

# The Spanish Civil War 1936–39 (2)

## Republican Forces



Alejandro de Quesada • Illustrated by Stephen Walsh

Men-at-Arms • 498

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# THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936–39

## (2) REPUBLICAN FORCES

### THE SECOND SPANISH REPUBLIC

In 1923 the Kingdom of Spain was poor, backward, socially rigid, and mired in an unpopular war in Spanish Morocco – problems for which the political class clearly had no solutions. On 13 September that year the military, headed by Gen Miguel Primo de Rivera, overthrew the government, and King Alfonso XIII gave the new dictator legitimacy by naming him as prime minister. Primo de Rivera announced: ‘Our aim is to open a brief parenthesis in the constitutional life of Spain, and to re-establish it as soon as the country offers us men uncontaminated with the vices of political organization.’ The dictator installed a governing military Directory, dissolved the *Cortes General* (parliament), and decreed martial law.

While co-operating with the French in 1925–26 to bring the Rif War in Morocco to a successful close, Primo de Rivera launched major infrastructure programmes at home, and the mid-1920s brought some modernization. However, although foreign trade had increased by 300 per cent by 1927, this up-turn was based on protectionist economic nationalism, and the boom died away. As times got harder again, many

Spaniards – workers’ movements and liberal intelligentsia alike – chafed under the regime’s repression, in a sclerotic society that condemned the poor to wretchedness and political progressives to impotence. In 1929, on the eve of the world economic crash, Spain began slipping into a catastrophic slump. As the ‘parenthesis’ from constitutional government stretched on, King Alfonso – troubled by the regime’s failure either to legitimize itself, or to solve the country’s woes – distanced himself from the dictatorship. On 28 January 1930, having lost the support of both the king and the military, Primo de Rivera resigned, and died in exile shortly afterwards.

At a time of widespread unrest and political polarization right across the spectrum, from an extreme reactionary Right to powerful Communist and Anarchist movements, King Alfonso’s appointment to power of another general cost him his last vestiges of popular support. Revolutionary enthusiasms were rising, and in April 1931 nationwide municipal elections revealed the overwhelming strength of the





December 1930: government troops marching towards Jaca, where a mutiny had broken out among the 1,500-man garrison; the rebels were quickly defeated and their ringleaders executed. These soldiers are wearing the characteristic Spanish winter *capote-manta* collared poncho of heavy wool, while the two officers have better quality fur-lined coats. At this date the olive-brown beret was the standard headgear of enlisted ranks. (AdeQ Historical Archives)



various Leftist parties in the major cities. When Gen José Sanjurjo informed the king that he could no longer count on the loyalty of the armed forces, Alfonso 'suspended' the monarchy and left the country. On 14 April 1931 the Second Republic was proclaimed amid confusion, deep political divisions, impatient demands for a radical transformation of society, and consequent fears of a 'Red terror'.

The uneasy coalition of parties now responsible for the impoverished Republic faced expectations for ambitious social and economic reforms that no government could possibly deliver, and pressure for the devolution of powers to the Basque provinces and Catalonia. Attempts to satisfy some of these demands merely fed the clamour for more, while infuriating the reactionary Right and frightening moderate centrists. Law and order were challenged from all sides; and while Prime Minister Manuel Azaña survived the threat of a coup led by Gen Sanjurjo in January 1932, conservatives formed the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* (Confederation of Autonomous Right-wing Groups, CEDA), which attracted many from among the 40 per cent of the officer corps who were



The 'Asturias Revolution' led by striking miners in October 1934, against the conservative government elected the previous year, saw serious bloodshed on both sides, and troops were shipped in from Morocco to help suppress it. Here soldiers are searching suspected snipers. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

compulsorily retired by the Republic. In October 1933 José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the former dictator, founded the fascist Falange party; elections the following month brought to power a conservative government backed by the CEDA, which set itself to unpick those reforms that had been enacted. In October 1934 the 'Asturias Revolution' by workers in the north-west was ruthlessly put down by the Army.

Elections in February 1936 brought a narrow Leftist victory for a Popular Front coalition, but violent disorder only increased. José Antonio Primo de Rivera was imprisoned in March, and in April the Falange was outlawed. On 13 July the assassination of the Rightist politician José Calvo Sotelo provided a catalyst for long-planned action by a group of military conspirators. On the 17th of that month they attempted a rebellion in all major Spanish garrison cities, including those in Morocco and the Balearic Islands.

## CHRONOLOGY

Note: While necessarily covering the same major events, this varies in many details from the Chronology in MAA 495, *The Spanish Civil War 1936–39 (1): Nationalist Forces*.

**1936:**

**July**

'Nationalist' military rebellion fails in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Bilbao, and other cities (**17th–19th**), but succeeds in Burgos, Valladolid, Saragossa, Pamplona, Seville and Cádiz. Leader Gen Sanjurjo dies in air crash (**20th**), but Nationalists quickly secure Spanish Morocco (led by Gen Francisco Franco) and Majorca; the provinces of Galicia, León, Old Castile, Navarre and part of Extremadura (Gen Emilio Mola); and western Andalusia (Gen Gonzalo Queipo de Llano). Widespread and violent counter-revolution breaks out across loyalist regions. Airlift of Nationalist troops from Morocco to western Andalusia begins (**20th**), aided by German and Italian aircraft (**from 27th**).

**August**

First German combat aircraft arrive to support Nationalists (**6th**); Nationalist 'Madrid Column' (led by Gen Yagüe), marching north from Seville, captures Badajoz on Portuguese frontier (**14th**); Italian aircraft help repulse Republican landings in Majorca (**from 16th**). France and Britain support League of Nations non-intervention policy and arms embargo.

**Republican militiamen vandalizing a Roman Catholic church pose in looted priestly vestments. The Church was seen as a supporter of the entrenched power of wealthy landowners, and anti-clerical attacks – which became serious during the 1934 Asturias uprising – went far beyond the destruction of churches. For instance, in the first three months of the Civil War half the clergy in the archdiocese of Toledo were murdered. Atrocities during the Civil War were common, and were carried out by both sides. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**







Map showing basic outlines of Republican and Nationalist territories in summer 1936 and summer 1938. Note that the spelling of some place names is anglicized. (Map by John Richards)

## September

## October

## November

Largo Caballero forms Republican government in Madrid (4<sup>th</sup>). Soviet Army Air Force advance party arrives in Spain (10<sup>th</sup>); Moscow-based Comintern plans international Communist support for Republic. First Italian tankette unit arrives to assist Nationalists (29<sup>th</sup>). Official creation of Popular Army of the Republic (30<sup>th</sup>).

Gen Franco named Nationalist commander-in-chief and head of state (1<sup>st</sup>). Nationalists launch offensive against Madrid (6<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup>). First German armoured troops arrive in Spain (7<sup>th</sup>); first Soviet tanks arrive (12<sup>th</sup>), and go into action in Madrid (27<sup>th</sup>–29<sup>th</sup>). Soviet fighters and pilots arrive in Bilbao and Cartagena (20<sup>th</sup>); first mission by Soviet bombers (29<sup>th</sup>). Official creation of German 'Condor Legion' (30<sup>th</sup>). Republic introduces military conscription. Battle of Madrid (7<sup>th</sup>–23<sup>rd</sup>): XI International Bde goes into action (8<sup>th</sup>) to fight alongside loyalist regulars, and



Members of the *Guardia de Asalto* and other loyalists distributing arms to civilian volunteers in Madrid, 1936; the lorry is marked with the 'CNT' of the National Confederation of Labour. At left is a 75mm Schneider M1906 artillery piece, as used by both sides during the Civil War. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

militias – Communist '5th Regt', Socialist UGT, Anarchist CNT, Catalans and Basques – in successful defence of capital (8th–18th). First action by Soviet fighters over Madrid (13th). In Alicante, José Antonio Primo de Rivera is executed (20th). Nationalists switch from assaults to attempts to encircle Madrid (from 23rd). By 30th, Republic has 70 Soviet-manned fighters and 107 tanks.

## December

Republicans successfully resist attempts to cut Madrid-Corunna and Madrid-Valencia roads. Army of South (Gen Martinez Monje) created to resist Nationalist offensive on Córdoba front. Nationalist-allied Italian Volunteer Corps (CTV) first lands at Cádiz (23rd).

## 1937:

### January

Second battle for Madrid-Corunna road (3rd–15th) keeps the route open.

### February

Battle of the Jarama river (3rd–15th): at great cost, Army of the Centre (under Catalan Gen Pozas), with Lister's 11a Div and Intl Bdes, blocks attempt to cut Madrid-Valencia supply route. In Andalusia, Nationalists and CTV capture Málaga (8th).

### March

Nationalist and CTV offensive towards Guadalajara, north-east of Madrid (7th–18th), is defeated at Trijueque and Brihuega, with heavy Italian losses, by IV Army Corps with 11a, 12a & 14a Divs; Soviet tanks and aircraft prove decisively superior. By c.15th, 200-plus Polikarpov fighters have arrived.

In a rigidly conservative society the Republic's rhetoric supporting women's rights attracted many to rally to the cause, particularly in the cities. These *milicianas*, marching with their male comrades, are leaving the streets of Madrid for the outer defences to help resist the advance of Franco's forces in autumn 1936. Dressed in both everyday clothing and workers' coveralls, they have been issued rifles, but their pouches look improvised. (AdeQ Historical Archives)





|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
|                  | Nationalists begin advance towards Bilbao and Santander in Republic's isolated Northern Zone ( <b>31st</b> ).   |
| <b>April</b>     | Franco finally unites Nationalists, Falangists and Carlists into single political movement and army under his leadership, as <i>caudillo</i> . Condor Legion bombing of Guernica ( <b>26th</b> ) in support of Franco's northern campaign causes international outrage.   |
| <b>May</b>       | Fighting in Barcelona between Left and Right wings of Republican movement ( <b>2nd–6th</b> ); new Moscow-backed government formed under Juan Negrín ( <b>17th</b> ).  |
| <b>June</b>      | Nationalist Gen Mola killed in air crash ( <b>3rd</b> ); Franco entrusts northern offensive to Gen Dávila. Fall of Bilbao, Basque capital and Republican naval base ( <b>19th</b> ).  |
| <b>July</b>      | Advised by Soviet military mission (Gen Grigori Kulik), Gen Miaja launches counter-offensive ( <b>6th</b> ) westwards from Madrid towards Brunete on 13-mile front, with 65,000 men of V & XVIII Corps (see below, 'Republican order of battle, Brunete offensive'). Early V Corps success is squandered by incompetence and confusion, particularly in XVIII Corps, and advance stalls ( <b>7th–12th</b> ). Franco transfers 30,000 men (Gen Varela) and Condor Legion south from Santander front; Varela's counter-offensive ( <b>18th–24th</b> ) retakes most lost ground; casualties <i>c.</i> 24,000 Republican to 12,000 Nationalist. |
| <b>August</b>    | Re-concentrated on northern front with superiority of two-to-one, Nationalists manoeuvre to divide Basque from Asturian forces ( <b>14th</b> ), and subsequently take surrender of <i>c.</i> 55,000 Basque troops near Santander ( <b>26th</b> ). Meanwhile in Aragón, in attempt to relieve pressure in north, Republican Army of East (Gen Pozas) launches ( <b>24th</b> ) offensive on Huesca-Saragossa-Belchite-Teruel front, with 80,000 men of reinforced V Corps (11a, 15a, 35a, 45a & 46a Divs).  |
| <b>September</b> | XV Intl Bde of 35a Div takes Belchite ( <b>6th</b> ), but thereafter offensive halts in stalemate. International Bdes officially incorporated into Popular Army, with some reorganization ( <b>23rd</b> ); by now overseas recruitment is slackening, and in future increasing numbers of Spaniards will be posted in to fill gaps.   |
| <b>October</b>   | In Aragón, successful Soviet air raid ( <b>15th</b> ) on Garapinillas airfield, Saragossa. In north, collapse of Asturian resistance and fall of Gijón ( <b>21st</b> ); extinction of Republic's Northern Zone, with consequent reduction of industrial capacity.   |
| <b>December</b>  | Republicans (Gen Hernández Saravia) attack Teruel salient ( <b>15th</b> ) with 90,000 men of XVIII, XX and XXII Corps. Cut off in Teruel town, 6,000 Nationalists hold out in house-to-house fighting ( <b>from 22nd</b> ).   |



Gen Varela's Nationalist reinforcements counter-attack (**29th**); Republicans bring XI & XV Intl Bdes from Walter's 35a Div up in reserve (**31st**); stalemate in freezing weather and deep snow.

**1938:**

**January**

Teruel's Nationalist garrison surrenders (**7th**), but Gen Varela's advance threatens to encircle Republicans in their turn (**10th**). Republicans driven off most of heights dominating town (**17th**).

**February**

Success north of Teruel by Nationalist cavalry (Gen Monasterio) is exploited (**7th–8th**), resulting in 22,000 Republican casualties. Another 24,000 casualties are recorded when town falls (**20th–22nd**); only part of 'El Campesino's' 46a Div escapes.

**March**

Franco launches (**9th**) Aragón offensive on 50-mile front, spearheaded by Army Corps of Morocco (Gen Yagüe) and Navarre (Gen Solchaga), with aim of reaching Mediterranean coast and cutting Catalonia off from Valencia. Solchaga's troops take Belchite (**10th**); Yagüe's take Alcañiz (**13th**), and Caspe, 100 miles behind Republican front line (**16th**). Second phase (**from 22nd**) thrusts both north for French frontier, and east for Lérida. France re-opens frontier (**17th**); Republic will receive important re-supply including aircraft and artillery (**April–June**).

**April**

Fall of Lérida (**3rd**). Nationalists reach both French frontier, and Tremp dam on Rio Segre (**8th**), threatening Barcelona's water and electricity supplies. Nationalist 4a Div de Navarra, Galician Corps, reaches Mediterranean at Vinaroz (**15th**); a 30-mile corridor soon cuts Republican territory in two.

**July**

Instead of pushing on for Barcelona, Franco chooses Valencia as next objective, which buys the Republicans some time. Nationalist offensive towards Valencia (**5th**), by Army Corps of Castille (Gen Varela) and Galicia (Gen Aranda), is repulsed at well-sited defences along Sierra de Espadán and fails at high cost, but Nationalist corridor is enlarged almost as far south as Sagunto (**20th**). In Catalonia, 120,000-strong Republican Army of the Ebro (LtCol 'Modesto') launches major offensive south and west across Ebro river into Nationalist corridor (**24th/25th**), with V & XV Corps supported by elements from XVIII & XXIV Corps (see below, under 'Army corps, armies and army groups'). Opposed by dispersed units of Nationalist Moroccan Corps, skilfully prepared night crossings are successful in some sectors, less so in others, and Nationalist responses are swift. Weak Republican air support exposes follow-up crossings to enemy air



Polish volunteers parade their unit's guidons; different sources state that either c.3,000 or c.5,400 Poles fought in Spain – the confusion is probably due to the fact that many came from emigrant communities in France. They served in the early 'Grupo Walery' and later in the 'Dombrowski' (aka 'Dabrowski'), 'Adam Mickiewicz' and 'Palafox' Bns and other, mixed-nationality units. The 'Dombrowski' Bn, named after the Polish hero of the 1871 Paris Commune, was one of the first three International battalions to go into the line in Madrid, on 9 November 1936, as part of XI Intl Brigade. It subsequently served in XII Bde, and from August 1937 many Poles served in the re-formed XIII 'Dombrowski' Brigade. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

October

November

December

1939:

January

February

attacks. Nationalists successfully defend key communications hub at Gandesa (26th–31st).

**August** Final attacks on Gandesa fail (1st–2nd); Republican advance stalls and digs in (3rd); Nationalist Northern Army (Gen Dávila) consolidates, with Moroccan Corps (Gen Yagüe) and Maestrazgo Corps (Gen García Valiño). Fayon-Mequinenza bridgehead lost (6th–7th); heavy but indecisive fighting for Sierra de Pandols (9th–15th); loss of Gaeta heights (22nd).

**September** With superiority in artillery, aircraft and logistics, Nationalist counter-offensive (3rd) retakes Corbera (5th). 'Modesto' reorganizes forces to contest strategic Sierra de Cabals and Valle de la Torre, deploying reserves (10th/11th) to deny attackers decisive results. 'Internationals' fight their last battle, in Sierra Fariols defending Venta de Camposines (22nd–24th), before their withdrawal (see below, 'International Brigades').

Slow, costly Nationalist advances on Ebro front against stubborn resistance. Decisive attacks on centre of Republican line in Sierra de Cabals launched (30th) with major artillery and air bombardments.

Nationalist 74a & 1a Divs reach Ebro in two places (4th), dividing Republican enclave. V Corps begins withdrawing across river (7th/8th); XV Corps commander Gen Tagüeña organizes orderly fighting withdrawal (9th–14th); covered by fog, last Republican troops re-cross Ebro (15th/16th). This greatest campaign of the Civil War has cost each side between 40,000 and 60,000 casualties (figures are widely disputed).

Three-pronged Nationalist offensive into Catalonia (23rd) by 20 divisions.

Lister's V Corps is defeated at Borjas Blancas east of Lérida (3rd–4th); Tarragona falls to Moroccan Corps (14th), who enter Barcelona unopposed (27th). Only Madrid and Valencia now remain in Republican hands.

Republican political leaders seek asylum in France (6th); some 400,000 military and civilian refugees follow them during the month. Uprising against Communist Party in Madrid (23rd) led by Col Casado, arguing for negotiations with Franco; internecine fighting will last until 13 March. France and Britain recognize Franco's government (27th).

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>March</b> | Casado establishes National Defence Council in Madrid ( <b>5th</b> ), and negotiates surrender. Nationalist troops enter Madrid unopposed ( <b>28th</b> ). |
| <b>April</b> | Nationalist troops enter Valencia unopposed ( <b>1st</b> ); Franco declares end of war.  |

## CREATION OF THE *EJÉRCITO POPULAR*

The 1931–36 Army of the Spanish Republic (*Ejército de la República Española*) was divided by the rebellion in July 1936 by the forces that became known as the Nationalists (though termed ‘insurgents’ by the ‘loyalist’ Republicans). A new ‘People’s Army’ (*Ejército Popular de la República Española*, EP) was then formed – but only gradually, and with difficulty. Perhaps 33,000 men of the pre-war Army remained loyal, together with about 18,000 of the *Guardia Civil* rural gendarmerie, 12,000 of the urban *Cuerpo de Seguridad y Asalto*, and 10,000 *Carabineros* border guards. In July 1936 about 2,000 loyalist officers remained at their posts; perhaps 1,500 recently retired officers also returned to the colours, though political distrust often wasted their potential. More prominent in the first months was a kaleidoscope of enthusiastic but untrained political militias.

The Nationalist rebellion destroyed the authority of the Republican government of Prime Minister Casares Quiroga, and provoked what was effectively a counter-revolution by diverse militias united only in their opposition to the rebels. A new prime minister, José Giral, gave in to the popular clamour for the armouries to be opened to the militias. The senior loyalist Army commander in Madrid was Gen José Miaja Menant (who served the Republic from the first, but who would be officially appointed to chair the Council of Defence only in November 1936). Miaja was very ably seconded by LtCol Vicente Rojo Lluch, who was appointed chief of the operations staff in October 1936 (but would be promoted general only in September 1937).<sup>1</sup> However, it took months to reconstruct even a small functioning general staff, amid constant political wrangling in an atmosphere of distrust towards all professional officers.

### The militias

The formation of the Popular Front that won the 1936 elections had done little to ease mutual distrust between the several Leftist political parties and those with particular regional agendas, and this was reflected in the disunity of their militias. Anarchists, Trotskyists, Communists, Socialists of various flavours, confederations of urban workers and rural peasants, Catalans and Basques all responded to the crisis independently, often frustrating the efforts of local Army or police officers to co-ordinate resistance to the

**General José Miaja (left – and see Plate A1); in October 1936 a single rank of *general* was adopted for all general officers. With him is his able chief of staff LtCol (later Gen) Vicente Rojo, one of several devout Roman Catholics who would nevertheless serve the Republic loyally in senior posts; the supposedly rigid division between Catholics and ‘Reds’ was a fallacy. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**



<sup>1</sup> The normal Spanish naming style is baptismal name, father's family name, mother's family name. This book will generally follow convention in using only the patronymic, e.g. Miaja, Rojo, etc.





**The drums of war: Communist militiamen of the '5th Regiment' muster for service in Madrid, summer 1936, wearing a motley collection of uniforms and headgear. The *Quinto Regimiento* was created around the Spanish Communist Party's paramilitary wing (*Milicias Antifascistas Obreras y Campesinas*, MAOC – 'Workers' and Peasants' Anti-Fascist Militias'), complete with political commissars led by the Comintern's then senior advisor in Spain, Vittorio Vidali (aka 'Carlos Contreras'). (AdeQ Historical Archives)**

Nationalists. They were identified by many different acronyms, of which some of the most prominent were the Anarchist CNT-FAI, the pro-Moscow Spanish Communist Party (PCE), the anti-Moscow Marxists of the POUM, and the Socialist trade unionists of the urban UGT and rural FNTT.

Their immediate resistance to the Nationalist advances was brave and occasionally successful, but scattered, and often short-lived. Most militias elected their own commanders, who thus lacked any lasting authority; the leaders were usually ignorant of war, and their followers resistant to military-style discipline. Within the CNT militias especially there was no hierarchy, no saluting, no titles and no rank insignia. While their small arms were sometimes adequate, the militias' logistics and communications were almost non-existent, and they were casual and improvident campaigners. However, there was another side to this story, as argued by George Orwell in Chapter 3 of his memoir of service as a corporal in the Catalan POUM, *Homage to Catalonia*:

'Later it became the fashion to decry the militias, and therefore to pretend that the faults which were due to lack of training and weapons were the result of the equalitarian [sic] system. Actually, a newly raised draft of militia was an undisciplined mob not because the officers called the private "Comrade" but because raw troops are *always* an undisciplined mob... In a workers' army discipline is theoretically... based on class-loyalty, whereas the discipline of a bourgeois conscript army is based ultimately on fear. (The Popular Army that replaced the militias was midway between the two types.)... When a man refused to obey an order you did not immediately get him punished; you first appealed to him in the name of comradeship.

'Cynical people with no experience of handling men will say instantly that this would never "work", but as a matter of fact it does "work" in the long run.... "Revolutionary" discipline depends on... an understanding of *why* orders must be obeyed; it takes time to diffuse this, but it also takes time to drill a man into an automaton on the barrack-square... And it is a tribute to the strength of "revolutionary" discipline that the militias stayed in the field at all.'

The key phrase here is 'in the long run', because many militia units did not have the luxury of evolving through experience. In 1936 it took more than enthusiasm and rifles to stand up to seasoned troops, let alone to mount effective counter-attacks, and when they came up against Nationalist regulars from Morocco many units understandably broke and ran. Notwithstanding the quality of the men Orwell served with, some other groups were little more than bandits taking advantage of the general anarchy. Local loyalist successes were accompanied (like those of the Nationalists) by widespread summary killings of proven or suspected 'class enemies', among whom favourite targets were landowners at any level, priests and nuns.

An exception to this generally unimpressive picture was the Communist so-called '5th Regiment' (*Quinto Regimiento*) in Madrid, which began mobilizing immediately after the rebellion. This was not itself a tactical unit, but a previously clandestine training organization that formed up to 50 units of various sizes, including autonomous 'Companies of Steel' and a 'Victory Brigade'. These amalgamated in late August 1936, and distinguished themselves during the defence of Madrid in November (though they stained their reputation with a mass killing of more than 1,000 Nationalist prisoners). The *Quinto Regimiento* applied relatively strict standards of discipline,



Republican volunteer militiamen march past giving the 'revolutionary' right-fist salute. Civilian and working clothes – of cotton or linen in summer, and wool or corduroy (*pano*) in winter – were mixed with odds-and-ends of military uniform, and a rolled blanket was usually the only bivouac gear. At first many militias were undisciplined, but the POUM veteran George Orwell wrote: 'The discipline of even the worst drafts of militia visibly improved as time went on. In January [1937] the job of keeping a dozen raw recruits up to the mark almost turned my hair grey. In May for a short while I was acting-lieutenant in command of about thirty men, English and Spanish. We had all been under fire for months, and I never had the slightest difficulty in getting an order obeyed or in getting men to volunteer for a dangerous job.' (AdeQ Historical Archives)

organization and training, and its infrastructure included staff, administrative, supply, transport and signals elements, with training schools for both officers and nurses. One of the battalions assembled in August was led by 29-year-old Enrique Lister Forján, who would subsequently become renowned as a brigade, divisional and corps commander.

Another important organization that fielded militias was the Anarchist-dominated *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT – 'National Confederation of Labour'). The usual militia structure was initially based upon a *columna* (roughly, a regiment) comprising six to eight *centurias* each of three or four *secciones* (roughly, companies and platoons); other militia units called themselves 'battalions' or 'groups'. However, there were wide variations in unit strength and organization, and much coming and going over the passage of months. The largest CNT unit in August 1936 was LtCol Francisco del Rosal Rico's *Columna del Rosal*, with 835 men; but by October the CNT's militias totalled more than 12,000 men, and in December its *Columna de Andalucía* and *Milicias Confederales* boasted 23,000 between them.

Pre-war Army battalions had had a 'paper' strength of four companies (one machine gun and three rifle), but mobilized battalions on both sides often had only three, lacking either the MG company or one of the rifle companies. Some militia units had significantly more companies, though their strengths varied; record-keeping was often vague, beyond the crude total numbers for which they claimed pay.

### **'Militarization' 1936–37**

On 4 September 1936 a new Republican government was formed under Francisco Largo Caballero, a left-wing Socialist. He formed a mixed cabinet including Communist, Catalan and Basque ministers; and on 4 November, with fighting in the outskirts of Madrid, he even managed to persuade Anarchists to join his second cabinet – albeit briefly. He appointed Gen José Asensio Torrado as commander of the Central Region, and in October conscription was introduced for all fit men between the ages of 20 and 45. The government announced its intention of unifying all loyalist armed forces under central organization and command by February 1937, but this proved optimistic.

From the first this policy, however obviously practical, was popularly



Falangist militiamen guarding a captured Republican armoured vehicle painted with 'UHP' for the *Unión de Hermanos Proletarios* ('United Proletarian Brothers'). Apart from armoured cars, numbers of armoured lorries had been built pre-war for the Republican security forces, and hundreds more were improvised by urban militias during the Civil War. These were of little value, being under-powered for their added weight, and were limited to road use. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

Loyalist troops manning defensive positions. Republican units were armed with a variety of rifles. In 1937 a visitor to the HQ of the 'Abraham Lincoln' Bn described a slotted display box with examples of perhaps a dozen different types of cartridges that the quartermasters had to be able to identify. The establishment of a rifle company was c.140 men (but often fewer) commanded by a lieutenant and a commissar, divided into three *secciones* led by sergeants, each of three *pelotones* led by corporals. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

associated with the Moscow-backed Communists in the Republican hierarchy, who established an intrusive system of unit commissars for the new Popular Army. The programme of 'militarization' was resisted by many, particularly Anarchists and Trotskyists. The long-standing mutual suspicion between the Anarchists, POUM and left-wing Socialists on the one side, and the right-wing Socialists and Moscow-backed Communists on the other, flared into serious fighting in Barcelona in May 1937. In simple terms, the former were wedded to ideals of social revolution and collective decision-making, the latter to the need for disciplined central organization to win the war. The Communists were victorious, and crushed their opponents ruthlessly. Largo Caballero was replaced as prime minister by Dr

Juan Negrín y López, who recognized the Republic's dependence on Soviet supplies and advisors, and from early summer 1937 the Communists would dominate the Ejército Popular and the internal security apparatus. President Azaña and Dr Negrín remained in office throughout the Civil War; their government was forced to move from Madrid to Valencia on 6 November 1936, and then to Barcelona on 31 October 1937.

By July 1937 the process of reorganizing the Popular Army was well under way; the training of both officers and men was making steady progress, considerable quantities of *matériel* were arriving from the USSR (though everything had to be paid for – in gold), and the Republic had some 500,000 men in the field.

## ORGANIZATION OF FORMATIONS & UNITS

### Mixed Brigades

Throughout the war the basic tactical formation was the *Brigada Mixta* (Mixed Brigade) built around four infantry battalions. Within the successively numbered brigades the battalions were also numbered in a single sequence throughout the infantry arm (i.e. *1a Brigada Mixta* had *Batallones Nos. 1–4*, *2a BM* had Bns 5–8, and so on). The raising of the first six brigades was announced on 18 October 1936, four of them being led by veterans of the Quinto Regimiento. The *1a BM* was commanded by Enrique Lister; *2a BM* by a lawyer, Jesús Martínez de Aragón; *3a BM* by José María Galán, a junior officer of Carabineros frontier guards; *4a BM* by Arturo Arellano, and *5a*







BM by Fernando Sabio, both former Army officers; and 6a BM by a serving infantry captain, Miguel Gallo Martínez.

The main difference from the Nationalist Army was that most of the combat support and service units were incorporated at brigade rather than divisional level, making the BMs at least theoretically autonomous. Divisional troops did include an artillery group and an anti-aircraft battery, but each of the BMs had its own artillery *grupo* (theoretically,

between one and four batteries of 75mm guns and one of 105mm howitzers). The brigade was also supposed to have an anti-tank battery (usually 3x Soviet 37mm M1930s); a *sección* of light infantry guns or mortars; its own ammunition column; an engineer unit; a reconnaissance squadron of horsed cavalry and/or armoured cars; and signals, supply and medical elements. The core structure was theoretically as follows:

**HQ:** Commandant; advisor (usually Soviet officer); adjutant, chief of staff, assistants and runners; hierarchy of political commissars; staffs of services (administrative, quartermaster/ordnance, intelligence, supply, food, transport, communications, medical, etc); plus AT battery, cavalry squadron and artillery group under direct command.

**Infantry battalions (x 4):** HQ (major or captain CO, political commissar, adjutants, runners; quartermaster/armourer, medical officer); companies (3x rifle, 1x MG).

By December 1936, 15 mixed brigades were listed as active, including two 'International Brigades' (see below); by early 1937 there were 40 active brigades, plus 15 more in training; and in May there were on paper 153 brigades in the Central Region, Aragón and the South (including 151a BM raised from Navy marine infantry). A total of 225 BMs were raised during the war; however, many fell significantly short of their theoretical establishment in manpower, weapons, support and services. Few BMs ever exceeded a field strength of about 3,000, with a maximum battalion strength of some 650 men.



Republican soldiers manning a machine gun of the Spanish 7mm Hotchkiss M1922/24/26 series. The man in the foreground cleans dust off an ammunition feed strip with a brush in order to prevent jamming when in use. The short feed strips held 15 rounds, longer ones either 24 or 30 rounds, depending on the type of cartridge. One of the four companies in each infantry battalion was an MG company, though the guns were often dispersed with the rifle companies. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

**BELOW LEFT** An artillery battery of 75mm Schneider guns manned by Republican regulars on the approaches to Madrid, apparently protected by militia riflemen. Each mixed brigade was supposed to have an artillery group with several batteries of 75s plus one heavy battery with 105mm howitzers, but under war conditions a brigade might easily be reduced to one understrength battery, perhaps with mixed equipment. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

**RIGHT** While hardly any tanks were manufactured in Spain, the Republic produced a variety of armoured cars. This is a knocked-out Bilbao armoured car, the only AFV type mass-produced in Spain before the Civil War. Initially intended as an anti-riot vehicle for the Assault Guards, these were pressed into field service to fill the armour gap until the first Soviet AFVs were delivered. Spanish and Soviet armoured cars continued to play a minority part in armoured operations throughout the war. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

**LEFT** Members of the 'Thaelmann' Bn displaying one of their banners; they wear a mixture of civilian and military clothing, with only the black Basque beret providing a note of uniformity – berets were the most common Republican headgear. A German/Austrian 'Thaelmann Centuria' was one of the earliest foreign volunteer workers' units in summer 1936; the full battalion served initially with XII Intl Bde, later transferring to XI Bde, which was sometimes called the 'Thaelmann Brigade' thereafter. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

**RIGHT** In the trenches, volunteers of the 'Thaelmann' Bn are seen wearing both the Germanic-looking Spanish M1926 helmet (left), and (foreground) the widely imported pot-shaped Czech M1930. Republican troops sometimes painted a red star or other motif on the front of their helmets – see Plate C2. It is reckoned that about 18,000 'Internationals' were present in Spain at any one time; they earned a high fighting reputation, but their use as 'shock' battalions cost them truly horrific casualties. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

## International Brigades



Much fuller details will be found in Osprey Elite 53, *International Brigades in Spain 1936–39*, and the following brief overview is included simply for completeness.

Between autumn 1936 and autumn 1938 more than 30,000 politically committed foreign volunteers from many countries travelled to Spain, in an effort co-ordinated from Moscow by the Comintern (Communist International) organization. They formed some 40 battalions, gathered in International Brigades, of which the first to be formed was the 11th, which distinguished itself in the defence of Madrid in November 1936. All had officially been created by June 1937, and from August 1937 one Spanish battalion was added to each.

The 'hard core' were numbered the 11th–15th Bdes (often rendered as XI–XV), plus the 86th Mixed/129th Intl and 150th Intl Brigade. The constituent battalions were usually named, and numbered in both an international sequence and an Ejército Popular sequence. For instance, the composition of LtCol Vladimir Copic's English-speaking XV Intl Bde from 23 September 1937 was the 16th 'British' Bn (EP Bn 57); the American 17th 'Abraham Lincoln' Bn (EP Bn 58) – the short-lived 18th 'George Washington' Bn (EP Bn 59) had been merged into the 'Lincolns' after suffering heavy casualties in July 1937; and the Canadian 19th 'Mackenzie-Papineau' Bn (EP Bn 60). However, other battalions assigned to the brigade at various dates were the Franco/Belgian '6th February' (EP Bn 55); the multinational 'Dimitrov' (59, before formation of 'George Washington'); another all-Spanish Bn 59 (after the merger of the 'Washingtons' and 'Lincolns'); and, briefly, a Balkan 'Tchapaiev' (Bn 48 or 49?) and an all-Spanish 'Galindo' Battalion.

The brigades were sometimes massed, sometimes allocated individually to Spanish divisions; e.g., in August 1937 during the Belchite offensive XIII Intl Bde served in 15a Div and XII Bde in 45a Div, while XI, XIV and XV Bdes formed Gen Walter's 35a División. Battalions were transferred between brigades, and strengths and internal organization were subject to change throughout the war. This was largely due to the impossibility of replacing severe casualties with fresh volunteers of the same origins; several battalions were merged, and at various dates the brigades were in fact substantially Spanish.

The major battle-honours of the Internationals were as follows: Defence of Madrid (Nov 1936), XI Bde; Boadilla (Dec 1936), XI & XII Bdes; Córdoba front (Dec 1936–Jan 1937), XIV Bde; Corunna Road

(Jan 1937), XI & XIV Bdes; the Jarama (Feb–June 1937), XI, XII, XIV & XV Bdes; Guadalajara (March 1937), XI & XII Bdes; Republican Brunete offensive (July 1937), XI–XV Bdes; Republican Belchite offensive (Aug–Oct 1937), XI–XV Bdes; Republican Teruel offensive (Dec 1937–Feb 1938), XI & XV Bdes; Nationalist Aragón offensive (March–July 1938), XI & XV Bdes; Republican Ebro offensive (July–Nov 1938), XI–XV Brigades.

To satisfy the League of Nations the International Brigades were withdrawn in September–October 1938, though hundreds of individuals chose to fight on in the ranks of Spanish units. (The Nationalists' German and Italian allies did not, as had naïvely been hoped, comply with the League's requests that they also should withdraw.)



### Divisions, and command

The brigades were gathered, according to availability, into divisions. These were usually numbered, but initially some were lettered (see below, '*Cuerpo de Ejército de Madrid*, Jarama front, 6 February 1937'). At first a division might comprise anything from two to five BMs, but later a structure of three brigades totalling 12 infantry battalions became the norm.

The Republic would always suffer from a shortage of experienced, let alone staff-trained officers at all levels. For instance, in December 1937, after the 'militarization' process was complete, of the 59 divisional commanders the most senior regular officer had been a lieutenant-colonel in 1936, four had been majors, 18 only captains, and 17 divisional commanders had risen from the militias. In the 188 mixed brigades active by that date there were only 49 regular officers serving as brigade commanders or chiefs of staff. It was common for formerly retired regular officers to command BMs during their formation and training, but to hand over to more politically acceptable officers before they left for the front.

This shortage was evident in the fact that an entire army corps might be commanded by a *teniente coronel*, and a brigade by a regular *comandante* (or, more often, by the militia equivalent rank of *mayor*). Major Lister and LtCol 'Modesto' seem to have been the only commanders from the militia with formal pre-war training, by the Frunze Military Academy in the USSR ('Modesto' had previously been a corporal in the pre-war Spanish Foreign Legion). In these circumstances the Republic had little option but to accept Red Army officers as advisors at formation level, and Soviet-trained foreign officers in senior field commands under *noms de guerre*. The most prominent were Karol Swierczewski ('Walter'), a Polish-born Soviet staff officer; and Manfred Stern ('Emilio Kléber'), János Galicz ('Gal'), and Mata Kemeny ('Lukacs'), all of whom had joined the Bolsheviks after World War I service in the Austro-Hungarian Army.

Popular Army units from brigade to company level were firmly under the oversight of Communist Party commissars, who enjoyed joint authority with line officers. They were responsible for the education,

**Typical of the appearance of the 'Internationals', this column from the 'Abraham Lincoln' Bn is led by an officer and a commissar wearing Popular Army M1926 service dress, flanking a more casually dressed officer who sports a rank patch on the left breast of a leather windcheater jacket – a popular garment among foreign volunteers. The men in the body of the column show a variety of uniform clothing and headgear. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**



indoctrination, morale and loyalty of officers and men; the best were inspirational leaders, while the worst used brutal methods to increase Party membership. Soviet NKVD agents also exercised considerable influence within the new security apparatus.

The following two representative orders of battle illustrate variations in the composition of army corps and divisions during the transitional first half of 1937:

***Cuerpo de Ejército de Madrid, Jarama front, 6 February 1937***

*4a División* (LtCol Juan Guilloto León – ‘Modesto’): 26a, 41a, 1a ‘Choque’, 19a & 45a BMs

*Div A* (Gen ‘Walter’): 5a BM, XII & XIV Intl Bdes & ‘PUA’ BM

*Div B* (Gen ‘Gal’): XI & XV Intl Bdes & 17a BM

*Div C* (Maj Lister): 1a, 18a & 22a BMs

*1a Brigada Blindada* (c.60 tanks – Soviet BrigGen D.G. Pavlov)

**Republican order of battle, Brunete offensive, 6 July 1937**

***V Cuerpo de Ejército (LtCol ‘Modesto’):***

*11a Div* (Maj Lister): 1a, 9a & 100a BMs

*35a Div* (Gen ‘Walter’): XI Intl Bde, 32a & 108a BMs

*46a Div* (LtCol Valentín González – ‘El Campesino’): 10a & 101a BMs

***XVIII C de E (LtCol Enrique Jurado):***

*10a Div* (Maj José María Enciso): 2a & 3a BMs

*15a Div* (Gen ‘Gal’): XIII & XV Intl Bdes

*34a Div* (LtCol José María Galán): 3a, 16a & 68a BMs

**Reserve:**

*14a Div* (Maj Cipriano Mera): 49a, 70a, 98a & 105a BMs

*39a Div* (LtCol Gustavo Durán): 69a & 94a BMs

*45a Div* (Gen ‘Kléber’): XII Intl Bde, 150a BM (part Intl)

Plus 3 groups of cavalry sqns; reserve artillery (102 guns);

1st & 4th Bns/ *1a Bda Blindada* (70 tanks, 30 armcd cars)

## Soviet armour

At the outbreak of war the Republic had only a handful of obsolete tanks. The first Soviet shipment of 50x T-26s, together with 51 instructors, landed on 12 Oct 1936. On 27 & 29 Oct the threat to Madrid prompted their commander to send some Russian crews into action, and the T-26's 45mm main gun easily destroyed Italian tankettes supporting a Nationalist attack. This superiority over machine gun-armed Italian and German light armour would be maintained throughout the war, making captured T-26s precious to Franco's army. Given the persistently poor Spanish tactical co-ordination of infantry with tanks, and the T-26's mechanical fragility, dozens of them would indeed fall into Nationalist hands.

Another 56x T-26s with 200-odd instructors arrived in Nov 1936, and the *1a Brigada Blindada* was formed under BrigGen D.G. Pavlov. A further 150x T-26s supplied between March and May 1937, together with 50 faster BT-5 light tanks, increased the brigade to four battalions. Soviet personnel commanded at all levels while training up Spanish crews; they often won tactical victories, but losses (particularly to the German 37mm PaK 36 anti-tank gun) and mechanical breakdowns were frequent, and they never achieved decisive breakthroughs. No less than 72 per cent of the tanks committed at the Jarama in Feb 1937 were lost; total losses by

Aug 1937 were 184 tanks (43.6 per cent of those committed).

A second shipment of 50x BT-5s in Aug 1937 were allocated to a new Intl Tank Regt manned partly by the best Spanish crews, partly by foreigners trained in Russia. Sent into a badly planned and mishandled Spanish attack at Fuentes de Ebro in Aragón on 13 Oct 1937, the Intl Tank Regt lost at least 19 of 48 tanks and one-third of the crews. Most Soviet personnel returned to the USSR by the end of 1937. A final batch of 25x T-26s arrived in March 1938, bringing the total number supplied up to 281.



## Army corps, armies and army groups

By May 1937 the Popular Army comprised the following higher commands: the Central Army (*Ejército del Centro*); Southern Army (*Ejército del Sur*); Army of the Levant, i.e. the southern sector of the Mediterranean coastal region (*Ejército de Levante*); Eastern Army, in Catalonia (*Ejército del Este*); and Northern Army (*Ejército del Norte*). The Northern Army consisted mainly of the regional Basque *Euzko Gudarostea*, the Asturian *Ejército de Asturias* and Cantabrian *Ejército de Cantabria*. Each Republican named army would be composed of anything from two to half a dozen numbered army corps (*cuerpos de ejército*), each usually but not invariably comprising three divisions.

After the loss of the Northern Zone, in December 1937 the structure was reorganized as follows: Central Army, Extremaduran Army (*Ejército de Extremadura*), Andalusian Army (*Ejército de Andalucía*), Army of the Levant, Eastern Army, and Manoeuvre Army (*Ejército de Maniobra*). The Manoeuvre Army, under direct control of the Republican chief of staff Gen Rojo, was not assigned to any specific front, but would create a task-organized *agrupación autónoma* to carry out any major operation planned by the General Staff; it included the most reliable and experienced troops, such as most of the International Brigades, and V Corps.

In April 1938 Republican territory was cut in two by Franco's thrust to the Mediterranean coast, and the remaining armies were reorganized into two army groups:

**Central Region Army Group** (*Grupo de Ejércitos de la Región Central*, GERC) was a consolidation of forces south of the Nationalist corridor, commanded in person by Gen Miaja. It comprised elements of the Central Army (I, II, III, IV & VI Corps, and XIV Guerrilla Corps); Extremaduran Army (VII & VIII Corps); Andalusian Army (IX & XXIII Corps); and the Army of the Levant (remnants of XIII, XVI, XVII, XIX, XX, XXI & XXII Corps).

**Eastern Region Army Group** (*Grupo de Ejércitos de la Región Oriental*, GERO) comprised the remnant cut off in Catalonia north of the Nationalist corridor – mainly the Eastern Army, and the Manoeuvre Army that would become the new Army of the Ebro – under the command of Gen Juan Hernández Saravia. The Eastern Army initially consisted of X, XI & XVIII Corps, while the Army of the Ebro had V, XII, XV & XXIV Corps (XVIII & XII Corps later being exchanged between these armies before the July 1938 offensive).

In July 1938 the autonomous Army of the Ebro assembled from the Manoeuvre Army would consist of Lister's V Corps (11a, 45a & 46a Divs); Manuel Tagüeña's XV Corps (3a, 35a & 42a Divs), plus in each case corps artillery and additional attached cavalry, engineer and other units; and, in reserve, part of José del Barrio's XVIII Corps (27a & 60a Divs), and 43a Div from XXIV Corps. Overall command was exercised by LtCol Juan Guilloto León ('Modesto'), who would be promoted colonel on 26 August 1938.

Republican soldiers learning the basics of the Spanish 7mm Mauser M1893 rifle. The man on the left has the Spanish M1926 helmet, while his comrade wears a French M1926 Adrian. Many Adrian helmets of World War I vintage were also used by the Popular Army, as well as Italian-made Adrians captured from the CTV. (AdeQ Historical Archives)





Republican soldiers in the trenches, 1937, their position decorated with pictures of Pablo Iglorias, the founder of the Spanish Socialist Party, and of Josef Stalin. Such figures were regarded as heroes by many Spanish loyalists. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

## REPRESENTATIVE FORMATIONS

There is obviously no space here for comprehensive orders of battle or combat records, but the following three examples may be of interest as broadly representative.

### (1) *11a División: composition 1937–38*

By the Jarama battle in late February 1937, Enrique Lister was commanding 11a División. This was formed on 24 January 1937 around a core of Communist Party militiamen from the Quinto Regimiento. There were several early changes to its composition; in the March fighting for Guadalajara it apparently consisted of the 1bis, XI & XII Intl, and 10a Bdes, but by the Brunete offensive of July it had acquired the composition it would retain for the rest of

the war: 1a, 9a and 100a Brigadas Mixtas.

Of these, the 1a BM was raised in October 1936 under the command of Militia Maj Lister. Its four battalions were: 1st 'Corbata' (ex-1st, 6th & 9th 'Companies of Steel' of the Quinto Regimiento, and later retitled 'Lister' Bn after its former CO); 2nd 'La Victoria'; 3rd 'El Amanecer'; and 4th 'Milicias Gallegas'. In January 1937 Bns 'Thaelmann', 'Cruz', 'Heredia' and 'José Díaz' were briefly attached; they were used to form 1bis BM, which was soon redesignated 9a BM, so were accordingly renumbered Bns 33–36 respectively. The 100a BM was formed in June 1937 around a cadre from 1a BM, plus some 3,000 conscripts from Jaén, Córdoba and Murcia; its battalions were numbered 397–400.

In June 1938 this crack division, rebuilt and re-equipped for the Ebro offensive, recorded 19 field officers, 372 captains and subalterns, 16 commissars, 561 sergeants and other senior NCOs, 8,085 corporals and privates, plus 549 miscellaneous rankers and drivers, for a total of 9,602 all ranks. The inventory of weapons included 5,739 rifles, 120 light machine guns, 54 machine guns, and 4x 81mm, 29x 75mm and 51x 50mm mortars.

### (2) *43a División: composition and combat record*

This division was formed in June 1937 under Militia Maj Antonio Beltran Casaña ('El Esquinazao'). Beltran's nickname meant 'The Dodger'; he had fought with Pancho Villa in Mexico and in the American Expeditionary Force in France, and was one of the few militia officers who would reach the rank of lieutenant-colonel. His division comprised the 72a, 102a and 130a Brigadas Mixtas.

The 72a BM was formed in January 1937 at Cifuentes on the Guadalajara front from the existing militia battalions 'Aragón' (became Bn 285), 'Marlasca' (286), 'Alto Aragón' (287) and 'Zaragoza' (288); the CO was a regular, Cdte de Inf Jesús Valdez Oroz. Assigned at first to Col Lacalle's 12a Div, by March it was part of Maj Mera's 14a División. In June, commanded by Cdte de Inf Ángel Ramírez Rull, the brigade was transferred to join 43a Div near Huesca at the northern end of the Aragón front.



The 102a BM (Bns 405–408) was formed in March 1937 at Villena, from young conscripts with a cadre from the depot battalion of 72a BM. Commanded by Militia Maj José Hernández de la Mano, it joined 43a Div at Huesca in early June. The 130a BM was formed in late April 1937 mainly from the former Agrupación de Montañas de los Pirineos: another battalion ‘Alto Aragón’ (became Bn 517), ‘Cinco Villas’ (518), ‘FETE-UGT’ (519), and ‘Izquierda Republicana’ (520). Its first front-line CO was Cdte de Inf Mariano Bueno Ferrer.

In September 1937, during the Belchite offensive, the division took Sabiñánigo at a cost of 2,500 casualties. Its next hard fighting came in early spring 1938 during Franco’s Aragón offensive, when the 43a Div was on the northern flank of the growing Nationalist salient during the battles on the Rio Segre. After capturing Lérida on 3 April, the Nationalists established two bridgeheads over the Segre around Balaguer, and Camarasa and Tremp, where dams with hydro-electric stations were vital to the power supply for the Republican industrial zone around Barcelona. The 43a Div was forced to make a fighting retreat into the ‘Bielsa Pocket’ in the Catalan Pyrenees; establishing positions on 14 April, the division’s c.7,500 men and four remaining artillery pieces held off the Nationalist 3a Div de Navarra with twice the strength and 30 guns.

On 21/22 May 1938 the 43a Div took part in failed attacks on the enemy bridgeheads, and on the 27th the Republicans were forced onto the defensive under a sky ruled by Nationalist aircraft. The defence collapsed on 1 June, and the 43a Div was pushed back into the Bielsa Pocket in the hills, where an enemy thrust on 9 June cut the division off on 15 June. It was forced to cross the international frontier into French internment, and was disarmed; however, 6,889 men chose to return to Republican-held territory. The 43a Div was reorganized in July 1938, and went into XXIV Corps reserve on the Ebro front. On 25 August the division was sent across the river; holding positions in the Sierra de Cabals, its 130a BM suffered approximately 70 per cent casualties from air and artillery bombardments on 30 October during the last Nationalist push.

The final Nationalist offensive into Catalonia began on the Segre on 23 December 1938; the Moroccan Corps and the Italian CTV established several bridgeheads, and on 3 January 1939 the Republicans were forced back from the Segre despite heroic efforts by Lister’s V Corps. On 5 January the whole Republican defence began to unravel; the 43a Div fell back to Tarragona, then to Barcelona, and finally into France via the Mediterranean coastal pass of Port Bou. The division was officially disbanded in February 1939.

### **(3) 84a Brigada Mixta: composition and combat record**

This largely Anarchist formation was created in April 1937 from the former *Columna Hierro*, of militiamen from Valencia plus a minority of regulars from the Valencia garrison.

**Republican soldiers in Teruel, where the fighting under terrible winter conditions in December 1937–January 1938 finally broke the 84a Brigada Mixta. By the time the battle ended in February 1938 the 90,000-strong Republican force committed to the offensive had suffered perhaps 50 per cent casualties. The two men flanking the officer are wearing *pasamontañas* caps; attached to their M1923 belt equipment are what appear to be Spanish ‘Castillo’ copies of the French Thevenot-Lafitte hand grenade. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**



Undisciplined and much given to political disputes, it eventually accepted 'militarization' as the 84a BM. Its constituent units were named 'Largo Caballero' (became Bn 333), 'Azaña' (334), 'Temple y Rebeldia' (335) and 'Infanteria' (336). Assigned to 40a Div in the Ejército de Levante reserve, it spent the rest of 1937 in the Celadas sector of the Teruel front, mostly on the defensive. In those eight months it got through four different COs, but at the end of the year it was led by Militia Maj Bénjamin Juan Iseli Andrés.

In December 1937, 40a Div took part in XX Corps' Teruel offensive. The 84a BM was sent into the assault in terrible weather on 14 December, eventually fighting its way into Teruel town on the 21st. By the time the last Nationalist positions fell on 7–8 January 1938 and the 84a BM was withdrawn from the line, it had suffered some 600 casualties (25 per cent of strength). On 17 January 1938 it was sent back into the line, to fight in appalling conditions in the bitterly-contested cemetery. Losses were again heavy, and, on 20 January, Bn 336 refused orders to relieve Bns 333 & 334. The harsh Republican military justice system inflicted swift punishments on 106 NCOs and men, of whom 46 were shot. On 21 January the 84a BM was pulled out of the line and disbanded.

Re-created on 19 April 1938 by renumbering the 123a BM (Militia Maj Agustin Villela Freixa), the new 84a was assigned to 60a División. During the Ebro battles the new brigade at first covered the Nationalist bridgehead at Balaguer on the Rio Segre, and was then sent into the front line near Villalba de los Arcos, where it was virtually wiped out on 21 August. The survivors crossed back over the Ebro in early September, but there seems to be no record of their fate thereafter.

Barricades are built across the Paralelo in Barcelona, capital of Catalonia, in 1936. Like the Basques, the Catalans have their own distinct history, language and customs, and in 1932 the new government granted Catalonia the status of an autonomous region within the Republic. This was rescinded by the CEDA-backed government elected in November 1933, but the Catalans reclaimed their status when they successfully resisted the military rebellion of July 1936. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

## BASQUE & CATALONIAN UNITS

### Basque Army

The Republic permitted an autonomous government in those Basque areas of Spain that had not been taken by the Nationalists, i.e. Vizcaya and parts of Guipuzcoa. Together with Asturias and Cantabria, this northern coastal region included the major cities of Santander and Bilbao, but was cut off from the rest of the Republic. The *Euzko Gudarostea* (Basque Army) was formed by Basque regionalists alongside local

Socialists and Communists, under the direction of José Antonio Aguirre. The first battalions were organized at Bidarte by the EAJ/PNV (*Euzko Alderdi Jeltzalea/Partido Nacionalista Vasco*), and left for the front on 24 September 1936; some fought in Madrid that November.

Most Basques were devout Catholics, and their leaders sought to maintain some autonomy from Communist Madrid. The Basque Army resisted the numbering of its units into the Republican line until they had their backs to the wall in April 1937. At that



date they had some 60,000 men under arms in Asturias and Cantabria, and these formed the 48a–51a Divs of XIV Corps in the Republican line. (The regional *Ejército de Asturias* and *Ejército de Cantabria* also accepted incorporation into the Popular Army, forming the 52a–63a Divisiones.) The *‘guardis’* (Basque for ‘soldiers’; from *guda*, ‘war’) fought with determination under Gen Ulibarri until the fall of Santander in August 1937, finally surrendering to the Italian CTV at Santoña (which was criticized as a ‘betrayal’ by some Republicans).

The Basques had been as chronically factional as any population in the country; the relative numbers of units fielded by the various political and trade union factions, as of 26 April 1937, were as follows:

Basque Nationalist Party (EAJ/PNV): 25 battalions

Communists: 17 battalions – 9 bns by *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (JSU, ‘Unified Socialist Youth’), and 8 bns by *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE)

Socialists: 11 battalions by *Partido Socialista Obrero Español & Unión General de Trabajadores* (PSOE, ‘Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party’; UGT, ‘General Union of Labourers’)

Non-affiliated: 7 battalions

Anarchists: 7 battalions by *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT)

‘Leftist Republicans’: 5 battalions by *Izquierda Republicana* (IR)

‘Basque National Action’ (EAE/ANV): 3 battalions

‘Jagi-Jagi’ (group promoting Basque racial purity): 2 battalions

‘Basque Workers’ Solidarity’ (ELA/STV): 1 battalion

‘Republicanists’: 1 battalion.

### Catalonian Army

Following the creation of the Second Republic, a regional government was granted to Catalonia in 1932. After the conservative victory in the November 1933 elections, Leftist leaders of this *Generalitat de Catalunya* rebelled against the Madrid authorities, and it was suspended. In 1936 local Anarchist, Communist and Socialist militias, alongside loyalist Assault Guards and some early foreign volunteer groups, defeated the Nationalist rebellion in Catalonia and parts of eastern Aragón, and revived the regional government in Barcelona.

Before conscription of men between 20 and 30 was announced in October, the bulk of the *Exèrcit de Catalunya/Ejército Popular Catalán* were militias created by various political factions and trade unions, of which some proved themselves in combat. The most effective Anarchist unit in Catalonia was the *Columna Durruti*, formed in Barcelona on 18 July 1936 by José Buenaventura Durruti. What began as a regiment of about 3,000 men became a division of some 8,000 at its peak, and it distinguished itself on the Aragón front. After Durruti’s death on 19 November 1936, his formation provided the nucleus for the Popular Army’s 26a División.

Despite Catalan suspicions of Madrid, on 24 October 1936 the *Exèrcit de Catalunya* chief of staff, Col Vicente Guarnier, ordered the conversion of militias into numbered battalions and brigades, and this Catalan Army soon had three divisions: the Divisiones Ascaso, Carlos Marx, and Durruti. However, it was only in May 1937 that Catalan formations were numbered in the Republican line as 26a–30a Divisiones.

Catalan formations fought mainly on the province’s western front with Aragón. After the Republican defeat on the Ebro in November 1938 destroyed any hope of reuniting Republican territory, the Nationalist

José Buenaventura Durruti Dumange is remembered as a hero of the Catalan Anarchist movement. Note on his cap the letters ‘C’ and ‘D’ – for ‘*Columna Durruti*’ – flanking a triangular patch halved in the Anarchist colours of black and red. Within his command several foreign volunteer *centurias* or companies were named after heroes of the international Left: the ‘Sébastien Faure’ Century, composed of Frenchmen and Italians; the ‘Sacco & Vanzetti’ Century, with Americans; and the German ‘Erich Mühsam’ Century. (AdeQ Historical Archives)





forces launched their final assault on Catalonia on 23 December. By this time many Catalans were demoralized, war-weary and politically divided; they were alienated by Madrid's perceived anti-Catalan prejudices, and by the Communist nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture. The fall of Catalonia to Franco's forces on 27 January 1939 forced the defeated Catalan troops, among at least 400,000 refugees, to struggle over the Pyrenean passes into France.

## REPUBLICAN NAVY

The pre-war *Marina de Guerra de la República Española*, which included the small *Aeronáutica Naval*, had operated from main bases at Ferrol on the north coast, Cádiz on the south-west coast and Cartagena on the Mediterranean. The July 1936 rebellion saw Ferrol and Cádiz fall into Nationalist hands; warships that were in dock at the time (including the heavy cruiser *Canarias*, under construction in Ferrol) were seized and put into service. Most of the Navy's junior ranks remained loyal to the Republic, but some experienced officers were killed during the coup and many others were imprisoned thereafter. Although on paper the Republican Navy retained significantly more warships than the Nationalists, the loss of officers and bases would hamper its efficiency.

Like the Nationalist Navy, its operations were normally confined to convoy and blockade work, with some shore bombardments. Its largest ship-to-ship action was fought by the light cruisers *Libertad* and *Méndez Núñez* and five destroyers (including *Sánchez Barcáiztegui*, *Lepanto* and *Almirante Antequera*) in the battle of Cape Palos near Cartagena on 6 March 1938, in which the Nationalist heavy cruiser *Baleares* was sunk. The main naval units in service between July 1936 and March 1939 were as follows:

Battleship: *Jaime I* (sunk 17 June 1937 by accidental explosion)

Cruiser, Blas de Lezo class: *Méndez Núñez*

Cruisers, Almirante Cervera class: *Libertad*, *Almirante Cervera*, *Miguel de Cervantes*

Destroyers, Alsedo class: *Alsedo*, *Lazaga*

Destroyers, Churruca class, first series: *Sánchez Barcáiztegui*, *José Luis Díez*, *Almirante Ferrándiz* (sunk by cruiser *Canarias* off Cape Espartel, 21 September 1936), *Lepanto*, *Churruca*, *Alcalá Galiano*, *Almirante Valdés*

Destroyers, Churruca class, second series: *Almirante Antequera*, *Almirante Miranda*, *Císcar*, *Escaño*, *Gravina*, *Jorge Juan*, *Ulloa*

Destroyers, Churruca class, third series: *Liniers*, *General Álava* (both under construction in Cartagena)

Submarines, B-class: B-1, B-2, B-3, B-4, B-5, B-6

Submarines, C-class: C-1 (*Isaac Peral*), C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, C-6

Submarines, D-class: D-1, D-2, D-3 (all under construction in Cartagena).

(Continued on page 33)

A rare photograph taken aboard a Republican submarine. At the time of the Civil War the *Marina de Guerra* had 12 operational boats, six each of the B class (similar to the US Navy's Cachalot class) and C class. Of these, five were lost during the war: B-5 sunk off Estepona in 1936; B-6 sunk in the same year by the Nationalist destroyer *Velasco*; C-3 sunk off Málaga in 1936 by the German U-34 during the Kriegsmarine's covert Operation 'Ursula'; and C-5 and C-6 both lost in 1937, the former disappearing without trace and the latter sunk. (AdeQ Historical Archives)



## STAFF OFFICERS

1: General José Miaja, service dress

2: Cavalry *teniente* ADC, field dress

3: *Commissario de Brigada*, PCE, service dress





**REGULAR TROOPS, FIELD DRESS**

**1: 'Dinamitero'**

**2: Teniente of artillery**

**3: Cabo, 'Quinto Regimiento'/1a BM**





## MILITIAS

1: *Miliciana*, UHP; Madrid, autumn 1936

2: *Miliciano*, POUM; Aragón front, spring 1937

3: *Miliciano*, FAI; Aragón front, 1936

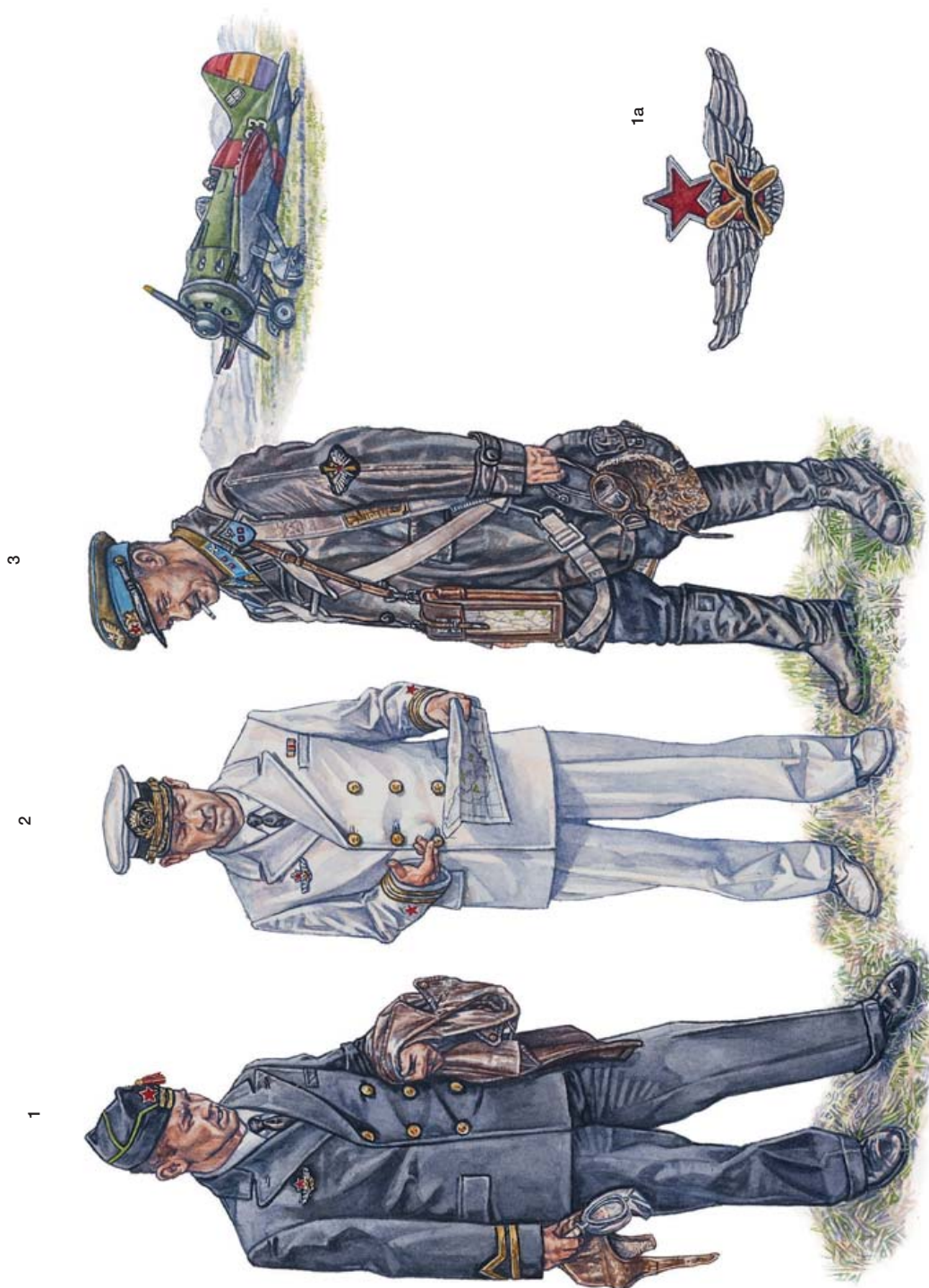


## AIR FORCES

1: *Teniente* pilot, *Aeronáutica Militar*, service dress

2: *Teniente de Navio*, *Aeronáutica Naval*, summer service dress

3: *Leytenant* pilot, Soviet Red Army Air Force, 1936





## SECURITY FORCES

- 1: *Cabo de Asalto, Cuerpo de Seguridad*, field dress
- 2: *Cabo de Carabineros*, summer field dress
- 3: *Catalan Mosso d'Esquadra*, parade dress
- 4: *Guardia de Asalto*, service dress





## MEDICAL ORGANIZATIONS

1: Stretcher-bearer, Spanish *Cruz Roja*  
2: Volunteer, Scottish Ambulance Unit

3: Surgeon, American Medical Bureau  
4: Doctor, *Cruz Roja de Catalunya*, service dress



## REPUBLICAN NAVY & BASQUE FORCES

1: Marine, Basque *Policia Maritima*

2: *Contra*maestre Radiotelegrafista,  
Republican Navy

3: *Cabo*, Basque *Euzko Gudarostea*

4: *Capitán*, Basque *Ertzaintza*





## FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS & ARMY OF CATALONIA

1: German volunteer, XI 'Thaelmann' Intl Bde

2: Cuban *sargento*, 'Abraham Lincoln' Bn, XV Intl Bde

3: Soldado, Columna 'Pi y Suñer', *Exèrcit de Catalunya*





## Basque Auxiliary Navy

The *Euzkoitsas Gudarostea*/ *Marina de Guerra Auxiliar de Euzkadi* began operations in October 1936 from its main base at Portugalete. In addition to a dozen motorboats, yachts and other small auxiliary craft, the following vessels are known to have been in service:

Destroyers: José Luis Díez, Císcar

Armed trawlers: *Araba*, *Bizkaia*, *Donostia*, *Gipuzkoa*, *Goizeko Izarra* (sunk 17 January 1937), *Iparreko Izarra*, *Nabarra*

Minesweepers: *Jaimin*, *Rafael Cantos*, *Mari-Toya* (sunk 18 January 1937), *Mo Angeles* (D-1), *Julito* (D-2), *Domayo* (D-3 or *Napartarra*), *Mourisca* (D-4 or *Arabarra*), *Gure Artizar* (D-5), *Gure Izarra* (D-6), *Alque* (D-7), *Alcion* (D-8), *Nuevo* or *Constante* (D-9), *Constante* or *Barreiro* (D-10), *Arco* (D-11), *Iris* (D-12), *Motriko* (D-13), *Ondarroa* (D-14), *Eduardito* (D-15), *Anthon Mari* (D-16), *Marcos* (D-17), *Delfina* (D-18), *Ibai-Ederra* (D-19), *Salvadora* (D-20), *Nazareno No. 6* (D-21), *Aralarko Mikel Deuna* (D-22), *Eugenio* (D-23), *Julia* (D-24)

In 1936–37 the Nationalists mined the approaches to the ports of Portugalete and Bilbao, and, as the list above implies, the Basque Auxiliary Navy was engaged mainly in minesweeping operations, during which it reportedly disabled more than 200 mines. On 17 January 1937 the armed trawler *Goizeko Izarra* struck a mine off Portugalete and was lost with all 17 crew. While clearing the minefield the following day the minesweeper *Mari-Toya* hit another mine and also sank, with the loss of six of her crew.

The first encounter between the Nationalist and Basque Auxiliary navies took place on 15 November 1936, when the Nationalist destroyer *Velasco* attempted to intercept the armed trawlers *Gipuzkoa* (aka *Mistral*) and *Bizkaia* (aka *Euzkal-Erria*). The Basque vessels were heading for Biarritz, France, to escort a freighter when they were spotted by the *Velasco* 40 miles off Pasaia. During the action the *Velasco* was hit and steamed away, while the *Gipuzkoa* received some damage to her forecastle, with two seamen wounded.

After the fall of Bilbao in June 1937 the Basque Auxiliary Navy continued operations from Santoña and Santander. It took part in civilian evacuations from the Northern Zone, but ceased operations after the fall of Gijón in Asturias in October 1937. Most of the sailors were able to reach refuge in France.



**October 1936: Basque loyalist militiamen viewing the wreck of the cargo ship SS *Jata-Mendi* (ex-*Netherton*), sunk by Republican forces in an attempt to block the Basque port of Pasajes San Juan in order to prevent the shipping of petroleum to the Nationalist forces. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**

## REPUBLICAN AIR FORCES

The Republican *Aeronáutica Militar* and *Aeronáutica Naval* were amalgamated into the *Fuerzas Aéreas de la República Española* in May 1937, by which time the small original inventory had been supplemented with Polikarpov fighters and Tupolev bombers purchased from the Soviet Union.



**Nieuport-Delage NiD 52 numbered '11-2', and displaying the black panther tailfin emblem of Grupo de Caza No. 11, based at Madrid/Getafe in 1936. More than 40 of these obsolete sesquiplane fighters were still in service at the outbreak of war, but by the end of that year most had fallen victim to combat attrition, accident or mechanical failure. Nevertheless, Sgt Andrés García La Calle of this unit was credited with seven aerial victories during this period. (Rafael A. Permuy López Collection)**

**Among the international volunteers who fought with the Republican Air Force was Harold 'Whitey' Dahl, who flew with the 'American patrol' that formed part of Andrés García La Calle's first Spanish I-15 squadron during the battle of the Jarama in February 1937. Dahl reported nine 'kills', though only five were ever confirmed. He was shot down in June 1937, and held prisoner until 1940. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**



These were flown by Soviet aircrew while some 800 Spanish airmen were trained both locally and in the USSR; Soviet advisors also exercised operational command until the withdrawal of Russian personnel in autumn 1938. However, a wide variety of other foreign machines were acquired despite the League of Nations embargo, often in very small numbers, thus

making the total fleet too bewilderingly diverse to list here. The Air Force also requisitioned aircraft from the Spanish airline LAPE (*Lineas Aéreas Postales Españolas*) for use as military transports.

Tactical units were, theoretically, the three- or four-plane flight (*patrulla*), the squadron (*escuadrilla*) with 9 to 12 aircraft, and the three- or four-squadron group (*grupo*). At first operational organization was purely ad hoc, depending upon available aircraft and pilots; flights were widely dispersed between three fronts, and sometimes had mixed equipment. Initially *Grupos de Caza No. 11 & 13*, at Madrid and Barcelona respectively, had up to 48 Hispano-built Nieuport-Delage NiD 52 sesquiplane fighters, but only about 28 pilots; Grupo No. 11 also acquired three Hawker Spanish Fury biplanes, and a naval *escuadrilla* in Murcia had Martinsyde F4A Buzzard fighters.

In 1936 foreign mercenaries from half a dozen nations arrived to fly with two French-equipped international squadrons, mainly equipped with Dewoitine D.372 & D.510 fighters plus a handful of Loire-Nieuport 46s and Blériot-SPAD S.51s. By the end of 1936, 53x Potez 540 & 543 twin-engine monoplane bombers had also been acquired (*Grupo Potez*), to supplement the Army's Breguet 19 biplane reconnaissance-bomber units (e.g. *Grupos de Reconocimiento No. 21 & 32*), and the Navy's squadron of Vickers Vildebeest biplane torpedo-bombers.

Attrition soon wore away most of the Republican fighter strength, but the balance began to tip in October–November 1936 when the first Soviet fighters and crews arrived: 40x Polikarpov I-15 'Chato' biplanes and 31x I-16 'Mosca' monoplanes. Additionally, 31x Tupolev SB-2 'Katiushka' monoplane bombers arrived to form *Grupo de Bombardamento No. 12*; Grupo No. 14 had a mixture of older types, while Grupos No. 20, 25 and later 30 would receive Polikarpov R-5 & R-6 'Natacha' biplane reconnaissance-bombers.

During winter 1936–37 the Republican, Russian and foreign volunteer pilots easily held their own over Madrid and the central front; the I-15 proved superior to the Italian Fiat CR.32, and both Polikarpov types could outfly the Heinkel He 51. By March 1937 the success of the SB-2s allowed the remaining Potez 'Flying Coffins' to be relegated to a night-bomber Grupo No. 22. The Republicans achieved definite air superiority over the Jarama in February 1937 and Guadalajara in March. By May enough I-15s had arrived, with rotations of Russian and Russian-trained Spanish pilots, to increase the Chato force to four Russian and two Spanish squadrons. Another delivery of Tupolevs

enabled the formation of a second modern day-bomber group, No. 24, and there was also a Soviet squadron of Polikarpov R-Z attack biplanes.

A composite group with about 50 Koolhoven FK-51s and Avia A-101s, gradually strengthened by two squadrons each of I-15s and I-16s, fought in the Northern Zone in 1937, but they were outclassed by the first Messerschmitt Bf 109s and Heinkel He 111s to reach the Condor Legion. The great ground battles of spring–autumn 1937 saw the Republican Air Force at its peak, with some 470 machines to the Nationalists' 350. Nevertheless, over Brunete, Santander and Belchite in 1937, and Teruel in early 1938, the Italian and modern German aircraft seized back air superiority. In September 1937 the whole Republican fighter force (now including Capt Manuel Aguirre's first Spanish-manned I-16 squadron) was collectively designated *Escuadra de Caza No. 11* (11th Fighter Wing). In December a new Grupo No.28 began forming with Grumman GE-23 'Delfin' two-seat biplane fighters, of which some 40 would arrive by the following autumn.

At first named after their commanders or equipment (e.g. *Escuadrilla La Calle/ 1a Escuadrilla de Chatos*), in autumn–winter 1937 three Russian and four Spanish I-15 squadrons would form Grupo No. 26 de Chatos, and the I-16 unit became Grupo No. 21 de Moscas, with four Russian and two Spanish squadrons. The number of Spanish pilots and squadron leaders was steadily increasing, but several I-16 squadrons would remain Soviet-manned and, like the Tupolev bombers, under Soviet operational control.

January 1938 saw tit-for-tat bombing raids on Barcelona, Seville and Valladolid, and in March both sides bombed naval vessels and harbours. Heavy air fighting then accompanied Franco's drive to the Mediterranean, with significant losses on both sides. Just before the Republican counter-offensive on the Ebro in July, Stalin began to withdraw Soviet personnel; although he allowed another delivery of I-16s to go ahead, the last Soviet aircrew returned home in October. (Total fighter deliveries between October 1936 and August 1938 would reach 276x I-16s and 131x I-15s, and another 213 Chatos were built locally.) Attrition continued at a damaging rate, and Republican sources state that in July 1938 there were only about 100 serviceable fighters to cover all fronts – including at most 36 Moscas and Delfins on the Ebro, where air support for the initial river crossings was inadequate. Thereafter, though Republican pilots kept fighting to the last, command of the air passed decisively to the Nationalists. At the end of the war in March 1939 a few Spanish pilots escaped to the USSR, where they flew with the Red Army Air Force in World War II, and others took refuge across the French frontier.

The 'Mickey Mouse' personal emblem identifies this I-15 'Chato', being refuelled on an airfield in Catalonia in autumn 1938, as 'CA-141', the fighter flown by Capt Vicente Castillo Monzó as commander of 1a *Escuadrilla/ Grupo de Caza No. 26*. Castillo is generally credited with 13 'kills' between July 1937 and September 1938, making him the Republic's third-ranking fighter ace. The records of aerial victories by both Spanish Republican and Soviet pilots are fragmentary, and often credit a whole flight or squadron rather than an individual, but memoirs have suggested that two Republican pilots may have scored as many as 20 kills. (Rafael A. Permy López Collection)





## SECURITY FORCES

### **Guardia Civil**

During the 1920s–30s the *Guardia Civil*, founded as a national police force in 1844, was frequently deployed to restore and maintain civil order. It mostly served all established regimes loyally, including the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30) and both Leftist and Rightist governments of the Second Republic (1931–36). During the Civil War this national gendarmerie, with a strength in 1936 of about 34,000, split almost evenly between loyalists and insurgents; the 53 per cent who remained loyal were retitled the *Guardia Nacional Republicana*.

### **Cuerpo de Seguridad y Asalto**

The *Cuerpo de Seguridad y Asalto* were the blue-uniformed urban equivalents to the grey-uniformed national Guardia Civil, created by the Spanish Republic in 1931 by reorganizing elements of the municipal police into a more heavily armed and reliable internal security force for crowd control in the cities. As an initial step *Compañías de Vanguardia* were created, and subsequently redesignated as the *Sección de Guardias de Asalto* as part of the reformed *Cuerpo de Seguridad*. In 1932 this Security Corps was renamed the *Cuerpo de Seguridad y Asalto*. In 1936 Assault Guards played a critical role in preserving the Republic during the early stages of the military rebellion, most notably by helping to crush the Army uprising in Barcelona. Of about 18,000 Assault Guards at the outbreak of the war, some 12,000 remained loyal to the Popular Front government.

### **Carabineros**

The *Cuerpo de Carabineros de España* was founded in 1829, as a para-military force to maintain vigilance over the coastline and land frontiers. Under the Second Republic the Carabineros, who enforced customs and excise laws, were subordinated to the Finance Department of the Home Ministry. At the outbreak of the Civil War they had an effective strength of c.16,100 (3 generals, 770 officers, 1,169 NCOs and 14,154 Carabineros); of these, approximately 10,000 remained loyal to the Republic.

### **Mossos d'Esquadra**

When the Second Republic was proclaimed in 1931, this Catalan police force (dating back to the 18th century) sided with the *Generalitat de Catalunya* regional government. During the Civil War, enlarged from some 300 to 1,000 men, the revived corps acted as an internal security and protection force for the Catalan government.



Troopers of the *Guardia Civil*, wearing July 1935 grey-green uniforms, unpack their kit in barracks. On the wall hang buff pouch belts, sabres, stirrups and other equipment, and note the white-edged bicorne full-dress hats. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

Wartime members of the *Guardia de Asalto* marching in khaki coveralls instead of pre-war blue; they are armed with Soviet-supplied Mosin-Nagant M1891/30 rifles, and their service is now only identifiable by their white-piped blue caps. (AdeQ Historical Archives)





Members of the Catalan *Mossos d'Esquadra* guarding a food lorry during a strike in Barcelona, June 1931. They are wearing their colourful traditional uniforms (see Plate E3) with service caps, and are armed with short Spanish Mauser M1916 rifles. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

### **Ertzaintza/Ertzaña**

The *Ertzaintza* ('People's Guard') had been the police force of the Basque region. Under the Basque Statute of Autonomy of 1 October 1936 the Interior Ministry began organizing a gendarmerie known by the colloquial name *Ertzaña*, with 500 infantry and 400 motorized personnel (though hardly any of the latter's planned fleet of British Riley motor cars evaded the embargo). Headquartered in Bilbao, the force would have a total strength of around 1,200, the majority being trusted members of the Basque Nationalist Party.

Republican militiaman guarding the British Embassy in Madrid following the outbreak of the Civil War; he is armed with the Spanish copy of the Winchester M1892 rifle, chambered for the Winchester .44-40 cartridge (known in Spain as .44 Largo calibre). Nicknamed '*El Tigre*' (Tiger), more than a million examples of this rifle had been manufactured in Spain since 1915, for private sale to hunters and issue to forest rangers, police, prison or private security guards who needed a compact but long-ranged weapon for use in confined spaces – e.g., the Railway division of the *Guardia Civil*. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

## **SMALL ARMS**

### **Rifles**

Apart from the standard Spanish 7mm Mausers of the long 1893, 1895 carbine and short 1916 models (see MAA 495), rifles of as many as 60 types from Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Poland, the Soviet Union and the USA were acquired by the beleaguered Republic (thus condemning quartermasters and armourers to a logistic nightmare). France closed its border to arms exports from August 1936 to March 1938, and although patriots and eager businessmen found ingenious ways to run guns into Spain, only the USSR and Mexico supplied them with any regularity. Often obsolete, in poor condition, and lacking standard accessories, weapons arrived by complicated paths. For example, the famous 7.62mm 'Mexicanskis' were Mosin-Nagants originally made in the USA by Remington in 1914–17 for the Russian Imperial Army, subsequently sold by the USSR to Mexico, and later offered to Spain.

The '*El Tigre*' rifle was a licensed Spanish copy of the lever-action Winchester M1892, manufactured in huge numbers in .44-40 calibre between 1915 and 1938 by Garate, Anitua y Compania. These had been used by various police and ranger services, and after the outbreak of the Civil War the bulk of them ended up in the hands of militia, police and





**Perthus, France, February 1939:** French soldiers collecting a variety of small arms being surrendered by Republican soldiers retreating over the frontier from Catalonia. Amongst those readily identifiable are Mosin-Nagant rifles, various models of Spanish Mausers, US M1917s, and Erma EMP35 sub-machine guns. Many of the pre-war arms factories were located in the Basque provinces, but in 1936–37 the dwindling supply of raw materials and soaring inflation caused a significant fall in production. Although some weapons were manufactured in Catalonia, the loss of the Northern Zone's factories in summer–autumn 1937 was seriously damaging to the Republic. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

*Japan* Arisaka M1897, M1901 & M1904

*Mexico* Mauser M1894/34 & M1932; M1914 Remington-made Mosin-Nagant

*Poland* Mauser M1898 & M1929

*Soviet Union* Remington M1887; Mosin-Nagant M1887, M1890, M1891, M1891/30 & M1936

*United States* Winchester M1860, M1895 & M1910; Colt-Burgess M1883. (For details of pistols, and a note on sub-machine guns, see MAA 495, pages 37–38.)

### Machine guns

The standard pre-war Spanish machine gun was a 7mm licence-built version of the French Hotchkiss M1914, manufactured in various slightly differing models during the 1920s. Most imported MGs came from the same countries that supplied rifles, the greatest numbers being water-cooled Maxims from the USSR. The following types have been recorded:

*Austria* Schwarzlose M1907 & M1916

*Britain* Lewis M1914 & M1915; Vickers-Maxim

*Czechoslovakia* Hotchkiss M1924; Zb vz M1930

*Denmark* Madsen M1903

*France* 'Chauchat' CSRG M1915; Lewis M1916; Hotchkiss M1921 & M1926

*Germany* Maxim MG08 & MG08/15; Bergmann M1914

*Mexico* Mondragon M1914

*Poland* Browning M1920 & M1936

*Soviet Union* Maxim M1910, M1932 & M1937; Degtyarev DP-28

*Switzerland* Neuhausen M1922

*United States* Colt M1914; M1918 Browning Automatic Rifle; Browning M1920.

### Hand grenades

Standard issue pre-war was a licensed copy of the smooth-cased, cylindrical French Thevenot-Lafitte defensive grenade; these were used during the war alongside a motley range of Spanish factory-produced and distinctly 'home-made' types, and imported Polish, German, and Russian models.





One of the most widely used was a cylindrical 'Universal' grenade made by several Republican factories. There were detail variations on the basic design; one version was grooved into eight rows of segments, the other had six, and fuzes fitted included copies of the Polish WzGr 31 and the French Billant. Another cylindrical segmented type was the 'Doble Disco', with four segmented rows above two solid, separated rings at the base. A crude cylindrical type named after the Madrid '5th Regiment' militia had three horizontal grooves around an otherwise smooth case, and a welded-on belt hook; it had to

be ignited by physically lighting a fuse-cord on the top, covered by a pop-off tin lid until needed. By contrast, the Type F was a reassuringly conventional 'pineapple' type modelled on the British Mills.

**A loyalist soldier loading a Soviet DP-28 (*Pulemyot Degtyaryova Pekhotny* M1928) 7.62mm light machine gun. Its ruggedness made it a 'soldier-proof' weapon for use in battlefield conditions, its 47-round pan magazine was quick to replace, and its relatively low rate of fire reduced the risk of barrels overheating. Note also the rear of the M1923 leather Y-strap equipment. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**

## AFTERMATH

After the fall of the Republic the Franco regime inflicted harsh repression over many years, but small, scattered groups of diehards hid out in mountainous regions such as the Montes de Toledo, the Galician Massif and the Pyrenees, and some would continue to wage low-level guerrilla warfare as late as the 1960s.

Many survivors of the Republican cause who escaped into southern France were interned under miserable conditions in camps such as those at Bacarès and Argelès-sur-Mer, the latter holding as many as 100,000 people at one time. Others who were able to leave Spain settled all over Europe (mainly in France, but a number of hard-core Communists in the USSR) and Latin America. During World War II many veterans served in the French Resistance, and others in the uniforms of various Allied nations, including in short-lived new regiments of the French Foreign Legion raised in France in 1939–40 (21e, 22e & 23e RMVE). Again, when the spearhead of Gen Leclerc's 2e Div Blindée fought its way into central Paris on 24–25 August 1944, the armoured infantrymen of 9th Co, III Bn/Régt de Marche du Tchad were mostly expatriate Spaniards.

After Franco's death in November 1975 and the consequent transition to democracy under a constitutional monarchy, some old Republicans did feel able to return to Spain. Although an amnesty in 1977 gave Franco's followers immunity for past abuses in return for supporting the transition, a law of October 2007 mandated removal of all remaining Nationalist symbols from public places, with some exceptions for works

A Republican soldier fetching grenades; note German M24 stick grenades, and Spanish Type F fragmentation grenades.

George Orwell remembered, of winter 1936/37: 'The bomb in use at this time was a frightful object known as the "F.A.I. bomb"... produced by the Anarchists in the early days...

The lever was held down not by a pin but a piece of tape. You broke this tape and then got rid of the bomb with the utmost possible speed. It was said of these bombs that they were "impartial" [i.e. killing the user as often as the enemy]... It was not until late March [1937] that I saw a bomb worth throwing.'

Photos of the crude detonating system of the 'FAI grenade' are indeed alarming. (AdeQ Historical Archives)

When most of Eastern Europe fell under Soviet domination following World War II, volunteers from those countries who had fought for the Republican cause were raised to hero status; here Hans Beimler is commemorated on an East German postage stamp. Beimler was killed while serving as a unit commissar during the defence of Madrid in 1936; a German/Scandinavian battalion named after him served in XI Intl Bde before being merged with the 'Thaelmann' Battalion. (AdeQ Historical Archives)



of particular religious or artistic significance. Many new memorials to the Republican forces have been erected, some of them provocatively replacing Nationalist monuments, and thus perpetuating resentment rather than reconciliation. One might believe that this determination to favour only one side's historical story is unwise in the long run.

During the Cold War some former members of the International Brigades who had sought refuge in the USSR would gain influence in the countries behind the Iron Curtain. A prominent

example was Karl-Heinz Hoffman, a young German Communist refugee from Nazism who attended the military school in Ryazan, USSR, conducted by the Frunze Military Academy. Having graduated as a lieutenant, in 1937–38 he served in XI Intl Bde under the name Heinz Roth, as a battery commissar and eventually CO of the 'Hans Beimler' Battalion. Severely wounded, he was evacuated first to France and later to the Soviet Union. In October 1952, as chief of East Germany's Kasernierte Volkspolizei (KVP, 'Barracked People's Police'), he was promoted lieutenant-general. After serving as chief of staff from 1958 until 1960, ColGen Hoffman was then appointed Minister of Defence, a post he held until his death in 1985.

Purely to underline the diverse lives of such International Brigade veterans, we might also mention Hoffman's countryman Kurt-Georg Fromm, who was not yet 17 years old when he enlisted from a French internment camp into the French Foreign Legion. After his unit was destroyed in the Battle of France, Fromm made his way to Dunkirk and was evacuated to Britain. There this veteran of two campaigns

had to wait some six months before he was judged old enough to join the British Army, but his talents subsequently earned him a welcome into No.10 (Inter-Allied) Commando, with which he served until the end of World War II.



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**On their way to Spain, men and women of the American Medical Bureau to Save Spanish Democracy (see Plate F2) pose for a photo as if receiving directions from a Paris police officer. Sympathizers in other countries, including Canada and Britain, also supported the Republic not only by collecting money for humanitarian aid but by sponsoring organized medical units like the AMB, manned by volunteer doctors, orderlies and nurses complete with ambulance vehicles. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**



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# PLATE COMMENTARIES

## A: STAFF OFFICERS

### 1: General José Miaja, service dress

His olive-brown *gorra de plato* cap has a cloth-covered peak (visor) with inset gold-embroidered foliate edging; narrow gold piping round the crown seam, vertically at the four quarters, and doubled round the top edge of the band; and a brown leather chinstrap with gilt buttons. A five-point red-enamelled star badge is worn on the front of the crown, above an embroidered national coat of arms on the band (see inset 1a). In the source photo he wears no collar badges on the M1926 tunic, but in others he has his 1936 rank insignia on the collar points. The design is shown here above the cuffs of his greatcoat: a crossed baton and sword, between three red stars. In some photos he displays below this a line of four silver three-point stars marking his command of the Army of the Centre (see caption to photo on page 3). Note that the tunic buttons are of leather or wood but the coat buttons are of gilt brass. In undress order, he wears straight-cut trousers over russet-brown Oxford shoes.

### 2: Teniente ADC of cavalry, field dress

This cavalry lieutenant, serving as a general's *aide de camp*, displays on his cap band the gold crossed-lances-and-sabres badge of his arm of service, flanked by pairs of narrow gold rank bars. He wears a personally acquired double-breasted, three-quarter length black leather coat and a civilian scarf, and his breeches are worn with the high-lacing field boots that were popular with both sides. The 'Sam Browne' belt with cross-strap is worn over a narrow sling supporting on his right the wooden

holster/stock for his Spanish-made Astra or Royal copy of the Mauser C96 'broomhandle' pistol.

### 3: *Commissario de Brigada*, Spanish Communist Party

Political commissars were introduced into the Popular Army upon its creation in October 1936. Standing at attention giving the 'revolutionary' salute, this brigade commissar wears the same M1926 service dress as a line officer but with distinctive insignia. The olive-brown tunic has shoulder straps, pleated breast pockets with scalloped flaps, plain skirt pockets with straight flaps, and brown wooden or leather buttons. His cap has had the stiffener removed, and the peak has a field-grade officer's inset gold edging. The upper badge is a red star within a circle, and below it the gold letter 'C' is flanked by three red rank bars (battalion commissars wore two, company commissars single bars). The circled star and rank bars are repeated on his sleeves. By regulation, field-grade insignia were worn on the cuffs and company-grade above them, and commissars wore red stars on the collars, but many Republican officers showed a spirit of individuality in their dress; for example, some photos show them wearing M1922 tunics with open collar and lapels over civilian neckties.

## B: REGULAR TROOPS, FIELD DRESS

A contemporary colour plate held in the Spanish Army Historical Service archives is believed to illustrate uniform regulations of 31 October 1936. In some cases it clearly accords with photographic evidence, in others it may be considered 'aspirational'; widely-dispersed uniform manufacture caused detail differences, and issues were unpredictable. Enlisted ranks' brown service dress is shown with a peaked field cap resembling a neatened-up cloth version of the winter *pasamontañas* (a sometimes knitted combination watch cap/balaclava); a tunic with a closed, long-pointed collar, pleated breast pockets with single-point flaps, and shirt-type wristbands; and straight trousers gathered into ankle boots. However, there is also plentiful evidence for tunics with four pockets, and ungathered cuffs with separate buttoned wrist-tabs; pre-war Army uniform items continued to be widely used, with new insignia.

### 1: 'Dinamitero'

The tradition of daring handling of explosives, established during uprisings by miners, was maintained among Republican troops. This 'dynamiter' or bomber wears a *pasamontañas* cap made of coarse brown woven material, complete with a red star badge. His khaki shirt has shoulder straps, long collar points, five wooden front buttons, pleated patch pockets with pointed flaps, and buttoned wrist-tabs; it is tucked into straight-cut olive-brown wool uniform trousers worn loose over brown ankle boots. As well as the M1923 belt, suspenders and pouch equipment he has a locally-made canvas-and-leather seven-pocket bandolier with extra clips for his slung Mauser M1893 rifle. He has moved his belt pouches to make room to loop onto his belt cylindrical leather carriers for grenades. These were made in black or brown leather with several detail differences, and simple looped-cloth carriers were also widely improvised. He is throwing a segmented cylindrical 'Universal' grenade.

These belt plates were recovered from Civil War battlefields. The pre-Republican example (bottom) is an M1926 plate bearing the royal crown above the infantry branch badge of a bugle-horn set on a crossed sword and musket; the M1931 plate (top) lacks the crown, as specified in uniform regulations of 27 June 1931. (AdeQ Historical Archives)



## 2: *Teniente of artillery*

This officer displays full service-cap insignia on his *pasamontañas*-type field cap: a red star, above the brass 'bomb' arm-of-service badge and his paired rank bars. The artillery badge is repeated on the long collars, and the star and bars above the cuffs, of his *cazadora* blouse. These very widely worn hip-length garments were made in a range of shades and materials; some were simple conversions made by cutting off the skirts of the standard Army enlisted ranks' *guerrera* tunic, leaving the bottom edge straight rather than tailored into a waistband. His straight 'bombacho' trousers are bloused over his ankle boots. He holds an Astra M1921 pistol.

### 3: *Cabo, Quinto Regimiento/1a Brigada Mixta*

The use of a pre-war Army issue *gorrillo* ('isabellino') sidecap, October 1936 regulation rank chevron, and imported helmet suggests that this image shows a Madrid Communist militiaman some time after incorporation of his unit into Maj Lister's 1st Mixed Brigade. However, the corporal still wears dark khaki *mono* coveralls with a fold-down collar and two pleated breast pockets, and typical Spanish *alpargatas* rope-soled canvas espadrilles. (Khaki and brown monos would remain in use throughout the war, being popular for their pocket capacity; an International Brigade veteran recalled his comrades buying new ones before the battle of the Ebro in 1938.) The sidecap has red piping and a red tassel; in the Popular Army the tassel was often removed, and the front and rear 'peaks' might be tucked inside and sewn across to give a more rounded profile. The rank patch sewn to the front shows a red star over the single red

Republican uniform items, arranged here on a sand-khaki coloured *cazadora*; these very popular blouses were made in a wide range of drab shades. The sidecap of the *Cuerpo de Seguridad*, in dark blue with white piping, displays both a red star and the silver 'CS' monogram surmounted by a Republican mural crown. A red-edged black diamond-shaped breast badge (top right) shows the red star and cipher of the Socialist UGT; the example (bottom left) is in Anarchist half-red, half-black with the CNT cipher – see Plate C3a. The pistol is a Republican copy of the Astra 400 (M1921), identified by the letters 'RE' for 'República Española' on the grips and barrel. (Author's collection)



upwards-pointing chevron; October 1936 regulations also called for such patches to be sewn to the left breast of field clothing. He has M1923 leather equipment with three box-pouches (one at centre rear) and a buckle plate with the infantry arm-of-service badge; an aluminium cup has also been strapped to the left front. His bivouac gear is limited to a canvas haversack on his right hip, and a blanket roll. He is armed with a Russian Mosin-Nagant M1891 rifle with fixed bayonet, and has received a Czech M1930 steel helmet.

## C: MILITIAS

### 1: *Miliciana, Unión de Hermanos Proletarios; Madrid, autumn 1936*

Some militia units included both men and women, and photos from 1936 show female volunteers in a wide range of civilian clothing and working dress, sometimes with military caps. This city factory worker wears a typical outfit of blue bib-front coveralls over a man's shirt, canvas espadrilles, and a soldier's sidecap, in this case without the red tassel. On her left arm is a red armband with 'UHP' in black. The slogan '*Uníos, Hermanos Proletarios!*' ('Unite, Proletarian Brothers!') had been popular since the Asturian uprising of 1934, and in 1936 it represented a movement to unify the efforts of all political parties against the common enemy. Militia fighters were often photographed with only one cartridge pouch, but she has at least two on an M1923 infantry belt. She is thumbing a clip of 7mm cartridges into her Mauser M1893 rifle; many soldiers who received imported bolt-action weapons had to load them with individual rounds, for lack of stripper clips.

### 2: *Miliciano, Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista; Aragón front, spring 1937*

The anti-Stalin POUM ('Workers' Party of Marxist Unification') was a fusion of the Trotskyist *Izquierda Comunista de España* ('Spanish Communist Left') with a less radical group, the BOC. Strong in Catalonia, their militias fought on the Aragón front in winter 1936/37 until they were crushed during the 'Barcelona Days' of May by the more powerful Marxist-Leninist PSUC ('Catalan Unified Socialist Party') with Soviet backing. This unusually well turned-out militiaman has received pre-war regular Army clothing and equipment; he carries the flag of a POUM unit, the Caserna Lenin ('Lenin Barracks'), and its motif is repeated on the front of his brown-painted Spanish M1934 steel helmet (see inset 2a). His bayoneted Mosin-Nagant M1891/30 rifle has a khaki canvas and leather sling.

### 3: *Miliciano, Federación Anarquista Ibérica; Aragón front, 1936*

By the outbreak of war the leadership of the CNT movement (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, 'National Confederation of Labour') was almost entirely dominated by the FAI party (*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*, 'Iberian Anarchist Federation'). After the takeover by the pro-Moscow Communists the CNT-FAI was still too strong to simply eliminate like the POUM, but Anarchist units in the Popular Army would complain of discrimination. This militiaman's scarf and sidecap are halved in the red and black Anarchist colours (the other side of the cap is a mirror image), while his left armband is in the Republican national colours of red/yellow/purple. His *mono* has breast pockets and a zipper down the front, and the legs are rolled up for ease of movement. Sewn to the left breast is a diamond-shaped 'C.N.T.' patch (see inset 3a). He has M1923 equipment with suspender Y-straps, and carries a short Mauser M1916 rifle from a Barcelona arsenal.





## D: AIR FORCES

Although the Army and Navy air arms were amalgamated into the *Fuerzas Aéreas de la República* in May 1937, they kept their previous uniforms and rank insignia.

### 1: *Teniente* pilot, *Aeronáutica Militar*, service dress

This officer wears the Air Force's 1931 double-breasted service uniform in dark blue. The sidecap is piped in the green arm-of-service colour introduced in 1933, but has a red-and-gold tassel, and bears two gold rank bars beneath the red star badge. His rank is denoted on his cuffs by one plain gold ring below a 'pointed' upper ring. His pilot's qualification 'wings' (inset 1a) are worn on his right breast, and he is carrying a three-quarter length leather coat and a flying helmet.

### 2: *Teniente de Navio*, *Aeronáutica Naval*, summer service dress

In 1936 the small pre-war naval air arm soon pooled some of its resources with the *Aviación Militar*; joint missions were sometimes flown, and there was some cross-posting of aircrew between Army and Navy units. However, the Navy continued to operate its specialist equipment such as seaplanes, particularly against the Nationalists and Italians in the Balearic Islands. The white-crowned summer service cap, with black band and gold chinstrap, bears the Republican Navy officer's badge of a mural-style crown above a wreathed and bordered fouled anchor. The white summer uniform follows the blue wool version in having a double-breasted 'reefer' jacket and straight trousers, worn with leather dress shoes. His rank is identified by two gold rings below a gold five-pointed star on each cuff; again, he wears pilot's wings on his right breast.

### 3: *Leytenant* pilot, Soviet Red Army Air Force, 1936

Throughout the Civil War approximately 772 Soviet airmen flew some 648 Soviet aircraft in Spain. On 20 October 1936 Lt Emelyan Filaretovich Kondrat arrived as one of the first group of 15 Soviet 'volunteers', and would fly I-15s in the first *Escuadrilla Palancar* led by Snr Lt Pavel Rychagov. His M1935 service cap has a black leather peak and chinstrap, sky-blue piping and band, and a gold embroidered winged star badge

I-15 pilots of the *Escuadrilla de Caza del Norte* at Santander/La Albericia, May 1937. This illustrates the two most common types of Republican brown leather flying clothing. The double-breasted, thigh-length coat (third man from left, & right) had a deep collar and an integral leather belt. The zipped windcheater, sometimes with knitted waistband and cuffs, and with or without zipped chest pockets or patch waist pockets, often displayed a combination of pilot's wings above rank insignia worked on a red patch sewn to the right breast (see centre man). Either coat or jacket might be worn with leather trousers with big patch knee-pockets and zip fasteners all the way up the outside of the legs; some Soviet pilots also acquired these. (Rafael A. Permuy López Collection)

on the crown above a metal wreathed red star boss. The double-breasted black leather flying coat is worn over M1935 VVS RKKA field uniform of a khaki *gymnastiorka* and dark blue breeches. Against regulations, greatcoat collar patches have been attached to the coat, in RKKA sky-blue with gold upper edge piping, and a winged propeller badge above the two red enamel rank bars. The bars and branch badge are repeated along the gold-piped rectangular patches on the collar of his shirt-tunic. The winged propeller, star and crossed swords RKKA left sleeve insignia is embroidered in silver, gold and red. His seat parachute is attached by a PL-3M harness. Photos of Soviet aviators in Spain normally show flight gear or civilian clothing rather than uniforms; however, a stamp commemorating them that was issued in Spain by the Association of Friends of the Soviet Union shows a pilot displaying Soviet collar insignia.

## E: SECURITY FORCES

### 1: *Cabo de Asalto*, *Cuerpo de Seguridad*, field dress, 1936

This corporal wears a one-piece coverall in dark blue, with a turned-down collar, five silver front buttons, and two buttoned, flapped patch pockets on the breast. Above the left pocket is a patch with a white embroidered mural crown over an entwined 'CS' monogram; below the pocket is his rank patch of a red star above an upwards-pointing chevron.

This service's distinctive dark blue sidecap has white piping and tassel, with red star and crowned 'CS' badges. All leather items are black, and on his buckle plate the engraved national coat of arms (see Plate A1a) is flanked by 'C' and 'S'.

## **2: Cabo de Carabineros, summer field dress**

This corporal of frontier guards has an olive-green shirt with flapped pockets; the collars bear the corps' brass badge of crossed rifles on a squared sunburst, and the left breast his rank patch. The rank chevron is repeated on the band of his unstiffened cap, below a metal red star. His olive wool trousers are worn loose over ankle boots. He has been issued M1923 belt equipment with the Carabineros badge on the buckle plate, a Mosin-Nagant M1891/30 rifle, and a French Adrian helmet.

## **3: Catalan Mosso d'Esquadra, parade dress**

This member of the *Policia de la Generalitat de Catalunya* wears ceremonial dress with a black felt top hat; the white-edged brim is turned up on the left, held by a silver button and a long white lace passing across a cockade in Republican colours (red outer/yellow/purple centre). The short dark blue jacket has red facings on a shawl collar and deep slanted cuffs, blue scalloped cuff flaps, white lace trim, two rows of silver buttons, and red facing and white piping around horizontal slash waist pockets. It is worn with a blue waistcoat, white shirt, black necktie, red-striped trousers, and canvas espadrilles with sky-blue leather straps. Here his hands holding a Spanish Mauser M1895 carbine obscure a black belly-pouch worn on a belt over a red girdle under the waistcoat. Alternative headgears were a dark blue peaked service cap with a red band, white piping and silver badges; or a sidecap with a dark blue crown piped red and a red 'turban' piped white.

## **4: Guardia de Asalto, service dress**

The Assault Guards' dark blue service tunic has six silver front buttons, shoulder straps, and two buttoned, flapped breast pockets. The crowned monogram of this service is worn on the collar points, and a more elaborate version (see inset 4a) on his white-piped dark blue *gorra de plato*. Some photos show this standard M1923 black leather equipment, others a variation

with a Mills-type belt fastener flanked by pairs of smaller cartridge pouches. His rifle is a Russian Winchester M1895.

## **F: MEDICAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **1: Stretcher-bearer, Spanish Cruz Roja**

The Spanish Red Cross was divided during the Civil War, with members supporting the medical corps in both armies. Although they were a civilian auxiliary organization the volunteers wore military-style uniforms, with rank insignia according to their status and assigned duties. This stretcher-bearer wears a white-topped cap with a red cross on the top, a red band, and the same frontal insignia as worn by figure F4. His tunic has five silver front buttons, pleated breast pockets with buttoned, scalloped flaps, and plain skirt pockets with straight flaps. The collar points bear silver Medical Corps wreathed Maltese cross badges, and on his right breast is a silver oval badge with a milled edge, bearing a red cross over a cut-out number. His belt has a silver buckle plate with a raised red cross, and a cross-strap to his right shoulder.

### **2: Volunteer, Scottish Ambulance Unit**

Sponsored by the Chancellor of Glasgow University, Sir Daniel Macaulay Stevenson, the first 19 volunteers arrived in Madrid with six ambulances in October 1936. They left in December, but smaller parties later served for most of January 1937–July 1938. This volunteer wears a Spanish service cap with a white band, and a metal red-cross badge below a small silver thistle. Under his private-purchase trench coat the M1926 Spanish Army tunic has the collar pressed open over a shirt and tie; on the left breast is a Union flag patch, above a round dark blue patch bearing the thistle surrounded by the unit name. He wears a 'Sam Browne' belt, a Geneva cross left armband, and laced field boots.

**Assault Guards guarding property from destroyed buildings, wearing their distinctive white-piped blue caps and blue coveralls – see Plate E1. (AdeQ Historical Archives)**



### **3: Surgeon, American Medical Bureau to Save Spanish Democracy**

Volunteer AMB male personnel wore modified US Army uniforms with plain metal buttons; the brown-vizored service cap has the same white band and red-cross badge as figure F2. Nurses' uniforms were modelled on those of the American Red Cross. All members wore a stiff cloth left armband in stripes of the Spanish Republic's red, yellow and purple, with a superimposed red cross bearing 'AMB' in white.

#### **4: Doctor, Cruz Roja de Catalunya, service dress**

The red-striped *rayadillo* cloth tunic of officers of the Catalan Red Cross had five silver front buttons; red collars bearing embroidered silver wreathed Maltese crosses (repeated larger on the left forearm, with a red cross in the centre); pointed red cuffs and shoulder straps edged with orange inner and gold outer pipings; pleated breast pockets and plain skirt pockets, all with buttoned scalloped flaps. The tunic is worn here with *rayadillo* breeches, riding boots and a 'Sam Browne' belt. This doctor's equivalent rank of captain is indicated on his shoulder straps by three embroidered silver stars bearing a red cross in a circle. His white cap has a red-cross badge on a gold half-ball set on a Republican cockade, and a red cross on the top of the crown like figure F1. Enlisted ranks had plain shoulder straps and straight cuffs, and wore a *rayadillo* version of the pre-war Army '*granaderos*' buttoned gaiter-trousers with foot-straps over ankle boots. Their buckle plate was as figure F1, and all ranks wore red-cross armbands.

### **G: REPUBLICAN NAVY & BASQUE FORCES**

#### **1: Marine, Basque *Policia Maritima***

Checking G2's identity document, this dockyard sentry of the Maritime Police wears a traditional black Basque beret with a large embroidered white badge of an encircled anchor. His 'pea-coat' is double-breasted, with black plastic buttons; it is worn over a blue tunic, an open-collar white shirt, and Navy-style bell-bottom trousers. His black leather equipment has the Basque quartered coat of arms on the buckle plate.

#### **2: *Contramaestre Radiotelegrafista*, Republican Navy**

This seaman, copied from a studio portrait, wears a Navy-blue sidecap with a white tassel, triple white piping in a distinctive pattern, and a silver badge of a mural crown over a fouled anchor. He has the traditional blue jumper and bell-bottom trousers, and a 'bib'-type collar with triple white tape edging, over a knotted black kerchief. His left sleeve shows the gold metal specialty badge for a boatswain radio-telegraphist: a mural crown above an anchor, two signal flags and six crossed lightning-bolts, on an oval backing. Below this he wears a narrow armband in Republican colours.

#### **3: *Cabo*, Basque *Euzko Gudarostea***

This corporal of the Basque National Army has a brown *pasamontañas*-style cap instead of the ubiquitous beret. His jacket is tunic length, and shows a Basque national flag patch on the left sleeve. It is worn with straight-cut '*gudari*' trousers made of the blue-and-white ticking (*rayadillo*) material that was common in the Basque provinces. The leather equipment is of the style also sometimes seen in photos of the Assault Guards – with up to four small pouches each side of the belt buckle, it resembles the colonial pattern introduced in c.1925 but lacks horizontal 'keep' straps over the pouch flaps.

#### **4: *Capitán*, Basque *Ertzaintza***

This police force's black-on-white badge of the Greek letter *epsilon* was displayed both on the beret (either black or

olive-brown) and on the left breast pocket. This officer wears dark blue service dress, with the three gold six-pointed stars of his rank embroidered above the left pocket. The belt supporting his holstered Astra pistol has a round brass clasp with the name of the force below a wreathed, quartered shield with the Basque coat of arms.

### **H: FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS & ARMY OF CATALONIA**

#### **1: German volunteer, XI 'Thaelmann' International Brigade**

The first units in XI Intl Bde, which fought in defence of Madrid in November 1936, were the German 'Edgar André' Bn; the Franco/Belgian 'Commune de Paris' Bn (later transferred to XIV Bde); and the Polish/Hungarian 'Dombrowski' Bn (later transferred to XII Bde) – such transfers were usually made to reduce the number of languages needed within any one brigade. In winter 1936/37 the brigade bore the name 'Hans Beimler', but this changed to 'Thaelmann' after the battalion of that name was transferred into XI from XII Brigade. Other units listed as serving with XI Intl Bde at various dates were the Austrian '12th February', and the Spanish 'Asturias Heredia', 'Madrid', 'Pacífico' and 'Pasionaria' battalions.

This volunteer's green-painted helmet is the rarely-seen M1921, with a steep profile falling to virtually unflared edges. Photos of Internationals in the field show an enormous range of Spanish uniform items and privately acquired clothing, but this volunteer has typical dress as described by a veteran in 1938: a sleeveless knitted sweater over a khaki shirt, tucked into *granaderos* trousers confined by puttees and/or rolled socks. ('Foreign surplus uniforms' of many shades are mentioned in memoirs, but photo-researchers find it very difficult to identify specific items.) The Russian Maxim M1910 water-cooled heavy machine gun on its wheeled mount was the most common weapon of its class among the Internationals.

#### **2: Cuban *sargento*, 'Abraham Lincoln' Battalion, XV International Brigade**

The American volunteers included about 80 African-Americans; one of them, Capt Oliver Law, commanded the 'Lincolns' from April 1937, and the 'Washingtons' in July before his death at Brunete. The 'Lincolns' also had a Cuban section made up of exiles from the Batista regime. On the left breast of his *mono* this volunteer wears the Popular Army sergeant's rank patch of a red star above a vertical bar, and an embroidered volunteer patch (see inset 2a). This shows the Spanish and Cuban flags, flanking a clenched fist against a map of Spain above a red star on a blue globe, with 'VOLUNTARIOS INTERNACIONALES DE LA LIBERTAD' above and 'ESPAÑA' below. He drinks from a Spanish Army water bottle (rarely issued), and – although it is hidden here – he has a looped cartridge belt round his waist.

#### **3: *Soldado*, Columna 'Pi y Suñer', *Exèrcit de Catalunya***

This private of the Catalan Army holds a flag in his province's colours, copied from a photo of troops parading through Barcelona. His campaign outfit is conventional: a Czech M1930 helmet, khaki shirt, olive *granaderos* with puttees, M1923 infantry equipment, and M1893 rifle. The pre-war Army *gorrillo* sidecap was often worn with the usual red piping and tassel, but sometimes with a silver shield-shaped Catalan coat-of-arms badge added to the front; left armbands in yellow with four narrow horizontal red stripes have also been illustrated.



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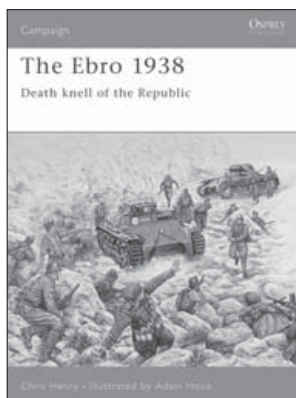
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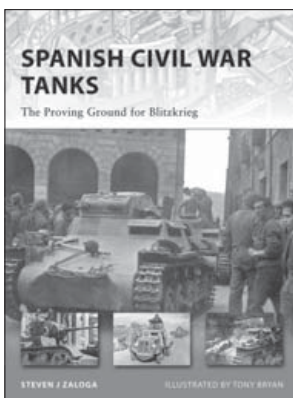
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## Dedication

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To the late Alejandro de Quesada, Infantry, Nationalist Army, and Francisco 'Paco' de Quesada, Republican Customs Service; and to the late Ken Seitz, Abraham Lincoln Brigade, Republican Army

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