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European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire

ISSN: 1350-7486 (Print) 1469-8293 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cerh20

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To cite this article: David Malet (2020) Workers of the world, unite! Communist foreign fighters 1917–91, European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire, 27:1-2, 33-53, DOI: 10.1080/13507486.2019.1706449

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2019.1706449

EUROPEAN REVIEW OF HISTORY: REVUE EUROPÉENNE D'HISTOIRE
2020, VOL. 27, NOS. 1–2, 33–53
https://doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2019.1706449

Workers of the world, unite! Communist foreign fighters 1917–91

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ABSTRACT

While foreign fighters are jihadis in the contemporary public imagination, over the last 100 years many more individuals volunteered to be foreign fighters for Marx than for Mohammed. During the 75 years between the Russian Revolution and the collapse of the Soviet Union, approximately one quarter-million volunteers joined Marxist armed groups in civil wars in foreign countries. The shift in leadership from the Soviet Union and the European-based Comintern to China and its diaspora networks in Asia to Cuban direction of missions across Latin America and Africa produced increasingly strategic and long-lived deployments of non-combatant nation-building volunteers along with fighters. Some of these entities remain active, and the movement continues to inspire Marxist foreign fighters in conflicts such as Syria even without state sponsorship. This article examines the life cycle of this transnational movement, and how it evolved as different state actors directed it to match their interests and strategic goals. It also examines understudied instances of foreign fighters in the Global South and the impact of their leadership.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 25 February 2019
Accepted 16 December 2019

KEYWORDS
Foreign fighter; Communist; focoism; Comintern; transnational; rebel

In the twenty-first century, global audiences associate the term 'foreign fighter' with the transnational Islamist terror groups that have operated since forming to battle the Soviet Red Army in Afghanistan in the waning days of the Cold War. Ironically, over the last 100 years many more individuals have volunteered to be foreign fighters for Marx than for Mohammed. And, decades before jihadi supporters emigrated to populate a caliphate, Communists and their families were recruited to build Workers' Paradises that similarly promised opportunities in new societies free from exploitation.

This article traces the evolution of the Communist foreign fighter movement, a global network of militants and supporting activists which, on the centenary of the Russian Revolution, remained active in recruiting foreign volunteers to fight in the Syrian Civil War. The focus of this article, however, is the approximately 75-year period coinciding with the existence of the Soviet Union, partly because this was the main period of activity for the movement, but also because the 'passing of the torch' between countries in orchestrating this non-state movement throughout this period led to significant changes in its character and emphasis.

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The Communist foreign fighter movement can be described in four distinct, overlapping phases. First was the period of Soviet hegemony in which the Russian Bolsheviks absorbed foreign volunteers, and later used the mechanisms of the Communist International to send volunteers to the Spanish Civil War, in both instances in an ad hoc basis in response to standing companies of volunteers and challenging wartime conditions. A second period saw Chinese Communists develop their own institutions centred on ethnic Chinese diaspora communities to move forces around civil wars across Asia, and evidence of a more strategic use of immigrant 'Western Friends' than that of Russia. The third period, encompassing the height and later stages of the Cold War, saw Latin American communists rebrand foreign fighting as anti-imperialist volunteerism in developing nations of Africa and Latin America, in which form they outlived the Soviet Union and continue to the present. And the fourth stage has been the harnessing of foreign fighters by global leftist networks without the direction of a state sponsor in the contemporary era after the Soviet Union.

Stepping back to examine the big picture

The multitude of roughly 250,000 foreign volunteers who fought for Communism in civil wars throughout the twentieth century has not been the subject of analysis as singular movement, despite its scale and impact, and similar approaches to studying other foreign fighter movements such as jihadism and Garibaldism. In fact, the wave of Communist foreign fighters lasted twice as long as the period between the rise of al Qaeda and the fall of the Islamic State caliphate, and included multiple foreign fighter groups of comparable size to the cohorts that fought in the Syrian Civil War.

Some aspects of the movement have been the subject of extensive scholarly research. The International Brigades of the Spanish Civil War are one exception; Che Guevarra and his missionary approach to spreading Marxist revolution globally is another. But these specific contributions have not been examined in the context of their effects on the entire Communist foreign fighter movement.

One reason for this has been an overall lack of research contextualizing foreign fighters beyond single cases. A few studies have compared the attributes of foreign fighters through history.[1] Others have traced the development of the jihadi foreign fighter movement since the 1970s.[2] But for the most part these studies focus on particular wars, and how rebel groups or armies add to their strength by persuading volunteers from elsewhere to join them or, in the cases of some jihadis, how groups of already active foreign fighters will travel to a new conflict to set up operations, leading to ensuing conflicts with local fighters.

The reason for this approach is the relative dearth of source material available to examine foreign fighter activity. As opposed to foreign military volunteers, who enjoy the support of their host regimes, foreign fighters join rebel groups fighting against governments, or factions in civil war states where the army might be outmatched by insurgents. Their activities are usually illegal under national and international laws or conducted under conditions of great threat and without extensive bureaucratic support, and the efforts abroad to recruit them are likewise typically illicit. Primary sources about foreign fighter activity, particularly their operations on the battlefield, are usually scant. Even in the best-documented cases, such as the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War or the mujahidin in Afghanistan, scholarly estimates of the sizes of their forces vary by several times, or even orders of magnitude.[3]

Therefore, a second contribution of this article is to highlight data from under-studied instances of foreign fighting, as well as to present them in the context of the wider movement in which they took place. After the Second World War, the locus of the Communist foreign fighter movement shifted to the developing nations of what was referred to during the Cold War as the 'Third World', and today is described in the international relations literature as the 'Global South'. This evolution coincided with general trends in world politics that saw both states and transnational activist movements shift away from Eurocentric proprietary control to South-based indigenous leadership with their own interests and strategies.[4] This article examines how the shift from Russian hegemony to leadership by non-Europeans influenced the longevity of the movement.

Identifying foreign fighters

For the purposes of this study, 'foreign fighters' includes all foreign volunteers or recruits with Marxist armed groups, regardless of whether they fought in combat. Individuals who join armies are still considered soldiers even if they do not participate in combat. Non-combatant volunteers, such as nurses, have been among foreign fighters throughout history, and their memoirs indicate that they subscribe to the same group interests and ideologies as the frontline fighters.[5] In fact, as the records demonstrate, like some jihadis, Communist volunteers signed up for purportedly civilian duties and even brought family members with them to help build new utopian societies while war raged around them.

However, there is evidence in the literature that the ideologies are not what principally motivates foreign fighters as much as commitment to fighting on behalf of a social group with which the fighter identifies. For example, Reynolds and Hafez used geospatial network analysis to demonstrate that German foreign fighters in the Syrian Civil War were all from the same few urban clusters, not the cities with the largest Muslim populations, and nearly all of them had known other volunteers personally, findings that would be unlikely if ideational factors mobilized recruits more than social networks.[6] Dawson and Amarasingam interviewed foreign fighters in the Syrian Civil War and found that they had low levels of ideological or religious awareness, in line with media reports of foreign fighters taking copies of basic informational books like *Islam for Dummies* when they travelled.[7] Moore and Tumelty provided evidence that rebels in Chechnya in the 1990s shifted from national liberation to global jihad in order to attract external financial sponsors.[8]

Malet demonstrated that through history, foreign fighter recruiters have switched the ways that they framed conflicts, such as from ideological to ethnic, depending on which appeals were better received by target audiences of potential recruits. Recruits for the International Brigades were micro-targeted based on their existing group affiliations and alternatively told that they would be fighting to preserve a Communist society in the Spanish Republic, to defeat fascists who were terrorizing fellow democrats or unionists or Jews, to protect black people by weakening fascism's hold on Ethiopia, or to stand up for fellow farmers at the mercy of fascist feudal landholders. Ultimately the ideology presented to ostensibly Communist foreign fighters was as flexible as was needed to get them to sign up to fight.[9]

Soviet hegemony (1917–43)

Throughout the nineteenth century, Communists had worked to develop 'International' unions of workers and to persuade them to fight for their interests as a transnational class beyond empires or nation-states. With the emergence of Communism in Russia, it would be reasonable to assume that a transnational vanguard was a core part of Vladimir Lenin's strategy for changing the balance of forces in the Russian Revolution and the civil war that followed. There are indeed records of Lenin recruiting individuals from abroad to join the Bolshevik leadership, and the Soviet Union would later attempt to recruit immigrants en masse to help modernize the state.[10]

However, it is also apparent that the bulk of the foreign fighters who helped to establish the Soviet Union were available due to happenstance, and that the Bolsheviks absorbed them as a reactive measure rather than a strategic one, establishing an ambivalence between the Kremlin and foreign volunteers that would last through the era of Soviet leadership of the Communist foreign fighter movement.

The Russian Revolution and Civil War (1917–22)

The Red Army was largely manned by foreign volunteers during the Russian Revolution, and its victory inaugurated a transnational movement that would wage war and promote insurrection on every continent for the next 75 years. However most of the approximately 50,000 'internationalists' who served either in specified 'internationalist detachments' or mixed with local forces were not recruited for their commitment to Communism.[11] Instead, Soviet use of foreign fighters in the Russian Civil War was initially the result of the need to accommodate a significant number of foreigners, mostly enemy soldiers in prisoner of war (POW) camps, who already happened to be in-country. The Communists strategically branded them as international comrades to justify recruiting them, and only subsequently made efforts to mobilize others abroad.

At the outbreak of the Russian Revolution in October 1917, there were approximately 5 million foreigners within Russia.[12] Half of this population were POWs from the Central Powers in the Great War, 2 million were refugees, chiefly from Poland and Romania, and the remaining half-million were labourers from Asia who had been recruited for construction and other work.[13] The Bolsheviks enlisted from among all of these populations, but concentrated on seasoned soldiers in order to rapidly build a force that could fight the Imperial Russian Army.

The impetus to create international detachments predated the Revolution. In mid-1916, approximately 50,000 Czech POWs from the Austro-Hungarian Army agreed to defect and create the Czechoslovak Legion, a force inspired by the *druzhina* (fellowships) of Czech foreign fighters who had served in the Varangian Guard of the Byzantine Army and then for the tsar between the tenth and sixteenth centuries.[14] Rather than deploy them to the front, the Army had the Czechoslovak Legion operate within Russia. An attempt on 14 March 1918 by local Red commanders in Cheliabinsk to force the Legion to disarm led the foreign fighters to seize control of the city, and this incident is widely considered the point at which the Russian Revolution sparked the Russian Civil War.[15]

Lenin responded to the formation of the Legion with a concerted effort to win the loyalties of other foreign POWs. By the end of 1917, all of the approximately 4000 POW

camps across Russia had Red Guard units with political officers stationed in them to facilitate recruitment into special units organized along national lines or of mixed foreign membership.[16] According to Pereira, 'by the Spring of 1918 there existed more than a dozen such "internationalist" detachments that brought tens of thousands of additional foreign sympathizers to the Communist side'.[17] When conscription began for the Red Army in summer 1918, half of its manpower consisted of Polish and Latvian detachments.[18]

'Internationalists' served in separate detachments as well as in regular local units in both the Red Army and Red Guard, making precise numbers difficult to calculate; reliable records of the Red Guard were not created or maintained. Red Guard units were assigned to particular cities and settlements, and available records indicate international detachments in 161 locales.[19] Available estimates range from 30,000 to 250,000 foreign fighters in the Red Army.[20] In 1923, Commissar Leon Trotsky put the figure at 50,000.[21]

All former POWs were made equal citizens of the Soviet Republic. Internationalists who served in the Red Guards had the same rights as Russian guards.[22] At Trotsky's direction, internationalist detachments of the Red Army were paid at a higher rate than Russian units and, while the Bolsheviks had introduced non-convertible Soviet roubles in 1917, foreign fighters were often paid in other currencies.[23]

The other main pool of foreigners was the workforce of a half-million Chinese and Korean labourers, some of whom had been in working in Manchuria for years, and who served both in nationality-based detachments and in mixed internationalist detachments with European foreign fighters. Some estimates place the number of Chinese internationalists alone at 50,000.[24] Regardless of their exact size, their presence was indispensable in filling nearly every unit of international detachments while still having enough recruits to form Chinese regiments in the Red Army.[25]

Internationalist detachments were assigned to conduct violence against civilians and crush political opposition, either because it was assumed they would be more willing to attack Russians than local forces would be, or for the purposes of creating greater terror. Lenin directed Latvian regiments to disperse the Constituent Assembly of the Russian Republic in January 1918. Polish 'shock' units put down the Yaroslavl uprising in July 1918.[26] Chinese units reportedly served as death squads, and this became a staple of anti-Bolshevist propaganda.[27] Foreign fighters assigned to Red Guard units were crucial in extending Soviet rule to regions of Russia, including most Siberian cities, where neither faction in the civil war otherwise had a strong presence.[28]

Reports indicate that many of the Latvian volunteers became disillusioned after being used frequently to put down civilian unrest, and other nationalities from Russian imperial lands, particularly Central Asian Muslims, also suffered integration difficulties because they were distrusted by Russian Bolsheviks. In 1920, Joseph Stalin became convinced of a foreign plot in the ranks and ordered all 'suspicious' foreigners, including Americans, Western Europeans and Central Asian Muslims to be interned in detention camps. Thus, the post-national ideology of Marxism did not overcome organizational decision-making based on the national identities of foreign volunteers.[29]

Some internationalist detachments of the Red Guard outlasted the civil war and were incorporated into the Red Army.[30] Many of these foreign fighters, such as Bela Kun, remained in Russia, and a number rose to senior ranks in the Red Army and security services but were eliminated in Stalin's purges. Others, including Josip Tito and Imre

Nagy, would return home with the resources and connections which they would ultimately use to lead the Communist regimes of their own countries. There was also variation along ethnic lines as many Latvians and Poles remained in Russia, while Hungarians and Germans tended to return home.[31]

Still, after the war, the Soviets expanded their efforts to cultivate international volunteers, particularly technical specialists, for internal reconstruction and modernization. In the 1920s the Kremlin developed a bureaucracy devoted to attracting Western immigrants. Recognizing their higher standards of living at home, it offered them better living conditions and higher wages than the average Soviet worker. They were permitted to buy goods not available to the general public in special stores and had travel privileges on private trains. Twenty years later, Chinese Communists would adopt this model to draw foreign fighters while their civil war was still underway.[32]

The Comintern in Spain (1936–9)

Lenin also initiated an extensive bureaucracy that operated transnationally to coordinate the efforts of Soviet supporters abroad and to extend Soviet influence into the domestic affairs of their countries. At the centre of this effort, The Third International, otherwise known as the Communist International or Comintern, convened in 1919 and would direct the activities of national Communist Party branches for more than 20 years. The Comintern also established non-Communist front organizations to manipulate non-Communists into assets in Russian espionage, a practice that would outlast the organization itself.[33] However, the effect also worked the other way, with public relations pressure from the Comintern driving the Kremlin to support foreign fighters in Spain.

The Spanish Civil War is the most extensively documented case of Communist foreign fighters, although estimates of the number of volunteers in the International Brigades (IB) remain contested and do not always include the volunteers who fought alongside them in separate Trotskyite units (including George Orwell), Socialist units (such as the 500 Americans in the Eugene Debs Column) and Anarchist militias, still less the more than 1000 anti-Communist foreign fighters on the other side who had mobilized in response to the IB. The most commonly cited range of figures is 40,000–50,000 foreign participants, which included not only combatants but medical volunteers for the Comintern front group International Red Aid, such as the ambulance driver Ernest Hemingway.[34]

The origins of the IB are less well known than the ensuing legends of outgunned volunteers emerging spontaneously to fight fascism. As in Russia 20 years earlier, the nucleus of foreign fighters was already present when the civil war began on 17 July 1936 with a fascist military coup against the elected government of the republic. Political refugees from Germany and Italy had already relocated to leftist-controlled Spain, and the People's Olympiad scheduled for 19 July in Barcelona, a Red alternative to the Berlin Olympics that year, had drawn thousands more foreign vacationers, labourers and students. At the outset, as many as 15,000 foreign volunteers engaged in street fighting against the fascists. They swiftly formed militia called *centuria* that were organized along national and linguistic lines and named for leftist leaders in their home countries.[35]

By September, multiple Western European Comintern leaders were pushing Moscow to organize an intervention, and had established relief committees that were raising funds and promoting the cause of the Spanish Republic. Stalin was not prepared to risk a direct

military confrontation with Germany over Spain. But he believed that there was value in engaging Comintern activists, whom he personally regarded as hapless dilettantes, rather than having them create bad publicity over Soviet non-intervention. While the Soviet Union would never send Soviet citizens to Spain as anything more than military advisors, on 14 September the Kremlin authorized a vanguard of 500–600 foreign Communists residing in the USSR to go to Spain and organize the *centuria* into nationality-based military brigades. The IB were intended to give the Soviet military the opportunity to observe fascist forces in action at low direct cost, and to create publicity that would encourage non-Communist foreigners to volunteer to fight instead of sacrificing Party members.[36] The Comintern became the mechanism for the mobilization of the IB 'partly because it already had a strong disciplined organisation and partly because the Labour-Socialist International … would not encourage or accept joint cooperation with the Comintern to organise volunteers.'[37]

The IB therefore consisted mostly of exiles from fascist states residing in free Europe, and sympathizers recruited under an Anti-Fascist banner of protecting democracy rather than fighting for Marxist ideology. The Comintern tasked national Communist Party branches with recruitment and provided them with quotas and with criteria for ideological purity.[38] Most volunteers already had ties to leftist groups and, as the war ground on, the Party would be compelled to send more of its own. An estimated 60% of IB members were Communist Party members before being recruited to Spain, and another 20% joined after arriving.[39]

Rather than advancing revolution, the foreign fighters were told 'Spain is the first trench of a battlefield which extends across national frontiers into all the democratic lands',[40] and that they were needed 'to keep war and fascism from spreading'.[41] Victory held the promise of advancing Anti-Fascist causes. As American Harold Smith of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade wrote in a 1937 letter home: 'The Fascists were driving against Madrid and they had to be stopped … Wallop the hell out of Fascism here and we'll see a World's People Front that opens up possibilities.'[42]

The Comintern recruited across North America through representative unions for longshoremen, miners and students.[43] Perhaps a majority of these volunteers had no commitment to Marxism, but shared short-term social justice goals that converged with preventing the ascendance of fascism.[44] The broad panoply of Anti-Fascists included union workers who were told that their benefits would not be safe if fascism advanced,[45] and African-Americans who wished to liberate Ethiopia by dealing Italy a crippling blow.[46] Active Communists promoted the IB as the fulfilment of prophecy, workers of the world uniting for the final battle against ultimate imperialism.[47]

The IB was successful in breaking the siege of Madrid in November 1936 and driving back a fascist advance at the Battle of Jarama in February 1937, and this initial success was celebrated in recruitment propaganda. But as the Axis war machine ground down the resistance, the IB were outmatched. Spanish commanders used the IB as 'shock troops on suicide operations'.[48] Political commissars sent companies of untrained recruits who had never held a rifle out of the trenches, resulting in 75% fatality rates for some units.[49]

As volunteers dwindled, internationalist units continued for propaganda purposes, but by the end of the war in 1939 they were manned primarily by Spanish troops. After its defeat at the Battle of Ebro in September 1938, the Republic announced it was sending all foreign volunteers home in an unsuccessful bid to prompt the withdrawal of Axis troops.

The Spanish government paid to send the foreign fighters back to their home countries in an evacuation organized by the League of Nations.[50]

Although the International Brigades had failed to save the Spanish Republic, they prolonged the war by nearly two years, forcing a depleted Franco to remain neutral during the Second World War.[51] And divisions over strategic priorities within the Comintern also began a process in which authority in the recruitment of foreign fighters devolved to local actors across the Communist bloc.

Stalin formally dissolved the Comintern in May 1943 to reassure his wartime Allies that Soviet agents would not foment insurrection on their home fronts. While the USSR would continue the organization's outreach and coordination functions, national Communist branches were now independent parties. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) soon thereafter began a concerted effort to attract foreign volunteers to help win its civil war and to build the People's Republic (PRC).[52]

China and its Diaspora (1923–89)

As with Russia and Spain, there was a ready host of foreign CCP supporters in China before the civil war. Also as with Russia, both the Communist and Nationalist forces employed several thousand Japanese POWs, with the former using them particularly in munitions factories. But the Communists also enjoyed the support of approximately 40,000 members of the Korean Volunteer Army (KVA) who had escaped into Manchuria to continue their fight against occupying Japan, most of whom would remain in China for the duration of the civil war before finally being sent back to aid Communist North Korea in 1950.[53]

International friends in the Middle Kingdom

Hundreds of Westerners also volunteered for the Communists. Kuomintang (KMT) Revolutionary Party premier Sun Yat Sen had established formal cooperation with Comintern planning advisors in 1923 to build a modern Chinese republic, and also sought to attract skilled experts from the West. Using a foreign fighter example, he argued that the Chinese Revolution 'should have its Lafayettes no less than the American'.[54]

Those who enjoyed the greatest prestige were the 'foreign comrades' or 'international friends' who joined the Communists in the rebel capital Yan'an prior to the victory over the KMT in 1949, with a number of Westerners becoming top advisors to and part of the social circle of the CCP leadership.[55] The most influential was George Hatem, a Lebanese-American physician who had been active in leftist study groups, moved to Shanghai in 1933, and joined the CCP the following year, becoming a top aide to Mao. Hatem recruited and escorted across the northern Mongolian border other key Westerners, such as journalist Edgar Snow who produced CCP propaganda for the outside world, including the widely circulated *Red Star over China*.[56]

Other early wartime volunteers were 'Spanish Doctors', combat medics and other specialists who had served with the IB from countries including Germany, Poland, India and Indonesia.[57] One physician, Canadian Communist Party member Norman Bethune, 'died in 1939 in northern China while working for the Eighth Route

Army'. He became a posthumous symbol of the revolution and continued to be portrayed in fictional works as an exemplar of internationalism through the 1966–76 Cultural Revolution.[58]

Subsequent foreign fighters included British Communist IB combat veterans and American Communists who wished to leave behind a United States they described as 'permissive and racist'. Female international friends included the wives of volunteers, but also ideologically committed professional women, such as former Canadian MP Dorise Nielsen, who tended to be under-employed as English teachers. Manhattan Project physicist Joan Hinton travelled to China in 1948 to join her brother, married another American volunteer, and became a propagandist.[59]

Hooper notes that 'there were some similarities between the PRC's long-term Western residents and those who went to the Soviet Union following the 1917 revolution. A number shared idealist motives: the desire to be part of a Communist society in the making.' Others were 'radicalized Chinese empathizers' more concerned at the outset with national destiny than with ideology. Persecuted American fellow travellers fled McCarthyism for Beijing, while others, disillusioned by Stalin, and then by the USSR itself because of the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising, adopted the PRC as 'an alternative vision of a socialist future'.[60]

From a more critical perspective, Brady argues that the foreign fighters and immigrants were 'as much linked by displacement from their own societies as they were by a strong ideological commitment to Chinese Communism'. Contemporary Western diplomats and reporters referred to them as 'the renegades, the misanthropes, or the malcontents'. British charge d'affaires in Beijing Humphrey Trevelyan wrote of a 'twilight brigade' that was 'pathetic … who knows what private disturbance or maladjustment had caused them to tear up their roots and plunge into the Chinese Communist world?'[61]

The CCP remained suspicious of Westerners, ultimately imprisoning a number for espionage, and volunteers needed to demonstrate their sincere political support. Most emigration arrangements were made by national Communist parties, but with variation: French volunteers went for three-year fixed terms; British Communists encouraged married couples to emigrate and settle; Australians were permitted to come for ideological training but were kept isolated from other Westerners.[62]

Beginning in 1949 all international friends were insulated from everyday life in China, residing in *waishi* ('foreign bureaus') modelled on 1920s Soviet practices, but different in that international friends received special privileges without any pressure to assimilate. Foreigners were requested to write testimonies detailing their new lives that would be used to attract more recruits.[63] The *waishi* operated on a system of 'privileged segregation' that concealed from Westerners the harsh realities of the early PRC that was far removed from the special stores where they shopped with their higher salaries for goods not available to Chinese citizens.[64]

Ultimately, most Westerners stayed for periods of only a few months during the 1940s and 1950s before efforts to recreate the 'Yan'an spirit' of foreign comradeship were abandoned during the nationalization period of the Great Leap Forward.[65] Some international friends remained in China for the rest of their lives, while Americans who returned home were subsequently indicted for sedition or conspiracy, with criminal charges against them not dropped until the 1960s.[66]

Chinese Diaspora replaces Comintern chapters

Meanwhile, to exert its influence externally, the CCP relied on the transnational connections of the Chinese diaspora to deploy foreign fighters in post-colonial struggles across Southeast Asia. In 1925 the CCP established the Singapore-based South Seas Communist Party, tasked with promoting anti-colonial revolution throughout the region, which was replaced in 1930 by nationally based parties. The Comintern actively coordinated with these and, based on documents seized in June 1931, the largest branch in Malaysia had 1500 active members and a network of 10,000 additional supporters extending into Thailand and the Dutch East Indies. This network would form the core of guerrilla uprisings throughout the region until the 1990s, beginning with the Malayan Emergency of 1948–60, waged by the Malayan National Liberation Army, the armed wing of the Malaysian Communist Party (PKM).[67]

Diaspora Chinese from across the region also served as Communist foreign fighters in revolts in neighbouring Brunei, Indonesia and Thailand. According to Boon Kheng, 'Chinese schools aligned with the CCP had inculcated Communism across Borneo since the 1940s, and Marxists controlled ethnic Chinese political parties and labour organizations.'[68] Of 2047 insurgents recorded in the Second Emergency in Malaysia (1968–89), 1416 were ethnic Chinese, divided fairly evenly between citizens of Thailand and Malaysia.[69]

According to PKM leader Chin Peng, Beijing harboured party leaders in exile, with support continuing until 1989 when PKM radio propaganda broadcasts finally ceased on the order of Premier Deng Xiaopeng.[70] Thus the PRC and its ethnic diaspora replaced the USSR and the Comintern in fomenting transnational Marxist revolution in Southeast Asia.

Latin American leadership in the Global South (1960–91)

China was not the only Marxist state that used ethnic ties to lead Communist anti-colonial struggles in the developing world. Revolutionaries from abroad would play a critical role in the Cuban Revolution. They would subsequently orient the Fidel Castro regime toward missions of covert, and then open, involvement by the military and civilians alike on behalf of leftist factions across the Global South.

Cuban activism from Havana to Luanda (1953–91)

Foreign volunteers played a key role in the Cuban Revolution of 1953–9.[71] Most famous among them was Che Guevara, originally raised in Argentina, who was convinced of the necessity of a programme of Marxist liberation from colonial exploitation and post-colonial dependency across the Global South. After joining a Marxist militia in the Guatemalan Civil War, he travelled to Mexico, where he met Castro and agreed to help organize the revolution in Cuba.[72]

Che subsequently became the architect of the Cuban focoist strategy of exporting wars of national liberation across Africa and Latin America. Under this foreign policy, conducted in person by Che in many instances, according to Choy, Chui and Wong, 'Cubans lent assistance to Congo, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, Somalia, Ethiopia, Algeria, Syria, Yemen, Oman, Sierra Leone, Sao Tome and

Principe, Benin, Equatorial Guinea, and in the Americas in Nicaragua, Grenada, Guyana, and Venezuela.' In many of these cases, however, local rebels did not trust their transnational fellow travellers and intended leaders, and Che found them unreliable, culminating in his betrayal and execution in Bolivia in 1967.[73]

In Congo in 1965, Che and his team helped organize columns of exiled fighters for the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).[74] Following the collapse of fascism in Portugal, the populations of Lusophone Africa moved quickly to end colonial rule. Angola declared independence on 11 November 1975, and MPLA revolutionary-turned-president Agostinho Neto appealed for external assistance in the face of a coordinated military intervention by Apartheid-era South Africa and Mobutu-era Zaire. Additionally, the United States supported domestic anti-Communist armed factions battling the MPLA within Angola.[75]

Cuba responded with a 'volunteer force' of 36,000 that drove out the neighbouring armies in 1976, although the internecine civil war would continue. Ultimately, 425,000 Cubans served in Angola. While the majority were members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces, 50,000 were volunteers outside of the formal military command who also provided a range of logistical support and nation-building programmes. South Africa launched a second major invasion in 1987, which was ultimately routed by Cuban and Angolan forces in the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale in March 1988. The last units of 'internationalist volunteers' left Angola in 1991, which also coincided with the end of the Soviet Union as a mechanism of support.[76] With the Soviet Union and Apartheid South Africa out of the picture, the local parties signed a peace agreement in 1991. Marxist rule ended the following year, but the local factions again resumed the civil war until 2002.

Cuban 'civilian collaborators' were dispatched to Angola early on, with over 3000 having served there by 1978. According to Zayas, 'Most were in health and education, although there were some in every sector.' Their average duration of service was two years, with one-month annual vacations in Cuba, during which time their roles would be filled by other volunteers in rotation. Mission planners coordinated with the Soviet Union to avoid redundant deployments of medical specialists in short supply at home.[77]

The intervention in Angola was codenamed Operation Carlotta after an enslaved Cuban folk hero of African descent who led a revolt against her masters in the nineteenth century. The rationale offered to volunteers for participation in the conflict was perhaps as often about the power of ethnic ties between Cuba and Africa as it was about Marxism.[78] At a mass rally in Havana in December 1975, Castro delivered a speech entitled 'African Blood Flows through Our Veins' that offered an ethnic rationale as well as an ideological one, a sophisticated multi-messaging appeal that reinforced transnational identity connections on multiple levels:

> Many of our ancestors came as slaves from Africa to this land. As slaves they struggled a great deal … In keeping with the duties rooted in our principles, our ideology, our convictions and our very own blood, we shall defend Angola and Africa! … We are part of the world revolutionary movement, and in Africa's struggle against racists and imperialists, we'll stand, without hesitation, side by side with the peoples of Africa. We are a Latin-African people – enemies of colonialism.[79]

Despite the power of transnational identity ties to bring volunteers together across national boundaries, there is evidence from Operation Carlotta that ethnic divisions

between local and foreign fighters remained salient. Author Gabriel Garcia Marquez, serving as a correspondent, observed that there was at least some degree of distrust of the foreign fighters evident in the Angolan civilian population because 'Black Africans, conditioned by centuries of hatred for the Portuguese, were initially hostile to Cubans who were white.'[80] The Cuban focoist effort therefore encountered limits of transnational solidarity even in its most successful deployment. The activism of Che and his successors replaced that of the Comintern, but they made no more discernable progress in their anti-imperialist crusade in post-colonial states than the Soviets had made among developed nations.[81]

Nicaragua: the longest intervention (1979–present)

Still, the impetus for spreading transnational Marxist revolution had clearly shifted to the Global South. With it came a shift in emphasis in the role of the foreign volunteer, recasting their responsibility to the international brotherhood of workers from one of leadership to one of service. By the end of the Soviet era, volunteers of European descent were now recruited to perform a role that was intended primarily for the battlefield of public opinion.

The Sandinista National Liberation Front (Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional, or FSLN) is a Nicaraguan anti-colonial leftist party founded in 1961 and named for Augusto Sandino, who led the resistance to an occupation by the United States military 30 years earlier. It began guerrilla operations against the regime of President Anastasio Somosa in 1974 and ultimately succeeded in ousting it in June 1979. The FSLN then assumed control of Nicaragua but faced a 'Contra' counter-revolution by right-wing militias, which were provided arms in illegal covert operations by the administration of President Ronald Reagan in the United States. Civilians were increasingly direct targets during the civil war, which ultimately killed 30,000 Nicaraguans.[82]

The Communist bloc sent approximately 2000 military advisors to aid the Sandinistas, primarily from Cuba but also from East Germany and Bulgaria. Coinciding with the establishment in multiple Western counties of pro-Sandinista lobby groups built upon leftist labour organizations, the direct support of the USSR in coordinating these activities is probable, and was suspected at the time.[83] KGB contacts with the Sandinistas had begun shortly after the establishment of the FSLN, and the Sandinistas enjoyed Soviet support during their 20 years in the wilderness and after they took power in Managua. Moscow recognized the strategic propaganda value of an indigenous leftist revolution fighting American-backed right-wing death squads that targeted civilians. It worked accordingly to transform the Nicaraguan Civil War into what left-wing writer Paul Berman described as 'the world center of the New Left' that inspired 'a renewal of belief in the possibility of a revolution'.[84] At the same time, volunteers expressed the need to prevent Reagan from using force to 'destroy the Latin American experiment'.[85]

The Sandinista rise to power in 1979 coincided with the establishment of a panoply of aid organizations in Western countries that sent volunteers to join support 'brigades' in Nicaragua. The 'brigadistas' volunteered to perform aid work or manual labour rather than serve as foreign fighters, ostensibly for humanitarian assistance, but frequently on projects to aid the export-driven Nicaraguan economy. For many volunteers, their nation-building work on behalf of a Marxist regime embattled in civil war had clearly

stated political objectives as well. The 'thousands of left-leaning international volunteers', of the 1980s, mostly American but including 850 Britons and volunteers of other nationalities, joined organizations that referred to themselves using the military designation 'brigade', and which adopted designations such as the Martin Luther King Brigade that echoed the foreign fighters in the Spanish Civil War.[86] In part because of the publicity the mostly American contingent garnered, the Veterans of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade organization donated hundreds of thousands of dollars and material support, including ambulances, to the Sandinista cause.[87]

Officially the Sandinistas referred to foreign volunteers as 'internacionalistas', but detractors viewed the leftist activists as hippie dilettantes and labelled them 'sandalistas'.[88] Most had prior involvement in left-wing political groups and wanted to oppose Reagan administration 'bullying' of the upstart Marxist regime in Central America. In the context of the Cold War dynamics, and Washington's strategy of supporting right-wing regimes as a bulwark against Communist expansion, the potential for 'Sandinista victory was seen across the world as an important victory against the United States and imperialism'. On the pragmatic side, the Sandinista leadership was 'very aware of how important international solidarity was for the revolution's survival'. It actively sought to recruit internacionalistas, and Sandinista speeches would typically highlight the contributions of individual brigadistas as an inducement to potential volunteers.[89]

As with the International Brigades, some of the organizations that recruited volunteers had prior ties to the labour movement. The Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group, which continues to send term volunteers for development projects in the present day, notes that it has been active 'since the time of the Revolution in 1979. [Their] work focuses on fostering and maintaining links of support and solidarity between trade unions in Nicaragua and the UK.'[90]

'The National Network in Solidarity with the Nicaraguan People, a Washington-based group whose goal [was] to build opposition to the Reagan Administration's policy toward Nicaragua,'[91] coordinated the activities of 60 support groups within the United States and sent several hundred recruits a year for three-month work trips throughout the 1980s. Although most were employed in harvesting cash crops to provide needed revenue for the Sandinista regime; some also participated in work such as building bomb shelters.[92]

With 3000 volunteers a year in-country and some involved in projects that had security dimensions, it was perhaps inevitable that the brigadistas would draw fire. In 1986, three European volunteers were killed by the Contras – who at the same time argued that two of their own European foreign fighters were killed by the Sandinistas – prompting the government to curtail the presence of brigadistas to provincial capitals only.[93]

Volunteers in the late 1980s reported receiving hostile and even violent receptions from local civilians who viewed them as exacerbating the conflict dynamic. Still, the Sandinistas emphasized transnational linkages between brigadistas and local supporters. In 1987, when American engineer Benjamin Lindner was killed by the Contras, President Daniel Ortega delivered a eulogy comparing him to the American protagonist of Hemingway's Spanish Civil War novel *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and another American volunteer told the funeral crowd that 'the United States now has a martyr for a free Nicaragua' who would inspire waves of followers at home.[94]

But the FSLN was evidently losing touch with its domestic constituents. It called an election in 1990 shortly after the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe that saw the

voters unexpectedly remove the Sandinistas from power. With the revolution finished at home, and with Soviet support evaporating, it would be logical to expect that the brigadista presence in Nicaragua ended as well, but this was not the case.

From a practical standpoint, the internacionales had largely performed useless tasks during the civil war – including being assigned to traveling juggling troupes – and the cost of transporting them probably exceeded any economic output that they produced, particularly as many were incapable of doing basic agricultural work. However, the propaganda impact of their presence may have fulfilled its strategic objective in shifting American public opinion on Nicaragua and preventing the Reagan administration from launching an invasion.[95]

Numerous aid organizations established during the civil war remain active today, recruiting volunteers for development work in Nicaragua, including one called Global Brigades. But, as British brigadista veteran and organizer Steve Lewis maintained:

> The big difference between the 1980's [sic] and today is that in the 1980's [sic] nearly all the brigadistas had a political analysis. People knew why they were coming to Nicaragua specifically, because they admired the achievements of the Sandinistas, and opposed U.S. intervention … Volunteers today are rarely 'in solidarity'.[96]

Communist foreign fighters after the Soviet Union (2015–present)

With the 1990s came the fall of Communism and an end to nearly 75 years of foreign fighters in Marxist revolutions. At the same time, a vanguard of Sunni Islamists who had been foreign fighters against Communist forces in Afghanistan formed the al Qaeda network with the goal of mobilizing foreign fighters for a transnational jihad. With the 'War on Terror' in 2001, 'foreign fighter' would become synonymous with jihadist. This perception had solidified by the centenary of the Russian Revolution, when jihadi foreign fighters joined the Syrian Civil War in numbers comparable to the great mobilizations of foreign Communists during the wars of the first half of the twentieth century.

Despite this shift, the influence of twentieth-century Communist foreign fighters has continued to inspire a range of others since then. Foreign fighters in the Yugoslav wars of the 1990s compared the conflict to 1930s Spain, and the diaspora Albanian 'Atlantic Brigade' of the Kosovo Liberation Army borrowed from the IB directly.[97] Islamist foreign fighters have adopted the motif as well, including the 'Umma Brigade' that fought early in the Syrian conflict.[98]

And, just as the first internationalist detachments in the Russian Revolution were a response to the anti-Communist foreign fighters of the Czechoslovak Legion, a new generation of Marxist foreign fighters rose in response to the ascendance of the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). The People's Protection Units (YPG) of the leftist Kurdistan Democratic Worker's Union Party expressed receptivity in 2013 to foreign volunteers to fight against ISIS, leading to an influx of hundreds of Westerners determined to defeat ISIS in the name of a variety of causes ranging from feminism to Christianity.[99]

And they also included a growing number of avowed Communists. The YPG had existing ties to the Marxist Kurdish Workers Party, and a number of early volunteers had ties to the labour movement.[100] The YPG framed ISIS as fascists and the Syrian civil war as an opportunity for 'left-wing radicals to fight for a new revolutionary entity', and it successfully created 'a union of six Marxist and Communist groups' as a single fighting

force.[101] The First Internationalist Freedom Battalion, established in June 2015, was expressly inspired by the IB. The group's leadership consisted of members of various European Communist Parties and, unlike the YPG as a whole, which accepts foreign volunteers regardless of their ideologies, the Battalion promotes a platform of Marxist revolution.[102]

With the emergence of the first post-Soviet Marxist foreign fighters as a direct legacy of those in the twentieth century, it is worth evaluating how their movement evolved over several decades. Lenin and the Bolsheviks employed the rhetoric and symbology of internationalism that had been a hallmark of the Communist movement for decades. However, the first Marxist foreign fighters in the Russian Revolution and Civil War were absorbed from displaced foreigners already on hand rather than recruited worldwide on a mass scale. Building internationalist detachments was a pragmatic response rather than an ideological strategy.

The same reactive approach occurred in the Spanish Civil War after Communist expatriates stranded in Spain formed militias to fight the fascist coup, and Western Comintern leaders agitated for intervention. The Soviets had created the Comintern to facilitate the extension of Moscow's reach into national Communist parties, but in this instance the requirement of maintaining a public face of Comintern unity shifted the locus of foreign fighter mobilization from the Centre to national Communist parties, and ethnic appeals were common among supposedly post-national Marxists. Chinese Communists later adapted these practices.

It was Latin American Communism, in a fashion comparable to the 'liberation theology' Christianity that evolved contemporaneously in the same milieu, which ultimately turned transnational volunteering into a global anti-imperialist mission. Although this form of transnational Communism would not prove more effective in fomenting revolution or in surviving the loss of state support, its ideology and civil-society organizations were the only ones to have endured.

The Communist foreign fighter movement was successful in mobilizing tens of thousands of volunteers who contributed crucial manpower and specialized skills whose participation attracted broader international support. It endured because it evolved, with successive generations of Communist leaders learning to use foreign volunteers in an increasingly strategic manner, adapting from ad hoc use of fighters already on hand to recruiting individuals through front organizations for propaganda purposes and leveraging diplomatic relations. And successive generations of leaders expanded the appeal of the movement globally, transforming a Euro-centric vanguard model of proletarian revolution to a global movement of anti-colonial liberation.

The history of Communist foreign fighters was not that of a concerted ideological effort to enact the internationalist ideals of Karl Marx and early Communists, but the evolution of what were initially pragmatic reactions to the presence of foreigners in the war zones. More deliberate and long-term strategies of engagement with foreign fighters would emerge among Communist parties in Asia and Latin America. Che's 'focoist' theory of an ideological vanguard of groups traveling to different societies and restructuring them resembles the jihadi strategy behind al Qaeda more than it does that of earlier Marxist-Leninists.[103]

As new Marxists and other foreign fighters emerge, it is worth considering the sources of success of the biggest and longest-enduring foreign fighter movement of the past century. All foreign fighter cohorts experienced tensions, extending to ethnic animosity,

with local Communist rebels, and state support appears to have been instrumental in recruitment of combatants in every case. However, while most insurgencies, including foreign fighters, are ultimately unsuccessful in their rebellions, this article has shown that Communist volunteers won five of the six major wars in which they mobilized. The material support of the Communist Bloc certainly contributed to this success, but it was the continuing adaptability of the revolution to local conditions which enabled the movement to endure.

Notes

1. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*; de Guttry, Capone, and Paulussen, *Foreign Fighters under International Law and Beyond*; Arielli, *From Byron to Bin Laden*.
2. Hegghammer, "Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters"; Byman, *Road Warriors*.
3. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 98, 221.
4. Acharya, "How Ideas Spread."
5. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 111.
6. Reynolds and Hafez, "Social Network Analysis."
7. Dawson and Amarasingam, "Talking to Foreign Fighters."
8. Moore and Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya."
9. Moore and Tumelty, "Foreign Fighters and the Case of Chechnya," 58–126.
10. Russian Historical Library, *Internationalists in the Red Army*, http://rushist.com/index.php/russia/4737-internatsionalisty-v-krasnoj-armii#rr3
11. Ibid.
12. Smele, *Historical Dictionary*, 506.
13. Konev, "Foreign Internationalists in the Red Guard," 7.
14. Smele, *The 'Russian' Civil Wars*, 41.
15. Brinkley, *The Volunteer Army*, 50–2; Daly and Trofimov, *Russia in War*, xxix.
16. Konev, "Foreign Internationalists in the Red Guard," 7.
17. Pereira, *White Siberia*, 63.
18. Russian Historical Library, *Internationalists in the Red Army*.
19. Konev, "Foreign Internationalists in the Red Guard," 7.
20. The Russian Historical Library provides the lowest available estimate, while Smele (p. 506) asserts that 5% of the 5 million foreign citizens in Russia became foreign fighters.
21. Leon Trotsky, *How the Revolution Armed, Volume 1* (1923), p. 276 as cited by Pereira, *White Siberia*, 192.
22. Konev, "Foreign Internationalists in the Red Guard," 7.
23. Russian Historical Library, *Internationalists in the Red Army*.
24. Konev, "Foreign Internationalists in the Red Guard," 7.
25. Daly and Trofimov, *Russia in War and Revolution, 1914–1922*, 249.
26. Russian Historical Library, *Internationalists in the Red Army*.
27. *New York Times* "Bolshevist Power Waning," 12 July 1918.
28. Dotsenko, *The Struggle for a Democracy in Siberia*, 17.
29. Whitewood, "Nationalities in a Class War," 349–52.
30. Konev, "Foreign Internationalists in the Red Guard," 7.
31. Russian Historical Library, *Internationalists in the Red Army*.
32. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China*, 10.
33. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve China*, 9
34. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 92–126.
35. Johnston, *Legions of Babel*, 25; Howard and Reynolds, *Mackenzie-Papineau*, 15–16.
36. Johnston, *Legions of Babel*, 26; Brome, *The International Brigades*, 16; Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 438–9, 447.
37. Mangilli-Climpson, *Italian Antifascists*, 38.

38. Richardson, *Comintern Army*, 8–9, 23, 25–35.
39. Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*, 455
40. Ward and MacLeod, *Spain's Democracy*, 14.
41. Barbara Dale May, "The Endurance of Dreams Deferred: Rafael Alberti and Langston Hughes," in Romeiser, *Red Flags, Black Flags*, 24.
42. Peter Carroll, "Before Pearl Harbor," in Carroll, Nash and Small, *The Good Fight Continues*, 24.
43. Edwards, *Airmen*, 21.
44. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 68–9.
45. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 122.
46. Carroll, "Before Pearl Harbor," 27
47. Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 12.
48. Edwards, *Airmen*, 22.
49. Carroll, *The Odyssey*, 43.
50. Rosenstone, *Crusade of the Left*, 333–6.
51. Johnston, *Legions of Babel*, 151–2.
52. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve*, 8.
53. Williamson, "Foreign Volunteers in the Chinese Civil War."
54. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve*, 36
55. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 2, 13.
56. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 13–14; Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve*, 44.
57. Jones, "The Chinese Volunteers," 7.
58. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve*, 54.
59. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 11, 15–16, 18, 20.
60. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 12, 20.
61. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 11–12.
62. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 19, 20, 248.
63. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve*, 3, 35, 57.
64. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 5.
65. Brady, *Making the Foreign Serve*, 35.
66. Hooper, *Foreigners Under Mao*, 20.
67. O'Ballance, *Malaya*, 2, 100.
68. Boon Kheng, "Communist Insurgency in Malaysia," 149.
69. Ling, "Kebangkitan Parti Komunis Malay," 27; Ling, "Communist Movement," 83.
70. Chin, *Alias Chin Peng*, 450, 457–60.
71. 63 Macaulay, "I Fought for Fidel." Also, hundreds of anti-imperialist volunteers from nearly 20 countries had traveled to Cuba during the latter half of the nineteenth century to overthrow Spanish dominion, culminating in the Cuban War of Independence in the 1890s. Armando Choy, Gustavo Chui, and Moises Sio Wong, "The People of Cuba Were Behind Our Effort," 81.
72. Al Jazeera, "Che Guevara and Fidel Castro: Revolutionary Friends."
73. Choy, Chui, and Wong, "The People of Cuba," 82.
74. Gabriel Garcia Marquez, "Operation Carlotta 1977," 126.
75. Waters, *Cuba and Angola*, 9, 12, 15
76. Waters, *Cuba and Angola*, 210; Michael Radu, "Angola," in Radu, *The New Insurgencies*, 138 provides the estimate of killed, missing and wounded Communist intervention forces.
77. Luis Alfonso Zayas, "Our Volunteers Learned what Cuba used to be Like," 98–100.
78. Waters, *Cuba and Angola*, 15.
79. Fidel Castro, "African Blood Flows through Our Veins," 31.
80. Marquez, "Operation Carlotta 1977," 132.
81. Schwampe, *Muslim Foreign Fighters in Armed Conflicts*, 35.
82. David Lewis, *Analysis of British and US Volunteers*, 5,8.
83. Bonner, "Behind Nicaraguan Build-up," *New York Times*.
84. Siegel, "The KGB in the Third World."

85. David Lewis, *Analysis of British and US Volunteers*, 23–4.
86. David Lewis, *Analysis of British and US Volunteers*, 5, 11, 18.
87. Bessie and Prago, *Our Fight*, 15, 355.
88. Preston, "Foreign Volunteers," *Washington Post*.
89. David Lewis, *Analysis of British and US Volunteers*, 12–16.
90. Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group, "About Us."
91. *The New York Times*, 16 February 1984.
92. Ibid.
93. Preston, "Foreign Volunteers."
94. David Lewis, *Analysis of British and US Volunteers*, 25, 79; Boudreaux, "Linder's Death," *The Los Angeles Times*.
95. David Lewis, *Analysis of British and US Volunteers*, 11, 23, 27, 29.
96. Steven Lewis, "Brigadistas and Volunteers."
97. Hockenos, *Homeland Calling*, 238, 239, 255.
98. Reuters, "Libyan Freedom Fighters."
99. Fritz and Young, "Transnational Volunteers."
100. Davidson, "Matthew Gardiner," *The Guardian*. Ahmet Yusuf Özdemir notes that Turkish and Kurdish volunteers traveled to work with Palestinian militant groups between 1968–1985 in Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon (@aysfzdmr on Twitter, 11 December, 2019).
101. Koch, *The Non-Jihadi Foreign Fighters*, 12–13.
102. *Syandan*, "Freedom Battalion Established in Rojava." There is a debate in the literature on foreign fighters over whether rebel groups actually benefit from their numbers and, in some cases, specialized skills, or whether the external actors with perhaps different agendas and at least partly separate command structures introduce significant discord among the rebels. There is evidence that both can occur in the same instances. Among the Communist foreign fighters, recruits fulfilled political propaganda purposes which may have outweighed their combat value. Likewise it is not clear what role veteran foreign fighters typically play when they join new groups, but among Communists there were individuals who fought in Spain who became senior officers and specialists in other groups. These included not only other Communist insurgencies, as with Mao's 'Spanish doctors' as described in this article, but also for other causes including the Israeli War of Independence and the Afghanistan War. Malet, *Foreign Fighters*, 52–3, 134, 171.
103. Schwampe, *Muslim Foreign Fighters*, 19, 34.

Acknowledgements

Thank you Whitney Grespin and Munira Mustaffa for your assistance.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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