

# EXCERPTS FROM "TSCHAIPAIEW: DAS BATAILLON DER 21 NATIONEN"

## THE FIRST WEEKS

Three days after our arrival in Albacete we were taken to Tarazona by trucks. We already looked like half-soldiers because in Albacete we had been dressed in a cap, jacket, and backpack. What was still missing would come, somehow. We had started singing. The village fountain in the market square was illuminated, and half of the population had come together to welcome us cordially. The next day we joined provisionally formed companies. Then the training. Exercises and group attack practice. (Today it occurs to me that we don't even practice defense or withdrawal tactics. Nobody thought about the retreat either, only about the attack. And in the history of the battalion, we have never given up the terrain we conquered.)

A few days later we received rifles and machine guns, learned about armaments. Then we still didn't have a place to shoot. We had to march for two hours to be able to shoot in the field. Five shots and some theory were, for the time being, all our training as shooters. A maneuver with the French battalion that was in a neighboring village ended our training. In the meantime, a good relationship had been created between the internationals and the population of the village. Although in the entire battalion only two or three people spoke Spanish, most of us soon found cordial personal contact with the inhabitants. This was expressed in many ways. When in the morning we marched to the Plaza del Mercado and the battalion stopped, we heard cheers and greetings from our friends from all the doors and windows. The young men accompanied us along the way and the girls formed a line to see us pass.

During the lunch break, a large number of the comrades took the opportunity to learn the language. We also tried to familiarize ourselves with the situation, customs and work of the population. The population of the town was mostly made up of rural workers and small peasants. As in all parts of Spain, they had been exposed to the most ruthless exploitation and

arbitrariness of the large landowners. Small peasants were also at a very low standard of living due to the backwardness of the agrarian economy and the great demands on their leases. For all these reasons, the goals and the struggle of the Popular Front were understood very well here. For the same reason, most of the men capable of fighting had volunteered to the front to defend the progress that the Republic had provided them. Hence the very cordial feeling of the population towards us. A party with the population in the largest room of the town brought this international union to its highest expression. We sang our songs in German, Czech, Polish and Yugoslav, and the Spanish boys and girls also sang their songs and danced their dances. And long after we left, we were still connected by letter with the population of Tarazona.

And then, at the beginning of December, we had to say goodbye to the welcoming people and their friendly population. But in Valencia we were welcomed by the same cordiality. In our barracks in Valencia, along with the internationals, there were also Spanish militiamen with whom we soon made friends. We liked to tell our Spanish comrades things about our lives and ask them about their lives and their struggles. But with our speech we were still stumbling. We understood each other much better with the music. Some comrades had bought musical instruments and with mandolins, guitars and violins we entered singing and playing in the large dining room. The Spaniards applauded and shouted with enthusiasm and in the end we sang *The Internacional* together.

On one of those nights there was an alarm. But when the battalion was ready to leave, it was clarified that it was a false alarm. Every day we followed the news about the hard fights against Madrid with great interest. We were already impatient, we wanted to go to the front and we didn't understand the reason for our presence in Valencia. The anti-fascists of Valencia gave the battalion a flag as a symbol of fraternal solidarity. The battalion commander thanked them on our behalf and promised that we would be worthy of them as soldiers for freedom and that the flag would go in front of us in our battles. A few days later there was a second alarm and 24 hours later we were in the province of Teruel to begin our first fight.

Julius Schneider, 1st Company

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# THE TERUEL FRONT

## Departure to the Front

We have been in Alfambra for three days, a small place 15 kilometers from Teruel. Our comrades are willing to fight and prepare for the first fight. Finally, the call! The training worked and in two minutes the whole battalion is fully equipped. The companies report: Everyone in their positions! The Tschapaiev Battalion, ready to march.

At 11 p.m. the battalion prepared for combat and entered into formation in a place in front of the village. The commander spoke briefly to the battalion, then the leaders of the companies translate it and speak. Franek speaks to us, he emphasizes that as children of the great fighters for the freedom of our countries, in the coming battles we must honor the name of the legendary hero of the October Revolution, Tschapaiev, who is named on our flag. After the talks we sang the battalion's song in all languages. The flags fly in the cold night air and the singing sounds defiant in the dark:

"... each of us is Tschapaiev's son,  
"onward, to the first battalion victory!"

We get into buses and drive to Teruel with the lights dimmed. After 3 hours, the engines stop. The Kommandant gives orders in a low voice. He says: "Comrades, we are 3 kilometers away from the enemy." We expect more orders from our company and platoon chiefs, who take us in small groups along the mountain to our position. We make our way in darkness up 800 meters above the enemy and occupy the entire ravine of the cemetery of Monte Viego. In the meantime it's 5 in the morning, The artillery doesn't fire any more than in previous nights, but it shoots differently. It is targeting the fascist positions that we will attack at dawn.

## B. Maslankiewicz 2nd Company (translated from the Polish)

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### Casimir

Casimir joined the battalion in Tarazona. He was about 40 years old, Yugoslav, energetic, military, you could tell that he was a former officer. He had been educated in a cadet school in Serbia before the Great War. During it he was promoted to officer, he distinguished himself, despite how young he was - he was then between 18 to 20 years old - for his courage and military ability and became captain and commander of an attack battalion. After the war he attended a military academy for General Staff officers. But like some of the best among the officers of that war, he got closer and closer to the revolutionary movement for the freedom of his country. That's why he was expelled from his "caste" and sent to jail. Then he emigrated to France.

He was fluent in German, French, all Slavic languages and a little Spanish. In Tarazona he was entrusted with the 1st Company. He demanded discipline and did not spare his military comrades. Thus he managed in a few days to unite hundreds of men, largely completely untrained and of many nationalities, in a strong military unit. The 1st Company, under his command, in fact became in a very short time a unit highlighted for its military capacity. In addition, the company loved him and trusted him.

Shortly before the battalion's march towards Teruel, he gave a talk before his company that was wonderful. He said: "Comrades, our future is like a rare wonderful garden, full of beautiful flowers and fruits. We would all like to go in there. But we see a high wall and so far we haven't found a door. Now we finally see the door, but it is guarded by cruel guardians and death machines. Despite everything, we are going to go in, no matter what it costs."

In the attack on Teruel, Casimir distinguished himself by his great tranquility and calmness. He led his company by making signs with a cane and by means of a whistle. He was the first to climb the hills that were taken in the morning at 9.30. He advanced at the head of his company to

within a few hundred meters of Teruel. In the middle of the most furious fire, he walked back and forth, as if no shot was for him. He kept yelling at his comrades, he ordered them, yes, to cover themselves better. While the company was covered, he went to a building that was empty, to cover the positions from there. He had barely entered the house when a mine hit him and tore him to pieces

By order of Ewald, the then first sergeant, Gusti Stöhr, took command of the 1st Company, a command that he has honorably held after his wound in Villanueva de la Cañada.

K-z (maybe Kantorowicz?)

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## Peter Fünfroeken

In 1915, the then 18-year-old Peter Fünfroeken was called under the Kaiser's flag. After he served three years in the war, he returned to his homeland, the Saarland, and became a miner. He became a fierce anti-fascist. When Hitler occupied the Saarland in 1934, Peter participated in the anti-fascist struggle and was a delegate to the Saarland Freedom Front. After the Saarland plebiscite, he was expelled from his homeland; he had to emigrate with his wife and five children.

On November 20, 1936, he joined the Spanish militia. On December 27, he fell in the attack on Mount Viego as an officer of the Machine Gun Company.

A few weeks later his wife wrote to me about her husband's death: *"It's hard for me, but you will avenge him. Say hello to all my husband's friends, they are also my friends."*

Soldier A. SCHUTZ (Machine Gun Company)

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## The Three Friends

While I was in the hospital, I learned that three good friends from my Company had fallen, comrades Saul, Sauerland and Matucek.

Comrade Saul's death was very hard for me. I worked with him in our Austrian homeland in the same company. For me he was always a great comrade, even more so, we have loved each other as brothers.

I really only got to know Comrade Matucek at the front. As frank and simple as he was dressed in civilian clothes, he was brave and generous at the front. He fell like a hero.

My friend Sauerland has been my fighting comrade since February. We went on strike together in July, we marched with the League of Defenders of the Republic and fought shoulder to shoulder on the barricades of Vienna.

I have lost them, they gave their lives so that we can gain freedom.

Alfambra, 9 January 1937

Lieutenant P. Wenzel (Machine Gun Company)

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The Celebration of the Three Ls (Lenin, Luxemburg, Liebknecht) by the 3rd Company of the Tschapaiev Battalion

On the afternoon of January 21, we gathered in the reserve position a little behind the front to remember those who had given their lives in defense of progressive humanity.

A small camp fire illuminated the portraits of our great leaders Marx, Engels, Lenin, who, framed by the red combat flags, raised the spirit of this party.

The fight song "*Arriba, arriba, a la lucha*" started the celebration. Then comrade Lützow remembered our three great masters Lenin, Liebknecht and Luxemburg. During a minute of silence we promised loyalty to our fallen comrades at Teruel. Comrade Becker spoke to the Hungarian comrades. Next, a Czech, a Spaniard and an Italian spoke about international solidarity and its triumph in Spain's civil war. Finally, our Battalion Commander, Comrade Otto, addressed some serious and encouraging words to us. He urged us to reinforce the good reputation of the Tschapaiev Battalion with new and great deeds and thereby to avenge our beloved dead in the best way.

We promised it!

The "*Internationale*" closed this unforgettable celebration.

We still want to remember a special gesture of camaraderie from our Hungarian comrades. They had received gifts from Paris sent by the women of their country that they distributed among all the comrades of the 3rd Company.

Herbert (3rd Company)

(From the battalion newspaper "*Der kämpfende Antifaschist*", no. 16, Teruel Front)

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## The Baptism of Fire

Our baptism of fire should begin soon. We have reached the starting position of the Teruel front.

Preparation by our artillery. The attack of the 3rd Company to reinforce the right wing is at 8.20. Most of the platoon is made up of German emigrants who have come to Spain without any military instruction. The head of the platoon, an old anti-fascist former German non-commissioned officer, has provided people with good military training during a four-week preparation period and has earned great sympathy and the greatest military respect during that time.

Now, finally, he had been ordered to attack with his platoon, and with the company that has always been considered the best of the battalion along with the 1st. Soon we exceeded the half-hour advantage that the others had. In the midst of the heavy infantry fire by the fascists, the platoon advanced with leaps, incredibly fast. When the city of Teruel was within reach of our group of machine gunners, we stopped and fired.

In the late afternoon, when Heinrich had to lead the platoon back through a chain of hills where we later built our position, he showed the same skill as in the attack.

The lives of the comrades who had been entrusted to him was the most sacred thing for him; all the comrades of his platoon saw it and knew it. He could be seen, pistol in hand and mostly in the middle of his platoon, directing the comrades and strictly reprimanding those who ran a few meters too far without cover. The comrades knew that Heinrich tried to avoid bullets, but they foresaw that he would die in the attempt.

Soon what everyone feared happened. In a new attack on the city still in the hands of the fascists, the platoon leader, Heinrich, was mortally wounded while he was running to help a wounded comrade. Not only our platoon, but the entire 3rd Company and all the Tschapaiev Battalion suffered a great loss due to the death of our platoon leader Heinrich. Undoubtedly, in the difficult days of the 3rd Company that lie ahead, he would have been promoted to head of the Company. The commander of the battalion would thus have had a whole man, politically and militarily, at the head of the 3rd Company.



## Georg 3rd Company

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### ON THE MÁLAGA FRONT

On January 27, the battalions of the XIII Brigade were removed from the Teruel Front. It has already been said that the comrades, despite their great exhaustion and the large number of casualties, did not willingly abandon the positions that they themselves had built.

The battalions, that is, the 8th Tschapaiew Battalion and the two French battalions - the 10th and 11th - returned to Valencia in two days and then were sent for intensive reorganization. The numbers of casualties of the two French battalions had been very high. So it seemed appropriate to merge the remains of both battalions into a single one that..... ultimately bore with honor and pride the name of the young French anti-fascist "Henri Vuillemin", under the direction of his commander Lehs.

The Tschapaiew Battalion went to Requena; there it received the complement of comrades German, Poles, Austrians and many other nations. At that time, the Spanish battalions "Juan Marco" and "Otumba" were also part of the XIII Brigade, and have remained closely linked to us since then. The few days we were able to spend in Requena to reorganize, were full of intense military and organizational work. The numerous newly arrived comrades quickly integrated into the ranks of the "old". At that time, the battalion was also visited by Maurice Thorez and Franz Dahlem.

These days of reorganization were full of concern for the fate of Malaga. When it was known that Málaga had fallen - it was learned at the same time that the alarm order was given for the battalion - no comrade had any other thought or desire than to go to the threatened South Front to plug the gap.

During the last days in Requena the Spanish and international comrades paraded; it was very good that a disciplined army was beginning to form on the basis of a multitude of heroic militiamen, guerrillas and volunteers. The battalion repeated the parade in Valencia during transport. It was a military demonstration. The battalion was dressed relatively well and uniformly, the impression on the population was strong and the self-awareness of the battalion, on which heavy tasks were going to fall, grew thanks to this powerful demonstration.

The battalion advanced singing to the South Front after a long journey in trucks; they sang as they entered the newly bombed Almería and sang as they marched along the Almería-Málaga road.

What they found: On this road was an unfathomable mass of people fleeing to the East: tens of thousands, mothers with children in their arms, old people barefoot, militiamen who were alive but shattered, lying down, staggering, crawling, fleeing in front of the fascists, whose beastly hordes were coming after them. Hundreds, thousands of these people lay in the ditches along the road, fainting from hunger and weakness, killed or injured by machine guns and bombs and the planes that were crushing, without stopping, this current of the poor and poorest.

Seeing this, the songs of the comrades fell silent. Then our voices rose again, but in a very different way. We understood what we were seeing, and we sang without the slightest joy, as a means of transmitting our own understanding, our own strength. The moral effect was great. This battalion that walked singing against the enemy, hundreds of disciplined soldiers, returned confidence and strength to those who were fleeing.

From the mountains to which they had fled, some of the inhabitants of the coastal villages returned to the homes that they had abandoned. Many who were on their way to Almeria, turned around. Hundreds of militiamen asked to be part of our battalion, and soon showed that they did not lack courage or military capacity, that they had not fled out of cowardice or the superiority of the enemy, but because they had been betrayed, sold-out, abandoned and had panicked.

In Albuñol, we found the outposts of the Republican army, the 6th Brigade, which, alone and unshakable, kept its guard there. (From this comes the close friendship between the VI and the XIII Brigades, which later, when we were shoulder to shoulder on the Pozoblanco Front for a long time, continued and was reinforced). Assured by the 6th Brigade, the battalion advanced a few more kilometers along the coastal road, consolidated our right flank in the mountains, and captured the important city of Calahonda from the fascists.

On February 11 the battalion was removed from Requena, on the 13th it arrived at the Southern Front and on the 18th it took up advanced positions against Motril, in anticipation of possible attacks on the right flank that were planned by the fascists from the Granada Front.

However, the impression of these few days spent on the Málaga Front remain unforgettable for all comrades and have a special place in the history of the battalion.

Alfred Kantorowicz

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## March Towards the Unknown

by

Franz Trautsch (Sergeant Major of the battalion)

After the hard weeks of fighting in Teruel, the battalion was sent to Requena. As soon as the reorganization was over, there was still a lot to do. The comrades were sitting next to the radio that brought us the latest news from around the world when we heard the news: "Málaga has fallen into the hands of the fascists." Not a voice was heard, we all remained silent, absorbed and thoughtful. Then the saving voice of a comrade: "Málaga is not yet all of Spain." Then the discussion began. How was it possible and what were the consequences of this occupation by the fascists for us? Then, thought turned into desire and spread through the

room: Yes, we could be down there! But a journey of more than 600 kilometers separated us from this combat zone. It was already late when the comrades went to sleep.

In the morning, around 3:30, the Battalion Commander, Otto Brunner, was ordered to go to the Brigade, and not even half an hour had passed when it was announced: "MÁLAGA".

The commander of the Brigade received the information: "The Tschapaiew Battalion of the International Brigades is ready to march." Many people from this small place with whom the comrades had established friendships despite the difficulties of the language in the short time they were there, came to say goodbye. Like a fire, the news had spread all over the town: the comrades of the International Brigades are leaving. Many girls seemed really sad that the friendships of such a short time were ended, and many comrades got an address in their pockets, although understanding each other was hardly possible because so few had mastered the written or spoken language of the country. And yet, a single thought of hope was conveyed even if not spoken: "If I still live, I think of you". Old mothers had tears in their eyes undoubtedly thinking: "Will luck be with you as with my poor son who risks his young life in Madrid"? And in many silent handshakes, the men of the place said: "Come to the aid of our fallen brothers and sons!" Nobody dared to ask: "Where are you going?", but everyone knew: Málaga.

Slowly the convoy left through the mountainous terrain, and when the towers of Valencia emerged from afar, we all knew it: the South Front! After a quick meal in Valencia, we continue south all the available buses. It's been dark and everyone gets as comfortable as they can to get some rest.

The gray morning sees the battalion advance towards Alicante where the convoy loads up and goes on without stopping. The beautiful Levant passes before us, trees loaded with oranges show the fertility of this land and make us think: fascism will never reign here.

At night, the convoy stops. What's going on? Have we arrived yet? No, it has to be stopped because fascism has presented its *carte de visite*: Almeria is being bombed by Italian and German planes.

Early on we entered the city singing. After a short tour of some streets, the song dies. Thousands of women and children, from breastfed children to old people, lie on the streets and spend the night with the belongings they've saved, between bomb craters and ruins of what were beautiful homes. Here and there a dead mule and in a corner a dead Spanish comrade as well. Refugees from Málaga.

Slowly we leave the city, our song now resounding powerfully in the streets because now we would like to give courage to you, women and children, so that you can better endure your hardships, because we are going to avenge you.

The road extends clear along the Mediterranean coast. At 100 kilometers per hour the vehicles continue their advance. As far as the eyes can see, there is a dark torrent of people, refugees from Málaga. The picture presented to us is shocking. Men and women, old people and children. Hunger in their eyes, no shoes on their feet. Sitting on mules or traveling in small wagons, the terror of the past hours imprinted on their faces. There on a mule, a woman with a child of barely six weeks squeezed against her chest, there an old man, tirelessly holding the cart that carries a sick old woman, crawling towards the unknown. Horrible, horrible, horrible vision.

Our singing sounds louder. We want to tell you: rest assured, we are here to help you, to defeat the enemy, so that you can return to the place where your cradle is, to which your heart belongs, where your house is.

Everything is empty, everything is quiet when we entered Adra, the last town before we must meet the enemy. It must be, because no one can tell us where the enemy is, or how far they have progressed. Even the head of the Spanish brigade that is here only has approximate knowledge. Well, at least he can tell us where the last outposts were, he certainly knows that a small town, a little off the main Almeria-Málaga military road, is still free, but what is beyond that is No Man's Land

Brief reflection of the military leadership, careful study of the maps, then a clear order: enter the place, occupy the heights in front and camp in a position that protects a retreat. If the enemy comes, give him the welcome

he deserves, but don't give him an inch of land. Although we are fucked up after two days of travel and our stomachs roar because we haven't eaten hot food since left Valencia, as soon as the battalion arrives at this place, it goes into the position that we have been ordered, without even asking when we will eat or when we will sleep. It takes two or three hours to climb the first mountain of the Sierra Nevada that it is our mission to occupy. And again the day is coming to an end.

In the barracks of the General Staff, there is a hectic coming and going because it is their duty to supply the troops. Where to find such a thing now, after having distributed our food and drink to thousands of refugees? Finally, good ideas and remedies arise here and although the food is scarce, at least we now have something. The kitchen is quickly organized and the food is prepared in a hurry. In the morning, food is smoked and the smell of a good bean soup reaches our nose. The non-commissioned supply officers find mules and carts in the almost abandoned town. You have to requisition what is necessary and that's how it's done. Then, to the mountains.

During all this time there is a lot of activity on the part of the General Staff, because as soon as the news arrives in the mountains that the internationals are here, a picture is created that we had not counted on. One by one, the Spaniards who had hidden from the fascists in the mountains they know so well come out, and the place fills up. They come armed largely with rifles and with tremendous hunger. What to do? To push them back? No, it's impossible. Each rifle is urgently needed at the front. A brief telephone conversation with the command and it is already clear: Whoever wants to join our battalion can do it. Anyone who wants to go back to the rear can go, but his rifle stays here. There are very few who want to back down, everyone wants to stay with us, because they know that with us they can fight and they can win. They have confidence in us. And we have the duty to justify that trust, despite the difficulties of the language. Our song sounds harmoniously, with this we want to say to them: Be calm, we are coming, we will help to beat the enemy, so that you can go back to where your cradle was, where your heart is, where your home is.

But we can still see another favorable sign: a few hours later, after we have passed through the secondary road, the moment they see us, many of

those who fled turn around and return to their homes. They return to their work, so the supply of the population and the troops is no longer in question.

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## Our Spanish Comrades and Us

After the fall of Málaga we quickly headed south. We came into contact with the enemy before reaching Motril and forced him to stop. When we ascended the mountains with our machine guns to occupy our positions, we were joined by the first Spanish volunteer. He didn't say anything - anyway we would have barely understood him - he simply smiled at us and came with us with his rifle on his shoulder. This didn't stop with one. Many came, most of them shattered and impoverished peasants. They joined us, motivated by a powerful desire for freedom and by a burning hatred against their exploiters. The fall of Málaga had revealed many weaknesses in the organization of the Spanish peoples' fight for freedom and perhaps that is why they appreciated our forces, forces in which they could trust. That is why they came and asked to fight with us, the "internationals". In this way, the internationalism of our battalion was completed with representatives of the anti-fascist workers of the Spanish State.

Our international comrades received this sudden and massive influx with pride and joy. We hurried to look for uniforms for our new fellow fighters, we gave them some of our own clothes, we took care of their weapons, we mobilized all our care and our tact to justify the trust of the Spanish comrades. We were aware of our responsibility. Somehow we understood each other soon. If one of us spoke or gestured with a Spaniard, sooner or later the two would laugh amicably. Out of necessity, we had soon learned our first words of Spanish. We passionately discussed among ourselves how we should behave with the new colleagues.

At the Pitres Front, we attacked together and saw that our Spanish comrades fought with courage and enjoyed being with us. Our closeness and our example encouraged them. The friendly relationship between us

and this most oppressed of the Spanish people was built more and more strongly. When we left the Pitres Front, to everyone's surprise, the order arrived that all Spanish comrades should stay there. This made us very sad, but the Spanish comrades did not let themselves be persuaded that they should leave us: most of them came with us. Hadn't we often talked about sharing the struggle? And they had often said that if fascism were defeated in Spain, they would come to our countries to end it there. The Pozoblanco Front put a lot of demands on us. We had, and continue to endure, hard trials. For the Spanish comrades, these trials were even harder because they lacked the experience that we had been acquiring in the World War and in other struggles in our own countries or as emigrants.

In the trenches, many Spanish peasants spoke longingly of the uncultivated fields they had abandoned and that needed the sweat and the work of their hands. It seemed that many of them sometimes felt trapped by an elementary longing for peace and for their land.

But it is also true that a part of them had developed quickly with their own struggles and had developed the hardness and tenacity that characterize the anti-fascist struggle. Are these now the same miserable shadows that had joined us in Motril? No, these are now conscious and combative freedom fighters who clearly know what this is all about. They also looked at us now with more critical eyes. And this made us doubly responsible. Our own hard fighting had surely weakened our attention to the Spanish comrades. Possibly we had not paid enough attention to them, too busy with ourselves, to correctly attract the most advanced among them to the fight and to have stimulated their abilities.

But in no way did we want the solidarity that united us with our combat companions to be weakened. Through them we have gained a close relationship with the working masses of the Spanish people. This relationship must be consolidated even more closely, despite the fascist provocateurs and their helpers, so that we can be strong and invincible in the fight against fascist intervention.

**Hermann (Machine Gun Company)**

(From our battalion newspaper)



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## The Women Who Came from Málaga

We were at the exit of the village that we had occupied a few hours before. On the mountains in front of us were the fascists. For the population that had not fled, the fascists had driven them away like cattle.

At dusk we saw a small column moving towards us from the land in front of us. When they approached, we recognized three women, some children and a mule. The enemy artillery fired at them as if on a target, but didn't hit them. Shortly before night, the column arrived at our advanced position and were brought to the company's command post. The youngest of the three tearful women, a pretty Andalusian, fell to her knees, threw her black scarf back, hid her head between her arms and burst into sobs. First we didn't understand, then we saw her shaved hair and we understood what this woman had suffered in the last few days. We immediately worried about reassuring the women and we take them under cover. Then we knew, this was the fate of countless women in the clutches of the fascists.

Málaga had fallen. Her brother had fought with the Republicans and she had been denounced for this. The small village in which he lived with his elderly mother had become over the days a scene of torture in revenge against the Republicans. The brutal mercenaries dragged the defenseless Felicitas Rodríguez out of her house, cut her hair in the square and dragged these women, who were almost driven mad by the humiliation, throughout the town between insults and screams. The population was forced to look at this shameful spectacle if they did not want to be suspected of being Republican. It must have been a horrible procession when the fascists pushed and dragged this shattered woman through the silent crowd of inhabitants of the village. When, at a street crossing, some men, in a silent show of respect, took their berets off their heads while she was being dragged, in order to show Felicitas Rodríguez their sadness and solidarity, the fascists beat the crowd with the butts of their rifles and bayonets. Then the fascist gangs destroyed the doors, the chests and even

the floor of her house and let the half-dead woman lie in the middle of the disaster.

Encouraged by our advance, she and other women fled from this hell and through the fascist lines and came over to us. In the following weeks we still saw many women with shaved heads whom we freed from fascist shame.

Heinz Maassen

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## IN THE SIERRA NEVADA MOUNTAINS

In the Sierra Nevada  
by  
Julius Lackner

After the front was relocated between Calahonda and Motril, our battalion was commissioned to repel an attack by the fascists that was expected on the side of the Sierra Nevada. The fascists intended to reach Almería. This would have meant the cutting off of the Republican forces. The 6th Brigade would occupy our position on the coast.

In that time we had grown to almost 900 men thanks to the Spanish comrades who had joined us during our advance. Thirty five trucks were needed to carry the battalion to the new sector of the front.

It was night. The convoy was advancing at a distance between vehicles of between 50 and 100 meters along the steep road. At front was the Battalion Commander Otto Brunner, Battle Commissar Ewald Fischer, and next to him a lieutenant sent by the commander of the Army of the South to show us the way. Although the lieutenant assured us that the drivers of the trucks knew the way, Otto and Ewald went with him in the lead in the hope that the convoy, slowly but surely, would continue behind. I was at the end of

the convoy and was carrying out the mission of managing the transport. I had two motorcyclists to keep in touch with the front and to make sure that the convoy stayed together.

Hours later, and in the dark, I began to feel a little uneasy and to doubt that we had taken the right path. So I sent the biker Harry up front to stop the transport. We stood at a crossroads. And since it was then stated that the drivers were not completely sure in which direction the commander and the head of the convoy had traveled, we sent the motorcyclists to investigate the different roads. One came back soon with the news that our position was in the direction of Órgiva, as some comrades of the French battalion had told him. The convoy started again in that direction. It was starting to grow light. The French battalion was already behind us.

Suddenly the convoy stopped: a “captain” had told the comrades that we were not expected here and then had quickly disappeared. Who was this “captain”? The situation wasn’t clear and, yes, very disturbing. Our trucks were in the middle of a valley surrounded by mountains and rocks. I observed the situation with binoculars and suddenly I saw clearly that the entire battalion was in the middle of the fascist positions. I immediately gave the order that all the trucks must turn around as quickly as possible and return to Albuñol. Although I had not publicly said what I saw, it seemed that the drivers had understood the seriousness of the situation, because five minutes later all the vehicles were going at full speed again towards Albuñol.

We had been no more than 800 or 1000 meters from the main fascist position, and in spite of everything we had not heard a single shot, although in this situation we would have been a perfect target for the fascists. Probably when we suddenly emerged, the fascists had been more frightened of us than we were of them. In any case, they refused to start a fight against us. Then it was also shown that the “captain” from whom we had gotten this information had been the head of the fascist outpost. At that time, it was almost impossible to tell the differences between the uniform of the Republicans and that of the Spanish fascist troops.

Ten minutes later the battalion was out of the danger zone and I breathed a sigh of relief and lit a cigarette. But soon we were hit by new difficulties.

The convoy had to stop because one of the trucks did not have gasoline. With the help of a siphon, a liter of gasoline was taken from the trucks that still had fuel, and finally 30 trucks reached the height from which we could reach Albuñol. Of the last five vehicles, one stopped 3 kilometers before the highest point. The other four had been able to drag themselves to the height with extreme difficulty, using every last drop of fuel. We couldn't do anything other than leave the laggard to his fate.

In the meantime, we had sent a motorcyclist to the Albuñol military headquarters asking them to supply us with gasoline for the vehicles and groceries for the fainted comrades, who had already been without supplies for twenty hours. In Albuñol everything worked quickly and well, so two hours later the 34 vehicles could be started again in the direction of Juviles. Along the way I felt quite worried when I thought about the reception by the Battalion Commander who likely had been waiting for his troops for a long time. I knew that I was responsible for this delay as head of the convoy and I knew that Otto was a good comrade and good officer, but I also knew that he could be hard on the culprits.

It was 5.30 in the afternoon when we found the Battalion Commander just before Juviles. Comrades greeted him. I got out of the vehicle and into position and made my report with a somewhat racing heart. Otto laughed, but I didn't know if this laughter was an expression of anger or the joy that we had arrived in good condition. Then Otto hit me amicably on the shoulder and said that he was happy that we had arrived. He had noticed that I was not very comfortable with my report, and he added: "Vamos, Julius!"

Julius Lackner

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Front, 23 February, 1937, 11:50 AM

To the Commander of the 8th Batallion:

Report of February 22, 1937 was collected at 7 a.m. Because of a report of the Spanish comrades, we are worried about the commanders. The report says that 3 commanders of the International Column were killed. Patrols have been sent to look for them.

The provisions of this Order are to be complied with as far as possible. The battalion's assistant is on his way to Pitres. We have received from the brigade 2 binoculars, 75 ammunition cartridges (pistols), 5 compasses, 3 altimeters and a field kitchen.

The brigade asks if the battalion can exchange 8 Colt machine guns for 8 Maxims in 24 hours? In any case, spare parts and cannon tubes are missing that still have to be obtained. Is it possible to get them from here? The exchange has been agreed upon. Therefore, we ask you to please ascertain the exact location of the 8 Colt machine guns in time for the exchange. If you do not agree with the exchange, a quick reply is requested.

Why haven't the companies received groceries today? Information is expected on when the groceries will be ready.

The presence of the Battalion Commander here this afternoon is also urgently needed, unless he is meeting with the commander of the Lenin Battalion. In any case, information is requested on the whereabouts of the commander.

The mail for the battalion arrived. Send it this afternoon to the position. Further information is expected.

General Staff Sergeant

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## Franz Informs Granada of the Situation

We had occupied Ferreïrola and Mecina Fondales without firing a shot. The operation was magnificent! After these places had fallen, thanks to our

maneuvers, the fascists fled from these towns to the river valley as if a demon were chasing them. We entered with our machine gun platoon at noon in Pitres and immediately occupied strategic points in front of Pampaneira and Capileira.

Without wasting any time, we also occupied the local command position that was abandoned by the fascists. Ten minutes after entering, the phone rang. We were amazed. Comrade Franz then took the headset and a big smile covered his face. He was called by the Military Command of Granada who believed that Pitres was still in the hands of the fascists! Franz listened quietly for a moment to what was said to him, then he said very happily: Ahhh, do you want a report of the situation?, and with the most lilting Austrian accent he reported: "Well, it's very easy: attention!, the fascists are fini, now that the Tschapaiew Battalion is here. Do you understand?" And then he hung up the headset, laughing. Since then, our contact with Granada has been broken.

We captured four trucks of ammunition. The 1st Company advanced towards the heights of the Pañón Castelleno, and settled there; the 3rd Company contacted the Lenin Battalion on the right, and the 2nd occupied the road to Granada shortly before Bubión. Our heavy machine gun was well placed on the right side of the road on a small hill. At noon, around 1 o'clock, a column of Bubión vehicles arrived. We can't believe what our eyes see, but the vehicles approach our lines at high speed. The head of the machine gun company looks through the binoculars. "Truly vehicles with material" he says. "Prepare the rifles, when the first vehicle has reached the last kilometer milestone, fire!" We let them get closer. We count the seconds, then... fire! Suddenly the trucks stop, we see some men jumping and running, then it's over. In the middle of the darkness we towed the trucks; it was a convoy of fascist ammunition. The loot was a dozen machine guns, many Spanish Mauser rifles and a lot, a lot of ammunition. The fascists had miscalculated their progress. They wanted to help the threatened Moors in Pitres with weapons and ammunition, but we had marched faster than they could travel.

Bertl

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## Before Órgiva

By Leon Wurzel

The battalion advances along the road to Motril. On our right, in the mountains, the enemy is still there. A part of our battalion must secure that side. Spanish comrades also were in the mountains. They had been there for weeks, with no way out, without supplies, without weapons. Now they are in our ranks to fight with us. We are happy and proud of it. All our backpacks open: one has a second set of wool underwear, another a second pair of shoes, the other a pair of pants or a shirt. Everything they can do without, the comrades give to the Spaniards who now belong to our unit.

Part of the battalion had already gone to the mountains. Adler, the head of the Machine Gun Company, and I, as a Political Commissar, were still behind with a part of the Machine Gun Company. The other part of this company had been divided among the other companies, as usual, and Julius Schacht had gone as a Political Commissar with this part; he was the one who later took the political direction of this company when I went as a Political Commissar to the 3rd Company.

When Adler and I were waiting one day for new orders, the head of the battalion told us that news had arrived: the fascists had attacked 70 kilometers inland from Órgiva in the mountains. The situation was dangerous, we had to bring help to the Spanish comrades who were there. We had to take a platoon from each company and go. Otto showed us on the map where we should go.

The motorcyclist with whom I led our convoy of ten trucks knew the road as little as we did. None of us knew how far the fascists had advanced, or where the front was. Each of the forks of the road posed a problem for us. After a three-hour trip, there was the sharp scream rifle barrels in front of us; the motorcyclist turned the wheel and stopped. The 10 trucks were one kilometer behind us. Damn, I wish one knew who the rifles in front of us

belonged to. Apparently they were as clueless as we were about them. A minute goes by and nothing happens. The noise of the engines of the trucks is louder and louder. I get off the bike and whisper to the biker that we must try to leave soon. Then a shout of joy resounds among the strangers in front of us. Our first truck with a gleaming red flag has been visible in the curve and all doubts have been dispelled.

Fifteen more kilometers and we are on site. The situation is not as critical as we expected. Adler divides the platoons after a careful inspection of the terrain in which he even ascends to the highest mountain. In the meantime, I sadly see that our supply is quite poorly organized. We are not in a position to adequately supply the more than 200 newly arrived men in a short time; due to the loss of Málaga, the food supply has been paralyzed. We can't distribute cigarettes either - and you already know how important tobacco is for a fighter.

On the contrary, things are now in order. An attempted attack by the fascists the next day is easily rebuffed. Apart from occasional weak artillery fire here and there, the visit of airplanes has no effect. Three days after our arrival, our French battalion also arrives and gives the impression that something will happen in the coming days in the mountainous giants of the Sierra Nevada. With the arrival of the French battalion, our material needs are met. It's true that the Spanish comrades had sent what they could do without, but they didn't even have enough for themselves. Now the Henri Vuillemin Battalion has brought some provisions, not many, but to begin with it has helped us. The French comrades have not hesitated for a moment to give us their modest provisions, although they knew that in a few days they would predictably have scarce rations themselves. We also receive cigarettes from them and smoke them with both gratitude and pleasure.

A couple of days later we observed on the slopes of the massif that there was violent fighting in front of us. We heard the incessant rattle of machine guns accompanied by artillery explosions up there. We had known that our battalion had been sent from the coast and that it was now attacking up there. "Tschapaiew attacks!" For hours we stayed on our mountain and looked at the hillside above us. The towns up there, when you see them with your naked eyes, look like scattered stones. The binoculars of the



head of the company's went from hand to hand. "A red flag over the village bell tower!" someone shouted and someone tore the glasses out of his hands. Indeed. Our artillery fire had also begun. "Tschapaiew" has attacked, 70 square kilometers of gained land, seven rich villages, countless supplies of material and food have been conquered.

Something pushes us to run to our battalion. Finally, the commander of the sector gives us permission. We marched in two columns. Now the days of hunger are over. The comrades have found a huge amount of provisions in the conquered villages. The property of the poor peasants is sacred to us, and the provisions and livestock that the fascists have left behind in their flight are carefully gathered by our commander's office and transported as quickly as possible to supply the fleeing population from Málaga. We can now also eat properly again.

Our first thought in the face of so much abundance was to send something to our French and Spanish comrades of Órgiva, who had so fraternally distributed theirs with us. We talked about this with the comrades and with the battalion management and our proposal to organize a transportation of groceries found enthusiastic acceptance everywhere. The entire battalion took part in it. We loaded 15 mules with meat, ham, bacon, sugar, coffee, etc... and sent a brief letter to the brother battalion. Comrade Ebner, who spoke French well, happily led the convoy.

When Ebner returned three days later, he brought us a letter from the French comrades, in which with very effusive words they expressed how happy they had been with the shipment. But Ebner brought something more than this letter. He brought to the battalion the only thing we were missing: cigarettes! The French comrades had received packages from their homeland, an abundant shipment of cigarettes for the battalion. They had sent absolutely all of them to us. We launched a lot of enthusiastic "Rot Front!" for the comrades of the Henri Vuillemin Battalion.

Xth Órgiva Front Battalion, March 7, 1937

*To the comrades of the 8th Battalion*

*Dear comrades,*

*On behalf of the anti-fascist volunteers of the 10th Battalion, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the gift of the groceries you have sent us. In fact, they are very welcome, because in our sector we have great difficulties in provisioning. But for us it is above all a great joy to see that our fellow fighters, the brave German and Slavic anti-fascist fighters of the 8th Battalion, do not forget their French comrades. This is also shown on the front, the solidarity among the workers of all nations and the close unity of all anti-fascists. This is a guarantee of our common victory.*

*Once again, thank you and anti-fascist greetings.*

(This letter is in French and German)

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*To Socorro Rojo (Almería)*

*Southern Front March 9, 1937*

*The 8th Battalion of the XIII Brigade in its advance through the Trévez valley has obtained from the conquered fascists the fabrics and articles of clothing that we send attached.*

*Salud!*

*The Political Commissar  
EWALD FISCHER*

*The Battalion Commander  
OTTO BRUNNER*

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## Statements from the Defectors

They are from Lugo. They were transferred and mixed with soldiers from other provinces to prevent them from communicating. For the same reason they have been sent to different provinces.

From Lugo they went to Monforte and from there to Seville, where they spent the month of January. From Seville to Ronda, Pandeire, Burgos, Pinos Puente and Buvión, where they were under the command of Captain Emilio Durán Delgado.

In Buvión there are 4 companies of Battalion No. 6, composed of Civil Guards, Falangists and alpinists. There are no Moors because they have gone to Granada as replacements. These 4 companies take turns every other day. No reserve forces are present. They have been promised replacements on the 31st of this month.

They have in their possession 50 mortars and a machine gun located above the heights of the mountain. They have another 50 mortars and a machine gun located on the curve of the road from which you can see Buvión (with a rangefinder). In the ravine there is a strategic point where you can cut off contact with the fascist forces. They have a complete set of Hotchkiss machine guns, which come from the Oviedo factory. They have a battery on the road to Órgiva.

They have been prohibited from reading our press. They receive 0.50 cents a day, bad food, even worse clothes. The bosses beat them with straps.

German officers complete the formation of the troop in Seville. German officers force soldiers to do heavy work. There are a large number of officers there. There are some Germans in Granada. In this sector of the front there are none.

In Pinos Puentes there are 180 elderly people destined for guard service, the so-called Patriots. These have shotguns and bullets of different calibers.

The armament of the troop consists of Spanish rifles, machine guns and German anti-tank guns. They have a lot of ammunition that they bring from Granada. The transport takes approximately 4 hours. They have a large number of heavy vehicles and two motorcycles. No cavalry.

The Falangists behave badly with the others who work with them and carry out executions of peasants incessantly.

The fugitives have left the fascist camp at 4:30 in the morning and have arrived at the outposts of the International Brigades at 8 in the morning.

Portugos, March 16, 1937

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## A Mother's Exhortation to her Son

In the stormy days spent on the front of Granada, a comrade received the following letter from his mother:

*Dear son,*

*We have known with horror that Heini has fallen. But we and all our friends are proud that he has not fallen as a mercenary but as a true fighter for freedom. We also expect you to fight as an anti-fascist. You must always have this before your eyes: wherever you fight, you fight for freedom. We have nothing more to lose than the chains with which capital and fascism keep us imprisoned. If we manage to shake them, we will be free. Why have we had to emigrate? Because we didn't want to bend under the Hitlerian yoke. Ah, if father wasn't so old! He would also have run to Spain to fight alongside the people for freedom. But at 57 years old he can't do it anymore. Tomorrow little Michel and Spatz leave for Lorena, they work on the construction of fortifications. As soon as we get the necessary money, we will also be closer to home. Father wants him to be there when it comes time to pay back Hitler for everything.*

*Hence what I ask of you: Don't embarrass us! Be a man as a fighter for freedom. Your mother writes it to you, who is proud that you have gone to Spain. Although it hurts, this is smallness compared to what women and mothers have to suffer there.*

*I want to say goodbye now and I greet you a thousand times from afar.*

## *YOUR MOTHER"*

The letter has gone from hand to hand. A mother exhorts, our homeland calls: plant your manhood as fighters for freedom, you fight for us, for everyone.

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## In Memory of Nagel:

(Political commissar of the armory -fallen in Romanillos-)

In the morning the Machine Gun Company had brought one of its machine guns to be repaired and the same day "long" Weiss came again and asked: Is the machine already fixed? And when he was answered in an apologetic tone: "Tomorrow", he jumped: "Well, what do you think? Do we have to throw potatoes at the fascists?"

This small war between the armory and the Machine Gun Company was an everyday thing. But it only reflected the situation of our weaponry, which often became a real impediment for us in military actions. At first, we were equipped with three types of rifles and Colt machine guns in the battalion, which caused endless complaints. Precisely for this reason, the performance of our battalion cannot be measured by simple comparative standards. In all cases, despite the permanent improvement of our weapons, we were very far from having the weapons that the fascist troops had. If in spite of everything we compensated for this important disadvantage, it was, in all cases, thanks to the heroic courage and fraternal unity of our soldiers in the most difficult situations and the outstanding leadership of our battalion.

I still see our troops in the first open field battle near Teruel. Then we were armed with American rifles and German Bergman 1917 machine guns. Despite all our care of these things, rust was not unknown. And then, in the first battle, almost all of the companies' machine guns failed. In addition, there were no spare parts for these guns and even much later, one

machine gun had to be repaired with parts from the others! Today we proudly see our results at the Malaga front. We conquered and maintained the road from the coast to Almería with a battalion of soldiers against a very well-armed enemy. Against their warships and their planes we could do absolutely nothing but barricade ourselves in the ravines; against their tanks the first days we didn't even have dynamite, much less anti-tank guns. Yes... but we didn't even have enough ammunition for the infantry! It sounds almost incredible but it's a fact that over the days we didn't have a single bullet for our Spanish rifles, except for those that we were able to obtain from the enemy's hands. It sounds very ironic when the battalion order of February 20 still demanded:

"Companies have to be careful that the weapons entrusted to them are in good condition, that is, that they are able to shoot."

Then, in Pitres and Bubión we kept up a stubborn war of positions against the well-entrenched fascists. But we had nothing more to oppose their minesweepers, field cannons and grenade launchers than our infantry rifles. And in spite of everything, we have given the fascists a hard time many times and we have caused them many setbacks.

If you think about it... with what deficient weapons we have carried out great successful military actions! They would need twice as much courage against a well-armed enemy equipped with modern weapons. That's why each machine gun captured was sacred to our company and why a large part of our improvement in armaments was achieved at the expense of our own forces and at the expense of the fascists.

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“Self-Education” from our Wall Newspaper

(Comrade “Wildlife Protection”)



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## Self-education

(From our wall newspaper)

To begin with, you have to complain about all the orders and rules. With this you raise the morale of the platoon and lighten the work of all the comrades.

Never clean the rifle! The dirt keeps it warm, and it also proves that you are a true soldier.

Ammunition boxes preferably serve as things to sit on by the fire. Due to their content, they provide the necessary firmness and also allow one to anticipate great fireworks. It's also a lot of fun to throw cartridges or hand grenades into the fire. The explosions only scare the cowardly and in case something serious happens, well, after all not everyone needs to be near the fire when it's cold out.

You should never have your things in order, and never have a place for everything. All the romanticism of war could thus be spoiled in the face of an alarm.

Next to the fire, reaffirm your place with all the cunning and strength you possess. Others will make sure that the fire does not go out.

The burden of going to collect water or similar small jobs are overvalued virtues. These jobs are too insignificant for you to dedicate yourself to doing them.

There are also several opinions about the changing of the guard. One worth recommending is the following: in the exchange, a couple of minutes late does not matter because the other has already had two and a half hours of practicing patience. The replaced person must take all the abandoned blankets at that time and go to sleep with them. You can also take one from someone who is sleeping; I'm sure they won't even notice.

At the guard posts, sleep peacefully. Overall... you can only see and hear with great difficulty. What about the Moors? They are not going to come. And if they come, you've been unlucky. The comrades will thank you for being tired.

In the so-called ordinary events while on guard you can sleep or read. Others will take care of the usual. But don't forget to criticize them afterwards abundantly and poisonously.

Tommy Flynn (fallen in Valsequillo)

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“Our” Spaniards

Ludwig Franken

(Head of the Department of Operations of the XIII Brigade, previously the battalion's Information Officer)



We were in the mountains of Sierra Nevada. We were almost 600 internationals and more than 250 Spaniards. Our relationship was just a little older than our common struggle in the mountains. But by this time we had become a firm unit, we had fought together, we ate together from the same dish, we slept next to each other to warm up on the cold nights of the Sierra Nevada. We had turned into comrades, we understood each other as well as we could, for which arms and legs were more important than words, and laughter solved all the difficulties of language differences.

The Spanish comrades got on the trucks with us when we went to meet those fleeing from defeated Málaga. They looked at us with their sad faces, as if demanding that we turn back the enemy from whom they had been fleeing. We were the first internationals they saw; they had heard a lot about the fighting of the battalions that had not let Madrid fall. But Madrid was far away and Málaga had fallen. More than 250 Spanish comrades stumbled into us and from that moment on they joined and were one with us. They were socialists, anarchists, communists and without a party, they were simply Spaniards who wanted to fight for their freedom. Six weeks of fighting in the mountains. Trévez, Pitres, Pórtugos; we took these seven fascist towns. We fought at a height of 3300 meters, in the snow, in the icy rain, during nights of freezing cold - we: 250 Spanish comrades and 600 internationals.

On March 27, we received a brief order: "The battalion must remain in a moving position, replacement in charge of..."

The road to the nearest passable road was long. For more than four hours we had to walk up and down on roads for horses. Winding twisting roads more than a thousand meters deep, four tree trunks forming an insecure bridge over a fast mountain torrent, and on the other side of the bridge the meandering road ascended up almost vertical walls. Then we continued for hours on narrow mountain paths and through humid valleys until we reached the end - or the beginning - of the road.

The replacements arrived 24 hours later than expected. Instead of the 45 trucks requested, there were 25. The head responsible for transportation counted and counted again - and got the same answer. We were 900 men,

5 trucks had to be loaded with ammunition, the mayor's office required 5 more trucks, telephone operators, platoon and luggage of the General Staff also needed a vehicle... the bill was not paid.

In the end, 7 more large trucks were recruited. Things were better now. We will squeeze, we will stand if there is no place to sit, but in any case none of the 900 will be left behind. The head of transport, reassured, contacted Otto Brunner: "It works, Otto, we have a few more vehicles." Otto was satisfied: "It has to work," he thinks, "we can't leave half of the men sitting there."

Then the phone rings, weakly, the bell vibrates without force because for weeks we have been missing new batteries for our phone; barely understandable, a little voice whispers a military order "The battalion gives all the Spaniards to the Commander NN of the battalion... All ammunition supplies are also transferred. End."

The order is accepted, and then we reflect: "...give all Spaniards to..." What does that mean? To our comrades? To "our" Spaniards?

Telephone report to the Battalion Commander "We have just received this and this order from the head of the sector."

At first Otto doesn't understand either, the idea is so strange. Then the resolute response: "This is unquestionable; immediately phone the brigade." We call everywhere, we try everything because we want to keep all our Spaniards. But all we can find out is the confirmation that the order must be obeyed, that we have to abandon our comrades right there, where the trucks remain prepared to go.

At this moment the column of 900 men carrying machine guns with more than 40 mules carrying other heavy luggage walks through the valleys, the roads curving up and down, one after the other. When it starts to get dark, the first of the long column arrive on the road on which the trucks are standing, get into the vehicles and wait, silent, tired. The head of the convoy goes along the line of vehicles. The 1st Company is almost completely on the trucks. In other words, with the Spanish comrades.

"Gusti, the order to leave the Spaniards here has arrived, have you already received the order?" The head of the company looks for a moment without understanding. "What? No way, damn it...! The Spaniards stay in the company!" For Gusti, the case is solved.

More and more trucks fill, comrades sit or stand, it's very crowded, they sit or stand together more and more, without complaints.

The new order of the Battalion Commander has already been communicated to the last ones who come along. The order has been transmitted to the end of the long line and has slowly become known. There are strong discussions, definite rejection, but in general there is already the understanding that the order will have to be obeyed. A thought comes back again and again: "We are now going to a resting position and the Spaniards will not come with us. But they need this rest as much as we do."

Our Spanish comrades notice something. I'm sure no one has told them anything because no one wants to. One would need a lot of words to explain this. Arms and legs are not enough now and a smiling face is not going to fix the difficulties. There is silence in the trucks despite the fact that 900 men are already together. Finally, Otto and Ewald come, Otto brings together the heads of the companies and Ewald, the Political Commissar. Otto gives his instructions, speaks frankly, rages and curses and then implies that it is an order and that it must be complied with. Ewald talks in his measured way with his people and ends up at the same place. You can explain it as much as you want but we have to separate ourselves from our Spaniards.

The heads of the companies and the commissars hear the sad news. The Spaniards must get out of the trucks and gather in front of the building where a captain of their new battalion will receive them. After a long wait, about 50 Spanish men get together and look back to where the trucks are in the dark. It's 50 men, what about the others? The others don't want to. They speak loudly and passionately to their international comrades. They speak very fast, we don't understand a word but we know exactly what they are saying. They are saying that they want to stay with us, that we are their comrades, that we are all one and they don't want to be separated from us.

They tell us the same thing we want to tell them. The internationals answer them in German, English, Czech, Hungarian... in 17 languages and dialects. Spaniards don't understand a word but they know that we are telling them the same thing they say to us. But the order has been given and must be complied with. Hesitating, some descend again, shake hands in the dark, throw their packs on their shoulders and go with tired steps towards the building. The little heap is getting bigger, I'm sure there are a hundred now.

Otto Brunner goes from truck to truck. We are in a hurry, we want to leave here as soon as possible, saying goodbye is more difficult than attacking a machine gun nest. Otto asks in each vehicle, "Have all the Spaniards come down?" Many times he receives a quick answer: "Yes!" - "Well, let's go", three kilometers later we stop until all the vehicles are together. Some trucks start, they disappear into the night. Sometimes Otto doesn't get an answer, or so hesitant an answer that he already knows that they are still sitting there all together. This doesn't help, an order is an order. But what can be done? It is dark, some Spaniards are covered by the comrades, who remain seated and wait silently. Others go down on one side after the order and go up on the other side without a word, without discussion, as if everything was already agreed upon; they are as hidden as contraband merchandise in the middle of the truck. Tomorrow they will talk to Otto, tomorrow they will have gone many kilometers, tomorrow everything will be answered. How? No idea, but this, simply, doesn't work, you couldn't use force. You understand Otto, don't you? And everyone is convinced that Otto will understand. And what...

This is how the 1st Company arrived, without Spaniards except for the 12 who have hidden; the 2nd, the 3rd with those from whom they could not be separated. Only the Machine Gun Company, our most disciplined company, the one that was always punctual, the one that fulfilled all orders quickly and safely, only the Machine Gun Company has brought almost all Spaniards. They have remained quietly seated in their covered trucks, have announced firmly "Everything in order" and have left - with 45 Spanish comrades. The next day they had the best excuse: "We couldn't undo all the machine gun equipment." Of course not.

The last trucks were not completely full. The captain spoke to the assembled Spanish comrades who were standing in the dark in front of him. They heard his words and stared at the last trucks. Slowly some separated from the group, went with calm, natural steps towards the trucks, stood for a moment, and at the moment when the trucks started moving, they jumped inside two, three... and helped by many hands they got into the truck.

The last vehicle was still stopped, four Spaniards were arguing vividly in front of it. One climbed inside, a second, also a third and then another tried. He spoke loudly and excitedly. The head of transport, who was supposed to go last in a light vehicle, approached and tried to push the man, who now hangs half inside and half outside, into the truck because the truck is now in motion. Instead of climbing inward, the man now jumps down, stumbles, almost falls. The convoy leader, who was traveling behind everyone in the last car, went to the man who was already hanging, half inside and half outside the bed of the truck and tried to push him in since the truck was already moving. Instead of getting inside, the man jumped back down, tripped and nearly hit himself. Hey, watch out, up! It was a small misunderstanding. This comrade did not want to leave with the truck. In fact, he was a lieutenant in the relief battalion who had to ensure that none of our Spanish comrades came with us. He had tried until the last moment to keep his little lambs together. Our interpreter, whom he was addressing, suddenly stopped knowing how to speak Spanish. We quietly got into our vehicle and traveled behind the long column of trucks. Do we know how many came with us?

We are not going to a rest position. We traveled four days and four nights. We passed through flowery valleys and over deserted mountains. We were going to Pozoblanco.

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## THE FRONT OF POZOBLANCO

Battalion Order

Cordoba Front, April 3, 1937, 13:50 hours

The battalion is on high alert. The companies will be prepared in such a way that they can be transported in trucks at any time. The heads of companies must ensure that each comrade of their company is provided with the necessary ammunition (150 cartridges). Likewise, all light and heavy machine guns must be equipped with the necessary ammunition belts. If the troop does not have the necessary first aid kit, it must immediately request it from the battalion's doctor.

## The Battalion Commander

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From the Order of Attack to the 1st. Battalion, Cordoba Front, April 3, 1937, 16 hours

**Secret!**

On April 4, the brigade will carry out an attack as part of a major combat action north of Córdoba. Mission of the brigade is to advance from Mármol towards the southwest and occupy Blásquez, Valsequillo and La Granjuela. The 1st and 3rd. Battalions of the Brigade will attack in the direction of Mármol-Valsequillo-La Granjuela, the 2nd Battalion in the direction of Mármol-Blásquez. The 4th Battalion remains at the disposal of the Brigade headquarters. The head of the Motorcyclists Section and four men are going to scout the conditions of the roads and the situation of our forces in the aforementioned section and inform the head of transport of the 1st. Battalion of the result of its inspection. All the trucks except two, which are available to the 1st. Battalion, will be sent to Dos Torres to make them available to the 2nd Battalion.

The 1st. Battalion, after its arrival in Mármol, will set off in the direction of Valsequillo. March on foot with the corresponding march coverage. Immediately after arriving at Mármol, you will inspect the road that leads to the S. (Valsequillo) and the railroad. Even during the night, the battalion will head to the appropriate starting positions. After the occupation of

Valsequillo, the battalion will continue the attack on La Granjuela. The 1st. Battalion will receive cold supplies for a day. The General Staff of the Brigade is on April 4 at 2 a.m. in... The first aid station of the brigade is located in... From the beginning of the action, a report must be sent every hour to the Brigade. The companies must carry with them "Aviation Cloths" to guide our own air forces on our position.

## Delegate of the War Commissariat, Brigade Chief Gómez

(A sketch of our situation is attached)

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### On the Other Side of the Station

An episode in the attack on Valsequillo

By Max Neubacher, Deputy Commander of the 1st Company

Exactly at 4 o'clock the battalion deployed and advanced. Then we discovered that we had to cross not a distance of half a kilometer but of at least three kilometers. For this reason, we lost time. It was still dark. The battalion comrades were well disciplined but not prepared to maintain direction and contact in a night attack. So in the end we had to make a turn with the whole battalion, which was not only a waste of time but also had a very serious tactical effect. In the meantime it was already daytime and while we were still busy turning to the right, we were detected by the fascist guard that was at the station, fortified as a bulwark, outside the town.

When the fascists saw us in front of the station, only part of the 1st platoon of the 1st Company was there. The fascists immediately began to shoot to kill in our direction from their firing holes. The station was a great obstacle for us and it had to be conquered before we could attack the village itself. The most dangerous side of the building was the one that looked out at the countryside. In it, most of their holes were open. Some comrades managed to protect themselves and began to shoot immediately. In this first fight, our Tommy Flynn was shot in the head. He was very brave. When he wanted to

shoot his light machine gun at the enemy, he raised his completely unprotected and the fascists easily targeted him at the short distance of just 20 meters. He fell without saying a word.

The other comrades were not going to do anything like that. Suddenly one jumped with a hand grenade in front of the protection, ran towards the building and threw the grenade. Then he ran back and did the same thing again without anything happening to him. I watched this daring act attentively from a nearby protected position and at first I was not a little surprised by the crazy courage of the comrade. The fact was a stimulus for another who did the same thing; he did not run back but stuck to the building. His name was Sauerwein and he fell shortly after in La Granjuela because of a shot in the neck.

The boss of the 1st platoon threw a fourth grenade through one of those holes. The result of these grenades was such that the fascists, after counting their seven deaths, surrendered. They came out one by one with their hands up through an exit on the side. Four of them were immediately transported to the rear to be interrogated.

Simultaneously with our head-on attack, another attack took place. The comrades fought with rifles and hand grenades. But they had few places to provide cover for themselves. Here comrade Dudec fell because of a shot in the chest. Moritz, the brave leader of the 2nd platoon, was also injured in this attack. Many other comrades lost their lives here, but the station was conquered and with it the possibly that the most difficult part of the attack on Valsequillo had been carried out.

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## Surrounded

It had been very recently that we arrived at a building in front of Valsequillo; after us no one else could pass the street, so furious was the shooting. Any attempt meant certain death.



We drilled a hole in the wall of the back of the house, which went through the rooms to the front wall of the house, and there at a demonic speed we opened lanes so that the fascists could not move forward and kill us with hand grenades.

Three members of the machine gun company also made a hole in the wall on the left of the building and installed our weapon there. The fascists put our hole in the exact sights of their machine guns. St. received a chafing in the foot through the hole. We had to get very close to the wall to hit the protector of the machine gun. One shot after another whistled inside.

Suddenly the infantry observed that the fascists, protected by buildings, were attacking us from the right. We were now under fire on four sides by the fascists. And then our machine gun stopped.

Everyone shooting. Paul dismantles the machine gun. The fascists, of course, have noticed the failure of our machine gun and are quickly approaching. We are running out of ammunition.

We are getting ready for the last battle.

We don't shoot like crazy anymore, no, every shot has to be right, it is pointed carefully and it is fired slowly. Maybe our comrades will get into town on time and help us?

Then a shout: Tanks are coming!

For a few seconds we were all paralyzed. Einer looks exhausted by his hole, he doesn't pay attention to the shots, and everyone thinks: How do we get out of this mousetrap?

We stared at the comrade, holding our breath. Then he raises his rifle and shouts: "Shoot!" And, again: "Our tanks! Shoot, shoot!" And then they rattled on down the street; three tanks of ours.

Durmayer, Machine Gun Company

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## Calle Mesones No. 9

Our people were already excited on the main road to Valsequillo. A couple of well-directed shots from our armored cars had silenced the fascist machine guns stationed in different places. We saw perfectly how the fascists fled from their positions and we covered them with a rain of bullets. The fight was decided. In the distance we saw the Phalangists running cross-country. The population, who had hidden frightened during the combat, greeted us with indescribable joy and cordiality and the women threw themselves crying around the neck of our soldiers.

In the center of the town, the head of the Adler company and I separated; he went with a patrol from house to house to discover possible hidden fascists, while I with the heads of the platoons secured the positions in which our machine guns had to be placed. At that moment we heard the explosion of hand grenades inside the town! Had our patrol run into the fascists? A runner then came to us out of breath: 15 fascists have fortified a house on Mesones Street and continue to fight! They were asked to surrender and responded immediately by shooting. Lieutenant Adler, who entered the house with a gun in his hand, was shot. Comrade Willinger, of the Communist Youth, who was already head of a machine gun company despite his youth, was shot in the head the moment he threw a grenade in the window, and died immediately.

A tank was brought as a reinforcement and the roof of the house collapsed. When we entered the house, eight fascists lay dead on the top floor, and seven, partially injured, were arrested and evacuated.

From the diary of Lieutenant P. Wenzel, Machine Gun Company

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## Attack on La Granjuela: A German Fascist Tank Chief Is Captured

Our maneuver was a success. We had run over the fascist trenches on the road and had entered the town chasing those who were fleeing, while our tanks advanced from the right side along the road that goes to La Granjuela. The enemy was completely surprised! On the one hand, fascists fleeing from us, and on the other hand, half a dozen tanks: this made the confusion of the fascist garrison total. When later even their cavalry fled, there was nothing to help them. In a wild flight, the 9th Battalion of the Castilian Regiment, which had occupied the town, left behind weapons, ammunition and vehicles.

At a brisk pace we rushed to the village to escape the fire of the fascist artillery. And with the protection of the town walls we surrounded La Granjuela. I was in the 2nd platoon of the 1st Company. We passed over the main road and stopped behind the town where we expected the enemy would wait for us.

That our plan was correct could be seen right away.

On the road to Fuenteovejuna there was a German tank with the cannon pointed at the town! When we showed up, our tanks were also in sight. The enemy observer was next to his tank and was completely surprised when we yelled at him with the rifles ready "Hands up!"

They were unprepared, and we arrested a German, a Portuguese and six Spaniards who were with the tank. We held them in the fascist building in La Granjuela, where they were exposed to the bombing of their own planes.

Sergeant F. Schaller 1st Company

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XIII Mixed Brigade  
III International Brigade  
8th Batallón "Tschapaiev"

Córdoba Front, April 5, 1937, 11 a.m.

## Interrogation of a German Prisoner

The 1st Company sent us the tank driver who was taken prisoner. He was, by profession, a language teacher, of German descent, who had lived in Barcelona since June 30, 1932.

The prisoner makes the following statements:

In La Granjuela, conquered today by us, an enemy force of 1200 men was stationed; they have retired to Pueblonuevo.

The colonel in command, Huelvo, has told him that 200 Moors and men from the Foreign Legion have arrived at Terrible for a fascist counteroffensive (today or tomorrow) ??? .

The artillery of the fascists is at heights between 779 and 578 in Peñarroya. Above the height of Pueblonuevo there is an anti-aircraft battery (served by Germans) !!! In Peñarroya-Pueblonuevo there is a fascist airfield, in which 3 or 4 aircraft are parked.

Because we have seen enemy movements on our left flank, we must immediately send the 4th Battalion as a reinforcement.

It is absolutely necessary to bomb the concentrations of enemy forces and the airfield.

Commander of the 8th Battalion  
Otto Brunner

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# Attack on Sierra Noria

by

Second Lieutenant J. Nadjer (deceased)  
2nd Company

..... we slowly dispersed under the fire of our artillery. The 4th Battalion "Otumba", supported by our 2nd Company, must have taken the heights during the afternoon!

Half way up the mountain, it was impossible to advance without serious losses. We changed the original plan, divided and attacked in two columns from both sides. On the right side, in addition, a tank was used to try to separate the fascists. They stubbornly defended themselves, but we moved forward.

Non-stop, getting closer and closer. When under permanent enemy fire we got to within 200 meters of their well-constructed positions on the rocks, it was necessary to try to penetrate their fire. Until that time we had 2 dead and 4 injured. Would we be able to do it with our company weakened during the last hard days? The enemy had to have a force of at least 200 men here. Our Spanish comrades were attacking from the other side, and we couldn't wait until they had taken the top of the mountain. Let's move forward! Our numerical weakness had to be replaced by our greater firepower and our bravery. With a "Hurrah!" we jumped over the last slopes. It was impossible to conquer the height with a single push, but when we launched the last attack, the fascists fled downhill through the back of the mountain! We occupied the last 100 meters almost without a fight.

The attack had lasted 5 hours, our soldiers were completely exhausted, but the victory was worth it. The fascists had 32 dead and their captain had fallen because of artillery fire. We obtained 12 machine guns, including seven German Bergman machine guns and two German Maxim heavy machine guns that were immediately taken over by our Machine Gun Company. In addition, a large amount of food and ammunition fell into our hands. The day was hard, but the victory made our soldiers forget all the difficulties.

(Translated from Polish)

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## Josef Toman

Worker from Moravia, Head of the Czech platoon

Already in Teruel Josef Toman showed that he was one of the best comrades of the Czech Gottwald platoon. Along with comrades Samet, Kozderka and Sobeslawski, he was one of the bravest members of the battalion's surveillance patrols. Subsequently, he demonstrated his bravery in each fight. He was not only a brave soldier, he was an extraordinary platoon leader who set an example to everyone of how an anti-fascist Czech volunteer should behave in combat. He was also an example from a political point of view. He knew how to resolve each confrontation not with his authority as leader of the platoon, but with his authority as a comrade. He was a giant because of his size but he had a delicate touch in dealing with all the comrades. How many times have we heard him play his violin! The company had given it to him and with it he often made the platoon and the whole company happy. We also greatly appreciated his talent as a narrator. When Toman said something, all the Czechs gathered around him to listen.

After Teruel, our platoon joined the 1st Company of the battalion. We became, with 10 or 12 Yugoslav comrades, the third platoon of the 1st Company. The leader of this platoon, Yugoslav comrade Mechmed, had been wounded in Teruel and rejoined the group on the Granada Front. Between Toman and Mechmed there was a cordial understanding on all issues. They led the platoon, we could say, as one. It is easy to understand that the Czech and Yugoslav comrades, thanks to the possibilities of linguistic understanding, were very closely united and there was always harmony between them.

Our third platoon was proud to belong to the Tschapaiew Battalion and its brave 1st Company. In the harsh attack on the fortified station of Valsequillo, the Czech-Yugoslav platoon largely fulfilled, along with all the other comrades, its anti-fascist duty. But we had to mourn many victims in

this victorious attack. The hardest loss for the Czechs was the death of their heroic leader Josef Toman, who fell in the attack on the station at the head of his platoon.

The Czech comrades have continued to fight with the spirit of our unforgettable Toman. At the same time that Toman was killed, the substitute leader Mechmed was also seriously injured, so shortly afterwards, comrade Vondracek took command of the platoon. At his command, the Czech comrades have continued to honor the battalion and the anti-fascist movement, even in the Brunete offensive, during which our platoon, which had already collapsed, showed the courage and bravery that it had shown even in the most difficult hours at Romanillos.

## From a Czech Comrade

(Translated from Czech)

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### From the Squadron of the Toledo Regiment No. 26

In the few weeks from April to June, around 500 defectors came over to our brigade in the western sector of the Southern Front. One group consisted of forced recruits from the prisons of Malaga, one group consisted of the operating crew of a battery for whom their fascist sergeant led the way to the Republicans. Another time, an entire crew brought their captain with them. On April 17th a whole squadron of cavalry with weapons and horses defected to us. What they said is recorded in a leaflet we dropped over the fascist lines:

"Brothers! Come on, you!

"Today, on the anniversary of the Republic, we, the squadron of the 2nd Battalion of the "Toledo Regiment", have joined the ranks of the Spanish Republic. We don't want to be forced to shed the blood of our brothers any longer. All of us have suffered from hunger on the fascist side. We have all been mistreated by a clique of Spanish, Italian and German officers who lead a life of luxury with their ladies in Seville and Córdoba. Don't follow

them for another moment; break with them! For each rifle you bring over, you will receive 100 pesetas.

“Hopefully many of you who want to desert will find the courage to do so. We want to receive you with camaraderie and cordiality.

“AS TO FRANCO’S PROMISES:

“If you come over to us, you will not regret it.

“You will save your life and we promise you the freedom to return to your homelands.

“Many of your comrades who came freely, have already returned to their homelands.

“FRANCO, HE PROMISES IT.

“What does Franco promise you? The axe of Hitler's executioners? Tortures to the death?

“The concentration camps of Germany, Poland and Austria? The walls of Switzerland's cells? FASCISM CAN ONLY PROMISE WHAT IS TRUE OF FASCISM!: Servitude and oppression, exploitation and lies to the people.

“That's why we don't believe that our lives will be safe if we go over to his side - which has never happened. And the FREEDOM OF PASSAGE to our homeland certainly cannot attract us, we who are emigrants from so many countries.

“Even if one or two of us do go over, none of us will even think of going with them. Franco's "new" method can only have one result: to make us laugh.”

(From the battalion newspaper)

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The Brother's Place



Isaak Joffe, a Jew from Palestine, came with other Jewish comrades to Spain to participate as a soldier in the fight for freedom. These Jewish comrades were, almost without exception, extraordinary fighters; and if anyone still had the prejudice that the Jewish comrades did not fight militarily as hard as the comrades of other countries, they would have been better and very quickly informed in our ranks. Among the brave Jewish fighters of Palestine, Isaak Joffe was one of the bravest.

In the battle of the Valsequillo station he was shot in the jaw. Despite the horrible pain he must have felt, he continued to advance to the head of his second platoon. One hundred meters before reaching the barricade in front of the village, he received a second fatal shot in the head. When he regained consciousness, his first question was whether we had conquered the town.

His death was a painful blow to the entire 1st Company, to which he belonged.

One of our comrades informed Isaak Joffe's relatives of his heroic death. Shortly after he received the following letter, which is not only a monument to the memory of Isaak Joffe, but also to his generous father, his brother and his entire family.

The author of the letter arrived in Spain shortly after, as he himself announced.

*Haifa, April 28, 1937*

*Dear friend,*

*The news of my brother's death has been very painful for me. It is clear to all of us that this can happen at the front. But our Isaak, as you say yourself, has not been able to prove what he was capable of. He learned very quickly and surely in a short time he would have been one of the best soldiers. It doesn't matter. In our fight against our enemies, victims must fall, and I am happy that in the fight in which my brother has fallen, something has been achieved. You have returned a couple of towns to the*

*Spanish people and the fascists have had to take a big step back. My brother's blood has not been shed in vain.*

*Now I would like to tell you how this news has affected my parents,*

*My father has received the news without saying a word. But on his face you could see how painful it was for him. You know that Isaak was his favorite son. After going for an hour from one place to another, without saying anything, he addressed me: Solomon, now you have to go to occupy your brother's place, he still needs to be there. The war is not over and no one has to stay on the sidelines!"*

*Yes, dear friend, I am going to go with you and I will make an effort to enter your battalion and, if possible, in the same platoon that my brother was in.*

*I wish you health and that you transmit a strong "Red Front!" To all the comrades, and especially to those who were good friends of Isaak.*

*(From our "B Battery Newspaper", No. 56, May 1937)*

*Salomon*

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## The Village is Liberated, the Work Begins

When the last armored vehicle disappeared in the direction of La Granjuela, there were many people in Valsequillo who breathed a sigh of relief. Men and women glimpsed the beginning of a new life, a life without leases or taxes, without the Civil Guard, a life in which the fruits of their work would belong to them in their democratic state.

The fascist defenders had taken without paying. They had looked at and thrown away what they didn't like. Now the big clean-up began.

The comrades and members of the UGT went through what had been discarded. Furniture and clothes were grouped and distributed. A table was

missing here, a family needed bed linen there. Here the pants were dirty, there another had shoes without soles. They helped as much as they could.

But then the main thing was... Valsequillo is a mill town. Its two large electric mills were at a stop and outside the workers were waiting for a new beginning. But... how? Something unaccustomed: to start, without a master, without orders, without being put in their place by someone. The help came quickly, not in the form of orders but with their friendly collaboration with the soldiers of the International Brigades. The first thing was to put the mill on the main street into operation; its owner had fled with the fascists. By his orders, all the workers had had to join the Falange, of which he was president. In his house we still found the Falange flags, the papers, the box that he had not been able to take with him.

Another machine, the bakery began to work at the other end of the town. There were a lot of sacks of flour there. Day and night the bread was kneaded. Bread for the front, bread for the people, and when the flour ran out, new workers, millers and machinists appeared. The big wheel of the machine started to move and buzz. The fire was rekindled, the mills resounded. The millers and bakers laughed radiantly:

"A lot of work comrade, a lot of work!" (In Spanish).

(From our battalion's newspaper)

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## I'm Comparing Two MayDay Celebrations

The victory of Hitler's fascism also emboldened the fascist government of Austria to hastily rob workers of their acquired rights. In April 1933, the Defense League of the Republic was dissolved and shortly after, a ban on celebrating May 1 was decreed. The government then wanted to make a test of strength: it sought to incite the workers and with this purpose it allowed its mercenaries, armed to the teeth, to occupy the center of the city. Machine guns were provocatively placed on the streets.

We would then gladly have attacked - if we had been able to do it according to our wish, that of the workers - and shown that we did not let ourselves be deprived of our right to May 1. But at that time, there was no collaboration of all the anti-fascist forces. In vain we waited for instructions to wield our weapons, take up the rifle and defend our rights on the barricades.

In February 1934 we didn't wait for instructions. We grabbed the weapons, took the machine guns out of their hiding places, erected barricades and the fight began. But the strength of anti-fascist unity, which would have made an effective fight against fascism possible, was again lacking.

Today is very different. Our dreams have come true. We are fighting in the trenches rifle in hand, we have our machine guns, we attack with our tanks and our pilots fight with us for peace, freedom and bread. We fight together communists, social democrats, anarchists, Catholics... supported by the solidarity and sympathy of progressive humanity. This May 1st in Spain we celebrate it under the banner of anti-fascists united against fascism.

## Lieutenant Mazek

Intendant of the Battalion

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## Our Newspaper

If an editor talks to his readers and frequently hears the reproach that his newspaper appears too rarely, he has a certain right to be proud of it because the demand for a newspaper is, in a way, a measure of its value. In recent times I have often heard this reproach. Since the beginning of the year '37 we have published 48 issues of the newspaper "The Anti-fascist Fighter", in four pages. From what we can see, our battalion newspaper has appeared more frequently than the other papers published as far as we know within the framework of the International Brigades.

In my opinion, our newspaper has advantages and disadvantages. First of all, the exterior appearance: the newspaper is made with a typewriter and copier. And its appearance suffers from this. Many comrades speak with envy of the newspapers of the other battalions and brigades that can illustrate their pages with photos and are printed on luxury paper. But this only happens if you are close to a large town with a printing press, etc... But if you have to fight as much as our battalion has and the comrades want to read a newspaper almost every two days, you have to limit yourself to working with what you have.

There have been situations where our comrades can read in the newspaper the news that was heard the afternoon before on the radios of Paris, Barcelona, Moscow, Berlin and Vienna. This has been the case both in Teruel and in Sierra Nevada, where radio news could be heard. (Electric current is missing in the current sector of the front). If one had to deal with type-setting and printing, it would not be possible to bring the latest news so quickly to the comrades on the front line.

Our newspaper serves:

1. for military and political training,
2. to discuss our combat experiences and compare them with those of other formations,
3. to deepen our camaraderie, especially for the cohesion of the different nationalities, until we have the formation of the first truly international army.

Hans Schaul

Editor of the battalion newspaper (From our battalion newspaper)

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A Letter from an Emigrant

Dear Heinrich,

London April 7, 1937

*I thank you wholeheartedly for your letter of March 5, also your previous letters of January. Your first letter about your arrival in Spain and your first experiences was published here.*

*It is difficult for you to imagine how proud of you. We all follow what you are doing for us. If possible, write to us frequently and extensively so that we can publish it.*

*Your first letter has aroused great enthusiasm at our February party. Many Austrian colleagues had come together to keep the memory alive of our February 12. And something you will surely love to hear: the party was organized by the Austrian Unitary Committee (Communist Party and Red Students) in London.*

*I am convinced that you do the best you can and that it must be very difficult, especially for those who have never been in a war. I would like to know more about our Austrians. Please cordially greet Hermann who has signed one of your letters.*

*Are you okay? I would like to send you something. Write me what you need; for now I'll send you a little package with cigarettes.*

*My husband is still down there, he runs the hospital of the XIV Mixed Brigade and is somewhere not far from Madrid.*

*Doctors are also doing a lot, and now I think that health services are incredibly well organized throughout the country. Alex now has new doctors under his command and is a commander or something similar.*

*All of us feel very optimistic at the moment: we know that you can't lose. It is admirable that fascism has now suffered, at least apparently, its hardest blow, and every person who has had the smallest participation in this victory, has reason to be proud.*

*With my warmest regards,*

*Yours, Edith*

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## Looking for a Wife and Children

Weeks after the capture of Valsequillo, we returned one day. We hadn't seen the city since the day of the battle. When we went up a street towards the Plaza Mayor I saw the houses with thoughts and eyes very different from those first days. I saw on one of the buildings, on a small ramshackle house, a large paper written and nailed. I read the lines written with an inexperienced hand and read them again:

"Comrades! Respect this house, the comrade is looking for his wife and children. They disappeared when the town was taken."

The President of the Popular Front J. Fernández"

As this letter on the door of the house was signed by the President of the Local Committee of the Popular Front, we went to him to ask about the whereabouts of the woman and the children. And he told us: for two months the owner of this house has been gone to look for his family and has disappeared. On April 4, at 7 in the morning, our troops attacked the town and a few hours later, with the support of the artillery, entered the place. The artillery had brought down the house of next door and buried all living beings in a few seconds. With a fear of these furious war machines, the woman and her five children fled outdoors. In the tumult, they, who had sought refuge in the crowd, were dragged by the torrent of those who were fleeing.

This family has been torn apart twice. When the fascists arrived in October of last year, the man had to flee and the family was left alone. Now the victorious troops of the Republic return and tragically separate the mother and the children again. A few hours after the reconquest of Valsequillo, the man, who was fighting as a militiaman on another front, returned to his liberated town and did not find his family.

"Have you found the wife and children again?" we ask. "Maybe yes," replied the Chairman of the Popular Front committee, "or maybe not. But in any case while looking for his family he must have fallen into the hands of the fascists, otherwise he would have returned a long time ago or we would have known something about his fate."

I have proposed that the street where this family's abandoned house is located be called: "Calle Pasionaria".

Heinz

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## We Remain Connected to the Homeland

*Brussels, May 16, 1937*

*Dear Hein,*

*In the happiest hours for a long time, we use the occasion to write you a "collective letter". You will receive the letter on the first day of Erna and Bertchen's arrival. Well, you can imagine what's going on here. And we want to make you a little part of our joy. Your Lotte is also here, and we'll talk about you and show your photos.*

*Dear Hein: just as you describe the situation of your front sector - and we check that your reports are even more optimistic than what is seen in our newspapers - so she also informs us of her front sector.*

*What we here still don't dare to think, happens "to the other side."*

*In some factories, workers have been deprived of their salary for the new Zeppelin. The labor force (about 3,000 men per factory, 80%) went to the offices and demanded the return of the money, and they got it.*



*In the engine factory of... the labor force was required to work overtime for the Zeppelin. The entire staff went home at the normal time. All workers know our radio station 29.8. St... he has heard it himself. The Nazis come to H... and hear the latest news on 29.8. These are specific cases that can be multiplied at will.*

*Now for some jokes on the other side. Question: "What is it that flies through the air and gets fatter and fatter?" Answer: "Göring!"*

*"What is it that is always in front of the doors and is getting thinner and thinner?" The "Westdeutscher Beobachter" (newspaper)!*

*Goebbels overturns his Mercedes, a worker comes along, picks him up and puts him in his correct position. Goebbels slaps him on the shoulder and says: "You are a real man, we could use you to lift Germany, what is your name?" And the man tells him his name: "Thälmann".*

*The situation in general is not very favorable. I have to tell you something sad. B. K... his lungs are not good. He is an old and exhausted man. These days a trial is taking place in B., where Fa... has been sentenced to 5 years in prison, and others to more. The trial for K... will be carried out separately in H. (if he is still alive). His wife went to visit him and didn't recognize him.*

*Now something about our front sector.*

*Our work has not gotten worse since you left, but it has improved. This means that our colleagues have understood what their duty is. And something I want to keep telling you, your Lotte has greatly participated in the promotion of our work. And this makes me especially happy. I am especially happy because she is your wife and because she is also a woman who stands out among all our comrades!*

*I have still forgotten something: Erna has brought bread that is as gray as a donkey.*

*Something even more: H. F. has finally revealed himself as a Gestapo snitch thanks to documents and letters found. He is in contact with the official of the Gestapo P...*

*Erna is still waiting to receive a message from you, so hurry up. Lotte has read your letter as "information" and it has made a good impression.*

*Dear Hein, keep the weapons in order, we may have to use them.*

*Paul*

*Dear Hein, we too, as young Germans, fight in the way of our comrade Thälmann for a new Germany. With a loud "We're ready!"*

*Bertchen*

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## Social Democrats in Spain's Struggle for Freedom by

Julius Schneider

Political Delegate of the 1st Company

In the history of the peoples who fight for their freedom there are many examples of the help they received during their struggle from members of other nations. But this is the first time in history that a unit like that of the Tschapaiew Battalion, made up of 21 nationalities, has been able to overcome hardships in this people's struggle.

In addition to this internationality, an important factor must also be mentioned in the work of the Tschapaiew Battalion: its involvement with the Popular Front. Although the majority of the battalion was formed by communists with only a small number of socialists or of no party etc..., there was never political division or opposition. Discussions between comrades about differences of opinion, with the passage of time, more and

more created a firm bond between these class-conscious workers and champions of international unity.

The leadership of the battalion by Otto Brunner and Ewald Fischer resulted in an unlimited confidence by us in their management. And many times, in conversations of communist comrades with socialists, regret was expressed for having confrontations in the past and also disgust at the fact that today there are people who do not believe in the need for the united front or who for other reasons do not support a unitary action or support it weakly. My party colleague Erich Kuttner rightly writes about a visit to the front: "What should I say to the soldiers in the trenches, who are fighting together for better and for worse, if they ask me: "When will the comrades from abroad learn from us?" I can only answer, "the learning has to come soon."

Since the early days, starting with the Thälmann Centuria and then in the International Brigades, the communists and socialists have given a splendid example of camaraderie and solidarity in their performance, without needing to talk much about it. In Madrid, our social democratic comrade who was the head of the company, Willi Wille, fell. Before Quijorna, a socialist comrade loved by all, Otto Jürgensen, also the head of the company, fell. In the offensive on the Aragon front, my friend Hermann Drumm lost his young life as lieutenant and platoon leader. These are just some of the many examples of those who have given their lives in the struggle for Spain's freedom as social democrats in favor of the Popular Front and as avant-gardes of the world popular front. These heroic deaths are an exhortation to fellow socialists to continue fighting for the union of the working class as the vanguard and guarantor of world peace.

The Tschapaiew Battalion is an example in the glorious history of the struggles of the international labor movement, an episode of internationalism and of an international popular front. In the same sense, each of these fighters will, in their homeland or in their organization, provide an excellent example. I often remember in critical moments comrade Heinz Hinz who, as group leader in our battalion, fell in the battle of Teruel when he was trying to bring a machine gun to his position. We had sat together many times. I knew him very well because he was an emigrant from my hometown in the Saarland. "Look," he said, "if you want,

it's possible. In Germany it's not possible, in the Saar the chances are better, and here? If only it was the same everywhere as it is for us here." He was referring, of course, to the good relationship between socialist and communist comrades.

He has fallen, but the Tschapaiew Battalion has continued to fight in the way that will lead to the victory of the working class, maintaining our faith and that of all fallen or living comrades, in the motto:

Unity and solidarity of all anti-fascists!

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## Sergeant Miguel Cordón López

On the list of promotions of the brigade of May 25, 1937 is the name of the machine gunner Miguel Cordón López, whom his comrades of the machine gun company call Negro. Miguel has been rewarded for his courageous behavior and promoted to sergeant. Naturally, we were also interested in his past and he willingly gave us complete information. Let's let him tell it himself:

"My parents were peasants and lived in the province of Granada. Since I was a child, I had to help support a very large family. I have never been to school, there was no time for that and there were no means. Some comrades have taught me how to read and write. In the spring of 1936 I entered the Socialist Workers' Youth. The relationship with the colleagues of our organization gave me a lot of new and interesting knowledge.

When the fascists occupied our village, we barely resisted. Our group was very small. We were heading for Málaga. On November 22, I voluntarily enlisted in the militias and was ordered to the Fara Battalion (?) of the 4th Centuria. At the beginning of February, we met the fascist intervention with a desperate resistance, but we were too weak against the technical superiority of the Italians, so we went back in groups towards Almería. On February 13, we met the internationals in Albuñol and immediately turned

around to fight with you against the fascists who are desolating our country."

He is very happy with the camaraderie he has found and with the fact that despite the fact that there are five nationalities in his machine gun group, there are never arguments. We asked him: What will you do when we send the fascists to the devil?

Miguel looks at us cheerfully: "Then I will return to my land!"

Willi

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## The Harvest

A little behind the Front, where the General Staff of the battalion are, the columns of reapers of the Spanish Popular Front advance and collect the harvest.

- "Are the fields yours?" - we ask the workers.

"No," they tell us, "last year we made the harvest for 3.50 pesetas a day with 14-hour days. The owner was a fascist. The harvest was his. But today we are harvesting for ourselves".

Their sweaty faces shine under the wide hats.

- "Why don't you take a big scythe?" - We ask them, looking at their small sickles with which they mow with small cuts what a scythe blow could do much faster.

They don't know about the scythes but they couldn't use them either while the fields are full of stones.

"Why do you cut at half height" we keep asking them, "so you lose half the straw"?

"The straw," they say, "has to be ploughed later, so it serves as fertilizer to the ground".

We are happy with them for their harvest. We explain to them the greater their wealth would be if they could work with all the knowledge of modern agriculture: development of livestock, correct fertilizing of the soil, large harvesters, all the great hopes and tasks appear before their eyes and ours.

The faces of the workers shine full of hope, cheerful, when they talk about this future.

The person in charge of the reapers' column is coming: "Okay. It's okay to talk about the future, but it's better to work for it. Work, as is bread, is as necessary as ammunition."

"The harvest is sacred," is the Government's motto. If we want to win the war, we can't lose a grain, not even the smallest of the vegetables. None of us can "collect" without permission. We leave the peasants to their own work. They fight a great battle that they have to win if we want to win the war.

Newspaper of the battalion, No. 62, of June 13, '37

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## Fascist Maneuver of Distraction

Since yesterday we have lived with the fascists in front of us in a kind of agreed combat pause. We see them in front of us moving freely in the sun. We do the same. We talk to them and they talk to us... This morning, an officer spoke to us from the fascist side. He began with the words: "Here the captain speaks to you....." It doesn't matter what this captain told us. The important thing is that an officer in front of his people goes and talks to us.

What can we deduce from that? First of all, the simple fact is that the fascists on the other side act with the consent of their officers and their General Staff. We cannot assume that this behavior has changed. That is why there are only two possibilities for this behavior, both of which can be assumed with a certain probability:

On the one hand, it is a distraction maneuver. The fascists believe they can numb our vigilance. Possibly they want to hide certain weaknesses. Possibly they want to try a breakthrough - it shouldn't be in our sector.

But at the same time it seems to be a demagogic maneuver of the fascist officers in front of their own soldiers. Many soldiers on the fascist side would like to flee to us. We know it from the testimonies of numerous refugees. But the fascists know it just like we do. So their officers try to use this circumstance demagogically. They want to win the trust of their people again through these actions. With this, they want to keep their soldiers firmly in check. Maybe they also want to find out who in their ranks is with them and who is with us. It's clear to us from the beginning.

We will not allow the fascists to use this pause to strengthen their positions. An attempt of this type must be countered immediately.

The situation is very alarming for us. It requires that the greatest attention be paid to each movement. If they want to come, let them come. They will find us ready. If they come as refugees, they will be warmly welcomed. If they attack, they will only get bloody heads from our steely proletarian surveillance.

Heinz

(From our battalion newspaper)

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## The Non-Austrians Write to Us About It!

Should our company have a name? This question has arisen again with us. There is also talk about what name it should be given. For all of us it is very

clear: the company must bear the name of an Austrian freedom fighter, since the Austrians are the most strongly represented among our different nationalities. We, as non-Austrians, salute this baptism in the interest of the anti-fascist struggle led by our comrades in Austria.

**Werner Naef**

(From "Der Treibriemen", No. 4, Newspaper of the Machine Gun Company, Córdoba Front, June 23, 1937)

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## We Have a Visit

Egon Erwin Kisch, Franz Dahlem, Erich Kuttner

The representative of the Central Committee of the KPD, Franz Dahlem, has visited our battalion. He has discussed with our comrades all the issues that interest us and has discussed these issues even more deeply with the political commissars and company heads. There is no important question for us that Franz has not answered us frankly and clearly. Starting with the small daily worries (heat, food, smoking, footwear, reading material...) we also talk to him about our most concerning problem: our replacements. Franz explained to us that when we raise the issue of relief, we cannot look at the issue only from the point of view of our own needs: the military situation as a whole, the global situation of the Spanish struggle, must be contemplated.

On all the topics discussed, especially on the new tasks of the International Brigades, on the development of war and international politics, on the relationship of our struggle in our sector of the front with the general situation... the commissars have already informed you. Talking about it here and now would exceed the scope of our newspaper.



Today we just want to thank Comrade Franz for the proof he has given us that our XIII Brigade is not a "forgotten brigade" but has accomplished some important tasks and must continue to accomplish them, tasks that will ensure us a place in the history of the International Brigades, in the history of the Spanish popular army and in the history of the struggle for the freedom of the Spanish people.

(From our newspaper of Battalion No. 63, June 16, 1937)

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## BRUNETE OFFENSIVE

### Soldiers at the Center of the Front

The train stops after a journey of more than 20 hours. It's 6 in the morning. We wake up. We try to orient ourselves. We are in a small station whose name is unknown to all of us. We stared out the windows, sleepy, surprised, hungry, frozen. Then we recognize on the platform some comrades from other battalions who have traveled a day before us. Is that okay? Have we arrived yet? Will we have to spend our much-desired days of rest here, in this sad place, in this empty plain without trees, shrubs, or hills? Where are we? We try to orient ourselves with a map. But then comes an order of the General Staff of the Brigade: all down. We put together our few things and got off the train stumbling, in a bad mood. It's very cold. We line up. Nobody knows what, how, where. The head of transport collects the report from the heads of companies and platoons. The battalion is complete. From somewhere comes the order to march along a road. We started to walk half stunned with our weapons and luggage one kilometer, two, three, four kilometers. Then we go to the right and left of the road through the stubble fields. We're lying down. Is this the beginning of the "rest"? It seems more like a damn immediate intervention. The atmosphere is horrible. Even Otto Brunner has stopped cursing with his good humor. Otto, quiet - it can't be worse. If we had at least a hot coffee and a piece of bread in our guts...

We are on the side of the road. Wallmann sings with his lute:

*I would like to wake up under the brightness of the sun that in the sky were no more airplanes, no crackles of bombs, no grenades;*

*Where there was no more talk of heroic deeds.*

*You have slept for a long time, you have lost many things, you talked about the war,*

*You have dreamed.*

It's an old song that Otto Reuter sang at the end of the last war. We have "modernized" it. But when we really sing it, without irony, with all seriousness, it is because it has come a long way with us. It's clear that this can't go on like this. Ewald gives a touch to Wallmann: "Uncle, sing a couple of less sentimental songs." And Wallmann realizes what is needed now. So it starts with the song of "Land of Tyrol" and ends with our "Song of Tschapaiew". Along the way the companies sing, at first a few, then

more and more sing. Meanwhile, the sun is warming us up. Someone has said that there is coffee prepared. Now everything will be better.

At 10 a comrade from the War Commissariat passes by and informs us that we are going to the area of Madrid and our eyes begin to light up.

Then they call Otto for a deliberation. After his return, he gathers the heads of the companies and the commissars and informs them that from now on we belong to the Army of the Center Front and we are going to fight alongside other international brigades. You have to tell the companies. The heads of companies and the commissars return to their companies and gather the platoon leaders. They in turn inform their units. Soon we hear everywhere along the way that the hurrahs resound. Precisely at that moment comes the field kitchen with freshly brewed, hot, steaming coffee. The hurrahs multiply.

The trucks are coming an hour later. We went up laughing, happy, delighted at the prospect of going to the front of Madrid, maybe even being

able to go to Madrid someday in the future: Madrid, whose name shines before us with an almost magical glow.

All the tiredness, all the exhaustion of the long and hard months we left behind seems forgotten.

The trucks start and the song of the International Brigades resounds loud, fresh and confident from each truck:

We have been born in very distant homelands, we carry only hatred in our hearts. But we have not lost our homeland: our homeland is today before us: Madrid.

K. (Kantorowicz?)

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## Karl Fischer

Karl Fischer was part of our Machine Gun Company as a combat medic on the Córdoba front. Since he was also Swiss, he came we us frequently and we spoke in the Swiss dialect about all kinds of things. We laughed a lot and we also made music. He also liked this and we were both young.

All of us appreciated the little blond Social Democratic comrade with his cheerful face. He gave us bandages. This was important because in combat it is not always possible that a doctor is exactly in place when a comrade is injured; a bandage quickly made by another comrade can save lives.

One day he also came with his Flit sprayer. The blankets were laid in the sun, the pants, the shirt, we took everything off and Karl sprayed them thoroughly with the Flit. We laughed a lot then, and many times Karl had to run while doing his work and take cover because the fascists had discovered him. But in spite of everything, he finished his job.

From the Pozobanco Front he later came with us to the Madrid Front. Although he was combat medic, he helped carry ammunition when we

were near the town of Villanueva de la Cañada. There, in the middle of the battle, Karl could be seen everywhere, blindfolding the wounded comrades under the fiercest fire. He helped them move back but immediately moved forward himself and brought help to another, until he himself was hit with a fascist bullet. That same afternoon it was known that our Karl had fallen and the sadness was great among all of us.

## Sergeant Alfred Hartmann (Machine Gun Company)

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### Difficult Hours

After the taking of the heights occupied by the fascists, the battalion, fulfilling orders, had to make a 90 degree turn to the left in the direction of Romanillos. During the rapid advance, there was a gap of two to three kilometers at some point between the 1st and the 3rd Company. The 3rd Company was advancing too quickly. Because we had taken the heights almost without damage, the comrades had become a little reckless and were not careful to maintain sufficient distance. With the 3rd Company there was a platoon of machine guns.

The terrain was very difficult, full of ravines and hills. In a ravine, a few hundred meters from Romanillos, those who were in front were suddenly surprised by about 30 or 40 Moors. The unexpected attack caused chaos in our ranks. The machine guns couldn't get into position, everything fell apart. It was a real disaster. Our machine gun platoon was completely wiped out with the exception of two men. Paul Wenzel received a serious shot in the abdomen but was taken back by Julius Schacht who was in our group. Then we found our comrades horribly shattered, their hands separated from the body, their ears cut off, their eyes emptied. Some of them had their hearts taken out. Some of the mangled corpses were later burned and were almost charred. This surprise attack by the fascists made us retreat a few hundred meters. In the meantime, the 1st Company and others had arrived. The battalion gathered and attacked Romanillos again. We reached the place where the fascists had surprised our comrades and found them unrecognizable: destroyed and burned.

We kept moving forward, but at about 800 meters from Romanillos we were greeted by such fire that we could not take another step. Horrible thirst, hunger and tiredness also played a great role in it. So we had to be satisfied with what was achieved that day and take a stand against Romanillos.

Lieutenant Paul Horn (Machine Gun Company)

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### Information

According to a front-line report, the fascists have received reinforcements of trucks on their right flank. There is contact with the Juan Marco Battalion, and between the 49th and 51st battalions (the 49th is the Tschapaiev and the 51st the Juan Marco) there is a gap of 1500 meters that cannot be filled by battalion 49. The 51st battalion must fill the gap.

Because all heavy machine guns are unable to fight, the firepower of the troop is very weak. The battalion draws attention at this point and will try with these weak forces to repel any attack.

The Battle Commissar and The Battalion Commander,  
49th Battalion, Ewald Fischer and Otto Brunner

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Front, July 9, 1937, 5 hours 5 minutes

To the head of the 2nd Company, Comrade Bauer!

A liaison patrol of 2 men will be sent immediately to the liaison officer of the Juan Marco Battalion to inspect the battalion's positions. Juan Marco must do the same.

The Political Commissar and the head of the company are responsible for all comrades being capable of fighting in the line of combat. Comrades must fortify as well as they can.

Send a report of the situation!!!

13th Mixed Brigade, 49th Battalion

The Battalion Commander Otto Brunner

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Front, July 10, 1937, 14 hours

To all the heads of companies!

The brigade has just announced that the attack must be carried out along the entire line.

Before we give the order to attack, the artillery will fire intensively at the fascist positions again. Tanks will be made available to us for the attack. The start of the attack will be communicated to the company heads.

As long as the artillery fires, the infantry must advance as close as possible to the enemy lines (positions).

Otto Brunner

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On July 23rd  
by  
Sergeant Helmuth Dudd, Chief of the Staff Train

No man in our battalion will forget July 23. The General Staff of the battalion spent the night from the 22nd to the 23rd in the white house. In the morning at 5 we went to the battalion that had been in the so-called reserve position for a day, that is, just over 100 meters behind the first line on a hill, without any kind of coverage. We immediately started digging a trench, but we had not yet advanced the work much when a horrible burst of artillery began. The first goal of the fascist artillery was the small white house that during the entire time of combat had been the command post of the General Staff of our battalion and that we had already abandoned. In a very short time only the ruins of this house remained. Then followed a bombing of between six and seven hours on our positions that, as has been said, lacked coverage; it was a bombing like never before in the war in Spain. We had to thank the ditches that we had just opened halfway in the morning, for not having had any casualties. So many grenades fell near our trench that our commander and the sergeant major were buried and for the second time the food supply was destroyed because we had left it at the edge of the ditch. Commander Brunner cursed in every possible way in the face of such dirt, especially since with his backpack his beloved Swiss cigars had gone to the devil.

Around 2 o'clock, the battalion of the XV Brigade that was in front of us could no longer resist the fire or the pressure of the fascists. So our "reserve position" was back on the front line. Despite the poor protection, after the cessation of artillery fire we decisively rejected the attack of the fascists and we pushed them back with many casualties for them. Then the artillery fire started again. In the course of these fights our battalion was numerically so weak that I received the commander's order to go to reinforce the front line with all the comrades of the battalion's General Staff who were available: observers, etc. With these few people, including Anton Kutz, Hans Heilmann and Hans Müller, we covered the largest gaps. Anton Kutz, much loved by all of us, fell two hours later.

I went to the left flank of the battalion. There I saw that the battalions that had contact on the left were retreating a little, so our left flank was exposed. I immediately informed our commander who accompanied me to the two battalions to find out the cause of their retreat. On the way back to our battalion we ended up at to the fascist artillery fireline. A grenade exploded about two meters in front of us and Otto Brunner was injured by shards in

his back and butt. He had not yet had time to bandage this when a second grenade fell at the same distance and into the same hole and Otto was wounded in the back again. We used the first pause in the firing to get to the battalion's first aid station, which was about 200 meters away. There, Brunner was given first aid.

After having spoken to the General Staff of the brigade by phone, Brunner went to his battalion, despite his injuries, with the Battle Commissar Ewald. On this way he was hit by two fascist bullets and seriously injured. We were able to take him immediately to the trench of the white house. A Spanish doctor gave him first aid for the new wounds that were awful. Ewald, the political commissar of the battalion, the liaison Hans Heilmann, Müller and I then took him downhill to our ambulance. We had to cross the road in the middle of tremendous artillery fire. The transport was also delayed by an attack by planes that bombed and machine-gunned us. After finally taking Otto to a hospital vehicle, we returned to the battalion. In the meantime, it had become dark and the fire and pressure of the fascists had ceased.

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## Forward in the Spirit of the Attack Battalion Tschapaiew

### Otto Brunner

Comrades, after I was wounded, and still convalescent, sitting in an armchair, there passed before my eyes images of the past combats, victories and deprivations of the XIII Brigade, and especially of our Tschapaiew Battalion.

I remember the bloody days of combat near Teruel, when the battalion attacked for the first time in front of the city houses.

After the brief reorganization in Requena, the battalion headed, singing and sure of its victory, into the midst of the terrible torrent of thousands of fugitives fleeing Malaga. The impression made by our disciplined and determined troops, as opposed to the impression made by the enemy, was so strong that hundreds of Spanish comrades joined our battalion to



confront the fast-moving enemy. No one knew where the enemy was. The battalion looked for him and found his advanced position in Calahonda and Motril. He fled in panic, and his advance was paralyzed.

In the Sierra Nevada, the highest mountain range in Spain, 800 Spanish anti-fascists had been surrounded by the fascists. The Tschapaiew Battalion was ordered to advance towards the Sierra Nevada. And the battalion overcame all exhaustion, all inconvenience with a single thought: we have to free our surrounded brothers. In a fierce attack together with the Spanish Lenin battalion, the fascists were thrown out of the Trévez valley. Seven rich villages and two other places were conquered. In this surprise attack, those who were trapped behind Trévez were able to make their way to us. A delegation of them - including women - conveyed their gratitude for our help. The battalion had done its work well.

After six weeks of hard fighting in snow and ice, without a single day of rest, the battalion was sent at the beginning of April to the threatened front of Pozoblanco.

Comrades, you know after the magnificent attack, the battalion expelled the fascists from the large fortified village of Valsequillo, and in the following days, with other battalions of the XIII Brigade, attacked LaGranjuela, held by more than 900 fascists of Sierra Noria. I remind you of the great demands on the morale of all the comrades during the hard months in the Sierra Mulva near Peñarroya. But again you fulfilled your duty as anti-fascist fighters until the end. The soil of Spain, soaked with the blood of our comrades, remained firmly in our hands.

All of you expected and wished for some days of well-deserved rest. But none of you complained when you were called out again, because it was necessary, even after seven hard months of uninterrupted fighting, to return to battle, this time on the Madrid Front. Despite its exhaustion, our attack battalion demonstrated its courage and the entire XIII Brigade again was courageous during the attacks on Villanueva de la Cañada and Romanillos.

Many of you are now possibly discouraged by the dissolution of the XIII Brigade and our battalion. This is required by military needs. But before you is now a new and great task: to resume the spirit of our battalion in

other units, in whose ranks you will fight in the future as brave and good anti-fascists as you fought in our battalion.

Our old slogan in future struggles and victories must be:

Forward in the spirit of the Tschapaiew Attack Battalion!

Hospital, Madrid, August 11, 1937

Your Commander Otto Brunner

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