

*“When we lost the war, those who fought on became the Resistance. But, to the world, the Resistance had become criminals, for Franco made the laws, even if, when dealing with political opponents, he chose to break the laws established by the constitution; and the world still regards us as criminals. When we are imprisoned, liberals are not interested, for we are ‘terrorists’. They will defend the prisoners of conscience, for they are innocent; they have suffered from tyranny, but not resisted it.*

*“I was among the guilty. I fought, I fell, I survived. The last is the more unusual.”*

From the introduction to  
*Franco’s Prisoner* (1972)

**Contents**

- ii Introduction
- 1 Manuel Lecha Blanch — 1/2
- 2 Lorenzo López Noguero
- 4 El Negret and El Valenciá
- 6 Santiago García Gasco
- 7 El Catalá
- 9 Caraquemada (Burnt Face)
- 10 José Pérez Pedrero
- 12 Carballo Blanco
- 14 César Saborit Carrelero
- Appendices:
- 16 Libertarian Histories  
[the execution of five members of the Tallión Group, 1952]
- 17 Nine Trade Unionists Executed in Barcelona  
[Protest leaflet]

## **Miguel García García: the one that got away**

Another pamphlet on the Spanish Resistance by Miguel García? Are we trying to launch a Miguel García renaissance? Well, this pamphlet does follow *Looking back after twenty years of prison*, (which we published in 2002) but that is only an introduction to the Spanish Resistance to Franco. Here, we not only get names, but we see the people in full, and in more detail than in *The Anarchist Resistance to Franco: Biographical notes* which covers some of the comrades mentioned here.

So why this pamphlet? The traditional (and true) answer would be that we do it to honour our comrades. Not that we are out to make superheroes of them, but to recognize – since no-one else will – their contribution to the struggle for freedom, over many years and on many fronts.

We are not publishing this as an adventure story because we think it's a good yarn – though we do hope you'll find it interesting reading. Nor do we want to suggest that travelling the Pyrenees with a rifle is the only valid form of anarchist activity. That activity depends on context is obvious from these biographies: they risked death as guerrillas in support of comrades risking death or years in jail attempting to rebuild the libertarian movement.

But even as we write, Spain is uneasy. The mass graves of Franco's post-war massacres, the butchery of any potential working class resistance on which his regime was built, can now be discussed. Of course, the political parties, tied to the 'pact of forgetting' would rather they stayed under the historical carpet in order to hide the obvious fact: the state is the worst enemy the Spanish people ever had.

We do not demand that the state put the clock back to 1936 and give us a chance to refight the civil war, but we feel free to ask for the historical record on the post-war massacres, the years of repression, the judicial murders (such as the framing and execution of Granado and Delgado) to be opened. Until then, the history of the Spanish resistance cannot be anything other than unfinished business.

And of course, we hope that this pamphlet inspires comrades not just to look at the past, but encourages them, here and now, in the struggle for human liberation.

KSL, July 20

## **Pages from Working Class History**

It is not our wish to create a Pantheon of Working Class Heroes. But now that the bourgeois historians have “discovered” anarchism and their “histories” proliferate, it is salutary to mention some of the forgotten or unrecorded pages of working-class history and the militants whom the bourgeois historians ignore. [*Black Flag*] Ed.

### **Manuel Lecha Blanch**

Historians dealing with the fight against Fascism will roll over names such as Azaña and Caballero, Negrin and Prieto. They were great orators in the Cortes. But their deliberations and decisions were totally ignored by the people throughout the civil war. The historians need “great names”. Manuel Lecha was certainly a great man in terms of bulk. He was a huge, tough man but gentle and chivalrous in his dealings with everyone. He was known throughout Barcelona as one of the toughest fighters on the docks, but with a code of honour like that of Guzman El Bueno.

For years he had been the organiser of the CNT dockers. When the rising came in 19th July 1936, the CNT workers swarmed out on the streets, rallying to their union halls to organise against the enemy. In the middle of the town the Captaincy-General held out against the people. Many lives were lost trying to storm it. Then, sweating, came an amazing sight: Manuel pulling along an enormous cannon to the Plaza de Cataluña, taken from the docks. The cannon was taken for protection to the arcade opposite. The first shot was badly made and the marks may still be seen on the arcade pillars. The second shot blew the machine gun nest out and the Captain-General surrendered. For this, Manuel was jokingly known all over Barcelona as “the artilleryman”.

Later he went to Majorca in a bid to recapture the island, jointly organised by the Navy and the Transport Union (dockers section). After the defeat, the Valencian docker escaped arrest, and began patiently to try to build up the union once more. When he was arrested, he had 2000 stamps in his possession – unused membership contribution stamps, to put into the union cards when subscriptions were paid. Damning evidence that he was keeping the union going.

Awaiting trial, “the artilleryman” shared my cell. He was sentenced to four years, three months and a day.

*Black Flag* Vol. 2 no. 7, July/Aug 1971.

## **Lorenzo López Noguero**

Publication of my book “Franco’s Prisoner” and Téllez’s book “Sabaté: Guerrilla Extraordinary”, has meant the names of some of Spain’s anarchist guerrilla fighters have become well known. . . the brothers Sabaté, Facerias and others. These people were born fighters with tremendous courage. But the numbers were infinite. Among the hundreds that I knew personally there were ten I was particularly close to.

The first was Lorenzo López Noguero. He was from Bilbao. When his home town fell to the fascists before the end of the civil war, his family took him across the border with them, where they settled in Nantes. Noguero was only a lad then. But he took part in resistance against the Nazis, and entered the ranks of the CNT well known for his heroism in that fight. After the war he went on with the struggle against fascism, entering Spain in 1950 with a group that was invading the province of Lerida (in Catalonia) via Andorra.

A well known landowner in Lerida was head of the Somatén army. It was a private army responsible for arresting and killing a great number of people. This incident shows how false the supposition that the guerrillas were in some way “elitist” or the actions were designed to “induce the people to rise” or that they were acting “without the support” of the workers. The landowner was steadily wiping out every one who had taken part in the collectivisation of the farms during the civil war. In Lerida all the farms (including his own) had been expropriated by the people and worked for the common good. As a result, when he took back his farm after Franco’s victory over the workers, he found it in greatly improved condition, and benefitting by years of devoted work. It is not to be supposed that he would be grateful; on the contrary he began to wipe out all witnesses to the fact of collectivisation. He had been spared, though a well known fascist. But he in turn spared no one. Hundreds were killed by his orders.

In those days it was enough to make a denunciation for a killing to follow.

Hundreds escaped over the border, where sympathisers learned of the systematic murder being carried out by this man: the group had come from France to kill him. Noguero was chosen as the delegate of the group. He entered his farm and put him against the wall in front of his workers and his family. “You’ve killed hundreds of people because of your own private guilt. Now it’s your turn.”

On the way back to France via the Mont Sec (dry mountain) between the republic of Andorra and Lerida, they walked at night and slept during the day, but stopped at a spring for water. This was the mistake of the guide. No veteran guerrilla would have stopped at a spring knowing how well the Guardia Civil was acquainted with the locations of the wells, and naturally the authorities had raised a hue and cry against the departing guerrillas. They were, indeed, positioned at this very spring, and fired immediately they saw the party stop.

Some of the group were shot dead, others escaped. Lorenzo himself survived but with a broken leg. Only in extreme pain could he crawl to a cave ten miles away. There he waited hoping the surviving members of the group – especially the guide – would find him. Two days passed ... he was found, but by the Guardia Civil.

Tracker dogs had located him for his enemies who would (had there been only one or two of them) killed him on the spot. But as they were witnesses to each other they could not very well murder him on the spot, and so they put him on a donkey – where he suffered agonies with his wounded leg – later transferring him to a car when he was taken to the prison in Lerida, where the director of the prison had him put in hospital, where his leg healed.

At Lerida, witnesses were called to identify him. But the landowners wife and daughter had evidently not been particularly fond of the departed and they declined to identify his assailant. The cab driver who had driven the group to Lerida identified them however.

Noguero was removed to a more secure prison, in Barcelona – for fear that a group might come over the mountains from Andorra to release him – and there, in the terrible “Fourth” Gallery of the security wing I first met him and we became close friends.

The Spanish police went into Andorra – where they had no legal right of entry – and kidnapped the guide coming out of a cinema. (This type of kidnapping has never caused international horror!) Smuggled over the border, he was taken into custody once across and taken to Lerida prison, to which Lorenzo was transferred after a year in Barcelona. Both were tried and condemned together. They were sentenced to be garrotted.

Lorenzo immediately planned to escape. Every morning the security wing was opened to allow the prisoners to wash. There was no running water in the wing itself and they had to wash in the yard. On the way to the ablutions they passed the centre of the prison where the chief guard – who controlled all the prison wings – was stationed for 24 hours duty. Evading their guard, Lorenzo and a fellow prisoner broke into this control room where the chief guard was asleep (though fully clothed). They looked for a pistol but as they could not find one they picked up a piece of wood and shoved it into his back, telling him they would shoot if he did not take them through the door at the end of the corridor.

This took them to the outside entrance, through which a guard on the other side could check who was passing. They knocked. The guard, seeing the chief guard through the window, opened up. Lorenzo hit him over the head with the piece of wood and he and the other prisoner, along with the chief guard, escaped through the main entrance to the street.

Once in town, they forced the guard to climb the stairs of a block of flats, while they rushed off. By nightfall they were on the mountainside. Unfortunately, their former guide had been unwilling to join them on the escape. Like so many he was paralysed by fear and hope – between execution and expectation. They therefore planned to meet a friend in the town of Balaguer. They reached it by the following morning, so they could not go into the town that day and they spent the night in a haystack outside the town. It was a poor hiding place as the Guardia Civil had been alerted to watch for them, and those gentlemen never bothered if, by mistake, they got the wrong person. But it was all they had as day was coming. Later the Civil Guard saw the suspicious presence in the haystack. They ordered them out, on the point of machine gun, which Lorenzo tried to snatch. He was not quick enough and was shot dead on the spot ... one more of those who fell in the long battle against repression in Spain.

*Black Flag* Vol. 3, no. 19, April 1975.

### **Unknown heroes [El Negret and El Valenciá]**

I introduced this series of articles on unknown heroes of the Spanish Resistance with Noguero. He like Facerias and Sabaté, was an exceptional man. But the Resistance was not formed by exceptional men and women, nor is it in any way an elite. El Negret, as we called him, of Sans (a working class district of Barcelona) worked on the docks before the civil war; El Valenciá was a coachdriver from Castellon. Those who spent their holidays in Spain in the thirties may have been driven by him on one of the coaches from Castellon to Valencia (hence his nickname).

They both fought in CNT battalions, and like many others, they refused to accept Franco's victory (or rather, Hitler's). When the posters appeared telling former combatants to report, they ignored them and went into hiding. They lived as best they could. The victor's instructions not only informed us that collectivisation had ended: we were also told we were back to wages as they existed on 18th July 1936 – which was, by this time, worth about a loaf of bread on the black market.

Both Negret and Valenciá were picked up by the police during the period of world war and began their separate prison odysseys. They regarded themselves as “ordinary” rather than political prisoners because they did not have the puritanism of many of the anarchists which they thought was indistinguishable from calling oneself such. But their solidarity was high, and among other things they established something of a record for their escapes. Negret escaped at least 17 times (once when he was in jail with him) and Valenciá seven. Innumerable escapes were made possible by them. Here I shall refer to one, concerning Tomás (I call him that as he is probably still alive).

In his village he had been the CNT representative (one death sentence) on the Revolutionary Committee (another). Certain notorious caciques in the village had been killed during the war. Each of these earned him a death sentence and he had to face seven charges each incurring the death penalty, when – in the notorious Fourth Gallery – second floor – the maximum security wing of Barcelona’s prison – he met Valenciá, the small, tough, bantam sized coachdriver.

“They’re accusing me of everything... I stand no chance”.

“There’s one chance... You could come with El Negret and me... but look at you.”

Negret was tall and slim; Valenciá short and wiry – but Tomás’s size ruled him out. He was a large stout man. “We have to go through a window... but your size... there’s one thing only. You must reduce your weight.”

From then on Tomás was running up and down the yard, sweating it out on P. T. and starving till he might have preferred the death sentence. To add to his misery his wife sent him huge hampers of food. People in the country could still manage to find provisions. His comrades sat around eating all they wanted. “Nothing for you – not even an apple” they would tease. Everyone laughed as Tomás looked at his hamper plaintively. They did not know what depended on this slimming course. It seemed a grim joke to worry about one’s figure in the shadow of death.

Finally Negret’s wife sent in a saw concealed in a paella. While Negret stood on Tomás’s shoulders, Valenciá lay on the floor of the cell listening for footsteps. Negret sawed away at the bar, leaving the centre in so that the warder on bar inspection would not notice. The marks were covered with dirt. They worked by day, as it would have sounded too much at night, until finally the right night came. With one pull they wrenched out the bar, and crept out on to the pipe. Tomás – weak from fasting but fashionably thin – got through the aperture. They climbed up the pipe to another department of the prison that connected with the outside block.

When they were outside Tomás made for the North Star directly to France – no more looking back than Lot’s wife. Negret unfortunately was recaptured. He would not leave Spain and was discovered with his woman companion. Valenciá too was re-arrested some months later. I met him in Ciudad Real prison in 1956 and he told me that one day when he was desperately poor in Barcelona Jail he was called to the bursary. He was wondering who was sending him money for he had no ‘rich uncles’. It was 500 pesetas from Andorra – the first money Tomás had been able to raise after he had heard that his benefactor was back in prison.

As escapes involve the loss of all previous time served, Valenciá may still be in prison. I have lost track of him. According to my calculations it may be 1976 before he comes out when he will have done the present maximum of twenty years since his last escape. Otherwise I could tell a great deal more about him.

But Negret is dead. He was a victim of the criminal La Farga, the most notorious prison officer in Barcelona. Rojas had been one of the most hated prison governors – comparable with any of the Nazi concentration camp chiefs (and it must be remembered that the number of Spanish workers who died in executions or as a result of prison exceeded the number of German Jews killed by Hitler). La Farga was for years his secretary. One day before the war, (Rojas even then was notorious) they were driving out in a limousine cruising for women, when members of the CNT Resistance ambushed them. La Farga lost an eye, getting the bullet intended for Rojas. This increased his hatred for the libertarian prisoners, and his favourite trick was to beat up those who had escaped and were recaptured, and confine them to a damp cell in which they could neither stand nor lie down. Negret after one of his escapes, was beaten up unmercifully and confined in such a cell for three months. Like other victims, he contracted T. B. of which he died. Even so, he tried to escape one more time before his death somewhere in prison in about 1957.

Neither of these men called themselves anarchists, nor did they regard themselves as political prisoners. But were they not so? When I knew Valenciá if he had an ounce of tobacco in his pocket it was shared with everyone. I would not be able to count how many comrades they kept alive to carry on the fight outside. This is the stuff of the working class Resistance in Spain.

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, no. 1, May 1975.

### **Santiago García Gasco**

Santiago García Gasco is yet another completely unknown Spanish Anarchist, yet fully of the character of Durruti, a Sabaté or a Facerías. He was the son of a libertarian, a CNT railwayman who spent many prison sentences for his union and libertarian activity. Santiago was born at Santander, where his mother used to unload coal in order to keep the family alive while the father was in jail. He was early imbued with the anarchist ideal.

When he was 17 he chose the Navy for his period of national service, feeling a vocation for the sea. But by the time he was 18 and was due to begin his service he changed his mind and did not report. He went on the run and in the end fell in the hands of the Guardia Civil who sent him to the Navy prison of el Ferrol. He escaped in October 34 to join the heroic battle of the Asturian Miners. CNT and UGT alike, they put up an enormous battle against overwhelming odds.

This was Santiago's first brush with General Franco – command of the Republic forces, bringing in the Moorish Legion to shot down the strikers, the survivors landed in jail. Then in 36 the Republican Popular Front amnestied all the victims of the conservative regime. But for Santiago it meant a change from the prison back to el Ferrol.



He was on the ship when the fascist generals rose in 1936. As the ship was under the command of the rebels, they put all the sailors in a concentration camp who were disaffected to the regime. From there he escaped to Bilbao.

His father had become station master on Bilbao, with the railway taken over by the workers. A few days before the nationals entered Bilbao, the Fifth Column shot him. Santiago's mother, brother and sisters escaped by ship to Barcelona. He entered France and joined them in Barcelona too. Here he immediately joined a Confederal Brigade.

In August 37 the Brigade was sent to Belchite on the Aragon front. A machine gun emplacement stood between Santiago's detachment and the front. He dashed forward like a madman, moving this way and that, and with a grenade in his hands which he flung in the midst of the nest. Immediately all went silent. He turned the machine gun round and began firing against the fascists. His comrades advanced: he was silent a bullet in the head from the enemy.

What of his brother, his sisters? That's another story which I hope to tell ...

There isn't any monument to the fallen in Spain, only to the victors. But those who lack stone live on in memory. Santiago's short life will be more to the point in future than Franco's long one.

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, no.3, Aug 1975.

## **El Catalá**

El Catalá has been mentioned in Antonio Téllez's biography of Sabaté and in my "Looking Back after Twenty Years". His real name was Francisco Denis and though his nickname might suggest a true Catalan, in fact he was a fellow-countryman of Durruti, coming from Leon – with all the strength and character that true "leones" possess. I described him as one who gave his life for freedom. He was a full human being who gave an example of sacrifice and generosity, giving all for a cause. In his way he typifies a large number of other militants. His story is theirs.

With the military uprising, he was one of the first on the streets against it. When the people were victorious and masters of the situation he believed the time had come at long last to put the revolution into practice. But, alas, comrades who were so much admired, and whose names impelled so much respect, were content with the opportunity of entering a government, against which they had so long inveighed. It was a sad disappointment for the militants like him, who were never consulted. The people who went into the Government dared not ask the consent of the organization.

In the trenches the long drawn out struggle meant that militarisation had to be accepted. The Popular Front, with its obsession of weakening the libertarian movement, formed a block with the Communist Party. The Commissar in each regiment was to replace the old Republican Army chaplain. El Catalá was – as a

responsible militant of the libertarian movement – nominated commissar of the Battalion, which conferred a status equal to comandante.

It was a stroke of irony. El Catalá, the anti-militarist, the well-known revolutionary, now on a parity with the chief of a battalion mediating between soldier and command! He had a heavy heart as he took these duties. But he knew the communists only wanted the opportunity to smash the libertarian movement. Like so many others he thought it best to forestall them. He managed to gain the respect of the soldiers and to be totally disliked by the commanders. There was no confidence he could feel however: on the one hand the political parties were carrying the Government between them, on the other hand the attitude of Britain and France was strengthening the intervention of Hitler and Mussolini. He, like others, fought on without hope – only to stave off genocide. The inevitable defeat came.

Catalá did all he could to ensure an orderly retreat. They crossed the frontier, only to find at the other side that the French were putting them into prison – the most inhospitable places, in fact, cages on deserted beaches along the Mediterranean where they were kept until war broke out in 1939. Many were destroyed by dysentery and lack of nutrition. There was no protection against the humid sand, the darkening sky and the harsh wind of the mistral. Senegalese troops kept watch on them.

But Catalá did not give up the struggle. He was together with his comrades in the vicissitudes of exile, and later, when the Germans broke through, he was also one of those who helped initiate the Resistance. Already in 1943 he made his first contacts with those left inside Spain. From then on, until his death in 1949, he went backwards and forwards over the frontier. He made innumerable journeys into the heart of Spain to carry on the struggle. The pitcher went too often to the well. Thus, Catalá, in one of his many missions in June 1949, fell into the hands of the police when keeping an appointment with some comrades in Barcelona.

The Prefecture of Police knew what Catalá was worth to the libertarian movement. He was subjected to strict interrogation (torture). During three whole days he resisted but human endurance has a limit and he could not take any more torture. He did not crack. Like the majority of the guerrillas of that period, he carried a small quantity of cyanide inside the button of his jacket. In his fourth night of suffering, in the early hours of dawn, the chief of police Morán came for him in person, accompanied by his guards. Catalá was lying on the floor already suffering from his torturers. He swallowed the tablet rapidly. When they got in they only found a corpse. It was June 1949. Thus ended a life completely devoted to the cause of a better humanity.

If we take the parallelism of Plutarch, we must compare Catalá with another man, who like him, also struggled in a similar way: this man, a born anarchist, has been mentioned by Téllez and deserves a full biography. His name has been well known in

spite of himself: he is known as Cara Quemada (burnt face) or Pasos Largos (Longsteps) or simply Ramon. We shall deal with him another time.

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, no. 5, Nov/Dec 1975.

### **Caraquemada (Burnt Face)**

The English obituarists of Franco dwelt on the fact of how he has “tricked” Hitler into not supporting him, how Hitler said he would rather go to the dentist than have another such interview. But why didn’t Hitler simply use force as with other European countries reluctant to help him to the utmost!

Franco had to deal with people of whom these “unknown heroes” are an integral part. He only dared send volunteers. He could not rely on his subjects staying conquered; neither did Hitler dare to stir up the Peninsula. That was the problem. Time and again trains laden with ammunition were blown up on the Catalan run. The “specialist” in explosions of this nature was Ramón Capdevila.

Ramón Capdevila – better known as “Caraquemada” (Burnt Face) one of his many nicknames – was a member of the Berga CNT. In that region of the Pyrenees, which he knew so well, he was to become almost legendary. During the civil war he was in a CNT batallion, later to become a commissar after the militarisation of the army. Like el Catalá, he felt the contradiction very keenly. Afterwards, he went to France to avoid capture, and he began a group of the Resistance together with Massana. Massana (one of the few of those surviving the immediate post-war Resistance) has said he will write his own biography. It will be a pity if he does not; he must be linked with Sabaté and Facerias as one of the toughest fighters of the epoch.

Caraquemada, Massana and Tallaventras (Cutbelly) organized regular raids in the Pyrenees. Ramon, however was invaluable as a guide over the Pyrenees, and was in great demand to smuggle people over the border. Truth to tell, it was something of a sport for him – he enjoyed matching his great strength against the mountains, and did not seem to understand that other people got fatigued on the way. Himself, he would not have stopped to rest between Perpignan and Barcelona! But he was tolerant of those who wanted to rest every hour – though always impatient to get on. He was affectionately, though ironically called “Pasos Largos” (Long Steps) by many veterans of the Resistance on account of his great strides.

During the war many Jews escaping from the Nazis, as well as allied servicemen, came out by that backdoor from Europe, and Ramón was one of the guides most sought after. This was an embarrassment to the Franco regime in that they could not send these people back (later they took all the credit on behalf of “the Spanish people”) but they did their best to keep them out – to no avail. The well-to-do paid for the guide’s services; the servicemen were paid for by British Intelligence;

workers, the poor, and resistance fighters went free. (Others, fled Franco the opposite way in the post-war years).

“Pasos Largos” took his charges all the way across the Pyrenees as far as Barcelona. But he never went into Barcelona. “Here’s your destination”, he said when they approached the city lights. “Goodbye”.

Unlike others, Franquesas for instance, who went into the city to help organise the groups, he stayed out. He was a lone wolf. He would not consent to be a leader, not to be led, but was always at the service of the anarchist resistance.

In an old monastery our movement used as a base to go into Spain (after the war) he holed up, waiting to take in a raiding party, living for weeks on frozen potatoes and wild mushrooms, rather than risk capture by buying in the village. With half a bar of gelnite he would blow up two electric pylons and bring the railroad to a standstill.

Even when caught in an ambush by the Guardia Civil, his companion killed, and wounded in the mouth, he went on for over a hundred miles to the border across the snows of the High Pyrenees... not for nothing did the guerillas who arrived in Barcelona speak of the daring of the “snowman” who took them as far as, but never into, the city.

Like many others, Ramón Capdevila eventually fell in an ambush by the Guardia Civil. He could not live under fascism. He was a man typical of anarchism in Catalonia, to whom Hitler preferred “toothache” and Franco would have preferred the pox.

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, No. 6, Jan/Feb 1976.

### [José Pérez Pedrero]

José Pérez Pedrero was in his early twenties when he faced the firing squad, as the result of the round-up of our section of the Resistance, one of the five whose death sentence was carried out – others had it commuted to various terms, 30 years in my case. At the last moment the lieutenant in charge of the executions asked if there were any last messages. Nobody answered, but José took the silk handkerchief off his neck and asked the officer to give it to his mother.

The Falangist secret policeman who was present wanted to snatch it away. “None of that, don’t play the martyr!” But the lieutenant, to his credit, told him to shut up. “You have no say here.”

Like many others, his mother received it as one of the last relics of her son snatched by the dictatorship. Had it happened a few years earlier, she might have received a pension from France; for José had been one of the first to enter the Resistance during the war. He survived the war to take the Resistance to Spain – and who would give a pension for a son executed as a “criminal”?

When he took up arms in the Resistance, he was about 14 years old. His parents had escaped the triumph of the Spanish Army to take refuge in France, which isolate them in concentration camps as if they were wild animals. He gravitated naturally into the anarchist Resistance which refused to accept Franco's victory, and was in the wave of anarchist resistance that came after the World War and in many ways was equal in intensity, suffering, drama and historic importance to the events of the civil war.

All the guerrillas had the habit of calling each other by affectionate sarcasms. José had a terrible appetite and when on the trek over the mountains, at the regulation ten minutes halt in every hour, he could – as the Spanish say – “even eat stones”. The first thing they did on the stops was to take off their loads, and usually eat. He was called El Tragapanes because in a few moments he would “swallow” one of those huge Spanish loaves which were cheap and still the basic food of the friendly farms. With his happy-go-lucky temperament, he would greet the name of “the Bread Swallower” with great bursts of laughter.

Like many others, even “el Quico” himself, he started his “career” with Massana who trained them all in the art of crossing the border and passing over the mountains. But Massana, like many others, was only in his element in the mountains; he would not go in the towns. This is where he had to part from people like Sabaté who were attracted to the towns where they organised groups of workers as well as fighting in their element. José too was irresistibly drawn to Barcelona where his ties were and the sight of the enemy was a constant provocation to action.

On one occasion coming over the Pyrennes a group with which “el Tragapanes” was working spotted a patrol of three Guardia Civil. They hid in the bushes to let them go past. Suddenly José stood up, with utter daring, and told them they were covered, and to throw down their arms. They did so. The rest of the group then told them to take off their clothes. The Guardia Civil were convinced their last hour had come, were weeping and saying how many children they had dependent on them... But whatever the regime propagandists say, the Resistance weren't bloodthirsty. They just hid the clothes in one spot and the arms on another – which gave them a good two hours start before they were recovered – and went off saying, “You don't report us, and we won't report you.” For the Guardia Civil would not report such an incident (which would have meant court martial after suspension without pay).

Such is the Guardia Civil, so arrogant and bullying when dealing with disarmed opponents, who swagger around like conquerors. But they are as cowardly as rabbit when faced with such a situation, possibly knowing they are hated by the conquered people.

Once coming across the Pyrennes the group went into one of the numerous friendly farms where they could be assured of protection. All these people were supporters c

the CNT and the Guardia Civil knew it, so they were regularly checked by patrols. On this occasion their look-out spotted three Guardia Civil approaching the farm, and the farmer hid them in the hayloft. When the patrol came in, the acting corporal asked the question, "Anyone here?" "Nobody." It was only a routine visit, but he decided, "Well, let's have a look." The group had no interest in provoking a fight and involving the farmer and his family. But the acting corporal was anxious for promotion and insisted on looking in the hayloft. As they went up the winging stair, the group were waiting breathlessly. One of them (still living) was crouched at the ready like an athlete. The Guardia drew his automatic. But too late. The other shot first. The other two Guardia Civil streaked off like lightning, one disappearing through a tiny window overlooking a precipice, from which he picked himself up agile as a cat and rushed off. Those who were there still wonder as to how so large a man got through so small a window.

The farmer and his 18 year old son escaped with the guerrillas into France to avoid persecution for their giving hospitality to the enemies of Franco. "El Tragapanes" was not responsible for the shooting; he just happened to be there. But this was what he was ultimately executed for – at least the pretext, for his real crime was his undying enthusiasm for the libertarian cause.

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, no. 7, Mar 1976

### **Carballo Blanco**

Mr. Heath [UK Prime Minister] says that the civil war must now be forgotten and we must go on from here. How reasonable he sounds compared with those who think it has not even ended! But let us consider just one case, that of Fernando Carballo Blanco. His is one case in thousands. He typifies the whole libertarian movement in Spain. And (see front page) he is still living. In misery. But still alive.

Carballo was born in the plateau of Valladolid – a Falange stronghold. But his father was a railwayman, member of the CNT (as a point of interest, in the same regional union as Buenaventura Durruti) One day – when he was twelve years old – his mother went to Madrid for a family visit. The Army Rising meant she could not return. Carballo, senior, was left with two sons and a daughter to look after, when one day five Falangists came to the railway workshops as he was leaving work. They "took him for a ride". Why? Because he was a member of the CNT. No more was alleged, nor was necessary, than his union affiliation. The body was found riddled with bullets outside the town.

The children were sent to an orphanage. There they had to wear uniform, sing "Cara al Sol" (the Falangist hymn), give the Nazi salute and listen to interminable lectures on José Antonio's theories and the more improbable miracles of the Catholic saints. That was their education and Fernando was a bad pupil.

After the war was over the mother were able to take them out of the orphanage to live with her in Valencia. Carballo collected paper and rags to get food for the families. One day he took a handful of peanuts from a shed and was taken before the Police Commissioner. "Have you a father? How did he die?" "He was murdered," answered Fernando. The Commissioner punched him, breaking his jaw. "He was shot!" he snapped, "Learn respect." But he never did.

As Fernando Carballo grew up he went to work as a sawyer, but also tried to contact the anarchist resistance. It was a passport to death in those days, and it was not easy to join the Libertarian Youth, but he succeeded. Despite prison sentences and persecution he went on; when he was out of prison in 1947 he tried to help the prisoners who had been his comrades. In 1948 he was arrested and charged with being a member of International Red Aid. What could he reply to this? That it was not true, that he was an anarchist? But as it could not be proved, a charge of robbery was preferred instead and he was sent to the Puerto de Santa Maria prison where everyone contracts tuberculosis, which will one day be pulled down stone [by stone.]

In 1950 he was transferred to Ocaña (Toledo) and then freed for good conduct in 1955. But he was kept under police surveillance in 1956. Meantime he married, worked as a carpenter during the day and a tailor at night to make a bare living for his wife and son in hard conditions. There was, he knew, one way out for the workers to better themselves; to reconstitute the union, so he joined the clandestine CNT. It was suggested to him by a friend in the Resistance that he would be doing good service if he met a foreign comrade who was smuggling explosives from abroad for an attack on Franco. He was willing to act as a guide but was in no other way concerned with the plot. Unfortunately, both he and his contact were arrested.

Consider their cases from the light of the court. One was a foreigner, impelled by sheer hatred of the fascist regime. He was proved, and subsequently admitted, to be implicated in the plot against the head of State. He got twenty years and was released after 3½ years. The other, who had deep personal motivation in the killing of his father apart from his libertarian views, who had been involved as a victim in the military conquest, but who was not involved directly in the plot – at most it could be said he was an accomplice – got 30 years. He is still in prison after 12 years. Where is the justice even by their standards? His life since the age of 12 has been one long Calvary.

What does it mean when they say we should forget the Civil War? That we should give up resisting provided they do not oppress us as much as they did? Will people like Carballo ever be able to forgive? Will they ever – voluntarily – accept dictatorship? They did not succeed in learning any of the lessons the France regime had to teach them.

World labour should not trouble itself to try to work out for the Spanish workers a vertical trade union which they have decisively rejected. It would do better to demand in loud and unmistakable terms that prisoners such as and beginning with Fernando Carballo should be released and indemnified immediately.

At the moment Carballo has been sent to Alicante – solely to try to break his morale. I too was in Alicante; but in my time it was a mixed prison. Before the civil war, and now, it was intended only for sexual offenders – regarded by the conquerors as the “lowest strata” but in reality a test of the failure of their society. There, Carballo, is the only political prisoner. They are determined to isolate and break him. For it does not escape the notice of the rulers of Spain that failure to break the spirit of our anarchist comrades, will ensure certain death to the regime.

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, no. 8, May 1976

### **César Saborit Carretero**

When I was still awaiting trial in 1951 and expecting the death sentence, the news came into jail that César Saborit Carretero had been ambushed by a police agent and shot in the back while leaving the bus at Santa Coloma. It was the 19th July 1951 – just fifteen years after our great victory in Barcelona.

It seemed as if the world had collapsed. He was not only one of the toughest fighters in the Resistance. He was our last hope. We were sure he would try to spring us from the trap, as he has attempted with his best friend Pérez Pedrero (el Tragapanes – see previous in this series). In that he had only been foiled because when “el Tragapanes” came before the criminal court it was surrounded by cordons of armed police as if for a military action. Otherwise nothing would have been too audacious for him to attempt.

Though he never joined any group, all could count on him for real action – he was probably closest to the militant Los Manos group, who sustained actions in Catalonia over many years. In 1947 he became secretary of the Committee of Defence of Barcelona (formed by “el Quico”) which fought against terrible odds to mitigate the ferocity of the fascist terror.

César Saborit was born in 1915, into a family who, like all Catalan weavers, were members of the CNT and was from boyhood dedicated to the libertarian cause. In 1935 there was great repression carried against the anarchist movement by the Catalan autonomist government (which now is presented by the media as almost libertarian itself!) and the Libertarian Youth decided to make an example of the two gangster brothers Badia, one of whom was chief of police. He was killed. In the ensuing wave of arrests a cache of arms was found at César’s but he escaped until the civil war when he came out of hiding, and joined Durruti’s column on the Aragon front.



When the war was over he could not, like many of us, accept Hitler's victory over the working class. But he could not live in France, where he despaired. Barcelona for him, as for many others, was a magnet. It was our city as none other. Its industry had been run by us; its buildings had flown our colours; we had defended it in the name of our idea. César's hatred of the fascists was particularly directed against the maggots who prospered on the victory of the Army, who did not come swaggering in uniform themselves but profited from the misery. The loan sharks with their ramifications both in the police and crime battered on the weavers who were down to starvation wages and fell into the abyss of debt.

César was not a weaver, though his folk were. He earned good wages as a brick-maker, and always made enough to keep himself, his compañera Magdalena, and their son (born in 1942). But in defence of the weavers, and to sustain the Resistance, he stepped up actions against the loan sharks and took forced contributions from them to the CNT. It must be confessed there was a double purpose: to raise funds and to wipe them out. They gave no mercy – they got none from him. Yet he was the type of man who, though hard as steel, would never be noticed in a crowd. There was no swagger about him.

I recall some comrades coming from over the Pyrennees escorting a group in, that was what they did, ferrying some OUT to escape from Franco, some IN to escape from Hitler ... (what a world!) sometimes there were wealthy Jews who paid up handsomely, or British airmen (paid for via the Consul, out of his secret funds). But this was a batch of Jewish and socialist resistance workers whom we did not charge. "A bad business" I said jokingly. "Now we must find the money to keep them!" Immediately César Saborit went out and held up one of the fascist usurers, shooting him and taking his loot. He handed over the money saying laconically, "It was too early in the day to be much... but anyway I burned his records."

With a man of such quick reflexes, the police did not dare to approach him directly. He was spotted on a bus travelling to see his brother, living openly on the outskirts of Barcelona, Santa Coloma. It seems incredible that he should have been careless enough to go to that district, but in Resistance work one slip is enough. The agent followed him out of the bus and shot him in the back.

Many of the "respectable" libertarians in Toulouse, blamed Facerias for having led César Saborit on. I can vouch that is false, the usual formula of attacking the living militant and eulogising the dead one, sometimes with faint praise that is even more condemnatory. Saborit was not one to lead or be led. But if anything he must have induced Facerias more than once to re-enter Spain.

It would have surprised Saborit to be termed one of the "unknown heroes" of the Spanish resistance. That was not how he regarded himself. What could not be borne

by him was the savagery of the conquerors and above all their meanness and rapacity.

He was far from being unusual. Is it to be thought that people like him will accept another dictatorship in place of Franco's?

*Black Flag* Vol. 4, no. 9, Jul 1976

## **Appendix 1 Libertarian Histories**

### **[The execution of five members of the Talli3n Group, 1952]**

On 13th March 1952 the fourth landing of Barcelona's Model Prison held 21 people under sentence of death; the bulk of them were libertarian militants, former fighters for the Republic who, when the civil war ended, refused to accept the Francoist victory (which was a victory for international fascism) and so continued to fight in the mountains and on the plains, against a vastly superior foe. Of these 21, nine were due for imminent execution. At 10 am the orderly, escorted by L3pez Pereira, the warder in charge of the first landing opened the doors of four cells one after the other. The order rang out: "Out. Go straight to the outer gate." So Antonio, Domingo, Jos3 and Miguel did just that. They were four of the nine due to be executed.

Awaiting them at the portcullis was the notorious chief warder Lafarga, known as "El Tuerto" (One Eye) who called out: "Come along! Step on it! The governor is waiting for you."

The governor, Don Fernando Arnau Garc3a, was in the Centre. Seated at a desk, he flourished a telegram and informed the condemned men: "You have been reprieved. The Caudillo has seen fit to commute the death sentences in your cases to life imprisonment. That means that you must serve out your lives here... no remission, no parole, and no other privileges of any sort. You may go."

The reprieved men returned to the fourth landing, escorted by El Tuerto, and were locked in their cells. Later they were transferred to the first landing.

Now there could be no more do doubt – four of the nine were to be spared and the other five were to be shot at dawn the next day. That night no-one on the fourth landing slept. Everybody lay awake, straining to hear the creaking of the heavy wrought iron gates which would signal the arrival of the police.

At midnight they came. A key was heard turning in a lock – "It's El Yayo!" shouted someone. El Yayo occupied the last cell on the fourth landing.

"I've been expecting you", said El Yayo when they came for him, rising from his bunk. He alone was allowed to use a bunk because he was suffering from tuberculosis. The others slept on the floor on filthy mattresses.

Another key creaked in another lock. "It's Tragapanes!", thought some who heard it.

Then it was Pons's turn. Then "El Sherrif's".

When it was the turn of the fifth man, Gine Urrea Piña, he shouted “Viva la FAI!” as his cell door was opened. His shout echoed around the landing. Every cell responded with cries of “Viva!”

Those about to be executed were taken to the chaplaincy and were besieged by the two priests attached to the prison, Fr. Lahoz and Angel Millan, along with three other clerics who had come to assist them. The condemned men were repeatedly urged to make confessions, but not one of the five would yield.

The condemned men were taken to Campo de la Bota where they faced a firing squad of soldiers. The officer in charge asked the condemned if they had any last wishes. Only José Pérez Pedrero asked that his silk neckerchief be given to his mother as a last remembrance.

And so the last five men shot in the Campo de la Bota went to their deaths. Their names closed a list of thousands – the vast majority of whom were libertarians – shot there ... the names of Ginés Urrea Piña, Jorge Pons Argilés, Santiago Amir Gruañas, José Pérez Pedrero and Pedro Adrover Font.

*Black Flag*, Vol. 6, no. 2, June 1980.

## **Appendix 2 Nine Trade Unionists Executed in Barcelona [Protest leaflet]**

Last Sunday were executed in Barcelona Pedro Adrover Font, Jose Perez Pedrero, Jorge Pons Argiles, Santiado Amir Gruanas, Domingo Ibars Juanias, Antonio Moreno Alarcon, Jose Corral Martin, Miguel Garcia Garcia and Gines Urrea Pina, members of the National Confederation of Labour (C.N.T.).

They were shot for the “crime” of illegal association by Franco and his Phalangists, represented here tonight by the Spanish Ambassador, Miguel Primo de Rivera and his Phalangist company.

Franco has invited all Republicans to return; meanwhile he shoots them at home.

We call upon free men and women to protest against these fascist assassins.

Published by A. RUIZ, Secretary, C.N.T., U.G.T. BASQUE, CATALAN DELEGATION, and LEFT REPUBLICAN c/o 25a Amberley Road, London, W.9

Printed by WALTER JENN LTD., 203 Royal College Street, N.W.1.

[Spanish text on reverse]

## **Franco Mata Nueve Trabajadores en Barcelona**

Ayer domingo fueran ejecutados, en Barcelona, Pedro Adrover Font, Jose Perez Pedrero, Jorge Pons Argiles, Santiado Amir Gruanas, Domingo Ibars Juanias, Antonio Moreno Alarcon, Jose Corral Martin, Miguel Garcia Garcia y Gines Urrea Pina, miembros de la Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo, matado por el crimen de asociacion ilegal.

Autores de crimen? Franco y falange representados aqui por Miguel Primo de Rivera, su embajador y los Coros y Danzas.

Franco ha prometido no tomar represalias contra los exilados espanoles que regresen; mientras condena y mata cobardemente a los que se encuentran alli.

Esperamos que la conciencias libres unan su vox de protesta contra los asesinos del Pueblo Espanol a la nuestra.

!! Condenacion a Franco!! !! Abajo el fascismo!!

Publicado C.N.T., U.G.T, DELEGACION CATALAN y VASCA y IZQUIERRA REPUBLICANA

[Translation of Spanish text]

### **Franco Kills Nine Workers in Barcelona**

Yesterday, Sunday, Pedro Adrover Font, Jose Perez Pedrero, Jorge Pons Argiles, Santiago Amir Gruanas, Domingo Ibars Juanias, Antonio Moreno Alarcon, Jose Corral Martin, Miguel Garcia Garcia and Gines Urrea Pina of the CNT were executed in Barcelona, killed for the crime of unlawful association.

And the authors of this crime? Franco and the Falange as represented here by Miguel Primo de Rivera, their ambassador and hanger-on.

Franco has promised that there will be no reprisals against Spanish exiles who go home: meanwhile he convicts and cravenly kills the ones available there.

We hope that free consciences will add their voices of protest to ours in condemning the murderers of the Spanish People.

Condemning Franco! Down with fascism!

Published by the CNT, the UGT, the Catalan and Basque Delegation and Izquierda Republicana

Note to appendix two

This leaflet has been reproduced as it was published. Unlike the other articles in this collection, we have made no attempt to provide correct accents for names (eg José for Jose). News of the reprieves had obviously not got through to the comrades in exile, nor precise details of the charges. As well as illegal association, the court martial had convicted the members of the Tallión group of murder, robbery and 'terrorism and banditry'. Like all other authoritarian regimes, the Francoist system like to accuse its political opponents of criminality. 'Illegal association' and 'terrorism and banditry' were almost interchangeable charges; and death was just as likely for one as the other.