

Goliardo Fiaschi

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Goliardo Fiaschi was born in Carrara (Italy) on 21 August 1930 and died in the same city on 29 July 2000. On 9 September 1943, aged thirteen, he joined the Resistance in his district, but in order to gain admittance he claimed to be over fifteen years old. By the time that Goliardo was starting out in life as an antifascist fighter, the Allied forces had just overrun Sicily where they had landed in July. Benito Mussolini had been placed under arrest by order of the king and a government headed by Marshal Badoglio had capitulated on 8 September, the very day on which the Allies landed on the peninsula at Salerno.

Carrara's antifascists entrusted Goliardo with the task of collecting the weaponry jettisoned by deserting Italian troops, weaponry that he removed at great risk to the dumps of the National Liberation Committee (CLN) and which were the first weapons with which the partisans armed themselves.

Since Goliardo was, when all is said and done, still no more than a boy, he could pass unremarked with a handcart, ferrying guns hidden under wood, rags or the like. He very soon learned how to handle, strip and reassemble a wide variety of weapons. Which led to his being starting out with the libertarian "Gino Lucetti" formation which was, with other organisations, under the control of the CLN (National Liberation Committee). He served with this up until 31 December 1944.

At that time, food supplies in Carrara were non-existent. People were desperate, skeletal. There was constant danger on every side – from the Nazis and fascists and from Allied air-raids. Fiaschi was entrusted with a number of missions into Marina de Carrara and Avenza. The explosion of an artillery shell in the latter town left him half-buried. In Bonascola which also came under fire from the Allies, Fiaschi was a frequent visitor on his missions (a partisan unit having been set up there under the command of Alcides, and the distribution of arms to the peasants having begun there). On one occasion he visited on a horse-drawn cart that galloped through a fascist checkpoint on the road and was fortunate not to be stopped.

In late December, Goliardo Fiaschi decided to cross through the German lines to join the Anglo-American forces which had postponed the continuation of their push until April. They were faced with the last German lines of defence that side of the Alps, the Gothic Line, which crossed Italy diagonally from Pisa in the north and the Tyrrhenian Sea, weaving its way across the Apennines as far as Rimini in the south on the Adriatic. It was made up of a chain of fortifications

with anti-tank minefields, lines of barbed wire, gun emplacements and machine-gun nests dug into the rocks or behind concrete.

Late in December 1944, anyway, Goliardo Fiaschi set off on his risky journey to join the Allied forces on the Seravezza front north of Pietrasanta. His distracted mother walked a good part of the way with him, pleading for him to stay with the family. In Bergiola he met up with some partisans and together they made it to Antona where they were joined by a column of civilians also bent on passing through the lines. With some difficulty they made it to Seravezza but when a roll-call was taken it was discovered that 14 of their number had vanished: they had probably perished while walking over icy trails overlooking deep gullies.

Fiaschi reported to the command post, only to be told that they had no need of him there, but that people were required elsewhere. They sent him on to the Abetone front along with the 3rd Costrignano Brigade, Modena Division (Emilia Region). There he was issued with grenades and a Sten gun, in the handling of which he was already well versed.

By the time that the Allied offensive resumed in April 1945 with the attack on Monte Lancia, where the fortifications were attacked in broad daylight under murderous enemy gunfire, Goliardo was the second person to reach the summit, after his commanding officer Filippo Papa.

After a short respite they had to cope with a forceful German counter-attack. They pressed on into Fanano, Sestola, Pavullo and Sassuolo and finally Modena. Progress was very difficult throughout as all of the roads had been mined and they were only able to proceed in single file whilst facing dogged Nazi resistance.

In Modena Goliardo's unit paraded under a rain of flowers, with Goliardo leading the way as standard-bearer. At the same time, Italian partisans were surfacing to ever greater effect behind the German lines. In Carrara, Genoa, Turin, Milan and elsewhere these guerrilla brigades forced the Germans into surrender and by the time that the Allies arrived were already solidly in control of the situation.

The Italian campaign, with its slow, painful, bloody progress through mountainous areas which seemed to have no end, was drawing to a close. Worried about the family and comrades that he had left behind him in Carrara, Goliardo set off for the city on foot, having been frustrated in his requests for a horse. In the environs of Abetone, after he had covered 90 kilometres already, an American vehicle picked him up and took him as far as Bagni di Lucca some 25 kilometres from Abetone. They dropped him off at the mayor's house for a few days' rest. After which a US officer accompanied him as far as Carrara where he was finally reunited with his family.

Ugo Mazzucchelli, the commander of the "Gino Lucetti" formation awarded Goliardo a citation from General Harold Alexander (who had attended the parade through Modena) recording Goliardo's part in the resistance in the marble-quarrying city. In 1956 while acting premises officer for the "Pietro Gori" anarchist group's premises in Canal Del Rio street in Carrara, Goliardo made the acquaintances of the Spanish anti-Francoist fighters José Lluís Facerías and Luis Agustín Vicente, known in Italy as "Alberto" and "Mario Mella" respectively. From them he learned of the tragic plight of the Spanish people under the Franco regime and this planted the notion in his head of joining the fight against the dictator Francisco Franco and trying to overthrow it. Towards the end of 1956 he crossed into France, meaning to meet up with Francisco Sabaté Llopart ("El Quico") only to find that the latter had just set off for Spain at the end of November with some other guerrillas.

At the anarchist jamboree in 1956 which was held in Villa Paradiso in Marina de Carrara from 1 July to 31 August, Fiaschi almost drowned in an accident. By the time that he arrived in Toulouse

late in November 1956, he fell ill as a result of this mishap and his comrades took him to a base in the Pyrenees to recuperate.

In March 1957, José Lluís Facerías and Luis Agustín Vicente arrived back in France from Italy. José visited Goliardo several times and showed him cuttings from the Italian press to the effect that the police were looking for him in connection with his supposed involvement in an armed hold-up carried out at a branch of the *Banco di Casale e del Monferrato* in Villanova on 15 January 1957. Facerías told him that upon his return to Italy he would be able to supply documentary proof that he was in France at the time of the offence and was, therefore, innocent. But for the moment what Goliardo wanted to do was join in the fight against Franco. Facerías suggested that he join him on the incursion into Spain for which he was making preparations and Goliardo agreed.

On 15 August 1957 Facerías, Goliardo and Luis Agustín set off for Spain; they reached the border by nightfall. On the 15th it poured with rain. They entered Spain at 8.40pm. on 17 August. On 28 August Facerías and Goliardo reached Barcelona and took cover in a hut on Tibidabo, the mountain overlooking Barcelona and connected to it by tram and cable-car. Luis Vicente had split off in Sant Joan de les Abadesses (Gerona), meaning to take his chances with travelling on to Barcelona alone.

This was a bad decision because on 27 August he was arrested in Sabadell (Barcelona) in the home of a friend – which is to say that he was picked up before his colleagues reached Tibidabo. At 7.30pm. on 29 August, Facerías made the trip down into Barcelona, telling his friend that he had a rendezvous to keep “with a comrade” and warning him that he would be back by midnight at the latest. He also told him that if by any chance anything befell him, Goliardo should move to a base of which he gave him the details. Goliardo accompanied him part of the way and while returning to the hut was arrested by a six-strong police unit laying in wait in the area.

Facerías was killed in Barcelona on 30 August at 10.45 am., so it is plain that the timing of the rendezvous had been changed, no doubt to allow time for the laying of the ambush in which he died. His “comrade” had sold him out.

Fiaschi and Luis Vicente were brought before a Court Martial on 12 August 1958, with the former receiving a prison term of 20 years and one day and the latter 24 years and four months. Goliardo had served five months when news reached him of the death of his father, Pietro. He served a total of seven years, eleven months and fourteen days, emerging from prison on 14 August 1966, only to be handed over to the Italian authorities which had sued for his extradition. Goliardo applied for a review of the sentence passed on him in his absence on 12 April 1960, but his application was rejected out of hand. He was committed to the prison at San Giorgio di Luca. In October 1971 he was transferred to the prison in Lecce and finally to Portolongone where he served 13 months in the cells for constantly protesting and demanding to be released.

After a lengthy campaign for his release, he was pardoned and discharged on 30 March 1974. Between Spain and Italy, he had seen the inside of 48 penal establishments. Several hundred anarchists from Italy and elsewhere attended his funeral, bidding him farewell by waving red and black flags and singing anarchist anthems.

Goliardo Fiaschi died after completion of his memoirs, having begun the writing of them some years previously after he was diagnosed with the disease that carried him to his grave.

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