



## Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee

The International Brigades first went into action in November 1936 in the defence of Madrid. One was the young Marxist poet, John Cornford. Although Cornford received a head wound in the Madrid fighting, he had recovered sufficiently to take part in an unsuccessful attempt to capture the village of Lopera, near Cordoba, at the end of December. Here he was shot dead by a sniper on the day after his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday.

A few weeks before, he had dedicated a poem to his lover, Margot Heinemann:

Heart of the heartless world,  
Dear heart, the thought of you  
Is the pain at my side,  
The shadow that chills my view,  
The wind rises in the evening,  
Reminds that autumn is near,  
I am afraid to lose you,  
I am afraid of my fear.

On the last mile to Huesca,  
The last fence for our pride,  
Think so kindly, dear, that I  
Sense you at my side,

And if bad luck should lay my strength  
Into the shallow grave,  
Remember all the good you can;  
Don't forget my love.

Cornford's friend and fellow-writer, Ralph Fox, who had studied at Oxford University, was also shot dead. According to one account, Cornford was killed trying to retrieve his body. Another casualty was Edward Cooper, a former actor and employee of the Daily Worker, whose home was in Dun's Tew, near Banbury. He was taken to the Federal Hospital in Madrid, but died a few weeks later of his injuries.