

IISH collections: Spain and Italy

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Introduction

In the Spanish and Italian collections at the IISH, the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement of the 19th and 20th centuries are predominant. Over the past 70 years, the anarchist, Spanish, and Italian collections have always been combined in one department at the IISH. This harmonious union started when the Institute was established in 1935. The primary function of the IISH - saving archives and materials under political threat - became acute at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936.

The archives of the powerful Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement survived Franco and Hitler because they were safeguarded in a depot of the Institute. In the slipstream of these collections, many other archives of anarchist origins came to the Institute after the war. Important postwar acquisitions included the archives of the Spanish exile organizations and the collection on the Comisiones Obreras CCOO in the 1960s and 1970s. The majority of the Spanish collections is directly related to the Civil War and the consequent exile of the Left. A Guide to the Spanish Civil War Collections at the IISH provides a survey of all these materials.

Likewise, the Italian collections at the IISH are primarily anarchist. The papers of the socialist leader Filippo Turati are a notable exception.

The collections may be accessed in various ways. The [archives index](#) contains individual archival descriptions and a list of all archives by country: Italy, Spain, or the country of birth of a participant in the Spanish Civil War or organization involved. Books, periodicals, and image and sound materials are retrievable via the [library catalogue](#). In addition, the archives index, library catalogue, and other data collections may be consulted via a single [search](#).

Archives

Thanks to the mediation of the Austrian anarchist [Max Nettlau](#), many Spanish and Italian archives were channeled to the IISH. This inveterate collector was close friends with several Spanish anarchists such as [Diego Abad de Santillán](#) and Federica Montseny, and with Italians such as [Luigi Fabbri](#) and [Ugo Fedeli](#). During the 1920s and 1930s, Nettlau frequented Spain, as did Arthur Lehning, the new head of the Anarchism and Latin department of the IISH. The anarchist collections gathered by Nettlau arrived at the Institute at the end of 1935, which made it the most important repository of anarchist records and papers in the world.

When the defeat of the Republicans was immanent in the summer of 1938, a prominent member of the [Federación Anarquista Ibérica](#) (FAI), [Diego Abad de Santillán](#), contacted the IISH to find a safe haven for various archives of the Left. After being miraculously smuggled across the border shortly before Catalonia fell, the "Spanish boxes" (as they came to be known) reached the IISH Paris branch. They contained the archives of the [Federación Anarquista Ibérica](#) and the [Confederación Nacional del Trabajo](#) (CNT). In the postwar years, the majority of the Spanish archives obtained by the Institute bear the hallmark of the Civil War and of Anarchism. The archives of exiled anarchists and organizations in exile, including [Fernando Gómez Peláez](#), [José Martínez Guericabeitia](#) and his publishing house Ruedo Ibérico, and the [Federación Española de Deportados e Internados Políticos](#) (FEDIP) are outstanding examples. Other interesting collections arrived because of the historians who researched the subject, including a vast collection on the [Comisiones Obreras](#) CCOO in the 1960s and 1970s. These workers' committees were set up in large industrial settlements to fight for the rights of workers and improve the low salaries, a task neglected by the official trade unions. The Committees operated within the boundaries of legality.

Like the Spanish archives, the Italian archives at the IISH bear the hallmark of anarchism. Clear examples of this are the archives of [Armando Borghi](#), which include many documents on Errico Malatesta, the archives of [Ugo Fedeli](#), and [Luce Fabbri](#) and her father [Luigi Fabbri](#). The archive of the [Partito Anarchico Italiano](#) chronicles the anarchist movement of the 1980s and 1990s. The papers of the socialist leader [Filippo Turati](#) are a notable exception. The Institute acquired these documents with the help of [Julius Braunthal](#) (the secretary of the Socialist International and one of our board members) in 1956. Turati maintained a lively correspondence with a wide range of people in and outside the Second International, from Friedrich Engels to Benoît Malon.

Library and Documentation Collections

Of course the IISH library contains dissertations, monographs, and journalistic impressions of the social history of Spain and Italy. In addition to archives, publications of the social movement itself, such as periodicals and leaflets, are available for research on this subject. This material - especially from Spain - is abundant and may be retrieved through various types of searches in the [IISH library catalogue](#).

A unique collection of 19th century Spanish and Catalan anarchist periodicals was gathered by the Montseny family and channeled to the IISH by Max Nettlau, e.g., *La Federacion*, the (Bakunist) bulletin of the Centro Federal de las Sociedades Obreras in Catalonia (1872), and the issue of *La Tramontana* (1881) pictured here. This magazine was named after a wind that was to blow away all institutions. The collection of books, brochures, and periodicals relating to the Spanish Civil War is very large. Following the restoration of freedom in Spain

after Franco's death in 1975, countless publications about the history of the Spanish workers movement surfaced. The IISH library contains many of these items. The political context of the events surrounding la transición (as the change in 1975 is known) is also documented. Examples include the formation of leftist parties and the movements struggling for autonomy, such as the ETA. The [La Novela Ideal/ La Novela Libre](#) collection contains more than 600 novels, most of them written by libertarians. Many publications in this series were written by the prominent anarchist Federica Montseny, who deplores the position of women in Spain.

Unlike the organizational simplicity of the Spanish workers movement, with hubs in Madrid and Barcelona, its Italian counterpart is very complex and has many regional centers. Collecting such non-centralized material is difficult. Nevertheless, our collection of publications is an excellent resource for research and covers all movements and aspects of the workers and agrarian workers movements. The [library collection of Ugo Fedeli](#) sheds light on all political currents in the first half of the 20th century.

Image and Sound

The IISH Image and Sound department houses a large collection of original posters from Spain and Italy, especially from the 1930s. The propaganda posters issued by various government institutions, political parties, and trade unions during the Civil War are especially striking. In the Italian poster collection, the [PCI](#), [PSI](#), and [Democrazia Proletaria](#) are well documented.

The photographs of the Image and Sound Department originate from archives and collections. Together with the archives of CNT and FAI, about 2000 photos from the Civil War period made by Spanish photographers were deposited at the IISH. The photos were made on behalf of *Solidaridad Obrera* and other newspapers associated with this organization. They chronicle the tragedy and the romanticism of the struggle: the ruins, the defenseless, and the dead, the brave civilians at the barricades and the handsome lightly armed members of the militias. Apart from this, there are many photographs about life behind the front. Photo albums of international brigadists, including the Czech volunteer Jaroslav Hošek (call number BG T2/406) and the Dutch nurse Noor Diamant (call number BG T2/629), are also kept in the Image and Sound Department. The [photo collection of José Martínez Guerricabeitia](#) also pertains to the Spanish Civil War.

The Sound section houses tapes of interviews with interbrigadists and various records issued in 1969 by the Italian daily [Lotta Continua](#). Badges and insignia, commemoration tiles, and other historical objects have been given the place they deserve in the Image and Sound department. All these items are to be found via the [library catalogue](#) as well as the [Search platform](#).

Highlights

Here you can find Web presentations that have been featured earlier. These are intended to highlight a special collection, a particular aspect of a collection, or a new acquisition. Click on this recent example or on one of the other highlights from the list.

[Spanish Workers' Commissions](#)

The Spanish Workers' Commissions (Comisiones Obreras) were formed inside the big industrial plants in order to defend the workers' rights and improve the low salaries, badly taken care of by the official trade-unions.

Other highlights from the Spanish and Italian collections:

[1 May 1990, Italian stamp](#) / [Armando Borghi](#) / [Campana de Gracia](#) / [Catalan Maoists](#) / [CNT/FAI stamps](#) / [José Ester Borrás and FEDIP Federación Española de Deportados e Internados Políticos](#) / [Francisco Ferrer](#) / [Enrico Ferri](#) / [Fernando Gómez Peláez](#) / [Lotta Continua](#) / [José Martinez Guerricabeitia](#) / [Mondo Beat, Milaan](#) / [Novela Ideal and Novela Libre](#) / [José Peirats Valls](#) / [Vernon Richards/Vero Recchioni](#) / [Ruedo Iberico](#) / [Liberto Sarrau Royes](#) / [South European migrants](#) / [Spanish Civil War photos](#) / [Spanish pilots in USSR](#) / [Terrazzieri in Olanda](#)

Contact

Please contact the Reading Room for general information about collections:
ask@iisg.nl.

You can submit your questions via <http://www.iisg.nl/enquiries.php>.

Jaap Kloosterman is in charge of the Spanish collections.

If you would like to have an archive or collection transferred to the IISH, please contact him: jkl@iisg.nl

Kees Rodenburg is in charge of the Italian collections.

If you would like to have an archive or collection transferred to the IISH, please contact him: kro@iisg.nl

See [Services](#) for information on consulting the collections.

If you would like to support the Institute, you can join the [Friends of the IISH](#).