

From resisting military service to the anti-militarist movement: Conscientious objection and resistance to compulsory military service in France, Italy and Spain. A comparative analysis, from the First World War until the 1980s

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the young people's resistance to participate in the war throughout the twentieth century. This resistance was determined by the obligatory participation of citizens in the wars and continued in "peacetime" with the resistance to conscription. It began by the individual resistance for conscience's reasons, and culminated in a large and heterogeneous social movement that influenced the Government's decision to abolish the obligatory conscription. To analyze this issue, I selected three European countries: Spain, France and Italy. In all of them, the opposition to conscription had similar motivations among the young refractories; they suffered a strong state repression, which made them deepen even more in their anti-militarism and disobedience that lead to a social movement against the conscription. Finally, resulting from the magnitude of the conflict and their wear, the states opted to professionalize their armed forces.

KEYWORDS

military service, refractory, repression, conscientious objection, insubordination, social movement, anti-militarism, Spain, France, Italy.

Introduction

In the twentieth century, armed defence of the nation was an unavoidable duty for citizens in France, Spain and Italy, as in many other countries. This duty, sometimes

considered sacred, was not only compulsory during wartime, but also in peacetime in the form of compulsory military service (CMS). This service was present in most countries in the twentieth century, consisting of military training for young men for a determined period of time which varied according to the historical and national context.

Over the course of the century, many men ended up in prison for refusing to carry out this task. This defiance first arose as an individual means of action stemming from moral, religious or political issues, but it did not take long to become a collective movement. The resistance to bear arms grew and matured continually throughout the century, becoming a widespread and heterogeneous social movement. Many people, ranging from the purest of pacifists to the most radical anti-militarists, discovered that CMS was a common enemy against which to fight and protest. Resistance to this service took on the shape of conscientious objection (CO) and draft-dodging, the expressions of which were both very valuable to the development of the anti-militarist and pacifist movement: they provided the structure for a continuous line of action, a tradition of protest and a meeting point for people who believed in a non-violent society or who simply opposed the militarism their countries promoted in different ways.

The objective of this article is to compare resistance to armed service in France, Spain and Italy. The choice of these three countries stems mainly from their similarities as well as the need to limit the subject studied for reasons of space.

The origin and basis of compulsory military service

The political, social and economic changes which took place in the nineteenth century had a big impact on the way warfare was carried out and the configuration of armies. This meant that the twentieth century brought forth an attitude of individual and collective resistance towards military service, first, and the creation and spread of anti-militarist movements, later.

The changes in warfare were impacted by the industrial revolution which gave rise to a new era in the history of armed conflict with a growing tendency toward “total war”. War became a mobilization and deterioration issue, and all of the warring country’s resources were allocated to the war effort to an unprecedented extent. The railway played an essential role in transporting troops and necessary material resources from the most remote areas of the country to the battle front. The reach and power of new artillery exceeded anything known until then. The end result of a war would be influenced as much, if not more, by industrial power as it was by the mass conscription which was essential to the conflict.¹

¹ STRACHAM, Hew. *European Armies and the conduct of war*. London: Academic Division of Unwin Hyman, 1983; and BEST, Geoffrey. *Guerra y sociedad en la Europa revolucionaria: 1770-1870*. Madrid: Ministerio de Defensa, 1990.

Mass conscription came with the change in armies. The French Revolution greatly influenced this process as it was the chapter of history that determined that the nation belonged to the people, giving rise to the concept of a “nation in arms” which implied the duty – in reality, the obligation – of defending the nation when it was under threat.² The end result was the implementation of a new mass and “egalitarian” recruitment system. However, the possibilities of redemption via payment, soldier substitution, etc. were progressively implemented, meaning that the only people enlisted were those who could not pay for their redemption or substitution.³ On the other hand, the “defensive” role of the army was simply a designation and not always the most important aspect, as demonstrated by Napoleonic expansionism.

The lower classes started to display their resistance to military conscription when it was first implemented and would try all kinds of trickery to avoid being enlisted. But as time wore on, these lower classes began to attain “class consciousness”, providing them with the awareness that behind the wars there were interests which concerned not only the nation, but also the benefits for other “classes” who determined the contours of the hostilities, but who generally did not form part of the troops. Moreover, the army began to be regarded as the state’s weapon – not the nation’s – used to subdue a labour movement which was becoming more organized and militant. Those who resisted military service were considered deserters, imprisoned and sometimes executed.⁴

Military service to the nation, meaning individuals’ duty to the state, became very common in Italy and Spain, no doubt favoured by fascism’s influence and its distinct militarist character. In both countries citizens were bombarded with patriotic rhetoric, glorifying the army.⁵ Moreover, in Spain as in Italy, militarism had the blessing of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, at least up to the time of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s.⁶

The two world wars: the first resistance

Although there were a series of organizations, mostly Marxists and anarchists, which had displayed their rejection towards war since the beginning of the twentieth century, war itself as a historical event was what most influenced the appearance of individuals

² CLIFFORD-VAUGHAN, Michalina. “Changing Attitudes to the Army’s Role in French Society”. *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 15, n. 4, 1964, pp. 338-349 and VON FREYTAG-LORIENHOVEN, Barón. *A Nation Trained in Arms or a Militia?*. London: Constable, 1918.

³ GOOCH, John. *Armies in Europe*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980.

⁴ OSTERGAARD, Geoffrey. *Resisting the Nation State. The Pacifist and Anarchist Tradition*. London: The Peace Pledge Union, Studies in Nonviolence, n.11, 1982.

⁵ GUSTARELLI, A. *Elementi di cultura e dottrina fascista*. Milan, 1940, p. 24; BUSQUETS, Julio and LOSADA, Juan Carlos. *Ruido de sables: las conspiraciones militares en la España del siglo XX*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2003, p. 71; and OLMEDA GÓMEZ, J.A. *Las Fuerzas Armadas en el estado franquista: participación política, influencia presupuestaria y profesionalización, 1939-1975*. Madrid: El Arquero, 1988.

⁶ COLETTI, Alessandro. *L’obiezione di coscienza*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1973, pp. 18-20 and CASANOVA, Julián. *La Iglesia de Franco*. Barcelona: Crítica, 2001.

resisting the use of weapons. That is how the first meaningful cases of public resistance to war arose in the context of the First World War. Figures like the Frenchman Louis Lecoin or the Italian Luigi Lué di San Colombano are examples of this personal resistance. Both of them ended up in prison after refusing to bear arms during the conflict. Louis Lecoin's reasons were libertarian and San Colombano's responded to his inspiration in the life of Christ and Tolstoy's pacifist works.⁷ Their cases were not exceptions as there were other men who were imprisoned because of their anti-belligerent beliefs, which tended to be of anarchist, Christian or socialist inspiration. These incentives arose in many other countries and inspired many important international pacifist and anti-militarist organisations such as the War Resisters International (WRI) or the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR).

These types of organizations also appeared in the inter-war period in France: the *Comité de Défense de l'Objection de Conscience* was created in 1920, the *Ligue pour la Reconnaissance Légale de l'Objection de Conscience* in 1924 and the *Ligue Scolaire pour la Paix* in 1932, which adhered to the WRI in 1939. The conscientious objectors who resisted doing CMS ended up being imprisoned. The number of them was quite low, ranging from 1 in 1928 to 7 in 1949.⁸ Nevertheless, as in other countries, many men managed to avoid MS by going into exile, deserting or managing to be designated "invalid" for armed services, but it is difficult to know if this stemmed from their anti-belligerent beliefs, as this can only be known in the cases of those who expressed their motivations publicly, like Claudio Baglietto, a young Italian who went into exile in 1932 to avoid being recruited.⁹

The Italian context proved to be more difficult for this cause due to the rise of fascism to power in 1922. No alternative could put conscience ahead of duty to the state; however, despite this difficult context, there were young men who left proof of their resistance to CMS and to violence. As well as Baglietto, Aldo Capitini, who had been excluded from CMS due to physical problems, published *Elementi de un'esperienza religiosa*, a book inspired in Gandhi's ideas where he speaks about non-violence and refusal to collaborate.¹⁰ Capitini was an inspiration and a backing for the resistance of individuals who arose later.

⁷ On Lué consult ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. Treviso: Santi Quaranta, 1993, pp. 21-22; ZEPPONI, Cristiano. "Obiezione di coscienza. Spunti laici", in http://www.instoria.it/home/obiezione_coscienza_laicit%C3%A0.htm; MARTELLINI, Amoreno. *Fiori nei cannoni: nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento*. Roma: Donzelli, 2006, pp. 12-22. In the case of Lecoin, see his own publications: LECOIN, Louis. *De prison en prison*. Paris: Self published, 1946; *Le cours d'une vie*. Paris: Self-published, 1965 ; and *Écrits de Louis Lecoin*. Paris: Union Pacifiste, 1974.

⁸ Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis (hereafter IISG), Amsterdam, WRI Archives, folder 455, Letter from Jean Nussbaum of the Association International pour la Defense de la Liberte Religieuse: "Military Service Regulation, France" (6 January 6 1953).

⁹ MARTELLINI, Amoreno. *Fiori nei cannoni: nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁰ CAPITINI, Aldo. *Elementi di un'esperienza religiosa*. Bari: Laterza, 1947 (2nd edition).

The 1930s were difficult for international pacifism on the other side of the Alps as well as in Italy. Fighting fascism or defending peace at any price was a generalized debate within the international pacifist movement.¹¹ The Spanish Civil War was an important episode in this conflict, where the emerging Spanish pacifist movement, established around professor José Brocca and the *Orden del Olivo*, was dissolved when the conflict ended.¹² In fact, many pacifists from all over the world decided to put their anti-belligerent beliefs to the side and defend the anti-fascist cause so that, once this objective had been attained, they could finally abandon arms definitively. Others kept resisting the use of violence and when the Second World War was declared they hid, went into exile or ended up in prison.

Against compulsory military service

In the second half of the twentieth century resistance to war continued through opposition to CMS. This opposition had different timing and rhythms in France, Italy and Spain, but there were many similarities between the three countries. On the one hand, the reasons tended to be quite similar, mostly religious or political. In all three cases the resisting individuals had to face very punitive, and occasionally very militarist, laws in each of their countries. On the other hand, personal resistance to CMS provided the backbone for the development of a resistance movement with very similar stages and traits in all three countries, impregnated with a tough anti-militarist criticism.

The reasons for those who resisted comprised religious, philosophical, libertarian and political issues in a broad sense and more specifically arguments against imperialism, militarism, the capitalist system, etc. They depended on the objector and on the context they developed in. For Catholics, the interpretation of the life of Christ, the Sermon on the Mount through which he expressed love for the neighbour, the “Thou shalt not kill” commandment and the consideration of God’s law as above man’s law had great influence. However, the Catholic objection did not have a presence until the Second Vatican Council took place, wherewith the church changed its stance in regards to CO, especially with the *Pacem in Terris* encyclical and the *Gaudium et Spes* pastoral, where those who refused to bear arms for conscience-related reasons were attended to. Many Catholic objectors did not claim religious reasons up until that point: Prieto Pinna, for example, claimed philosophical reasons for his objection in Italy in 1948 in spite of his strong religious inspiration. This was the case for many Italian objectors, until Giuseppe Gozzini, a member of the *Mouvement International de Réconciliation* (MIR), appeared in 1962. His action brought forth an international debate within the Christian community

¹¹ IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 3 Triennial Conferences, 1934-1937, *Le Résistant à la Guerre. Quatre Jours au Danemark. Conférence Triennale 1937*, Bulletin WRI, 1937; BROCK, Peter. *Twentieth-Century Pacifism*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1970, pp. 130-137; and RUNHAM BROWN, Herbert. *Spain – A Challenge to Pacifism*. London: WRI, 1938.

¹² PRASAD, Devi. *War is a crime against humanity: The Story of War Resisters’ International*. London: WRI, 2005, pp. 167-171 and ROMEU, Fernanda. “Memoria en sombra. Los pacifistas en la Guerra Civil española”, *El Viejo Topo*, n. 287, 2011, pp. 46-53.

where different positions on the subject surfaced, and ended up with Ernesto Baducci being imprisoned for supporting Gozzini.¹³

In Spain, the first Catholic objector was José Luis Beunza, who had been very influenced by French Catholic objectors, especially by the members of the *Communauté de l'Arche*. What differentiated the Spanish case was that CO appeared in the 1970s, when the Vatican Council had long ended, legitimizing the more open sectors of the church. In Spain this appeared in some sectors of Catholicism deeply committed to individual rights and freedom, amongst which was the right to CO.¹⁴ It also seems logical to think that Catholic motivations were the only ones which could be displayed and beheld in certain consideration with Spain being under Franco's regime, although it is true that CO was a way of understanding religion which opposed the dictatorship's national Catholicism.¹⁵

As well as the Catholic objectors, Jehovah's Witnesses were also very present in the three countries, refusing to carry out armed service as this would oblige them to excessively neglect their evangelical labour. Despite the fact that their cause was neither a pacifist nor an anti-militarist one, it was important in countries such as Spain, because of how many of them were imprisoned, jeopardizing Franco's dictatorship and its intention of seeming tolerant towards religion in the international community.¹⁶

On the other hand, for the anarchists the army was the antithesis of libertarian ideas. Denial of individuality, absolute obedience and forced discipline made CMS a difficult task for anarchists to carry out, and they also rejected the state's authority to impose anything upon them. After Pinna's case in Italy, many war-resister anarchists made their rejection of CMS public, such as Elvoine Santi, Pietro Ferrua, Mario Barbani or Angelo Nurra, all of whom, with the exception of Santi, belonged to the *Federazione Anarchica Italiana*. They carried out their resistance between 1949 and 1951 as before that the libertarian option was to emigrate to Belgium or Switzerland, and less frequently, to England, France or the United States.¹⁷ Exile was an individual solution, which is why collective, official, open rejection started to be seriously considered in groups located mostly in the north of Italy, in San Remo, Turin, Milan, etc. In the case of Spain, the anarchists' dangerous situation throughout the dictatorship meant that there was no public

¹³ ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia* ., *Op.Cit.*, pp. 68-75; COLETTI, Alessandro. *L'Obiezione di Coscienza. Op.Cit.*, pp. 46-47; and GOZZINI, Giovanni. "Perché sono obietttore di coscienza". *Servitium*. n. 16, 1970, p. 756.

¹⁴ ORDÁS, Carlos Ángel. "La soledad de los primeros pacifistas". In: *VIII Trobada Internacional d'Investigadors del Franquisme*. Barcelona: CEFID-UAB and Fundación Cipriano García, 2013.

¹⁵ OLIVER OLMO, Pedro. "Los iniciadores del movimiento de objetores de conciencia (1971-1977)". In: *Culturas políticas del nacionalismo español: del franquismo a la transición*. Madrid: Los Libros de la Catarata, 2009, p. 221.

¹⁶ JIMÉNEZ, Jesús. *La objeción de conciencia en España*. Madrid: Cuadernos para el Diálogo, 1973.

¹⁷ FERRUUA, Pietro. *L'Obiezione di Coscienza anarchica in Italia*. Guasila: Archiviu-Bibrioteka T. Serra, 1997; ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 46-51; and MARTELLINI, Amoreno. *Fiori nei cannoni: nonviolenza e antimilitarismo nell'Italia del Novecento*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 95-100.

opposition to CMS until well into the 1960s. Up to that point the solution had been desertion or exile.¹⁸

In France, the Catholic Church proclaimed obedience to the state when a citizen was called upon to fulfil his “national obligations”. However, from 1948 onwards there were sectors within French Catholicism that supported the recognition of CO as had occurred in other Protestant countries. Regarding libertarian resistance, France had early models like Lecoq although most French anarchists who resisted opted to go into exile, only beginning to make their opposition public after the Second World War.

As far as authors who served as inspiration for CMS resistance, Leo Tolstoy’s works must be mentioned, especially *The Kingdom of God is within you*. The Russian author was an influence for many of those resisting, including Christians and anarchists. With his radical Christianity serving him as a base, he defended turning one’s back on the state and acting as if it did not exist, that way obeying and carrying out the rule of love on earth dictated by the Gospel.

Other important examples were Henry David Thoreau, who defended disobedience to the state as a duty when it demanded the fulfilment of an unjust act and Jean-Marie Muller, who provided conscientious objection with the virtue of being an individual’s moral responsibility. Mohandas Gandhi was especially influential with his non-cooperation campaign, which brought forth a questioning of the social order in which the law developed. This point needs to be emphasized, as from the start resistance to CMS produced a deep political, social and economic questioning: “War is not an accident but the result of certain social and political conditions that need to be weighed to ensure peace. The challenge to the military in particular implies a questioning of industry, and the whole economic system depends in part on national defense”.¹⁹

CMS objectors therefore criticized not only the army, but the whole capitalist social order. Lanza de Vasto, Gandhi’s Christian disciple, organiser of the *Communauté de l’Arche* and one of the main CO mentors in France and Spain stated that:

It is useless, ultimately, to refuse military service if, on the other hand, one accepts to be an accomplice of injustice and unrest which, besides military service, are also due to wars. The desire to oppose violence by non-violent means cannot bring the conscientious objector to question the whole political and economic organization which almost always relies on violence and generates violence (...) What should be objected above all are the root causes of evil that should be exposed and removed (...) the real conscientious objector objects both in peace and in war the abuses, the excesses, the lies

¹⁸ In the mid-seventies there was the *Perpignan el Grupo de Insumisos y Desertores Españoles*, composed mostly of anarchists who refused to make any kind of compulsory service for the state. IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 467, II, Letter from Ramón Bielsa.

¹⁹ CATTELAİN, Jean-Pierre. *L’Objection de Conscience*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1973.

covered by the law, oppression and exploitation, the industrial and commercial system, politics, police and judiciary.²⁰

Resistance and repression

Resisting CMS implied, for most of the twentieth century, strong repression from the state. Those who resisted were accused of disobedience, subject to a military penal code and judged by the military tribunal of their countries, resulting in a variable number of years in a military penal institution. But this was not the end: when they served their sentence they were again summoned to the ranks as they had not yet fulfilled their duty to the nation. Refusing again meant going through the same process and this could be repeated until the maximum age of military service which ranged from 38 to 55 years of age, depending on the country and the year.²¹ Usually this series of sentences did not go on until that age: after being sentenced a number of times to a variable number of years in prison, the young resister received a pardon.

In France, for example, there were 82 objectors imprisoned in 1955; for 36 of them this was their first sentence; for 31 it was the second; for 11 it was the third; for 3 it was the fourth; and there was one individual who had been imprisoned for eight years, having been sentenced five times. By 1970, over 400 young men had been imprisoned in Italy since the end of the Second World War for refusing to carry out armed service, while in Spain there had been 268 people resisting CMS by 1973, out of which 264 were Jehovah's Witnesses. 72 of them had been in prison for over five years and some of them since 1962.²² It was not unusual for these individuals to end up in psychiatry wards or even to be considered "invalid" when the case started to get too much public attention as happened with Pinna the second time he was summoned to conscript.

From objection to the anti-militarist movement

The path to recognising the right to CO followed very similar stages in the three countries during which there was a constant dialogue between the state and the people resisting CMS. In this dialogue the state was not prepared to completely satisfy the resisters' demands and these resistance groups were not satisfied with what was proposed, prolonging and deepening the conflict.

In the beginning it was the objectors and their sympathizers who demanded recognition of an alternative civil service (CS) for those who objected for religious, philosophical and moral reasons. They were willing to accept this even though it was more difficult: it was longer time-wise and as dangerous or more than CMS. After some years, countries ended

²⁰ LANZA DE VASTO, Giuseppe. *Approchede la vie intériur*. Paris: Denoël, 1962, p. 276, cited in "Què és l'Objecció de Consciència?". *Pax*, n.3, Barcelona, 1977, p. 11.

²¹ Repression was also used in other European countries such as Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Switzerland. IISG, WRI Archives, folders 453, 457, 458 and 460 respectively.

²² IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 455, Peace Pledge Union, "Memorandum re Conscientious Objection in France", 16 and 17 April 1955; and JIMÉNEZ, Jesús. *La objeción de conciencia en España*. *Op.Cit.*

up legalizing this alternative, but accentuating its restrictiveness: it included a tribunal that judged who was an objector and who was not; it only recognised CO for religious reasons; it penalised propaganda that favoured CO, etc. This late recognition came when the objectors' demands had become broader and asked for the same conditions as the rest of conscripted young men and recognition of political objection, as well as the demand to not have a jury to "judge the objectors' conscience". The last stage involved rejection of any kind of CMS or CS, emphasizing the negative repercussions CS had on unemployment, refusing the authority of state to impose any kind of compulsory service and radicalizing criticism towards a global anti-militarist stance.

The fact that governments always presented very limited and limiting proposals influenced this radicalization process. They did this only when the extent of the conflict did not leave them any other alternative than giving in to some concessions. The delay in this regard tended to coincide with the radicalization of the movements, making the demands that the government conceded already outdated in regards to the resistance organizations.

It can be said that overall the three countries went through similar stages. Nevertheless, there was different timing of developments between them. France was the country that went through them quickest, especially throughout the upheaval of the Algerian war. Italy did not go through a similar episode; the process was more linear, although it was influenced by the French conflict, the international echo created by the Vietnam War and the flaring up of the Cold War. In Spain the dictatorship conditioned the appearance of resistance to CMS and it taking the form of a social movement, something that did not happen until the transition process began in the mid-1970s. Yet in the Spanish case the dictatorship's strong militarism influenced the quick development of an anti-militarist movement that brought forth the quantitatively largest European resistance of the twentieth century. Spain's entering NATO and the debate created around this issue was also an influence.

In these three countries the CO issue started with the appearance of young men who refused to do CMS and managed to make their actions gain the attention of the public. In Italy it started with the aforementioned Prietto Pinna in 1948 who began his action having been influenced by one of Aldo Capitini's conferences that same year. Pinna refused to put on the uniform and to obey, claiming philosophical convictions.²³ He carried out his action without any political support and without having looked for a support group previously. He and his lawyer, Bruno Segre, aimed to provoke public debate around the issue of CO as much as possible to generate recognition of the opposition to military service. This debate also appeared in France in 1948 with the appearance of Jean-Bernard Moreau, a young objector who refused due to his Christianity and offered to carry out an alternative CS. His action got the attention of publications such as *Figaro* and *Franc-*

²³ CAPITINI, Aldo. *L'obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. Manduria: Lacaita, 1959; FABBRINI, Fabrizio. *Tu non ucciderai. I cattolici e l'obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. Florencia: Cultura Editrice, 1966; and PINNA, Prieto. *La mia obiezione di coscienza: scritti 1950-1993*. Vernoia: Movimiento Nonviolento, 1994.

Tireu,²⁴ and other libertarian pacifist groups and human rights defence associations who began to demand recognition of CO. He also had the support of Abad Pierre, a member of parliament for the Christian Democrat party, *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*. In Spain resistance to CMS came out publicly in 1971 with young Beunza's CO. In the same way that Monreau did, Beunza claimed Christianity-related reasons and also offered to carry out an alternative CS that worked for the benefit of society. Before his action, Beunza had contacted different national and international groups, therefore gaining an important support group which came into action the moment he was imprisoned.²⁵

These young men's actions hugely influenced the appearance of the first legislative proposals to tackle the issue, most of which were very restrictive: they did not recognise CO as a right; instead they simply offered the possibility of an alternative to CMS. They were only recognized if it was for religious or sometimes ethical reasons. As well as the possibility of doing a CS the objector needed to be recognized as such by a tribunal which was totally or partially military. Finally, the CS tended to last a longer amount of time and the work was at least as hard as or harder than the one in CMS.

That was the nature of the proposals presented in 1949 by Umberto Calosso (PSDI) and Igino Gioirdani (DC) in Italy and by the abbot Pierre and Paul Bonet with the support of other SFIO and MRP politicians in France.²⁶ More initiatives sprung up in the 1950s in both these countries, and although they were quite restrictive, they faced political apathy in the best of cases and a strong political opposition in the majority of cases. In Spain, the resistance to the 1970 and 1971 initiatives was notorious: they were both very restrictive and had been presented by a large number of Jehovah's Witnesses who had been carrying out sentence after sentence since 1958. Franco's procurators called CO a "soviet manoeuvre" and tackled the concept as if it meant "a direct attack on the political and social system's fundamental ideology". They did not have any consideration for the objectors either, who were designated "psychopaths" and "traitors to the nation".²⁷ The only thing that was resolved was the regulation of the crime of refusing to do CMS in 1973 so as to end the frequent occurrence of having prisoners sentenced again and again.

In the years following the appearance of these pioneers, resistance to CMS kept growing thanks to the number of objectors refusing to carry out armed service and ending up in prison, the spread of pacifist ideas and of non-violence amongst the population, the development of groups starting to combine these theories and practices, and finally, the support of international organisations such as WRI, IFOR, MIR, etc.

²⁴ IISG, WRI Archives, folder 455, Marc Nez: "Legal Recognition of Conscientious Objection" (October 1949).

²⁵ OLIVER OLMO, Pedro. *La utopía insumisa de Pepe Beunza. Una objeción subversiva durante el franquismo*. Barcelona: Virus, 2002; and ORTEGA, Pere. *La societat noviolenta. Converses amb Pepe Beunza*. Barcelona: Icaria-ICIP, 2012.

²⁶ IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 456, "Proposta di Legge d'iniziativa dei Deputati Calosso e Giordani" 3 October 1949, in the case of Italy and; IISG, WRI Archives, folder 455; André Philip, Jean Binot, Paul Boulet, Albert Gau, Pierre Grouès, Eugène Reeb; y Paul Rivet: "Military Service Regultaions. Draft Law n° 8568" (1 decembre 1949), in the case of France.

²⁷ *Diarios de las Sesiones de Comisiones*, 9 July 1970 and 2,6,7 July 1971.

France's case and the impact of the Algerian war proved to be very influential for the budding movement in Italy and Spain. The number of objectors and deserters between 1954 and 1962 came to around 500 young men. The French government stopped cycle-sentences, limiting the maximum number of years in prison for refusing to carry out CMS: it went from five years in 1958 to three years in 1962.²⁸ Simultaneously, resistance groups inspired by pacifist and non-violence ideas and using the models of Gandhi, Luther King, Thoreau or Tolstoy, among others, arose. *Action Civique Non-Violente* appeared in 1958, founded by Roland Marin and Joseph Pyronnet; that same year *Secours aux Objecteurs de Conscience* appeared as one of Lecoin's initiatives; in 1959 *Jeune Résistance* was founded, a group which was openly disobedient to the state. The war ended in 1962, but the groups' activities did not nor did the growing tendency of resistance to CMS with a large number of people in exile or in prison for this reason. The first legal initiative to recognise CO was settled in 1963;²⁹ the hostility felt by many politicians was reflected in the amount of modifications carried out to the original text, resulting in a distorted legal language where CO was recognized only to a very limited extent.

Italy's situation was not accelerated by a colonial war context, but CO and the pacifist and non-violence debate started to get more public attention from the 1960s onwards with the appearance of organizations based on non-violence and against CMS. WRI and IFOR sections were created as well as the *Centro per la Nonviolenza de Perugia*, led by Capitini, which centred around non-violence and CO. Italian anti-militarism and resistance to CMS was supported by the *Partito Radicale*, founded in 1955 which had an important presence in the anti-militarist context from the 1960s onwards. In 1963 the *Gruppo di Azione Nonviolenta* was created under Pinna's initiative, spreading to various Italian cities and promoting civil disobedience and anti-militarist mobilizations for recognition of CO. In addition, in 1962 and with the help of the Gozzini case, Catholic CO started to become more and more frequent, impacting the creation of groups all over Italy who defended CO. In the end, in December 1972 the first law allowing an alternative CS was passed. Although it was as precarious as the first proposals presented in the 1950s, the government publicized it claiming it was a step forward for democracy and a civil conquest. The resistance groups attacked it directly with a campaign called *legge-truffa* [fraudulent law].³⁰

In Spain, the few objectors to appear after Beunza were supported by Christian pacifist groups like *Justicia y Paz* and *Pax Christi*, and received international solidarity from the

²⁸ AUVRAY, Michel. *Objecteurs, insoumis, déserteurs: Histoire des réfractaires en France*. Paris: Stock, 1983, pp. 215-242 and CATTELLAIN, Jean-Pierre. *L'Objection de Conscience*. *Op.Cit.*, p.54.

²⁹ IISG, WRI Archives, folder. 455, Letter from Yvette Naal "A statute for conscientious objectors in France", Paris, 12 dicembre 1963.

³⁰ ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 76-77; COLETTI, Alessandro. *L'obiezione di coscienza*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 29-40; and IISG, WRI Archives, folder 456: Movimento Nonviolento per la Pace, "The campaign for CO in Italy", Perugia, 29 novembre 1965; and Gruppi Nonviolenti Bolognesi, "Legge Truffa", 9 settembre 1971.

WRI, IFOR and French and Belgian non-violence and objectors groups. Collective objection started to develop with the launching of self-managed civil services that the objectors installed in areas suffering a strong lack of resources, such as the Can Cerra area in the *L'Hospitalet del Llobregat* in Barcelona and other places like Bilbao, Madrid, Málaga, Reus, Tarragona and Vic. These initiatives were launched between 1975 and 1976, as the political transition process was barely beginning. In January 1977, many of these objectors met in Madrid to publicly and unitedly reject the December 1976 law for religious reasons. As a result of that meeting, they then formed the *Movimiento de Objetores de Conciencia* (MOC) which turned in to one of the most important resisters' groups; they had an anti-militarist nature and a non-violent strategy. CMS resistance began to spread as a social movement. Non-violence, pacifist and anti-militarist ideas had given rise to more groups with the same basis in many areas of the country. The case of Catalonia was notorious for the *Casal de la Pau* foundation (inspired by the Belgian *Maison de la Paix*), where different groups dedicated to pacifism and anti-militarism came together. The way that the objection phenomenon was growing at a national and international scale no doubt influenced the half-hearted recognition given to CO in the constitution in 1978 although its legislative regulation was not installed until 1984 under the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) government. The socialist legislative project, which was also very limited, recognized the possibility of an alternative social service for the objectors who were recognised as such.³¹

None of the legal initiatives that were presented managed to solve the problem in any of the countries. The young resistance groups, who by this time were organized, made their demands public through a series of different types of actions. Resistance to CMS had taken on the shape of a social movement and had enlarged its base and its political models. The discourse comprised a strong anti-militarist stance and was more and more openly disobedient and defiant to the state. When the state tried to react to this, the young rebels were prepared to take another step and proposed disobedience to the law in spite of the fact that this would mean going back to prison. CS was considered free labour and therefore an attack on the working class.

In France, CS was launched in 1964 and showed signs of complications from the very year of its launch. These complications became graver after May 1968 when many of the objectors ended up in prison for refusing to do a job they considered strike-breaking.³² In 1972, as a reaction to the repression, the *Comités de Soutien aux Objecteurs* (CSOC) were created in Lyon and rapidly spread across all of France. The objectors started to abandon their posts in the civil services and objection took on a strong politicized dynamic with numerous groups in favour of draft-dodging springing up: the first *Groupe d'Insoumission Totale* was created in Lyon in 1972; simultaneously, objectors in Rouen,

³¹ LEDERACH, John Paul. *Els anomenats pacifistes. La noviolència a l'estat espanyol*. Barcelona: La Magrana, 1983; MOVIMIENTO DE OBJECIÓN DE CONCIENCIA. *En legítima desobediencia. Tres décadas de objeción, insumisión y antimilitarismo*. Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2002; and SAMPEDRO BLANCO, Víctor. *Movimientos sociales: debates sin mordaza. Desobediencia civil y servicio militar (1970-1996)*. Madrid: BOE, Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1997.

³² IISG, WRI Archives, folder 455, Henry Martin: "The situation in France" (1970).

Caen, Paris and Dreux created *Groupes d'Insoumission Collective*. The following year, many French groups were considering combined action and created the *Comité de Lutte des Objecteurs* which were federated independent committees against militarization, and whose members gradually became more radical and started to defend total insubordination more decisively. At an international level, there was a collective international draft-dodging campaign carried out by twelve rebels from Belgium, France, Holland and Sweden.³³

In Italy the *Lega Obiettori di Coscienza* (LOC) was founded in 1973 against the *legge-truffa*. It started in Rome and in little time spread across all of Italy, organizing mobilizations against the law. In their first conference in 1974, they determined to display disobedience towards CS, preparing to go to prison for it. The LOC was made up of people from the radical left, libertarians and *Partito Radicale* militants. From the 1960s on, arguments for CO became critical of the social system in general and militarism in particular, and this was made evident in the CO collective declarations signed by people resisting from all over Italy.³⁴ On the other hand, the far left created an anti-militarist combat front based on struggle in the barracks, highlighting the fight against hierarchy and promoting insubordination. For this to be carried out, the *Lotta Continua* group was created and its publication, *Proletari in Divisa*.³⁵

In Spain, resistance to CMS was joined by the inertia of the movement against Spain entering NATO. Anti-militarist groups like the *Grup Antimilitarista de Barcelona* promoted the political debate around militarism. Other groups with a number of “revolutionary left” and libertarian militants also appeared: *Mili KK* (*Kakitzat* in the Basque Country) or the *Colectivo Antimilitarista Pro Insumisión*. It was not possible to apply the 1984 law until 1987, and by the time the government tried to launch it, all these groups, with the MCO, had a new strategy: draft-dodging. This strategy was made public in February 1989 through a collective action when 57 draft-dodging objectors publicly surrendered themselves to the military authorities to reassert their refusal to perform CMS and CS.³⁶

Conclusion

At the end of the twentieth century, the state ended CMS. The wars of the past century definitively awoke youth's resistance to participate in war. If armed conflict was the

³³ COMITES DE LUTTE DES OBJECTEURS. “Guide de l'objecteur de conscience”. Supplément à *Objection*, n.23. Toulouse, 1975, pp. 54-55 ; and AUVRAY, Michel. *Objecteurs, insoumis, déserteurs : Histoire des réfractaires en France*. *Op.Cit.*, p. 284.

³⁴ IISG, WRI Archives, folder 456, VV.AA., “Dichiarazione di Obiezione di Coscienza di:”, 1971 and 1972 and ALBESANO, Sergio. *Storia dell'Obiezione di coscienza in Italia*. *Op.Cit.*, pp. 138-139.

³⁵ DI BANDINELLI, Angiolo. “Antimilitaristi: cronache di venti anni”. *La Prova Radicale*, October 1971, n.1.

³⁶ MOVIMIENTO DE OBJECIÓN DE CONCIENCIA. *En legítima desobediencia. Tres décadas de objeción, insumisión y antimilitarismo*. *Op.Cit.*; SAMPEDRO BLANCO, Víctor. *Movimientos sociales: debates sin mordaza. Desobediencia civil y servicio militar (1970-1996)*. *Op.Cit.*; and PRAT, Enric. *Moviendo por la Paz. De Paz Christi a las movilizaciones contra la guerra*. Barcelona: Hacer, 2006.

spark, the blaze of the conflict was maintained alive in times of peace through opposition to CMS. Personal resistance to participate in war or in training for it was the core concept of a social movement that spread throughout the second half of the twentieth century based on anti-militarist political content against war and its causes. The extent of this movement was so broad that in the last decade of the century the three countries studied decided to eliminate this obligation. Anti-militarism developed by the young resister generation was extremely uncomfortable for the three states since governments were not prepared to give up conscription, because of the open disobedience towards the state which the resister groups defended and, finally, because the resistance movement questioned every aspect of the countries' defence policies: weapon production, the belligerent episodes resulting from military alliances, the capitalism which accompanied war, etc. It ended up becoming easier for governments to professionalize the armed forces so as to put a stop to an unending source of conflict that dissuasive and repressive policies had not managed to terminate.

Overall, objection and draft-dodging were mostly subdued, except in the case of Spain, where almost one million individuals were registered as objectors in the 1990s, out of an annual contingent of between 200,000 and 250,000. To that one must add about 20,000 individuals resisting CMS and CS. However, in other countries there were rarely over a few hundred draft-dodgers.³⁷ However, since the armed forces were professionalized in all three countries the anti-militarist and pacifist movement has not had a similar level of public impact, except when there have been outbreaks of armed conflict. However, their main objective was not just to put a stop to CMS, but also to oppose “war and its causes”, something they have not yet fully succeeded in.

³⁷ AJANGIZ, Rafael. “Objeción de conciencia, insumisión y movimiento antimilitarista”. *Mientras Tanto*, n. 91-92, 2004.