

About the militia leader and anarchist Buenaventura Durruti



Buenaventura Durruti.

From Source 3.

Buenaventura Durruti (1896-1936)

Already at the age of 17, Buenaventura Durruti actively participated in a strike that was crushed by the Spanish army. 70 workers were killed and more than 500 were injured, while 2,000 were imprisoned.

Durruti himself escaped to France, from where he returned in 1920. Since then he participated in a long series of conflicts between workers and the Spanish authorities.

He became a prominent leader in the Spanish anarchist party FAI (Federación Anarquista Ibérica), which in collaboration with the anarcho-syndicalist trade union CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) 1) [formed](#) a large number of militia units at the beginning of the Civil War.

Durruti himself became the commander of one of these forces.



Buenaventura Durruti of Militias led by anarchists.

From Source 1.

Durruti Column

The column, which originally numbered approx. 2,500 militia soldiers, left Barcelona on 24 July 1936 for Saragossa, with the aim of conquering the city.

The column came into battle for the first time at the town of Caspe, but had to stop the advance at Pina de Ebro, approx. 22 km from Saragossa, as it was feared that further advance could lead to the column being isolated and surrounded. They had few supplies and were thus unable to resume the attack.

The force therefore took up defensive positions and set about spreading revolutionary attitudes in the province of Aragon. The militia leader Buenaventura Durruti set up his headquarters in the town of Bujaraloz, Zaragoza. The strength gradually grew to approx. 6,000 men.

The force was then sent to Madrid to take part in the defense of the city. Durruti was given command of 1,400 of the 6,000 militia soldiers who took part in the defense.

The force suffered heavy casualties and Durruti himself was shot by an unknown person on 19 October 1936. There are apparently many theories about Durruti's death, including that he was killed because he opposed the Republican government's intention to disband the militia units and form a regular army that was under the control of the government [2](#)).

The anarchist Ricardo Sanz then took command and agreed to disband the militia and transform it into a regular army unit - the 26th Division, which consisted of the 119th, 120th and 121st Brigades. The division took part in the battles for Belchite (24 August to 6 September 1937) and in the defense of Catalonia in January 1939.

After the war, many of the soldiers were deported to France, where some were enlisted in the French army; some of these soldiers were part of the first Free French units that moved into Paris in 1944. The first armored personnel carrier that moved into the city was named Guadalajara and among the crew were several members of the original Durruti column. The tank was part of the 9th Company from the 2e Division Blindée3).

Organization per 15 August 1936 (*From Source 4*)

The management

Chef Buenaventura Durruti

War Committee Miguel Yoldi, Jose Splugas, Rionda, Ruano, Mora and Durruti

Military advisors Major Pérez Farras, Captains Botet and Carciller and Sergeant Manzana

Responsible for all companies José Esplugas

Responsible for all sectors Rico Rionda

Responsible for the artillery Captane Botet

Responsible for the Bonilla armored vehicles

The military advisers were the actual soldiers of the column and acted as advisers to the war committee. Neither officers nor commanders were in command or had special privileges.

The structure of the column was based on everyone being equal who had volunteered. An order was thus given from one comrade to another. Military punishment did not exist, but "punishment" was based on a sense of solidarity.

The fighting force

Sector	Unit	Subunits	Responsible
Sector 1 (Chef: Ruano)	1. Kampfgruppe (group)	5 companies (<i>centuries</i>)	Jose Mira

	2. Combat Group	5 companies	Liberto Roig
	3. Combat Group	5 companies	Jose Esplugas
Sector 2 (Chef: Miguel Yoldi)	4. Combat Group	5 companies	Jose Gomez bead
	5. Combat Group	5 companies	Jose Tarin
	6. Combat Group	5 companies	J. Silvestre
Sector 3 (Head: Mora)	7. Combat Group	5 companies	Subirats
	8. Combat Group	5 companies	Or
	9. Combat Group	5 companies	R.Garcia
Other units	International battle group	5 half companies of 50 male	Louis Berthomieu
	Guerrilla groups	4+ groups, see below	-

Each company numbered approx. 100 men, organized into 4 platoons. The person in charge of the battle group was appointed by the war committee, but did not command the battle group and had no command privileges.

The International Battle Group (*Grupo Internacional*) consisted of French, Germans, Italians, Moroccans, English and Americans. The person in charge of the unit was the French captain of artillery, Louis Berthomieu. As such, he was not in command and had no command privileges.

Responsible for the 5 half companies were: Ridel, Fortin, Charpentier, Cottin and Carles. The force eventually grew to 400 men.



Militissoldater fra Columna Durruti, Aragon, August 1936.

Fra Buenaventura Durruti (Spartacus Educational).

The guerrilla groups that operated behind enemy lines carried, among other things, the designations:

- *Los Hijos de la Noche* (Children of the Night), *La*
- *Banda Negra* (The Black Gang), *Los*
- *Dinamiteros* (usually referring to miners from Asturias who were experts in explosives)
- *Los Metalúrgicos* (Metalworkers; possibly also explosives experts).

The picture could show people from one of the guerrilla groups; *Dinamiteros* were often armed only with hand grenades and explosives.

Arms

The column had approx. 3,000 rifles, 16 machine guns, mostly captured from the enemy, 9 mortars and 12 artillery pieces. The column also had a number of improvised armored vehicles.

The images come from Source 5.



Improvised armored vehicles from Columna Durruti.

From Source 5.

Strength figure

The strength figure was originally approx. 2,500 men (men and women), but gradually grew, and per 15 August 1936 there were approx. 4,500 people; later the number was approx. 6,000 men. The armament was thus far from reaching everyone, and the unarmed assisted the local population, e.g. in agriculture.

Sources

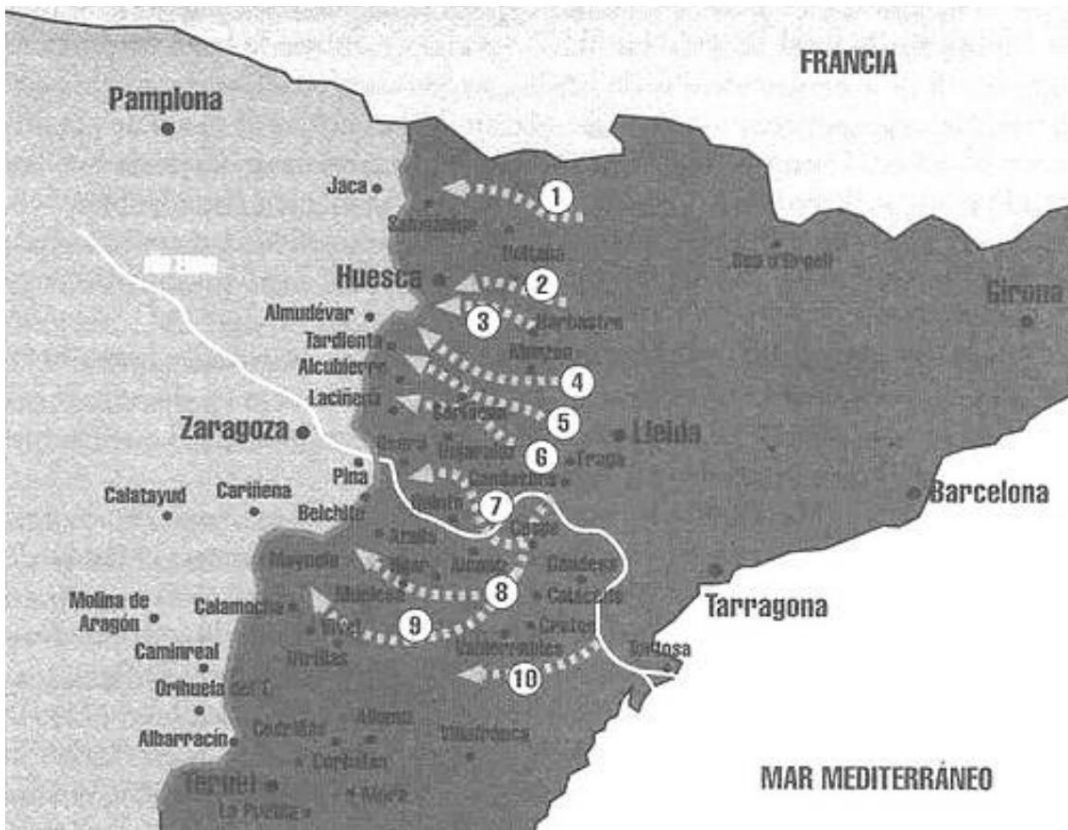
1. Confederate militias (Wikipedia).
2. Good Luck Durruti (Wikipedia).
3. Good Luck Durruti (Wikipedia).
4. La Columna 'Durruti' (A las Barricadas!!!). The article is based on information from the book *Durruti en la Revolución española* by Abel Paz, Fundación de Estudios Libertarios Anselmo Lorenzo, Madrid 2001.
5. The Durruti Column (Republican Battle Tanks).
6. War in Spain: Los Dinamiteros (Time Magazine, 3 January 1938).

Per Finsted



From the cut sheet *Milicias del Pueblo - Columna Durruti*. Published by *El Gato Negro*, Barcelona, 1936. Friar Recortables of the Civil War (Fora Anarchist).

Postscript - On militia units from Catalonia, summer 1936



The map and the information about the Catalan militia units are taken from Source 4.

No.	Column Chief	The soldiers came mainly from...
1	Well	The left-wing party <i>Esquerra Republicana</i> in Catalonia, which advocated the independence of Catalonia 4) —
2	Lenin	Militia units belonging to the Marxist Workers' Party POUM, <i>Partido Obrero Unificación Marxista</i> 5), and <u>various</u> units formed by soldiers from many countries
3	rarely Gregorio young man	Militia units belonging to the anarchist organizations CNT-FAI - the anarcho-syndicalist trade union CNT, <i>Confederación Nacional del Trabajo</i> and the anarchist party FAI, <i>Federación Anarquista Ibérica</i> , and militia units from the town of Barbastro in the province of Aragon
4	eaglets garcia vivacious	Militia units belonging to the anarchist organizations CNT-FAI
5	Carlos Marx José del Neighborhood	Militia units belonging to the Catalan Socialist Party PSUC, <i>Partit Socialist Unificat of Catalonia</i> 6) —
6	Maurin	José Rovira Militia units belonging to the Marxist labor party POUM and workers from the city of Lleida

7	Durruti	Buenaventura Durruti	Workers from the anarchist organizations CNT-FAI
8	South-Ebro	Antonio Ortiz	Workers from the anarchist organizations CNT-FAI
9	penalve	Penalver	Workers and militia units from the city of Tarragona in southern Catalonia
10	If	If	Workers and militia units from the city of Tarragona in southern Catalonia

The Peñalve (9) and Mena (10) columns later became part of the units *Columna Sur-Ebro-7* formed by militia units from Barcelona, and *Columna Macià-Companys* formed by members of the Catalan independence party Estat Català 8) . Members of the same party also formed a detachment of mountain troops, the Regiment Pirinenc de Catalunya, as well as an expeditionary corps, the Columna Volant Catalana, which took part in the republican attempt to conquer Mallorca 9). The latter unit later formed the core of the 132o Brigada Mixta.

To note:

- 1) Se Iberian Anarchist Federation, National Confederation of Labor og Syndikalisme (Wikipedia).
- 2) The different versions are discussed in the article La Muerte de Durruti (Leyendas de la Guerra Civil, El Pais).
- 3) See Nueve Company (Memorial Montornel) which also shows a picture of the M3 semi-tracked vehicle Guadalajara. The article states that well over 2,000 of the armored division's soldiers were Spanish.
- 4) Republican Catalonia Narrows (Wikipedia).
- 5) It is POUM (Wikipedia).
- 6) The Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (Wikipedia).
- 7) Se Confederate militias (Wikipedia).
- 8) Catalan State (Wikipedia).
- 9) See Battle of Majorca (Wikipedia). The operations in Majorca lasted from 17 August to 12 September 1936.