

**Italy was the birthplace of one of the great strands of the international anarchist movement.**

From the time of Bakunin's secret *Brotherhood* of the 1860s (the model for the modern anarchist affinity groups), Italian anarchist militants founded movements and fought for their ideals in many countries. It was an Italian, Fanelli, who took Bakunin's ideas to Spain in 1868, and it was Italian anarchists who were the first international volunteers to rush to the aid of the Spanish Revolution in 1936. Yet, as usual, the class heroes are little known.

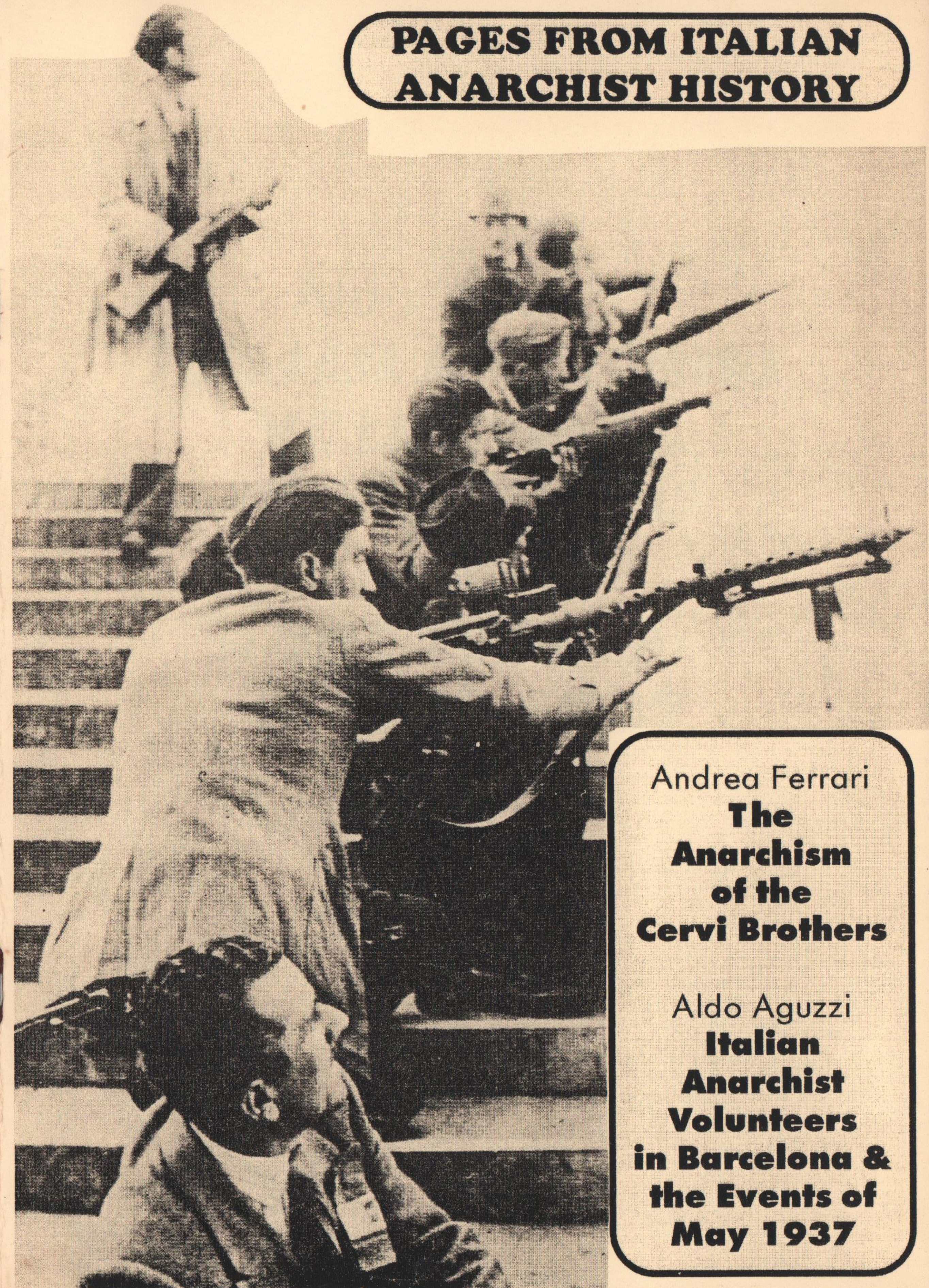
*Pages From Italian Anarchist History* examines two different aspects of the anti-fascist fight: the struggle of the partisans in Reggio Emilia, and the contribution of the Italian volunteers in Spain. Both essays share a common, tragic, subtext: the sacrificing of libertarian communist revolutionaries (and of the revolutions they fought for) by an "official" Communism dictated from Moscow.

In a postscript on the recent trial of comrades from Italy, Greece and Scotland, the continuity of anarchist resistance in Italy, and the need for international solidarity, is shown clearly.

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The Kate Sharpley Library  
ISBN 1 873605 22 6

**PAGES FROM ITALIAN  
ANARCHIST HISTORY**



Andrea Ferrari  
**The  
Anarchism  
of the  
Cervi Brothers**

Aldo Aguzzi  
**Italian  
Anarchist  
Volunteers  
in Barcelona &  
the Events of  
May 1937**

## **KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY & ANARCHIST ARCHIVE**

The Kate Sharpley Library takes its name from a working class anarchist who was active in the catering shopworkers' fight before the First World War, and in the anti-war struggle of 1914-18. She does not appear in any of the "official" histories of anarchism, yet as George Cores wrote (in the first of our historical reprints, *Recollections of Anarchists in the Past - Personal Reminiscences of British Anarchists 1883-1939*), "most of the work which was done was due to the activities of working men and women, most of whom did not appear as orators or as writers in printed papers".

The Library and Archive exists to preserve a record of these "unknown heros" of the class struggle, and to illuminate aspects of anarchist history and thought which are ignored or distorted by academic historians, and by some who are allegedly "inside" our movement.

Our collection of anarchist documentation, books, pamphlets, newspapers and magazines from all over the world is unrivaled in Britain (outside the archives of MI5 and the Metropolitan Police Special Branch!) and is in the process of being catalogued. We will be open to subscribers at a future date, but meanwhile we are available for consultation.

If you would like to know more about our work, or would like to donate any material to the Library and Archive, please write to:

**KSL**

The Kate Sharpley Library  
BM Hurricane, London, WC1 3XX

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Andrea Ferrari  
**The Anarchism of the Cervi Brothers**

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& the Events of May 1937**

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*For Goliardo Fiaschi,  
an "unknown hero"  
of the anarchist Resistance  
in Italy and Spain*

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Andrea Ferrari, *The Anarchism of the Cervi Brothers*,  
first published in *Umanita Nova* (Milan), 18 November 1980.

Aldo Aguzzi, *Italian Anarchist Volunteers in Spain & the Events of May 1937*,  
first published in *L'Adunata dei Refrattari* No. 33, 13 August 1938.

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In Reggio Emilia the controversy still rages regarding the lives and deaths of the Cervi brothers. Enzo Passi's book *Una storia di contadini* (A Country Tale) has helped in a special way to keep the memory alive. Published by Cuneo, it tells the story and the tragedy of the Cervi family. According to its author the book operates on two levels: at one level the historical-sociological view of the family of Emilia peasants; on the other, the political analysis made the discovery of resistance and the Cervi's relations with the Communist Party of Italy (PCI) in the 1930s. The reader will find that he is dealing here with a potent and timely issue.

# Andrea Ferrari **THE ANARCHISM OF THE CERVI BROTHERS**

We must finally set out the role of Aldo Cervi who, with his deep learning, was to stimulate the family into attachment to communist principles, jettisoning their previous dogmatic affiliation to popular Catholics. Aldo received his political education in the military prison in Genoa, where he was serving five years for maintenance (his sentence was later reduced to three years by the Court Martial in Bologna).

Aldo is who his family and his strong personality. He had inside and outside the family for the need to take action, and he was always ready to take action. This meant that the Cervi's culture was the very first in the Emilia region to take up arms against the fascists; that their home was one large and famous hostel for fugitives, until in the end they were themselves in less than 33 years, including Russia, South Africa and Belgium; that their revolutionary activity was an ongoing phenomenon from 1930 right up to their deaths - and that they conducted themselves in exemplary fashion, individually and as a group. The Cervi's militant and fascist was at work in the "heyday" of the regime as they assassinated, fought, mounted attacks and sabotaged the regime, attacking barracks and shooting ranges, stamping an uncompromising notice upon the liberation struggle.

The rebel spirit of this family-community is revealed forcefully by this policy. Although not anarchists in the "traditional" sense, they were - by their deeds - to display a rationale and a practice that could hardly have been more libertarian in content.

The Cervi unmistakably looked forward to a free communism built from the roots up, internal and revolutionary, as Onelio Sergi (who served with their partisan unit) observed in a recent lengthy and delightful interview. The Cervi brothers' anarchism is all there, in the manner of their waging their fight against fascism, off their own bat and without depending anything on a political party, in their whole approach to life, regardless of conditions or convenience, with their feeling for solidarity and change in a libertarian, egalitarian spirit.

For Gollardo Flandi  
an unknown hero  
of the anarchist Resistance  
in Italy and Spain

The Anarchism of the Cervi Brothers

Aldo Aguzzi

Italian Anarchist Volunteers in Barcelona

& the Events of May 1937

Postscript: anarchists in Italy today

individual anarchism

Attagate le mani (teaching out a hand)

Bubini, Tesseri, Stradiopoulos & Weiss

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In Reggio Emilia the controversy still rages regarding the lives and deaths of the Cervi brothers. Liano Fanti's book *Una storia di campagna* (A Country Tale) has helped in a special way to keep the controversy raging. Published by Camunia, it tells the story and the tragedy of the Cervi family. According to its author the book operates on two levels: at one level the historical/sociological side of the family of Emilian peasants; on the other, the political analysis inside the phenomenon of resistance and the Cervis' relations with the Communist Party of Italy (PCI). Even in the first part the reader realises that he is dealing here with a peasant family of extraordinary revolutionary worth.

It was a full ten years after they were shot that the Party was to organise the first commemoration ceremony. Only then did the martyrdom of the Cervis come to be broadcast far and near and then only for very specific purposes, as might be expected. That lengthy delay in itself has much to say about the PCI's attitude to the Cervis and above all how it viewed their unbending political militancy which refused to kowtow before the Party's "supreme authority", or even the black-shirted firing squad.

For that reason we need to probe this "other history" more deeply, the story of a family of fighters for freedom, trying to bring out the official misrepresentations of Party history. For too long the tragedy of the Cervis has been shrouded by Party mythology, tailored to suit electioneering propaganda, and prevailing over disinterested scrutiny of an important fragment of the history of the working class movement in our past.

We must briefly set out the role of Aldo Cervi who, with his deep learning, was to stimulate the family into attachment to communist principles, jettisoning their previous dogmatic affiliation to popular Catholicism. Aldo received his political education in the military prison in Gaeta, where he was serving five years for insubordination. (His sentence was later reduced to three years by the Court Martial in Bologna).

Aldo it was who too, thanks to his strong personality, lobbied inside and outside the family for the need to take fascism on directly by whatever means were available, rather than awaiting some Messiah or abiding by the democratic directives from some party. This ensured that the Cervis' partisan unit was the very first in the Emilia region to take up arms against the fascists; that their home was one huge anti fascist hostel for fugitives, until in the end they were harbouring no less than 35 men, including Russians, South Africans and British; that their revolutionary activity was an ongoing phenomenon from 1930 right up to their deaths, and that they conducted themselves in exemplary fashion, individually and as a group. The Cervis' militant anti fascism was at work in the "heyday" of the regime as they assassinated bigwigs, mounted attacks and sabotaged the regime, attacking barracks and shooting ranges, stamping an uncompromising nature upon the liberation struggle.

The rebel spirit of this family-community is revealed forcefully by this policy. Although not anarchists in the "traditional" sense, they were - by their deeds - to display a rationale and a practice that could hardly have been more libertarian communist.

The Cervis unmistakably looked forward to a free communism built from the roots up, internationalist and revolutionary, as Otello Sarzi (who served with their partisan unit) observed in a recent lengthy and delightful interview. The Cervi brothers' anarchism is all there: in the manner of their waging their fight against fascism, off their own bat and without delegating anything to a political party, in their whole approach to life, regardless of conditions or convenience, with their feeling for solidarity and change in a libertarian, egalitarian spirit.

On that basis, the Cervis, who were little disposed to a wait-and-see policy, were not wrong when they accused the PCI's military committee of political opportunism. On the other hand, throughout the partisan era and even afterwards, the Party denounced the anarchistic adventurism of the Cervi brothers. The Party's military command made up of Alcide Leonardi ("d'Alberto"), Osvaldo Poppi ("Davide"), Gismondo Veroni ("Tito") and backed up by the PCI leader from Campagna, Didimo Ferrari ("Tito-Eros") was to frustrate the activities of the partisan unit led by Aldo, once the Cervis moved out from Cervarezza. Arguments inside the Party over how the Cervis should be "dealt with" became so heated that some PCI leaders were transferred to other campaigns: d'Alberto, known to be a lot more indulgent towards the rebel partisans, is one instance of this. However, it was hard for the PCI to put the Cervis' unit out of commission, isolate it from the rest of the partisans, split it up so as to reduce its influence or discredit the standing of Aldo.

This is borne out also by Osvaldo Poppi ("Davide") in his book *Il Commissario* issued by the ANPI in Modena in 1985, where he states: "Whereas it was feasible in the Modena region to assume the leadership of the partisan movement even where it had emerged spontaneously and autonomously, this was not a possibility with the Cervi brothers, in view of their standing and their inflexible, indomitable characters." In fact, in the Modena region the PCI, having liquidated Giovanni Rossi - the leader of the substantial autonomous partisan unit known as the Sassuolesi - managed to monopolise the partisans, smothering all dissent.

Returning to the Cervis, listen to what Osvaldo Poppi (a hard-line Stalinist) has to say about his first encounter with the full strength of the unit in Cervarezza: "...I identified myself as the representative of the provincial military command. I was very badly received and charged with opportunism and incompetence because these people had great personal courage and great initiative and had thrown themselves straight into open armed struggle, "open to the daylight", leaving behind them the struggle to which veteran communist comrades were used, a struggle conducted in darkness, amid the secrecy of conspiracy."

And again, apropos of the methods whereby the unit reached its policy decisions, Poppi states: "...No, like good anarchists every one of them said his piece. On that occasion, Aldo Cervi himself made an enormous impression on me, because I found myself faced with the classic prototype of the anarchist fighting shy of imposing his wishes upon anybody else. Aldo explained the function of command as the committed participation of every individual in a view embodied by the man who effectively exercised command, without the latter's being acknowledged as the commander and without his being recognised as a superior."

The military command decided to give up "detaching" the Cervis from the other partisan units on the grounds that their fate was "foreseeable". When Enea Boni, as she relates in her book *Radici Socialisti* (published in 1980 by the Tipografia Nazionale in Parma) later suggested to Didimo Ferrari ("Eros-Tito") that the PCI's underground paper *La Lotta* be published from the Cervi's home, she was told by Ferrari: "You are a dreamer, and so are they. Only a few days ago I visited that powder keg with your sister to invite them to get organised and operate in accordance with Party directives. But, as usual, I was greeted by the most harsh and sectarian reaction, because the Party has now decided to let them operate autonomously."

Some years ago, the relatives of the Cervis themselves sent a letter to the ANPI in Reggio Emilia stating: "over the last 40 days of their activities, our relatives were the subject of a

"warning" from a group of leaders of the Reggio Underground Movement." All the same, their partisan unit carried out further anti fascist operations on 16 November - this was in 1943 - disarming the Carabinieri Barracks in San Martino in Rio, and on 13 November they executed the fascist bigwig Giuseppe Scolari. Following these latter attacks, the fascists' cordon around the Cervis' home tightened, because they had come to appreciate the dangers emanating from that anti fascist laboratory.

To dwell for a moment upon their home, here we have the evidence of Enea Boni: "There in that isolated homestead where, unbeknown to themselves, the seven Cervi brothers awaited their martyrdom and heroic ends, they must have stood out as unbending communists in order to demonstrate right up to the end that true comrades had to be able to defy fear and waste no time in offering resistance, howsoever they might, to the brutalities of dictatorship and war.

...And there was a warm welcome there only for deserting soldiers and communist militants ready for anything, and none too faithful to the Communist Party official line regarding the organisation of the resistance movement."

But there is another, unsettling fact: on the evening before their arrest on 25 November 1943, the Cervis realised that they had been "blown" and - unsuccessfully - they sought Party hiding places for the many anti fascists hiding out in their homestead. As Ines Bigi, widow of Agostino Cervi, relates: "That evening, around 9 o'clock, some of the brothers had set out along with all the foreigners and two Italians to seek refuge elsewhere, in a Party hide-out. I do not know what door they knocked on, but I do know they had been out for four or five hours, maybe more, to no avail. Nobody wanted them. The order from the Committee (the PCI Military Committee) had worked."

They had scarcely returned from their futile expedition when their house was surrounded and set alight by 150 fascists who proceeded to arrest the Cervi brothers, their father Alcide Cervi and some other partisans, including the foreigners. Other highly questionable matters arose while the Cervis were in prison, although the Party, and especially members of Aldo's unit still at large, attempted with the partisans of Parma to free them from prison.

According to Otello Sarzi, the Party issued an instruction that no attacks were to be mounted lest this prejudice the position of the captives. Among other things, the Party, notoriously opportunistic, as the Cervis themselves had argued, had always - up to that time - adopted a prudent, not to say defeatist stance. Instead, the very opposite occurred: on 17 December, partisans assassinated the Senior Commander of the Militia, Giovanni Fagiani, in Cortegegge, and on 23 December they assassinated the fascist Davide Onfiani in Bagnolo in Piano.

At this point the death sentence on the Cervi brothers became a foregone conclusion, and on 28 December they were shot in the firing-range in Reggio Emilia, along with Quarto Camurri, a member of their partisan unit.

The verdict reads: "The Extraordinary Tribunal, in urgent session this night, has issued its verdict on eight persons, confessed authors of ordinary as well as political acts of violence and attacks, with the connivance and assistance of anti-national and communist elements, subverting national order through propaganda and recourse to weapons. Sentence was carried out at dawn today, 28 December."

Obviously, the stance of the Party and its Military Committee through their actions objectively sealed the fate of the Cervis, leaving them open to certain retaliation, as their

deaths proved in the end. The friction between the PCI and the Cervis was to persist even after the deaths of the seven brothers, so much so that it was a full ten years after they were shot that the Party was to organise the first commemoration ceremony. Only then did the martyrdom of the Cervis come to be broadcast far and near and then only for very specific purposes as might be expected. That lengthy delay in itself has much to say about the PCI's attitude to the Cervis and above all how it viewed their unbending political militancy which refused to kowtow before the Party's 'supreme authority' or even the black-shirted firing squad.

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**Andrea Ferrari**

An account of the contribution of the Italian anarchists to the tragic events of May 1937 in Barcelona is of supreme importance for any understanding of the reasons that led to the defeat of the first column of Spanish revolutionaries to come to the aid of the Spanish proletariat: the Italian Column, founded in Barcelona on 5 August, 1936.

These volunteers had undergone their glorious baptism by fire on 28 August 1936 at Monte Pelado. They fought in the front against Burgos on 13 September, and on 20 October saw action in Tudela. They were also active in Almadén on 21 November, giving generously of their blood and lives for the cause of the Spanish people.

Aldo Aguzzi  
**ITALIAN ANARCHIST  
VOLUNTEERS  
IN BARCELONA  
&  
THE EVENTS  
OF MAY 1937**

Without any doubt, the event which was most pronounced among the Italian fighters was their determination to fight to the death, to overcome all vicissitudes, all hardships, all experience and disappointment.

Their Spanish comrades, however, were not so much concerned with the matter, knowing that the Italian volunteers were not only brave but also possessed of the necessary political consciousness. The only difference between the Italian and Spanish anarchists is that the Italian anarchist is more individualist, more inclined to see the Italian Revolution as a personal matter.

Indeed, many Spanish comrades (especially those who held exalted military ranks) were harsh in denouncing the attitude widespread among our comrades as merely an excuse for deserting the fight. As Mexico commander Jover had let slip a remark that they found deeply wounding. A point was reached where a decision was made to quit the front.

But this decision was reported to the Spanish comrades on the eve of some scheduled operations. Once again the Italian comrades had the charge of comrades thrown at them. Exasperated, they immediately declared their readiness to take part in the approaching battle before leaving the front, even though they were certain it would result in a disaster due to inadequate preparation. So, in order to respond through actions to the insults they had received, they took up their weapons and were true: and in the battle of Cerro del, which lasted from 7 to 12 April, 1937, they lost 9 killed, 45 wounded and upwards of twenty fighters were initially reported as missing in action.

After the battle of Cerro del, the survivors returned en masse to Barcelona, saddened and exhausted. But once they were in Barcelona and had calmed down, they found that the determination to fight on grew again. Camillo Berneri drafted a plan for the establishment of an International Brigade which would operate on the Aragon front, spearheaded by the remnants of the former Italian Column. Its rules and statutes had already been drawn up and he worked like a demon to overcome all sorts of vicissitudes and secure the necessary help.



An account of the contribution of the Italian anarchists in the tragic events of May 1937 in Barcelona is of supreme importance for any understanding of the reasons that led to the demise of the first column of foreign revolutionaries to come to the aid of the Spanish proletariat: the Italian Column, founded in Barcelona on 5 August, 1936.

These volunteers had undergone their glorious baptism by fire on 28 August 1936 at Monte Pelado. They fought in the push against Huesca on 15 September, and on 20 October saw action in Tardienta and Torreseca and again in Almudevar on 21 November, giving generously of their blood on each occasion. But during this time, a crisis arose inside the ranks of the column.

In the wake of the bloody fighting in Amudevar the latent differences between the bulk of the column's membership, namely the anarchists, and those who belonged to other factions grew more acute. Rosselli, Battistelli and others broke away from the anarchists to set up the Matteotti Battalion attached to the Durruti Column. The anarchists then set up an International Battalion attached to the Ascaso Column. But in the meantime the question of militarisation of the Antifascist Militias, which is to say their conversion into units of the regular army cropped up. It was chiefly on this issue that deep seated doctrinal differences and glaring psychological contrasts between the Italian anarchists and their Spanish colleagues had come to light.

Without any doubt, the aversion to militarisation was most pronounced among the Italian fighters. But their determination to fight against fascism overrode all sacrifice, all bitter experience and disappointment.

Had their Spanish colleagues, whilst sticking to their own particular views on the matter, shown themselves less scathingly and contemptuously unappreciative of the mentality of their Italian comrades (and there is a huge difference between Italian anarchism and Spanish anarchism in terms of tradition, culture and indeed temperament) then the likelihood is that the conversion of the militias into a 'People's Army' would not have been enough to see the Italian Battalion wound up.

Instead, many Spanish comrades (especially some who held exalted military ranks) were harsh in dismissing the malaise widespread among our comrades as merely an excuse for deserting the fight. At Huesca commander Jover had let slip a remark that they found deeply wounding. A point was reached where a decision was made to quit the front.

But this decision was reported to the Spanish comrades on the eve of some scheduled operations. Once again the Italian comrades had the charge of cowardice thrown at them. Exasperated, they immediately declared their readiness to take part in the approaching battle before leaving the front, even though they were certain it would result in a disaster due to inadequate preparation. So, in order to respond through actions to the insults they had received, they took up their weapons one more time: and in the battle of Carascal, which lasted from 7 to 12 April, 1937, they lost 9 killed, 43 wounded and upwards of twenty fighters were initially reported as missing in action.

After the battle of Carascal, the survivors returned en masse to Barcelona, saddened and embittered. But once they were in Barcelona and had calmed down, they found that the determination to fight on grew again. Camillo Berneri drafted a plan for the establishment of an International Brigade which would operate on the Aragon front, spearheaded by the remnants of the former Italian Column. Its rules and statutes had already been drawn up and he worked like a demon to overcome all sorts of obstacles and secure the necessary help.

Meanwhile, the Italian comrades had contacted their greatest friend: Domingo Ascaso. Ascaso, who was to be murdered in the streets of Barcelona only a few days later, - and not at the hands of the fascists who had taken the life of that other Ascaso, Francisco, in the assault on the Atarazanas fascist stronghold back on 19 July 1936 - was thoroughly conversant with the Italian anarchists, their heroism and their thinking. He understood them and liked them. With his help, it was decided that a battalion made up exclusively of Italian anarchists would be reorganised and would leave at the earliest possible date for a front as yet undecided.

So it was on the morning of 3 May two representatives of the Italian anarchists made contact with the commander of the Tierra y Libertad column which had just returned from Madrid - with a view to determining the assignment of this new battalion. They came away dazed and saddened by the terms in which commander Ceva expressed his opinion of the Italians. Although Ascaso intervened in an attempt to effect a reconciliation, the negotiations were abruptly broken off.

A few hours later, in the afternoon, the first reports of the communist 'putsch' that was to turn the Catalan capital into a battlefield reached the Ascaso barracks where the stormy talks had been held. The 'Telefonica' (Telephone Exchange) had been attacked.

Decisions were impossible amid the initial surprise that this provocation had created. The Spartacus Barracks was to become one of the most important centres of the fighting. At this point it was occupied by around 5,000 men: 200 Italians, a few dozen volunteers of other nationalities, and men of the Tierra y Libertad column along with 20 artillery pieces, 16 armoured cars and a single machine-gun. The Italians were unarmed.

Even as inquiries were being made about what was going on in the city, the barracks was struck by explosive shells. Two people were killed. At first it was decided that the Italians would be left at liberty to adopt whatever position they saw fit. To a man, they placed themselves at the disposal of the district committee. The committee met in the presence of Ceva, the Tierra y Libertad commander, Varela, the commissar in charge of the barracks, Sanz of the Durruti Column, who happened to be in Barcelona on a few days leave, and the barracks delegate.

In view of the increasing gravity of the situation, urgent steps were taken. In the surrounding districts, the people had thrown up dozens of barricades with incredible speed to frustrate the provocateurs. The Italian comrades were entrusted with the defence of the barracks' most important position. The sole available machine-gun was issued to comrade Zanasi. All of the adjacent streets were closed off.

The night of 3-4 May was spent in anxiously waiting. Explosive shells continued to hit the building, with the rate of fire escalating as morning broke on 4 May. Two of the Italian comrades in the barracks, namely Ferrari (who had entered Spain under the auspices of the Giustizia e Liberta faction and promptly enlisted in the Ascaso confederal column) and De Perretti tried to venture outside, despite orders and advice to the contrary. They were unarmed but one of them was wearing a red armband. On reaching the Plaza del Angel they were stopped by PSUC members and shot. Ferrari had been married in the barracks only the day before.

As the shells continued to rain down, repeat telephone calls were made to the Karl Marx barracks barely 600 metres away, and occupied by communists, to ask them to stop firing. Their answer was that they had no idea where the firing was coming from. Comrade

Di Maioi was seriously wounded. Meanwhile other Italian comrades were dug in at various points in the city, especially in the 'Malatesta House', in the premises of the Foodstuffs Union, the CNT-FAI headquarters, etc. Repeated appeals for help reached the Spartacus barracks from these places as well as from the seat of the CNT-FAI regional committee. On 4 May the CNT regional premises reported that they were under serious threat. The loss of the premises on the Avenida Durruti where all the offices of the CNT and FAI were concentrated would have dealt a serious blow to the Barcelona proletariat.

On instructions from Sanz and Ceva, Italian comrades clambered into four armoured cars. Under a deadly hail of fire they crossed the Plaza del Angel, flanking the Generalidad (all places where communists, police and Estat Catala members held sway) and made it to CNT-FAI headquarters. This daring sortie was crucially important. These same comrades then occupied the premises adjacent to the Regional committee base and did much to render it impregnable.

Meanwhile a rumour had begun to circulate that Camillo Berneri and Francesco Barbieri had gone missing, and requests for men and munitions were pouring in from all parts of the city.

The Foodstuffs Union was still cut off and its occupants needed weapons. Six armoured cars set out from the Spartacus Barracks. Fighting every inch of the way, it took them three hours to reach the Control Patrol headquarters in the Calle Cortes. The weapons they delivered were carried to the Union by some courageous libertarian women. The Italians who took part in the defence of the building, among them Cafiero, Marcon, Zambonini, etc., fought heroically. Marcon was killed and Zambonini was gravely wounded.

To bring help to the comrades stuck in the 'Malatesta House', which had been partly occupied by communists and Assault Guards, some armoured cars had been sent out as early as 4 May but they had been forced to turn back. A further attempt was made on the morning of 5 May. Six armoured cars set out, manned half by Italians and half by French and Spaniards. Two armoured cars were knocked out by hand grenades from Assault Guards. That same day, outside the 'Malatesta House', the grandson of Francisco Ferrer, convalescing from wounds sustained on the front was murdered while out walking with a woman.

The Italian comrades rescued from the Malatesta House' and from the Foodstuffs Union mostly made for the Spartacus barracks. They brought news of the situation at large and about the killing of many comrades. This was when the arrests were reported of the Libertarian Youth members found dismembered some days later in the streets of Ripoll.

Such news and the ongoing fire from the Karl Marx barracks which had claimed the lives of another three comrades, inflamed the minds of the occupants of the Spartacus barracks. Endless telephone calls had been made to the Karl Marx barracks to urge the communist commanders to call off their fire and thus far no reprisals had been taken against this treacherous onslaught. But the reply was always the same: the communists in the Karl Marx had no idea who could be firing at the anarchists in the Spartacus barracks! It was decided that enough was enough. The first sortie saw the occupation of all the buildings separating the two barracks. A second sortie led to the occupation of the tallest building. Both operations cost a number of lives, among them that of a Spanish section leader.

At 9.00 that evening, the decision was made to press on with an attack designed to capture the communist barracks which was a real fortress and an extremely important strategic

position. If need be, there were 500 cannon shells available for firing. Everything stood ready and the Italian comrades were in the front ranks. They quickly formed an assault party. The direction of the attack was entrusted to the commander from the Tierra y Libertad, who had 40,000 men at his disposal. But as the day wore on, Federica Montseny and Garcia Oliver began their campaign to induce the anarchists and CNT members to abandon the struggle. Commander Ceva, who had gone for consultations with the CNT regional committee, returned that night with orders to call off the attack.

We shall not enter here into a discussion of the stance adopted on this occasion by the CNT and the FAI. But for the record we have to say that disagreement erupted again between the Spanish anarchists and their Italian colleagues. Albeit reluctantly, the former agreed to the decisions of the responsible committees. The Italians did not. Commander Ceva laboured the point that had the fighting spread with any likelihood of success for the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, civil war would have erupted among antifascists, and that the British and French navies which had appeared off the port of Barcelona on 3 May, which is to say, on the eve of the dematico-communist putsch, would have stepped in. The Italian comrades were against the letting slip of this chance to deal a decisive blow to put paid to the counter-revolutionary provocations and manoeuvres.

Even though the followers of the CNT and FAI throughout the city had set about dismantling their barricades, whilst registering their protest with their leaders, a strong contingent of communists and Assault Guards launched an attack on the Spartacus barracks from the France Station on the night of 5-6 May. The comrades moved out to head them off: they threw up barricades in the area and barred their way at the Avenida Icaria. The day passed amid contradictory reports. Communists and Assault Guards were attacking confederal forces everywhere. Against the wishes of the barracks leadership, a determination to give it everything gathered strength, especially among the Italian comrades.

There was a heavy exchange of gunfire between the opposing barricades in the Avenida Icaria. Two German comrades crept to within a few metres of the enemy position and threw their grenades. They perished on the return journey. That evening the news came that the occupants of the headquarters of the Glassworkers' Union had come under attack from the communists and were in serious danger. Zanasi, in command of two armoured cars, took a team of Italians to occupy the union headquarters and the communist attack was beaten off. On 7 May the 'cease fire' order from the CNT was repeated with even greater insistence.

The Spanish leaders in the Spartacus barracks, headed by commander Sanz, complied and began to pull back from all strategic positions. There was further skirmishing overnight but by the morning of 8 May the anarchists had abandoned all their positions. The Italian comrades who were manning the Avenida Icaria barricade despatched a spokesman to propose a truce to the enemy and in token of good faith they set about partly dismantling their barricade. But the communists could not obtain their leaders' permission to follow suit. Agreement was reached only after some hours. The Italian comrades then quit the last position held by the defenders of the Barcelona proletariat.

During the May Events, the Italian anarchists, whether part of the strong contingent in the Spartacus barracks or the little groups scattered around the union premises, in the CNT-FAI headquarters etc. fought heroically alongside their Spanish comrades. On many occasions theirs had been the decisive action. They had shed more of their blood on the altar of the Spanish Revolution.

Their performance during the struggle against the counter-revolution had two contradictory effects. The fighting had barely subsided when the Tierra y Libertad commander, Ceva, a brave and loyal fighter, sent for the two delegates of the Italian anarchists and told them that, having seen them in action, he was retracting the offensive remarks he had made about the Italian comrades on the morning of 3 May and he expressed his admiration. The commander of the Durruti Division, Sanz, (who had on other occasions echoed the rather dismal opinion of the Italian volunteers widespread among the Spanish anarchists) immediately set about organising an International Battalion made up of personnel whom he had seen under fire for himself within the framework of his division about the reliability of which he had some misgivings.

The Spanish comrades had at last come to appreciate that the Italian anarchists might not see eye to eye with them in their appraisal of the situation, but that their intransigence in terms of their ideals was not a cover for any cowardice. They were ready to make any sacrifice provided they were convinced that they would be of service to the common cause. But at the same time, the May events had deepened the disagreements. The Italian anarchists felt increasingly alienated from the tactics of their Spanish comrades.

At the end of those days of tragedy, they felt even more disappointed in their hopes. Once they had laid down their arms, they learned of the death of the man who had been one of their most enthusiastic mentors. The corpse of Camillo Berneri had been identified in the morgue.

Abducted from his home on 5 May along with Barbieri by Generalidad police and PSUC personnel he had been coldly murdered and his body dumped under cover of the night by his killers and their accomplices in high places. And the murder of Berneri was the last straw for the column of Italian volunteers in Spain. A substantial number of Italians followed the Tierra y Libertad column within which they formed the 25th Ortiz Division, or the Garibaldi Brigades. But the Italian column which had pioneered volunteer service in Spain was never revived.

**Aldo Aguzzi**

## ALLUNGARE LE MANI (Reaching out a hand)

On Monday 19 September, in the region of Rovereto (Trento) an operation involving carabinieri in battle order led to the arrest of five anarchists (Antonio BUDINI, Jean WEIR, Evangelia TZIOUTZIA, Christos STRADIGOPOULOS and Carlo TESSERI) accused of armed robbery. They are now being held in prison in Rovereto\*. What they are claimed to be guilty of is having lightened a bank of some of its criminal responsibility. As always, men of the State are now at work to blow the event out of all proportion. The newspapers are oozing with delirium about *commandos*, *international crime organisations*, *extremely dangerous gangs*, etc.

Antonio, Jean, Christos, Carlo and Eva are dangerous in that they are anarchists, individuals in permanent revolt against exploitation, power and authority. The robbery obviously has nothing to do with all this. They say we have reached the death of any concept of Truth, of any claim to absolute objectivity. Yet the law is increasingly becoming the only criteria of evaluation. Innocent/guilty: An *objective* way of dividing, filing and judging single individuals.

Those arrested are THIEVES, there is no getting away from it.

The democratic and much extolled dialogue of different opinions does not function in these cases - there is no question about it. And if it were the banks who are the criminals (international, yes, and very dangerous indeed)? Who finances war? Who is responsible for the most abject economic speculation and the practice of starving the population of the southern hemisphere?

We are not interested in whether or not the arrested comrades are guilty of the crime they are accused of. In a society based on domination, inequality and the total expropriation of individuals, IT IS NOT UNJUST TO TAKE. May each one, armed with freedom, choose his own means - without judges and without keepers. In affinity with all those who want to build relations that are free from the violence of hierarchy and money, we will oppose ourselves - and invite others to do the same - to any attempt at repression or isolation of our comrades.

ARM YOURSELF WITH FREEDOM!

**individualita anarchie**  
(anarchist individualities)

\* **EDITOR'S NOTE (April 1995):** Eva was released because of the absence of evidence against her. Jean, Antonio and Christos were each sentenced to five years in prison. Carlo, having served a previous sentence for political action, received six years. Solidarity greetings can be sent to: Jean Helen Weir, Via Comporgano 40, 20090 OPERA (Milan), Italy, and to Antonio Budini, Christos Stradigopoulos, and Carlo Teseri, Via Pilati 6, 38100 TRENTO, Italy.

## ON THE EVENTS IN TRENTO

an open letter from Budini, Tesseri, Stradigopoulos & Weir

Comrades:

**We are speaking out to clarify a few things that are dear to us.**

First of all, we thank all those who have expressed their solidarity and those who will set about doing so through a common practice of struggle.

We are anarchist individuals moved by a common sentiment of freedom. Our personal need for money would never have found satisfaction in exploitation, either on our backs or those of others. We therefore decided to turn our attention to a bank, a structure whose responsibility we are all aware of.

The action we carried out should therefore be considered an act of reappropriation for personal needs.

We tried, and it didn't work.

Immediately following our arrest in the Chizzola mountains near Trento on 19 September, 1994, the local press began to pave the way for a frame-up that did not lose time in taking form. In huge titles they presented us as an international gang of anarchist robbers, and to reinforce this thesis they presented us as the authors of two other bank robberies that had taken place at the same time in Ravina, Trento, on 20 July, 1994. Our photographs were published in the local newspapers for days on end and were shown on regional TV on a number of occasions. Jean was presented as "wife of ex-Red Brigades leader (*sic*) Alfredo Bonanno", in our opinion, to wave the spectre of "terrorism", backing up their thesis of "robbery in a political framework".

Antonio received notification of confiscation of material seized from his home in Milan on 19 September, as "required for investigations aimed at asserting the involvement of others in the robbery, and the participation of Budini himself in subversive organisations". Since then Antonio, Carlo, Christos and Jean have formally been accused of the above robberies.

It is easy to deduce that they are preparing to saddle us with all their unsolved cases, and, by investigating in the sphere of our friendships, that they will try to involve other comrades in order to support their accusatory theses and inferences.

We are convinced of the need for mobilisation in order to break up this criminalisation, mobilisation not strictly limited to this case, but addressed towards other fields of the struggle.

Good work comrades.

Antonio Budini, Carlo Tesseri, Christos Stradigopoulos, Jean Weir.

### EVERY DOG WILL HAVE HIS DAY

Using the Trento case as a pretext, the Italian police and judiciary have made strenuous efforts to intimidate the publishers of the anarchist weekly *Canenero* (Black Dog), and to frame comrades on ridiculous charges. Despite these machinations, Anarchism remains a vital force for social justice in Northern Italy. *Canenero* has conducted well attended meetings throughout the region. The Kate Sharpley Library asks you, dear reader, to show your solidarity in whatever way you can. Messages of support, or requests for more information, should be sent to: *Canenero*, Casella Postale 4120, 50135 FIRENZE, Italy.