



Brigadas Internacionales



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armha

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International Brigades exhibition

International Brigades

The international political situation and the war in Spain

The "Comintern" and the recruitment of the brigaders

The first moments..... Training

An Organizational chart of the international Brigades

The Battles of the brigades

The brigaders in Spain

The Lincoln Brigade in Aragón

The withdrawal of the brigades

The uniforms Paper crafts

After Spain

After the international Brigades

NO PASARÁN!

THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES

A PROJECT BY: ARMHA. www.warmharagon.com

SUBSIDIZED BY: DIPUTACIÓN DE ZARAGOZA

"When the years pass by and the wounds of the war are staunched when the memory of the sad and bloody days dissipates in a present of liberty (...) speak to your children Tell them of these men from the International Brigades (...). We shall not forget you and, when the olive tree of peace blooms, come back."

[\(Dolores Ibaruri's speech dismissing the International Brigades, October 28, 1938.\)](#)

The illusion and desire for freedom of a people is an International longing. The Spanish Republic was the greatest Democratic experiment in the history of Spain. Taking into account its context and historical moment, with its advances and setbacks, the positive result of the progressive government was consolidating.

This reality was not only perceived in our country. When the Spanish youth saw that the usual enemy frustrated their political aspirations again, they took to the streets to defend them. But they would not be alone.

Simultaneously a wave of International sympathy was rising.

The World "frente" to achieve a better World was in Spain and thousands of idealistic young people responded to the call of freedom.

The base for the creation of the International Brigades was laid.

Illustration bottom left: Brigader of XI IB.

Illustration bottom right: Cover of "La Traca" 1937. BNE. (Biblioteca Nacional de España).



THE INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL SITUATION AND THE WAR IN SPAIN.

The "European Civil War," as some have called it, would have many scenarios.

The First World War, a conflict that arose above all over the distribution of the wealth of the colonies among heavily industrialized societies, finished hastily to turn the weapons towards a new enemy, much more dangerous, arisen from the Russian Revolution.

The "Crash" of 1929 sank the Western economies giving rise to an Army of people who had lost their jobs. Many of those exiled due to European political conflicts and the unemployed were also revolutionaries who saw their place was in Spain, fighting against Fascism.

THE POPULAR OLYMPICS

In 1936, the Olympic Games in Berlin were tended by the Nazis to use it as an international showcase to improve its image. Many young anti-fascist athletes refused to participate.

Approximately half of them, after the frustrated Popular Olympiad in Barcelona, would stay in Spain to help the Republic in the fight for its survival.

The first killed of the not yet constituted International Brigades would be the Austrian athlete Metcher, who died on July 19th. PANEL III.

THE "COMINTERN" AND THE RECRUITMENT OF THE BRIGADERS.

The brigaders became a total of almost 60,000 volunteers. But, nevertheless, they never passed the figure of 20,000 fighting at the same time. There were many casualties, approximately 15,000.

With regard to nations, the largest contribution was from the French, with around 10,000 volunteers.

Photos: BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España)

Few of them had been soldiers, most were workers. It is said that the International Brigades were the most intellectualized military unit in History.

Even though the "Comintern", the Communist parties of Soviet obedience, would be mobilized for recruitment tasks, especially in the Paris office, not all the Brigade members were followers of that ideology.

Many Anarchists, Trotskyist Socialists. Social Democrats, or anti-fascist progressives in general, would approach that recruitment office or go directly to Spain.

Not all the foreign volunteers were formed into the International Brigades. Some of them, especially those who were already in Spain before the start of the war, joined the Militias that were more related to them and with militarisation, they became part of the reconverted units of the Popular Army.

Photo: Soldier of the International Brigades. BNE. (Biblioteca Nacional de España)



exhibition texts

THE FIRST MOMENTS. TRAINING .

At first, before the arrival of this deluge of volunteers, it was thought to form them in the Legion since it was the only Spanish military unit that accepted foreigners in its ranks. But most of these troops were part of the rebellious military forces, which is why it soon ceased to be relevant in the Republican zone except to fight against it.

Largo Caballero did not want these soldiers to serve in autonomous units, precisely because of the fact that they would be troops at the service of the "Comintern". But for fear of the fall of Madrid and for reasons of international propaganda, finally the volunteers were sent to [Albacete](#) arriving, specifically at what would be the Los Llanos air base.

There the first three Brigades were created: the XI, XII and XIII. All these and the following ones would always be named with Roman numerals, (except the last ones, which would have both types of numerals).

Most of the members of these units were French, Belgian, Italian and German, compatriots who fought alongside each other far from their land for ideological reasons.

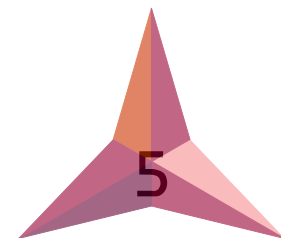
In those first moments, and following a mechanism that would be repeated throughout its history, the Brigade members were grouped by ideology and language. Finally, the French Communist André Marty was appointed Head of the La Mancha Base. The sub-sites would be: La Roda, Tarazona de la Mancha, Villanueva de la Jara and Madrigueras. Later the XIV and XV Brigades were formed.

The Brigade revolutionaries, in general, were not very supportive of discipline, which they considered a bourgeois aptitude. So their training left a lot to be desired.

Their equipment was very varied and on some occasions they brought it as their own luggage.

Thus, the training was poor and lasted only a few days, since it was necessary to enter into combat immediately.





AN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES (I)

Fundamentally, the Internationals were infantry troops. The "España" Squadron of Malraux, was never part of the Brigades. A squadron of American volunteers was also created, which was called the "Yankee" squadron.

Many writers and intellectuals, some of whom were already in Spain and others who arrived during the conflict, supported to the Spanish Republic and some even formed part of the Brigades.

ORDER OF COMBAT OF THE BRIGADES. STRUCTURE:

XI BRIGADE (Head: Manfred Stern, later Jean Marie Françoise, created on October 22, 1936):

- FIRST "EDGAR ANDRE" BATTALION (German).
- SECOND "COMMUNE DE PARIS" BATTALION (French and Belgian), later it went to the XIV Brigade.
- FOURTH "GARIBALDI" BATTALION (Italian) which later went to the XII IB.
- SPANISH REINFORCEMENT AND SUPPORT BATTALION.
- THIRD "DABROWSKI" BATTALION incorporated later (Polish, Hungarian, Yugoslav and Paraguayan) distributed later in three of the Brigades.

Photo: BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España)

XII BRIGADE (Head: Mate Zalka, created on November 1, 1936):

- FIRST "THAELMAN" BATTALION (German), later it passed to the XI Brigade.
- SECOND "GARIBALDI" BATTALION (Italian), coming from the XI Brigade.
- THIRD "ANDRÉ MARTY" BATTALION. (French and Belgian), later it would pass to the XI, XII and XIV Brigades.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES (II)

XIII INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE (Head: Wilhelm Zaisser, created on November 1, 1936):

- FIRST "LOUISE MICHEL" BATTALION (French and Belgian), later it would become part of the XIV International Brigade.
- SECOND "CHAPAIÉV" BATTALION (Balkan countries), later it would go to the 129 International Brigade.
- THIRD "HENRY VUILLEMIN" BATTALION, (French and Belgian), which would later go to the XIV Brigade.
- FOURTH "MICKIEWICZ-PALAFIX" BATTALION (Polish and Jewish Anarchists, also Ukrainians from Nestor Makhno 's Army).

XIV BRIGADE "LA MARSELLAISE" (created on December 1, 1936 and reorganized on November 27, 1938):

- FIRST "NOVES NACIONS" BATTALION (later, the "COMUNE DE PARIS").
- SECOND "DOMINGO GERMINAL" BATTALION (Spanish and Portuguese Anarchists).
- THIRD " HENRY BARBUSSE" BATTALION (French).
- FOURTH "PIERRE BRACHET" BATTALION (French), later the "VAILLANT-COUTURIER" BATTALION.

exhibition texts

XV BRIGADE (Head: Janos Galicz, created on January 31, 1937):

-FIRST "DIMITROV" BATTALION (Yugoslav and Bulgarian), later it became the 150th Brigade and in the XIII-Brigade.

-SECOND "BRITISH" BATTALION.

-THIRD "LINCOLN" BATTALION (with the groups "Washington" and "MacKenzie-Papineau") (American, Canadian, Cuban and Argentinian with other American nations, plus the "Connolly Column" of Irish).

-FOURTH BATTALION (French, created on February 6, 1937) which then passed to the XIV International Brigade.

-FIFTH, "Benito Juárez García" Volunteer Corps (Mexican plus "Pancho Villa" Militiamen).

CCIX BRIGADE (created on April 28, 1937 with the remains of other more POUMist Brigades, also known as the "40 Nations" Brigade reorganized in February 1938: Head: Wacek Komar):

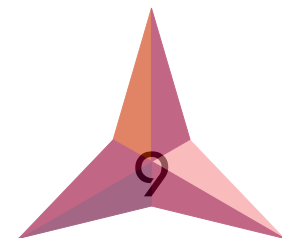
-FIRST "DIMITROV" BATTALION (Balkan).

-SECOND "DJAKOVIC" BATTALION (Yugoslav and Bulgarian).

-THIRD "MASARYK" BATTALION (Czech).

CL BRIGADE (created in June 37), formed with the remains of the Dabrowski Battalion of the XI Brigade: - FIRST "RAKO-SI" BATTALION (Hungarian).





THE BATTLES OF THE BRIGADES (I)

The training was poor, but the enthusiasm was as great as the need for forces to defend the Republic.

Quickly the first International Brigades were transferred to the front of Madrid, They would fight in the defence of the University City with great courage against the Regular forces of General Varela.



From February 6, 1937, the XV Brigade would fight with great determination in the Battle of Jarama, where they helped stop the Fascist offensive on Madrid.

In the subsequent Battle of Guadalajara, a resounding Republican victory was achieved. The XI and XII Brigades participated there, although this was the prelude to their tragic history, as they suffered a large number of casualties.

In the Southern-Central part of the Offensive on the Aragonese front, with the intent to liberate Zaragoza from the Insurgent forces and clear the road between Madrid and Barcelona, the Battle of Belchite was fought.

The XI and XV Brigades, participated from August 26 to September 10, 1937. After this Battle, the Republican Government wanted to reintegrate the Brigade members into its Regular Army and disband their units, but the leadership of the PCE (Spanish Communist Party) and the "Comintern" did not allow it.

THE BATTLES OF THE BRIGADES (II)

The only Provincial Capital retaken by Government forces was Teruel.

The Offensive took place in December 1937, during the coldest winter in the previous 30 years, all the meat was thrown into the spit to relieve the pressure on the Northern front, which after the fall of Gijón in October 1937 could almost be considered totally lost.

All the International Brigades participated, in very harsh conditions, except the XIV.

The loss of Teruel in February '38 was very costly in casualties, especially for the XI International Brigade.

Photo: BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España)

The International Brigades also contributed forces to the Guerrillas that infiltrated behind enemy lines to carry out sabotage.

At this time, the Government showed itself wanting to gradually withdraw foreign troops in order to force the Nazi-Fascists out of the War.

The Offensive on the Aragon front in March 1938 meant another great suffering for the Brigades due to the number of casualties.

They also stood out in the Defence of the City of Caspe.

At this time of the conflict it was already very difficult to cover the casualties of the Internationals with foreigners, so the recruitment of Spaniards to replace them became general.

Although Juan Negrín was in favour of the withdrawal of the Internationals in order to put greater pressure on the Non-Intervention Committee, the International Brigades would still be used in the last great Republican Offensive, the Battle of the Ebro, whose failure would definitively mark its military decline.

After this last test, the strength of the Brigades had been reduced to a third of what would have been desirable.

Its low military force and its propagandistic importance suggested that it was advisable for these forces to be withdrawn. Making them leave Spain, despite their sadness (as reflected in the faces of the Brigade members captured by Capa's camera), was more beneficial for the cause of Liberty than keeping them fighting.

THE BRIGADERS IN SPAIN

(how they lived... how they suffered).

After World War One and the Russian Revolution, Europe swarmed with exiles and displaced persons, Revolutionaries and Counter-Revolutionaries; the Regimes changed and citizens were persecuted.



During the Republic, many young people arrived in Spain in search of a more tolerant and Democratic Society. When they arrived, they got close to the local youth due to their ideological proximity, also due to artistic and intellectual affinities and for other reasons.

These were the first Brigade members, but many of them would never become part of them, instead they fought as part of the Militias and later, after the militarisation of them, in the Popular Army of the Republic.

Photo: BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España).

You have to imagine the passion of these Europeans to achieve a new Society, something that they had not been able to do in their country, but in ours it seemed like an idea within reach.

The experience of war is far from being an easy situation. They endured the wounds, the suffering, the discomforts in various ways and death would also come for many of them.

The fact of them being foreigners did not help them in the face of Franco's Repression.

In two months at the beginning of 1938, the Francoists shot almost one hundred and fifty Internationals, provoking protests from the Western Democracies and the Soviet Union.

The Monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña was the place chosen by Franco as a concentration camp for the trapped Brigade members.

Some were exchanged for Italians and Germans, others were deported directly to their countries of origin, to be placed in the hands of the corresponding political police.

The deplorable conditions of the camp were denounced by International Observers.

Also Vallejo-Nájera, the "scientist" of the Regime, used these inmates to show that their genetic theories about degenerate Reds had universal validity. Mulattoes, Blacks, Asians and even Arabs! They were filmed in clearly Racist Propaganda documentaries.

Some were not released until 1943, when the Fall of the Axis forces seemed assured.

THE LINCOLN BRIGADE IN ARAGON

Almost 3.000 American Volunteers were part of the Lincoln, Washington and Mackenzie-Papineau battalions of the XV International Brigade, which soon became known as [the Lincoln Brigade](#).

Above all, it was made up of communists, but also by progressives of all stripes with very diverse professions: from intellectuals, journalists, teachers or writers, even trade unionists and activists with manual and industrial professions.

They came into Spain through France and some of them were trained in Figueras but the majority went to the Albacete base.



As the rest of the Brigades, the Lincoln had a brief military training, since the need of troops led it into fight urgently on the Madrid Front. The Americans came well equipped from their country with elements of regular material in the U.S. Army, which gave them a distinctive look compared to the other brigades. Between 1937 and 1938, the Brigade fought in Belchite and other areas of the Aragon, as in the defense of Caspe.

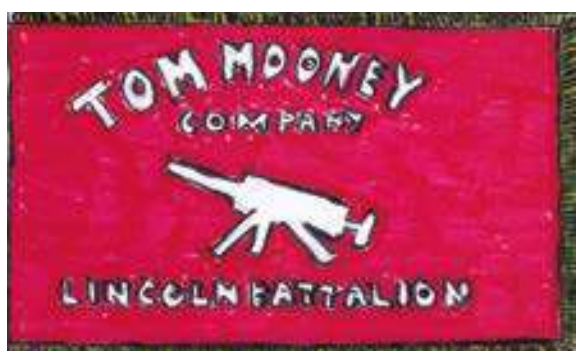
There are numerous photographs of the war actions and the scenarios that they toured, thanks to the cameras of their photographic unit.

Hijar, Quinto de Ebro, Codo, Belchite, Almochuel, Fuentes de Ebro, met the Brigade, which later went to fight to Guadalajara.

They went back later to Teruel province, to the Alto de Celadas, Segura de los Baños and, later, they were also involved in the loss of Teruel.

People like Lilian Armstan, Irene Goldin, John Hunter, Morris Stamm, Pablo Carbonell, Jimmy Yates, Steve Tsermegas..., wandered around our land as part of the Brigade.

Oliver Law, a soldier in the Brigade said: "In Spain was where, for the first time, being black, I felt free." He was also the first african-american officer. He died in Villaviciosa de Odón on the 9th July 1937.



Their newspaper was The Volunteer for Liberty and it showed very clearly the spirit of the International Brigades. Help and solidarity between peasants and brigadistas was a constant in their relations, despite the difficulties with the language.

In March 1938, the Brigade had to retreat after the Francoist offensive. Many were captured, despite the fact that they held out for as long as they could until they left the Aragon at the end of the month.

exhibition texts

THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE BRIGADES

In 1938, faced with the failure of the Non-Intervention Committee, the League of Nations made various efforts to stop the War in Spain.

On May 1st 1938, Negrin presented his "Thirteen Points" after the Defeat in the Aragon Offensive, where he proposed, among other things, the withdrawal of foreign troops from the Peninsula,

But the diplomatic weight of the Spanish Republic no longer granted him many options for International support, given his situation of military weakness. With barely a third of their initial forces, the Brigades would still be used in the Battle of the Ebro. Another defeat at the end of his military campaigns.

Negrin announced before the League of Nations the unconditional withdrawal of the foreigners who were fighting for the Republic, hoping in vain that Franco's Fascist allies would be forced to also leave the fight. On October 28th, the International Brigades paraded through the streets of Barcelona in the multitudinous and meaningful tribute that was organized for their farewell.

Photo left BNE (Biblioteca Nacional de España). Farewell on the esplanade of the Tunnel de L'Argentera

Photo bottom right: Italian Partisans.

The Italians withdrew part of their troops, but 30,000 of them remained in Spain until the end of the War. The People's Army, with the slogan "Knights of the World's Freedom, have good Journey", dismissed its comrades. Attended by Azaña, Negrin, Companys, General Rojo and more than 300,000 people.

Dolores Ibarruri read a farewell speech, a fragment of which begins this exhibition.

AFTER SPAIN

Photo: French Partisans

The approximate 10,000 surviving Brigaders would suffer a very different fate when facing their withdrawal from the Spanish War. Some, who were going to have many difficulties to return to their countries of origin, fought to stay in Spain, integrated into other military units.

Almost all those who had such difficulties (Italians, Germans, Austrians, Bulgarians, etc.) ended up as exiles in France.

Others, such as the Americans, French and British, although watched over by their governments, in almost all cases were able to return to their countries of origin. The Soviet Union only helped leaders who could be useful in the near future, purging many of their own Nationals.

A special case would be that of the many Yugoslav Brigaders who ended up being the backbone of the Partisan movement in their country when it was invaded by the Nazis.

Photo: Yugoslav Partisans

Some Brigade battalions will still fight in Spain until February 9, 1939, when they crossed the border together with the defeated Republican military and hundreds of thousands of civilians.

A few would still fight in Madrid until the entry of Franco's troops into the capital.

The truth is that because of youth and nationality, their life paths would lead many of them to continue fighting Fascism, this time embedded in their National Armies, on different fronts of the World.

AFTER THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES

Mercenaries, Adventurers, Resisters, decorated soldiers, persecuted, repressed, swallowed up by the new Maelstrom of War maelstrom that would sweep the World from 1939 to 1945. Those were the fates of many Brigaders. Many of them would not stop fighting for years.

Some of the most well-known brigaders were, for example:

Willy Brandt, who became Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. Enver Hoxha, who became President of Albania. Luigi Longo, of the Italian Communist Party. Josip Broz "Tito", who was President of Yugoslavia, is believed to have also been in Spain.

In addition to writers such as Ralph Fox, Charles Donnelly, John Cornford, Gustav Regler... Scientists, artists...

On June 30, 1938, a commemorative monument to the Battle of Jarama was inaugurated, which would be the first dedicated to the International Brigades.

On October 28, 1988, commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Withdrawal of the Brigades, the sculptural group David y Goliath by Roy Schifrin was inaugurated in the [Carmel neighbourhood of Barcelona](#).

On January 26, 1996, the Congress of Deputies granted Spanish Nationality to the brigaders, as long as they renounced their own, fulfilling the promise that Negrin made when they left our country.

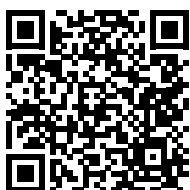
With the Law of Historical Memory they no longer had to renounce their original nationality.

In 2009, the Spanish Embassy in London gave Spanish passports to several surviving Brigade members.

Some of the monuments that we can find around the world dedicated to these heroic volunteers, apart from those mentioned, we can see them in [Albacete](#), [Belgrade](#), Berlin, Canberra, [Caspé](#), Dudelange (Luxembourg), Stockholm, [Glasgow](#), [Kirkcaldy \(Scotland\)](#), [London](#), [Madrid](#), Paris, Reading (England), San Francisco, Seattle (USA), [Victoria \(Canada\)](#), etc.

The words of Paul Nothomb, distinguished and controversial aviator and writer who fought in André Malraux's España squadron and on the Northern Front, will serve to put a worthy conclusion to this tribute exhibition.

"We live in one of those rare moments in which human brotherhood, that is so often adulterated, becomes something more than a word, than a euphemism".



ILLUSTRATIONS.

Examples of uniforms and flags used by the International Brigades.

If you use this QR Code, you can download these images in a cut-out format, as well as to access additional information about the clothes and equipment of these combatants:





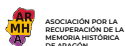
BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES

LA MAYOR EXPRESIÓN DE SOLIDARIDAD DE LA HISTORIA

«Cuando los años pasen y las heridas de la guerra se vayan restañando, cuando el recibir de los días dorados y sangrientos se esfumen en un presente de libertad [...] hablad a vuestros hijos, habladles de esos hombres de las Brigadas Internacionales [...] No os olvidaremos y, cuando el olivo de la paz florezca, volved.»

(Discurso de Dolores Ibárruri para despedir a las Brigadas Internacionales, 28 de octubre de 1938)

UN PROYECTO DE:



SUBVENCIONADO POR:



BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES I



INTRODUCCIÓN

La ilusión y el deseo de libertad de un pueblo es un anhelo internacional. La República Española fue el mayor experimento democrático de la historia de España. Teniendo en cuenta su contexto y momento histórico, con sus avances y retrocesos, el resultado positivo del Gobierno progresista iba afianzándose.



Esta realidad no solo se percibía en nuestro país. Cuando la juventud española vio que el enemigo de siempre volvía a frustrar sus aspiraciones políticas, se lanzó a la calle a defenderlas. Pero no estarían solos. Simultáneamente fue surgiendo una ola de simpatía internacional.

El frente de batalla mundial para conseguir un mundo mejor estaba en España y miles de jóvenes idealistas respondieron a la llamada de la libertad.



BNE Portada "La Traca" 1937

Las bases para la creación de las Brigadas Internacionales estabanuestas.



Brigadista Internacional de B.I.

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES II



LA SITUACIÓN POLÍTICA INTERNACIONAL Y LA GUERRA DE ESPAÑA

La "guerra civil europea", como la llamaron algunos, tendría muchos escaharos. La Primera Guerra Mundial -conflicto que surgió sobre todo por el reparto de las riquezas de las colonias entre unas sociedades fuertemente industrializadas-, terminó apresuradamente para volver las armas hacia un nuevo enemigo, mucho más peligroso, surgido de la Revolución Rusa.



Revolución Rusa, Ilustración de la época

LA OLIMPIADA POPULAR

En 1936 se celebraron los Juegos Olímpicos de Berlín que el nazismo pretendía utilizar como escaparate internacional para mejorar su imagen. Muchos jóvenes atletas antifascistas se negaron a participar.



Aproximadamente la mitad de ellos, tras la frustrada Olimpiada Popular de Barcelona, se quedarían en España para ayudar a la República en la lucha por su supervivencia. El primer fallecido de los aún sin constituir Brigadas Internacionales sería el atleta austriaco Metzger, que murió el 19 de julio.

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES III



LA "COMINTERN" Y EL RECLUTAMIENTO DE LOS BRIGADISTAS

Los brigadistas llegaron a ser en total casi 60.000 voluntarios. Pero, sin embargo, no pasaron nunca de la cifra de 20.000 luchando a la vez. Hubo muchísimos bajas, aproximadamente unas 15.000. En lo que respecta a naciones, la mayor aportación fue la francesa, con alrededor de 10.000 voluntarios.



BNE Biblioteca Nacional de España

Pocos de ellos habían sido soldados, la mayoría eran trabajadores. Se dice que las Brigadas Internacionales fueron las unidades militares más internacionalizadas de la historia. Aunque la "Comintern", los partidos comunistas de obediencia Soviética, se movilizó para las tareas de reclutamiento, sobre todo en la oficina de París, no todos los brigadistas eran seguidores de esa ideología.

Muchos anarquistas, socialistas, trotskistas, socialdemócratas, o progresistas antifascistas en general, se acercaron a esa oficina de reclutamiento o acudirían directamente a España.

No todos los voluntarios extranjeros estuvieron encuadrados en las Brigadas Internacionales. Algunos de ellos, sobre todo los que ya estaban en España antes del comienzo de la guerra, se incorporaron a las milicias que les eran más afines y, con la militarización, pasaron a formar parte de las unidades reconvertidas del Ejército Popular.



Soldado Brigada Internacional Biblioteca Nacional de España

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES IV



LOS PRIMEROS MOMENTOS. ENTRENAMIENTO.

Al principio, ante la llegada de ese aluvión de voluntarios, se pensó en encuadrarlos en la Legión ya que era la única unidad militar española que aceptaba extranjeros en sus filas. Pero la mayor parte de estas tropas formaban parte de las fuerzas militares sublevadas, por lo que pronto dejó de ser relevante en la zona republicana salvo para luchar contra ella.

Largo Caballero no quería que estos soldados sirvieran en unidades autónomas, precisamente por el marchamo de que serían tropas al servicio de la "Comintern". Pero por temor a la caída de Madrid y por cuestiones de propaganda internacional, finalmente los voluntarios eran enviados a Albacete según iban llegando, concretamente a la que sería la base aérea de Los Llanos.



BNE Biblioteca Nacional de España

Allí se crearon las tres primeras Brigadas: la XI, XII y XIII. Todas estas y las siguientes siempre serían nombradas con números romanos, (excepto las dos últimas, que llevarían los dos tipos de numerales). La mayor parte de los integrantes de estas unidades eran franceses, belgas, italianos y alemanes, compartidos que lucharon entre sí lejos de su tierra por razones ideológicas.

En los primeros momentos siguiendo una mecánica que se repetiría a lo largo de toda su historia, los brigadistas se agruparon por ideología y por idioma. Finalmente, el comunista francés André Marty fue nombrado jefe de la Base manchega. Las subsecciones serían La Roda Tarazona de la Mancha, Villarueva de la Jara y Madrigueras. Después se formaron las Brigadas XIV y XV.

Los revolucionarios brigadistas, en general, no eran muy partidarios de la disciplina, la cual consideraban una aptitud burguesa. Así que su entrenamiento dejó bastante que desear.

Su equipamiento era muy variopinto y en algunas ocasiones lo traían como equipaje propio. Así pues, el adiestramiento fue pobre y duró pocos días, pues había que entrar en combate de inmediato.

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES V



EL ORGANIGRAMA DE LAS BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES (I)

Fundamentalmente, los internacionales fueron tropas de infantería. La escuadrilla «España», de Malraux, nunca formó parte de las Brigadas. También se creó una escuadrilla de voluntarios americanos que se denominó el "escuadrón Yankee". Muchos escritores e intelectuales, algunos que ya estaban en España y otros que llegaron durante el conflicto, apoyaron a la República Española e incluso, algunos, formaron parte de las Brigadas.

ORDEN DE COMBATE DE LAS BRIGADAS, ESTRUCTURA:

- XI BRIGADA (jefe: Manfred Stern, después Jean Marie François, creada el 22 de octubre de 1936).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «EDGAR ANDRÉ» (alemanes).
- SEGUNDO BATALLÓN «COMMUNE DE PARIS» (franceses y belgas, luego pasó a la XIV Brigada).
- CUARTO BATALLÓN «GARIBALDI» (italianos) que pasó después a la B.I. XII.
- BATALLÓN ESPAÑOL DE REFUERZO Y APOYO.
- TERCER BATALLÓN «DABROWSKI» incorporado posteriormente (polacos, húngaros, yugoslavos y paraguayos) distribuidos después en tres de las Brigadas.



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- XII BRIGADA (jefe: Mata Zalka, creada el 1 de noviembre de 1936).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «THELMAN» (alemanes, posteriormente pasó a la XI Brigada).
- SEGUNDO BATALLÓN «GARIBALDI» (italianos, procedente de la XI Brigada).
- TERCER BATALLÓN «ANDRÉ MARTY» (franceses y belgas, posteriormente pasaría a la CL, XII y XIV Brigadas).

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES VI



EL ORGANIGRAMA DE LAS BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES (II)

- XIII BRIGADA INTERNACIONAL (jefe: Wilhelm Zaissner, creada el 1 de noviembre de 1936).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «LOUISE MICHEL» (francesas y belgas, posteriormente pasaría a la XIV Brigada Internacional).
- SEGUNDO BATALLÓN «CHAPAEV» (países balcánicos, posteriormente iría a la 12ª Brigada Internacional).
- TERCER BATALLÓN «HENRY VUILLEMIN» (franceses y belgas, que después iría a la XIV brigada).
- CUARTO BATALLÓN «MICKIEWICZ-PALAFOX» (polacos y judíos anarquistas, ucranianos del ejército de Nestor Májnov).

- XIV BRIGADA «LA MARSELLAISE» (creada el 1 de diciembre de 1936 y reorganizada el 27 de noviembre de 1938).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «NOVES NACIONS» (después «Comuna de París»).
- SEGUNDO BATALLÓN «DOMINGO GERMINI» (anarquistas españoles y portugueses).
- TERCER BATALLÓN «HENRY BARBUSSE» (franceses).
- CUARTO BATALLÓN «PIERRE BRACHET» (franceses, posteriormente BATALLÓN «WILLANT-COUTURIER»).

- XV BRIGADA (jefe: Janos Galicz, creada el 31 de enero de 1937).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «DIMITROV» (yugoslavos y búlgaros), después pasó a la Brigada 150 y a la XIII Brigada).
- SEGUNDO BATALLÓN BRITÁNICO.
- TERCER BATALLÓN «LINCOLN» (con los grupos «Washington» y «McKenzie-Papineau») (estadounidenses, canadienses, cubanos y argentinos y otras naciones americanas, más la columna «Connolly» de irlandeses).
- CUARTO BATALLÓN (franceses, creado el 6 de febrero del 37) luego pasó a la Brigada Internacional XIV.
- QUINTO, Cuerpo de voluntarios «Benito Juárez García» (mexicanos más milicianos del «Pancho Villa»).

- COXXIX BRIGADA (creada el 28 de abril de 1937 con restos de otras brigadas más pounistas, brigada también conocida como «de las 40 naciones», reorganizada en febrero del 38; jefe: Wacac Komar).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «DIMITROV» (balcánicos).
- SEGUNDO BATALLÓN «DIAKOVIC» (yugoslavos y búlgaros).
- TERCER BATALLÓN «MASARYK» (checos).

- CL BRIGADA (creada en junio del 37, formada con los restos del Batallón Dabrowski de la XI Brigada).
- PRIMER BATALLÓN «RAKOSI» (húngaros).

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES VII



LAS BATALLAS DE LAS BRIGADAS (I)

El entrenamiento era pobre, pero el entusiasmo era tan grande como la necesidad de fuerzas para defender la República.

Rápidamente las primeras Brigadas Internacionales fueron trasladadas al frente de Madrid. Lucharon en la defensa de la Ciudad Universitaria con gran coraje contra las fuerzas de regulares del General Varela.

Desde el 6 de febrero del 37, la XV Brigada combatiría con mucha determinación en la batalla del Jarama, donde ayudaron a detener la ofensiva fascista sobre Madrid.



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En la posterior batalla de Guadalajara se consiguió un sonado triunfo republicano. En ella participaron las brigadas XI y XII, aunque este fue el prelude de su trágica historia, pues sufrieron una gran cantidad de bajas.

En la parte sur-central de la ofensiva sobre el frente aragonés, con el intento de liberar Zaragoza de las fuerzas sublevadas y dejar libre el camino entre Madrid y Barcelona se libró la batalla de Balchiza.

En ella participaron las brigadas XI y XII del 26 de agosto al 10 de septiembre de 1937. Tras esta batalla, el Gobierno republicano quiso volver a integrar a los brigadistas en su ejército regular y disolver sus unidades, pero las direcciones del PCE y de la "Comintern" no lo permitieron.



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LAS BATALLAS DE LAS BRIGADAS (II)

La única capital de provincia retomada por las fuerzas gubernamentales fue Teruel. La ofensiva se realizó en diciembre de 1937, durante el invierno más frío de los últimos 30 años, se echó toda la carne en el asador para aliviar la presión sobre el frente Norte, que tras la caída de Gijón en octubre de 1937 casi se podía dar por totalmente perdido. Participaron todas las Brigadas Internacionales, en condiciones muy duras, excepto la XIV. La pérdida de Teruel en febrero del 38 fue muy costosa en bajas, sobre todo para la Brigada Internacional XI.



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Las Brigadas Internacionales también aportaron fuerzas a las guerrillas que se infiltraron tras las líneas enemigas para realizar sabotajes.

En esta época, el Gobierno se mostró proclive a ir retirando tropas extranjeras para forzar la salida de los nazi-fascistas de la contienda. La ofensiva sobre el frente de Aragón de marzo del 38 supuso para las brigadas otro gran sufrimiento por el número de bajas.

También destacaron en la defensa de la ciudad de Caspe. En este momento del conflicto ya resultaba muy difícil cubrir las bajas de los internacionales con extranjeros, por lo que se generalizó la recluta de españoles para las mismas.

Aunque Juan Negrín se inclinaba por la retirada de los internacionales para presionar mejor al Comité de No-Intervención, todavía se usaría a las Brigadas Internacionales en la última gran ofensiva republicana, la batalla del Ebro, cuyo fracaso marcaría ya definitivamente su declive militar. Tras esta última prueba, los efectivos de las brigadas se habían reducido a un tercio de los que hubiera sido deseable.

Su escaso peso bélico y su importancia propagandística hacían pensar que era recomendable que estas fuerzas se retiraran. Hacían abandonar España, pese a su triste fati y como reflejaban las caras de los brigadistas capturados por la cámara de Caspá, resultaba más beneficioso para la causa de la Libertad que mantenerlas luchando.



LOS BRIGADISTAS EN ESPAÑA (cómo vivieron... cómo sufrieron).

Tras la Primera Guerra Mundial y la Revolución Rusa, Europa era un hervidero de exiliados y desplazados, de revolucionarios y contrarrevolucionarios, los regímenes cambiaban y los ciudadanos eran perseguidos. Durante la República, muchos jóvenes recalaron en España en busca de una sociedad más tolerante y democrática. Cuando llegaron, volían escarmentados a los jóvenes locales por proximidad ideológica, también por afinidades artísticas e intelectuales y de otros tipos. Estos fueron los primeros brigadistas, pero muchos de ellos nunca llegaron a integrarse en ellas sino que lucharon encuadrados en las milicias y más tarde, tras la militarización de las mismas, en el Ejército Popular de la República.



BNE Oficina Propaganda CNT-FI



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Hay que imaginarse la ilusión de estos europeos por conseguir una sociedad nueva, algo que no habían podido hacer en su país, pero que en el nuestro parecía una idea al alcance de la mano.

La experiencia bélica dejó mucho de ser una situación fácil. Soportaron los heridos, el sufrimiento, las incomodidades de diversas maneras y también la muerte llegaría para muchos de ellos.

El hecho de ser extranjeros no les ayudó frente a la represión franquista. En dos meses de principios de 1938, los franquistas fusilaron a casi ciento cincuenta internacionales, provocando las protestas de las democracias occidentales y de la Unión Soviética.

El Monasterio de San Pedro de Gardeja fue el lugar escogido por Franco como campo de concentración para los brigadistas atrapados. Algunos fueron castigados por italianos y alemanes, otros, deportados directamente a sus países de origen, para ser puestos en manos de las correspondientes policías políticas.

Las deplorables condiciones del campo fueron denunciadas por observadores internacionales. También Valle-Najera, el "científico" del Régimen, usó a estos reclusos para mostrar que sus teorías genéticas sobre los "tipos degenerados" tenían validez universal. Muchos, negros, asiáticos y hasta israelíes fueron filmados en documentales propagandísticos de corte claramente racista. Algunos no fueron liberados hasta 1943, cuando la caída de las fuerzas del Eje parecía asegurada.



LA BRIGADA LINCOLN EN ARAGÓN

Casi 3.000 voluntarios americanos estuvieron encuadrados de los batallones Lincoln, Washington y Mackenzie-Papineau de la XV Brigada Internacional, que pronto fue conocida como Brigada Lincoln. Sobre todo estaba formada por comunistas, pero también por progresistas de todo signo con profesiones muy diversas: desde intelectuales, periodistas, maestros o escritores, hasta sindicalistas y activistas con profesiones manuales e industriales. Fueron entrando en España a través de Francia y algunos de ellos fueron entrenados en Figueras pero la mayor parte en la base de Albacete. Como las demás Brigadas, la Lincoln tuvo un somero entrenamiento militar, pues la necesidad de tropas la llevó a pelear en el frente de Madrid con urgencia. Los americanos venían bien equipados desde su país con elementos de material regular en el U.S. Army, lo que les daba un aspecto distintivo frente a otras brigadas. Entre 1937 y 1938, la Brigada combatió en Belchite y otras zonas de Aragón, así como en la defensa de Caspe.

Existen numerosos testimonios fotográficos de las acciones bélicas y los escenarios que recorrieron, gracias a las cámaras de su unidad fotográfica.



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Hijar, Quinto de Ebro, Codo, Belchite, Almocho, Fuentes de Ebro, conoctor a la Brigada, que luego fue a luchar a Guadálajara.

Después, vuelta a la provincia de Teruel, el alto de Celadas, Segura de Baños y más tarde, también en la pérdida de Teruel. Genta como Lilian Armstan, Irene Goldin, John Hunter, Morris Stamm, Pablo Carbonell, Jimmy Yates, Steve Isermengas... desambularon por nuestras tierras, integrados en la Brigada.

Olivier Law, un soldado de las Brigadas, afirmó: «En España fue donde, por primera vez, siendo negro, me sentí libre». El también llegó a ser el primer oficial americano negro. Murió en Villavieosa de Odón el 9 de julio de 1937. Su periódico fue The Volunteer For Liberty y en él se reflejaba claramente el espíritu de los internacionales. La ayuda y solidaridad entre campesinos y brigadistas fue una constante en sus relaciones, a pesar de las dificultades idiomáticas.

En marzo del 38, la Brigada tuvo que retroceder ante la ofensiva franquista. Muchos fueron capturados, a pesar de que resistieron todo lo que pudieron hasta la salida de Aragón, a finales de ese mes.



LA RETIRADA DE LAS BRIGADAS

En 1938, ante el fracaso del Comité de No Intervención, la Sociedad de Naciones realizó diversos esfuerzos para detener la guerra de España. El 1 de mayo de 1938, Negrín presentó sus «técnicas puntos» después de la derrota en la ofensiva de Aragón, donde propone, entre otras cosas, la retirada de las tropas extranjeras de la península.

Pero el peso diplomático de la República Española ya no le concedía muchas opciones de apoyo internacional dada su situación de debilidad militar. Con apenas un tercio de sus fuerzas iniciales, las Brigadas aún serían usadas en la batalla del Ebro. Otra derrota al final de sus campañas militares.

Negrín anunció ante la Sociedad de Naciones la retirada sin condiciones de los extranjeros que luchaban por la República, esperando en vano que se forzara a los aliados fascistas de Franco a salir igualmente de la contienda. El 28 de octubre, las Brigadas Internacionales desfilaron por las calles de Barcelona en el multitudinario y sentido homenaje que se organizó para su despedida.



BNE Documental en la exposición del Toral de Aragón

Los italianos retiraron parte de sus tropas, pero 30.000 de ellos siguieron en España hasta el fin de la guerra.

El Ejército Popular, con el lema «Caballeros de la libertad del mundo, buen camino», despidió a sus camaradas. Asistieron Aznar, Negrín, Companys, el General Azaña y 300.000 personas más.

Dolores Ibárruri leyó un discurso de despedida un fragmento del cual da inicio a esta exposición.



Partisanos Italianos



DESPUÉS DE ESPAÑA

Los aproximadamente 10.000 brigadistas supervivientes sufrirían una suerte muy diversa a la hora de enfrentar su retirada de la contienda española. Algunos, que iban a tener muchas dificultades para volver a sus países de origen, lucharon para quedarse en España, integrados en otras unidades militares.

Casi todos los que tenían esas dificultades (italianos, alemanes, austríacos, búlgaros, etcétera) acabaron como exiliados en Francia. Otros, como los americanos, franceses y británicos, aunque vigilados por sus gobiernos, en casi todos los casos pudieron regresar a sus países de origen. La Unión Soviética solo ayudó a los dirigentes que pudieran serles útiles en el futuro cercano, deparando a muchos de sus nacionales.



Partisanos Yugoslavos

Un caso especial sería el de los muchos brigadistas yugoslavos que terminaron siendo la columna vertebral del movimiento partisan en su país cuando fue invadido por los nazis.

Algunos batallones de brigadistas aún lucharon en España hasta el 9 de febrero de 1939, cuando pasaron la frontera junto a los militares republicanos derrotados y cientos de miles de civiles. Unos pocos aún combatirían en Madrid hasta la entrada de las tropas franquistas en la capital.

Lo cierto es que por juventud y nacionalidad, su derrotero vital llevaría a muchos de ellos a seguir combatiendo el fascismo, esta vez encuadrados en sus ejércitos nacionales, en diferentes frentes del mundo.

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TRAS LAS BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES

Mercenarios, aventureros, resistentes, soldados condecorados, perseguidos, repressados, exiliados por la nueva vorágine bélica que arrasaría el mundo desde 1939 hasta 1945. Esos fueron los destinos de muchos brigadistas. Muchos de ellos no dejaron de luchar durante años. Algunos de los brigadistas más conocidos fueron, por ejemplo: Willy Brandt, quien llegó a canciller de la República Federal de Alemania. Enver Hoxha, que fue presidente de Albania. Luigi Longo, del Partido Comunista Italiano. Josip Broz «Tito», que fue presidente de Yugoslavia, se cree que también estuvo en España. Además de literatos como Ralph Fox, Charles Donnelly, John Cornford, Gustav Regier... Científicos, artistas...



El 30 de junio de 1938 se inauguró un monumento conmemorativo de la batalla del Jarama, el cual sería el primero dedicado a las Brigadas Internacionales.

El 28 de octubre de 1988, recordando el cincuentenario de la retirada de las Brigadas, en el barrio del Carmel de Barcelona se inauguró el grupo escultórico David y Goliat de Roy Schifrin.

El 26 de enero de 1996, el Congreso de los Diputados concedió la nacionalidad española a los brigadistas, siempre que renunciaran a la suya propia cumpliendo la promesa que Negrín les hizo cuando abandonaron nuestro país. Con la Ley de Memoria Histórica ya no tuvieron que renunciar a su nacionalidad original.

En 2009, la embajada española en Londres entregó pasaportes españoles a varios brigadistas supervivientes.

Algunos de los monumentos que podemos encontrar por el mundo dedicados a estos heroicos voluntarios, aparte de los citados, los podemos ver en: Albacete, Belgrado, Berlín, Canberra, Caspe, Dudelange (Luxemburgo), Estocolmo, Glasgow, Kirkcaldy (Escocia), Londres, Madrid, París, Reading (Inglaterra), San Francisco, Seattle (EEUU), Victoria (Canadá), etc.

Las palabras de Paul Rothbard, destacado y polémico anarquista y escritor que combatió en la escuadrilla España de André Malraux y en el frente norte, nos servirán para poner un digno colofón a esta exposición-homenaje.

«Vivimos uno de esos raros instantes en que la fraternidad humana, eso tan menudo adulterado, se convierte en algo más que una palabra, que un eufemismo».



ILUSTRACIONES

Ejemplos de uniformes y banderas usados por las Brigadas Internacionales.

Si usas este Código QR podrás bajarte estas imágenes en formato recortable, así como acceder a información adicional sobre las prendas y equipos de estos combatientes.



The uniforms

The uniforms and flags of the International Brigades suffered from the regulations typical of an Army in their use.

It was difficult for the Republic to regularly uniform the troops that were being incorporated into its defence effort.

At first, the militiamen used civilian and work clothes, blue overalls, espadrilles ... whatever was available. The important thing was to have weapons and, of course, that the political affiliation of each group be recognized with armbands, hats and insignia.

As the first months went by, the need to organise this improvised Army was seen, militarizing it, uniforming it and equipping it as befitted a true Regular Army.

The People's Army of the Republic took advantage of the arrival of foreign war material: to equip itself and the textile factories in its territory to suitably uniform its troops.

The International Brigades made up for the lack of resources with enormous enthusiasm.

The need for training was solved with the creation of bases to organise and train the soldiers, as in the Albacete base where the Internationals were gathering. However, the urgency of war meant that, on many occasions, soldiers were sent to the front with minimal equipment, both in terms of weapons and uniforms, and the same happened with these volunteers.

The Internationals were the most peculiar aspect of the many soldiers that were there. There were no combatants in Spain in those years, with the exception of the foreign Fascist volunteers, who also had their own uniforms with special characteristics, both of their national origin and those made in Spain.

Coming from many countries, the diversity of clothing and materials was enormous.

When the volunteers came to Spain, they were aware of the material shortages of the Republic, so, whenever possible, they brought their own material from their countries of origin.

For this reason, Italian volunteers from the "Death Battalion" were seen wearing Fascist-looking uniforms, open tunics, black sweaters, large berets, very elegant short boots, daggers at their belts and insignia with skulls. The Italians were very well uniformed, with clothes made to order.

Their Fascist counterparts also wore ties and plumes up front.

The French brought their Army equipment from the 1920s and 1930s: brown tunics and trousers, traditional French black berets (smaller than Italian berets), Lebel rifles and regulation belts from L'Armée de Terre.

The Soviet inspiration obviously could not be missing. The three-pointed insignia of the International Brigades were used interchangeably with the red five-pointed stars of the Popular Army of the Republic. Most of the Soviet pilots and tankers brought their own flying and field overalls, as well as the characteristic tanker's leather jackets and coats and big boots.

This inspiration of the Russian Revolutionaries was also noted in the clothing of internationals such as the "Ghost Column of Uribarri", as well as in the personal choice of many soldiers.

The North Americans also came, pulling surpluses from the United States Army (U.S. Army), both in the case of their clothing and belts and in that of weapons. Their blue military shirts (not to be confused with those of the Falangists) were very characteristic, together with the baggy trousers and cloth belts that completed their general appearance.

The helmets were very diverse, as in the rest of the Republican Army. Above all, the Adrián helmet would be used, which would still survive until the Second World War from France and the Great War, as well as the Spanish Trubia, some Czech ones, etc.

Volunteers from the East also brought large Polish coats. Vest-tabards like those used by the British in the First World War were popular.

Sometimes the volunteers from Great Britain (many of them leather), wore their national flag on their jackets.

Many garments were of civilian origin, which was shocking and many times they seemed simple citizens armed with rifles and cartridge belts.

The EPR uniform would also reach many units. Sometimes it was not easy to distinguish an International soldier from a non-International soldier by his uniform, but by his physical appearance, which was clearly that of a foreigner.

The insignias were very diverse and although the Republican military insignia were those officially

used, some Internationals, like good Revolutionaries, were very reluctant both to use it and to obey the commands and discipline

At the beginning of the War, the International volunteers chose their own officers. To the extent that the militias were militarised and the columns were converted into Mixed Brigades, the International Brigades were also undergoing this transformation.

Auxiliary units such as the Scottish stretcher-bearers (who wore a fully British uniform) or the medics of the Canadian Blood Bank did not belong to any specific Brigade, but were attached to them according to the needs of the war.

Regarding the flags, we could say that although as Brigades belonging to the Popular Republican Army they had their own official banners, with their characteristic use of Roman numerals to distinguish them from the rest, they also used a myriad of guidions, banners, emblems and pennants more typi-

cal of a colourful political demonstration than an Army.

The effervescence of the Revolutionary Spirit of the International volunteers was manifested in the dozens of imaginative scripts with mottos specific to each nationality, allusions to Proletarian Heroes, the colours of the flags of the countries of origin, the names of companies and Battalions in homage to those who died in defence of the workers, and so on.

The International soldier preferred this type of ensign to the traditional military ones, since they reminded him of that ideal for which he was risking his life and they identified with his compatriots or co-religionists in that Revolutionary effort behind those symbols.

In any case, both their colourful uniforms and their flags will remain in the memory of our country as the clothing of true heroes, young people who come from all over the world to defend Democracy, willing to offer their lives for an ideal of International Solidarity



Paper crafts



Soldier of the International Brigades with N.B.Q. chemical and bacteriological protection.



American nurse, ambulance driver.



Soldier of the XIII Brigade in campaign uniform and Trubia helmet



B.I. Officer



French B.I officer



French brigade member of the XIV Brigade, "la Marseillaise"



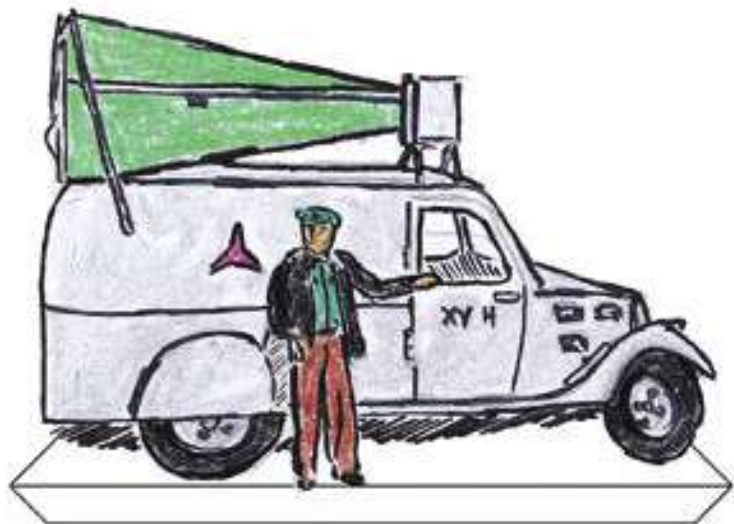
Soviet M1937 anti-tank gun used by the XV Brigade



First class soldier of the XIII Brigade



Unidentified brigade infantry-mangade



Propaganda vehicle of the XV International Brigade



International with monkey in summer



Soldier of the 35th division (international) battle of Teruel, with Adrián cape and helmet



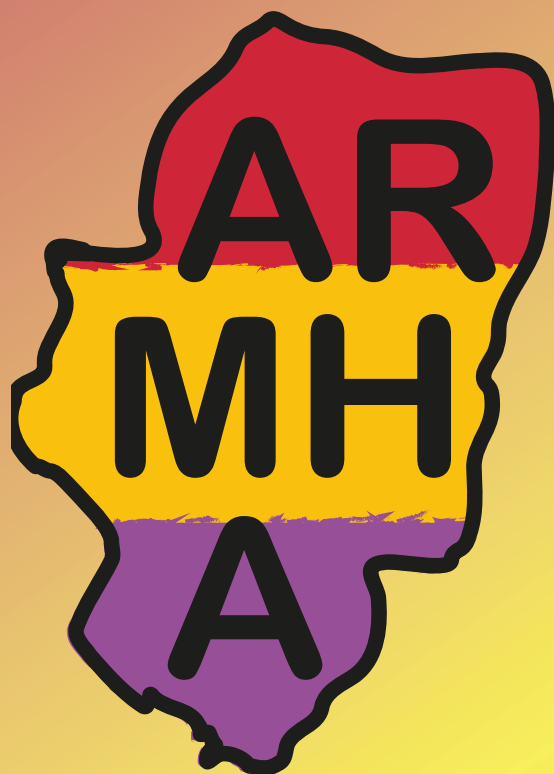
Officer of an International Brigade, parade uniform.



British officer of the International Brigades, regulation E.P.R winter outfit



Nurse - driver of the British BB ambulance service. II.



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