

MERCENARIES OR SOLDIERS OF THE FAITH? THE PONTIFICAL ZOUAVES IN THE DEFENSE OF THE ROMAN CHURCH (1860-1870)

¿MERCENARIOS O SOLDADOS DE LA FE? LOS ZUAVOS PONTIFICIOS EN LA DEFENSA DE LA IGLESIA CATÓLICA (1860-1870)

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BASTRACT

From 1861 to 1870, more than 7,000 men came from all over Europe and even from beyond the Atlantic to voluntarily join the Papal army and defend the Holy See against the threat of Italian nationalism. Who were these men and what drove them to abandon their ordinary lives to take up arms in the defense of the Pope? Were they mercenaries in the service of a lost cause or idealistic and heroic combatants ready to sacrifice themselves for the Church, as their contemporaries saw them in contradictory views? Based on letters, journals, memoirs and various archival sources, this paper investigates the motivations and the experience of the Pontifical Zouaves.

Keywords: Italy, Risorgimento, Nationalism, Papal Zouaves, Catholicism, Holy See, War Volunteering, XIXth century.

RESUMEN

Desde 1861 a 1870 más de 7.000 hombres llegaron procedentes de toda Europa, incluso de más allá del Atlántico, para unirse voluntariamente al ejército papal y defender la Santa Sede contra la amenaza del nacionalismo italiano. ¿Quiénes fueron estos hombres y que les empujó a abandonar sus vidas cotidianas para tomar las armas en defensa del Papa?, ¿fueron mercenarios al servicio de una causa perdida o combatientes idealistas y heroicos listos para sacrificarse por la Iglesia, tal y como los vieron sus contemporáneos en visiones contradictorias? A partir de cartas, diarios, memorias y diferentes fuentes de archivo, este artículo analiza las motivaciones y la experiencia de los zuavos pontificios.

Palabras clave: Italia, Risorgimento, nacionalismo, zuavos papales, catolicismo, Santa Sede, voluntariado de guerra, siglo XIX.

RESUM

Mercenaris o soldats de la fe? Els zuaus pontificis en la defensa de l'Església catòlica (1860-1870)

Des de 1861 a 1870, més de 7.000 homes van venir d'arreu d'Europa i fins i tot de més enllà de l'Atlàntic per unir-se a l'exèrcit papal i defensar la Santa Seu davant l'amenaça del nacionalisme italià. Qui eren aquests homes i què els va fer abandonar les seves vides ordinàries per prendre les armes en defensa del Papa? Van ser mercenaris al servei d'una causa perduda o combatents idealistes i heroics preparats per sacrificar-se per l'Església, tal i com van ser vistos pels seus contemporanis en visions enfrontades? Mitjançant cartes, diaris i memòries, així com diferents fonts arxivístiques, aquest article investiga les motivacions i l'experiència dels zuaves pontificis.

Paraules clau: Itàlia, Risorgimento, nacionalisme, zuaus papals, catolicisme, Santa Seu, voluntariat de guerra, segle XIX

The photograph was taken in Rome, in 1860, in the workshop of the brothers D'Alessandri, photographers of the papal court. The man who poses in uniform, leaning on a column, wears the characteristic outfit of the *Tirailleurs franco-belges*, inspired by that of the native troops of the French army in Africa, with its puffy canvas trousers, woolen belt and open waistcoat. The Franco-Belges were a force of Catholic volunteers set up at the beginning of 1860 to protect the Holy See against further attacks of Italian nationalists, following the events of 1859 that had severed two-thirds of the Pontifical State.¹ Like this man –Joseph-Louis Guérin, a native of the Nantes, who had engaged in August 1860 and died in the battle of Castelfidardo–, many recruits, most of them anonymous, took the pose in front of the camera in order to get a photographic portrait to be distributed to their relatives at home or to their new companions in arms, as was fashionable at that time among the upper and middle classes. Between 1861 and 1870, more than 7,000 men came from all over Europe and even from beyond the Atlantic to voluntarily join the papal army, for varying periods of time ranging from six months to ten years.² Who were these men and what drove them to abandon their ordinary lives to take up arms in the defense of the Holy See? For their detractors, they were merely mercenaries in the service of a lost cause, who had nothing to do on Italian soil. For the catholic propagandists, the *Zouaves* –the name they took from 1861– were the incarnation of the devotion of the faithful to the Sovereign Pontiff and defended with heroism and idealistic self-denial a great struggle. At the time of the “Roman Question”

- 1 On the historical context, see: BEALES, D., and BIAGINI, E. (2002): *The Risorgimento and the Unification of Italy*. London, Longman, chap. 7; DUGGAN, C. (2008): *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy Since 1796*. Boston-New York, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, chap. 10.
- 2 ANONYME (1910-1920), *Matricule des zouaves pontificaux*. Lille, Imp. Ducoulombier. On the history of this force, the bibliography is mainly in French: BITTARD DES PORTES, R. (1894): *Histoire des zouaves pontificaux*. Paris, Bloud et Barral; CERBELAUD SALAGNAC, G. (1963): *Les zouaves pontificaux*. Paris, Editions France-Empire; GUÉNEL, J. (1998): *La dernière guerre du pape : les zouaves pontificaux au secours du Saint-Siège : 1860-1870*. Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes. In English: COULOMBE, C. A. (2009) : *The Pope's legion : the multinational fighting force that defended the Vatican*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.



Fig.- 1: Fratelli D'Alessandri, "Joseph-Louis Guérin", Photograph (Albumin), 1860.
(Private collection of Amaury de la Pinsonnais)

which divided the opinion of virtually all countries, the gaze way their contemporaries looked on the Zouaves was never neutral.

Throughout contemporary times, the struggles of the counter-revolutionary camp have inspired phenomena of international solidarity. Before 1860, Don Miguel's army in Portugal in 1833-34 and Don Carlos' war in Spain between 1834 and 1840 had also welcomed volunteer fighters from all over Europe to defend the cause of absolutism against liberalism, as would the second Carlist war of 1872-76.³ At the same time, when catholic volunteers joined in the service of the Pope, the cause of the King of Naples in exile attracted foreign volunteers, of whom the most famous, the Spaniard José Borges, died shot by the Italian army after five months at the head of the legitimist guerilla in the south of the peninsula.⁴ Later, the resistance of

the Boers in South Africa reactivated the memory of these engagements in the eyes of the French legitimist aristocracy, and the ideological conflicts of the 20th century renewed the ground for international mobilization, especially in the ranks of Franco's army during the Spanish Civil War.⁵ In the light of these various manifestations of the internationalisation of the counterrevolutionary struggle, historians like Jean-Clément Martin and Jordi Canal have spoken of a "white (or black) international" that was born from the civil and political conflicts of the contemporary period and acted on the same grounds and with the same weapons as the liberal or democratic internationals.⁶ During the first half of the 19th century, military volunteers became a model of political engagement that was new and attractive, endowed with a strong emotive and symbolic charge.⁷ Without any doubt, the success of this model owes much to the new conceptions of citizenship and heroism forged by the French Revolution and Romanticism, but the attraction of the volunteer force was not exclusive to the revolutionary ideas and ideals. The new romantic representations of volunteers in arms resonated perfectly with the reactionary mentality and lent itself to the recuperation of traditional values and conceptions such as the ideal of chivalric heroism, the spirit of a crusade or the sense of personal sacrifice.

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- 3 HADENGUE, A : (1925). «Une équipée française au Portugal (1833) d'après des documents inédits». *Revue des Questions Historiques*, pp. 42-74 and 406-429; COUTANT DE SAISSEVAL, G. (1952): «La chouannerie espagnole, 1832-1936». *Bulletin des sciences, arts et lettres de Cholet*, pp. 49-55.
 - 4 SARLIN, S. (2009): «Fighting the Risorgimento: foreign volunteers in the conflicts of Southern Italy (1860-1863)». *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, n° 14 (4), pp. 476-490.
 - 5 KEENE, J. (2001): *Fighting for Franco : international volunteers in nationalist Spain during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939*. London, Leicester University Press.
 - 6 MARTIN, J-C. (2001): *La contre-révolution en Europe, XVIIIe-XIXe siècles : réalités politiques et sociales, résonances culturelles et idéologiques*. Rennes, Presses universitaires de Rennes; CANAL, J. (2011): «Guerres civiles en Europe au XIXe siècle, guerre civile européenne et Internationale blanche». ZUNIGA, J.-P. (ed.), *Pratiques du transnational : terrains, preuves, limites*. Paris, Centre des recherches historiques, pp. 57-77.
 - 7 For Italy as ground of military volunteerism during the Romantic Age, see: PÉCOUT, G. (2009): «The international armed volunteers: pilgrims of a transnational Risorgimento». *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, n° 14 (4), pp. 413-426; RIAL, L. (2012): «Men at War: Masculinity and Military Ideals in the Risorgimento». PATRIARCA, S. and RIAL, L. (eds.), *The Risorgimento revisited : nationalism and culture in nineteenth-century Italy*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 152-170; More generally on conceptions about military volunteerism: MOSSE, G. (1991): *Fallen soldiers: reshaping the memory of the World Wars*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Pope's soldiers have inspired abundant apologetic literature that often quotes their letters or their companions' testimonies to illustrate their spirit of sacrifice and their devotion to the Catholic cause. Many of the former volunteers published memoirs, and their relatives gave to the public their journals and correspondence.⁸ These sources should be used with caution, as they –no less than guns– aimed at serving the objectives of the clerical movement by providing young militants and the entire Catholic community with idealistic models. Nevertheless, caution should not lead to reject any idea of sincerity from them. Together with other archival sources –the papers of general Lamoricière (commander of the Roman army in 1860) at the Archives Nationales in Paris; of the Pontifical Ministero delle Armi in Rome; and of various fonds in the Vatican Archivio Segreto– it is possible to investigate the motivations and the experience of those who voluntarily entered the ranks of the Zouaves during the last decade of the Papal Rome.

“WE NEED A BLOODY PROTEST”: AN ARMY OF VOLUNTEERS FOR THE POPE

Firstly, why were volunteers called upon to defend the Holy See? It was during the winter of 1859-1860 that the project to strengthen the Pontifical Army by appealing to the voluntary work of Catholics was conceived. The context was then marked by the developments of Italian nationalism, with the corollary of the precipitation of the “Roman question” (i.e. the maintenance of a temporal power for the papacy). In the wake of the war between Piedmont and Austria in northern Italy, nationalist insurrections during the summer in the Legations, Marches and Umbria had clearly shown the limits of the policy of reliance on the Catholic powers pursued by the papacy since 1815.⁹ The passivity of the latter, especially of Austria, entangled in an internal crisis after its defeat in Italy, and of France, governed by Napoleon III, torn between its external ambitions and the pressure of Catholic opinion, forced the papal government to rely on its own strength. The deployment of Swiss regiments made possible to regain militarily control of Umbria and the Marches, showing that the Pontifical State could defend itself. However, the situation remained precarious: despite the fact that pa-

8 For an overview, see HARRISON, C. E. (2007): «Zouave Stories : Gender, Catholic Spirituality and French Responses to the Roman Question». *Journal of Modern History*, n° 79 (2), pp. 274-305.

9 VIAENE, V. (2002): «The Roman Question. Catholic Mobilisation and Papal Diplomacy during the Pontificate of Pius IX (1846-1878)». LAMBERTS, E. (ed.), *The Black International, 1870-1878: the Holy See and militant catholicism in Europe*. Bruxelles, Institut historique belge de Rome, pp. 135-178.

pal forces had easily overcome insurgents badly organized and armed, the concentration of various nationalist volunteer troops in Central Italy under the command of Garibaldi caused a much more serious danger. At the same time, diplomatic pressure from London and Paris for reforms of the Pontifical State did not weaken, with the support of liberal public opinion aroused by the indignation in front of the "Perugia massacres".

In 1859, the turn of the internal and international political situation pushed Pius IX towards positions more and more intransigent on the ground of the pontifical temporal. Shortly before his troops entered in Perugia on June 18th, the pope issued his encyclical *Qui Nuper*, in which he reaffirmed the need for the Holy See to retain its "civil power, so that nothing prevents it from exercising, in the interests of religion, his sacred magisterium", and also affirmed his firm determination to "incur all dangers and endure all kind of suffering" before abandoning his apostolic duty. This uncompromising attitude was derived both from his ecclesiological conceptions – i.e. the belief in the necessity of the temporal to ensure the effective and visible independence of the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church– and from political, secondary but effective considerations: the hostility to the liberal government of Turin, the categorical condemnation of liberalism and nationalism, and the awareness of close theoretical and pragmatic links between the defense of the temporal rights of the Holy See and the cause of other Italian sovereigns threatened by the nationalist revolution.¹⁰ The position of Pius IX didn't vary. The Pope renewed it with firmness on September 26th (*Maximo Animi*), the day after the Legations were annexed to Victor Emmanuel's crown, and again on January 19th, 1860 (*Certe verbis*), in response to the semi-official pamphlet *Le Pape et le Congrès*, which called upon the pope to renounce voluntarily his civil power. The growing intransigence of Pius IX laid down the framework of the policy of the pontifical government led by Cardinal Antonelli, who himself was in favor of a policy of temporization which would not have jeopardized French military protection. The Cardinal rejected any idea of reform without obtaining strong guarantees for the maintenance of the Papal States, or even their restoration in the territories lost during the summer.

Increasingly skeptical about the results to be expected from diplomacy, Pius IX lent an ever more attentive ear to the most intransigent sectors of the Curia and the episcopacy, the *Zelanti*. Those pleaded for endowing the papacy with material means that would allow it to resist internal and external pressures for reform, and even to dispense with the protection of France.

10 MARTINA, G. (1986): *Pio IX. 2, 1851-1866*. Rome, Ed. Pont. Univ. Gregoriana, pp. 106-107.

An anonymous note of September 1859, preserved in the private archives of Pius IX, clearly sets forth this point of view.¹¹ While “the princes were unfaithful and their advisors won over to the revolution,” it said, the Holy Father found supporters among “those faithful Catholics who are numerous but wrapped in the unity of their respective nation and must accept in spite of themselves a policy which they disavowed”. “For the moment they are weak because they were separated” but should “the Vicar of Jesus Christ make himself heard,” it asserted, “we do not doubt that a unanimous cry of faith and obedience will answer him and that thousands of volunteers from all corners of the globe will gather for the fulfillment of a sacred duty. They will be obedient and strong, for they will devoutly bring to the Holy Father the moral power of the profession of faith of many”. The author of the note believed that a call from the pope would be enough to make possible the formation of an army of Catholic volunteers of 40 to 50,000 men, enough to bring the rebellious provinces into obedience and to decide “all by one the famous objection of the foreign occupying bodies to the Roman states”, for “it would be from then the whole catholicity that would guarantee the independence of the pope”.

The principal advocate of this project in the entourage of Pius IX was a Belgian prelate, Bishop Xavier de Mérode. Before embracing his priestly vocation, he had served as an officer in the French army, and since 1850 occupied the function of Secret Chamberlain. A boiling character, at once ardent Monarchist and uncompromising Catholic, he had imposed himself in the Curia as the leader of the Zelanti opposition to the policy of Cardinal Antonelli (and no doubt that he used the project of military reform also to weaken the position of the Secretary of State).¹² As early as December 1859, Mérode had begun secret negotiations with a French general, Louis Juchault de Lamoricière, whom he wanted to convince on behalf of Pius IX to become the head of the Pontifical army. The name of Lamoricière was associated with the French conquest of Algeria (Mérode served there under his command), but also with the opposition to the coup d'état of December 1851. In 1859, this choice was clearly a provocation against Napoleon III (“it is a small affront that we give to the emperor”, the Belgian prelate would have affirmed). The French general arrived in Rome at the beginning of April 1860, where he was officially appointed Generalissimo of the Pon-

11 ARCHIVIO SEGRETO VATICANO, Archiv. Part. Pio IX, Oggetti Vari, b. 1537 : «Note sur le Saint-Siège» (Turin, 15 September 1859).

12 AUBERT, R. (1956): «Mgr. de Mérode, ministre de la guerre sous Pie IX». *Revue générale belge*, n° XCII, pp. 1102-1116 and 1316-1332.

tifical Army, while Mérode took the lead of a newborn Pro-Ministry of Arms. Despite Antonelli's opposition, Mérode-Lamoricière's plan consisted of doubling the size of the Pontifical Army, from 15-16,000 to 25 or 30,000 men. To achieve this result, voluntary enlistment of foreigners was called for, and it had previous precedents in the Roman army. The presence of foreigners had been reinforced in the aftermath of the revolutionary episode of 1849, when it had been necessary in order to rebuild the army without resorting to indigenous recruitment, that was deemed unreliable¹³. A law of 1852 regulated the "conditions and treatment of foreign individuals called by the Holy See to constitute special military bodies".¹⁴ Deposits were opened in France and in the Austrian Empire since, until 1859, the bulk of the volunteers came from Switzerland, Austria and the German States. In 1860, the commitment period was reduced from 4 years to 1 year to facilitate recruitment. The Swiss, Austrians and Germans still constituted the majority of the recruits, and allowed the creation of a battalion of *Carabinieri* and six battalions of foreign *Bersaglieri*, in addition to the two regiments of infantry and the two existing battalions of foreign *Cacciatori*.¹⁵ The arrival of volunteers from other countries led to the formation of new bodies on the basis of national membership: French and Belgians were regrouped in a battalion of *Tiraglieri* (known as Franco-Belgians), who at the end of the summer of 1860 had a modest manpower of 450, while a battalion of Saint-Patrick welcomed the 1,300 volunteers sent by Ireland.¹⁶

The Roman army reached a number of 22,000 in September 1860, when the Piedmontese government –eager to take control of the South where the kingdom of the Two Sicilies had collapsed under the blows of Garibaldi– threatened to invade the Pontifical State, taking precisely as a pretext the presence of "foreign mercenaries" in the Roman troops. Faced with an

13 MANCINI BARBIERI, A. (1986): «Nuove ricerche sulla presenza straniera nell'esercito pontificio 1850-1870». *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, n° 73, pp. 161-186.

14 SEGRETERIA DI STATO (1852). *Legge colla quale il governo pontificio viene a determinare le condizioni ed il trattamento degli individui di nazione estera che chiama al servizio della S. Sede per costituirne dei corpi militari speciali*. Rome, Tip. della Rev. cam. Apostolica.

15 VIGEVANO, A. (1920): *La fine dell'esercito pontificio*. Rome, Stab. poligr. per l'amministrazione della guerra.

16 On the Irish Battalion, see: O'CARROLL, C. (2014): «The Irish Papal Brigade: Origins, Objectives and Fortunes». BARR, C., FINELLI, M. and O'CONNOR, A. (eds.), *Nation, nazione: Irish nationalism and the Italian Risorgimento*, 73-95. Dublin, University College Dublin Press; PANCIANI, M. C. (1986): «New Light on the Background to the Irish Participation in the Papal Army of 1860». *The Irish Sword. The Journal of the military Society of Ireland*, n° 16 (64), pp. 155-164.

army far more powerful in numbers and resources, the Pontifical leaders could only hope for a reversal of the international situation and a conservative reaction from the Catholic powers, which Pius IX and his entourage believed was inevitable.¹⁷ Without any illusion about the balance of power, the pope hoped that the army commanded by Lamoricière would “resist long enough to allow Europe to intervene before it is confronted with accomplished facts”.¹⁸ Some went further in their calculations and thought that a defeat of the pontifical troops would also serve the cause of the papacy, as it would arouse the emotion of the European Catholics. That was the meaning of what Lamoricière is reported to have said at eve of the battle: “We need a bloody protest”.¹⁹

The history of a transnational voluntary force at the service of the papacy could have ended in October 1860. The crushing defeat of the Roman army and the absence of reaction from the Catholic powers, which resulted in a reduction of the Pontifical State to the mere “Patrimony of St. Peter”, completely changed the situation and even greatly questioned the usefulness of maintaining an army of volunteers. The Catholic committees continued nevertheless to encourage the recruitment and departure of volunteers, but wondered who would be responsible for organizing and using them in Rome. Pius IX, for his part, declared in several occasions “that he could not bear a second Castelfidardo” and “that he never wanted to allow anyone to use his name, nor would make any call himself, and that he did not want in the present situation throwing anyone in the midst of perils”, but “that he expressed to those who came his gratitude for the sacrifice they made, instructing them to let their parents know that he was giving them his special blessing”.²⁰ In spite of these hesitations, the Ministero delle Armi formed a new corps of volunteers, with the debris of the Franco-Belgian and Irish battalions, joined by the new recruits, who took the name of “battalion of the Pontifical Zouaves” under the commandant of the French colonel count of Becdelièvre.

17 MARTINA, *Pio IX*, p. 103.

18 JACINI, S. (1931): *Il Tramonto del Potere temporale : nelle relazioni degli ambasciatori austriaci a Roma (1860-1870)*. Bari, Laterza, p. 31.

19 BECDELIÈVRE, L.-A. de. (1867): *Souvenirs de l'armée pontificale*. Paris, Lecoffre fils, p. 65.

20 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/76&78 : Armand Chaurand, 7 December 1860 ; Xavier de Mérode, Rome, 26 February 1861, and Gaston de Chevigné, Nantes, 11 March 1861 (reporting a conversation with the Archbishop of Rennes on his return from Rome).

The *raison d'être* of this force could no longer be of an offensive nature but a symbolic one. This orientation became clear when a beginning of military reconquest of the Sabine (presumably planned by Mérode himself) was attempted at the end of January 1861. Not only the move was immediately arrested and disavowed by the Pontifical Government, at the request of Antonelli, but the latter claimed and obtained the head of Becdelièvre who was replaced by Colonel Allet, a Swiss and quiet officer who had long been in the service of the Papacy. From this time onwards, the Zouaves were quartered far from the frontier zone, whose defense was assured only by the French troops until their withdrawal in 1865, and their missions were no longer very clear. In 1862, the Zouaves were even employed in the excavation work of Castro Pretorio, in order, as Mérode justified, to "occupy them" and "put them to work to avoid inaction".²¹

Not without some irony, an officer saw as "one of the great miracles of modern times" the maintenance of a body charged with conducting an "armed and inactive protest".²² The remoteness of the prospects for action and the vagueness surrounding the missions of the volunteer battalion put an obstacle to the recruitment. From one thousand in 1861, commitments were limited to only two or three hundred in the following years. These arrivals barely compensated for departures and leaves, so that the battalion barely maintained its modest strength (between 620 and 750 men). The implementation of the Convention of September 1864, which planned the withdrawal of French troops (in exchange for the commitment of the Kingdom of Italy to respect the integrity of the Papal State), led to the rekindling of Catholic opinion's mobilization: the number of Zouaves increased to nearly 2,250 in May 1865.²³ After 1865, new missions were entrusted to them, such as the fight against the brigandage which raged in the south of Latium and which the pontifical government was thus trying to repress more actively, after having long tolerated it.²⁴ The Zouaves also participated in the campaign of 1867 that stopped the Garibaldian attempt of invasion at Mentana and Monterotondo. After that dramatic event, the arrivals of volunteers reached a peak in 1867, with more than 3,000 recruits, justifying the passage of the rank of battalion to that of regiment: the Garibaldian invasion had elec-

21 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : X. de Mérode, Rome, December 1861.

22 *Ivi*: B. de Morelle, no date (1863).

23 CERBELAUD SALAGNAC, *Les zouaves pontificaux*, p. 112.

24 GRUAZ, L. (2016): «La répression du brigandage et la lutte contre le choléra : deux exemples de "campagnes militaires" menées par les Zouaves pontificaux dans les États du Pape à la fin du XIXe siècle». *Revue Historique des Armées*, n° 284, pp. 103-112.

trified Catholic opinion on both sides of the Atlantic. The regiment reached its maximum at the beginning of 1870 with 2,900 fighters. The Zouaves formed the fifth of the Roman army when Rome was invaded by Italian troops and ceased to belong to the Pope.

MERCENARIES OR CRUSADERS? A MATTER OF COMPLEX MOTIVATIONS

From January 1st 1861 to September 20th 1870, the regiment of the Pontifical Zouaves issued about 11,000 enlistments of soldiers and non-commissioned officers and of 250 officers (ie, in view of the re-engagement, about 7,000 men).²⁵ What prompted thousands of young people to abandon everything to take up arms in defense of the papacy? For their contemporaries, this question gave rise to two opposing answers, the antinomy of which merely reflected the intense ideological opposition provoked by the "Roman question". For the partisans of Italian unity the Zouaves were merely mercenaries attracted by the lure of gain or the spirit of adventure, while the defenders of the papacy saw in them volunteers who were enamored of religious ideals and ready to sacrifice themselves for the Church.

In 1860 and 1870, the Italian leaders did not hesitate to point the use of "foreign mercenary" to justify their military interventions against the Papacy. When invading the Marches and Umbria, General Manfredo Fanti, who commanded the invading corps, called upon his soldiers to expel "from Italian soil foreign bands rushed from all over Europe" in order to plant "the false flag of a religion they flout". In his order of the day, General Enrico Cialdini vituperated "against a band of foreign drunkards whom the thirst for gold and the desire for pillage have led to our country". On the other hand, Catholic polemicists have not ceased to fight these accusations through the publication of apologetic works, hagiographic biographies or martyrologies that celebrate the idealistic and chivalrous epic of the Zouaves. In a work published in 1861 in homage to the "Martyrs of Castelfidardo", that would end as a true Catholic bestseller (he had known seventeen editions until 1892), Count Anatole de Ségur attacked "the enemies of the Holy See" who "slandered (the volunteers) with the name of mercenaries" and who "transformed into factious attitude the purest, most sincere religious of devotion". For him, the "heroic young men" who fell on the battlefield were "martyrs of the Catholic faith, immortal martyrs of the papacy!"²⁶ In a chapter ironically entitled "the mercenaries", the journalist Louis Veuillot claimed that it was enough to demonstrate the falsity of ac-

25 ANONYME, *Matricule des zouaves pontificaux*.

26 SÉGUR, A. de. (1861): *Les martyrs de Castelfidardo*. Paris, A. Bray, p. 25.

cusations against volunteers to quote their written letters to their parents. "I have shed my blood for my religion, defending the temporal power of the Holy Father," wrote Louis Gicquel in a letter to his bishop. The young Lanfranc de Beccary, who died in Castelfidardo at the age of 17, had "given his life for justice". At the resolution of Léopold de Lippe, "no human motive was mingled," for he "aspired only to devote himself to a holy cause".²⁷ The catholic literature on the Zouaves systematically emphasized the youth of the volunteers, their innocence and virtue, in order to make them models for the Catholic youth, following the same models provided by the life stories of saints and martyrs in use in religious colleges.²⁸ The comparison with the Crusaders of the Middle Ages was also common, like in Veillot's book. "At the call of the threatened Church", Count Gaston du Plessis de Grénédan "set off with chivalric abnegation to take the sack and gun of modern knights". The Belgian captain Georges Guelton "was indeed a son of the crusaders, and Godefroy and Baudoin had said to him: 'Come with us to Palestine'".

A careful examination of the sources shows –unsurprisingly– that it is impossible to interpret the commitment of the volunteers to the Pope solely in terms of idealism. The pontifical authorities were aware of the risk of attracting to their service elements that might compromise the image or efficiency of their armed forces, even if the necessity of rapidly filling the ranks of the Roman army has led them to reduce their conditions to the minimum. The Foreign Recruitment Act of 1852, which was in force until 1870, stipulated that volunteers should report spontaneously to the various recruitment deposits, have no obligation to serve in their own country, be in good health, unmarried or widowers without offspring; it also asked the recruits to "profess the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman religion" and to produce a certificate attesting their "moral and political conduct". In order to attract the largest number of candidates, the duration of the appointment was reduced from one year to six months for the Zouaves; on the other hand, financial difficulties of the Pontifical State led to the abolition of the commitment allowance of ten *scudi* provided by the law of 1852.

The maintenance of discipline in the corps of volunteers was also an object of constant concern for military authorities. The military penal code in use for foreign regiments indicted sentences for acts of treason and desertion, but also a whole range of offenses including homicide, rape, fire, counterfeiting and smuggling, extortion, theft (with aggravation for the theft of

27 VEUILLOT, E. (1861): *Le Piémont dans les États de l'Église: documents et commentaires*. Paris, Gaume frères et J. Duprey éditeurs, chap. 5.

28 HARRISON, «Zouave Stories».

sacred objects) and even the desecration of sacred objects or places.²⁹ Military court registers reveal a significant number of convictions for desertion, "misconduct", sale of military effect, theft or fraud.³⁰ In July 1861, Captain Le Caron de Troussures estimated at a hundred the number of refusals or expulsions of the battalion, in reaction to a hostile article by *La Presse*; such a figure, he said, showed that the Zouaves "would not have anyone improper among them".³¹ In his memoirs, an officer admitted that "the need to send as soon as possible" recruits and the lack of means and time "to organize investigations on the precedents" explained "the lack of men that were experimented, serious, skilled in military art"; but "gradually, as the regularity of the administration was established, we proceeded with more rigor and eliminated all elements more or less suspect".³²

In other words, we must emphasize the limits of an interpretation made solely in terms of idealism or opportunism. In an article about Canadian volunteers in the struggles of the Risorgimento, Matteo Sanfilippo emphasizes how "our vision of volunteerism in the 19th century derives in reality from the romantic imagination: whether he is a revolutionary or an uncompromising bigot, the volunteer is always considered an idealist ready to sacrifice himself". The examination of individual realities often shows a more complex picture, in which the volunteers obeyed a skein of motivations among which idealism was only one dimension. Whether they were Garibaldian volunteers (such as Arthur Buies who followed Garibaldi in Sicily in 1860) or the Pope's soldiers, it appears that volunteers could enlist for "the most disparate reasons": in order to flee their creditors, give vent to their spirit of adventure or because they were attracted by the promised rewards. These reasons are not the only ones, "but they must not be forgotten or undervalued" – and they are not necessarily incompatible with the expression of idealistic motives or the pursuit of ideal.³³

It is difficult to draw a sociological profile of the volunteers, both because the sources provide incomplete information and because the available data show a real diversity. In the first place, those who responded to the call to

29 ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI ROMA, Ministero delle Armi, 1144. *Codice Penale e Militare per uso dei reggimenti esteri* (1852).

30 See ARCHIVIO DI STATO DI ROMA, Ministero delle Armi, Rassegne.

31 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : Le Caron de Troussures, Anagni, 19 juillet 1861.

32 MAUDUIT, H. de. (2013): *Souvenirs d'Henry de Mauduit, zouave pontifical*. Saint-Martin-des-Tilleuls, p. 8.

33 SANFILIPPO, M. (2007): «Fuggitivi e avventurieri: volontari nord-americani tra Garibaldi e Pio IX. Una proposta di ricerca». *Ricerche di Storia Politica*, n° 1, pp. 67-78.

arms of the papacy between 1860 and 1870 belonged to all classes of society. The predominance of noble names among the French officers should not be delusive –the Piedmontese general Cugia is said to have exclaimed, commenting on the list of wounded and dead of the Franco-Belgian battalion in Castelfidardo: “What names! It seems like a ball invitation to the court of Louis XIV!” The nobility represented indeed a significant part of the contingent of French volunteers (a fifth in the case of the diocese of Nantes). The bulk of recruits, however, came from the middle and upper-middle classes, although the sources give only sparse indications of the volunteer’s origins. Among the dead and wounded Franco-Belgians of Castelfidardo, Joseph-Guérin was the son of innkeepers in Noirmoutier; Paul Saucet belonged to a family of craftsmen of Nantes; Jacques Nalbert was the son of the owner of the Hotel des Missions Aliments in Paris; Louis Gicquel, who was 21 years old who had been an apprentice carpenter.

One social limitation of the recruitment of volunteers was that the transport and equipment were responsibility of the volunteers themselves, that is to say, for a private soldier the sum of 600 francs (the equivalent of the annual wage of a farm worker). For the Guides de Lamoricière, a body of cavalry, the first expense, with mount, harness and armament, amounted to more than 6,000 fr, so that there were only rich aristocrats in its ranks. This barrier was partially lowered by the collective material assistance provided by the Catholic committees to the elements of the lower classes or their families. Among the Zouaves was a discreet number of servants and peasants. For B. de Morelle, the latter formed “the fundamental part of the battalion,” but they were also those more ready to quit because they felt “the homesickness”.³⁴ It was mainly in the Dutch contingent that the peasants were most present, with a quarter of the recruits, the second group after the artisans and the petty bourgeoisie.³⁵ The plebeian origins of some volunteers have been put forward by Catholic commentators, like the Belgian journalist Guillaume Verspeyen, for whom the fact that “sons of the Crusaders [...] did their duty alongside the son of the craftsmen” was a veritable “miracle of Christian fraternity” that seemed to revive the “first centuries of the Church”. Age was another element of diversity. Many volunteers were young, even very young people. Of the 61 volunteers who joined from the diocese of Nantes in 1860, half (32) were under 20 years of age, and more than 80% were under 25; 8 had not reached the minimum age of 18 years the-

34 B. de Morelle, Rome, 26 December 1862, quoted.

35 ZAAL, W. (1996): *De vuist van de paus: de Nederlandse zouaven in Italië, 1860-1870*. Nieuwegein, Uitg. Aspekt.

oretically required by the law of 1852.³⁶ Hagiographic Catholic literature emphasized the youthfulness of many volunteers, associating them with the qualities of innocence in order to exalt the value of their sacrifice. "This gentle and delicate adolescent", exclaimed Mgr. Pie in the funeral oration of Georges d'Héliand (who fell in Castelfidardo at 19), was "the model of fervor and innocence". "The young soldier", wrote the Marquis de Segur, "was full of youth and health, he radiated life, innocence, and beauty". Like Georges Mignonnet, Lanfranc de Beccary was 17 when he joined the papal army, "just emerging from childhood," and in him "a soul as a hero" was clad in "an adolescent body". Alfège de Beaudiez "died at the age of 20 [...] in all the flower of youth". Alfred de Nanteuil, who died at the age of 21, bore the "triple crown of youth, beauty, and virtue".³⁷ But other volunteers abandoned, on the contrary, a well-established life. Philippe de Tournon, aged 40, was "rich, considered, married". The average age was also higher among those who dropped out of a military career in the army of their country of origin or a foreign army.

Religiosity is another variable that is difficult to measure. Many young volunteers had just left the benches of religious colleges: the most prolific, that of St. Francis Xavier held by the Jesuits at Vannes in Brittany, sent no less than 120 pupils between 1860 and 1870. Some clerics have even taken up arms, but their number is marginal –between 1860 and 1870 there were 10 or so former seminarians and a novice of the Society of Jesus. On the other hand, more than 130 Zouaves entered the religious orders after their engagement in the Pontifical Army, with a predilection for missionary missions, and became Jesuits, Lazarists, priests of Foreign Missions, Missionaries of the Sacred Heart or White Fathers in Africa. There are, however, some indications that religious beliefs animated most of the volunteers, such as attendance at the religious ceremonies (military masses every Sunday and holydays, prayers every night at the barracks, retreats), or the formation of groups of piety (Congregations of the Blessed Virgin, Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, or Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul).³⁸

Neither ideology nor social origin, education and age are the only variables to be taken into account in order to understand voluntary commitments: social bonds play an important role in the dynamics that lead an individual to commit himself. This is illustrated by the contribution made by religious

36 ANONYME, *Matricule des zouaves pontificaux*.

37 SÉGUR, *Les martyrs de Castelfidardo*, pp. 154, 129 and 95.

38 ALLARD, J.-S. (1880): *Les zouaves pontificaux ou Journal de Mgr Daniel aumônier des Zouaves*. Nantes, Bourgeois.

colleges to the contingent of volunteers, which can be explained by two phenomena: the fact that the religious colleges played an crucial role in the formation and the transmission of a clerical culture based on uncompromising combat for Catholicism and political conservatism; and the driving effect of solidarity or emulation between classmates. Other logics of networks and driving effects have been at work. The aristocratic clientele appear when, as in the Mauges or the Mayenne, the map of castles and that of recruitments can be superimposed. Elsewhere, it is the parochial dynamics and the strength of the ecclesiastical framework that play a decisive part. That is so in the little parish of Campbon in Brittany, which, with its 4,500 inhabitants, sent no less than 29 volunteers, where played the combined action of Vicar Dabin and that of the old Marquis de Coislin (who at the age of 59 asked in 1860 to engage as a private soldier). Geldrop, a small town of 2000 souls in North Brabant (Holland), had 20 soldiers in the Pope's army in 1868. Enlistment among the Zouaves has often been a family affair, and among them there are whole bunches of brothers, cousins, uncles and nephews –such as the four brothers Charette, the many Villèle, Sioc'han de Kersabiec, Cathelineau, Villiers de l'Isle-Adam and other great noble families. "It could be said now that there is no army where there are as many family affairs as in that of the Holy Father: and this crusade would have served only to develop the family spirit, it would already be something," wrote Captain Le Caron de Troussure.³⁹

The use of armed volunteering was not really a novelty in the Catholic-Conservative camp. During the 1830s and 1840s, in Portugal and Spain, volunteers were engaged in the service of the causes of Dom Miguel and Don Carlos. To those who accused Spaniard José Borges of having landed in Calabria in 1860 to combat Italian unification, the Catholic journalist Charles Garnier replied that the Legitimists had "sowed enough drops of their blood on the various beaches of the world, in order not to reproach Borges for not being stingy with his own", and that "they finally realized that the revolutionaries of all countries were making common cause, and that solidarity should be opposed to solidarity".⁴⁰ Although these mobilizations had mostly a "political" character in favor of the thrones threatened by the revolution, the struggle against "impiety" was part of the slogans of the traditionalist militants, and the Church had often supported those strug-

39 Le Caron de Troussure, Anagni, 19 July 1861, quoted.

40 GARNIER, C. (1861): *Le Général Borgès*. Paris, E. Dentu, p. 29.

gles. Political conservatism was not without an echo in the mobilization of the Catholic world in favor of the papacy. On his way to Rome, Henri de Cathelineau, grandson of the Vendean *Généralissime*, was going to “crush the revolutionary hydra and save society”.⁴¹ We have already noted the presence among the officers of Zouaves with great names of the French legitimist aristocracy, to which were added, after 1868, the Carlist exiles around their pretender Don Alfonso de Bourbon. The pontifical authorities had not ignored the risk of a political instrumentalisation of voluntary service in the pope’s army and tried to prevent too noisy political protests, especially for fear of antagonizing the French government. The refusal opposed to Cathelineau and his project of “Crusaders of St Peter”, an army corps both religious and military on the model of the chivalrous orders of the Middle Ages, was explained by reasons of internal discipline but also because of the political problem it would have posed for Napoleon III: it was perilous to grant a command to someone who represented the Legitimist party in France and who was suspected of wanting “to revive the legitimist party by the formation of an order of Crusaders gathered under the flag of religion”.⁴²

The success of the Catholic mobilization of the 1860s can also be explained by evolutions specific to Catholicism that during the first half of the century gave rise to a first form of Catholic internationalism, oriented behind the slogans of uncompromising Catholicism and the defense of the papacy. Throughout Western Europe, secularization had produced intense conflagrations between churches and states, which have embraced all spheres of social life in real “Culture Wars”.⁴³ The various combats of Catholics in the 1830s and 1840s –for freedom of education in France and Belgium, for emancipation in Ireland and Prussia, for Greek and Polish independences– had given rise in every country to an organized Catholic movement using modern means of mobilization, in which the laity occupied a more active place, at the head of committees and newspapers. Most of the members of the committees set up in 1860 for the financial collections and the recruitment of volunteers in defense of the papacy (*Oeuvre du Denier de Saint-Pierre*

41 CATHELINEAU, V. de (1909): *Le général comte de Cathelineau: chevalier de la Légion d'honneur, commandeur de l'ordre de Pie IX, chevalier de la Tour et de l'Épée et de Don Miguel de Portugal : sa vie et ses mémoires*. Rome-Paris-Bruxelles, Desclée De Brouwer, p. 131.

42 ARCHIVIO SEGRETO VATICANO, Archiv. Part. Pio IX_Oggetti Vari_1638. Progetti Cathelineau.

43 CLARK, C., and KAISER, W. (ed.) (2003): *Culture Wars. Secular-Catholic Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

in Belgium, Comité de Saint Pierre in France, Committee of St. Michael in Germany, Central Committee of Montreal in 1868) had a long past of clerical militancy. At the same time, the Catholic world underwent a process of standardization through a movement of centralization of the Church and the encouragement given to the universal cults (the Sacred Heart, the Virgin, the "Roman" saints). This devotional uniformity "gave expression to a borderless economy of salvation that powerfully helped Catholics to reimagine themselves as a transnational community in the modern world".⁴⁴ The figure of the pope –"vicar of Jesus Christ" and "supreme pontiff of the universal Church"– had occupied an increasingly important place on the horizon of Catholics, thanks to an active campaign of ultramontanes, and has given birth to a genuine devotion to the pope sometimes pouring into what Mgr. Landriot (a Gallican prelate) denounced as mere "idolatry". Many in 1860 had the impression that the mobilization of the Catholic world revived the spirit of crusade dropped in Late Modernity. The enemies of the Church were no longer "the ferocious hordes" which threatened to invade Europe to spread Islam, according to the most uncompromising Bishop of Poitiers, Mgr. Pie, but the new and implacable barbarians "who rejected the reign of God on Earth", the apostles of a "politics without God". The commitment of the Zouaves was thus the incarnation of an uncompromising struggle for which the Catholics of the whole world were to unite their forces.

A MULTINATIONAL FORCE IN HOSTILE TERRAIN, OR THE CHALLENGES OF COHESION

The Zouaves formed a truly international force. No less than 21 nationalities were represented, but among them the largest contingents were provided by the French and the Dutch, followed by the Belgians, the Swiss, the Germans and the Italians. In May 1865, of the 2.251 men, the national groups were consisting in 857 Dutch (38%), 651 French (29%), 485 Belgians (22%) and 146 from other countries (5%).⁴⁵ After the episode of Mentana (1867), an opinion campaign tried to launch the recruitment of volunteers across the Atlantic. In Canada, Bishop Ignace Bourget, the ultramontane bishop of Montreal, supported his appeal on the publication of the Pontifical Brief of 17 November (in which Pius IX praised the courage and value of his troops who had been able to stop "i funesti nemici del nome cattolico") and on the example of the Canadian pontifical Zouave, Alfred La Rocque,

44 VIAENE, V. (2012): «Nineteenth-Century Catholic Internationalism and Its Predecessor». GREEN, A. and VIAENE, V. (eds.), *Religious Internationals in the Modern World: Globalization and Faith Communities since 1750*. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, p. 89.

45 CERBELAUD SALAGNAC, *Les zouaves pontificaux*, p. 112.

wounded during the campaign. A recruiting office was set up in the early days of 1868 and soon received more than 800 engagements, but limited means of arming and transport lowered the number of actual recruits to 240. For reasons not well known, the four American archbishops discarded a similar initiative in the United States.⁴⁶

Maintaining the cohesion of such a heterogeneous force was not an easy task, especially since a social dimension was added to differences in nationality and language. While many French volunteers were inexperienced young people from upper-class families, including many aristocratic offsprings, or military officers that belonged to the same milieux, recruits from Belgium or Holland had a large number of peasants who spoke only Flemish, or former soldiers who had no experience of command. The French were thus overrepresented in the command, among the non-commissioned officers (132 against 42 Belgians and 22 Dutch) and even more among the officers (36 against 6 Belgians and no Dutchman). This situation could only produce tensions on both sides. In a report to the Paris Committee, the French captain Charette complained of the "numberless recriminations" of the Dutch who demanded promotions, which he deemed impossible to satisfy because, if those were "active, intelligent, hard-working soldiers", it was difficult to "find among them the elements needed to form cadres"; as for the (Flemish) Belgians, the French officer wrote, "I defy anyone to find an officer among them".⁴⁷ If the defense of the papal State gathered the volunteers under the banner of Pius IX, it did not obliterate cultural and social prejudices, as evidenced by a letter written in 1866 by Joseph Rialan, a young bourgeois from Brittany (a son of a solicitor). He was afraid by the influx of new recruits being mostly made up of Flemish and the "French element" becoming a minority: "It follows that, if this continues, we will hear only the Flemish language spoken, which may be beautiful and agreeable to the inhabitants of Brussels and Ghent, but has the privilege of tearing my ears. Also I would like to see the French arrive here".⁴⁸

Internal cohesion was not the only factor weighing on the life of the Zouaves. The relations with the rest of components of the Roman army constituted another. On the one hand, the Zouaves received all kinds of attention of the pontifical leaders, who saw in them the window of the Catholic mobi-

46 MARRARO, H. (1944): «Canadian and American Zouaves in the Papal Army, 1868-1870». *CCHA Report*, n° 12 (45), pp. 83-102.

47 CERBELAUD SALAGNAC, *Les zouaves pontificaux*, p. 112.

48 OHEIX, R. (1868) : *Joseph Rialan, sergent aux Zouaves pontificaux*. Paris, J. Lecoffre, p. 151.

lization on behalf of the papacy. The choice of their uniform, which mixed the costume of the native troops of Africa and of the French infantry, among all the models proposed to the Ministry of Arms, held both practical reasons –the trousers puffed more adapted to the moves of the infantry and to the Roman heat– and of aesthetic considerations which should make of the uniform a constituent element of the identity and the image of the Zouaves: “it will be beautiful, it will attract people”, assured Colonel de Becdelièvre to defend his model.⁴⁹ For the same reason, however, and due to both the susceptibilities of the French military command and the initial difficulties of organization, the Zouaves were kept in an isolated position and confined to unimportant missions. The cantonment of the troops between Anagni and the convent of Saint Paul Outside the Walls on the outskirts of Rome, devoid of tactical sense, had the advantage of “proving that [the papal authorities] are no longer afraid to produce the Zouaves in broad daylight, and to destroy this opinion, that they did not dare to show to anyone this battalion of volunteers so unruly and ill-kept”.⁵⁰ To compensate for the semi-abandonment of the volunteer corps, Pius IX went several times to visit his soldiers for assuring them of his interest. In May 1862, the organization of a large military camp at Porto d’Anzio was to enable the Zouaves to parade before the pope, surrounded by his cardinals, and had the effect of establishing a “truly cordial entente” with the other foreign and indigenous bodies. The Pope regularly received in the Vatican the officers and families of the soldiers who had died in service, and handed over signed photographs with autographs praising their abnegation. After the midnight mass of 1863, Pius IX addressed the officers present, saying: “You are the representatives of the army, of the Pope’s little army. You are part of this army for justice. So you are truly the army of God”.⁵¹

The Zouaves served a state whose legitimacy was contested by a section of its population, and the opinion of the locals about them reflected these divisions, as well as a more general mistrust about the presence of foreigners. They therefore operated largely in hostile terrain, as evidenced by the frequency of cases of assault or assassination attempted on the volunteers. The first victim was a Belgian, the young Count Alfred de Limminghe, murdered in Rome under dubious circumstances, whose death many wanted to make a political affair. “The Zouaves spread imprudent rumours”, warned B. de

49 BECDELIÈVRE, *Souvenirs de l’armée pontificale*, p. 55.

50 Le Caron de Troussure, Anagni, 26 October 1861, quoted.

51 ALLARD, *Les zouaves pontificaux*, p. 106-107.

Corcelle, because such stories risked “making people believe that Rome is a horribly agitated place” and discourage families from letting their children enroll.⁵² The peculiar uniform of the Zouaves made them easy targets in the streets of Rome. “They murder prodigiously here,” wrote the Belgian volunteer Alexander de la Faille de Leverghem a few months later, after four assaults in two days and in the middle of the street. He himself never “went out alone and always with his pistol in his pocket,” nor “allowed himself to be approached at a distance where he could receive a stab”.⁵³ In 1867 two young Roman workers with nationalistic ideas chose a barracks of the Borgo Santo Spirito where Zouaves lived to carry out a bomb attack intended to kick off a Garibaldian insurrection, killing 23 soldiers. They were immediately arrested and condemned to death for the crime of lese-majesté with the other conspirators, and executed the following year, in spite of the intervention of Victor Emmanuel himself. For their part, some Zouaves did not hesitate to express their royalist opinions and to attack the “patriots”. In December 1863 a brawl between foreign soldiers of the Dragoons’ squadron and inhabitants in a cafe in Castel Gandolfo ended in an armed clash between the Pontifical soldiers and the French gendarmerie sent to the scene, with some dead and wounded. Administrative records often contain complaints from local authorities and the ecclesiastical hierarchy about the behavior of drunken soldiers, often involved in altercations with locals or with the Frenchmen of the expeditionary force.

The main peril that concerned the discipline of the corps of volunteers, however, was not the hostility of the populations or the disagreements between nationalities: it was boredom. A former soldier recalled that the garrison at Anagni “was none but frisky”. “In the first weeks the conscripts were not too bored, for the military training, vigorously pushed, left them little leisure; but once incorporated, it happened to us, as to everybody, to be in a hurry to leave”. The soldiers killed time by going on excursions “in the surrounding countryside, or on the nearby peaks, to enjoy the picturesque sites and beautiful points of view that were not wanting in the country”, or visiting the local sanctuaries and the villages reachable by foot.⁵⁴ The garrison life was uncomfortable especially for young people who had no prior military

52 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : Corcelle, Rome, 19 avril 1861.

53 LORETTE, J. (1966): «Documents sur la question romaine : la correspondance du volontaire pontifical Alexandre de la Faille de Leverghem». *Risorgimento*, n° 9, pp. 122-23.

54 DELAPORTE, V. (1905): *Le P. Pierre Le Tallec, zouave pontifical, docteur du Collège Romain, jésuite (1843-1903)*. Saint-Brieuc, R. Prud’homme, pp. 34-36.

experience. At St. Paul, the Zouaves were confined "in an old convent of famous unhealthiness, especially during the heat, but which freezes in the winter."⁵⁵ For lack of means, the worn uniforms were not replaced and soon the Zouaves were covered with "rags". The cantonment in the Roman outskirts had at least the advantage that "the neighborhood of Rome allows the young people [...] to see the city, visit the churches, etc., that is a happy diversion".⁵⁶

The remoteness of the perspectives of action, the vagueness surrounding its missions and the boredom of the garrison life directly affected the cohesion of the troop. At the end of its first year of operation, "the Pope's little army [...] tired of its leisure, without future or prospect, wondered what was its role", and "many young people were thinking about retirement".⁵⁷ The main reason for the young men's departure was "lassitude and its too long duration of a life they had only embraced for a moment". Many people felt the "homesickness". If the number of those who requested a final leave was still limited, "others more often would take temporary leave, for a month or two", which should not be granted too scantily "for fear of disgusting the postulant and to lose it altogether."⁵⁸ The hemorrhage continued in 1862 and there was, according to one officer, "nothing to do to prevent these departures". In order to stop it, Zouaves were allowed to re-engage for a month only but, "in spite of this measure, there are many who leave".⁵⁹ A library was set up to "give a little nourishment to spirits weighed down by idleness", and the expense of 600 to 800 francs for the purchase of books and newspapers seemed quite justified because this library was "an important resource" for volunteers.⁶⁰ During religious retreats, preachers of renown were invited: Bishops Pie, Dreux-Brézé, Berthaud, Dupanloup, Mermillod or Le Cosquer had addressed the Zouaves. In spite of all these efforts, in 1863 again "the battalion of the Zouaves diminishes every day" because "voluntary recruitment [...] cannot compensate for the vacuum produced by the leaves", and the situation "may give rise to fear of a near dissolution". By the end of 1864, the battalion's strength was "decreasing rather than increasing".⁶¹ In 1865-66, the struggle against brigandage in the province

55 Le Caron de Troussures, Anagni, 26 October 1861, quoted.

56 B. de Morelle, Rome, no date (1863), quoted.

57 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : C. de Latreiche, Lorète, 18 September 1861.

58 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : Le Caron de Troussures, Anagni, 26 October 1861.

59 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : B. de Morelle, Rome, 26 December 1862.

60 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : Lamoricière, «Affaires de Rome» (c. 1863).

61 ARCHIVES NATIONALES, 289AP/78 : Latreiche, Rome, 20 February & 20 October 1863, 29 December 1864.

of Velletri offered "a happy diversion" to the idleness, but it was ungrateful, for it obliged the troop to go on continual marches on rugged terrain and often with no purpose for the bands of brigands almost never allowed to be reached.⁶² After the campaign of 1867, the regiment regained its garrison life, but the fear of a nationalist insurrection or a European war deemed imminent kept the spirits alert.

CONCLUSION: HAT REMAINED OF THE COMMITMENT OF THE ZOUAVES AT THE END OF THE CENTURY?

In 1867, in the aftermath of the Mentana and Monterotondo battles, Pius IX had erected a monument in the Roman cemetery of the Verano in honor of all the pontifical soldiers who had fallen for the defense of the Holy See. Since the end of 1861, this cemetery had received the remains of Zouaves dead during their service in the Papal State. In 1862, the tomb of Achille de Bligny, who died of illness during the summer at the military hospital in Marino, had even been monumentalized: it was surmounted by a statue of the volunteer lying as a giant, his hands crossed on his saber. The monument erected in 1867, designed by Virginio Vespignani, was formed by a high octagonal base, set on two steps, crowned by alternating semi-circular or triangular tympana, flanked by acroteria, and surmounted by a sculptural marble group, made by the sculptor Vincenzo Lucardi, that depicted St. Peter in the act of delivering the sword to a crusader, with a Latin inscription saying "*accipe sanctum gladium munus a deo in quo deiicies adversarios populi mei israel*" (Take this holy sword as a gift from God in order to overthrow the adversaries of Israel). The 7 meters high monument was made of bronze and white marble. On the basis of stood a pedestal decorated with the allegorical figures of Faith and Fortitude, and on each prospect of the octagon, the names of all who had died in battle. The message was clear: the Zouaves were new crusaders who had put their swords at the service of religion, ready to go so far as to sacrifice their lives, and the Roman Church had found in them a bulwark against the revolution. This homage of stone to the volunteers, through the memory of their dead, sublimated the reality of an armed engagement whose importance had been more symbolic than military. Actually, diseases were by far the leading cause of mortality among the Zouaves, far ahead from heroic death on the battlefield to which many volunteers aspired. On the whole, among all the Zouaves that died in service (476), only one fifth (68) lost their lives by fighting in

62 CHARETTE DE LA CONTRIE, A. (1876): *Souvenir du régiment des zouaves pontificaux. Rome 1860-1870, France 1870-1871. Notes et récits*. Tours, Impr. Mame, p. 21-24.

1867 or 1870; the vast majority succumbed to diseases such as smallpox, cholera, typhoid or malaria. The peak of mortality occurred in 1868, with 152 deaths, a year in which there was no fighting.⁶³ However, these figures are not surprising for the armies of that time. And if the Pontifical forces had been able to face the attempt to invade an irregular troop in 1867, neither the Zouaves nor the small Roman army as a whole were able to delay more than a few hours the advance of the regular army of Victor Emmanuel in 1870. Only the diplomatic and military protection of France, undermined by the collapse of the imperial regime, had been the basis of the survival of the Papal State during the ten years after the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy.

Despite their modest military contribution, the decadal experience of the Pontifical Zouaves was of great symbolic importance. The Italian government's decision to dissolve their corps and to expel them to their respective countries immediately after the seizure of Rome is the best proof. The formation of a corps of volunteers in arms firstly testified the rise of a Catholic internationalism capable of mobilizing by all means on behalf of the uncompromising struggle against secularization that was crystallized by the defense of the papacy and based on national clerical movements united by transnational solidarity. From the Catholic mobilization of the 1860s emerged new political and military commitments. A large part of the Zouaves dismissed in September 1870 engaged in the Franco-Prussian war, under the standard of the Virgin and the French flag, while others joined the Don Carlos camp in Spain in the hope of restoring the traditional monarchy beyond the Pyrenees.⁶⁴ At the very moment when the Pontifical State was living its twilight and representatives of the Catholic world flocked to Rome to prepare the council of 1870, plans were made for international coordination, a 'Black internationale' led by a network of laity activists organised by a permanent office whose goal was to act openly at the head of a new crusade to restore the "social reign of Jesus Christ" –not thought armed fights anymore but with the same weapons and in direct rivalry with the Workers' Internationale.⁶⁵ For more than two decades, the captain Charette animated in France the association of the former Zouaves and volunteers

63 GUÉNEL, J. (1995): «Service de santé, morbidité et mortalité dans le régiment des zouaves pontificaux en Italie (1861-1870)». *Histoire des sciences médicales*, XXIX/3, pp. 261-269.

64 LAUNAY, M. (1996): «Charette après Charette : des zouaves pontificaux aux volontaires de l'Ouest (1860-1871)». *Enquêtes et documents*, n° 23, pp. 127-134.

65 LAMBERTS, *The Black International*.

of the West, that the republican police suspected of being the nucleus of a paramilitary organization to be ready to support the hoped return of the Legitimate claimant on the throne. In 1885, for the 25th anniversary of the creation of the regiment, Charette exclaimed in his castle of La Basse-Motte in Brittany: "Does this mean that our silver wedding is the last act of our legend? [...] As Colonel d'Albiousse said, 'As long as there is a cross and a sword in France, we have the right to hope.' How many times did we believe that everything was lost, and then a fact, on which we could not count, arose, and we found ourselves together, ready to fight and to die, if necessary, for God and the Fatherland, because we have no right to believe our legend!"⁶⁶ At the end of the century, international solidarity in favor of the Boer peasants in the struggle against Protestant and industrial England was not without echo with the commitment of the Zouaves and, still more, the wars of Vendée, in a continuity embodied by the presence of French and Dutch former soldiers of Pius IX among the foreign fighters.

After 1870, the memory of the commitment of the Zouaves continued dividing and inspiring opposing interpretations. On the one hand the clerical circles celebrated the epic of the pope's soldiers through the publication of memoirs, apologetic works or bulletins (such as *L'Avant-Garde*, published in France from 1892 to 1907). On the other hand the "official" memory in united Italy had engraved in the marble the imputation of mercenarism. In Rome, which became the capital of the unitary state, the epigraphs hostile to the pope's soldiers flourished: "mercenaries of the pope" ["mercenari pontifici", on the Salario bridge], "foreign mercenaries" ["mercenari stranieri", on the Verano Monument], "hired, base and ferocious mercenaries" ["prezzolati, vili e feroci mercenari", on Ajani Palace where patriots had resisted Zouaves who had been sent to arrest them], "foreign militias of mercenaries who defended the temporal power of Popes" (on the Garibaldian ossuary of the Janiculum). No experience of international armed volunteerism, however, has escaped this ambivalence in the eyes of their contemporaries: had not Garibaldi been described by his opponents at the same time as a filibuster or a condottiere, an adventurer, a braggart soldier or a brave with an empty head? This ambivalence merely reflected the ideological divisions of conflicts that were both civil wars and episodes of a vaster international ideological struggle. The interpretation of volunteering from a Manichean point of view must be disregarded, as its motivations use to be complex on an individual scale: idealism, opportunism or thirst for

66 ARCHIVES DE LA POLICE DE PARIS, BA (1) 870 : police report of 29 July 1885.

adventures are mixed in to varying degrees, without excluding one another. The experience of the pontifical volunteers between 1860 and 1870 is not exempt from this rule. Seen from a different perspective, it participates in a romantic conception of political commitment based on the notion of fraternity and international solidarity and on the mobility of small committed groups that fed international armed volunteerism throughout the century and after, of which all political groups have taken part.

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