in Spanish Morocco as a bribe for entering the war on the Republican side. French colonial troops were to cross into northern Morocco, the soft underbelly of the Nationalist war effort, and push Franco's African troops into the sea. The Republican government hoped that France would offer Hitler one of its African colonies to prevent Nazi Germany intervening.[465]

The plan was never put into operation. Even had the French agreed, which was unlikely, Germany was too deeply enmeshed in Spain to co-operate. The Nazis had two companies dealing with the Spanish war. *Hispano-Marroqui de Transportes SA* (Spanish-Moroccan Transport Company, HISMA), run by the fat Prussian businessman Johannes Bernhardt, his fears of bankruptcy now a thing of the past, shipped arms from Germany to Spain. *Rohstoffe und Waren Einkaufgesellschaft* (Raw Materials and Goods Purchasing Company, ROWAK) sent raw materials to Germany in payment, and assisted in the purchase of Spanish mines.

The business of HISMA went smoothly, despite accusations from Bernhardt's Spanish partner that the German was embezzling money, but ROWAK had a bumpier ride. Shipments of raw materials were less frequent than the Nazis expected and in October 1937 Franco stopped the transfer of Spanish mine shares to the German government. The Nazis considered withdrawing the *Legion Condor* in retaliation, but dropped the idea in case it gave Franco an excuse to suspend all payments. National Socialism seemed to have made little impact on the Spanish political landscape.

'How did you find the new Spain?' a Nazi diplomat was asked on his return to Berlin.

'When I find it, I shall tell you,' he replied.[466]

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Spores of disenchantment also appeared in the world of Moroccan nationalism. Abdelk Khalek Torrès and Sheikh Mohamed El-Mekki Naciri would never be friends but both recognised Beidberger's policy of divide and rule was weakening their ambitions for independence.

'We Spanish Nationalists understand very well the nationalism of other peoples, and we respect it', Franco had said at the start of the civil war. Torrès and Naciri gradually came to realise that respect was not the same as support.[467] They decided to look for other patrons. Torrès approached the fascist powers while Francophile Naciri looked to western democracies. Torrès had the most immediate success. His *Al-Islah* party obtained large Nazi subsidies, earned partly through distributing anti-Semitic leaflets in Spanish and French Morocco on behalf of Adolf Langenheim.

The Nationalists were not as obsessively anti-Semitic as the Nazis (only 1,000 Jews lived in Spain by the late thirties with another 10,000 in Morocco) but prejudice was not uncommon.[468] General Quiepo de Llano made a radio broadcast from Seville in September 1937 claiming that the Nationalists were fighting 'a war for Western Civilisation against World Jewery'.[469] Four months later he fined the town's Jewish community 138,000 pesetas.[470]

Voz de Galicia newspaper launched a campaign urging citizens to give up their jewellery for the war effort: 'Anyone who keeps his gold at this moment when the Fatherland needs it, IS A JEW'.[471] Other newspapers made sneering references to the 'cosmopolitan' nature of the International Brigades, at least a quarter of whom were Jewish.[472]

Franco had some Jewish support. Jacob Benmaman provided funds to Franco through the Banque Hassan of Tangiers.[473] A few Moroccan Jews served as soldiers in the Nationalist ranks. Abraham Truzman, Mesod Chocron Cohen, Isaac Benguigui Chocron, and others could be found in the regular Army while the *Bandera de Falange de Marruecos*, a Falangist unit raised in Tetuán, contained a number of Jewish soldiers.

Jewish Spaniards on the Nationalist mainland were subject to conscription like everyone else and joined up when they got the official letter, although many later complained about encountering discrimination in the army. Swiss volunteer Emanuel Vischer, who died of wounds on 7 September 1936, came from a prominent Jewish family.[474] Abraham Klein, a Jewish volunteer from Palestine, joined the Foreign Legion and fought in XIV *bandera*.[475]

Apart from Nazi-inspired leafleting, Moroccan nationalists showed their disillusionment with Franco by winding down recruitment efforts for the Nationalist army. It was a symbolic gesture. The supply of recruits had dried up by early 1937 after the scale of Moroccan combat losses became known in the Protectorate.

'A detail of fifty Moors would surround a building, silence the ground floor defenders, and rush in,' wrote American reporter John Whittaker. 'Then they would clear the second storey with sub-machine-guns and hand grenades. These Moors were calm and tight lipped, expert workers. They would clear each building, floor by floor. There was one difficulty. By the time the Moors had reached the top floor there were no Moors left.'[476]

Of the 78,000 Moroccans who volunteered to fight in Spain, one in eight died and over 55,000 were wounded.[477] Nationalist authorities employed wounded Moroccans as training camp instructors to keep them out of the public eye but inevitably disabled veterans returned to the streets of North Africa and recruit numbers dropped.

The Nationalists occasionally resulted to subterfuge. The French Moroccan newspaper *La Dépêche Marocaine* reported in 1937 that the Nationalists hired 800 Moroccans for a public-works project then tried to force them into the Army. Despite threats, the Moroccans refused and the Nationalists let them go.[478] Veteran Mohammed El Hassan recalled the son of a Moroccan who died in Spain was told his mother would lose her house unless he also enlisted.[479] Others joined under the impression they would serve in North Africa.

Strains showed in the frontline. Mohamed ben Mohamed Salam, a volunteer from the Protectorate of Ifni, a Spanish enclave on the coast of French Morocco, claimed Nationalist officers treated the Moroccans well, partly from previous experience commanding them in the Rif but partly out of fear 'the Moors would shoot them'.[480]

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Spanish Republican propaganda was not subtle. It portrayed Moroccans as grinning, thick-lipped savage in turbans who attacked defenseless white women and bayoneted children.[481] Foreign works echoed these portrayals. Gustav Regler's International Brigade novel *The Great Adventure* throws away a remark about 'bestial Africans with the knife between their teeth'.[482]

At best, Moroccans were regarded as uncivilised and backward. Responding to a questionnaire from the League of American Writers, I.F. (Isidore Feinstein) Stone's remark was typical. 'Is it not strange that the allies of Spanish Fascism are to be found in brown shirt and black shirt in the most backward section of the Catholic Church, [and] among ignorant Moors?'[483]

British leftists sometimes crossed the line to outright racism. Upper-crust Communist Philip Toynbee later apologised for the way he and his contemporaries attacked Franco for 'bringing African savages into a European war'.[484] Pseudonymous British writer Hispanicus described the arrival of Moroccans in Spain as a 'crime' and a 'Mussulman invasion' in his 1937 book *Foreign Intervention in Spain*, views echoed by a letter writer to a Trade Unionist newspaper who was horrified by rumours 'the Moors have been promised mosques in various towns which suggest Mahommedanism will be officially recognised in a European country'.[485] Some volunteers in the International Brigades referred to the Moroccans as 'niggers'.[486]

Visual portrayals of Moroccans presented them as black caricatures rather than Arab or Berber. A popular example was left-wing cartoonist David Low's famous cartoon 'The Patriots', with its caption 'What a pity! If we only had enough Moors and foreign riff-raff to wipe out the Spanish people we could save Spain'.[487]

A *Daily Herald* cartoon showed a thick-lipped travesty labelled 'Franco's Own' addressing British readers with the words 'Yow hi! Brudder Europeans'.[488] None of the *Herald*'s working-class readers objected.

Some black Africans did fight in Franco's forces. Guinea was a Spanish colony. The administration declared for the Republic but its attention was so focused on controlling an outbreak of beriberi fever that an October 1936 Nationalist expedition from the Canary Islands took control with little resistance.

Around 100 Guinean volunteers joined the Nationalists and were shipped to Morocco where they joined regular Army units alongside black soldiers from the French colonies of Mauritania, Senegal, and Mali.

In America, the Communist Party drummed up black support by linking the fate of Spain to that of Abyssinia, whose invasion by Fascist Italy had outraged many African-Americans. 'Ethiopia's fate is at stake on the battlefields of Spain!' claimed the *Daily Worker*. 'The Negro people, earnestly desiring the defeat of Italian Fascism in Ethiopia, can best help their magnificently heroic brothers in the African country by throwing all their

support to the Spanish people'.[489]

Not every black American opposed Mussolini's invasion. Some hoped it would stamp out the slavery tolerated by Haile Selassie's regime although few went as far as the French singer Josephine Baker who suggested forming a 'Negro army' to help the Italians.[490]

Reaction in the African-American community to Spain was also mixed. Writer Langston Hughes compared Franco and his forces to the Ku Klux Klan. Richard Wright, another African-American author, agreed but recognised the existence of black support for fascism. He believed African-Americans were fascinated by fascist dictators not because 'of any intellectual comprehension of the forces at work in the world, but because they felt that these men "did things," a phrase which is charged with more meaning than the mere words imply".'[491] Proof could be found in the proud claim of black nationalist leader Marcus Garvey from the early thirties. 'We were the first Fascists,' he said, although he would turn on Mussolini after Abyssinia.[492]

Even as they courted black America, the left used images of North African 'barbarians' marching on Madrid to rally white support for the Republic. A pro-Republican cartoon showed a Nazi clutching a bomb, a Catholic bishop full of hot air floating overhead, and a barely human-looking Moroccan clutching the corpse of a young white woman.[493]

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Spanish Republican propaganda emphasised the horror of sexual assault by the Moroccans. 'Peasant girls violated by legionaries, mercenaries, and Moors, who have been tempted from their African villages by the promise of a good time,' said Dolores ('La Passionara') Ibarruri, 'bear witness to this "patriotism" of the Fascist murderers.'[494]

'Red lies,' retorted Ifni volunteer José Mohamed Lahsen. [495] His comrade Cheld Uld Alí Omar, an Ifni camel dealer, put the blame elsewhere. 'It was the Reds who raped women and mutilated corpses'.[496] Ebnu Salek Abdala, seventeen when the war began, also claimed rapes and other atrocities did not happen, 'absolutely not! Prisoners were sent to rear and their wounded were treated'.[497]

But John Whitaker witnessed Moroccan officer Mohammed El Mizzian giving two young female prisoners girls to his troops to be gang raped. El

Mizzian waved away Whitaker's protests. 'Don't worry. They'll be dead in four hours'.[498]

Welsh legionnaire Frank Thomas also witnessed an incident when a teenage militia girl was taken away by Moroccans for rape. Spanish officer José Pettenghi recalled ten Moroccans executed for the crime in his unit during the war. Controlling the Moroccans was sometimes difficult. 'There were excesses. They had to be stopped, you had to be on top of them, you had to run behind them when they went into the villages'.[499]

Pettenghi insisted rape was always punished and remembered the 1939 execution of two Moroccans. 'They were condemned to death and their unit ordered to execute them, which they did against a wall. The Moors accepted it like nihilists'.[500]

Moroccans from a male-dominated Islamic society were no more immune to the lure of rape than other soldiers but no-one knows whether they were disproportionately responsible for sexual crimes or if their role was over-emphasised because of assumptions about race.

The Moroccans certainly committed other atrocities in Spain, such as the 1936 murders of prisoners at Badajoz. An Italian serving in the Foreign Legion later witnessed a Moroccan sergeant executing four French prisoners of the International Brigades by beheading them with a sword as he shouted 'Long live Franco, long live Spain!' As a gesture of solidarity with the Italian, he changed his cry to 'Long live the *Duce* and long live Italy!' as he decapitated the last prisoner.[501] The decapitated head rolled to the Italian's feet.

The practice of castrating enemy corpses was so widespread among Rif veterans at the start of the war that Colonel Yagüe expressly forbade the practice after photographs taken by German journalists at the fall of Badajoz appeared in the international press.[502]

Rumours the practice still occurred were widespread and in 1937 Associated Press reporter Franz Roth enlisted English volunteer Peter Kemp to examine corpses near La Marañosa for evidence.

'The bright sunshine lit up the golden fields and the olive trees; it shone, too, on the huddled corpses of the Frenchmen [of the International Brigades] heaped around the bridge where the Moorish machine guns had caught them in a crossfire […] With a ghoulish intensity Roth probed the bodies, urging me to do the same. We found no trace of mutilation and Roth seemed disappointed. After ten minutes of this grisly activity I was horribly sick and

told Roth I couldn't go on'.[503]

Mutilation of corpses was not unique to Moroccans. The pseudonymous Swede 'Olaf' fought for the Republic in Madrid. After Nationalist bombing raids on the city in 1937 Olaf watched militiamen wreak 'useless vengeance' on the corpses of executed Falangists.[504]

The Nationalists denied all charges of Moroccan war crimes but they could not refute charges of looting. In Ciempozuelos, General O'Duffy's Irishmen gawped at an impromptu market set up by Moroccan troops. Spread out on blankets were packets of tobacco, alcohol, clothing, paintings, jewellery, books, icons, family photographs. The houses of the town had been stripped and their contents put up for sale.[505]

Nationalist officers allowed looting for a short period after the capture of a town and officials at Protectorate recruiting offices sometimes guaranteed it as an incentive to enlist. The Moroccans posted most of their spoils back home, retaining smaller items to sell to other soldiers. They liked clocks, watches, and musical boxes. They would cut off a finger to get a ring.

In static positions, like the trenches around Madrid where many Moroccans dug in through late 1937, the biggest concern was food. The Spanish soldier's staple of tinned pork was unacceptable to Muslims. The Moroccans existed for long periods on bread and sardines although their officers made efforts to find alternatives. Sometimes they were able to supply lamb or give permission to hunt game in the countryside.

Hunger lay behind stories in Republican newspapers that Moroccans fighting in Madrid's University City district contracted 'bubonic plague' from a rabbit stew they made out of diseased laboratory animals in the *Hospital Clinico*. A cage of rabbits proved too much a temptation for men sick of sardines.

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As Moroccans festered in trenches around Madrid in late 1937 the Republicans launched a counter-attack at Teruel, a gloomy town in Aragon that had been held by the Nationalists since General Mola's forces overran it in the first weeks of the rising.

Franco diverted troops from Guadalajara to relieve the town's defenders, holed up in a bank for a desperate last stand, but they arrived too late to prevent the town's surrender on 8 January 1938.

Among the relief columns marching through the snow to retake the town were Frenchmen of *Jeanne d'Arc*. Even if they survived Teruel, the frostbitten company's future was uncertain. Political arguments had split its members, *Action Française* was trying to claw back control of the unit from Paris, and commander Jean Courcier was under investigation for corruption, theft, and kidnapping.

24. THE CRIMES OF CAPTAIN COURCIER

Unrest and Desertion in *Jeanne d'Arc*

In February 1938 police in Bilbao, northern Spain arrested a Frenchman who had been asking around for a map of the Franco-Spanish border. The Nationalist authorities knew that only a deserter would be interested in paths across the Pyrenees. The suspect's cover story collapsed in interrogation and he admitted he was Henri Renout, on the run from the *Jeanne d'Arc* company. Pressed further, he told police he was the batman of Captain Jean Courcier, commander of the unit. Renout had nothing good to say about him.

A long time follower of Colonel François de la Rocque's PSF, Courcier was a career military man. Beneath his respectable exterior bubbled an adventurer's soul. Courcier risked his career to spend weekends in the French countryside with other De la Roque militants on military manoeuvres. Two days of map references, messengers, and crawling through long grass. The PSF's defenders shrugged it off as boy-scout stuff, while the left thought they were watching preparations for civil war.[506] Courcier put his career at risk again in 1937 when he took a leave of absence to fight in Spain, unable to resist the adrenalin rush of combat.

Renout deserted *Jeanne d'Arc* because, he claimed, it was full of 'bandits'.[507] A fish rots from the head downwards. The Frenchman claimed to have seen Courcier stealing a set of *Diario de Alcázar*, an amateur newspaper produced during the Toledo siege and expensively collectible, from a fellow soldier.

As well as crime, Courcier played politics. He favoured fellow PSF members as officers and stamped the mark of Colonel de La Rocque's movement on the unit. *Action Française* members of *Jeanne d'Arc* were overlooked for promotion and *Parti Populaire Français* militants encouraged to defect.

Renout's claims fed back to Foreign Legion headquarters. They would normally have been dismissed as the excuses of a troublemaker but that same month a wealthy French businessman called Guillemet complained to the Nationalist authorities that Courcier had locked him up in Valladolid and stolen his mistress.

The Legion decided it needed to talk to Captain Courcier. But in February he and his men were waist deep in snow, fighting the enemy outside Teruel. Courcier might not survive to give his side of the story.

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When Courcier took command of *Jeanne d'Arc* at the end of 1937 the Nationalists had conquered all territory on the northern coast, including Santander and Llanes. They turned their attention to Guadalajara, north-east of Madrid, the anvil on which the Italian hammer had broken at the start of the year. It proved equally tough for Franco's men. On 15 December, as the Nationalists settled in for a long siege of the town, news came in of a surprise Republican attack on a provincial capital to the east.

Teruel was a walled town known for its cured ham, churches, and mountainous remoteness. It sat on a snowy prong of Nationalist-controlled land, surrounded by Republican forces on three sides and vital for any drive to the east coast.

It was the coldest place in Spain. New Year's Eve 1937 recorded the lowest temperature for over a century. Nationalist soldiers fought to hold the town in blinding snowstorms. Tanks froze to the ground and aircraft could not fly. The few pilots who made it into the air froze to paralysis in their cockpits and had to be beaten by ground crew when they landed to restore feeling to their numbed bodies.

Turuel fell to the Republic after desperate fighting. Franco counter-attacked. *Jeanne d'Arc* was part of the force that waded through the snow to re-take the town.

The cold caused as many casualties as the bullets. Seventeen-year-old Pierre D'Ugenest suffered severe frostbite. A surgeon managed to save his feet but D'Ugenest lost his blackened fingers to the scalpel. The Australian Nugent Bull came down with a serious fever after a long march through a snow storm and fluttered between life and death in a hospital bed. Bull eventually pulled through but would never be fit for front line duties again.

Captain Courcier led from the front, urging his men on. The Nationalists re-took the town on 22 February 1938 after a series of bloody battles, some in four feet of snow.

As the French rested after the battle, Legion officials came to speak to Courcier about the allegations by Renout and Guillemet. Notes were taken. A report typed up.

On 4 March 1938 Colonel Yagüe recommended the French company be broken up and its men distributed among the Nationalist forces.

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Yagüe's suggestion was only partly motivated by the news of deserters and mistresses. He was more concerned by the political infighting. Senior *Action Française* figures in Paris had recently requested the repatriation of an underage volunteer called Maurice Babarin. Under French law volunteers had to be twenty-years-old to join a foreign army. Courcier, who had no loyalty to *Action Française*, refused on the grounds the age of majority in Spain was eighteen.

Action Française flexed its political muscle and asked monarchist contacts in the Nationalist High Command to intervene. The Spaniards leant on the *Jeanne d'Arc* commander but the pressure had no effect and Babarin remained in the company. The young Frenchman was killed in action shortly afterwards. *Action Française* blamed the death on Couricer and demanded the *Jeanne d'Arc*'s commander be cashiered.

News of the incident enflamed Yagüe's already well-entrenched francophobia, a prejudice he shared with many Spaniards. The average Nationalist supporter seemed to believe all French were Communists. Members of the *Jeanne d'Arc* company were advised not to speak too loudly in public in case their accents made them targets for suspicious policemen. The governor of Irún, Julián Troncoso, had recently been circulating a rumour that Nationalist police had arrested two Frenchmen who entered Spain deliberately infected with the bubonic plague and typhoid.[508]

Troncoso's story made life even more difficult for French volunteers. They suspected the governor was just laying down smoke around his own sabotage activities in France. It was well known his commandos had disrupted shipments of Republican war materials headed for the border. In October 1937 they even tried to hijack a Republican submarine berthed in

Brest.

But the rumour was true. In France a womanising playboy, who pretended he was a test pilot, and a Polish-born burglar known only as ‘Captain Jack’, who had fought for the Republic, plotted to send two volunteers infected with an ‘anemia’ virus into Nationalist territory.[509] They recruited a petty criminal and an unemployed journalist who agreed to be injected with a virus which, the plotters claimed, would infect those around them but leave the carriers unharmed.

Biological warfare was nothing new. In the First World War all sides dosed enemy cattle with disease and smuggled weevils into grain shipments. The *Servizio Informazioni Militari* (Italian Military Intelligence – SIM) had recently considered but dropped the idea of doing something similar to the Spanish Republic.[510]

The plan failed when the infected men were arrested as they crossed the border. Both later returned to France, an act of clemency unusual for the civil war. In the Russian doll world of plots within plots that characterised interwar intrigue it is possible the Nationalists knew about and even encouraged the plan from the start. Or the playboy and the Captain, who seem to have received some initial financial backing from the Republicans, received a better offer from the Nationalists. Whatever the truth, the plot did not make life any easier for Franco’s French volunteers.

Prejudice against the French spanned both sides of the lines. A confidential report by Karol Swierczewski (‘General Walter’) in early 1938 for Moscow complained of the ‘transparently obvious’ Francophobia within the Brigades.[511] It was one of many prejudices found among the Republic’s foreign volunteers. ‘Anti-Semitism flourished,’ Swierczewski wrote, ‘(and indeed it still has not been completely extinguished)’.[512]

Franco ackowledged Yagüe’s recommendation and ordered an official investigation into Captain Courcier.

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Courcier’s dark side was an open secret among right-wing French journalists in Spain but the news never made it home. No-one wanted to tarnish a fight that was of vital significance to French rightists.

‘There was one event which happened abroad but was of extreme importance,’ remembered the aristocratic young fascist Christian de la

Maziere, a teenager during the civil war. ‘How could a boy of my age raised in the environment in which I was raised be anything other than a devoted anti-Communist when all the papers that I read were filled with photographs of nuns who had been gunned down, of Carmelites who’d been unearthed, of desecrated tombstones and so forth?’[513]

One of the newspapers De la Maziere read was *Je Suis Partout* (I am Everywhere), the best known publication on the far-right. Its editor-in-chief was Robert Brasillach, a plump and dishevelled fan of world cinema who visited Spain on several occasions and wrote a best-selling account of the Alcázar siege. A fierce critic of the French Popular Front, Brasillach sent home articles about *Jeanne d’Arc* volunteers (and a few who remained outsde it, like the pseudonymous ‘Jean Petit’, a cook who swapped his frying pan for a rifle in the Carlist *Nuestra Senora de Monsermt* and got a bullet in the head on the front line) and hinted the time would come when they might find a use for their military skills in France.

Typical of Brasillach’s work was a piece about an eighteen-year-old student who joined the *Jeanne d’Arc* company with school books still under his arm.[514] The young man’s father had been killed in the 1934 Stravisky riots and he joined the Nationalist forces to get revenge on the left. *Je Suis Partout*’s editor-in-chief praised him for clinging to his youth by caring more about chocolate than women. The left dismissed the piece as propaganda while the right applauded, although it raised eyebrows among readers who knew about Brasillach’s homosexuality. [515]

The French left, particularly Communists, were not keen on homosexuality either. Henri Barbusse, the recently deceased novelist and prominent party member (whose book *Le Feu* had been hated by Douglas Jerrold), had regarded homosexuality and fascism as synonymous. The Soviet Union shared the view and had recently recriminalized homosexual acts.

‘In the fascist countries,’ wrote Maxim Gorki, ‘homosexuality, which ruins youth, flourishes without punishment; in the country where the proletariat has audaciously achieved social power, homosexuality has been declared a social crime and is heavily punished.’[516]

Brasillach was concealing more than his sexuality. He did not tell his readers *Jeanne d’Arc* was only formed as a bargaining counter for the Non-Intervention Committee. He did not pass on unsavoury rumours about Jean Courcier. His work glossed over the negative aspects of Franco’s rule. Exposing the dark side of the Nationalist fight was left to the devoutly

Catholic George Bernanos, a writer best known for *Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* (The Diary of a Country Priest), a 1936 novel about holding onto faith in the face of adversity.

A writer for *Action Française* until the Church proscribed membership in 1927, Bernanos moved to Majorca in the early thirties, linked up with the Spanish right, and watched the Nationalist rising from the house of a prominent Falangist family. He encouraged his son to join the Italian Dragoons of Death militia who defended the island against Republican invaders.[517]

Like many intellectuals, Bernanos could not stomach his ideas becoming reality. Bearing 'witness [to] the blowing-out of fifteen wrong-thinking brains per day' sickened him.[518] He was shocked when the Archbishop of Palma justified the repression on Majorca with the reasoning that only fourteen percent of islanders had fulfilled their Easter duties the previous year.

'It is a cruel thing,' said Bernanos, 'when what you were born to love becomes degraded before your eyes'.[519]

In 1938 Bernanos wrote *Les Grandes Cimitières Sous la Lune* (The Great Cemeteries Under the Moon) which described Nationalist war crimes. He wrote about the mayor of a Majorcan town shot in the belly by Falangists. As he lay dying his drunken executioners shoved an empty bottle of brandy in his mouth then smashed it on his head.[520] Bernanos met a young Nationalist who stole keepsakes from the cells of women he executed.

'His small aristocratic hand [held] in its soft dimpled palm the secret of a hundred deaths'.[521]

The book charted his disillusionment. 'Now the hyenas appear on the scene. What follows is not for people like you and me […] A counter-revolution is not at all what the idiots think it is, back in France'.[522]

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The Foreign Legion investigation into *Jeanne d'Arc* found French volunteers queuing up to make statements against Courcier. Some claimed he ran up huge debts with townspeople and refused to pay, others that he habitually stole and blamed his own soldiers. Members of the unit who fell out with him were imprisoned without trial.

Leading witness for the prosecution, S.G. Guillemet, ran a nitrate mine

in Chile and came to Nationalist Spain in 1937 to organise a business deal. He lent money to *Jeanne d'Arc* in its early days to cover wages. He mixed socially with Couricer, who was particularly attentive to Guillemet's beautiful Spanish mistress, but when the businessman wanted his loans repaid the *Jeanne d'Arc* commander arrested him and took his mistress to Saragossa where he set her up in an apartment, claiming she was his wife.

Things looked bad for Courcier but the Frenchman was not going down without a fight. He badgered contacts in the Nationalist High Command to vouch for him and squeezed testimonials out of anyone with anything remotely kind to say.

Some helped out but what saved Courcier was the international situation. Discussions with the Non-Intervention Committee about repatriation of foreign volunteers continued to occupy the attention of Republicans and Nationalists. Franco decided he might still need his own International Brigade to bring to the bargaining table.

Politics outweighed Courcier's flaws as a commander and the *Generalissimo* sent Legion investigators a telegram praising Courcier's 'excellent comportment, exceptional capacity, valour and military sprit, and bravery in battle'.[523] The Frenchman was exonerated of all charges.

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The Republic lost 6,000 men at the battle of Teruel, along with large quantities of war material it could not replace. As the investigators sieved through their findings on Courcier, Franco launched a huge assault on the weakened Spanish Republic with the aim of cutting the government's territory in two. On 9 March 1938 the Nationalist drive to the sea began. Forces including Moroccan troops, the CTV, and the *Legion Condor* attacked along the entire northern front from Teruel to the border with France. On the first day Moroccans took twenty-two miles of territory. Within ten days Franco's army had advanced sixty miles.

In the frontline were the Italian volunteers Raffaello and Licio Gelli. Their unit was ambushed by a desperate Republican rearguard in the evening of 19 March among the ruins of a small town. Shells came pounding in, smashing down walls and burying the men sheltering behind them.

As the brothers crouched in the smoke, Raffaello shouted out. He had been hit in the chest by shrapnel. A doctor tried to stop the blood. Raffaello

was lifted onto a tank and sent back towards the ambulances, leaving Licio to fight on against the Republicans. The Italians overwhelmed the rearguard and pushed on.

Renzo Lodoli was there too, now a tough combat veteran. His passion for war still burned but he was disillusioned with his commanders. Orders were garbled, tactics were wrong. Lorries rolled in a straight line along a single road. When one stopped, all stopped. Woollen gloves arrived in June, six months too late to save those who died of winter cold.

'Our staff was mistaken in everything.'[524]

He was disillusioned with the Spanish as well. Franco may have been more a conservative than fascist but his lack of radicalism did not stop Nationalist soldiers demanding the Italians hand over their prisoners to execution squads. This offended the honour of Lodoli and others. To save the captured Republicans they recruited them into Italian units.

'Our divisions were full of prisoners. […] Many saved their lives by putting on the Italian uniform. There was a Republican captain who fought on the Santander front who was taken prisoner and knew that if we gave him up he would be shot. The commander of the artillery regiment gave him an Italian uniform and that man spent the war with us as an observer. He was even awarded a bronze medal for detecting a weapons depot.'[525]

In the drive to the east Lodoli was wounded for the first time when a stray bullet came through a bunker window and smacked into his ankle while he had his feet up on a table, smoking a cigarette. Even that was not enough to send him home. It was only when his mother died later in the year that Lodoli would return to Italy.

On 15 April 1938 the Nationalists reached Vinaroz, a fishing town once ruled by the Knights Templar. The Carlists who led the attack waded into the sea in celebration. Commander General Alonso Vega knelt on the shore and crossed himself. A corridor had been established. The Nationalists pushed at its boundaries until it stretched from Tortosa in the north to Castellón in the south. Republican Spain was divided.

Licio Gelli did not share the rejoicing. Raffaello had died of gangrene in a Saragossa hospital. Licio swore at his brother’s grave that he would fight Communism for the rest of his life.

The Nationalist drive to the east coast seemed to have doomed the Republic but the Spanish government had a plan for one last offensive. If successful, it could change the course of the war. If it failed, the Republic

was finished.

25. CARNE DE CANON

Peter Kemp, the International Brigades, and the Battle of the Ebro

Late one morning in July 1938, near the river Ebro in eastern Spain, Peter Kemp was hit by a mortar shell. The Englishman was standing in the doorway of a dug-out chatting to a fellow Foreign Legion officer when a stray shell fell out of the sky and struck the stairs behind him.

The blast caved in the left side of Kemp's face and snuffed out his hearing. His mouth filled with a sea of pebbles. As his jaw flopped open he realised the pebbles were pieces of teeth and the sea was blood. He hit the floor praying.

'Oh God! Please don't let me die now, like this, in terror!'[526]

Kemp's luck had finally run out. For a while the African idol his father gave him seemed to be working. February had found him halfway up a mountain overlooking the Teruel-Saragossa road watching Nationalist bombers pound nearby Republican positions. He admired the sight.

'They came on in perfect formation, steady and unhurried, silver against the deep blue sky, with the sun flashing on their metal fuselages and wings'.

The planes overshot and bombed the legionnaires.[527] A chain of explosions blasted the mountainside and caused 500 casualties in five minutes. Kemp was unhurt.

In the relief of Teruel Kemp commanded a machine gun platoon against counter-attacks by Britons, Americans, and Canadians of the International Brigades. His *bandera* took casualties from cold as well as enemy bullets. One morning Kemp woke up with frost in his hair at the end of a row of legionnaires who had frozen to death in the night.[528]

His faith in the Nationalist cause wobbled just once, when he was forced to shoot a deserter from the International Brigades. Kemp claimed the man was Irish but told fellow Briton Priscilla Scott-Ellis, a Nationalist nurse

during the war, the man was English.

‘Evidently one day an Englishman passed over to them from the Reds,’ recalled Scott-Ellis. ‘Peter was sent to talk to him and found out he was a sailor. His story was that he had gone on shore at Valencia and got tight. The next thing he knew he was being taken up to the front in a lorry […] Before he was halfway through the story the Colonel just said 'Shoot him.' Peter sort of gaped and the Colonel got angry and said, 'What is more, shoot him yourself or I will have you shot.' He even sent an officer after Peter to see that he did so, with orders to shoot him if not. So Peter led his Englishman off into the countryside. The man realised what was happening and asked if he was going to be shot, so Peter said yes. The man just answered 'Gee, that's tough.' Then Peter said if he wanted to die properly he was to walk quietly away in front of him. So the man shook hands with Peter, said 'Thanks anyhow', turned around and was duly shot. A nasty thing to have to do.’[529]

Scott-Ellis had initially found it hard to swap her upper class life for the blood, vomit, and piss of a nurse’s daily life. She soon adapted. British women served as nurses on both sides of the war. The Republicans had Spanish Medical Aid (SMA), which sent an ambulance unit to work alongside the International Brigades. Political intrigue within SMA units almost capsized the organisation but it survived and by the summer of 1938 had a presence at nineteen hospitals in the government zone.

The Nationalist equivalent was poet Gabriel Herbert’s Anglo-Spanish Medical Service. Herbert was a militant Catholic converted to the faith by the writer Hilaire Belloc. Her sister Laura had married Evelyn Waugh in April 1937. Fundraising efforts among British Catholics enabled the Service to purchase an x-ray machine and good quality medical supplies. Despite occasional language problems – London once received an order for 10,000 *anguilas* (eels) instead of *agujas* (needles) - it offered competence and care unrivalled in the Nationalist zone.[530]

British Catholics gave regularly and generously for Spain. The Bishops’ Committee for the Relief of Spanish Distress raised £14,500 for Nationalist medical equipment. Catholic newspaper *The Universe* achieved a similar total. Secular groups like the Spanish Relief Fund for Sufferers from Red Atrocities, and Douglas Jerrold’s Friends of National Spain raised smaller sums.

The most prominent secular organisation was The Basque Children’s Repatriation Committee, set up to return young refugees to homes now under

Nationalist control. The Committee’s attitude to the children in its care is summed up by leading light Sir Nairne Stewart-Sandeman: ‘Little Basque devils’.[531]

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Peter Kemp was not the only British casualty at the Ebro. In a letter from his brother Neil earlier in the year Kemp discovered another British officer in the Foreign Legion.

Cecil Owen came from an Anglo-Spanish family based in Vigo and joined the Requetés before transferring into XVI *bandera*. Naval officer Neil Kemp was aware of him through the coincidence that Owen’s brother Charles was the observer in his Swordfish torpedo-bomber.

Kemp later met Owen on convalescent leave in San Sebastián and thought him a ‘quiet but sociable fellow’.[532] Their friendship had no time to ripen. Owen died that autumn.

By that time Kemp and Owen were the only British officers in the Legion. Noel Fitzpatrick, who Kemp had met the previous year (he remembered the tall Fitzpatrick ‘uncoiling’ himself from a restaurant table) had returned to V *bandera* with Gilbert Nangle after the Irish Brigade debacle. Shortly after the transfer he revealed he was a Freemason in an argument with his conspiracy-loving commander and was expelled from the country.

Nangle remained with V *bandera* for the remainder of the year, most of his time spent in the trenches south of Madrid. He was wounded twice, the second time seriously enough to be given indefinite leave. In early 1938 he left Spain to recuperate at his family home in Ireland. Once recovered he joined the police force in Palestine, then under British mandate.

Kemp fought in the Nationalist offensive of 1938 that took Franco's army to the Mediterranean. His company was destroyed and Kemp wounded three times.

'At one point in the battle it seemed inevitable that I should be killed; curiously in that moment I felt it was worthwhile. Our adversaries, I learned afterwards, were British.'[533]

He was hurt far more seriously by the stray mortar bomb shortly before the start of the battle of the Ebro. On the eve of the Republic’s last offensive he was in hospital with a doctor pulling shrapnel out of his jaw with pliers.

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The assault over the Ebro River was an attempt by the Spanish government to reverse Franco's gains in eastern Spain by cutting the corridor that divided its territory. The attack occurred where the river Ebro bulged eastwards, with the Republican forces on the outer side of the bulge's curve and the Nationalists within it.

In the early hours of 25 July 80,000 Republicans crossed the Ebro by boat and pontoon bridge. When overrun Nationalist soldiers threw down their rifles British International Brigader and boxing champion Tony Maguire shouted 'Surrender be fucked!' and emptied his automatic into them.[534]

'We didn't take prisoners,' remembered his comrade Charles Morse.[535]

By 30 July the Republic had lost 12,000 men but continued to advance. The terrain was rocky and the sun harsh. Corpses bloated and blackened in the sun. Huge dogfights took place in the skies. Grounds troops once watched 300 aeroplanes weaving amongst each other in Brownian motion, pilots parachuting into space as their planes fell in smoking cartwheels towards the ground.

On 30 September 1938 the Republicans conquered the entire bulge. Victory was short lived. The next month a huge Nationalist assault force pushed the Republicans back over the river. On 18 November Colonel Yagüe re-took Ribarroya village, the last Republican pocket on the western side of the Ebro. The government had lost 70,000 men and Franco 40,000.

As the fighting raged Kemp was undergoing further operations to dig shrapnel out of his jawbone, some carried out with only a bottle of brandy for anaesthetic. When the last of the metal splinters had been removed he was sent to San Sebastián where Joseph Eastman Sheehan, the Irish-American pioneer of plastic surgery and honorary colonel in Franco's army, rebuilt his face.

When Kemp entered his hospital room for the first time he was greeted with a shout from the other bed. 'Why, Goddammit, you old bastard!' It was Carl von Haartman. The Finn had accumulated a number of wounds in the recent fighting, including grenade splinters in the leg and a bullet lodged on a nerve in his arm.

The hospital was run by nuns who woke patients in the middle of the night to serve coffee. Von Hartmann brought an end to the practice by shooting out the light when they came in.

‘Next time, I shoot *you*, not the light!’[536]

Both men were soon exploring the local bars and Kemp began drinking heavily. ‘Be careful, or you’ll be getting a red nose and become a dull fellow,’ a friend warned.[537] Kemp never became dull but his stay in hospital marked the start of an alcohol problem that lasted decades. Von Hartmann drank even more. He once ran into the hospital’s Mother Superior early in the morning after an all-night session. Thinking fast, the Finn told her he was just back from early Mass.

‘Ah, Captain, if only you could persuade some of the other boys to follow your example,’ she said.[538]

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In late 1938 Kemp went home on leave to recuperate. Theodore Zichy flew him over the border to France. The Anglo-Hungarian playboy (a shoe fetishist photographer, self-proclaimed Count, and pilot) had come to Spain to explore the Nationalist zone. He found time to join the fighter ace Joaquín Garcín Morato on a mission before heading back to the casino at Biarritz.

Other British pilots had walk on roles in the war. Owen Cathcart-Jones shuttled Spanish millionaire Victor Urrutia Usaula around Eastern Europe on a round of diplomacy in a Beechcraft B.1 7R bought for £3,000 from American businessman James Haislip and originally shipped into Europe on the *Hindenburg* airship. Cathcart-Jones got a taste of fame four years later when he was dragged into American actor Errol Flynn’s 1942 statutory rape trial. The underage Peggy La Rue Satterlee confessed to a relationship with the pilot.

‘He called me his little strumpet,’ she said. ‘That’s some kind of English muffin’.[539]

Robert Henry McIntosh aka All Weather Mac made good money flying journalists into Nationalist Spain and their dispatches back out to France. He also acted as middleman in the early, unsuccessful, attempt by the Nationalists to buy Fokker F.XIIs from British Airways. London-born Peter Humbertum flew Heinkel He51 and Romeo RO37 fighters over Madrid, and Dornier seaplanes out of Cadiz.

Other Britons were found in Franco’s ground troops. Patrick Campbell joined Peter Kemp’s old outfit, the Requeté *Tercio de Nuestra Señora de Begoña*, not long after Kemp had moved to the Foreign Legion. In 1937

Horace Philbin served in the 10th Assault Company on the Oviedo front. A group of British seminarists in Valladolid joined the Nationalist army. Thomas Stead enlisted in V *bandera* but demanded release from service on the grounds of venereal disease. A Legion doctor refused the request.

Kemp once saw a doctor from his own *bandera* send a man with gonorrhoea to the punishment squad because he wanted to be hospitalised. 'Damned shirker! Whoever heard of a man going to hospital for a dose of the clap?'[540]

Kemp and company's opposite numbers were unexpectedly pulled out of the frontline in October 1938, along with the rest of the International Brigades. As Nationalist wrangling with the Non-Intervention Committee entered its third year, the Madrid government made a unilateral decision. The International Brigades were going home.

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On 15 November 1938 the Spanish Republic held a farewell parade for its foreign volunteers. A soft rain of flowers fell on the men of the International Brigades as they paraded through the streets of Barcelona. Their boots crushed a carpet of fallen red and pink petals as they mached past the sycamores of *Avinguda Diagonal* towards *Plaça de la Gloria* where Republican dignitaries waited on a reviewing stand.

The people of Barcelona stood on balconies, leant from windows, and perched in trees to cheer as the men marched past. Groups of women burst through the Spanish honour guard that lined the avenue to embrace the foreigners who fought for the Republican cause.

In *Plaça de la Gloria* the Republican President Dr. Juan Négrin thanked them for their sacrifice. His hoped General Franco would reciprocate and withdraw the foreigners who fought in his army to make the conflict one solely between Spaniards. Without outside intervention, he said, the Republic could still win.

Franco and his foreign allies were baffled by the announcement of the Brigades' departure. Nationalist intransigence had brought negotiations with the Non-Intervention Committee to a standstill. Now Négrin had unilaterally sent home his foreigners without even talking to the Committee.

'Why are they doing this?' wrote Italian Foreign Minister Ciano in his dairy, 'Do they feel themselves so strong? Or is it merely a demonstration of

a platonic nature?'[541]

Dolores Ibarruri, Communist deputy from the Asturias known as *La Pasionaria*, followed Négrin to the microphone.

'Comrades of the International Brigades! Political reasons, reasons of state, the good of that same cause for which you offered your blood with limitless generosity, sends some of you back to your countries and some to forced exile. You can go with pride. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of the solidarity and the universality of democracy […] We will not forget you; and when the olive tree of peace puts forth its leaves, entwined with the laurels of the Spanish Republic's victory, come back!'[542]

Ibarruri's hero Stalin was behind the withdrawal. Having realised that France and Great Britain would not back his dictatorship against that of Nazi Germany after September's Munich Pact (an agreement allowing the Germans to occupy Czechoslovakia's Sudetenland territory that British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain thought would bring 'peace for our time'), Stalin decided on an alliance with Hitler. As part of the policy shift he demanded the International Brigades be withdrawn to impress the Nazi leader.

The Republic could not refuse. It had not created or organised the International Brigades. That had been done in Moscow, which had also put up most of the financing, although Madrid had to find brigaders' wages of ten pesetas a day.[543]

Négrin did not regard the withdrawal as a loss. Over 35,000 men had served in the Brigades but by November 1938 less than 10,000 remained. The majority of those were Spaniards drafted in to make up the numbers (some volunteers, others from prisons and disciplinary battalions) and could be re-distributed among other Republican divisions. The actual damage was 4,000 exhausted foreigners, a small dent in the Republican military machine.

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Some men in the *Plaça de la Gloria* cried at the speeches as they stood beneath giant photographs of Stalin and Négrin. Others were dry eyed.

'We had wilfully deluded ourselves into the belief that we were fighting a noble Crusade because we needed a crusade - the opportunity to fight against the manifest evils of Fascism […] which seemed then as if it would

overwhelm every value of Western civilization,' said Briton Jason Gurney. 'Nobody, from either side, came out of it with clean hands'.[544]

Despite his bitterness Gurney believed the fight had been worth it but disillusion hung like a rain cloud over sections of *La Pasionaria*'s audience. Political realities, like Communist control of the Brigades, had wrecked many fantasies of fighting for democracy. *Daily Worker* journalist and senior communist Bill Rust had compiled a blacklist of 400 'politically unreliable' British volunteers while in Spain. Anyone on the list had reason to worry. Over 500 brigaders, according to chief Brigade organiser André Marty, were executed during the war as spies or counter-revolutionaries.[545]

Volunteer Tom Murray, an Edinburgh Labour party counsellor in civilian life, coolly described how the Spanish leader of a machine gun crew attached to the Brigades was shot in the back of the neck for insubordination and a strong 'anti-Soviet and anti-Socialist' background.[546] And British International Brigader William Browne, brother of Felicia, the sculptor who died in the early days of the war, was shot by his commander Tom Glynn Evans in March 1938. The official explanation was that Browne tried to desert but it was well known his comrades suspected him of imperialist views after they discovered he had served as a colonial policeman in Rhodesia.[547]

Official Spanish attitudes toward the Brigades were more complex than Ibarruri's speech implied. Some government circles called brigaders *'carne de canon'* (cannon fodder).[548] This may have been a response to volunteers' attitudes towards Republican soldiers. Soviet advisor General Kléber, now disgraced in a Siberian gulag, had told Moscow that his brigaders treated Spanish soldiers 'as the officers of the imperialist armies related to the soldiers in the colonial armies'.[549] Perhaps the *carne* opinion was simply a reflection of the reality of war. Foreign volunteers in Spain from left or right, without special skills, often found their role was to absorb bullets that would otherwise hit natives.

Not all volunteers had lost their faith. As *La Pasionaria* spoke, many men, bright flowers clinging to their uniforms, gave the left-wing's clenched fist salute and drank in her talk of victory. The territory controlled by Republican Spain amounted to two shrinking segments.

Négrin intended the Barcelona parade to remind foreign observers about the flickering flame of Spanish democracy. But the eyes of the world were on Hitler's expanding empire in Eastern Europe and the threat of a new world war. As Nazi Germany chewed up Czechoslovakia and intimidated Poland,

Spain was sideshow and the Republic a lost cause. Defeat was around the corner.

26. THE HORROR AND THE HEARTBREAK

End of the Spanish Republic

Arrow heads of tanks, marching men, and dust-cloud lorry convoys. Franco attacked the Republic's northern territory at the end of December. The *Legion Condor* destroyed the government's air force before it got off the ground, leaving runways choked with blackened wrecks. Under empty skies Franco's men established a bridgehead across the Ebro and poured into Catalonia.

On 26 January Barcelona fell. In the previous five days it had been bombed forty times from the air. Soldiers, government ministers, and civilians fled the city as the Nationalists entered the suburbs.

When the invaders reached the *Plaça de la Gloria*, accompanying priests lit bonfires and threw on every left-wing book they could find. The flames threw orange light across the faces of looting Moroccans as the words of Marx, Engels, and Lenin curled up into ash.[550] Barcelona's new military governor General Álvarez Arenas announced he intended to erect altars on every street corner and make the defeated inhabitants pray for forgiveness. Only two and a half months earlier Négrin and Ibarruri had stood before the International Brigades in the same square and talked of victory.

France opened its borders to refugees on 3 February and half a million streamed in, the Nationalist army on their heels. The northern Republican territory ceased to exist. The Spanish government was left with a ragged diamond of land stretching from Guadalajara in the north to Almeíra in the south, Córdoba in the west to Alicante on the east coast. Militarily weak and politically divided it clung on, waiting for a miracle.

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Portuguese National Syndicalist leader Rolão Preto heard the Republic's

death rattle from his homeland but felt little joy. He had once hoped the Spanish conflict would radicalise the peninsula, provide a training ground for his followers, and bring him to power. But as the civil war entered its end game Rolão Preto had been defanged and Salazar was more powerful than ever.

In early 1938 Portuguese secret police had foiled a coup. PVDE agents arrested a group of National Syndicalists at the border as they returned from a meeting with the former Angolan governor Henrique Mitchell de Paiva Couceiro. The governor was stewing in bitterness after having been exiled to Spain for criticising Salazar. PVDE investigations traced the threads to the web's centre and found a familiar spider: Rolão Preto.

The coup was the lashing out of a trapped man. The National Syndicalist leader had sounded strong on Fancoist radio when he called for Salazar's overthrow but his movement was already a tattered flag. Disapointingly few National Syndicalists had crossed the border to join the Nationalists. Instead many had fallen for Salazar's honey trap, the *Legião Portuguesa* (Portuguese Legion).

With all the uniforms, salutes, and mass rallies of fascism but none of its substance, the *Legião Portuguesa* provided an outlet for the radicalism of Portuguese rightists while keeping them under Salazar's control. National Syndicalists who could have enlisted with Franco's forces chose to remain in Portugal competing for a chance to grasp the *Legião*'s levers of power. The few who made it to the top discovered the levers had been disconnected. *Legião* activity never amounted to more than paramilitary play acting.

Rolão Preto's movement posed no danger but his radio threats angered Lisbon. Salazar complained to Burgos and the National Syndicalist leader was arrested by Franco's police. On release from prison a demoralised Rolão Preto contacted Portuguese authorities and asked to return home. He promised to abandon politics.

Salazar accepted the offer and allowed him into Portugal. But Rolão Preto could not leave politics alone. He began plotting a coup with the help of Paiva Couceiro, leader of the failed 1911 monarchist counter-revolution in which Rolão Preto had taken part as a teenager.

The border arrests destroyed the coup plans. The remains of Rolão Preto's movement fell apart. PVDE agents kept him under close watch but he remained free. Salazar knew a leader without followers was not a threat. In April, some of Paiva Couceiro's men tried to carry out another coup, this

time from Spain, but it collapsed. The former Angolan governor was exiled to Tenerife by Franco and the Portuguese plotters imprisoned.[551]

Salazar and Franco worked hand in hand to crush Rolão Preto's political ambitions but they were not always so close. Spanish abuse of Portuguese volunteers in the Foreign Legion and refusal to hand over underage volunteers had come close to poisoning the relationship between the two dictators.

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In the spring of 1937 the *Missião Militar Portuguesa de Observação* (Portuguese Military Observation Mission) arrived in Burgos. Its leader was General Raúl Esteves, once leader of the phantom *Viriatos* Legion. One hundred and forty strong, the Mission was top heavy with senior officers from the army, navy and air force, including Colonels Anacleto Domingos dos Santos and Álvaro Teles Ferreira de Passos, three lieutenant colonels, eight majors, and fifteen captains.

The Portuguese armed forces were keen to learn from the real life war game being played out in Spain. With Franco's permission the Mission attached its members to Nationalist units and sent data on tactics, weapons, and equipment back to Lisbon. Those from the army and naval were non-combatants but the air force contingent took a more active role.

In July 1937 Lieutenant-Colonel António de Sousas Maia, Captain António Dias Leite, and Lieutenant João Faustino Alburquerque de Freitas manned machine-guns on Junkers Ju-52 bombers during the battle of Brunete. Fifteen other Mission fighter pilots went through the Spanish Air Force training school and saw action at the Battle of the Ebro. João Manuel Machado Soáres de Oliveira was killed when ground fire destroyed his controls as he strafed enemy positions and sent his aeroplane cart wheeling along a trench. Pilot Fernando Tame Allepuz and machine-gunner Edmundo Porto Correia died when their aeroplane crashed during a test flight.[552]

Salazar reduced the Portuguese Army's size and budget while the Mission was in Spain. The War Ministry was brought under his control, the Portuguese President's role reduced to something more symbolic, sympathetic senior officers were promoted, opponents quietly retired, radicals isolated in the *Legião Portuguesa*. The knife went in so quietly that few in the army realised they had been neutered until too late.

The Mission soon discovered how much things had changed. In summer 1938 a Portuguese agent called Pedro Teotónio Periera based in Salamanca forwarded a Falange map of the Iberian Peninsula on sale locally. The map contained a major omission. It did not show Portugal's borders.[553]

Esteves' men interpreted this to mean the Nationalists intended to invade Portugal. The Mission sent a message urging Salazar to pour money into the Portuguese Army and give it a free hand to deal with the threat. The dictator ignored his Mission's advice. Senior army officers told Esteves to concentrate on war games and stop playing politics. The slap stung.

The Mission failed again when it tried to resurrect the *Viriatos* Legion. Esteves approached Portuguese serving in the Foreign Legion and asked if they would help to create and lead a new national unit. The response was positive but Franco and Salazar opposed the move. Consolidating his Portuguese volunteers into a new force was too disruptive for Franco, too much like an army power play for Salazar.

While the three-way debate raged, the unit's nominated leaders died in the battle for Catalonia and the last ghost of the *Viriatos* Legion evaporated into the ether.

*

The Portuguese Military Observation Mission had a second duty. It was charged with looking after the welfare of Portuguese volunteers in the Foreign Legion. Many of the 8,000 men were uneducated and illiterate. Spanish opinion of them was low and treatment correspondingly bad. Frank Thomas' view of a Portuguese soldier in his unit was typical: 'stupid and gross, too slow-witted to resent a wrong but, paradoxically, quick to appreciate a kindness'.[554]

Major António Arsénio Rosa Bascos forwarded reports of abuse by Portuguese volunteers. Deserters complained they had been used as punch bags, and given the worst billets and rations. The Portuguese were the only foreigners in the Legion not exempt from the whip.

The Mission had limited success in aiding its fellow countrymen. It managed to spring a few volunteers who had joined under the impression they would not see the front line but complaints about abuse got nowhere. The Legion prided itself on toughness. Beatings and punishment were part of everyday life.

The main achievement of Esteves' investigation was to confirm that many Portuguese volunteers were underage. In Portugal the age of majority was twenty-one. Anyone younger was a minor under their parents' authority. As early as November 1937 Salazar's Consul General in Salamanca made a formal request that Nationalist Spain stop recruiting underage volunteers. He was ignored. Portuguese made up a large part of Foreign Legion manpower and the loss of minors could hinder, or even cripple, its fighting capability.[555]

Franco claimed he would examine cases involving those under eighteen. It was all just words. He had no intention of losing any soldiers. The diplomatic fencing continued all year.

It was not until October 1938, with victory in sight, that Franco began the repatriation of minors and even then he fought dirty. The Nationalists admitted to only 2,654 Portuguese having served in the Foreign Legion, of which 187 were minors, a blatant underestimation.[556]

Not every underage volunteer wanted to return home. Mafra-born João Rodrigues Júnior was a twenty-year-old house painter who joined the Legion on a five-year contract. Wounded twice and left temporarily blind, he told the Portuguese magazine *A Esfera* (The Globe) that he believed absolutely in the Francoist cause and would not go home even if ordered by Salazar himself.[557]

*

Franco's assault on the last ruined remains of the Spanish Republic began in March. Government lines disintegrated as soldiers deserted to protect their families. Starving militiamen threw away their rifles and surrendered. In the final weeks Anarchists fought Communists on the streets of Madrid for control of a doomed government, like survivors of a wreck grappling for the ship's wheel as it floated in the water. Troops under the bricklaying anarchist Cipriano Mera Sanz executed the city's Communist commanders and tried to negotiate a peace deal with the Nationalists. No-one listened. Franco wanted unconditional surrender. On 31 March the Nationalists entered the capital. The Republic was finished. An aide told Franco the news as he sat at his desk.

'Very good,' the Generalissimo replied without looking up. 'Many thanks'.[558]

On 1 April 1939 the Spanish Civil War was officially declared over.

Half a million people dead, whole cities smashed into the ground, the economy in ruins. A quarter of a million houses destroyed, another quarter of a million seriously damaged. A third of the merchant marine shipping fleet had been lost and a third of Spain's livestock killed.

Madrid celebrated. Nationalist supporters, pale as milk, came out of foreign embassies into the sunlight for the first time in three years. Victorious soldiers gave chocolate to children who been living on lentils, cigarettes to men who had not smoked in months. Nationalist flags and banners hung from windows. The bars and restaurants were packed out with celebrating Francoists. In dark backstreets Republican supporters waited for a knock at the door.

On 19 May the capital hosted a victory parade. Franco watched from a podium surrounded by his Moorish bodyguard in scarlet and white robes as thousands of Nationalist troops marched past. Alongside Spanish legionnaires, Falangists, and Carlists were Moroccans, *Legion Condor* Germans, Italians of the CTV, the French *Jeanne d'Arc* unit, Portuguese *Viriatos*, and a troop of White Russians allowed to form a national unit for the parade. Fighter aircraft spelt out 'FRANCO' in the sky over the capital. At the controls of one was the Belgian aristocrat Count de Hemricourt de Grunne.

The *Legion Condor* held a separate parade in the northern town of Léon several days later followed by a drunken meal with Spanish air force personnel. Baron von Richtofen announced to loud cheers that Hitler had made a donation of a million pesetas to the families of Spanish pilots killed in combat. At the sober official victory parade in Berlin the following month stiff soldiers in *Luftwaffe* uniform goose-stepped through the Brandenburg Gate.

Fifteen thousand Germans conscripts served in the *Legion Condor* during the war, although the German presence was no more than 5,000 strong at any one time. The *Legion* took 300 casualties. The reparations for Nazi Germany's help were set at 288.7 million Reichmarks, to be paid with exports of raw materials.

Eighty thousand Italians served in the CTV, mixed units, and the Foreign Legion. A significant minority were volunteers. Around 4,000 died with another 14,000 wounded. The debt to Mussolini was set at £56 million, to be paid over ten years with Spanish exports. The Italian economy was badly strained and the public sick of war. Foreign Minister Ciano admitted to

confidants that involvement in Spain had been a ‘stupid mistake’.[559]

In addition, close to ninety thousand foreign volunteers fought for Franco: 78,000 Moroccans, 8,000 Portuguese, 700 Irishmen, 500 Frenchmen, at least 500 South and Central Americans (including 300 Argentineans, 100 Cubans, and forty Filipinos), over 200 Austrians, 155 Greeks, 150 White Russians, 100 Poles, 100 Guineans, seventy Scandinavians, fifty Belgians, at least thirty and possibly as many as fifty Britons, ten Americans, and over 100 volunteers from other countries, including seven Iron Guard Romanians, five Dutch, two Egyptians, and a handful of Turks, including volunteer Saladin Ben Sadik in IX *bandera*, remembered as a terrible gambler constantly brawling with his comrades.

Accused by the Republic of being mercenaries, many volunteers had no previous military experience. With a Legion private’s pay only three pesetas a day, no-one got rich in Spain.[560] Their opposite numbers in the International Brigaders were even worse off, despite earning ten pesetas a day, thanks to the weak Republican currency. In 1938 a live chicken cost 100 pesetas in the Republican zone but only eight pesetas in the Francoist zone.[561]

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The Nationalists kept poor and disorganised records on their foreign volunteers but most seem to have been in their twenties and early thirties, with some Moroccan, Russian, and Italian soldiers significantly older. Volunteers from Ireland, Italy, Morocco, and Portugal (countries where recruitment was relatively open and transport provided) often came from a poor background. Other nationalities seem to have been from more middle-class backgrounds, probably because the cost of getting to Spain filtered out those without money.

Perhaps 8,000 Moroccans and (excluding Italians and Germans) around 1,000 other foreign volunteers, most Portuguese, died in Spain, a death rate of ten percent. Casualty figures could be even higher; at the end of the war some Lisbon newspapers claimed, without naming sources, that 6,000 Viriatos had been killed in action.[562]

On the other side of the lines the Republic mustered 40,000 international volunteers from fifty countries. Around 35,000 of these fought in the International Brigades, while the rest were found in Anarchist or POUM

militias. Nearly 10,000 died in the war, a death rate of twenty-five percent.[563] In addition, a small number of non-volunteer Soviet tank crews and pilots fought for the Republic. The biggest single national contingent in the International Brigades was 8,500 Frenchmen but there were volunteers from as far away as Brazil and China.

Many of those in the International Brigades belonged to their native Communist parties but card-carrying fascists were under represented on the other side. The main European fascist groups outside of Italy and Germany ordered their members not to fight in Spain. Ireland was a rare exception. Most of the officers in Eoin O'Duffy's Irish Brigade were members of his Green Shirt party.

A few fascists went anyway. Two members of Mosley's BUF joined the Falange in the early months of the war. Around 50 members of the *Legion Nationale* went to Spain. Many of the 300 strong French Jeanne d'Arc company which fought in the Spanish Foreign Legion were from the right-wing PSF, although their views were closer to conservativism than fascism. Two Romanians of the *Garda de fier* died at Majadahonda in 1937. And Per Imerslund, the Norwegian Nazi, fought in the Falange. There were other fascists, but not in significant numbers.

More of Franco's European and South American volunteers were conservatives, Catholics, or both. Some, like Englishman Peter Kemp who fought in the Carlist monarchist militia and then the Spanish Foreign Legion, actively disliked fascism. In the first six months of the war foreigners could enlist in the Foreign Legion, the Falange militia, and the monarchist Carlist militia. The Falange was the least popular destination.

Franco's volunteers were motivated by a variety of reasons: politics, money, religion, adventure, escape. But some national groups had specific reasons for signing up. Morocco was a protectorate of France and Spain in 1936. Technically still under the control of its Sultan Mohammed V it was effectively run by the western powers. Money was a powerful draw in the impoverished territory but some Moroccans with less materialist concerns thought Franco would grant independence if they proved their loyalty to his cause. A grave miscalculation as Franco was imperialist to his bones. Others believed they were fighting a jihad against atheism in Madrid.

General Eoin O'Duffy motive in forming his Irish Brigade was to generate enough publicity to return him to the political centre stage in Ireland but most of his men were in Spain because of their faith. The news that

thousands of religious figures had been murdered in Spanish government territory during the early months of the war outraged Irish Catholics. Poles and Frenchmen shared their feelings with special intensity but it was a common source of horror to Catholics across the world.

The 500 South and Central Americans who fought for Franco shared a pride in their nation's historical ties with Spain. They believed those ties were being cut by the Spanish left. White Russian exiles saw the civil war as a chance to sharpen the combat skills they would need when they drove the Communists out of Russia.

Money and adventure appeal to men from all cultures. It is unlikely the 100 volunteers from Spanish Guinea cared much about the clash between right and left in Europe.

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One of those in Madrid on 19 May to watch the victory parade was Peter Kemp, accompanied by English nurse Priscilla Scott-Ellis and Major Hugh Pollard, the passenger on Captain Bebb's Dragon Rapide at the start of the conflict. The three discussed their roles in the war as they threaded through the crowded streets of the capital. None of them regretted their actions.

'Despite the horror and the heartbreak, and the wounds that trouble me still', said Kemp, 'I count it as a privilege to have fought beside some of the best and the bravest friends anyone could ever hope to meet - and against some of the bravest enemies'.[564]

Later Kemp was summoned to Burgos for an audience with General Franco in recognition of his unique status as a British volunteer who had served for close to the entire civil war. The new ruler of Spain ('a short, tubby figure with a soft, high, almost feminine voice') lectured him on the danger to Western civilisation posed by Communism.[565] Franco concluded his talk by confidently declaring a world war out of the question.

27. AFTERMATH

The Second World War 1939-45

Berlin, 30 April 1945. The heart of the German Third Reich was a burning shell. Civilians hid in quaking bomb shelters as Soviet troops hammered their way into the city centre with tanks and rockets. The few Nazi top brass who had not fled were cocooned with their Fuehrer Adolf Hitler in a bunker beneath the Reich Chancellery. A concrete submarine.

By now the exhausted *Wehrmacht* soldiers and wide-eyed Hitler Youth had surrendered, died, or deserted. The only defence came from Waffen-SS troops, Hitler's elite paramilitaries, dug into the ruins of Berlin's government sector around the *Tiergarten* park. They were stinking, unshaven, and bloody. They had a few handfuls of ammunition each, no food. They were prepared to fight to the end.

The fighting intensified as Soviet troops closed in on Hitler's bunker. The stiff corpse of a Waffen-SS soldier, pistol hanging limply from each hand and African campaign medals on the chest of his uniform, made Russian soldiers stare as they trudged through the rubble. The corpse's face was tattooed with Moroccan designs picked up in General Franco's Foreign Legion. The dead man was a Spaniard.[566]

The Waffen-SS were glorified in Nazi propaganda as Germany's elite but the last soldiers defending Berlin against the Soviet onslaught were foreign. Spaniards, Estonians, Dutch, French, Latvians, Swedish, Swiss, and many more nationalities could be found in their ranks. Visible through dirt on their grey uniforms were the colours of national arm shields, foreign names on cuff titles, and elaborate collar patches in place of the SS lightning strikes.

They were the remnants of collaborationist legions formed to provide manpower for the German invasion of the Soviet Union. Fascists and adventurers who gambled their futures on Hitler's fantasies of a thousand

year Reich, they had nowhere left to go.

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On 23 August 1939 Hitler and Stalin agreed the Nazi-Soviet pact. Ostensibly a non-aggression treaty, secret protocols divided Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Romania between the two dictatorships. On 1 September Germany invaded Poland. Britain and France declared war on Germany, and the Second World War began.

The Soviet Union attacked Poland from the east in mid-September and the country was overrun by the end of the month. Stalin turned his attention to the Baltic States, eating up Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania before invading Finland in November. British fascist Peter Keen joined the Finnish Volunteers, a 230-strong force of unconscripted men recruited in London by Kermit Roosevelt, alcoholic son of the former American president, to fight the Soviet invaders.

The Volunteers were right-wingers, adventurers, and those looking for escape from civilian life. The kind of men who might have joined the Nationalists if the recruitment apparatus had been there. They saw no action and most were marooned in Scandinavia for the duration but outnumbered by five times the Britons who fought for Franco.

Keen reached Finland in time for the 12 March 1940 peace treaty with the Soviets and was interned in Sweden for several months on his way home. In Britain he joined the intelligence section of the Airborne regiment and narrowly escaped being put on a charge for wearing his Falangist medal.

Seven hundred Norwegians volunteered to help the Finns, serving with the *Svenska Frivilligkåren* (Swedish Volunteer Corps). Per Imerlsund saw two weeks of service on the Salla front before returning home. He accepted without much enthusiasm the following month's invasion of Norway by the Nazis, preferring 'the protection of Germany to that of England'.[567]

In the west the Third Reich conquered Belgium and Holland in May 1940 and pushed into France. Former Falangist Rupert Bellville, now with the Air Transport Auxiliary, barely escaped the German advance, wobbling into the air in a Hurricane fighter plane abandoned for scrap as the *Wehrmacht* overran the airfield at Chateau d'Un.

After the fall of France, Hitler sent the *Luftwaffe* into British skies as prelude to an invasion. *Legion Condor* veterans practised combat lessons

learnt in Spain, among them Adolf Galland, the fighter pilot who had flown for Franco wearing only swimming trunks. RAF bombers took the battle back to Germany. The 300 civilians who died at Guernica would soon be dwarfed by the hundreds of thousands killed on both sides by bombs falling from the sky.

Well-placed friends in the Australian diplomatic world got *Jeanne d'Arc* veteran Nugent Bull on an RAF air gunnery course and he was soon flying raids over Berlin in a Wellington bomber. He enjoyed himself and wrote home that the raids were 'cracker'.[568] On 8 September his plane went down over the Channel and he was declared missing in action.

Belgian aristocrat Rodolphe, Count de Hemricourt de Grunne retreated with his unit to England after his homeland surrendered and joined RAF 32 Squadron at Biggin Hill. He was shot down in August 1940 and badly burned. Following reconstructive surgery he visited Portugal to convalesce but arguments with the Belgian government-in-exile, who wanted him to cross the border into Spain and spy on Franco's war plans, sent him back to England.

Spain had declared neutrality in the war but when Franco met Hitler, for the only time, on 23 October in a railway carriage at the French coastal resort of Hendaye, the Spanish dictator offered to enter the war if Germany could meet a long list of material requirements and political guarantees. Hitler declined the offer and told aides he would rather have 'three or four teeth pulled' than meet Franco again.[569]

De Grunne rejoined the fight against the *Luftwaffe*. On 21st May 1941 his luck ran out. His Spitfire was shot down into the Channel. His body was never recovered.[570]

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On 22 June Germany ripped up the Nazi-Soviet pact and invaded the Soviet Union. A war of ideological extermination raged through the Eastern Europe. General Franco believed fascism would triumph and sent the expeditionary *División Azul* (Blue Division) of Spanish volunteers to fight on the Eastern Front alongside Hitler's soldiers.

'I would gladly join with those Spaniards,' wrote right-wing Pole Alfons Jacewicz in his diary as he watched *División Azul* volunteers from behind the

barbed wire of a Spanish prison camp, ‘and not only because they will probably be crossing through Poland, and maybe even through Volhynia [north-west Ukraine], where my closest family had remained, but also because the struggle against Communism is a matter of principle for me’.[571]

Nationalist Spaniards may have supported Germany but their allegiance was torn by the plight of Catholic Poland, now completely in German hands. Spanish prison camps were full of Polish refugee soldiers who had fought in France and crossed the border after the Nazi victory. In 1942 Franco allowed them to join the Free Polish forces in Britain. Despite pressure from Berlin, Spain continued to recognise Poland’s London-based government-in-exile.

The *División Azul* that marched past Jacewicz’s prison camp was home to legionnaires addicted to battle, Naziphile Falangists still bitter at Hedilla’s arrest, and foreign veterans of the civil war. Several hundred Portuguese volunteers, including a few National Syndicalists, made up a ‘Green Legion’ within the *División* despite their homeland’s neutrality.

‘It was when the war against Russia began,’ Portuguese volunteer Rodrigues Júnior told the magazine *A Esfera*. ‘In my years in Spain I had started to understand what Bolshevists were and their ideas in their motherland, and decided to continue the life of a legionnaire and fight against them. When Spain began recruiting for the campaign in Russia, I volunteered.’[572]

He admired German efficiency and hated the Russians. ‘Bad clothes, famine, dirty. The women, a misery.’ Fellow Foreign Legion veteran Jaime de Assuncâo Graça’s memories of *División Azul* were of hardship, cold, and being so hungry he ate rats.[573]

Twenty-nine White Russians from Franco’s forces joined the Spaniards. Active in the Falange militia of San Sebastien, Vladimir Kovalevsky was initially turned down for service in Russia. He was too old at forty. He got into the *División* as a translator. One of his comrades had the unlikely name of Leon Totzky and had been a private in the Tsarist army and sergeant in the Spanish Foreign Legion.

In August 1940 the better-known Bolshevik Leon Trotsky was assassinated in his Mexico City home. Stalinist hitman Ramón Mercader smashed in the veteran revolutionary’s head with an ice axe handle while his mother waited outside as the getaway driver.

Trotsky’s Norwegian burglar, Per Imerslund, was too busy in

collaborationist circles to gloat. After the invasion of the Soviet Union, Imerslund joined the Waffen-SS as a war correspondent in search of the pan-Germanic spirit glorified by the *Ragnarok* circle. He failed to find it.

'Every tie, every connection, between German and Norwegian is lacking,' Imerlsund wrote.[574]

He became as disillusioned with Hitler as he had with Franco. On leave in Norway, he plotted with *Ragnarok* comrades to kidnap Quisling and assassinate senior German officials in Norway.

Imerslund contacted the resistance for help in the coup but was turned down. His ultimate goal is unclear but friends suggest he wanted a fascist Norway to continue the fight against the Soviet Union independently of Nazi Germany.[575] The plot fell apart in 1943 when Imerlsund was seriously injured on the eastern front. He died in December at Oslo's Aker University Hospital.

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División Azul was not the only collaborationist unit recruiting Spanish civil war veterans. Foreign Legion veteran Constantin Amilakvari and several other White Russians enlisted in the *Légion des Volontaires Française* (LVF), a group of French collaborators who joined the German army to fight the Soviets.

Michael Zulukidse, the truck driving Georgian prince who fought in the Falange, briefly enlisted in the LVF but was plucked out by the Germans to train groups of former Soviet citizens who had joined the Nazis, including the *Waffengruppe Georgien*, a unit from his home country.[576] The prince was able to avoid the mincing machine of the eastern front and spent as much time as he could in France with his family.

Northern France was now an occupied zone controlled by the Germans from Paris. The south remained under the rule of Marshal Philippe Pétain, eighty-three at the outbreak of war, who had set up government at the spa town of Vichy. France fought a three-way civil war between those loyal to their new German masters, like Jaques Doriot's PPF, the principal movers behind the LVF; those who declared all-out war on Hitler, like General Charles de Gaulle in London exile; and those who supported a reborn conservative France under Pétain, like Colonel de la Roque's PSF, home to most *Jeanne d'Arc* volunteers.

De la Roque banned his party from cooperating with the Germans, although not everyone listened. Despite this, the colonel could never bring himself to support De Gaulle. De la Rocque set up a PSF resistance network, the Réseau Klan, firmly anti-Communist and occasionally anti-Semitic, while he tried to persuade Pétain to abandon the collaborationist path. It was a former PSF member, Paul Collette, who shot and wounded two prominent collaborators at an LVF parade in August 1941.[577]

Pétain had been French ambassador to Spain in 1939 where the Francophobe Nationalists treated him with contempt. Serrano Súñer ordered Burgos' population off the streets when the Marshall arrived. The old warrior got his revenge by rescuing a Republican refugee hiding in French embassy's garden. But he was unable to protect De la Roque when the colonel was arrested by Gestapo in March 1943 and sent to a concentration camp for the rest of the war.

A pair of former *Jeanne d'Arc* men ran the Lyons LVF recruiting office but thanks to De La Roque's stand only a handful of fellow veterans enlisted and those who did came from other parties. One was Parisien Jacques Delerse, a PPF militant who joined Franco's forces in 1938 at the age of seventeen and died at the battle of Djukowo, near Moscow, when he accidentally shot himself jumping from a lorry.[578]

Pierre de Bénouville and Michel de Camaret, the young Cagoule supporters who joined the Carlist cavalry in 1936, distinguished themselves in the fight against the German occupiers. De Camaret won the *Croix de Guerre* as a member of De Gaulle's Free French and went on to a career as a NATO adviser, diplomat, and member of Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right *Front National*. De Bénouville became a general under De Gaulle and in the post-war years advised members of the cabinet. He was elected to the National Assembly in 1951. He and François Mitterand, who became the President of France in 1981, remained close friends.

Captain Henri Bonneville de Marsagny's son Roland, just old enough to remember his father going off to Spain, was too young for the war. He joined the French army in the 1950s and died at the Dien Bien Phu siege in French Indochina.

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The Blue Division was withdrawn in 1943 after pressure from the Allies but a

Legión Española de Voluntarios (Spanish Volunteer Legion), informally known as the Blue Legion, stayed on until March 1944. By then Franco had realised he was backing the losing side. The Legion was brought home. A few Spaniards and other civil war veterans decided to fight on with the Germans.

Monzon Toledo, a Guatemalan member of *División Azul*, stayed behind when it was withdrawn and found work with General von Faupel's *Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut* (Iberian-American Institute), an organisation that spent the war intelligence gathering in South America and propagandising for Spanish intervention in the war. By 1944 the Institute ran a centre recruiting Spanish workers in Germany into the armed forces. It had a strong anti-Franco flavour.

The Institute was home to a number of *División Azul* veterans and Von Faupel hoped he could use them to lever Franco out of power. Back in December 1942 Madrid had recalled Major General Agustín Muñoz Grandes, the first commander of the *División*, after he got too close to Von Faupel and other anti-Franco Nazis. The more reliable General Emilio Esteban Infantes *y Martín* took over.

Von Faupel undermined Franco through the pages of his Spanish language newspaper *Enlace* (Liaison), aimed at Spanish workers and soldiers in the Reich. *Enlace* had originally been published by the Spanish embassy in Berlin until late 1944 when it collapsed under the weight of its debts. Von Faupel acquired the paper at a bargain price. The new editor was Martin de Arrizubieta, a defrocked priest who served with the Republicans during the civil war but washed up in Berlin. Most of its journalists were bitter *División Azul* veterans.

The old *Enlace* had been solidly behind General Franco but the relaunched version urged Hitler to invade Spain when he won the war and install a truly fascist government. 'If Germany wins the war it should not respect the Spanish frontier.'[579]

Along with the anti-Franco propaganda were articles on Spaniards still fighting for the Nazis, under the heading 'Soldiers of an Ideal', and personal ads from lonely German women. Monzon Toledo turned out a number of pieces, from historical works on Cortés to an article called 'Like 1936!' recalling the civil war.

Enlace was popular with Spanish workers in Germany but Faupel's aim of overthrowing Franco was an unachievable dream. The *Generalissimo* was

too firmly entrenched in power and Germany too obviously doomed for the plan to gain support outside a small circle of fanatics.

Monzon Toledo remained in Berlin at the Institute as the Russians closed in during the last weeks of the war. He disappeared in the fighting. Von Faupel and his wife committed suicide rather than face capture.

Also in Berlin at the end was Juan Alfonso Van Horrembeke, a Belgian veteran of the Foreign Legion. He had remained in Spain working for the Falangist youth movement after the civil war. In 1944 radical Falangists sent him into occupied Europe to round up Spanish volunteers still in German service and create an unofficial successor to the Blue Legion. In occupied France, Horrembeke met his former comrade Paul Kehren, now a member of a Wallonien Waffen-SS sturmbrigade commanded by Rexist leader Léon Degrelle.

When Degrelle heard of Horrembeke’s mission he persuaded him to redirect the Spaniards to his sturmbrigade. The Belgian agreed but soon became disillusioned with the self-important Rexist and attached himself to a separate group of Spaniards in the Waffen-SS under the command of Miguel Ezquerra Sanchez.

The unit fought to the last bullet among the burning ruins of Berlin at the end of the war. The dead man with facial tattoos near Hitler's bunker was Ezquerra Sanchez's bodyguard.

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As the Soviets closed down Berlin block by block Hitler raged at commanders who told him the divisions he was relying on to save the Nazi cause no longer existed. On 30 April 1945 he retired to his quarters in the Reich Chancellery bunker with long-time mistress Eva Braun, whom he had married earlier that day, and the couple committed suicide. Their bodies were cremated by members of the Waffen-SS outside the bunker as mortar shells rained down.

Ireland’s De Valera was the only head of state to give condolences to the German people on Hitler’s death, a much criticised attempt to maintain Irish neutrality. The *Taoiseach* was no fascist. During the war he ordered Irish police to keep an eye on General Eoin O’Duffy, who continued to dabble in far-right politics. Despite the failure of the Irish Brigade, O’Duffy offered his

own ‘Green Legion’ of Irishmen to fight with the Nazis on the Eastern Front. The Germans remembered the problems in Spain and rejected the proposal.[580]

Convinced Germany would invade, O’Duffy deluded himself they would call on him as Ireland’s Quisling, the *Nasjonal Samling*’s leader having entered popular vocabulary for his alliance with the Nazis. O’Duffy united with former enemies in the IRA, now Nazi sympathisers in the war against Britain, and together they plotted an invasion of Ulster under his rule. It failed to happen. When he died on 30 November 1944 of alcohol-related causes De Valera gave him a state funeral.

Hitler’s ally Mussolini died five months later, his bullet-riddled corpse left swinging by its heels from the girders of a Milan petrol station. His declaration of war on Britain and France in June 1940 had destroyed the Fascist regime. Italians from Mussolini’s Blackshirt divisions took part in battles for Albania and Greece but as the tide of the war turned against them the graves of CTV veterans could be found scattered from Russia to Southern France.

Licio Gelli survived. He had returned to Italy in 1938 after the death of his brother and was paraded as an example of Black Shirt heroism. There was a brief moment of literary celebrity when he wrote *Fuoco!* (Fire!), a war memoir.[581] Gelli joined the paratroops when the war began, then became an intelligence agent in Yugoslavia where he socialised with Austrian conscript Kurt Waldheim, later the United Nations Secretary-General. Gelli was responsible for transferring King Peter II’s treasury to Italy. It was rumoured some gold bars went missing in the process.

In 1943 the Allies invaded Italy and much of the country changed sides. In the north, Mussolini formed the Republic of Salò, a rump state propped up by the Nazis, to keep the Fascist dream alive. Gelli joined him as liaison officer with the Germans. When Salò began to crumble, Gelli secretly linked up with the partisans. Some of his new comrades suspected he had not completely given up his Fascist beliefs. Others suspected he was an American agent. Gelli claimed to be just a patriotic Italian.

Also involved in Mussolini’s last stand was Vincenzo Patriarca, the New Yorker shot down over Madrid in 1936. He had rejoined the Italian airforce the following year. When the war began Patriarca saw action on the Albanian and Russian fronts before downing a British Wellington bomber over Naples

in late 1941. Any glory was short lived. America entered the war at the end of the year and Patriarca agonised at the thought of fighting his fellow countrymen. The authorities removed him from the combat zone.[582]

A fellow American who fought for Franco, Guy Stuart Castle, had no doubts about which side he was on. In March 1938 Castle's prison sentence for desertion had been commuted and he was expelled from Spain. When America entered the war he signed up and fought the Japanese as a captain in the Rangers, a special forces unit.[583]

In 1943 Patriarca found himself on the German side of the lines when the Allies invaded. He refused to join the Luftwaffe so the Nazis imprisoned him. A chance meeting with Mussolini's son Vittorio, who was famous for film producing, flying, and inflammatory quotes (dropping bombs on Abyssinian cavalry 'was exceptionally good fun'), changed Patriarca's mind and he spent the last year of the war in the Republic of Salò airforce piloting beaten up aeroplanes against the Allied onslaught.[584]

On 28 April 1945 Mussolini was executed by a Communist partisan at the gates of the Villa Belmonte in Mezzegra, northern Italy. Dramatic to the last, he held open his overcoat and told the executioner to shoot him in the chest.

Other fascist collaborators ran for cover as the war ended. Belgians Van Horrembeke and Kehren were caught and served lengthy sentences. Rexist Léon Degrelle was one of many given asylum in Spain, along with remnants of the Romanian *Legiunea Arhanghelul Mihail*. The *Legiunea* had achieved power in 1940 but in a severely weakened state. The death of Ion Mota, who actively sought martyrdom and claimed 'I love Christ and will happily go and die for him', had been a great loss to the movement but worse was to come. In 1938 King Carol II ordered the murder of Codreanu and his top lieutenants. The movement was beheaded and Horia Sima, a minor figure with similarities to the Falange's Hedilla, took control.

Romanian army veteran Marshal Ion Antonescu forced King Carol II to abdicate in 1940 and brought the *Legiunea* into the government. Sima's men tried to overthrow Antonescu the following January but were crushed after brutal street fighting in Bucharest. Many fled into German exile where the Nazis admired their fanaticism but preferred Antonescu's level-headed administration. Franco banned a Falangist demonstration in support of the *Legiunea* to be held in Madrid but granted Sima and his followers asylum

when the Third Reich collapsed.

Back in Italy, Licio Gelli surfaced a few years after the war as a factory owner with links to the *Democrazia Cristiana* (Christian Democrat) party. Successful and rich, he discovered a taste for political intrigue. In the early 1970s he became head of the P2 Freemasonic lodge, a meeting place for well connected right-wingers to plot against the state.

The waters around Gelli are still dark as squid ink but journalists have linked P2 to attempted coups, bombings, and the 1982 murder of financier Robert Calvi (known as 'God's Banker' for his links to the Vatican). Gelli's life after the discovery of the P2 membership list in the early 1980s has been adventurous for a man of retirement age: serious criminal charges, fleeing the country, being arrested withdrawing millions of francs from a Swiss bank, escaping a Swiss prison, fleeing to South America, surrendering to the Italian authorities, guilty vedicts, reversals, more charges, fleeing the country again, more arrests, more charges.

'I have a serene old age,' he told reporters.[585]

Vincenzo Patriarca also survived the wreckage of Salò. He worked as a member of an American aerial display team in the post-war years, flying out of Naples, then re-joined the Italian airforce. He became a test pilot for NATO before retiring in the late 1950s. He died in 1994.

Renzo Lodoli was another Salò survivor. The *Littorio* veteran served in Croatia, Sicily, and France before joining Mussolini's last stand. He ended the war in a partisan prison. After his release Lodoli began a long career as an engineer but never abandonned his politics. In 1946 he formed the *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement), Italy's biggest post-war Fascist movement. Fifty years later the party morphed into the less radical NA (*Alleanza Nazionale* - National Alliance) and joined the coalition government led by media magnate and former P2 member Silvio Berlusconi.

Until his death in 2008 Lodoli organised regular trips to the Spanish battlefields for the shrinking group of Italian veterans of the civil war.

'I do not like wars,' he claimed towards the end of his life, 'but in my opinion the war in Spain was the only one which had a real reason because it was not a power struggle against the British or the Germans. This was a war in defense of our civilization. Communism was defeated in Spain. Its first defeat.'[586]

By 1946 only Franco and Salazar remained out of Western Europe's pre-war dictators. As the cold war began, America led the way in finding Franco's Nazi sympathies less important than his anti-Soviet views. The rehabilitation was helped by the fact 40,000 Jews had escaped the Nazi genocide via Spain.[587] International Brigade veterans who predicted Franco would become a pariah after the collapse of European fascism watched stunned as he was welcomed back into the mainstream of world politics.

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After the war Olley Air Service Ltd presented Franco with the Dragon Rapide bi-plane in which Cecil Bebb had flown the Spanish leader to Morocco. It was given pride of place in the *Museo del Aire*, Cuatro Vientos, Madrid. The Spanish government awarded Major Hugh Pollard and Cecil Bebb the Knight's Cross of the Imperial Order of the Yoke and Arrows; Diana Pollard and Dorothy Watson got the medal of that order.[588]

Recalled to service in 1939 because his MI6 superiors saw him as a conduit to Franco, Hugh Pollard was assigned to 'Section D' in Madrid. An approach was made to the Spanish leader about the restoration of Alfonso XIII to the throne, with the intention to use the anglophile king to choke off Nazi influence. Franco declined. Usefulness over, 'Section D' dispensed with Pollard's services. He died in 1966, aged seventy-eight.[589]

Bebb flew as a test pilot during the war then rejoined Olley Air Service. Fellow Briton Frank Thomas served with the 8th Army in North Africa. He was badly wounded in the 1942 retreat from Tobruk. After the war Thomas returned to work at his father's firm. In the late 1990s historian Robert Stradling discovered Thomas living in comfortable retirement in a Cardiff suburb and persuaded him to publish his memoir of Legion life, written in 1937 after his return home but subsequently forgotten. By the time the book came out Thomas was fading away in a nursing home.

Foreign Legion veteran Gilbert Nangle rejoined the Ghurkhas when war broke out and earned the Military Cross fighting in North Africa. On 2 March 1944 he took a group of new and nervous Ghurkha recruits to a safe sector of the front line at Monte Cassino, Italy. Standing at the edge of a trench Nangle gave them a morale boosting speech, explaining that this part of the line was not dangerous. While he was talking a German sniper shot him in the head.[590]

Bellville moved abroad after the war to continue his playboy lifestyle

away from Britain's rationed austerity.[591] Before he left, Papillon Hall, with its moat and cursed slippers, was sold and demolished. Bellville became friends with pro-Republican author Ernest Hemingway and the pair holidayed in Spain together. Even hard-drinking Hemingway was concerned by his friend's alcohol consumption. Bellville died in 1962. His friend the Marquess of Donegall found success as a BBC radio disc jockey and gossip columnist for the *Sunday Dispatch*. He died in the mid-1970s.[592]

Andrew Fountaine joined the Royal Navy as an ordinary seaman when war broke out and finished it Lieutenant Commander. He saw the flash of the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki. The Conservative Party chose him as an election candidate in 1949, even though Fountaine now believed the upper-classes were 'bloody useless and would vote for a baboon as long as it was Tory blue'.[593] Thrown out of the party he entered the world of the far-right in 1967 as first chairman of the National Front. He died of cancer in 1997 at the age of seventy-nine.

Peter Keen was working as a theatre agent when fellow fascist John Warburton met him in London shortly after the end of the war. Warburton cheerfully told him he had spent the morning photographing a naked woman. In the days of stage censorship risqué shows had to prove they stayed on the right side of respectability by supplying photographs of their star attractions to the Lord Chamberlain's Office. Keen asked if the girl's name was Dizzy. Warburton said it was.

'That's my fiancée,' said Keen, 'and you've seen more of her than I have'.[594]

He went on to join Mosley's Union Movement, successor to the BUF, in the new generation of bodyguards known as the Special Detachment. He was killed in a car crash in the mid-1950s.

Noel Fitzpatrick retreated to Ireland after his service with the Foreign Legion and became a well-known figure at horse racing events. Mulchand Sobhraj Sita, the Indian legionnaire, stayed in Spain living off a disability pension. He had spent the last part of the civil war in hospital after being badly wounded in action. In November 1940 he was baptised Juan José Sobrat and took Spanish citizenship.[595]

Hitler enthusiast Pieter Krueler sat out the war in South Africa, affected by a clash of political sympathies and the recent death of his wife in childbirth. After the war he joined the South African army as an instructor before serving in Rhodesia during the 1960s in the fight against nationalist

guerrillas. He retired for good in 1970 and was still running two miles a day at the age of ninety-nine.

'I would rather die in a hail of bullets or in a high speed crash, leaving a positive impression upon my friends and others, as opposed to dying in my bed, obscure, anonymous and alone'. [596]

He died in 1986 at the age of 101.

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The longest serving British volunteer for the Nationalists had the most exotic wartime career. Peter Kemp joined the Commandos and took part in raids on the French coast before finding a better outlet for his unconventional talents in Winston Churchill's guerrilla warfare outfit the Special Operations Executive, created to 'set Europe ablaze'.

At one stage he worked alongside Kim Philby and discovered his new colleague, an ex-journalist with right-wing credentials, had been awarded a medal by Franco after being the victim of a Republican mortar bomb while reporting from the frontline. Years later Philby was revealed as a Soviet spy.

Kemp saw action across Europe. He was dropped behind enemy lines in France; parachuted into Albania to help the partisans; sent to Poland to help the Home Army, where his anti-Communist prejudices were confirmed when he was detained by the Soviet secret police for a month; fought the Japanese in Laos and Thailand. He was awarded the MC and DSO. After the war he was involved in operations against the Vietminh on behalf of the French until tuberculosis invalided him out.

Kemp pursued a split post-war career. He juggled a steady job in the London branch of the Imperial Life Assurance Company of Canada with an intermittent public life as a journalist for *The Times* in the world's hotspots.

He rescued young Hungarians from Budapest in the 1956 uprising against Communism; investigated the slave trade in the Philippines; wrote right-wing commentary from Saigon during the Vietnam war; and supported the Contras in Nicaragua. On 30 October 1993 he died of septicaemia in a London hospital.

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Peter Kemp owes his relative fame to 1957's *Mine Were Of Trouble*, a memoir of his time in the Carlists and Foreign Legion. He was one of the few

to write about his experiences. After the war foreign veterans did not want to admit they had fought for what was commonly regarded as a fascist dictatorship. Even service against the Nazis did not always erase suspicions.

'It made no difference that one fought as willingly against Fascism as one had done against Bolshevism previously,' complained Roy Campbell, who joined the King's African Rifles in the world war. 'Even if you killed ten times as many Fascists as you had previously killed Bolsheviks in self-defense, you still remained a Fascist'.[597]

The International Brigades became part of popular culture, subject of poems, novels and films. Their Nationalists counterparts were rarely mentioned. Pierre Drie La Rochelle's 1939 novel *Gilles* features French Francoists with passing nods to the Irish Brigade; Ksawery Pruszynski's post-war story *Rozaniec z granatow* mentions the Irish and Polish; David Baddiel's 2006 novel *The Secret Purposes* has an unpleasant English Nationalist volunteer; and the long running BBC radio soap *The Archers* featured mostly off-mike character Sir Sidney Goodman, another Englishman who fought in Spain.

Franco's international brigades had a near miss with fame during London's swinging sixties. José Maria Ozores Laredo, a Cuban who fought for Franco, had joined the Waffen-SS and been captured in Italy at the end of the war. On release he changed his name to Miguel Ferreras and moved to New York to become a fashion designer. He married the wealthy Irish heiress Oonagh Guinness in 1958 and became stepfather to Tara Browne, a London-based socialite who mixed with The Beatles and The Rolling Stones.

Ferreras had fun spending his wife's money until they divorced in 1966 when she found out about his past. A year later his ex-stepson Browne died in a car crash, inspiring John Lennon's lyrics for 'A Day in the Life'.[598] Despite the thoroughness of Beatles' fans, the link between General Franco and Sgt. Pepper did not become public.

Franco made use of his foreign troops' silence to spread a myth that the civil war was a victory by patriotic Spaniards over foreign-controlled Communists. The Irish Brigade, the Portuguese *Viriatos*, the CTV, *Legion Condor*, and the others were wiped from textbooks.

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In the post-war years Franco pursued a vindictive campaign against former enemies. In the first decade of his rule firing squads executed over 50,000 Republicans for alleged war crimes. Thousands more worked as virtual slave labour on public works projects.

In 1956 the *Generalissimo* gave Morocco its independence after lengthy civil disturbances in Spanish and French zones. Despite wartime promises, autonomy had not been granted when the civil war ended. During the Second World War Franco went to considerable lengths to keep Morocco supplied with foodstuffs and other produce, often at the expense of the Spanish mainland. Disgruntled Moroccan veterans were unimpressed.

Abdel Khalek Torres and Sheikh Mohamed El-Mekki Naciri played important roles in the post-war agitation that finally brought Morocco its independence. The French gave up the fight at the same time as Spain and a united Morocco returned to the rule of Mohammed V.

In 1969 Franco gave in to Monarchist pressure and appointed Alfonso XIII's grandson, Prince Juan Carlos, as heir to the Spanish throne. By that time the *Generalissimo* cared more for golf than military might. Spain's army had decreased in size every year since the war. In 1970 it was the same size as Norway's army, and half that of neighbouring Portugal.[599] In per capita terms, it was the smallest army in Europe.

Portuguese dictator Oliveira Salazar died in 1970 and the reactionary Catholic state he had created fell four years later to an army coup, the 'Carnation Revolution'. The broadcast of Portugal's entry in the Eurovision Song Contest (*E depois do adeus* - After the Farewell by Paulo de Carvalho) signaled the start of the coup.[600]

The first post-Salazarian government was headed by General António de Spínola, one-time member of the *Missião Militar Portuguesa de Observação*. Helping to usher in democracy was Rolão Preto's *Partido Popular Monárquico* (People's Monarchist Party), a return to the Blueshirt leader's political roots that lasted until his death in 1977.

Franco died on 20 November 1975. Two years later the first democratic elections took place. Spain made an unexpectedly smooth transition from dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy under Juan Carlos. The King's stature grew in the eyes of his subjects when he faced down a 23 February 1981 coup attempt by Francoist nostalgics in the army. In the following years democracy and the remnants of Francoism lived an uneasy co-existence, the latter fading as civil war veterans and their successors retired or died off.

Finn Carl ‘Goggi’ von Hartmann lived to see Spain’s transition to democracy. He had returned to his native country at the start of the Second World War to fight the Soviet invaders and lost an eye to a shell splinter. When the war ended he came back to Spain to live out the remainder of a long life. He married Hungarian exile Countess Marie-Eugenia Zichy-Pallavicini, converted to Catholicism and wrote his memoirs. He died in 1980 at the age of eighty-three.

His friend Joe Serrallach also saw the fall of Francoism. After the civil war Serrallach returned to chemistry and turned his company Lainco S.A, which he had established in 1934, into a successful pharmaceutical and agrochemical concern. His main interest was in laxatives. He died in November 1989.

At a reception shortly before he returned to Finland to fight, Von Hartmann talked with General Valera, the conqueror of Toledo. Von Hartmann suggested Spain should send volunteers to help the Finns in their fight against Communism. Varela shrugged.

‘My dear Goggi,’ he said, ‘it is a long way from Spain to Finland’.

‘It is the same distance,’ said Von Hartmann tapping the medals on his chest, ‘from Finland to Spain’.

The general smiled politely and turned to talk to someone else.[601]

*

In the early hours of 17 March 2005 a gang of workers removed the last statue of General Francisco Franco from its plinth in Madrid’s *Plaza San Juan de la Cruz*.

‘It is unthinkable,’ said Spanish President José Luis Rodriguez, ‘that in a democracy reminders of dictators should remain in public places.’[602] A small group of supporters gave fascist salutes as the statue was covered in a sheet and driven away.

Conservative newspaper *El Mundo* enquired if the government had any plans to remove Ricardo Bellver’s statue *El Ángel Caído* (The Fallen Angel) from Retiro Park. The statue, which has stood in the park since 1885, depicts a horned and winged Satan contemplating his fall from Heaven. When the government admitted it had not, *El Mundo* wondered why the new Socialist administration regarded Franco as more dangerous than the Devil.[603]

One final statue remained. In early 2008, authorities in the Polish city of

Poznań announced they intended to demolish a Communist-era monument. The sword-shaped concrete pylon standing near several blocks of flats and a busy road commemorated Karol Swierczewski, the Polish communist who wrote the report on the International Brigades for his masters in Moscow.

General Walter had an erratic career after Spain. During the Second World War he served in the Soviet army but alcohol badly affected his abilities. He was shifted to the reserves. He recovered enough to play a role in the establishment of a Communist dictatorship in Poland after the war and ordered the execution of Poles who had fought the Nazi invaders as members of the non-Soviet underground.

Moscow's activities inspired armed resistance in parts of the country. One group in the north-east issued a leaflet proclaiming 'Let pre-war Spain serve as our example. On into the battle and let God, faith, and the love of our fellows and the Fatherland reside in our hearts!'[604]

Ukrainian partisans were active near the south-east border. In March 1947 Swierczewski was ambushed in his car while driving through the Bieszczady mountains on an inspection tour. The model for 'General Golz' in Ernest Hemingway's novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls* died in burst of machine-gun fire.

The plan to demolish his monument was controversial enough in Poznań, where some old Communists regarded Swierczewski as a hero, but it stirred emotions elsewhere in Europe. In September 2008 the British Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn, a prominent Amnesty International member, tabled a motion in the House of Commons asking the government 'to ensure international solidarity preventing this act of political vandalism which has no place in modern Europe'.[605] Miguel Angel Martínez Martínez, Vice-President of the European Parliament and Secretary-General of Spain's reborn PSOE, also protested.

The Poznań authorities refused to accept that Swierczewski's monument represented either democracy or art. On 8 June 2009 the cranes moved in. General Walter's memory collapsed in a cloud of concrete dust.

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Chapter 7. Air Power

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89 Strakosch, op cit

90 Coverdale, ‘Italian Intervention in the Spanish Civil War’ (1973) p134; the Dragoons of Death was Bonaccorsi’s name for the unit – Spanish members knew it as the ‘Majorcan Militia’.

91 Thomas, op cit p397

92 Evening Standard, 16 September 1937

Chapter 8. Flowering Rifles

93 Thomas,op cit p208

94 Kemp, ‘The Thorns of Memory’ (1990) p11

95 The Times, 15 July 1936

96 Keene, ‘Fighting For Franco’ (2001) p199; in the words of Russian volunteer General Anton Shinkarenko.

97 Daily Mail, July 27 1936

98 Ibid

99 Daily Telegraph, 16 August 1936

100 Ibid

101 Carpenter, ‘The Bridgehead Generation: Evelyn Waugh and His Friends’ (1989) p313

102 Buchanan, op cit p23

103 Buchanan, ‘The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain: War, Loss And Memory’ (2006) p20

104 Popular writers were less reticent about supporting Franco; Dennis Wheatley's 1938 'The Golden Spaniard' (1938), a thriller set during the war, was unashamedly pro-Nationalist.

105 Alexander, 'Roy Campbell – A Critical Biography' (1982) p174; 'The Flowering Rifle' was still popular enough to go into a second printing in 1941.

106 Cunningham, 'British Writers of the Thirties' (1993) p431

107 Buchanan, op cit p15

108 Cunningham, op cit p429

109 Thomas, op cit p223

110 Evening Standard, 16 September 1937

111 Yugoslavia was the colloquial name for the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes from 1918 to 1929, and its official name after that date.

112 Payne, 'A History of Fascism 1914-45' (1995) p258

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114 Cowles, 'Looking For Trouble' (1941) p79

115 Ibid

116 Payne, op cit p246

117 Thomas, op cit p927

118 Kemp, op cit p11

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119 Kemp, op cit p4

120 Information from Sir Raymond Carr, February 2008

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122 Cunningham, 'Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse' (1980) p52

123 Griffiths, 'Fellow Travellers of the Far Right' (1983) p261-262

124 Giffiths, op cit p263

125 Action, 6 August 1936

126 Buchanan, 'Britain and the Spanish Civil War' p184

127 Alpert, op cit p52

128 Knox, 'Robert Byron' (2003) p392-393

129 Kemp, op cit p69

130 Ed. Toynbee, op cit p67

131 Kemp, 'Mine Were Of Trouble' (1956) p36

132 Kemp, op cit p43

133 Kemp, op cit p25

134 'No Pasarán' was borrowed from General Pétain's call to the French army at Verdun in the First World War; it was popularised in Madrid by Communist firebrand Dolores 'La Pasionaria' Ibarruri.

135 Kemp, op cit p29

136 Kemp, op cit p31

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137 Blinkhorn, 'Fascists and Conservatives' (1990) p162

138 Payne, op cit p314

139 Ploncard d'Assac, 'Salazar' (1967) p107

140 Bruce, 'Portugal: The Last Empire' (1975) p41

141 Foray, 'Dutch Involvement in the Spanish Civil War: National, Local and Individual Reactions' (The Colombia Historical Review, vol.1 Spring 2001)

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144 Ed. Sperber, 'And I Remember Spain' (1974) p81

145 Pena Rodríguez, 'Franco, Salazar y los propagandistas de la libertad (1936-1939)' (Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 5 May 1998, Issue 5)

146 Ed. Sperber, op cit p77

147 Kay, 'Salazar and Modern Portugal' (1970) p87

148 Alpert, op cit p54

149 Payne, 'Fascism in Spain 1923-1977' p314

150 Alpert, op cit p53

151 Delgado, 'Portugal E A Guerra Civil De Espanha' (1980) p223

152 Oliveira, 'Salazar E A Guerra Civil De Espanha' (1988) p243

153 Luis de Mesa, 'Los Otros Internacionales' (1998) p220

154 Thomas, op cit p396 n3

155 'Hispanicus', 'Foreign Intervention In Spain' (1937) p332

156 Oliviera, op cit p248

157 Information from Manuel Alonso Comerma, 2001

158 Oliveira, op cit p249

Chapter 11. The Dream And Lie Of Franco

159 Pearson, 'Facades: Edith, Osbert and Sacheverell Sitwell' (1978) p282

160 Eby, 'The Siege of the Alcazar' (1965) p72

161 Time And Tide, 9 October 1937

162 Alexander, op cit p164

163 Alexander, op cit p165

164 Daily Express, 12 September 1936

165 Alpert, op cit p46

166 Le Figaro, 25 July 1936

167 Thomas, op cit p392 n.1

168 Daily Mirror, 3 June 1936

169 Seaman signed as a driver for Mercedes Benz in 1937 and won the German Grand Prix the next year. He was described as Hitler's favourite racing driver but died after smashing his car into a tree during a 1939 race in Belgium.

170 Eaton, 'Daily Life in the Soviet Union' (2004) p18

171 Moss, 'Nineteen Weeks: America, Britain and the Fateful Summer Of 1940' (2003) p17

172 Alpert, op cit p78

173 Switzerland signed up to the Non-Intervention Agreement but refused to compromise its neutrality by attending Committee meetings.

174 In his confession, written while on trial at Nuremburg in 1945.

175 Kemp'Thorns of Memory' p68

176 Kemp op cit p56

177 Kemp, op cit p77

178 Eby, op cit p223

179 Eby, op cit p225

180 Thomas, op cit p754

181 Thomas, op cit p424

Chapter 12. Welsh Legionnaire

182 Francis, 'Miners Against Fascism' (1984) p175

183 Ed. Stradling, op cit p39

184 Powell, 'Journals 1982-1986' (1991) p.54; Orwell commented that Powell was 'the only Tory I ever really liked'; both attended Eton but did not meet until the Second World War; Powell's Celtic ancestry may have been more imagined than real but that did not stop him requesting he appear in reference books as Welsh.

185 A Cook's tour to Portugal required a passport, a luxury in 1936; the other option was a weekend Channel crossing to France, which did not require a passport, followed by an illegal border crossing into Spain.

186 De Mesa, ‘Los Otros Internacionales’ (1998) p217; ‘Victor Raymond Kelleth’, also a Gibraltar deserter, mentioned in Nationalist records is probably the same man.

187 Ed. Stradling, op cit p52

188 Ed. Stradling, op cit p55

189 Ed. Stradling, op cit p84

190 Ed Sloan, ‘John Cornford – A Memoir (1938) p200

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193 Beevor, op cit p133

194 Ed. Stradling, op cit p117

195 Ed. Stradling, op cit p116

Chapter 13. Holy Crusade

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197 Keene, op cit p238

198 Payne, ‘A History of Fascism 1914-45’ p136

199 Nagy-Talavera, ‘Green Shirts and Others’ (2001) p379

200 http://www.reocities.com/integral_tradition/mota.html

201 Nagy-Talavera, ibid p350

202 Keene, op cit p222

203 Keene, op cit p231

204 Ibid

205 Ed. Stradling, op cit p82

206 Ed. Stradling, op cit p119-120

207 Keene, op cit p233

208 Keene, op cit p235

209 Ibid

Chapter 14. A Holiday in Spain

210 Pollard, ‘Secret Societies Of Ireland, Their Rise and Progress’ (1922) p256

211 McGarry, ‘Eoin O’Duffy: A Self-Made Hero’ (2005) p166

212 Cronin, ‘The Blue Shirts and Irish Politics’ (1997) p48

213 Western Mail, 8 November 1933

214 McGarry, op cit p282

215 McGarry, op cit p281

216 Hamilton, ‘The Appeal of Fascism’ (1971) p68

217 Preston, ‘Franco’ (1993) p162

218 Hachey et al, ‘The Irish Experience: A Concise History’ (1996) p180

219 Standing beside Sexton was Douglas Hyde, future President of Ireland from 1938-45; at the end of the Second World War, Hyde, along with De Valera, paid his respects to the German embassy in Dublin when Hitler died.

220 McGarry, op cit p152

221 McGarry, ‘Irish Politics and the Spanish Civil War’ (1999) p153

222 McGarry, op cit p174

223 Alpert, op cit p127

224 Ed. Sperber, op cit p261

225 McGarry, op cit p175

226 Stradling, ‘Franco’s Irish Volunteers’ (History Today, March 1995)

227 Stradling, ‘The Irish and the Spanish Civil War’ (1999) p8

228 McGarry, ‘Eoin O’Duffy: A Self-Made Hero’ p312

229 McGarry, op cit p285

230 Irish Independent, 10 August 1936

231 Stradling, op cit p6

232 De Valera suggested himself to the Spanish Republic as a peace negotiator at the start of August 1936; his quashing of the Clonmel resolution was intended to support his case. The Republic turned him down.

233 Ed. Ryan, ‘Book Of The XVth Brigade’ (1938) p115; Ryan later collaborated with the Nazis, some say reluctantly, during the Second World War.

234 Stradling, op cit p31

235 ‘Fascism Never Entered The Pic’ (New Hibernia, vol.6 no.7 July-August 1986)

236 Stradling, op cit p28

237 Raguer. ‘Gunpowder and Incense: The Catholic Church and the Spanish Civil War’ (2007) p78

238 Thomas, op cit p398

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239 http://irelandscw.com/band-Beckett.htm

240 Stradling, op cit p221 n74

241 De Mesa, op cit p247

242 Kemp, op cit p56

243 Gaya y Delrue, ‘Combattre Pour Madrid’ (1964) p129

244 Stradling, op cit p71

245 In his 1930 novel ‘Storm Over Europe’, the source for the 1936 play, Douglas Jerrold had written that ‘erotic and indecent literature, crudely primitive art, a debasement of private morals and a slackening of the general fibre in all classes’ were examples of the degeneracy of the left-wing Cisalpanian government.

246 ‘The Jarama, Say The Irish, Was No Picnic’ (Sunday Independent, 12 June 1960)

247 ‘Hell Breaks Loose Along The Jarama’ (Sunday Independent, 19 June 1960)

248 O’Duffy, ‘Crusade in Spain’ (1938) p158

249 De Mesa, op cit p 184

250 De Mesa, ibid

Chapter 16. The Devil’s Own Frying Pan

251 ‘El Bombardeo de Guernica’ (El Mundo, vol. 12 October 2005)

252 Thomas, op cit p624

253 ‘Guernica Remembered: Picasso’s Legacy’ (The Independent, 26 April 2007)

254 The Times, 28 April 1937

255 Payne, ‘Politics and the Military in Modern Spain’ (1967) p410

256 Thomas, op cit p628

257 Alpert, op cit p85

258 Chatwin, ‘What Am I Doing Here’(1998) p119

259 Bridgeman, ‘The Flyers’ (1989) p137; Du Berrier originally volunteered for the Nationalists but was turned down after the Italians discovered he had flown for Haile Selassie in the Abyssinian war.

260 Thomas, op cit p469

261 Westwell, ‘Condor Legion’ (2004) p23

262 Ed. Toynbee, ‘The Distant Drum’ (1976) p96

263 Ed. Costa, Critchfield, Gostan, Koepke, ‘German and International Perspectives on the Spanish Civil War: The Aesthetics of Partisanship’ (1992) p130

264 Ed. Toynbee, op cit p103

265 Ed. Toynbee, op cit p97

266 Neri, ‘Licio Gelli - Parola di Venerabile’ (2006); from http://www.dagospia.com/rubrica20/Odo_gelli_far_festa/articolo-6/1.htm

267 Heiberg, op cit

268 Bosworth, ‘Mussolini’ (2002) p 317

269 Coverdale, op cit p158

270 Coverdale, op cit p183-184
271 Thomas, op cit p573
272 Thomas, op cit p583
273 Whealey, ‘Hitler and Spain: The Nazi Role in the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939’ (2005) p188 n53
274 De Mesa, op cit p147
275 Coverdale, op cit 168
276 Neri, op cit
277 Thomas, op cit p520
278 'La bella guerra di Renzo il nero' (La Domenica di Repubblica, 14 May 2006)
279 ‘My Century’ (BBC World Service, 22 November 1999) http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/people/features/mycentury/transcript/wk47d1.shtml
280 http://www.elmundo.es/especiales/2006/07/espana/guerracivil/hist_lodoli.html
281 'La bella guerra di Renzo il nero' (La Domenica di Repubblica, 14 May 2006)
282 Thomas, op cit p594
283 Hamilton, op cit p68
284 Hamilton, op cit p 69
285 Alpert, op cit p82
286 Thomas, op cit p601 n.2
287 Bosworth, op cit p318
288 Preston, ‘Franco’ (1993) p302
289 http://www.elmundo.es/especiales/2006/07/espana/guerracivil/hist_lodoli.html
290 Thomas, op cit p600
291 Thomas, op cit o603
292 Thomas, op cit p604
293 Alpert, op cit p149
294 Bosworth, op cit p318

Chapter 17. Russia, One And Indivisible

295 Luckett, ‘The White Generals’ (1971) p203
296 Johnston, ‘New Mecca, New Babylon: Paris and the Russian Exiles: 1920-1945’ (1988) p27
297 Pozner, ‘White Despot’ (1938) p8
298 Keene, op cit p194
299 Miller, op cit p132

300 Kemp, op cit p22

301 Ed. Munoz, ‘The East Came West: Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist Volunteers in the German Armed Forces 1941-1945’ (2001) p182

302 Keene, op cit p210 n8

303 Robinson, ‘The White Russian Army in Exile 1920-1941’ (2002) p224-225

304 Keene, op cit p188

305 Robinson, op cit p225

306 Laquer, ‘Soviet Realities: Culture And Politics From Stalin To Gorbachev’ (1990) p94

307 Luckett, op cit p390; leadership of the ROVS was a poisoned chalice; Miller’s predecessor, General Kutepov, was kidnapped by the Soviets in 1930, and organisation founder General Wrangel died in circumstances his family regarded as suspicious in 1928.

308 Miller, op cit p136

309 In 1940 Plevitskaya died in prison of heart disease.

310 Miller, op cit 139

311 Thomas, op cit p982

312 Ed. Stradling, op cit p95

313 The nationalisation of food was nothing new; sauerkraut became ‘Liberty Cabbage’ after America entered the First World War.

314 Watson, ‘Single To Spain’ (1937) p104-107

315 Keene, op cit p204

316 Keene, op cit p205

317 Orwell, ‘Homage To Catalonia’ (1980) p70

Chapter 18. Hedilla At 120 Kilometres An Hour

318 Daily Worker, 21 May 1938

319 Orwell, ‘Collected Essays, Journalism And Letters’ (2000) p516

320 Ibid

321 Ed. Hindle, ‘Foreign Correspondent – Personal Adventures Abroad in Search of the News’ (1939) p265

322 Kemp, op cit p92

323 New York Times, 13 December 1936

324 New York Times, 13 December 1936

325 Information from Dr. Joan Maria Thomàs (Universitat Rovira i Virgili), October 2011

326 The Tech, 8 May 1929

327 Traing, ‘American Diplomacy and the Spanish Civil War’ (1968) p282 n.24; in 1939 Krock was charged with carrying a concealed weapon after an incident in which his friend Count Igor Cassini, a gossip columnist, was tarred and feather by a group of men in Virginia who objected to something he had written – see The Paris News, 27 June 1939.

328 Herrick, ‘Jumping The Line: The Adventures And Misadventures Of An American Radical’ (1998) pxvi

329 Guttmann, ‘The Wound In The Heart’ (1962) p233 n.27

330 Hemingway would have been a good fit as Spanish correspondent for Collier’s but had punched out the magazine’s publisher Joseph Knapp in a drunken fight at Bimini in 1935; the locals still sing a song (called ‘Big Fat Slob’) celebrating Hemingway’s victory.

331 Taylor, ‘The United States And The Spanish Civil War 1936-39’ (1956) p137

332 Taylor, op cit p144

333 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, ‘The Spanish Civil War: American Hemispheric Perspectives’ (1982) p21

334 Thomas, op cit p363 n.1

335 Guttmann, op cit p11

336 Guttmann, op cit p58

337 Amery, 'Approach March' (1973) p103

338 Payne, ‘Fascism In Spain 1923-1977’ p256

339 Payne, op cit p250

340 Payne, op cit p264

341 Ed. Hindle, op cit p266

342 Norling, ‘El Capitán Finlandés’ (Revista Espanola De Historia Militar, Feb 2004)

343 Payne, op cit p265

344 Thomas, op cit p637

345 Payne, op cit p266-268

346 Norling, op cit

347 Heiberg, ‘Mussolini, Franco and the Spanish Civil War: An Afterthought’ (Totalitarian Movements And Political Religions, vol.2 no.3, Winter 2001) p63

348 Ed. Homer & Wilcox, ‘Germany And Europe In The Era Of Two World Wars’ (1986) p129

349 Thomas, op cit p643-644

Chapter 19. Viva Francia!

350 Soucy, ‘French Fascism: The Second Wave’ (1995) p49

351 De Mesa, p53

352 Soucy, op cit p41

353 Time Magazine, 5 December 1935

354 Hamilton, op cit p194

355 Kennedy, 'The Croix de Feu, the Parti Social Français, and the Politics of Aviation, 1931–1939' (French Historical Studies, Spring 2000, 23.2)

356 Soucy, op cit p31

357 The Guardian, 14 December 2001

358 Cole, 'Francois Mitterrand: A Study in Political Leadership' (1994) p2

359 Keene, op cit p164

360 Jackson, 'Fallen Sparrows: The International Brigades In The Spanish Civil War' (1994) p106

Chapter 20. Remember the Irishmen in Spain

361 http://irelandscw.com/band-Beckett.htm

362 Sunday Independent, 3 July 1960

363 Gunning later broadcast wartime radio propaganda from Nazi Germany to Ireland until his death from tuberculosis in 1940.

364 McGarry, op cit p309

365 Kemp, op cit p86

366 Stradling, op cit p87

367 Stradling, op cit p89

368 Stradling, op cit p94

369 Stradling, op cit p94-95

370 McGarry, op cit p310

371 McGarry, op cit p314

372 Ed. Stradling, op cit p119

373 Stradling, op cit p119-120

374 Thomas, op cit p832

375 Fontenoy crossed the border as a journalist in the few weeks of the uprising, later writing 'September 1936 in front of Irun, during the seige […] I recall the early morning of 4 September, around 3 am. Irun burns. Irun is in flames'. Fontenoy did not join the *Jeanne d'Arc* unit but he did fight with the Finns against the Soviets in 1939, and on the Eastern Front with German collaborationist unit, the *Légion des Volontaires Français*; he committed suicide in Berlin, April 1945.

376 Keene, op cit p162 ˇ Kennedy, op cit

377 Keene, op cit p106

378 Duncan, ‘Crusade or Conspiracy? Catholics and the Anti-Communist Struggle in Australia’ (2001) p26

379 Keene, op cit p108

380 Information from Sarah Inglis, November 2012

381 Petrakis, ‘The Metaxas Myth: Dictatorship and Propaganda in Greece’ (2006) p37

382 De Mesa, op cit p183

383 De Mesa, op cit p177

384 Orlow, ‘The Lure of Fascism in Western Europe’ (2009) p119

385 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 8 September 1936

386 De Mesa, op cit p176

Chapter 21. For The Wrong Reasons

387 Information from Bernt Roughtvedt, 2005

388 Newell, ‘Zapata of Mexico’ (1997) p68

389 Dahl, ‘Quisling’ (1999) p122

390 Trotsky, ‘In “Socialist” Norway’ (1936)

391 http://www.marxists.org/history/etol/revhist/backiss/vol8/no3/workinprogress.html

392 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, op cit p74

393 Excelsior, 29 July 1939

394 http://scwmosin.weebly.com/paraguayan-m1927-long-rifle-converted-to-792x57.html

395 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, op cit p67

396 De Mesa, op cit p238

397 Balace, ‘La Droite Belge et L’Aide à Franco’ (Revue Belge D’Histoire Contemporaine, Vol.XVII, no.46, 1987) p656

398 Jackson, op cit p69

399 Sutherland, ‘Stephen Spender: A Literary Life’ (2005) p209

400 Hopkins, op cit p474

401 Lewis, ‘Illusions of Grandeur: Mosley, Fascism, and British Society 1931-81’ (1987) p191

402 Alexander, op cit p169

403 Rossland fought for the Finns in the Winter War against Russia then joined the Waffen-SS.

404 De Mesa, op cit p184

405 Kemp, op cit p8

406 Linehan, ‘East London For Mosley’ (1995) p286

407 Warburton, op cit
408 Information from Bernt Roughtvedt, 2005
409 Linehan, op cit p84
410 Bean, Many Shades Of Black (1999) p123
411 Degrelle, 'Aux Armes!' (Pays Réel, 8 July 1941)
412 Balace, op cit p661
413 Balace, op cit p657 n344
414 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, op cit p292
415 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, p293
416 Offensiva, 4 September 1936
417 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, op cit p224
418 De Mesa, op cit p237
419 Schoenberger, 'Dangeous Muse: A Life of Caroline Blackwood' (2001) p50
420 http://www.abs-cbnnews.com/lifestyle/02/17/11/war-produced-great-writers-heroes-our-time
421 The Manila Times, 28 February 2009
422 The Manila Times, 5 July 2008
423 http://www.florentinorodao.com/scholarly/sch95b.htm
424 Sakdal leader Benigno Ramos took refuge in Japan after the rising but returned to the Philippines in 1938 and formed the Ganap party; he collaborated with the Japanese during their occupation of the islands in World War II, sometimes working with former Falangists. He was killed in the last months of the war.
425 Ed. Falcoff & Pike, op cit p70
426 Norling, 'SS-Oscha. Per Imerslund' (Siegrunen, No.61, 1996)
427 Balace, op cit p665
428 Balace, op cit p674
429 Information from Bernt Roughtvedt, 2005
430 Information from John Warburton, Friends of Oswald Mosley, 2001
431 Linehan, op cit p285
432 Linehan, op cit p286

Chapter 22. Bullet In The Head

433 Beevor, p289
434 Evening Standard, 14 September 1937
435 Ibid
436 Cowles, 'Looking For Trouble' (1941) p100

437 Kemp, op cit p42-43

438 Kemp, op cit p47

439 Kemp, ibid

440 Heaton, ‘Memoirs Of A Bellicose Boer’ (Military History, Feb 2003)

441 Ibid

442 Thomas, p722

443 Evening Standard, 14 September 1937

444 Ibid

445 Kemp, op cit p65

446 Kemp, op cit p72

447 Kemp, ‘Mine Were Of Trouble’ (1956) p49

448 http://poland.gov.pl/Jozef,Pilsudski,(1867-1935),1972.html

449 Ed. Chodakiewicz & Radzilowski, ‘Spanish Carlism And Polish Nationalism’ (2003) p62

450 Ed. Chodakiewicz & Radzilowski, op cit p86

451 Ed. Chodakiewicz & Radzilowski, op cit p64

452 Ed. Chodakiewicz & Radzilowski, op cit p85

453 http://www.gatwickaviationsociety.org.uk/spanishcivilwar.asp

454 Blit, ‘The Eastern Pretender: The Story of Boleslaw Piasecki’ (1965) p70; those arrested were quickly released due to government embarrassment at the involvement of senior military figures in the coup.

455 Chodakiewicz, ‘Affinity and Revulsion: Poland Reacts to the Spanish Right, 1936-1939 (And Beyond)’ (1999) p97

456 Ksawery Pruszyński (1907-50) supported the Communists in post-war Poland but died in a car crash in Germany; some Poles believe his death was linked to the fact he had recently angered high-ranking members of the party.

457 Ed. Stradling, op cit p53

458 Ibid

459 Roosz survived the war and was granted Spanish citizenship on 7 October 1948 (http://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1948/319/A05191-05191.pdf)

Chapter 23. Yow Hi! Brudder Europeans

460 Ed. Stradling, op cit p144

461 Rein, op cit p197

462 Guttmann, op cit p35

463 Keene, op cit p148

464 Whaley, ‘Guerrillas in the Spanish Civil War’ (1969) p39
465 Alpert, op cit p106
466 Payne, op cit p347
467 Broué & Témime, ‘The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain’ (1961) p290
468 Ruiz, ‘Franco’s Justice: Repression In Spain After The Spanish Civil War’ (2005) p196
469 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 13 September 1937
470 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 25 January 1938
471 Beevor, op cit p166
472 Sugarman, ‘Jews Who Served In The Spanish Civil War’ (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/History/spanjews.pdf)
473 Rohr, ‘The Spanish Right And The Jews: Anti-Semitism And Opportunism’ (2007) p88
474 Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 8 September 1936
475 De Mesa, op cit p247
476 Whitaker, ‘We Cannot Escape History’ (1943) p102
477 Balfour, op cit p312
478 Balfour, op cit p276
479 Balfour, op cit p276
480 Sánchez Ruano, op cit p123
481 Whaley, op cit p42
482 Guttmann, op cit p185
483 Ed. Sperber, op cit p234
484 Ed. Toynbee, op cit p171
485 Buchanan, ‘The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain’, p10
486 Whaley, op cit p42
487 Evening Standard, 24 July 1936
488 Buchanan, ‘Britain and the Spanish Civil War’ p10
489 Daily Worker, 23 February 1937
490 Blumenthal, ‘Stork Club’ (2000) p168
491 Brinkmeyer jnr, ‘The Fourth Ghost: White Southern Writers and European Fascism, 1930-1950’ (2009) p18
492 Grant, ‘Negro with a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey and His Dream of Mother Africa’ (2008) p440
493 Guttmann, op cit p71
494 Ibarruri, ‘Speeches and Articles 1936-1938’ (1938) p130

495 Sánchez Ruano, op cit p119
496 Sánchez Ruano, op cit p122
497 Sánchez Ruano, op cit p121
498 Whitaker, op cit p114
499 Balfour, op cit p293
500 Sánchez Ruano, op cit, p167
501 Balfour, op cit p292
502 Thomas, op cit p375 n.1
503 Kemp, op cit p40
504 Lias, 'Olaf' (1958) p80
505 Stradling, op cit p68

Chapter 24. The Crimes Of Captain Courcier

506 Soucy, op cit p109
507 Keene, op cit p161
508 Keene, op cit p166
509 Miller, op cit p219
510 Miller, op cit p98
511 Ed. Radosh, 'Spain Betrayed' (2001) p448
512 Ibid
513 Interviewed in 'The Sorrow And The Pity' (dir. Marcel Orphüs, 1969)
514 Keene, op cit p165
515 Brasillach, 'Une Génération Dans L'Orage' (1950) p215
516 Miller, 'Out of the Past' (2006) p187
517 Bernanos' son later accompanied Nationalist troops to mainland Spain and fought on the Bilbao, Oviedo, and Madrid fronts but lost his taste for war and tried to desert. He was caught and sentenced to death. Only the intervention of his father's influential friends in Majorca saved him.
518 Ed. Sperber, op cit p256
519 Bernanos, 'A Diary of My Times' (1938) p107
520 Ibid
521 Ed Sperber, op cit p256
522 Molnar, 'Bernanos: His Life and Thought' (1996) p102
523 Keene, op cit p162
524 http://www.elmundo.es/especiales/2006/07/espana/guerracivil/hist_lodoli.html

525 Ibid

Chapter 25. Carne De Canon

526 Kemp, op cit p131
527 Kemp, op cit p88
528 Kemp, op cit p91
529 Scott-Ellis, op cit p99
530 Keene, op cit p267
531 Haxey, ‘Tory M.P’ (1939) p215
532 Kemp, op cit p99
533 Kemp, op cit p73
534 Cunningham, ‘British Writers Of The Thirties’ (1989) p428
535 Cook, ‘Apprentices Of Freedom’ (1979) p75
536 Kemp, op cit p136
537 Kemp, op cit p 136
538 Kemp, ‘Mine Were Of Trouble’ (1956) p199
539 Bret, ‘Errol Flynn: Satan’s Angel’ (2000) p122
540 Kemp, op cit p75
541 Ciano, ‘Hidden Diary 1937-38’ (1953) p159
542 Hopkins, op cit p474
543 Jackson, op cit p56 n.1
544 Gurney, ‘Crusade In Spain’ (1974) p379-380
545 Jackson, op cit p107
546 Hopkins, op cit p266
547 Information from John Wainwright, April 2012
548 Jackson, op cit p105
549 Ed. Radosh, op cit p345

Chapter 26. The Horror And The Heartbreak

550 Beevor, op cit p367
551 Pinto, ‘The Blue Shirts: Portuguese Fascists And The New State’ (1999) p209
552 Herrera Alonso, ‘Viriatos Do Air’ (Aeroplano n.12)
553 Oliveira, op cit p261-262
554 Ed. Stradling, op cit p80

555 Oliveira, op cit p246

556 Oliveira, op cit p247

557 A Esfera, 23 August 1942

558 Thomas, op cit p915

559 Mack, 'Mussolini' (1981) p229

560 Stradling, op cit p54

561 Seidman, po cit p116

562 Stone, 'The Oldest Ally: Britain and the Portuguese Connection, 1935-1941' (1994) p12

563 Jackson, op cit p106

564 Kemp, op cit p138

565 Kemp, ibid

Chapter 27. Aftermath

566 Sourd, 'True Believers: Spanish Volunteers in the Heer and Waffen-SS, 1944-1945' (2004) p40

567 Stein, 'The Waffen-SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War' (1984) p153

568 Keene, op cit p110

569 Payne, 'Franco and Hitler: Spain, Germany and World War II' (2008) p91

570 Article by Jean Louis Roba, http://ibelgique.ifrance.com/baha2/Webpages/Navigator/Belgian_Aviation_History/ww_ii/c

571 Ed. Chodakiewicz & Radzilowski, op cit p91

572 A Esfera, 23 August 1942

573 O Indepent, 26 June 1992

574 Stein, op cit p153

575 Information from Erik Norling, September 2005

576 Ed. Munoz, op cit p184

577 Drew Flanagan, "Resistance from the Right: François de La Rocque and the Réseau Klan" (Intersections vol.11, no. 2, Autumn 2010)

578 Information from Jean-Pierre Sourd, June 2008

579 Bowen, 'Spaniards and Nazi Germany: Collaboration in the New Order' (2000) p215

580 Stephan, 'Spies in Ireland' (1963) p232

581 Guarino & Raugei, 'Gli anni del disonore: dal 1965 il potere occulto di Licio Gelli e della Loggia P2 tra affari' (2006) p11

582 Paselli, op cit

583 De la Mesa, p225

584 Garratt, ‘Mussolini’s Roman Empire’ (1938) p123

585 La Repubblica, 28 September 2003

586 http://www.elmundo.es/especiales/2006/07/espana/guerracivil/hist_lodoli.html

587 Payne, op cit p549 n105

588 Hale, op cit p88

589 Macklin, op cit

590 Information from Bill Nangle, 2004; Bill commissioned a pipe march from the Pipe Major of the Irish Fusiliers of Canada for the 50th anniversary of Gilbert Nangle’s death in 1994.

591 Bridgeman,op cit p49-50

592 Bridgeman, op cit p34

593 Bean, op cit p122

594 Information from John Warburton, Friends of Oswald Mosley, 2001

595 http://www.boe.es/datos/pdfs/BOE/1940/321/A07891-07891.pdf

596 Heaton, op cit

597 Campbell, ‘Light On A Dark Horse’ (1951) p226

598 The Spectator, 13 August 2011

599 Cuzán, ‘Franco’s Spain And Castro’s Cuba: Parallels And Contrasts’ (2003) p18

600 It got three points and tied for last with Germany, Norway, and Switzerland.

601 Norling, ‘El Capitán Finlandés’ (Revista Espanola De Historia Militar, Feb 2004)

602 http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/4376371.stm

603 http://actualidad.orange.es/carticulos/80242.html

604 Chodakiewicz, op cit p134

605 http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2008-09/1281