

**José Peirats**

**ANARCHISTS IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION**



**FREEDOM PRESS**



**José Peirats (1908-1989)**

**ANARCHISTS**  
**in the**  
**SPANISH**  
**REVOLUTION**

**by**  
**JOSÉ PEIRATS**

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For this FREEDOM PRESS edition we also have to thank the last two named (and the translators, of course) for the same reasons.

In order to produce this volume as cheaply as possible the original negatives have been used, and consequently one or two factual errors, as well as some infelicities in translation, have not been corrected.

The American edition gives no date of publication (probably 1977) nor publisher though it was 'available' from Solidarity Books (Toronto).

*Correction:* Page 371 Glossary. Maten Pedro was not killed in the attack on the President of the Council of Ministers in 1921.

## NOTE

The following abbreviations have been used in the text to identify organisations and political parties:

**CNT** (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* — National Confederation of Labour). The revolutionary syndicalist organisation influenced by the anarchists.

**FAI** (*Federación Anarquista Iberica* — Anarchist Federation of Iberia).

**MLE** (*Movimiento Libertario Español* — Spanish Libertarian Movement). The combined CNT-FAI and FIJL.

**UGT** (*Union General de Trabajadores* — General Workers' Union). Reformist Trade Union controlled by the socialists.

**PSO** (*Partido Socialista Obrero* — Workers' Socialist Party).

**PCE** (*Partido Comunista Español* — Spanish Communist Party).

**PSUC** (*Partido Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* — Catalan Unified Socialist Party). The combined Socialist and Communist Parties of Catalonia.

**POUM** (*Partido Obrero de Unificacion Marxista*). Dissident revolutionary Communist Party.

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## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Our pleasure in being given the opportunity to publish this important work has been marred by the death of its gifted and dedicated author last August. He was 81 and though he had been unwell for some time, his death, while out walking by the sea shore in Valencia, was unexpected and came as a great shock to his many comrades and friends throughout the world.

This history of the Spanish struggle is unlike most in that its author, who got his first job at the tender age of eight, actually joined the CNT when he was 14 and was intimately involved in the Spanish workers' struggle for more than 60 years.

His lack of formal education was more than compensated for by his thirst for knowledge. His first writings, according to Victor Garcia, date from 1927, and he was contributing to the anarchist and syndicalist press (such as *Tierra y Libertad* and *Solidaridad Obrera*) both before the military uprising in 1936 and during the revolutionary struggle that followed. He also participated in the militias and later joined the 25th Division. With the final defeat in 1939 he managed to escape via France to South America — San Domingo, Ecuador, Panama, Venezuela, returning to France in 1947 as delegate for the CNT comrades in Venezuela at the first Intercontinental Congress of the CNT held in Toulouse. At that Congress he was nominated General Secretary which involved him, among other things, in making contact *in person* with comrades in Franco's Spain. A year later he also became editor of the anarchist youth journal *Ruta*.

At this time too he was appointed historiographer of the CNT. Between 1951 and 1953 three volumes of *La CNT en la Revolucion Española* were published in Toulouse by the CNT in exile — 1,100 pages of documents, invaluable source material for the student, but in which Peirats' opinions were muted. Only some eight years later Giovanna Berneri, who was then editing the monthly anarchist magazine *Volantá* (first in Naples and then in Genoa) as well as publishing books and pamphlets (Edizioni RL), suggested to Peirats that he should produce a volume based on his history of the CNT and at the same time seek to draw the lessons from the experience of 1936-39. And in 1962 the *Breve Storia del Sindacalismo Libertario Spagnolo* came out and the author dedicated it to the memory of Giovanna Berneri who had not lived to see it in print. In 1964 a Spanish edition was published in Argentina with a different title — *Los Anarquistas en la Crisis Política Española*. And only in 1977 did an American edition appear. It included a preface dated September 1974 which has been retained in this edition, but a short postscript dated September 1976 which is no longer relevant has been omitted, and also the five-page epilogue

for the same reason. It was written in 1960 and Peirats was speculating about possible developments in Spain. But so much happened in the following years which Peirats recognises in the 1974 preface, which has been retained, so we feel confident that the author would have approved of our decisions.

For the reader who has also been following events in the countries of the Eastern bloc — even as presented by the capitalist press — the Spanish struggle and the way it developed and degenerated is surely full of lessons for today's struggles. And Peirats who, as he got older became if anything more critical of the 'leaders' of the CNT-FAI, offers many observations the relevance of which brave demonstrators of Leipzig and Prague and Bucharest can already appreciate as the professional politicians seek to worm their way back into power. Relevant to today's events are the mistakes of the Spanish Popular Front politicians in leaving the career officer class in their positions of power, of the revolutionaries who soon allowed the Patrullas de Control to be replaced by the professional and the secret political police (which the communists took over with disastrous results). And it would appear that this is already happening.

"East German opposition parties broke off their talks with the Communist leadership yesterday in protest at the government's intention to reconstitute a secret police force soon . . . The opposition demanded that the Prime Minister attend and give a detailed explanation of government thinking on the security services." (*Independent* 9 January 1990)

One is also reading that "Fire goes out of the Romanian revolution".

"Gone is the exhilarating, hypnotic, infectious, unstoppable enthusiasm of the early days of the revolution, the days when thousands braved the guns to celebrate and bring about change." (Peter Hillmore in *The Observer* 7 January 1990)

Is this the fate of 'revolutions' which are no more ambitious than in wanting to replace one government by another, compared with Spain in 1936 where a significant politically conscious minority wanted to get rid of all governments and to run their own lives? For a short time at least this was true in Spain and the achievements and the lessons for future generations are still to be learned. Peirats is a good teacher.

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FREEDOM PRESS have published a number of books on the Spanish revolution and are also distributors of many useful titles by other publishers. A complete list can be obtained from FREEDOM PRESS.

# Preface

Since I completed the Spanish edition of my book in 1964, a number of developments have occurred which I would like to outline in this preface to the English edition. In Spain itself, in spite of the continuation of the régime that began on July 18, 1936, everything seems to be stable. I have already spoken of the shameful diplomatic recognition on the part of all the international powers, which began when the blood of the defeated was still warm at the base of the walls where they had been shot. Diplomatic recognition of this creature of Hitler and Mussolini was forthcoming not only from authoritarian countries, but also from the democratic countries, which had already demonstrated the measure of their convictions while the war was going on. Included among the authoritarian countries were those of East Europe, which not long before considered Francoism one of its worst enemies. Franco's Spain was also able to enter the United Nations and its agencies with the USSR itself as its chief promoter. Today the Soviet and Chinese open up their embassies in Madrid, while Spain remains closed to those Spanish civil war exiles who refuse to return on their knees. The only door still closed to Spain is that of the European Community; but in Madrid it is held, and for good reason, that entrance into the OEC is only a matter of time.

In order to achieve recognition, Franco's régime had put on a friendly front for the Europeans but the fundamental principles which have underwritten it since July 18, 1936 have not been altered. There has been a liberalization only of minor details. Recognition of the right to strike, the right of association, the free play of democratic organizations, liberty of the press without prior or *post facto* censure, all continue to be untouchable tenets of the régime.

Nevertheless, there has been a more or less constant pressure from factors beyond the control of the régime. At present more than 75% of Spaniards either did not live during or were too young to participate in the civil war. This immense majority did not suffer the trauma that has so influenced both sides, the trauma of terror and the victor's euphoria, which itself is really trauma too because of a possible resurgence of the vanquished.

These Spaniards, who never knew, or were the first to lose their fear, confront the régime violently or through intellectual means not tainted by paralyzing complexes.

Without adding or taking away anything from the old militants who never admitted defeat and continued the struggle as long as their advanced years permitted; without denying the courage of the many who sacrificed their lives crossing the frontier to fight, especially in the 1950's; without denying the guerrillas' work in the city and the countryside toward eroding the régime without serving the interests of any Machiavellian power; without denying any of these important factors, one must be convinced that what has most injured the régime, both on the inside and the outside, has been its own sons, who, on reaching adulthood, realized its horrendous injustice. There are even cases of the children of leaders who opted for what little there is left of justice and honour in the world, instead of climbing aboard the victor's chariot.

The régime has not been able to control this development, which explains the first signs of liberalization that it has exhibited. Economic and financial imperatives have forced the régime to come out from its isolation, since economic self-sufficiency is the rosiest of dictators' dreams. In this way, maintaining a sense of proportion, we are able to say (plagiarizing a tiresome slogan of the régime) that "today Spain is different."

The Spanish revolution has had both an external and an internal continuity. Until recently the exterior had a monopoly, because virtually all of the works on the Spanish revolution were published abroad. This literature suffered at first from political writers, who with rare exceptions distorted the history to fit their particular perspective. Hence the conspiracy of silence concerning the revolutionary accomplishments of the CNT, FAI and part of the revolutionary socialists. But beginning in the 1950's, and continuing to the present the revolutionary truth of those accomplishments has begun to be known. Scholars in Anglo-saxon coun-



tries and others made major contributions to the process of demystifying the Marxists and fellow travellers, in their effort to understand fully and profoundly the "War in Spain" (for they did not refer to it as the "Spanish Revolution"). From then on there began to be available a true, historical account of the Spanish struggle, which, consciously or unconsciously, broadened the debate and made a significant mark on the spirit of a new generation of students. This extension of the Spanish revolution came forth with the explosion of the events of May in Paris, which not only shook the world, but which also sparked a set of demands that until then had remained quiescent.

Of course we must disabuse ourselves of the notion that the Spanish revolution was the only inspiration behind the May days. But we can affirm that it did have considerable effect in shaking anarchism out of its lethargy throughout the world, to the point of causing alarm in the well-prepared ranks of the Stalinists, who rushed like any firemen to put out a dangerous fire. One need only recall the indecent instructions of the French Communist Party to gauge the heat they felt from the left, which threatened their control over their domesticated masses. If they were able to repel the assault it was because the rebelling youth was not well-grounded in the history of the last 40 years. But the events of Paris in 1968 had the virtue of arousing not only rebellious youth, but also a great number of adults, social and national groups. Today we see them concerned with a series of issues that until recently were taboo, such as conscientious objection, abortion, divorce and regional autonomy movements. In these areas anarchists have a broad field of concrete issues which they can influence without neglecting what could be called their philosophical or doctrinal tenets, for decades their only preoccupation. With its collectivist accomplishments, the Spanish revolution opened the way to the consideration of concrete problems — if only through an understanding that specific accomplishments have a far greater effect than lenten sermons. Today there is much talk of self-government or self-administration. For many this is still a mystification of true collectivization. Confusions of this kind occurred in Spain, also, in certain milieu of revolutionary collectivists. This is not surprising since it is difficult to shake off ancient prejudices from even the most sublime ideas.

Anarchism is largely responsible for its own bad reputation in the world. It did not consider the thorny problem of means and

ends. In their writings, many anarchists conceived of a miraculous solution to the problem of revolution. We fell easily into this trap in Spain. We believed that "once the dog is dead the rabies is over." We proclaimed a full-blown revolution without worrying about the many complex problems that a revolution brings with it. Nettlau said that those who believe that a society can change itself overnight through a heroic struggle have not learned the lessons of history. As Bakunin was wont to say, "a people develops extraordinary capacities when it is able to defeat its worst enemy: the State." But we must not forget what we have learned from more recent history (which Bakunin did not experience) — that the state is a virus that can take hold in each of us, and that revolutions set free not only the enslaved masses, but also millions and millions of viruses. For example, to the Iberian anarchist of my generation the notion that there is an inevitable reaction to any revolution was unthinkable, or unimportant. Some Spanish comrades still lament that our revolution happened to be accompanied by a civil war. But when had there been a revolution without a civil war? Is not a revolution a civil war by its very nature?

And yet we were caught unprepared when our revolution inevitably provoked a civil war. As I say in the text of this book, the Spanish anarchists suffered from an excessively urban orientation in their revolutionary, or rather insurrectionary, plans. If the insurrection was lost in the cities, the villages were written off. We never thought that we would have to prepare for civil war by organizing support bases for guerrilla actions in the countryside and the mountains, and by developing supply systems for such activities and training select troops as guerrillas. With its tortuous geography Spain is a good terrain for guerrilla warfare, and a well organized guerrilla force would have defeated soldiers trained for a war of continuous fronts. In the last world war the Spanish Army itself used guerrilla warfare (which it called *commandos*), and the Vietnamese and the Palestinians are still using it. Guerrilla organization could have saved the North from Franco. Our trench warfare was a gift that we made to Franco, Mola, Quiapo del Llano, Yagüe and the other strategists of the enemy camp.

The war of fronts led the CNT into the mire of political collaboration and to give up our past without any kind of recompense, since the more we surrendered as we collaborated, the more was demanded of us. While the policy of collaboration went ahead, we anarchists were able to gain some influence, but it was inevitable that we would fall sooner or later on the side of the

State, and we were soon absorbed by the State bureaucracy. Many of our comrades realized the inevitability of the process and found they enjoyed the seats of power.

What redeemed our role in the revolution of July 19 was the work of the regular militants, who echoed the position of our classic theorists, and fled the bureaucratizing ambience of committees, trying instead to make the revolution in concrete ways, or who simply fought, without ever having read Bakunin or Kropotkin.

We still argue in our circles about whether we should have instituted full libertarian communism in Catalonia from the start, with all of its consequences. Assuming something which is very dubious, that "going all out" would have had the virtue of being able to extend anarchism to all of the loyal zone, I am still convinced, even without the Fascist presence, that we would not have been able to avoid a civil war. In such a situation, what would have happened? Most likely, the formation of a strong revolutionary government, which excluded the opposition — a supremely centralized power with a coercive apparatus to prevent and repress opposition. In such a situation the means would have completely obliterated our ends, as occurred in the Russian experience.

One of the key problems which international anarchism must work on is how to learn lessons from others' experiences. All the energy spent on preaching revolution as an infallible panacea must be used in creating new strategies from the authentic analysis of all other revolutions, including our own. The ideal society will not result from a forced birth. Already, we live in the society which we have been capable of creating or which has been created by select minorities, among them the anarchists. The present is not completely detestable. Let us make intelligent choices from the heritage of our ancestors and multiply the virtues we find there. Violent propaganda is diametrically opposed to our end; this propaganda has alone given the false idea of the possibilities of anarchism, a false impression of the writings of Bakunin, Kropotkin and, above all, Elisée Reclus.

Anarchism in Spain today is an enigma: firstly, because the classical organizations received the most severe repression at the hands of the régime; secondly, because it has been impossible to gauge the effectiveness of their action. All clandestine groups and organizations suffer in the same way; although not all are modest

enough to express honestly their effectiveness, they cannot, nor want to, show their true strength. This strength is usually evident in the considerable number of leaflets which they distribute and through demonstrations whose spontaneity is often suspect because they are mounted by some party from the outside which has inexhaustible financial resources. We bring the typical case of the Workers' Commissions (*Comisiones Obreras*) which became quite active at a time when the régime was too busy looking out for the classical organizations. But ever since they acquired a certain amount of power and seemed to be well established, their prestige has been diminishing as their importance has decreased.

Perhaps the experts in this kind of mystification, since their design has been uncovered in the Workers' Commissions, will try to put other products on the market. That is what is taking place as I write these lines with the overblown Assembly of Catalonia. From a simple occasional meeting it has been transformed into an organization, in which communist manipulators with phantom organizations and acronyms typically hold the key posts. The novelty of these attempts to fish in troubled waters comes from the attempt to merge the phantom organization with other groups, whether they be confessional (opposition religious), Carlists or simply regional nationalists; they even have the audacity to cast their hook in front of inexperienced anarchist groups. The success of these operations for the moment is quite variable, and we repeat that, since it is a matter of covert operations, it is not possible to evaluate their true importance.

The régime has tried either to repress these groups or to support them and their branches in order to keep them under control. But it is clear that foreign money also has a large role in keeping them more or less active. For example one notes in almost all their periodicals a particular Marxist influence which shows that editors and publishers are suffering from a particular financial blackmail. A few books with a clear anarchist position appear in Spain, but much more numerous are those with Marxist positions, whether Soviet, Chinese or Castroist.

Anarchism itself for many years in Spain has also suffered from a kind of external inspiration that has stifled internal initiative. The traditional organizations that never went out of existence abroad committed the serious error of trying to export themselves into Spain, thinking themselves imbued with a kind of historical charisma. They sent their members and literature into Spain filled with an idea of the Spanish situation that had no relation to that of

Spaniards in general. The socialists, on the other hand, have made the first effort (we yet do not know of what magnitude or sincerity) to make the militants inside Spain the true leaders of the party both inside and outside the country. The same has happened with the General Union of Workers (UGT), the union affiliated with the party.

This line of action has encountered great resistance from the CNT leaders in exile, who continue to think of the small groups in Spain as children who have not come of age. In those groups there are persons of indisputable intellectual worth, although they may lack experience in underground struggle which has caused serious losses. But the same could be said for the veterans brought in from the outside, who by reason of their advanced age have lost the better part of their reflexes. There exists, therefore, in Spain, a kind of nebula which might (and it is to be hoped that it does indeed) coalesce into a universal type of organization of the traditional kind, if political circumstances would permit. This new universal formation would have to have the intelligence, the spirit of sacrifice, and the benefits of inherited tradition to compete with the highly developed craft of Marxists. It would be a question of creativity versus system. The only thing clear so far is that the new generation of anarchists in Spain represents a certain release or emancipation, with all the problems and virtues that starting from zero involves.

I think exorbitant hopes or speculations about what will happen the day that Franco and his régime disappear are unfounded. We should be prepared for the fact that 50% or more of the regime will survive Franco. It is pernicious to believe that people ready to act would do so when the funeral bells ring for the caudillo. Evolution does not take place at a given time. Rather it moves erratically, stopping dead, starting up nervously, with its own logic.

By this I mean that Spain has been in a post-Franco era for years already. The time of physical and moral terror that Spaniards suffered in the 1940's has been unconsciously overcome, and a new Spain, in spite of the official rhetoric, has begun.

What many people do not take into account, is that although history does tend to repeat itself, it does not do so in the same way. As far as anarchists are concerned, it is not the first time that they have had to start from scratch. It will be recalled that before the dictatorship of General Franco (keeping in mind the differences)

there was the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, which left the anarchists, as well as some other parties, nationalist or regionalist, very much enhanced. In some ways the situation is not the same because of the greater trauma suffered, and its outcome may also be different. Experience comes from events that were and are no more, and from it, many lessons of different kinds can be drawn.

We should become accustomed, therefore, to the idea that we are living in the post-Franco era, and that what happened in the past will not happen again, that the future will take a new course, unpleasant as that may be for those of us who are welded to the old.

One thing that our people has demonstrated is that indomitable vitality. It is to be hoped that, in the course of events, problems will arise for the anarchists that they will have to struggle with on various fronts, even among themselves. It is not the first time that this phenomenon has taken place, and, nevertheless, once the energies with which we are indubitably endowed are liberated, we will once more begin, and it is possible that those who survive us (for I, for one, am getting old) will once more influence the events of the world. For anarchism is the eternal herald of liberty.

Although anarchism drew most of the repression upon itself and was left with nothing but the spirit and enthusiasm of its members, it is nevertheless certain that anarchism continues to survive in Spain, as in the world, turning up everywhere it can to the great shock of those who considered it dead and gone years ago. With the evolution of world events, the question of anarchism versus its formidable rivals taken on a greater importance. *The social world will perish or will be saved with the true liberty that anarchism represents.*

José Peirats  
September, 1974







*Barricades in Barcelona during the Semana Trágica, 1909.*



# 1. From the Beginnings to the First Great Struggle

At times in public, at times underground, the anarchist workers' movement has been in existence in Spain since the founding of the Spanish section of the First International in 1869. It began as the Spanish Regional Federation, outlawed from 1872 to 1874 but continuing underground until the dissolution of the International. It became known, in turn, as the Federation of Workers of the Spanish Region (1881-1889), the Pact for Union and Solidarity (1889-1896), Worker Solidarity (1904-1909), and since 1910 as the National Confederation of Labour, CNT (*Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*).

At the turn of the century the movement declined, both because it was forced to go underground and because it was divided internally. At this time the more authoritarian members, influenced by the doctrines of Karl Marx and his representative in Spain, the Frenchman Paul Lafargue, split off from the movement. Also, there was heavy repression, the bloodiest of which was the persecution in 1882 of an alleged organization of evil-doers called "The Black Hand".

In response to government repression, some of the followers of the International formed secret societies. In Andalusia members of one such group swore to avenge assassinated or imprisoned members, and to aid their families where necessary. One member, jealous of another's love affair, informed on the group. When the informer was killed, local landowners and the police seized on the incident to fabricate a bizarre plot. On a wall in the village of Villamartín the print of a hand appeared in paint; this was the famous "black hand". Likewise the police "discovered," this time under a pile of stones on a mountain, the

macabre rules of a secret society "founded for the robbery and murder of decent people". Two sinister figures, the head of the Civil Guard of Jerez, Tomás Pérez Monforte, and his aide Oliver, directed the repression that followed. All unsolved murders, thefts, or fires were included in the case. Numerous prisoners were severely tortured to force confessions of pre-selected crimes. The reactionaries sought to discredit the anarchist movement and deprive it of its leaders. Three members of the District Commission, Juan Ruiz, Pedro Corbacho, and Francisco Corbacho, along with Cristóbal Fernández, Manuel Gago, Gregorio Sánchez, and Juan Galán, were condemned and executed. León Ortega avoided the scaffold by going mad in jail. Eleven other men were condemned to life imprisonment and several of them died in jail before amnesty was declared twenty years later, after an international campaign.

From 1880 until the turn of the century a kind of renaissance took place in anarchist intellectual circles: the founding of the satirical periodical *La Tramontana* by José Lluas (Barcelona, 1881); the First Socialist Literary Competition, organized by the Centre of the Friends of Reus, Tarragona, in 1885; the founding of the review *Acracia* (Barcelona, 1886); the publication of the newspaper *El Productor* (Barcelona, 1887); and the Second Socialist Literary Competition (Barcelona, 1889). The best Spanish anarchist writers, most notably Ricardo Mella, took part in these competitions.

In 1892 a peasant uprising took place in Jerez de la Frontera. More than 4,000 peasants took over the city, shouting "Long Live Anarchy!"

The peasant rebellion of '92 was the act of dreamers. Armed with staves and scythes they thought they would overcome the well guarded lords of Jerez who lived off lands they never even saw, while those who worked the lands could hardly eat.<sup>1</sup>

Blasco Ibáñez has written of this episode in his novel, *La Bodega*. The anarchist apostle of Andalusia, Fermín Salvochea, was in the Cadiz prison at the time of the events, but he was still held responsible for the uprising and condemned to twelve years imprisonment. (The prosecutor demanded 52 years.) Four men were condemned and executed. Eighteen other defendants were sentenced to heavy terms, some of them for life. They, too, were given amnesty at the beginning of this century.

The end of the century in Spain was punctuated by ex-

plosions of anarchist dynamite. In Barcelona on September 24, 1892, Paulino Pallás threw a bomb at General Martínez Campos, one of the architects of the Restoration. Pallás acted in retaliation for the Jerez executions. When Pallás in turn was executed, another anarchist, Santiago Salvador, tried to avenge him by throwing another bomb, this time into the orchestra section of the Lyceum, a patrician theatre in Barcelona, on November 8, 1892. Twenty persons were killed. The police rounded up a number of anarchists and tortured some of them into confessing that they had committed the crime. José Codina, Mariano Cerezuela, José Bernat, Jaime Sogas, José Salvat, and Manuel Archs were condemned to death. In the meantime the police discovered the real culprit, but in spite of his confession they carried out all of the executions.

Manuel Archs wrote his son a letter shortly before his execution in which he said:

Perhaps tomorrow people will tell you your father was a criminal. Tell them loudly that he was innocent of the crime he was accused of. I hope you will understand and will not despair because of what happened to your father. On the contrary, may my end serve to inspire you to spread far and wide the principles for which I give my life.

Years later Archs' son was assassinated by one of the gangs of gunmen which operated with impunity under the reign of the Generals, Martínez Anido and Arlegui.

In June, 1896, in Barcelona, two bombs were thrown at a procession attended by the Captain General. There were several victims. As a result, hundreds of prisoners, many brought on foot from the countryside, were crowded into the dungeons of the notorious Barcelona fortress of Montjuich. Among them were Anselmo Lorenzo, Tarrida de Mármol, Teresa Claramunt, Federico Urales and José Lluñas.

Commander Enrique Marzo was in charge of the case, and a lieutenant of the Civil Guard, Narciso Portas, conducted the interrogations. On his orders hired thugs tried to obtain confessions from the prisoners, who were whipped into running for hours at a time until they dropped from exhaustion. They were also prevented from sleeping and given dry cod instead of water. In desperation they came to drink their own urine. Their testicles were twisted, and glowing irons were inserted under their fingernails and toenails. These tortures took place deep inside the fortress.

By the end of September the executioners had chosen their victims. Five of them, Aschery, Más, Nogués, Molas, and Alsina, were condemned to death and executed inside the castle. Twenty-two others were given maximum penalties (they too were freed by international pressure in the spring of 1900) and the rest were banished from the country. During the trial the climate of international opinion changed to the extent that those exiled were given asylum in England. Fernando Tarrida de Mármol, an anarchist professor in the Barcelona Politechnical Atheneum, who, because of his intellectual reputation and his wealthy family, had been released in the first phase of the investigation, roused the international community with a powerful book denouncing the trial.<sup>2</sup>

Influenced by these reports, Miguele Angiolillo, an Italian anarchist, left London for Spain in August, 1897 with the express purpose of assassinating the Prime Minister, Cánovas del Castillo. Angiolillo was executed on August 20, 1897. The following month, a Spanish anarchist named Sempau tried in vain to attack Portas, the interrogator.

Repression and anarchist attacks followed one another well into the twentieth century. In 1898 Spain lost the last vestiges of its overseas empire. Defeated in America and the Pacific, the army decided to colonize Spain itself. Alfonso XIII began his reign by humouring the army. But the liberal press satirized the army's arrogance and in retaliation a group of officers sacked the office of a satirical newspaper in Barcelona. The government gave in to military pressure and promulgated the Law of Jurisdictions. By this law any offense, verbal or written, against military institutions would be judged by the military code. In newspapers and public meetings the workers' movement protested this extension of martial law to the civilian sector. The king continued to cultivate the army's favour.

In 1906 the anarchist Mateo Morral broke up the royal wedding by throwing a bomb as the royal couple passed. The king and queen were unhurt, and Morral committed suicide. The subsequent repression concentrated on Francisco Ferrer, director of the Modern School of Barcelona, where Mateo Morral had been a teacher.

Francisco Ferrer had arrived in Barcelona at the beginning of the century with a respectable fortune inherited from a Frenchwoman who sympathized with his projects. A convinced revolutionary and experienced conspirator, he proposed to advance

the revolution on two fronts: on the industrial front by means of the general strike; and on the educational and cultural front with rationalist and positivist teachings. In 1901 he opened the first Modern School in Barcelona with 30 students. His publishing house undertook the translation of the best examples of scientific thinking and modern philosophy. His school was the working class equivalent of the *Institución Libre de Enseñanza*<sup>3</sup> on the university level. His collaborators included Elisée Reclus, Jean Grave, Pyotr Kropotkin, Charles Malato, and Anselmo Lorenzo. This serious revolutionary movement frightened government officials and the clergy. Ferrer was freed unharmed from his first jailing only with great difficulty. But the clergy and the military did not lose sight of him.

In 1907 the local Barcelona federation, called *Solidaridad Obrera* (Worker Solidarity), became a regional federation. In October, 1907, there appeared the weekly *Solidaridad Obrera*, edited by José Prat and Anselmo Lorenzo. In January, 1908, the government of Maura and La Cierva proposed a new law for the repression of terrorism. La Cierva, the Minister of the Interior, began a campaign of provocation in Barcelona to ensure the bill's passage. Bombs went off daily in virtually all parts of town, especially in the meeting places of the Catalan nationalists. Curiously, no one was arrested. The government had prepared a plan to stop, once and for all, the political and social rebirth of Catalonia. A private detective was able to establish the true source of these explosions, implicating the police, the Governor, and the Ministry of the Interior. A provocateur named Juan Rull was paid for his services on the scaffold. The proposed law for the repression of terrorism had to be withdrawn from Parliament because of the concerted opposition of the republicans, Socialists, and anarchists.

During the first days of June, 1909, serious incidents took place near Melilla, in Spanish Morocco. The local people were violently opposed to the construction of a mine railway, which they saw as an encroachment on their sovereignty. A Spanish military counterattack was beaten back with heavy losses at Baranco del Lobo. On July 11, 1909, the government called up the reserves.

The Moroccan campaigns had always been unpopular in Catalonia. Spontaneous demonstrations broke out in the port district of Barcelona when the reservists were leaving. Worker Solidarity called a general strike, which the people turned into an up-

rising. The people threw up barricades in the streets and burned 17 churches and 23 convents and other religious establishments. The government proclaimed martial law and cut off Catalonia from the rest of Spain with troops. A heavy repression followed. Reactionary civilians formed Councils of Civil Defense and a special judge was charged with indicting those responsible for the uprising. The official press undertook a campaign of slander against the people and centred the blame on the founder of the Modern School, Francisco Ferrer. They brought out his prior revolutionary activities in France and Spain as militant anarchist and enemy of the nation, the army and the Church. The government produced false witnesses who testified they had seen him direct the uprising from the barricades. Some of these perjurers departed for America after being paid for their testimony.

On August 31, Ferrer was arrested and accused of leading the rebellion. A public hearing was held for anyone wishing to testify against him and police, aristocrats and Carlists took advantage of the opportunity. The edict of the judge in charge of the case made no mention of those who might testify in his favour. This public appeal for witnesses shows that the government had no proof of Ferrer's guilt. The Captain General of the garrison ordered the military judges to select "all indications, evidence, and charges against Ferrer" from the transcripts "and forward them to the instructing judge, Raso Negrín." Thus all evidence and testimony in favour of the prisoner was eliminated.

The government had previously banished all close friends of the prisoner. Three of his longtime associates, Soledad Villafrañca, Cristóbal Litrán, and Anselmo Lorenzo, were sent to Teruel. The letters they sent the judge asking to testify were mysteriously lost or "delayed." On one of these "delayed" letters Raso Negrín wrote, "The case has already been sent to court, and because in court only those witnesses may testify who have testified in the hearing, to my great regret I cannot allow this testimony." Nevertheless, the case was taken to court October 1 and two days later a new witness was permitted to testify against Ferrer. From then on the trial picked up unusual speed. It was very clear that, come what may, Ferrer was to be shot. And yet the uprising had been leaderless. Ossorio y Gallardo, the governor at the time, admitted as much.

But because the government needed a well known person as a scapegoat for the recent events, they fixed on Ferrer, a man already marked as an agitator by the military and clergy. Ferrer

was a good catch for the reactionaries. He had succeeded in escaping unpunished from the investigation of the attack on the royal couple in 1906. Besides being a revolutionary, Ferrer was a dangerous innovator in education and therefore profoundly disliked by the clergy. With convents and churches gutted by flames, the clergy could not bring themselves to forgive the people for the events of July, 1909.

Francisco Ferrer was condemned to death according to plan and executed in Montjuich on September 13, 1909. To mitigate the effect of the execution other more obscure citizens were also shot: José Miguel Baró, Antonio Malets, Eugenio del Hoya, a night watchman, and Ramón Clemente.

The Maura government was unable to survive the protests throughout Spain and abroad during and after the trials. Ferrer's statue stands in Brussels; Maura's career was ruined by the crime. In 1910 he was wounded in Barcelona by an anarchist, Manuel Possa. (In 1904 another attempt on his life had been made by the anarchist Joaquín Miguel Artal.) At the beginning of 1911 there was a widespread movement to reopen the Ferrer case. Although the case was never reopened, the verdict was in effect reversed by a series of brilliant speeches in Parliament.

In the face of such repression, *Solidaridad Obrera* convened a national congress in Barcelona. The syndicalists realized that the lack of a national organization had hindered the cause of the rebels of 1909 and facilitated the Ferrer trial and execution. A kind of guilt complex led to the founding of an anarcho-syndicalist central committee on a national level. The other national union, The General Union of Workers (UGT), was only a docile satellite of the Pablo Iglesias Socialist Party, organized between 1879 and 1881. The Congress of *Solidaridad Obrera* took place in Barcelona's Palace of Fine Arts, and so was known as the "Congress of Fine Arts". It met on October 30 and November 1, 1910 and was composed of delegates from almost all of the regions of Spain. One of the most notable adherents was Anselmo Lorenzo, founder of the old Spanish Regional Federation. His message was prophetic:

You are going to make an accord that will influence the ever-progressive march of humanity. A page of the book of history lies blank before you; prepare yourselves to fill it in a way that will be to your credit and to the benefit of all persons, now and in the future.



The Congress of *Solidaridad Obrera* founded the National Confederation of Labour (CNT) on the model of French revolutionary syndicalism. Perhaps old Anselmo Lorenzo smiled when the syndicalist Charter of Amiens was used as a model by the Spaniards. For in fact this syndicalism had been invented by the Spanish members of the International, and brought to the London conference of 1870 in a speech that produced astonishment and admiration. The speaker had been none other than Anselmo Lorenzo himself, then a youth, sent for the first time to an international conference.

The Congress of Fine Arts defined syndicalism as

... a way of struggle ... to obtain at once all those advantages that enable the working class to intensify the struggle within the present order, so as to gain ... its complete freedom, by means of the revolutionary expropriation of the bourgeoisie, as soon as syndicalism ... considers itself numerically strong enough and intellectually competent to carry out the general strike. The general strike by definition must be revolutionary, and have as its watchword the motto of the First International: *The workers must free themselves*. Consequently only workers, who earn their wages in factories or businesses run by the bourgeoisie and the State, may be members of the unions of the CNT.<sup>4</sup>

In the fall of 1911 the CNT celebrated its First Congress in Barcelona.<sup>5</sup> Soon afterwards two serious incidents took place: the metalworkers' strike organized by the Socialist Party in Bilbao, spread across Spain; and the bloody incidents in Cullera (Valencia), where a judge from Sueca, invested with full powers, provoked popular violence and was lynched. Seven suspects were condemned to death on January 10, 1912. All seven were reprieved, the last, Juan Jover, by the king.

The various CNT headquarters were shut down because of their solidarity with the strikers organized by the Socialist Party in the Bilbao mining region. In October, 1911, a Barcelona judge outlawed the CNT. Not until the eve of the First World War, in 1914, would the CNT return to public life.

Because of the reprieves after Cullera, the President of the Council of Ministers, José Canalejas, submitted the resignation of his government. The king reiterated his confidence in Canalejas, and the government toughened its anti-popular stance. In September, 1912, there was a railway strike. Canalejas, following the example of the socialist Aristide Briand, drafted the strikers into



the army. The decree was known as the "Law of Handcuffs". On November 12, 1912, Canalejas was assassinated in Madrid's Puerta del Sol. His killer, Manuel Pardiñas, immediately committed suicide. Perhaps the act was motivated by Canalejas' refusal to reverse the conviction of Ferrer. But there are other hypotheses. Among the proposed reforms of Canalejas was the so-called "padlock" law, which forbade the establishment of new religious orders. This law caused much unrest among the clergy, and throughout the country there were processions presided over by bishops and aristocratic ladies.<sup>6</sup>

Even underground the CNT continued to have an effect, in particular in a strike of 100,000 textile workers. Again legal in 1914, the CNT waged a campaign against the European war. In 1915 it held an international anti-militarist conference in Galicia in spite of government prohibition. Some of the participants were jailed, and foreign delegates like Sebastian Faure and Malatesta were not allowed to enter the country. Some foreign anarchists, notably Kropotkin, Malato, and Grave, openly favoured the allies as did some of the anarchists and syndicalists<sup>7</sup> in Spain. The most notable of the Spaniards was Ricardo Mella, who argued in *Acción Libertaria* against the position taken by José Prat in *Tierra y Libertad*. This dispute darkened the last days of Anselmo Lorenzo, who died on November 30, 1914.

The Spanish State declared its neutrality in the war because its political leadership was divided between francophiles and germanophiles, and possibly because a neutral Spain was useful to France and England as supplier for their armies. Neutrality meant commercial paradise for the bourgeoisie. All the industrialists received contracts to supply the belligerents. Shipbuilders appeared overnight and amassed great fortunes. Mines, almost abandoned, were reactivated and still could not keep up with demand. New industries were created and old industries were converted for war production. The Bank of Spain reaped a harvest of gold.

The demand for labour brought a flood of immigrants to Barcelona from other regions. Exporters sold even the food that would normally have been consumed in Spain. Prices of essential goods rose sharply due to speculation and shortages, causing large-scale social unrest. In mid-1916 the Socialist Party adopted a program of political agitation bringing it closer to the CNT. Both movements declared a general strike against the

rise in prices. Syndicalism gained great power and even a certain cachet.

Lower ranking army officers, in an effort to get rid of the nepotism of the military hierarchy, formed their own union known as the Juntas of Defense. Liberal politicians took this as evidence of a new mentality among younger officers and demanded that parliament be reconvened and a new federal constitution drawn up. A united front of members of Parliament held a meeting in Barcelona, but government forces broke in and quickly dispersed it. However the CNT and the UGT had agreed upon a revolutionary alliance, and on August 12, 1917, they proclaimed a general strike throughout Spain. The Juntas of Defense quickly showed their true colours and soldiers entered the streets of Barcelona firing at will. Within seven days the revolutionary outbreak was stifled. Four Socialist leaders, Largo Caballero, Saborit, Besteiro, and Anguiano, were held responsible. They were imprisoned, but were freed the next year because of the parliamentary elections. Referring to the strike, Socialist leader Prieto declared to the new parliament: "It's true that we gave the people weapons. But we didn't give them ammunition."

In July, 1918, an important regional congress, called to modernize the structure of the unions, was held in Barcelona. The *sindicato único* (single union) was devised as a way of avoiding rivalries between unions.<sup>8</sup> In December, the CNT sent its finest speakers on a propaganda campaign through remote parts of the country. Although many of them were eventually arrested and put into jails and ships anchored in Barcelona harbour, they had sown the seed. Unions sprang up everywhere. The CNT soon had more than a million members.

On February 21, 1919, a well-organized general strike took place against the powerful La Canadiense electricity company. This strike, the most successful for the anarchist working class in that period, marked the climax of the period of expansion. It was a united, disciplined action: it caused panic in the bourgeoisie and the government and they responded in the usual fashion. When the conflict had virtually been resolved by negotiation between the parties directly involved, the Barcelona military authorities broke up the talks and arrested many of the militant workers. Thus the second phase of the struggle was against the authorities. The strikers had returned to work with the promise that all prisoners would be freed. But some were kept in jail on the pretext that they had been indicted. The strikers contended that the trials

should have been dropped by executive fiat. The truth is that the only reason the indictments had been issued was to keep certain prisoners in jail, and thus save face for the authorities. In ignoring this and insisting upon total victory, the strikers were excessively optimistic. In fact, they played into the hands of the authorities. What had at first been a great victory turned into a modest success.<sup>9</sup>

The strike of La Canadiense gave an idea of the power, the degree of coordination, and the militancy of the worker movement. The bourgeoisie and the authorities knew that the defeat of so dangerous an adversary, by any means necessary, was a question of life and death. In the face of the dread *Sindicato Unico*, industrialists organized the *Federación Patronal* (Owners' Federation). Hostilities broke out at once: a dialogue of pistols. Who had fired the first shot?

For the beginnings of *pistolerismo*, one must go back to the time of the First World War. As indicated previously, the industries of Catalonia supplied the Allied troops, although they also traded with the other side. The German high command wasted no time and spared no effort setting up espionage networks in ports and industrial centres. In Barcelona one such team worked fairly openly, reporting port traffic and shipping destinations to submarines on the high seas. The head of this team was known as the Baron de Koenig. One of the subordinates of "the Baron" was a police inspector named Bravo Portillo. The rest were recruited from the underworld of the city, armed with pistols, and sent to intimidate industrialists and other speculators who supplied the Allies. If their warnings had no effect, the gang used violence. To disguise their activities, they shot workers and owners alternately, giving the impression that a violent social struggle was underway and further irritating class antagonisms. One of the best known of Koenig's victims was the manager of a large factory that manufactured artillery shells.

In 1918, *Solidaridad Obrera*, the CNT organ, published irrefutable proof that Bravo Portillo was a spy.<sup>10</sup> He was fired from the police force and jailed. Although he was subsequently freed and readmitted to the force, he always held a grudge against the CNT and its principal activists. From then on he directed his gangsters against the workers' movement.

When the war was over all this human flotsam was left unemployed. Miró y Trepas, Barcelona industrialist, with the goodwill of the Captain General of the garrison, Miláns del

Bosch, offered his services to the *Federación Patronal*. The result was soon evident. One of the first victims of the new cycle of terror was an activist from the Dyer's section of the union, Pablo Sabater, murdered in July, 1919. Within two months Bravo Portillo was killed in revenge.

Faced with strikes, the *Federación Patronal* used the tactic of the lock-out. At the start of November, 1919, workers from several factories were turned out into the streets. This was the owners' response to the strike at La Canadiense. The lock-out lasted until January, 1920, and ended in a humiliating defeat for the working class.

The CNT had planned its national conference for December. Around the same time the Catalan bourgeoisie organized the "Free Unions", composed of paid thugs recruited by the bourgeoisie and the military authorities. These were armed and guaranteed complete impunity, and they lost no time making their force felt throughout the country, above all in Catalonia, Levante and Aragon. Their sponsors, in addition to the *Federación Patronal*, were *Industrial Spain*, the *Fomento de Trabajo Nacional*,<sup>11</sup> the Hispano-Suiza Company, Miró y Trepas, and the *Sindicato de Banca y Bolsa*.

According to Farré Morego (*Los atentados sociales en España*), from 1917 to 1922 1,472 assassinations were attempted. Miguel Sastre (*La esclavitud moderna*) puts the number at 1,012, of which 753 were workers, 112 policemen, 95 owners, and 52 foremen. Ramon Rucabado (*En torno al sindicalismo*) counts 1,207 and, finally, according to an official source (José Pemartín, *Los valores históricos de la dictadura española*), from 1918 to 1923 there were 843 attacks in Barcelona, and 1,259 in all of Spain.

The most important confederal source is a booklet published by the Committee for Prisoners in Barcelona in 1923, which lists major trials, sentences and murders of the 1920-1923 period. The number of CNT members killed is given as 104, with 33 wounded.<sup>12</sup> Note one detail: in most military actions the number of wounded usually exceeds—even doubles—the number killed. Here, as can be seen (on the CNT side of course), the opposite occurred. This detail says more than might appear at first glance.





*Assassination of  
Salvador Seguí.*



## 2. Repression and Martyrs

The National Congress of the CNT met in Madrid from December 10 to December 18, 1919. In terms of the breadth of subject matter, the number and quality of delegates, and the number of members those delegates represented, it was one of the most significant worker assemblies ever held in Spain. The delegates dealt with three major issues: the merging of the Spanish proletarian movements (rejected by 323,955 votes to 169,125, with 10,192 abstentions); a new organizational structure based on National Federations of Industry (rejected by 651,472 to 14,008); and a declaration of libertarian communist principles (adopted by acclamation).

The most important debate had to do with the position to be taken on the Russian Revolution. A number of issues were raised:

What can we do to help the Russian Revolution and counteract the blockade . . . of the capitalist countries? Is it necessary to join the Third Syndicalist International? Should the Confederation join the International immediately? Should an International Congress be held in Spain?

The key resolution adopted by the Congress read:

The National Confederation of Labour declares itself to be the defender of the principles that guided the First International, as Bakunin conceived them. It adheres provisionally to the Third International, because of the revolutionary spirit presiding over it, until the International Congress being organized in Spain meets to define the basic principles by which the true International of the workers will be run.

This agreement crowned an eloquent debate, in which the

most prominent delegates took part. Discussion centered on the meaning of the dictatorship of the proletariat. A summary of the speeches follows:

**Manuel Buenacasa:** "We, who have shown in several motions approved by this Congress that we are enemies of the State, declare that we should support the Russian Revolution and keep the government of soviets from being strangled by the capitalist states, if only because it has upset the old economic order—that is, because it has given power, the means of production and land to the proletariat."

**Hilario Arlandis:** "Let us begin by considering the dictatorship of the proletariat. Many companions<sup>1</sup> . . . do not approve of the dictatorship of the proletariat, because they do not approve of any kind of dictatorship. Naturally, in principle we should reject any form of violence, because all violence is a form of dictatorship. But we are not mere idealists . . . We have to allow violence because it is necessary in our society, given the conditions under which we live. The theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat is justified not as an ultimate ideal . . . but rather as an inevitable, necessary, and preordained intermediate solution, a contradictory means of overthrowing once and for all the powers of the privileged; and also in order to educate . . . the mass of workers who for centuries have been reduced to the cruelest ignorance by exploitation."

**Eleuterio Quintanilla:** "A powerful government has been formed in keeping with the classic idea of revolution. [According to this idea] every movement, generally speaking, should culminate in a revolutionary government that takes power and, in the interests of the new revolution, organizes the society, establishes a new order, and constitutes a new juridical system. That is the classic view of revolution, the Marxist view of revolution. And because from the start we have been federalists, Bakunin internationalists, imbued with libertarian ideals and a libertarian spirit, we have always struggled in the arena of class conflict against this view, which we consider castrating. Does the Russian dictatorship coincide with our libertarian ideals? No. The Russian dictatorship as it now stands represents a serious danger for us and although it is not within our power to fight it at least we can, and should, refrain from cheering it on."

**Salvador Seguí:** "We favour . . . because it is demanded by practical realities, not just theory . . . entering the Third



International . . . because it will make our conduct appear more legitimate when we of the CNT issue our call to the labour unions of the world for the founding of the true, the only, the genuine International of workers. We maintain that we must join the Third International for tactical reasons, and then the Confederation can convoke all of the labour organizations of the world to organize definitively the true International of workers."<sup>2</sup>

The CNT congress met during the lock-out, which had begun in November, 1919 and ended the following January with a defeat for the organized working class. The Governor of Barcelona, the Count of Salvatierra, followed up on this defeat by intensifying repressive measures against anarcho-syndicalists. In self defense the CNT tried to organize an international boycott against Spanish exports and for that purpose Angel Pestaña left Barcelona in March, 1920. He was also instructed to find a way to enter Russia in order to carry out the decision of the CNT Congress. Two other representatives, Eusebio C. Carbó and Salvador Quemades, were to join Pestaña in Russia, but Carbó was imprisoned in Italy, and Quemades got no further than Paris.

In Berlin Pestaña heard that the Second Congress of the Third International was to be held in July. Having got permission from the CNT to go as its delegate, he arrived in Russia on July 26. There the Executive Committee of the Communist International invited him to the preparatory sessions of the Congress, where a new International of revolutionary trade unions was under discussion. The announcements being prepared praised the dictatorship of the proletariat and attacked apolitical trade unions. Pestaña refused to sign such a document, making this reservation clear:

Everything referring to the taking of political power, the dictatorship of the proletariat . . . must wait for decisions that the CNT will take after my return to Spain, when the Confederal Committee learns what has been decided here.

Pestaña affirms that the Communists seemed reconciled to amending the reference in the document to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but when the Spanish delegate was absent they published the original text with Pestaña's signature at the bottom.

Concerning the Congress itself, Pestaña says that he was particularly intrigued by the struggle for the chairmanship. He soon realized that the chair *was* the Congress, and that the Congress

was a farce. The chairman made the rules, presided over the deliberations, modified proposals at will, changed the agenda, and presented proposals of his own. For a start, the way the chair handled the gavel was very inequitable. For example, Zinoviev gave a speech which lasted one and one-half hours, although each speaker was supposedly limited to ten minutes. Pestaña tried to rebut the speech, but was cut off by the chairman, watch in hand. Pestaña himself was rebutted by Trotsky who spoke for three-quarters of an hour, and when Pestaña wanted to answer Trotsky's attack on him, the chairman declared the debate over.

He also protested the way in which speakers were chosen. Theoretically each delegate could speak on every issue, but the chair selected "the most capable ones". He was also shocked that no minutes were kept. Nor did they vote by national delegation, only by individual delegate. It had been agreed to count the vote proportionally, but the agreement was not kept, and the Russian Communist Party assured for itself a comfortable majority. On top of everything, certain decisions were made behind the scenes and never reached the assembly at all. That is how the following motion was approved:

In the future worldwide Congresses of the Third International, participating trade union organizations will be represented by delegates from the Communist Party of their respective countries.

All protest on this decision was simply ignored.

Pestaña left Russia September 6, 1920, after a brief exchange of views with the delegate of the *Unione Sindicale Italiana*, Armando Borghi, who returned to Italy equally disappointed by the whole experience. Before they left Moscow they obtained a communique about the organization of the Red Labour International. Given that the Russians sought to ensure precedence of the Communist parties over trade union organizations in future congresses of the Third International, one might have supposed that in a Labour International the unions would be given a free hand. On the contrary, plans for the Red Labour International completely subordinated trade unions to the Communist Party:

1. A special Committee should be organized in every country by the Communist Party.
2. Said Committee shall be in charge of receiving and distributing to union organizations all circulars and publications of the Red Labour International.
3. The Committee will name the editors of professional and re-

volutionary publications, inculcating in them the point of view of the International, against the rival International.

4. The Committee will intervene with its own articles of guidance and polemic.
5. Although the Committee will be a separate organization, it will work closely with the Communist Party.
6. The Committee will help by arranging lectures to discuss questions of international organization, and will choose the speakers.
7. The Committee should preferably be composed of Communist comrades. Elections will be supervised by the Communist Party.
8. To countries where this method cannot be used emissaries from the Communist Party will be sent to create a similar organization.<sup>3</sup>

There are those unable to understand how a libertarian organization like the CNT, so rich in political and social experience, could have been attracted, if only momentarily, by the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Third International. There are explanations for this phenomenon. Spain herself was in a revolutionary period. The CNT was growing rapidly and the new recruits brought with them a ferment of different points of view. The climate of constant repression made it easier to give in to expediency, to the detriment of doctrinal purity. One event transcended everything: the clarion call of the Russian Revolution. No leftist party or organization in the world was immune to it. It had a powerful effect on the Spanish revolutionary spirit and caused two schisms in the Spanish Socialist Party. The more effective the blockade of the Russian experiment by Western powers, the more hypnotic the call of the revolution. Besides, by 1919 the avalanche of anticommunist criticism had not yet occurred. Luigi Fabbri's book, *Dictatorship and Revolution*, although written in 1919-1920, did not appear in Italian until 1921. The Spanish edition was published in Argentina in 1923. One of the first anticommunist pamphlets, "Soviet or Dictatorship?" by Rudolph Rocker, did not appear in Spanish until 1920 (Argonaut, Argentina). Rocker's *Bolshevism and Anarchism* was written in 1921 and published in Argentina the following year. Not until 1923 was Mikhail Archinof's work, *History of the Mahknovist Movement*, published in German. In the same year *My Disillusion with Russia*, by Emma Goldman, could be read in the United States. Alexander Berkman's *The Myth of Bolshevism* was not available until 1925.

Obviously, delegates to the 1919 congress could not benefit from these valuable sources of information. In any case, a close examination of the resolutions of the congress reveals that

the delegates' surrender to the Communists was far from unconditional. The resolution emphasizes the CNT's fidelity to the principles of the First International "as Bakunin conceived them." The provisional nature of the agreement to join is also evident. Participation in the Third International is made subject to the results of a congress that would be held in Spain to establish the basis for a "true" International of workers. The CNT further reserved for itself the right to send a delegation to Russia to study the revolution.

The best informed anarchists had been those of the Berlin circle who, from their position on the corridor to and from Russia, picked up the first desperate messages of what was really happening. The discrediting of the communist myth began in 1921 when Trotsky's troops crushed the anarchist stronghold of Kronstadt. Some anarchists who had gone to Russia to help in the revolutionary reconstruction of the country had already returned disillusioned or been expelled by the new despots. Among them were Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, and Alexander Schapiro. These exiles from the paradise of the proletariat brought back with them manuscripts of books and valuable information. The anarchists were among the first to expose the red myth. They have never been forgiven for this distinction by their "*frères ennemis*". Other parties and people under influence of the myth, especially the intellectuals of the avant garde, took years to shake off its effect.

In the labour movement, Angel Pestaña and Armando Borghi were the first harbingers in the West of the dramatic betrayal. But Pestaña's news was delayed; he did not reach Barcelona until December 17, 1920, and was immediately arrested and imprisoned. He could not turn in his report to the National Committee until nearly a year later, in November, 1921. He also had been arrested on his way through Italy, where the police confiscated all his papers. Subsequently, Pestaña wrote two books about Russia. The first, *Setenta Dias en Rusia* (Seventy Days in Russia), was finished in 1924, so it could not have been read by the members of the CNT until well into the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera.

Let us now see what had happened in Spain after Pestaña left for Russia. The Catalan Owners Association continued to press for the elimination of the syndicalists. The owners were backed by the Captain General of Catalonia and the Military Governor. The latter, Martínez Anido, was the true Civil Governor. Three governors—Montañés, Amado, and Bas—were replaced in open

alliance between the wealthy and the army. When the Count of Salvatierra took over he shut down the unions and arrested hundreds of activists. He also proposed the dissolution of the CNT. (This aggressive ruler was replaced and, soon after, assassinated.) But the real governor continued to be Martínez Anido. He was the one behind the formation of the notorious "Free Unions" on October 10, 1919. A close aide of the general writes,

[Martínez Anido] looked with favour on the schism, which he considered the first sign of the disintegration of the *Sindicato Unico*. He foresaw the struggle between the two factions; he predicted that there would inevitably be victims, but could see that the final victory would go to the handful of brave workers who dared to face their tyrants and oppressors.<sup>4</sup>

On August 10, 1920, a government decree suppressed the use of juries in court cases involving bloodshed. Judges tended to be stricter than juries with union cases. Salvador Seguí had been attacked in Barcelona at the beginning of the year. Immediately afterward Graupera, head of the *Federación Patronal* and hero of the lock-out and repression, was shot.

On the morning of January 9, 1920, a military uprising prepared by anarchists took place in Zaragoza. Sympathetic guards let a group of armed artillerymen under the command of the anarchist Angel Checa into the Carmen barracks. Checa died in a sharp clash with the forces of order and, the next day, after a summary court martial, a corporal and several soldiers were executed. A general strike spontaneously declared by the people forestalled further executions, but the authorities handed down heavy prison sentences to the rest of the rebels.

We have already said that Martínez Anido, the Military Governor of Barcelona, was the *de facto* Civil Governor, could count on the support of the Captain General, and along with the Captain General was in the service of the industrial bourgeoisie. In November, 1920, the Civil Governor, Carlos Bas, resisted being manipulated, and warned syndicalist leaders of the schemes against them. On November 20 the industrialists put pressure on Martínez Anido to put a quick end to social unrest. A civil servant, Francisco Madrid, recounted the following in his book:

Martínez Anido appeared one day in the office of the Governor and said to Carlos Bas, 'Sr. Governor, the crimes continue. Peaceful methods have failed. Peace will return when some of the more obvious leaders are shot without a trial.' The general mentioned the

syndicalist leaders Seguí, Pestaña, and others, and the Republicans Luis Companys and Francisco Layret, the CNT's lawyers. The Governor replied with energy, 'My general, I am a governor, not an assassin.'

'Then quit your job and I will do it. Tomorrow I will be in your place.'

Minutes later the Minister of the Interior, informed of the conversation, ordered [Bas] to hand in his resignation.<sup>5</sup>

And so Martínez Anido began his fateful reign. On the first day 64 union leaders were arrested. They were later deported on a warship to Menorca, where they were shut up in the Castillo de la Mola. When a general strike broke out, Martínez Anido declared the unions illegal. A few days later the lawyer, Francisco Layret, who was trying to negotiate the release of the prisoners, was murdered on his doorstep.

The CNT-UGT pact of 1917 fell apart when the UGT resisted joining the general strike. Martínez and his colleague from the police department, General Miguel Arleguá, deported hundreds of CNT members to other provinces by forced march along the highways. At the same time the police began using an expeditious form of elimination known as the "*ley de fuga*" (escape law). Late at night, prisoners were released from jails or police stations and told they were free. On their way home the unfortunates were shot and killed from a dark corner by gunmen from the "Free Union."

On February 7, 1921, the government replied evasively when challenged in Parliament about the "*ley de fuga*" by the Socialist deputy Besteiro. On March 8, three CNT members, Luis Nicolau, Pedro Mateu, and Remon Casanellas, killed Eduardo Dato, President of the Council of Ministers, in downtown Madrid. Casanellas succeeded in escaping to Russia, but Nicolau and Mateu were captured. Under interrogation they said their grudge was against Dato, not as an individual, but as head of the government, responsible for the atrocities of his subordinate, Martínez Anido.

By the beginning of 1921 the confederal organization was practically leaderless. Salvador Seguí and about 30 of the front rank activists were prisoners in the Castillo de la Mola, Pestaña had been arrested on his return from Russia, Eusebio C. Carbó was in the Valencia jail for the murder of the Count of Salvatierra and, on March 2, the police located the hiding-place of Evelio Boal, Secretary-General of the CNT.



Boal, Feliu (Antonio Feliu, Treasurer of the CNT), and Domínguez, murdered in the early hours of June 17, 1921, were never freed at the jail, nor did they leave the jail at midnight, as the Minister of the Interior, the Civil Governor of Barcelona, and the Chief of Barcelona Police falsely claimed. The following facts disprove them. On June 17, 1921, at exactly 12 midnight, they opened the doors of the three cells, telling the prisoners to get dressed because 'they were going out on the street.' One of these was Boal. They had to dress, gather their belongings, pass through the processing office and from there to the main offices, cash in their tickets for the corresponding amounts, and sign receipts. What with all of these formalities, which everyone who is freed must go through, even though they went through them as a group, it is logical that when they crossed the threshold of the Model Prison it was at least 12:50 in the morning. The police were waiting in the courtyard of the prison to take them to Headquarters, where they arrived at 1:40 in the morning. There they were freed. But awaiting them nearby were men from the 'Free Union' sent by the secret police to kill them. As everyone knows, Boal, Feliu, and Domínguez died from bullet wounds.

The morning of the 18th an orderly asked a prisoner, 'Do you know Enrique Boal? I've been checking the record book and I find no such name. The only thing I could find was one Evelio Boal, and I was surprised to see in the record book the word "delivered" instead of "free", as they usually put it. It seems they called him over to Police Headquarters instead of freeing him.'<sup>6</sup>

Given this kind of repression, which was catastrophic for the organization, a national meeting was called in Lerida. The CNT National Committee was in the hands of newcomers infected with communism. Andrés Nin, a young man from the Socialist Party recently converted to syndicalism, was the Secretary-General. The Pestaña report on Russia was still unknown: it was not written until the following November. The assembly was held in the second half of April, 1921. There a decision had to be made about the Red Labour International, which was slated for June and July. A delegation was named to go to Moscow. It consisted of four pro-communists—Andrés Nin, Hilario Arlandis, Joaquín Maurín, and Jesús Ibañez, an activist from the North. Anarchist groups from Barcelona, perhaps alerted to what was happening in Russia, added their own delegate, Gaston Leval, to the group. Gaston Leval openly separated from the four committed communists when the delegation arrived in Moscow.<sup>7</sup> To the credit of



this delegation is its intervention, at the suggestion of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, on behalf of the anarchists and revolutionary socialists on a hunger strike in the Moscow prison. The document that set the terms between the strikers and the all-powerful CHEKA carries the signatures of Hilario Arlandis and Gaston Leval.<sup>8</sup>

Due to a division between pro-communists and anticommunists on its executive commission, the Socialist Party had held its Twelfth Congress on December 9, 1919. At that time those in favour of joining the Third International, led by the Secretary-general, Daniel Anguiano, had been narrowly defeated. A year later the Young Socialists split off from the party. Angel Pestaña wrote in his report,

Before I left Spain in March, 1920, there was no Communist Party. When I was in Paris I learned that the Young Socialists had broken from the Socialist Party to form the Communist Party, publishing *El Comunista* as their newspaper.<sup>9</sup>

In June, 1920, a new Socialist Party Congress was convened. This time the partisans of the Third International narrowly defeated their rivals. As in the CNT, joining the Third International was made subject to a research trip to Russia by the two opposing factions. The delegates were Daniel Anguiano and Fernando de los Ríos. Anguiano came back as he had left, firm in his Communist convictions: it was Fernando de los Ríos' opinion that weighed most heavily. According to Andrés Saborit,

Fernando de los Ríos' conversations with Peter Kropotkin, the grand old man of anarchism, convinced him that although czarism had been overthrown, a new personal tyranny was developing in Russia, and he came back absolutely opposed to entrance in the Third International.<sup>10</sup>

Another congress of the Socialist Party on April 9, 1921, decisively defeated the partisans of the Third International. But on April 13 the defeated minority, led by Oscar Pérez Solís, who was to be the first Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, quickly issued a manifesto, marking a split in the Socialist Party that contributed to the founding of the Communist Party. According to Pierre Broué and Emile Témime,

Three currents joined to form the Communist movement in Spain: the Young Socialists at the beginning, with Andrade and Portela; then the Socialist minority, with Pérez Solís, García Quejido, An-

guiano, and Lamonedá; and finally a group of CNT leaders, inspired by Andrés Nin and Joaquín Maurín.<sup>11</sup>

The CNT badly needed to hold a congress to revise its decisions in the light of the new developments. Only a trick and the strength of the Zaragoza proletariat made a modest conference possible in the Aragonese capital in June, 1922. One of its principal tasks was to evaluate the reports of the delegates who had gone to Russia. There were three: a verbal report by Hilario Arlandis, and written reports by Ángel Pestaña and Gastón Leval. The delegates received Arlandis unfavourably and voted a motion of censure against Bolshevik despotism. They decided to withdraw from the Third International and join the International Workers Association,<sup>12</sup> which had recently been reorganized in Berlin. They even named delegates to the founding convention of the new organization, but at the last moment decided that the decisions of the Congress of 1919 could only be changed by another congress, and so the conference decisions were submitted in a referendum to the unions for reply within a month.

Hopes for a renewal of CNT activity were dashed by government terrorists. On August 25, during a visit to the industrial city of Manresa, Ángel Pestaña was ambushed by gunmen from the "Free Union." Gravely wounded, the syndicalist leader was hospitalized in Manresa. This attack led to the fall of Martínez Anido. Because they had government protection the gunmen brazenly patrolled outside the hospital in which Pestaña was struggling for his life, declaring their intention to finish off the wounded man. The Socialist Deputy, Indalecio Prieto, himself victim of an attempt on his life, denounced the situation in Parliament, and Catalan Socialist, Gabriel Alomar, publicised it in the Madrid press. To counteract the bad publicity, Martínez Anido had the idea of simulating an attempt on his own life. This scheme almost cost the lives of a number of CNT activists, who were misled by a double agent. The afternoon of September 24 the head of the government, Sánchez Guerra, addressed the Governor of Barcelona in severe terms.

By notices that have reached here from trustworthy sources by various means, I understand that General Arleguá, after what happened last night, . . . cannot continue in his post, and I order that today you take charge of it . . . and if, as it appears from your latest communications, which I hear with real bitterness, you feel unable to carry out the instructions of the government, . . . you too

can hand over the command of the province, as is the custom, to the President of the Audience.<sup>13</sup>

Martínez Anido and his lieutenant resigned, but the Catalan industrialists continued on their violent course. On March 10, 1923, in broad daylight the gunmen of the "Free Union" shot down Salvador Seguí and his companion Francisco Comas, in downtown Barcelona's Calle de la Cadena. Perhaps in revenge for this double crime, the ex-governor of Vizcaya, Fernando González Regueral, was shot in Leon on May 17, and on June 4 Cardinal Archbishop Juan Soldevila y Romero was killed in Zaragoza. For this last deed Francisco Ascaso, Francisco Salamero, Juliana López, and José Torres Escartín were tried. Ascaso succeeded in fleeing the country. The other three received heavy prison sentences. Escartín was freed when the Republic was proclaimed, but after so many years in jail he had to be placed in an insane asylum. At the end of the Civil War in 1939, Franco's henchmen found him in a cell of lunatics and shot him.

The fall of Martínez Anido was the first step in the restoration of due process. As the CNT's popularity revived, the bourgeoisie took countermeasures, attempting to turn industrial conflicts into problems of public order. Glassworkers, mass transit workers and truckers went out on strike, endangering public health. At the height of the conflict, to the applause of the Catalan industrialists, General Primo de Rivera made his *pronunciamiento* in Barcelona. He then went on to Madrid, where the king made him dictator.





*Anarchist "picnic": At such a "picnic" the FAI was founded.*

### 3. Conspiracies against the Dictatorship

Taking power in a coup d'état on September 13, 1923, the rebel generals, led by General Primo de Rivera, declared their desire

to free Spain from the professional politicians, misfortunes and immoralities that began in 1898 and threaten Spain with a tragic, dishonourable and speedy demise.

The military has been the only safeguard, however weak, and has brought to the laws and customs what little ethics, what slight colouration of morality and equity they still possess.

The generals pointed out, with a petulance that betrayed its origin, that

this is a movement of men, and let him who does not have a complete sense of manhood wait in a corner without disturbing the good days that we are preparing for the nation.

Objective historians agree that the dictatorship was really a desperate manoeuvre of the king to forestall the report of the 21-member Commission of Parliamentary Responsibilities that was to assign blame for the disaster of the Annual of 1921. The Commission had finished its work and was to render a public verdict on September 20, 1923. The military uprising took place on the 13th.

Blasco Ibañez, exiled in Paris, wrote a pamphlet in 1924 about, among other things, the objectives of the takeover:

One of the first acts of the triumphant generals was to send a trusted official under heavy escort to the Chamber of Deputies. In the hall of Parliament in which the Commission of 21 had met the dossier on the responsibility for the disaster of the Annual' was kept. The



envoy of the Directorate confiscated it and no one heard anything about those documents again.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusions of the Commission pointed to the king as the main culprit. Starting with his coronation in 1902, the king had shown a weakness for military uniforms and strategy. The Rif, a Spanish protectorate, was a part of the Moroccan nation in which the sultan's sovereignty had never been recognized. It was a poor territory, inhabited by warlike mountain tribes. In the Algeciras conference of 1906, England and France had tossed the Rif to Spain like a bone to gnaw upon, while keeping the choicest colonial morsels for themselves.

It was in the Rif, the last scrap of the Spanish Empire, that young lieutenants fresh from military academy received the baptism of fire that enabled them to advance their careers. The monarchy, decreasing in popularity year by year since the restoration in 1874, found its firmest support in the military; the military, itself ever more unpopular because of the return of the reactionaries, recognized a kindred spirit in the king. Army and monarch both wanted to be above all criticism. In his pamphlet Blasco Ibañez remarks:

We have already said that the monarch ceaselessly doted on the army, modeling it in his own image and likeness in order to ensure its support. The army, realizing its indispensability to the king, demanded through the Juntas [of Defense] a raise in pay, then exorbitant privileges, and ended by forming in the very bosom of the nation a kind of caste, with special laws that rendered it unassailable and untouchable. In Spain all things may be questioned, even the existence of God, but the person who questions the conduct of an officer is immediately imprisoned and sent before a court-martial.

In 1921 the King and General Silvestre, a firm supporter of the government and Minister of War, embarked on a very risky "pacification" programme in the Rif. That venture was an unprecedented disaster, leaving 12,000 dead and 1,500 prisoners. The Moors destroyed the Spanish army and only a lack of decisiveness prevented them from taking Melilla. Even General Silvestre, who had promised the king a great victory, died in the undertaking.<sup>2</sup> Among his personal papers, documents were found that compromised the king. These formed the basis for the Picasso resolution which, in effect, was the trial of the king by his Parliament. The fate of the king was closely tied to that of the army, and so they planned the coup together to avoid a scandal. It was the dogma of untouchability that produced the dictatorship.



The dictatorship suppressed the liberal constitution, shut down the Parliament, and outlawed political parties and other organizations that would not submit to its requirements. Only the UGT submitted. In the judgement of a conservative politician,

the [Socialist] Party, far from condemning the *pronunciamento*, endorsed it and suppressed its own campaigns, with Largo Caballero accepting the position of Councillor of State. He forbade the party organ from making any verbal or written act of violent protest and ordered the organization to join ranks with the princes of the Church and the blueblood aristocracy.<sup>3</sup>

The newly designated Councillor of State, Largo Caballero, tried to justify himself as follows:

The Council of State from time immemorial was made up of members named by royal decree; it represented the government and not the people, but it had never taken the place of Parliament. Like many other government bodies, it was consultative, not democratic. The dictatorship opened the doors of the Council to freely elected corporate representatives. This was not the same as a pure democracy, but it was better than what came before, a political advance, and that is why the Union [UGT] and the [Socialist] Party agreed to have a representative in that body, like the one they had in the Labour Council, the Customs and Tax Office, in the International Labour Office and others.<sup>4</sup>

After the failure of the general strike called by the CNT on September 14, 1923, and the two regional plenary sessions of the Catalan Confederation later in the fall of 1923 and spring of 1924 in Granollers and Sabadell, the CNT virtually disappeared from public life. On May 7, a group of anarchists assassinated the Barcelona executioner, Rogelio Pérez Cicario, apparently in revenge for some of his more recent acts as an "officer of the law". The government ordered the arrest of all CNT and anarchist committees, shut down the unions and suppressed *Solidaridad Obrera*. The CNT had to go underground.

The proclamation of the dictatorship on September 13, 1923, was followed by a rash of bank robberies: the Tarrasa Savings Bank, for which two of the perpetrators were executed; the Padros Bank in Manresa; the French Bank, located in front of the Government building in Barcelona; and finally the Bank of Spain in Gijón, which yielded 675,000 pesetas, a fortune at that time.

Buenacasa speaks of the meetings of Granollers and Sabadell in his book, *El movimiento obrero español, 1886-1926*:

Hundreds of workers from Barcelona who paid their own travel expenses attended both assemblies, in addition to the delegates sent in the regular way by their unions. In the Granollers assembly, which was briefly disrupted by some enemies of anarchism, I had to speak by order of my organization and declare in its name that the unions of Catalonia had come on such a solemn occasion to ratify the decision of the National Congress in Madrid, to wit, 'The Confederation is moving toward anarchy.' There was no vote on this matter; the dissenters said that . . . only the unions in their own assemblies could ratify it. 'Then let us go back to the unions.' And we did, and the masses, the unions, meeting in special sessions, without a single exception ratified the accords of the Second National Congress unanimously. The assembly of Sabadell was even more resolute. The one delegate out of 237 who was a known Bolshevik was refused the right to speak by a unanimous vote.

On November 6, 1924, there was an attempted assault on the Atarazanas barracks in Barcelona. Groups of CNT activists took positions around the fort and waited for accomplices inside to let them in. The timing was off, and the presence of the rebels aroused suspicions. Guards called the police, who killed one person while pursuing the activists. A summary court martial condemned Juan Montejo Aranz and José Llacer Bertrán to death.

About the same time there was an anarchist incursion at Vera de Bidasoa, on the Basque-Navarre border. Three of the anarchists, Juan Santillán, Enrique Gill and Pablo Martín, were condemned to death for killing several civil guards. Martín killed himself by jumping from the prison balcony. It has been said that these incidents were provoked by double agents working for Martínez Anido, the Minister of the Interior under the dictatorship. Once again, the dungeons of Montjuich were crowded with syndicalist prisoners.

Martial law was not lifted until May, 1925. On June 3, Catalan separatists failed in their attempt to blow up the king's train on the way from Barcelona to Garraf. Resulting arrests included Jaime Compte and Miguel Badía. Compte, an idealistic patriot, perished in the ruins of a nationalist centre on October 6, 1934, when the rebellion of the Catalan government was put down by General Batet. Badía later became Chief of Barcelona Police in the early months of the autonomous government. He vigorously persecuted CNT-FAI activists, assassinating many. In revenge, he was assassinated in the street with his brother on April 28, 1936.

In 1926 there was another attempt on the life of King Alfonso

XIII. He was scheduled to be officially received in Paris on July 14. A few days in advance, the French police uncovered a plot to attack the king's coach. For this bold attempt Buenaventura Duruti, Francisco Ascaso, and Gregorio Jover were indicted. They admitted before the tribunal that they had planned to kidnap the king in order to overthrow the dictatorship in Spain. They were sent to jail, and at once the Spanish and Argentine governments sought to extradite them. The Argentines accused them of attacking the San Martín bank; and the Spaniards accused them of looting the Gijón branch of the Bank of Spain. In addition Ascaso was sought as one of the murderers of Cardinal Soldevila. A year later, in July, 1927, they were freed and expelled from France. An Argentine warship, supposed to take them to Argentina, had to turn back empty.<sup>5</sup>

The sequel to this episode is described by Rudolph Rocker:

Only a widespread protest movement in France, in which the most diverse political groups participated, as well as noted personalities like Mme. Séverine and others, kept the French government from giving in to the Spanish and Argentine extradition requests. The anarchists were merely expelled. When Belgium and Luxembourg denied them entry, they went to Germany, from which they were expelled after four weeks by the Minister of the Interior, a Prussian Social Democrat. An attempt to gain asylum in Russia was unfruitful, as the Russian government imposed conditions on them that, as anarchists, they were completely unwilling to accept. Under these circumstances they had no choice but to return to Paris under assumed names. There they lived underground for several months, until they found work in Lyons, not wishing to endanger any longer the comrades who were helping them in Paris. But six months later they were discovered by the police, sentenced to six months imprisonment for violation of the expulsion order, and then expelled again. After a secret stay in Belgium they arrived in Berlin, as no other way was open to them.<sup>6</sup>

In that year, 1926, two other actions were undertaken against the dictatorship. The first came to be known as the "*Sanjuanada*," because it took place on June 24, the feast of Saint John. The plot failed because of indecisiveness of the activists, and hundreds of militants and union members were jailed. Most of those detained remained in jail for many months without trial. Periodically they would be released and re-arrested. Such round-ups became routine whenever high government officials came to town, and sometimes the detainees were held for an entire year.

The dictatorship was not a particularly bloody one, but it was characterized by a rigid judicial and penal system. One of the first acts of the regime was to abolish jury trials. Political or social delinquents were tried by courts martial or tribunals.

The second conspiracy took its name from the French frontier town of Prats de Mollo. Eight hundred men, many of them anarchists, planned to cross the frontier from France and provoke an uprising in Catalonia. The expedition was betrayed by one of the main conspirators, the Italian colonel Ricciotti Garibaldi, a descendent of the illustrious patriot of the Italian Revolution. Garibaldi, who was to participate in the invasion with fifty Italian anti-fascists, sold out to Mussolini for 600,000 lira, and the expedition did not get far. The conspirators, hidden in villas and hotels, were picked up by the French police. The main organizer, an old Spanish army colonel named Francisco Maciá, founder of the separatist party Estat Catalá, was tried. He had retired from the army at the beginning of the century in protest against military assaults on the offices of a satirical magazine. He felt that his colleagues had put him in the position of choosing between dishonour and his military uniform. Maciá served briefly in parliament, was for a number of years involved in separatist activities, and emigrated to France when Primo de Rivera came to power.

In 1927 the CNT, in addition to its clandestine activities, began to expand and develop as an organization. In a few provinces, especially in the North, some of its publications continued to appear. Most notable among these for the network it maintained was *¡Despertad!* [Wake Up], formerly *El Despertor Marítimo*, edited in Vigo by the Galician militant José Villaverde. In its pages well-known anarcho-syndicalist writers contributed polemics and constructive theory. There Juan Peiró published a series of fifteen articles entitled, "Problems of syndicalism and anarchism," later collected in a pamphlet. Other publications began to reappear: *Acción Social Obrera* [Worker Social Action] in San Feliu de Guixols, Gerona; *El Productor* in Blanes; *Redención* [Redemption] in Alcoy; and *Horizontes* [Horizons] in Elda. The best of the magazines was *La Revista Blanca*, a successor to the magazine with the same name published in Madrid the previous century. Edited and published by the Urales family, it published the best writers of international anarchism: Max Nettlau, Charles Malato, Jean Grave, Luigi Fabbri and Palmiro de Lidia (Adrián del Valle). The *Revista Blanca* pioneered the use of the short novel, or novella, as a means of propaganda and popular political

education. Its greatest success was a slim volume of 32 pages entitled *La novela ideal* [The perfect novel].

In 1925 in Valencia *Estudios* began to come out, a sophisticated magazine (the former *Generación Consciente*) dedicated to anarchist principles emphasizing the theme of physical and social self-improvement. The magazine provided articles on art, nutrition, sex education and eugenics. The anarchist individualists also had their magazine *Iniciales*, run by vegetarians and naturalists whose interests ranged from hedonism to mysticism. These extremist tendencies flourished in a period that, while stormy for some of the anarchists, was a kind of hibernation for most. Clandestine meetings in the mountains were dressed up as mountain climbing expeditions motivated by a sincere devotion to nudism, fresh air and sun tans. This picturesque return to nature was perfectly consonant with making plots, concocting explosives and practising marksmanship. Inveighing against tobacco and alcohol camouflaged the exchange of periodicals and underground leaflets.

On a Valencia beach in July, 1927 one of these outdoor excursions gave birth to the Federation of Iberian Anarchists. A group of bronzed bathers—men, women and children, young and old together, some lying on the golden sands, others in the surf, some resting, others playing games, the traditional *paella* bubbling over the fire, and the whole scene caressed by the warm, friendly sun along the shores of Lake La Albufera—founded a revolutionary organization soon to be known for its idealist vision, its strength and its heroism, the FAI.

A royal decree of November 26, 1926 imposed Arbitration Boards and corporative organization on the labour movement. The committees were meant to be an obligatory form of cooperation between social classes—classes that until then were locked in mortal combat. The decree deprived the workers of the right to strike and obliged them to submit disputes to official arbitration. It brutally proscribed the direct action of militant labour unions. Nevertheless some Catalan unions subject to corporative labour laws began to rebel. Starting in 1927, confederal cadres were reorganized by the weavers, roofers and bakers. Many of these cadres emerged as new unions in 1930 when the dictatorship fell.

One of the most important events of 1928 was a clandestine National Plenary of the CNT in Barcelona to coordinate subversive activity with political and military elements. In a speech before the Confederal Congress of 1931 Juan Peiró affirmed,

Since 1923 not one National Committee and not one Regional Committee lost touch with political leaders, not in order to set up a Republic, but rather to be done with the infamous regime that was stifling us all.

In regard to the Plenary session with which we are concerned, Peiró notes,

... and the National Plenary session took place July 29, 1928. That Plenary, with a unanimity that included even the delegates from Castile, agreed to make contact with political and military leaders. They agreed to let the soldiers and the politicians make the revolution, and that we would back them up, and that if the Confederation could go farther than the politicians it would, but that otherwise we would stay quiet.<sup>7</sup>

The Sánchez Guerra plot of January 1929 was one fruit of these conspiracies. Sánchez Guerra had been exiled in Paris since the beginning of the dictatorship. A liberal monarchist, Sánchez Guerra had slapped General Aguilera in the Senate Chamber for saying that only soldiers have an honourable past. Given these circumstances Sánchez Guerra had no choice but to go into exile after the *coup d'état*. Certain generals, including the Captain General of Valencia, Castro Girona, were involved in the 1929 plot. When Castro Girona saw Sánchez Guerra disembark he urged him to re-embark at once. Sánchez Guerra refused, and the commander of Valencia arrested him. Sánchez Guerra was condemned and subsequently reprieved, apparently at the urging of the Queen Mother. His speech at the Zarzuela Theatre, quoting the classic line, "Serve no more the lords who have turned into worms," began a rapidly escalating crisis for the monarchy.

All during 1929 the students were in revolt, and in Barcelona strikes broke out in textile factories and brickworks. The king, seeing the gathering storm, began to consider dropping the dictator for another general. Primo de Rivera, aware of the king's plans, was foolish enough to consider himself the real power. In a circular to military leaders who seemed sympathetic he sought to renew his *pronunciamento* of 1923, but this time in open opposition to the king. One of the sentences in the circular read,

Above all it was the Army and Navy that chose me as dictator, the former actively, the latter tacitly. The Army and Navy should therefore be the first to decide in conscience whether I should remain or resign my powers.

The response was such that the king, imbued with new cour-

age, dispatched the Count of the Andes to force Primo de Rivera's resignation. The author of the Manifesto of September 13, 1923, who had made such a great show of virility, let himself be led by the hand like a child to the frontier and died in obscurity, on March 16, 1930, in a Paris hotel room.





*The editors of Solidaridad Obrera, 1932.*

## 4. The Anti-Monarchist Offensive

A series of polemical articles in the Vigo weekly, *¡Despertad!*, and in Gerona's *Acción Social Obrera* provides an authentic glimpse of the moral climate in which the militant anarcho-syndicalists moved.

In *¡Despertad!* Angel Pestaña had published a set of articles, entitled "*Situémonos*" (Where we are now) which characterized the CNT as "context" and not "container". That is, he held that the CNT was not a set of permanent principles, but rather "could adapt itself to any kind of principles." In the columns of *Acción Social Obrera*, Peiró called the notion deviationist:

The confederal congresses can modify all of the principles of the CNT that they deem necessary. But no congress can go back on the principles that form the CNT's essential base, its foundation and reason for existence: antiparlamentarianism and direct action.

Important activists like Buenacasa and Carbó supported Peiró's judgement. The FAI contributed a statement in December, 1929, attacking ideological neutrality in the labour movement and defending the influence of anarchists in the CNT as a kind of acquired right.

One of Peiró's accusations against Pestaña was that Pestaña favoured the Arbitration Boards. He reproached Pestaña for having put "his sinful hand" to the propagation of these bodies.

You deny that the name of the CNT and the name of militant in the Confederation are being exploited to bring about this deviation, and I affirm that the very Committee of the National Confederation advocates the acceptance of Arbitration Boards at the same time that it encourages the formation of unions.

In the fall of the same year the National Committee of the CNT published its resignation in *¡Despertad!* in terms that implied that the organization as a whole was on its last legs. This document aroused the ire of many militants. Another was published by the same committee upon the fall of the dictatorship. It contained contradictions like these:

1. Therefore we yearn for equal rights for all and the most complete freedom for mankind; we wish to substitute the orderly action of unions for capitalism, and for the State social, political and ethical collectivities that are economically free, or joined together only by free and voluntary choice.
2. Spanish syndicalism is not indifferent to the current national situation and therefore affirms that it will intervene with all the means at its disposal, in accord with its ideology and its past, in the revision of the Constitution that is taking place, and which must lead to a legal and political reorganization of the Spanish State. Within this new structure we will live together and obey its laws as men, as citizens, and as an organized social class, in order to work with greater effectiveness for the triumph of our egalitarian principles.

The National Committee was forced to declare that the manifesto was not precisely official, but rather a resolution of the Regional Plenary of February 16, proposed by the delegates of Asturias, Aragon, Levante, and one of its own members. The explanation pointed out

our public support for the convocation of a Constitutional Convention means that this will come at the appropriate time in the streets, with means appropriate to revolutionary syndicalism.

And it goes on,

Let it be very clear, then, that at no time, neither before nor after drawing up the manifesto, can it be maintained that the CNT decided on, or even considered supporting the nation in the ballot boxes, or supporting any kind of candidate.

On an early spring Sunday in Barcelona, with the dictatorship well out of the way, the CNT held its first meeting of national importance. The attendance was impressive. The Teatro Nuevo was thronged with people, and hundreds of workers who could not get in gathered in large groups on the boulevard outside. In spite of the threatening presence of the Governor's delegate, Sebastián Clará, Juan Peiró and Angel Pestaña denounced the repression of the CNT and asked for the legalization of unions and amnesty for political prisoners.

Through the malice or caprice of magistrates, many anarcho-syndicalist prisoners, because of the violent nature of their crimes, had been classified as common criminals. The amnesty of February 6, although it covered political prisoners, did not apply to those political prisoners whom the tribunals had arbitrarily designated as common criminals. The National Committee for Prisoners declared,

After much effort some political prisoners have been freed from the jails but others, who in moments of difficulty were defeated like heroes, remain.

As for legalizing the unions, before deciding one way or another, the Minister of the Interior, General Marzo, wanted to know what to expect from the CNT. So he sent the Director General of Security, General Emilio Mola, to Barcelona. In his book, *Lo que yo supe* (What I found out), Mola has left an interesting account of his mission:

At seven o'clock on the evening of April 4, 1930, I entered the office of General Despujols [Governor of the Province of Barcelona], whom I found alone, with his tortoise-shell glasses on, reading some papers. At once he escorted me to a small room where the leader of Spanish syndicalism, Angel Pestaña, was waiting. Pestaña was about 35 years old, rather tall, dry, with a sharp nose and a suspicious and inquisitive glance, clean-shaven, slow of movement, quick of speech, with a slight Catalan accent. He was well dressed, in a way calculated to show that he was a worker, and during the entire visit he maintained an extremely polite attitude. After a brief silence during which we looked each other over, I began the conversation by telling him that the government had resolved to return the country to normal, gradually authorizing organizations and propaganda of all kinds as long as they obeyed the law. What I wanted to know were the orientation, the intentions and the methods that the CNT would follow; the relations it intended to maintain with other workers' groups; and whether its leaders intended to follow the same ideology or intended to turn toward Communism. Angel Pestaña, accustomed to questions of this order—which are not always made in good faith—at first appeared mistrustful to the point of restricting himself to monosyllables that did not satisfy me, or him either, for that matter. But little by little he became more explicit, without ever really opening up. Fighting men, accustomed to clandestinity, unjustified persecutions and constant betrayal, doubt everything and everybody. According to him the Confederation wanted



to emerge from the underground into which it had been forced by the dictatorship. He said that the anarcho-syndicalist organization had as much right to life as any other. As for their hopes, they were to gain for the working class those privileges to which they were entitled as the producers and to put an end to capitalism, which was the ferocious exploitation of man by man. Of course he recognized that it was not possible to solve this problem in the short run, but that constant activity and continual pressure were necessary in order to advance, for any truce in the struggle would merely provide time for the bourgeoisie to consolidate its forces and take reprisals. As for the methods to be used, he knew of only one—the direct action of a free and aware working class, with the right to settle its own disputes without intermediaries or guides. He was not in favour of the Arbitration Boards. ‘They do not interest us,’ he said, ‘because they run counter to our syndicalist strategy. The Arbitration Boards are a monstrosity, at least from our point of view. The chairmen, foreign to the struggle between capital and labour, do not understand, and have no interest in understanding our customs, and generally let themselves be guided by the management representatives. The worker members, since they are paid a salary, lose the habits of the workplace and forget the needs of their companions, whom they cease to defend. Why say more? The Confederation cannot cooperate with the so-called corporative system.’ The syndicalist leader discretely avoided all discussion of the UGT and the Free Union; they did not interest him. He then continued, saying that the communism of the Third International had partisans in the CNT, but that he, in principle, had a very different point of view; he was an enemy of all kinds of dictatorship—of rich or poor, intellectuals or illiterates, priests or layman . . . He added that in any case the CNT as an organization was strictly apolitical; that its activists personally could be whatever they wanted to be. ‘I know,’ he added, ‘that it has been said—it doesn’t matter where, when or why—that contacts and agreements have been made with a certain political party. Apart from being false, this is absurd. One need only know the history of the CNT, its rules, its behaviour. The Confederation cannot join with anyone, but it would be more sympathetic to the regime that best approximates its ideals. That is all.’<sup>1</sup>

The CNT National Committee was legalized on April 30, 1930 by Governor Despujols. Every union had to have its own statutes approved, and here the government followed an intentionally obstructionist policy. While in the most important provincial capitals the reopening of the unions was authorized, in the less important

cities and most of the villages petitioners ran up against the obstinacy of the provincial governors. With Catalonia this happened in Tarragona, Lerida, and even Gerona. In Barcelona the normalization of the Transport Union was blocked. The Marquis of Foronda, a dyed-in-the-wool monarchist and a hardened enemy of the working class, was the central figure behind the Company of Trolleys and Buses of Barcelona. In the book already cited, General Mola touched on the heart of the matter:

Don Mariano Foronda was a royalist, an enthusiastic and determined supporter of the dictatorship, even when he recognized its mistakes. He was somewhat worried at the new turn of events, for he feared that the so-called road to legality would turn out to be a difficult obstacle course. Politically he was a follower of certain specific public figures. His labour policy was a reaction to whatever the leaders of the CNT proposed—at that time a Public Services Union, the first step toward a subsequent Transport Union. ‘Just from reading the introduction,’ he told me, ‘you can see the grave implications this holds for the social order, for they will have a united front for all transportation, and hold the power to paralyze completely all means of transportation whenever they want to. We have obeyed the law of corporative organization,’ he continued, ‘and after forming unions we have formed our Arbitration Board (that of the trolley services), which is now functioning. But apparently all this is not enough for the directors of the Single Union, since they want to join all of the unions together to form one big Transport Union.’ Foronda was right, but this was a matter for the Governor, and it was up to the Governor to make the rules, and I told him so. The organization of workers by general type of occupation instead of merely by job gave them an unexpected strength and placed the entire commercial and industrial activity of the region in the hands of a small commission. This struggle, along with the one in which the CNT wanted to absorb the longshoremen’s unions, was the main object of contention during the government of General Berenguer, and I saw that it also held true for the Republic, although of that I had no direct knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

During the dictatorship the Federation of Port Workers had been formed as a part of the Arbitration Boards. Its leaders were old-time CNT activists who were given to bureaucratism. When a return to constitutional government seemed likely, an effort was made to revitalize the old Transport Union, which would include as subdivisions the trolleys, buses, truckers, taxis, chauffeurs, and stevedores. The leaders of the stevedores, above all interested in

holding on to their positions, refused to join the Transport Union, giving the pretext of a kind of mystical independence. The Governor and the government, who shared Foronda's reactionary position on unions, fully supported the dissidents and roundly rejected the legalization of the single Transport Union. The result of these official intrigues was a fratricidal struggle. The autonomous longshoremens' unions, directed by the renegade Desiderio Trillas managed the hiring of day labourers (almost all of the stevedores were day labourers) with obvious discrimination against CNT members. With the air poisoned by the cooperation between the stevedore leaders and the transport bosses and government, both sides went armed with guns. The Confederalists were all the more frustrated because of the repercussion of the dispute on the legalization of the single Transport Union. After many months that union was finally legalized, but the most committed confederalists never forgave Desiderio Trillas for his collusion with the authorities and for the victims on both sides that his stance entailed. Trillas was assassinated during the wave of terror that broke over Barcelona during the first weeks after the Fascist uprising of July, 1936. Since the CNT and the FAI had control of Catalonia, Trillas sought to protect himself by joining the UGT, compromising himself even more.

The statutes of the newly legalized National Committee contained, with only slight variations, a declaration of the traditional principles, objectives and tactics of the CNT:

First Article. An organization named the National Confederation of Labour is constituted in Spain that proposes the following:

- a) to work to create a spirit of cooperation among workers so they will understand that only thus can they improve their moral and material condition in the present society and prepare the way for complete emancipation by conquering the means of production and consumption;
- b) to practise mutual aid between the federated groups whenever necessary and whenever requested, in case of strikes or for whatever else may arise;
- c) to maintain relations with all other similar workers' groups, national or international, for the common knowledge that leads to the total emancipation of the workers.

Second Article. To put these objectives into effect, the confederation and the unions that compose it will always struggle strictly in the economic area and will resolve their conflicts and differences with whoever is directly involved: conflicts of an economic nature



with the bourgeoisie; and conflicts of a social nature, involving public order or public services, with the government or other appropriate bodies. The CNT will have absolutely no involvement in politics or religion.

Soon afterwards the other unions were legalized, without any problems other than those already mentioned. Once the offices were reopened, the technical committees, Juntas, assemblies and Plenaries were set in motion. On May 17, 1930, in Barcelona, the seat of the National Committee (at 12 Calle de la Guardia, first floor), the first Regional Plenary of the new era was held. It decided to bring out *Solidaridad Obrera* again as a daily paper. The weekly, *Acción*, published in Barcelona as the voice of the CNT, had begun in February, 1929 and the anarchists had been publishing *Tierra y Libertad* since May, 1929. Also, in accordance with an old tradition the CNT papers in the provincial capitals were also called *Solidaridad Obrera*.

A miracle of astounding vitality, thanks to individual and union loans and contributions, *Solidaridad Obrera* began regular publication on August 30, 1930. Its director was Juan Peiró, its administrator Pedro Massoni, and its editors Eusebio C. Carbó, Pedro Foix, Sebastián Clará and Ramón Magre. The first editorial sounded the battle cry:

[*Solidaridad Obrera*] appears in order to reaffirm with resolution the principles of revolutionary syndicalism, which has as its ultimate goal libertarian communism, to be achieved primarily by an open struggle against capitalism and the State by the direct action of the proletariat, revolutionary action to build a new economy in which the people are economically, politically and socially free. It has also appeared, in the short run, to defend the freedom to organize, the right to assemble and to strike, scandalously denied by those in power and the patently illegal Arbitration Boards. By the same token it appears in order to defend with all necessary force and audacity the individual and collective liberties contained in the basic laws of the nation but denied to the common people since the code was promulgated. It appears, then, in order to crush the glacier formed by cowardice, the reason that Spain cannot be called a civilized country but must be classified with those countries of barbarians in which individual life, property, and dignity are at the mercy of bestial mandarins. It comes resolved to put an end, whatever the cost, to the brutality that reigns in Spanish stockades and prisons, to denounce boldly the day-to-day immorality of the

bureaucratic machinery of State, to publicize with a loud voice the assaults and indignities that characterize the activities of certain government offices, and to raise its fervent protest against all of those who in these historic days treat Spaniards as if we were the inhabitants of the most brutish areas of Africa.

On August 6, 1930, a Regional Conference took place attended by many unions and local, district and provincial federations, as well as the confederal cadres—formed, as we know, because in Catalonia the governors refused to legalize certain unions. While all this intense reorganizing was taking place, another task of major importance arose—the overthrow of the regime that succeeded the dictatorship.

The CNT was the nerve centre of conspiratorial and revolutionary activity in Catalonia and much of the rest of Spain. One of the secret committees in contact with the CNT Regional Committee was made up of university students, officers like Captain Alejandro Sancho and Eduardo Medrano, and several engineers. The National Committee of the CNT and the Peninsular Committee of the FAI were also represented. This secret committee was so effective that it broke the telegraphic code of the Ministry of the Interior, as General Mola reveals in his book. After *Solidaridad Obrera* published a telegram that had been sent in code from the Governor to the minister the code was changed, but within a few days the new one was in the hands of the revolutionary committee. A coded message from Mola to Despujols ordering the imprisonment of certain persons was also intercepted, and some of those named were able to escape. Others, because of their official capacities, could not. Such was the case of Captain Sancho, an engineer in the Free Port. Imprisoned in Montjuich and badly treated, he contracted a disease from which he died shortly thereafter. Sancho belonged, with other officers, to Fermín Galán's secret group. It was at that time that Progreso Alfarache and Manuel Sirvent, Secretary and Vice-Secretary of the CNT National Committee, were captured. The government order also named the editors of *Solidaridad Obrera*, who were forced to edit the paper in hiding.

It is ironic that Commander Arturo Menéndez was a member of the conspiracy. Three years later, as Director General of Security, he was responsible for the heinous repression at Casas Viejas. Another member was Ramón Franco, brother of the future "Caudillo," who was to die when his plane was shot down after the criminal bombing of Barcelona. And another was General López Ochoa, punished by the people of Madrid for his brutal massacre of

Asturian revolutionaries. On April 12, 1931, Ramón Franco published an article in *Solidaridad Obrera* that contained these bold words:

Everything that gets in the way of the people's will must be destroyed. Do a group of generals want to set up a new fascist dictatorship? Let them be taken away or lynched, following only the lynch law. Do some colonels meet as a simple threat or in order to take precautionary measures against the people? Let them be burned up or blown up in their own barracks. Does a priest in the pulpit or a bishop, violating his vows, discipline and neutrality, undertake a political campaign? Do some perverts known as legionnaires seek to trample public freedoms? Let them be quartered, and their ugly pieces offered to the people. Do some civil guards or security men, egged on by their superiors or by their own criminal instincts, turn their weapons against the people? Let their sins fall upon their families, and in this way let them pay an advance on the justice that will befall them some day. Does the Army, ignoring the voice of duty, go out in the streets in defense of reaction and monarchy to fight the public that pays it? Let the soldiers, the sons of the people, turn their guns against their officers, and another battle would be unnecessary.

Those who might be called the illustrious exiles, like Unamuno and Eduardo Ortega y Gasset (editor in France of *Hojas Libres*) arrived in Spain after a prudent delay and were honoured at banquets. The more obscure exiles, whose arrival had been awaited for months, went at once to their combat stations. The return of Francisco Maciá was countermanded by a government order, by which he was immediately expelled and accompanied to the frontier by the police chief of Barcelona, Sr. Toribio.

On August 27, 1930, some leftist political groups met in San Sebastian in a large meeting of anti-monarchists. Apparently neither the CNT nor the UGT was invited. Juan Peiró, speaking for the CNT, refused to participate:

When the politicians met in San Sebastian the Confederation was not in contact with political groups. The Confederation has had no part in the San Sebastian Pact. It was not invited, just as the UGT was not invited. There was an agreement at one point to call on the revolutionary movements, both the UGT and the CNT. But they wanted to make do with an unofficial or token delegation. It was then, when it had become clear that the politicians were trying to involve the Confederation in a revolutionary movement without treating with it formally, that we told them in *Solidaridad Obrera*

that if they thought we were their camp followers they were mistaken, and that the revolution would be made with the Confederation or not at all.<sup>3</sup>

The CNT's exclusion from the San Sebastian meeting indicates the apprehension with which the future leaders of the Republic regarded the organization. This exclusion avoided any possible obligation to the CNT, leaving the future leaders of the Republic free to proceed against the CNT in an atmosphere rife with mutual hostility.

The power of the CNT tempted the politicians as much as it worried them. The CNT's conflicts with the bourgeoisie and the authorities served the purposes of the antimonarchists, but the CNT was a double-edged sword which could also cut against the future republican order. In Catalonia alone there were conflicts of an epic quality, such as the strike at the ditch on the Calle Aragon, between the Single Construction Union and the Works Construction Development Company. Other memorable strikes took place at the Z and the Philips light bulb factories in Barcelona, at the Griffi cement factory in Villanueva y Geltrú, at the Badalonesa and Metalgraff factories in Badalona, in the Pirelli tire factory in Manresa, at the SAFA artificial fibers factory in Blanes, at La Cerámica in Hospitalet de Llobregat and finally, a series of lesser conflicts in the Altos Hornos of Catalonia and Riegos y Fuerzas del Ebro in Reus, Igualada, Sabadell, Tarrasa and the Vich area. It was an outbreak that came naturally after seven years of dictatorial oppression. All of these conflicts were exacerbated by authorities seeking to defeat the syndicalists by a war of attrition. Instead, out of every encounter with the civil guard and the "Free Union" scabs, syndicalism emerged with renewed strength.

On October 5 and 6, a new Catalan Regional Plenary was held to set the agenda for a forthcoming National Conference of Unions. But it was decided that the assemblies of the unions were the only ones able to discuss the agenda. So the Plenary was left with a discussion of *Solidaridad Obrera* and its financial situation. In the same month Miguel Maura and Angel Galarza, representatives of the National Revolutionary Political Committee (UGT), came to Barcelona to sound out the CNT about a "peaceful" general strike that would begin with a strike of their railway workers and then escalate into a military uprising.

The National CNT Conference had to be postponed because of political unrest. It had been planned for October 17, and in its place a National Plenary of Regionals was held on November 15

which, according to Peiró, "agreed to make contacts with political groups to build a revolutionary movement." The Regional confederations of Catalonia, the North, Levante, Andalusia, Castile and Aragon sent delegates. Galicia sent written agreements. Two hundred thousand copies of a manifesto that denounced the reactionary regime and declared the CNT to be faithful to its apolitical and libertarian principles were printed and distributed.

A general strike in Madrid in protest against police brutality was taken up by students in the University and began to spread across the country. In Barcelona the CNT took advantage of the opportunity to make a show of force, in order to demonstrate that a general strike was possible even if the Transport Union was illegal. Governor Despujols had to admit that his efforts to block the legalization of the union served no purpose. The strike was complete, other than a few trolleys operated and occupied by policemen. The students and the youth of the revolutionary left, strongly influenced by the CNT, unanimously turned to the movement. In the middle of the University Plaza they burned a portrait of the king. Begun on November 17, the strike was supposed to end on November 20, but the workers continued it until Monday, the 24th. It had spread to a number of towns in the region, and ships anchored in the harbour had to be converted into floating prisons.

At the beginning of December, 1931, the National Revolutionary Committee, which had conferred upon itself the title of Provisional Government of the Republic, appeared to rouse itself from its lethargy. In a manifesto signed by Alcalá Zamora, Alejandro Lerroux, Fernando de los Rios, Manuel Azaña, Casares Quiroga, Indalecio Prieto, Miguel Maura, Marcelino Domingo, Alvaro de Albornoz, Largo Caballero, Nicolau D'Olwer, and Martínez Barrio, it proclaimed,

The people are already in the streets marching toward the Republic. We are not affected by the violent emotions that culminate in the theoretics of a revolution, but we are moved by the sorrow of a people and the anguish of a nation. Revolution will always be a crime or madness wherever justice prevails, but it is just and right where tyranny prevails. Without the solidarity and support of the people we would not take steps to provoke and direct the revolution. We join with the people to put ourselves in a position of responsibility at the head of a national uprising that calls out to all Spaniards.

Never have so few words contained so much fraudulent blustering.<sup>4</sup> The only role they envisioned for the workers' organi-

zations was a peaceful general strike. After issuing the manifesto *Alcalá Zamora* and Miguel Maura, the future President of the Republic and the Minister of the Interior, let themselves be easily captured by the police. Other future ministers, like Prieto, fled abroad. Others, like Largo Caballero and Fernando de los Ríos, gave themselves up spontaneously to the police. The rest disappeared as if swallowed up by the earth. The UGT did not declare a general strike nor even a railway workers' strike, which was supposed to be the key to the revolt.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, exasperated by the army counterorders and delays, Captains Fermín Galán and García Hernández of the Jaca garrison took their troops to the streets, where they were soon arrested by other officers supposedly involved in the conspiracy. Galán and García Hernández were executed after a summary court martial. The only ones to make a symbolic act of defiance were the aviators led by Ramón Franco, who flew to Portugal after dropping leaflets on Madrid.

In Catalonia the general strike did not compare to the one in mid-November. Apparently everyone was awaiting the military revolt and the stoppage of the railroads. Unlike the UGT, the CNT National Committee had given the order for a general strike in a manifesto dated December 15:

The National Committee of the National Confederation of Labour, in accord with the decisions of the last National Plenary, and confident that the groups that have joined against the monarchy will carry out their obligations, has agreed to call a general strike for Monday, December 15. The scope of the action is as follows. The movement will remain peaceful except when it has orders to the contrary. In places where there is fighting, the organization will have to act in concert with other groups in the anti-royalist front in order to shorten the struggle.

The manifesto concluded,

Workers who are members of the National Confederation of Labour: let all obey the decision of the National Committee, and let all act to bring down this political system.

One of the tasks of the Catalan CNT was to incite the revolt of a number of garrisons and send an expedition to Lerida with a similar mission, since the support of the Lerida garrison was critical for the Jaca uprising. Another plot that failed was an assault on the air base at Prat de Llobregat, for which several dozen activists were arrested.

The court martial of the Revolutionary Committee in Madrid ended with prison terms of a few months, sentences that permitted parole. According to official statements of the Committee, Galán and García Hernández had impatiently anticipated the date of the uprising: the truth is that the date had once again been postponed and Casares Quiroga, the messenger sent to inform them, had arrived at Jaca late at night and preferred a warm bed to the immediate fulfillment of his urgent mission. How could one expect any more from a Revolutionary Committee whose headquarters were in the Madrid Atheneum, and who, when in prison, enjoyed the luxury of telephones and silk pyjamas.

The electoral victory of April 12, 1931, the desertion of a bewildered king, and the gift of power on a silver platter on April 14 were possible only because of the sacrifice of Galán and García Hernández. These martyrs provided the Republican cause with the charisma of blood, of sacrifice, and heroism that it had lacked. When he approved their death sentences, the king executed the monarchy.





*Casas Viejas. Top: The remains of Seisdedos' cottage. Bottom: The cemetery.*

## 5. The Republic and Its Fatal Cancer

When the Republic was proclaimed, all Spain called a holiday. The new leaders took pride in saying that the Republic had come into being without bloodshed. In the same vein Angel Pestaña declared that the peaceful revolution was a clear sign of the political maturity of the new times.

The great calamity of dictatorships is not only their violations of the rights and welfare of their citizens, but also the vacuum they leave when they disappear. Everything has to be improvised in the wake of personal power. A great hunger, both physical and spiritual, is immediately awakened. By April 14, 1931, the Spanish workers had been bound hand and foot for 14 years by the rapacity of the owners. Those writers who had not given in to the dictatorship had been censored for so many years that they were numb and needed ceaseless exercise.

The leaders of the Republic, good bourgeois that they were, decided to appease conservative economic forces, perhaps to prevent conspiracies and the flight of capital, and perhaps because they had an instinctive fear of the people. They sought to satisfy the big landowners and the landless peasants with a land reform that was neither fish nor fowl. They sought to win the army over with mild reforms like the Azaña law, which wounded the army's pride and fueled its animosities, yet solved none of the basic problems. Playing to the galleries they made demagogic attacks on the more objectionable religious orders, without really taking them in hand. These policies satisfied no one and exasperated everyone.

But the government's great mistake came when it was particularly repressive against the extreme Left. The excesses of the

Right were just as dangerous as those of the Left, if not more so. But while displaying great severity towards the Left, sometimes shelling union headquarters, and massacring demonstrators in Seville, Arnedo, and Casas Viejas, the government was curiously easy on those guilty of military revolt on August 10. It commuted the death penalty of the head of the insurrection, Sanjurjo, who was able to escape from jail, like the rich smuggler Juan March.

Without forgetting the others, two members of the first Republican government stand out in this regard. Miguel Maura, son of the infamous Antonio Maura, wanted to be thought of as a strongman and tried to resolve all problems of public order, including strikes, by force. He regarded brutality as a sign of a government's prestige. Largo Caballero, by definition the representative of the working class, favoured the union of which he was the Secretary (the UGT) and provoked the CNT with his sectarian policies.

On July 29, 1931, when the participation of right-wing Republicans in the government was called into question, Maura, given the mood of the country, assumed that the issue was his repressive policies against the CNT. He replied aggressively,

My duty is to inform the CNT, the FAI, and also you gentlemen here, that the Spanish laws form a whole. If they act as though there is a set of laws from which they are exempt—because they do not recognize the laws governing labour, arbitration boards, mixed tribunals, and above all the authority of the government, then there is also a set of rights from which they are exempt—the right to assemble, free association, and any other protective right. Let them obey the labour laws and the laws that relate them to the government; then they will be given their full rights by the government.

Maura's declaration of war on the CNT corresponds to a similar one made by the Minister of Labour, Largo Caballero. Soon after the Republic was founded, on May 7, 1931, he issued a decree establishing mixed juries, which were really arbitration boards by another name. This decree, confirmed by Parliament, the *Cortes Constituyentes*, made half of the organized Spanish proletariat illegal. The law required arbitration of any difference between workers and their exploiters and stipulated that any strike that ignored the arbitrator's decision was illegal. Even apart from this imposition, the law tended to suppress the right to strike, the only weapon the workers had for their own defense.

Both Maura's and Largo Caballero's positions were inspired by reasoning similar to that of Mola and Foronda in 1930.

On April 8, 1932, the above law was followed up by another which instituted Professional Commissions for owners and workers, a blatant attack on industrial unionism. The law was a deliberate provocation, for by these decrees the CNT, which at its June congress had some 800,000 members, was automatically made illegal, since it could hardly abandon the structural and ideological principles that were its very reason for existence. The laws of May 7, 1931, and April 8, 1932, were premeditated attacks on the "direct action" of the confederalists. They meant a state of war between the government and the CNT; the Republic had the most to lose.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the repression of which it was the object, the CNT helped to save the Republic on two critical occasions; the Sanjurjo coup on August 10, 1932, and the military uprising of July 19, 1936.

The first clash between the CNT and the government took place on June 6, 1931, when the CNT declared a strike of telephone workers. This strike was a miniature version of the Canadiense strike, a test of two powerful forces. The National Telephone Company was one of the oppressive, richly endowed monopolies so common during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. The contract with the Telephone Company was granted in perpetuity, a gross violation of the official rule that any government may rescind concessions. Indalecio Prieto himself, in a speech in the Madrid Atheneum in 1930, publicly denounced this robbery and promised that the next Republican government would rescind a contract so prejudicial to the Spanish people and the State.

The CNT, as on many other occasions, let itself be carried away by the enthusiasm of the members of the National Telephone Union (created in 1918). The 7,000 members were little versed in struggle. The almost unlimited autonomy of the individual unions within the CNT, their right to declare conflicts worthy of a strike, and their ready assumption that they possessed the degree of solidarity necessary for a strike, greatly lowered the prestige of the CNT as a whole. For many strikes were lost because of impetuosity and a lack of foresight. The inexperience of most of the telephone workers, many of whom were women, seriously hindered the struggle. The burden of the most dangerous operations, like sabotage, fell on activists from other unions. During the conflict more than 2,000 strikers were de-

tained. The Minister of Labour, in accord with tradition, quickly declared the strike illegal and the Minister of the Interior called out the Civil Guard without delay. When Largo Caballero declared that he was first of all Secretary of the UGT, and second, Minister of the Interior, he clearly established the hostility of the UGT in the conflict. A resounding triumph of the CNT at that time in such a strategic industry would have diminished the prestige of its rival. So the Secretary General of the UGT made a personal issue of the strike, in spite of his position as Minister. The struggle quickly degenerated into guerilla actions between Civil Guards and CNT saboteurs. Under these conditions there was no hope. The strike petered out. Not until the spring of 1936 did the union obtain the rehiring of those dismissed and a financial settlement.<sup>2</sup>

Provoked by monarchists, the people took revenge upon churches and convents.<sup>3</sup> Strikes and uprisings continued, countered by the Civil Guards, whom the Minister of the Interior had ordered to "fire at will". From June on, the focus of attention shifted to Andalusia. July 18-25, 1931 was the "tragic week", the "*semana trágica*" in Seville, where the *ley de fuga* was applied in the Maria Luisa Park. At that time the government issued the decree of the Defense of the Republic, later to be known as the Law of October 21, which abrogated certain constitutional rights and authorized deportations to non-metropolitan areas. The Constitution, being formulated by the Parliament, was flawed in advance by this law of exceptions. It was not the Right that voted the law, because they had withdrawn from the session after the discussion of religious reforms. (Alcalá Zamora and Miguel Maura had threatened to resign for the same reason.)

On December 21, 1931 in Castilblanco—the most inhospitable corner of Badajoz—the people killed four civil guards for their brutality. The entire village participated, and there was no way to fix individual responsibility. But a few days later the Guard took its revenge in the village of Arnedo, Logroño, leaving 15 dead and 100 wounded. General Sanjurjo, Director General of the Civil Guard, uttered the famous phrase, "The Civil Guard is the soul of Spain."

On December 9, 1931, Parliament finally approved the Constitution. The government had to resolve three problems in order to keep its promises—land, the Church, and the army. Not one of the three was resolved.

The Agrarian Reform, typical of the kind of scholasticism swallowed by Parliament, was nonsense worthy of the enlightened de-



spots of the 18th century. The facts forced them to some minor corrections, but at the beginning they wanted to set up a peasant family on every ten hectares. In 1931, the number of peasants without land was about five million; in order to homestead all of them ten Spains would have been needed, all without rocks, nicely endowed with fertile soil. What's more, since only 10,000 were to be resettled every year, a complete resettlement would have taken five centuries. But since the amount of fertile land, at most, was a third of the nation's area, the resettlements would have taken 15 centuries to carry out.<sup>4</sup>

It was Cervantes who raised "have it out with the Church" to a national motto. There was no greater attempt to "have it out" than when the Parliament of the Republic took up the religious problem. The first attempt was a radical one. All religious orders would be dissolved and their immense wealth nationalized. The budget of Clergy and Service would be eliminated, and the Spanish State separated from the Church. But two conservative ministers (the President and the Minister of the Interior) threatened to provoke a crisis by resigning if article 24 was approved. The rest of the ministers fell into line, and with them the leaders of the minority parties in Parliament. Azaña then presented an amendment, which became article 26; the religious orders would remain, and a law would be created to regulate them. The clergy would be paid for two more years. The Jesuits were dissolved, because they imposed "a special vow of obedience to an authority distinct from the legitimate authority of the State," in addition to the three canonical vows of chastity, poverty and obedience. During the so-called "*bienio negro*" (black biennium) the timid land reform was abandoned, and the clergy were again paid by the legal subterfuge of proclaiming them public servants.

The law reforming the military tried to reduce the surplus of generals and officers. The Spanish army, in spite of Spain's traditional neutrality, was the most star-studded of all Europe. Some regiments were dissolved, and the number of divisions or captain-generalcies was reduced. The law rewarded retiring officers with promotion to the next higher rank, full salary, use of uniform and weapons and passes for free travel. The same conditions applied to those officers who were retired for refusal to swear allegiance to the Republic; because, according to the official text, "the retirement from service of those who refuse to promise fidelity is not by way of sanction, but rather the termina-

tion of an agreement with the State." Those who retired with ulterior motives found in this law an ideal cover for passing from barracks to barracks and conspiring with impunity. The military uprising of 1936 is proof of the uselessness of the law and the failure of the reform.

On June 11, 1931, the National Congress of the CNT began its deliberations. Two points of view clashed immediately: one that tended toward cooperation with the republican government; another that wanted to achieve a social revolution quickly. In the first some members of the old guard were active, syndicalists par excellence like Juan Peiró, Angel Pestaña, Sebastian Clará and Pedro Massoni. In the second the moving spirits were revolutionary idealists like Francisco Ascaso, Federica Montseny, García Oliver and Buenaventura Durruti.

An impassioned debate broke out in the congress over the report of the National Committee. The extremist wing maintained that in the last days of the clandestine period the higher committees had made arrangements with politicians. Repeated references were made to the San Sebastian Pact. Although no one has ever proved the participation of the CNT in the pact of August 17, 1930, the extremists insisted that an agreement had been made for a moratorium on social unrest, especially in Catalonia, in order to let the Republic settle in and facilitate the autonomy of Catalonia within the Republic. Remarks by the Catalan leader Luis Companys had aggravated this suspicion.

Such an agreement would have been meaningless, for no responsible activist would have been able to guarantee that it could be carried out. The autonomy of the individual unions in the declaration of strikes, their fierce attachment to freedom of action, and the total lack of influence of the higher committees in professional matters and in economic claims made any attempt by the CNT to direct from above an exercise in fantasy.

This congress was one of the least constructive and perhaps one of the most impassioned in the history of the organization. While a plan for restructuring the CNT based on National Federations of Industry was approved, the plan was never put into effect because of a long, drawn-out debate. The enemies of the new system stubbornly maintained that national federations of industries involved a duplication of functions and would enmesh the organization in bureaucracy. The old organization would continue alongside the new, and offices would proliferate and become a breeding ground for bureaucrats. The ideological princi-



ples of the movement would be subverted by this bureaucracy.

Those in favour of the plan argued that concentrations of industrial workers had to be organized to counter concentrations of industries by the owners. Others replied that apart from the area of public services there were no instances in Spain of the superindustrial form of international capitalism. "And even if there were," it was added, "is it possible that we would abandon our principles and yield simply because the bourgeois economy has evolved in that way?" Indeed, much of the bourgeois industrial sector had formed into trusts, partly to counteract the concentrated structure of the "single unions" set up by the CNT since 1918. But "single" unions were combinations of the old units of worker resistance, which remained isolated in their localities. There was no direct connection between two or more unions of the same industry located in different places. The CNT was composed of local and district federations and regional confederations. But these federations had no economic-professional orientation.

A local federation of unions was a federation of the different unions in a locality—woodworking, construction, metalwork, chemical products, transport, light and energy. For example, the representative of the metalworkers went to the federation to discuss social, political or revolutionary problems, not the technical problems of a mechanic or welder. Anything else would have been absurd, since the federation was a meeting of different professions, not similar ones. Problems of technical skills and activities related to a particular technology stayed within that particular union itself, and at times even within a particular section of that union. Locksmiths and welders, masons and roofers were grouped as subdivisions of the metalworkers and construction unions.

It follows that, above the union level, the CNT was an eminently political organization (political, obviously, in an antipolitical way), a social and revolutionary organization for agitation and insurrection. The different unions of the same industry were spread out across Spain; although they were confederated, they were isolated from each other in technical, economic, and professional terms.

The system proposed was the national federation of unions of the same industry, a horizontal federalism compared to the prior vertical federalism, which would be maintained for political and insurrectional purposes. This new structure would have two

objectives: a better adaptation to the terrain of daily struggle, for short-term gains; and the kind of technical, professional, and administrative preparation necessary for long-term constructive revolutionary ends. For if syndicalism was to be substituted for capitalism in the organization of production, the CNT needed to prepare for its future responsibilities. The national federations of industries were to be schools for militants, and also for the factory committees, the future administrators of a socialized industrial economy.

Did the project raise reservations because it originated in the moderate wing? Might it also be that the Spaniard is allergic to complexities and thinks he has resolved them by turning away? In psychology, temperament and reactions, the anarcho-syndicalist is the most Spanish of Spaniards.

Shortly after the war began between the CNT and the central government over the Telephone Company, a second front was opened between the CNT and the Catalan Government. The Esquerra, the republican party that was to dominate autonomous Catalonia, could not pardon the CNT for maintaining its revolutionary stance and holding out for true autonomy, as opposed to the superficial autonomy of a regional statute. The division within the CNT, evident in the June congress, widened.

Prior political developments in Catalonia had much to do with the CNT division. Syndicalists and politicians had been in contact during the struggle against the dictatorship and the monarchy. These contacts were particularly close in the secret committees and the jails. Because Companys and his friends were likely to exercise power in the autonomous region, they were understandably interested in coming to terms with the CNT. For without the CNT, the power of an autonomous Catalonia would be limited, to say the least. Companys had been the CNT's lawyer during the heroic period, when the CNT was virtually a state within a state (1919-1923). He needed to win over the CNT at any cost, neutralize it or if this proved impossible, destroy it for the good of the future state of Catalonia.

The first skirmish between syndicalists and the Esquerra took place on May 1, 1931. The CNT held a large meeting in the Palace of Fine Arts, followed by a demonstration. The demonstration turned into a battle in front of the Government Palace because the committee charged with presenting the conclusions of the meeting insisted on entering the building with the red and black flag. The battle started as an argument with the *mozos de*

*escuadra*, the symbolic guard of Maciá, who was soon to be president. It escalated into a shoot-out with the police that left dead and injured on both sides.

The Telephone strike broke out in June, 1931. In Barcelona the conflict took on the proportions of a class war. Although the Statute of Autonomy was not approved until the end of 1932, the Esquerra had already directly and indirectly assumed control of the government. Luis Companys was the first governor of Barcelona under the Republic, installed at the behest of the CNT itself.<sup>5</sup>

The manifesto of "*treintistas*"—so called because there were 30 signers—was issued in August, 1931, by moderates in favour of cooperation with the Republic. The leading *treintistas* were fired from their posts in publications and committees. Those who did not voluntarily retire were expelled from the confederation. This led to a schism within the confederation. In the Valenciu area *treintismo* had considerable support, more than the official CNT. In Sabadell, a city near Barcelona, the unions were completely in favour of the opposition, and were consequently expelled for capitulation to the Catalanist policies of the Esquerra. Later these unions split off to join the UGT, which in Catalonia during the war would be Communist.

On the whole, the Esquerra was not successful in its effort to win over many dissidents. It also failed in its attempt to create a Catalan workers' organization: the Catalan Labour Federation (F.O.C.), which it tried to set up in opposition to the "Murcians." For like the fox and the sour grapes, Catalan politicians of the time dismissed as "Murcians" (immigrants from Murcia, a depressed area in the South of Spain) all the syndicalists they were unable to attract. Spanish politicians have always had the custom of calling those who hold revolutionary doctrines "outsiders." Anarchism, for instance, was labelled an imported product.<sup>6</sup> The new Catalan politicians exploited the crudest xenophobia by saying that the CNT was composed only of people dying from hunger who came from the poorest areas of the south of Spain, like Murcia.

These machinations did not advance the interests of the bosses of the moment, but they did aggravate the war between the CNT and the police, who under the Statute of Autonomy had been Catalanized. The accusations of Federica Montseny that follow can be taken as typical of the emotional reactions that the situation produced:

Finally, the promises made to Maciá by the syndicalist leaders so that the Statute would be approved round out the picture: when the Statute of Catalonia was approved a tolerant policy would be set up for the 'good boys' of the CNT, but the screws would be turned (in Companys' phrase) on the FAI, on the famous 'extremists' and that term would be applied to anyone who did not agree that the CNT ought to be for the government in Catalonia what the UGT is for the Republic in Madrid.

Later, groups of young nationalists from Estat Catalá—the extremist wing of the Esquerra—joined the battle. These groups ("*escamots*"), operated out of the offices of the party and used fascist tactics—kidnappings, beatings and murders—with complete impunity. In the first days of the Civil War, because of their hatred and resentment of anarcho-syndicalists, they joined the United Socialist Party (the Communist Party) en bloc.

The climate of official terror intensified when the police came under the orders of the local government. What followed was a kind of replay of the reign of Martínez Anido and Arleguí, this time by the Interior Secretary of the Government, José Dencás, and the Chief of Police, Miguel Badía. Later Dencás turned out to be a provocateur, and after the events of October, 1934, Mussolini gave him asylum. Badía died from gunshots on the eve of July 19, 1936, apparently at the hands of anarchists.

Even the Assault Guards, a nation-wide paramilitary repressive force, failed to intimidate the anarchists. Strikes multiplied to the despair of the Ministry of the Interior. Contrary to what might be thought, many of these strikes were more for moral than for material reasons. One of the most heroic strikes of the Republican period was that of the Duro-Felguera de Asturias, declared by the CNT because of the firing of some older workers without severance pay or pension. The strike affected virtually the entire town of La Felguera and, thanks to worker solidarity, was maintained for almost nine months. CNT families all over Spain vied for the honour of caring for the children of strikers. A similar situation occurred in Zaragoza during the most important of its general strikes. The Catalan authorities blocked the entrance into Catalonia of a caravan of strikers' children. That incident ended with several deaths. In 1933, 9,000 CNT members were in jail.

Miguel Maura commented on the civil guards' butchery,

Neither its weapons—the traditional Mauser, a slow action, long distance weapon—nor its uniforms, nor its rigid discipline could be

adapted to the streetfighting and the preventive action necessary in the cities. Each time that it went into action, the number of casualties was necessarily high, given its weapons and its normal procedures. After the three regulatory calls to attention, if they were attacked they had to fire in their own defense, and the guns inevitably decimated the ranks of the rebellious . . . . As soon as Angel Galarza assumed his post as Director General of Security he and I planned the creation of a new armed police corps, which we agreed from the start would be called the Assault Guards. Galarza got in touch with the army Colonel Muñoz Grandes, a capable man and an exceptional organizer, and he agreed to form the corps that we had conceived.<sup>8</sup>

It should be added that the assault guard was very soon armed with heavy weapons, machine guns, hand grenades and tanks. It lacked only heavy artillery.

Maura tried to justify the severity of the government as a response to anarchist aggression:

The National Confederation of Labour . . . made up of the anarchists and the anarchizers of the working class, did not hide its disappointment at the moderation of the revolution, which they were prepared to bypass and overrun before it was hardly underway. The month after the proclamation of the Republic, the left wing began its attacks, which continued without any major interruption until the last hours of the regime, making things easy for right wing propaganda and recruitment.<sup>9</sup>

Beginning with the decline of the monarchy, certain people began to act like republicans in order to seek protection under the Republic for the privileges and venalities typical of the monarchic order. In denouncing this posture, the anarcho-sindicalist press singled out, among others, Miguel Maura and Alcalá Zamora. The former has confessed that he proclaimed himself a republican in the following context:

Our problem was as follows: The monarchy had committed suicide, and so we either had to join the nascent revolution to defend within it legitimate conservative principles, or we had to let the left wing and the workers' organizations have a free hand, a very dangerous alternative.<sup>10</sup>

Alcalá Zamora, in the speech in which he hung up his monarchic uniform, was also straightforward:

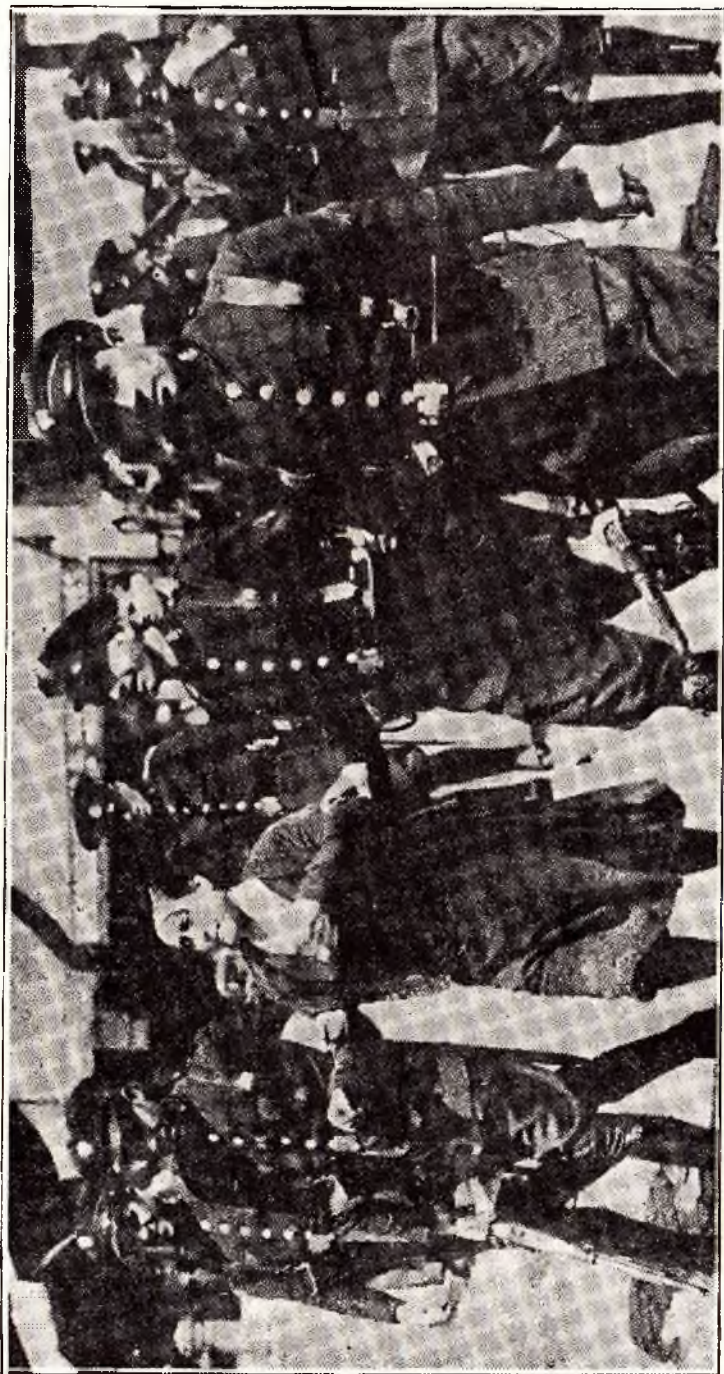
I will serve, govern, propose, and defend a viable, governmental,

and conservative Republic that by its nature attracts the governing forces of the middle class and the intellectuals of Spain. I will not be another Kerensky and implant in my country a convulsive, epileptic Republic that is full of enthusiasm and devoid of reason.

The anarchists, who clearly wanted something more than a conservative and "civilized" Republic of many classes, soon passed from strikes to insurrections.







*Woman being arrested by the Assault Guard.*

## 6. The Cycle of Insurrections

On January 18, 1932, an insurrection broke out in the mining district of Figols in the Catalan Pyrenees. The insurgents proclaimed libertarian communism and maintained complete order until the troops arrived. The President of the government, Manuel Azaña, gave strict orders to the Captain General of the region. "I told the general I was giving him fifteen minutes to eliminate them after the troops arrived." It took the troops five days to crush the rebellion.

This sparked a sympathy strike in Barcelona: hundreds of prisoners were detained on boats in the harbour. The repression extended across Catalonia to Levante and Andalusia. The best known prisoners were deported to Spanish West Africa (Rio de Oro) and to the Canary Island of Fuerteventura. Buenaventura Durruti and Francisco Ascaso were two of the 104 deportees.

The deportation was on February 10, 1932, and the CNT responded at once with a general strike. The anarchists in Tarasa declared a rebellion and took over the town hall, raising the red and black banner of anarcho-syndicalism. They besieged the barracks of the Civil Guard, but reinforcements came to the guards from the neighbouring city of Sabadell, and the battle spread throughout the town. Military troops were called in and it was to them that the last anarchist stronghold, the town hall, surrendered. In the subsequent trials sentences of 4, 6, 12 and 20 years were imposed.

Protests against the deportations continued, and on May 29 they reached a climax with mass meetings, demonstrations, clashes with the police and explosions. The jails were jammed with prisoners, most of them held without charges. In Barcelona

the prisoners of the government, seeing that their protests were to no avail, set fire to the jail and rioted. The warden, who put down the riot brutally, was shot in the street shortly afterwards.

The Right thought its time had come. On the 10th of August, there were uprisings in Madrid and Seville. In Madrid, assaults on the Ministries of War and Communications were unsuccessful. General Sanjurjo was the military commander in Seville, and he led the garrison in the uprising. The working class put him to flight, and the anarchists led the popular reaction that followed, in which all the ruling class headquarters were burned. A summary court martial condemned Sanjurjo to death, but the governor quickly commuted the sentence to life imprisonment.

The anarchists had to resort to insurrections. They were moved partly by response to repression, partly by the call for the final revolution that was the cry of the extremist wing of the movement. The extremists who had expelled the moderates felt an obligation to be revolutionary. In the debates preceding the expulsions, a polarization took place. The pessimism of some led to a kind of optimism in others, just as the cowardice of one who flees increases the bravery of one who pursues. To prove the validity of their accusations of impotence, defeatism or treason on the part of the moderates, the extremists had to make a show of their vigour. In the big meetings, where up to 100,000 people gathered, libertarian communism was declared to be within everyone's grasp. Not to believe in the imminence of libertarian communism was grounds for suspicion.

The insurrection of January 8, 1933, was to be preceded by a railway strike, but the secret was poorly kept. The confederal press of the time, especially the Madrid editions of the daily *CNT*, talked a great deal about the imminent revolution. The police, the new assault guards and the veteran civil guards were ready for anything—they knew all about the coming revolution. But fidelity to revolutionary promises was a point of honour among the confederalists, with sometimes questionable results.

The railway workers did not strike. Most of them were members of the national union (UGT) which followed the official line; a UGT union could have been expected to obey Indalecio Prieto, the Minister of Public Works. The movement was decapitated from the start. A routine police check of a car in Barcelona led to the detention of those who were to lead the rebellion, among others, Garcia Oliver. Shots were exchanged in front of the barracks, and the old story was repeated: instead of the

troops who formed part of the conspiracy passing to the revolutionaries with arms and baggage, the gates were locked and the guard was doubled. The guards, after the usual "Halt!", fired desperately on any suspicious group of persons. History also repeated itself in the streets, where the people, cold, indifferent, or afraid, locked themselves in their houses. There was serious fighting in the *barrios* and the outlying districts, and even an heroic stand by the militant member of the Gastronomic Union, Joaquín Blanco. There were incidents in Tarrasa and in Saradañola-Ripollet libertarian communism was declared. Four assailants met death in front of the Panera garrison in Lerida. A number of villages in Valencia proclaimed libertarian communism: Ribarroja, Betera, Pedralba, and Bugarra, but they knew they were isolated when the troops arrived. They were left to choose flight, surrender, or selling their lives dearly.

Again the jails were filled with prisoners. Judges held off until the guards had time to take out their anger in tortures. For those who were tortured it had all happened so quickly: raising the red and black flag in the Town Hall, proclaiming libertarian communism, burning property deeds in the town square, and announcing the abolition of money and the end of exploitation of man by man.

In Andalusia there were outbreaks in Arcos de la Frontera, Utrera, La Rinconada, Alcala de los Gazules and Medina Sidonia, but the critical one occurred in Casas Viejas, a remote village in the Province of Cadiz. Libertarian communism had been proclaimed there without any difficulties or victims. All was peace and order until the police arrived. Assault Guards went into the village shooting, leaving several dead in the streets. Then they went into the houses and began to line up prisoners.

In the process they come to a hut with a roof of straw and dry branches. They break in. A shot is heard, and a soldier spins. Another shot and another soldier falls. Another is wounded as he attempts to sneak in through the yard. The rest retreat. Who is inside? Old "Seisdedos" ("Sixfingers"), a sixty year old with a tribe of children and grand children. The old man will not give up. The others cannot leave without getting hurt. The guards take their positions and receive reinforcements. They use their machine guns and hand grenades. "Seisdedos" does not give in. He saves his shots and uses them well. Two more guards fall. The struggle lasts all night. Two of the children escape, covered in

their retreat by someone who dies riddled with bullets. Dawn is coming and they want to end it once and for all. The hand grenades bounce back, or their impact is cushioned by the thatched roof. The bullets are blocked by the stones. Somebody has an idea. They gather rags, handfuls of cotton, and make balls with them, which they dip in gasoline. Red flashes break the darkness like meteors. The roof crackles and turns into a torch. Soon flames envelop the hut. The machine guns seem to smell blood. Someone comes out, a burning girl. The machine guns leap and leave little fires burning on the ground that smell of burnt flesh. The hut, like an enormous pyre, soon collapses. A sinister cry, a mixture of pain, anger and sarcasm echoes through the night. And afterwards the quiet silence of the coals. It is all over.

In its persecution of the Left the men of government apparently did not realize the weakness of their own position, nor the alarming growth of the Right. By 1933 erosion within and opposition without had taken its toll. Right and Left joined together against the Casas Viejas crime. Captain Rojas was tried and, because of his statements, the Director General of Security was also tried. The latter claimed to have received direct orders from the Minister of the Interior, Casares Quiroga, who had received them from the Prime Minister, Azaña. But the case was not pursued any further. The orders from above had been, "No wounded and no prisoners, shoot for the belly."

The leitmotif of the government leaders was that the CNT was illegal. For that reason the unions were always being shut down, and confederal publications suppressed. But they themselves were the ones who outlawed the CNT by the law of April 8, 1932. Another government refrain was that the CNT had been taken over by a handful of anarchists from the FAI. But in their public relations campaigns against the FAI they achieved just the opposite of what they intended. The workers were attracted to the FAI because of the bold action attributed to it. In those days the membership of the FAI was never less than 30,000.

In a speech on June 5, 1933, a former minister F. Gordón Ordás said,

When there is an action, the illegal unions are shut down; when the action is over, the illegal unions open up again. Instead of this weak-kneed policy, how much more useful it would have been if the government had taken account of the two very different tendencies within the Spanish syndicalist movement, and put an end once and for all to the public activity of the four or five hundred

anarchists in Spain, who have taken over the CNT, and on the other hand, by the many subtle means that the government has at its disposal, supported the activities of the group known as the *Treinta*, who are syndicalists not anarchists, and who have complaints of a social nature, and even revolutionary ones, but who go about making them in a different way than the FAI does. Now, since they have separated from the CNT, these men, who could be termed more conservative in their tactics, have formed a labour organization, and we should be interested in making sure that it functions legally. In order to ensure this there is only one thing to do: keep up an inflexible struggle against all illegal organizations.<sup>1</sup>

The Rightists attacked on two fronts: the Monarchists led by Martínez de Velasco, and the Fascists led by Gil Robles. Neither of these two men believed in the Republic. On December 9th, the President of the Republic dissolved the Parliament. There was no objection. The Socialists, according to their literature, were convinced that the move served their interests. Together with Lerroux they were disaffected, and the strong minority of Lerrouxists began to obstruct the deliberations of the Parliament. The Right had taken up the Casas Viejas incident for its own ends. The President of the Republic, a fervent Catholic, had his own complaints against the Parliament, which had passed article 26 against the clergy. The decree of dissolution named a new government, headed by Martínez Barrio. In the elections of November 19, 1933, the Left was decisively defeated; the *bienio negro* had begun.

People have explained this turn of events by the advent of women's suffrage. But apart from the sources of erosion already mentioned, there is no doubt that the rout of the Left was caused by the CNT's widespread abstentionist campaign, under the banner of Casas Viejas. All of the CNT's efforts were turned toward an unprecedented strike: a strike of voters. Numberless meetings were held, and reams of literature distributed until the slogan "Don't Vote" became common usage. Two great dailies, *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona and *CNT* of Madrid, and a multitude of weeklies spread the slogan "Don't Vote" through villages and hamlets with syndicalist sympathies. On the eve of the election a monster rally was held in the Plaza de Toros Monumental of Barcelona, at which 100,000 persons listened to popular speakers like Domingo Germinal, V. Orobón Fernández and Buenaventura Durruti. The theme of the meeting was: "Instead of elections, a social revolution."



One more time the CNT had to keep its word. The revolution was set for December 8, 1933. In Barcelona it started with a sensational prison escape through a tunnel leading into the sewers and many of those sentenced for events in Tarrasa the previous year were able to get away.

As in January, 1931, the Revolutionary Committee in Zaragoza, including the noted Basque theoretician of libertarian communism, Dr. Isaac Puente, were quickly arrested. The National Committee of the CNT were also detained. (Approximately a month later, on January 24, 1934, a large armed band held up the trial judge and confiscated the records of the indictment.)

The rebellion was centred in Aragon and the Rioja region, many of whose villages proclaimed libertarian communism, as did the village of Hospitalet in the Province of Barcelona. In Villanueva de la Serena a group of soldiers along with a Sargeant Sopena, joined the rebellion. (It is worth noting that the regions punished for the previous insurrection, Catalonia, Levante and Andalusia, did not participate in this one.) Jails and stockades were filled with prisoners, and in station houses and police headquarters the interrogators went to work. The unions and the confederal papers were once again suppressed.

When order was re-established, Lerroxx took over the government. The C.E.D.A. (Spanish Confederation of Independent Rights), which dominated Parliament along with Lerroxx's party had planned a three-phase program: let Lerroxx govern alone; govern with Lerroxx; and govern without Lerroxx. More than 200 Rightist deputies were sitting in Parliament.

As soon as the Socialists saw they had been deprived of power, they turned their thoughts to revolution. During the electoral campaign in Murcia Largo Caballero, soon to be known as the "Spanish Lenin", had said,

We never said that we were going to socialize everything at once. For this reason we accepted and defended a transitional period in which the working class, with all the resources of political power in its hands, would complete the job of socialization and the economic and social disarming of the bourgeoisie. That is what we call the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that is what we are heading for.<sup>2</sup>

This was the first time that Spanish socialists had talked in these terms. The change of position was caused by a division in the party and in the UGT, where, nonetheless, Largo Caballero



maintained control. The pro-Caballero Socialists began to speak of an alliance with the syndicalists.

In two consecutive issues in February, 1934, the Madrid daily *La Tierra*, an official organ of the CNT, published an influential essay entitled, 'Revolutionary Alliance, Yes: Factional Opportunism, No!', by the confederal activist V. Orobón Fernández. Orobón's intention was to bring the Socialists out into the open. But he also had to change the minds of other anarchists. The confederalists, with the exception of the Asturians and the Castilians, were loath to consider any alliance with the Socialists. The injuries inflicted by the government were too fresh in their minds. Orobón, who realized the problem, wrote,

I know there are comrades who will say, 'Are you naive enough to think that the violent talk of the Socialists has anything to do with true revolutionary commitment?' To which we reply that, as things are going now, with their bridges to democratic collaboration already burned, or seriously weakened, the Socialists will have to choose between meekly allowing themselves to be annihilated, as in Germany, or save themselves by fighting alongside the other sectors of the proletariat. Others will say, 'How can we forget the part played by the Socialists in making and enforcing the laws, and in the repression during the sad and tragic period of "social-Azañism"?' To this question, with all its bitter truth, we must reply that the only opportunism permissible is that which serves the cause of the revolution. The unity of the Spanish proletariat is an undeniable necessity if the reactionaries are to be defeated. To oppose the revolutionary alliance, even in good faith, is to oppose the revolution.

Taking up the terms of an alliance, Orobón also weighed its pitfalls:

Difficulties not easily solved will exist virtually from the start. Largo Caballero speaks of the 'complete takeover of public power'; the Communists want to set up 'the dictatorship of the proletariat'; and the anarcho-syndicalists seek to establish libertarian communism. . . . From the start we will have to drop such phrases as 'the conquest of public power' and 'the dictatorship of the proletariat' as being too sectarian, and not expressing enough about the practical program of a social revolution.

Since deep-down, and according to their principal theoreticians, the Communists and the Socialists also aspire, in the last phase of development, to a classless and stateless society, one of the a-

greements of the alliance should be to move toward that goal whenever possible. That is to say, in the new social order coercive structures would not be set up lightly, or as a whim to conform to the formal plan of one faction, but only when absolutely indispensable for the efficient channelling of revolutionary endeavour.

Finally he proposed the following guiding principles:

1. Agreement on an unequivocally revolutionary strategy that excludes any kind of collaboration with the bourgeois regime and seeks to overthrow it with a speed limited only by tactical considerations.
2. Agreement on a workers' revolutionary democracy, that is, on the will of the majority of the proletariat as the common denominator and the determining factor of the new order.
3. Immediate socialization of the means of production, transport, exchange, housing and finance; reintegration of the unemployed in the productive process; reorientation of the economy to increase productivity and raise the standard of living of the working people as much as possible; establishment of a rigidly egalitarian distributive system; conversion of products from commodities to social wealth; and transformation of work into an activity that is open to all and is the source of all rights.
4. Municipal and industrial-type organizations, federated by type of activity, and nationally confederated, will maintain unity in the structure of the economy.
5. Any other executive body needed to take care of activities other than economic ones will be elected, controlled, and can be removed by the people.

It was difficult for the CNT and the FAI to get used to the idea of an alliance with their Socialist oppressors. With the Communists it turned out to be impossible. Although the same effort was made, that alliance made progress only in Asturias, perhaps because of the power of the Right there. The Asturian delegates had already avoided a battle by merging the two most important workers' unions in the confederal congress of 1919. In June of that year the Asturian delegation to the National Plenary turned up with a unilateral pact signed with the local UGT. They were reproached for their lack of discipline, and told that the only possible alliance could come in the streets, fighting. The Asturian delegation replied, "in social struggles, as in other wars, the victory always goes to those who previously got together and jointly organized their forces." In any case, the previous National Ple-

nary had in February made some public proposals to the UGT, which had gone unanswered.

The unilateral pact signed by the Asturians established, among other things, "that the signatories to this pact will work together until they obtain a social revolution in Spain and establish a regime of economic, social and political equality founded on socialist and federalist principles." An executive committee was formed, made up of the participating organizations, to draw up "a plan of action which, through the revolutionary efforts of the proletariat, would assure the triumph of the revolution in its many aspects, and consolidate it according to the agreement." The agreement would terminate once the new regime was in power with its own bodies "elected by the free will of the working class." It ended with this clause:

Considering that this pact constitutes an agreement of working class organizations to coordinate their efforts against the bourgeois regime and abolish it, those organizations that have any relations with the bourgeois parties will automatically break them off.

The Asturian Socialist Federation signed the pact.<sup>3</sup>

The *bienio negro* employed the same repressive tactics as previous governments. The only difference was that the Socialists who had perfected them were now suffering from them as well. The Right took advantage of its influence to have those sentenced for the August 10th uprising pardoned, to remove the economic sanctions that had been imposed on the big landowners and the *grandees* of Spain for their complicity in those events, to undo land reform, to re-establish the rights of the clergy and parochial schools, and to dismantle town councils led by the opposition, especially after the events of October. This is when the Falange and the Ultra-right of Gil Robles began to make themselves known.

On October 3, after a cabinet shuffle, three ministers from the CEDA joined the government. On October 6, UGT insurrections broke out in Catalonia and Asturias. In Catalonia the pretext was the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees' annulment of a law passed by the Catalan parliament setting a new kind of contract for sharecroppers. This law had been one of the electoral promises of the Esquerra, but its revocation under normal circumstances would hardly have sparked a rebellion.

Although it seems absurd, one constantly has to ask whether the Socialists meant to start a true revolution in Spain. If the

answer is affirmative, the questions keep coming: Why did they not make the action a national one? Why did they try to do without the powerful national CNT? Is a peaceful general strike revolutionary? Was what happened in Asturias expected, or were orders exceeded? Did they only mean to scare the Radical-CEDA government with their action?

That the absence of the CNT did not bother them is clear from their silence in regard to the National Plenary's request on February 13:

The CNT, in keeping with its revolutionary mission, and attentive to the requests of the representative bodies of the UGT, is, as always, ready to participate with all its energies in any revolutionary action which tends toward the liberation, once and for all, of the working class, as long as such an action does not involve an agreement or compromise with political forces or parties. Therefore, the CNT calls upon the UGT to make known clearly and publicly its revolutionary aspirations. But let it remember that, when revolution is spoken of, what is meant is not merely a changeover of control, as on April 14, but rather the complete suppression of capitalism and the State.

It does not appear that a concerted action had been agreed upon by the Socialist strategists and the Catalan insurgents. In *Mis Recuerdos*, [*My Memories*], not an autobiography based on documents, but rather a series of quick impressions, Largo Caballero gives a deplorable picture of the preparations for the action, which he often simply calls a "strike". Based on the book, one would have to conclude that the Socialists relied only on themselves, and had a very naive idea of what a social revolution would entail. The program for the revolution drawn up by Prieto, according to Caballero, differs little from an electoral platform. The magnitude of the response in Asturias seems to have surprised the Special Commission that gave the go-ahead for the insurrection.

The revolution in the mining zone began with the shriek of sirens. The first fighting took place around the barracks of the Civil Guard. Then the victorious miners marched on Oviedo, which they entered after blowing up enemy strong points with dynamite. But they could not take the Pelayo and Santa Clara barracks, and machine guns in the towers of the cathedral caused innumerable casualties.

In Gijón the anarchists gained control of the working-class

districts, but the shortage of weapons kept them from being fully effective. In the industrial city of La Felguera they made armour plating for vehicles and produced war materials, especially cartridges. In the villages the revolution took whatever ideological form happened to predominate.

In Mieres the Revolutionary Committee decreed: "Every person with arms must report to the Revolutionary Committee for identification. Anyone found with undeclared weapons will be very severely judged." The Marxist wing of the revolution had an obsession about obedience to authority. It produced nothing more than drastic orders and military barking. The libertarian wing, at the other extreme, was characterized by humanitarian weakness:

Companions (said a proclamation in Grado), we are creating a new society, and just as in the biological world birth is accompanied by physical wrenching and mental anguish; yet indeed, it is important for us to lay down our weapons, we want to free the youth in order to create and not destroy. Each household should furnish itself only with what is absolutely necessary. If a family can pass a few hours without an article, it should not ask for it. Women! for your children who will enjoy a better world, help us in this effort. You, too, be worthy of the moment. Workers! Long live the Revolution.

The Asturian activist Avelino González Mellada wrote:

La Felguera belongs to the township of Langreo, whose capital is Sama. The two towns, of equal size, are separated only by the Nalón River. Two bridges link them, that of the Northern railway, and the highway. The insurrection triumphed immediately in both the industrial and the mining town. Sama was organized militarily: dictatorship of the proletariat, red army, Central Committee, discipline, authority. La Felguera chose libertarian communism: the people in arms, liberty to come and go, respect for the engineers of the Duro-Felguera, public deliberation of all matters, abolition of money and the rational distribution of food and clothing. Enthusiasm and gaiety in La Felguera: a barracks-type sullenness in Sama. The bridges were held by guards, complete with officers. No one could come or go in Sama without a safe conduct, or walk in the streets without the password. All of this was ridiculously useless, because government troops were far away, and the Sama bourgeoisie were disarmed and neutralized. The workers of Sama who did not belong to the Marxist religion preferred to go over to La Felguera, where at least they could breathe. Side by side there

were two concepts of socialism: the authoritarian and the libertarian; on each bank of the Nalón a city began a new life: with a dictatorship in Sama, and with liberty in La Felguera.<sup>4</sup>

Almost as soon as the revolution began, government expeditionary troops arrived on the Asturian border. The lack of arms and munitions led to the fall of Gijón on the 10th. General Ochoa's column, delayed at Grado, detoured by way of Aviles and advanced on Oviedo. At the port of Musel, under the protection of the fleet, contingents of the Tercio (mercenary shock troops of Spaniards, foreigners and Morroccans) and regular troops from Africa disembarked. The fortresses in the capital city held the miners' battalions immobilized. On the 18th, with the enemy near Oviedo, Gijón fallen, and the villages bombed by the air force, the Revolutionary Committee put an end to the uprisings with a moving declaration:

We consider that a truce is necessary in the struggle, that our arms must be laid down to avoid a greater tragedy. It is a halt on the way, a parenthesis, a rest for recuperation. We remind you, dear comrades, of this historic truth: the proletariat may be beaten back, but never overcome. Everyone must get to work and continue the struggle for the victory!

The repression in Asturias was outrageous: prisoners packed into cells, beatings, pistol-whippings, bones dislocated, genitals kicked, murders, mass killings. In Villafria whole families, even entire neighbourhoods, were massacred by knife or rifle by Moorish mercenaries or legionnaires. In the slag heap of Carbayin, a score of prisoners, brutally tortured before they were massacred, were buried. At the barracks that had been besieged, people were shot *en masse*, without trial and without the knowledge of superior officers, who, in any case, were looking the other way. It was then that Lerroux uttered the phrase, "My hand will not shake when I sign death sentences." Doval, colonel of the Civil Guard and chief of the repression, echoing Thiers, said, "We have to exterminate the seeds of revolution in the mothers' wombs."

In Barcelona events took a grotesque turn. There the CNT had a difficult time because the insurgents were its worst enemies. On the eve of the rebellion the Catalan police jailed as many anarchists as they could put their hands on, including Durruti. The police themselves declared the general strike and forced the workers to leave their workplaces. The union offices had

been shut down for some time. The press censor had completely blacked out the October 6 issue of *Solidaridad Obrera*.

At once a CNT manifesto was circulated:

We cannot remain passive. As a revolutionary proletariat working for itself and making its own decisions, we must act decisively to put an end to the present state of affairs. We must fulfill our libertarian principles avoiding all contact with official institutions that limit popular participation to suit their own ends.

Then the manifesto gave the following instructions:

1. The immediate opening of union offices, and the massing of workers at our buildings.
2. A demonstration of our antifascist and libertarian principles, as opposed to all kinds of authoritarian principles.
3. Mobilization of the Barrio Committees, whose function is to transmit precise instructions during the struggle.
4. All unions of the area should maintain close contact with these committees, which will guide the struggle by coordinating forces.

When the woodworkers began to open their offices, they were attacked by the police, and a furious gunfight ensued. The official radio immediately reported the event, saying that the fight had already begun against the FAI fascists. In the afternoon large numbers of police and *escamots* turned out to attack and shut down the editorial offices of *Solidaridad Obrera*, as well as the shop where the paper was printed. At nightfall the Assault Guards began their strike, aided by large groups of civilians armed with Winchesters, in front of the *Generalidad* (the Catalan Legislative Assembly). There they were addressed by President Companys, who ended his speech proclaiming a Catalan State within the Spanish Republic and giving asylum in Catalonia to the provisional government.

At once General Batet declared a state of war. About 500 soldiers easily dispersed the rioters, including the Assault Guards, who threw down their arms and went back to their homes. A few rounds of shells without explosives against the facade of the *Generalidad* and the Town Hall were enough to make the revolutionary committee give in.

The confederalists picked up the weapons lying in the streets. The army thought it strange that the weapons dropped by the *escamots* in their flight should disappear without a trace and for months made careful searches, surrounding blocks of houses. The CNT had buried the weapons, and the ones that did not rust



were put to good use on July 19, 1936 in anarchist hands.

The *bienio negro* came to an end due to a combination of factors. It was threatened by Fascists and Monarchists from the Right. Falangists and Young Socialists clashed. The Monarchist Right bitterly attacked the governing coalition for its "weakness in the repression" and also criticized the vacillations of the CEDA. The Falangists now pointed their pistols at the heads of their victims. At the same time the leaders of the Left began to emerge. Largo Caballero, imprisoned for the October insurrection, was released. Azaña too was freed for lack of evidence and, because of his book against the uprising, *Mi Rebelión en Barcelona*. He began a series of outdoor speeches heard by hundreds of thousands of persons at places like Comillas and Mes-talla.

In these circumstances a sensational scandal broke: the question of *estraperlo*. The *estraperlo* was a roulette wheel equipped with a spring that enabled the players to be fleeced at will. A complaint against the President of the Republic had repercussions in the courts and Parliament. For their complicity in the installation of the apparatus the Director General of Security, the Minister of the Interior, and the Prime Minister himself were accused. The press was gagged by censorship, but that merely made matters worse for the government. The *estraperlo* affair, exaggerated and embellished, went from person to person, and even entered the language as a synonym for fraud and black market activity. The scandal was compounded by a complaint against Lerroux's secretary for indemnifying the shipbuilder Tayá with 3,000,000 pesetas. Lerroux was disgraced, the government, and then Parliament, were dissolved and new elections were set.

The memory of the October repression, of the 30,000 prisoners, and the scandal of the *estraperlo* tipped the electoral scales in favour of the Left. With the help of the electoral law they gained an overwhelming majority. The absolute results of the balloting showed the Right that their defeat was not a major one.<sup>5</sup> The Right had overcome the inferiority complex they had had in the first days of the Republic. They had received the hot breath of revolution full in the face. Furthermore, at the beginning of 1934, when the anarchists wound down their revolution, and the socialists began to mount theirs, the monarchist Right was not far behind. On March 31, 1934, an agreement was signed in Rome by officers, Monarchists, and Traditionalists and Italo Balbo and Mussolini. The Italian fascists promised to help overthrow the

Spanish Republic by delivering "at once 20,000 guns, 20,000 hand grenades, 200 machine guns and 1,500,000 pesetas." In other words, when the pirate ship *Turquesa* run by the Socialists unloaded its shipment of arms in Asturias the Ultra-right was already practising with its own weapons in the mountains of Navarre. The help from Mussolini "was only a beginning and would be augmented with larger contributions at the opportune moment."<sup>6</sup>

After the dissolution of Parliament the Ultra-right embarked on a campaign of provocation. Did it seek to increase tension and set up the psychological conditions for a military coup? At times these provocations had the character of a dress rehearsal for the real performance.<sup>7</sup> The CNT picked up rumours of a right-wing military coup and, on February 14, published a prophetic manifesto:

Day by day the suspicion grows that right-wing elements are ready to provoke a military coup. Morocco appears to be the focal point of the conspiracy. The insurrection is subject to the outcome of the elections. The plan will be put into effect if the Left wins. We do not support the Republic, but we will contribute all our efforts for an all-out fight against fascism in order to defeat the traditional oppressors of the proletariat.

On March 18, the Minister of War, General Masquelet, responded to a new wave of rumours with the following indignant communiqué:

The Minister of War has been apprised of insistent rumours about the state of mind of commissioned and non-commissioned army officers. These rumours, which are absolutely false and groundless, clearly tend to arouse the fears of the public at large, sow a hatred of the military class, and undermine, if not destroy, military discipline, the fundamental basis of the army.

The CNT held a special National Congress on May 1 in Zaragoza. The most interesting results were: the definitive healing of the schism; an analysis of the errors in the recent revolutionary uprising; a program for libertarian communism; and a proposition for a revolutionary alliance with the UGT. The most important features of this last resolution follow:

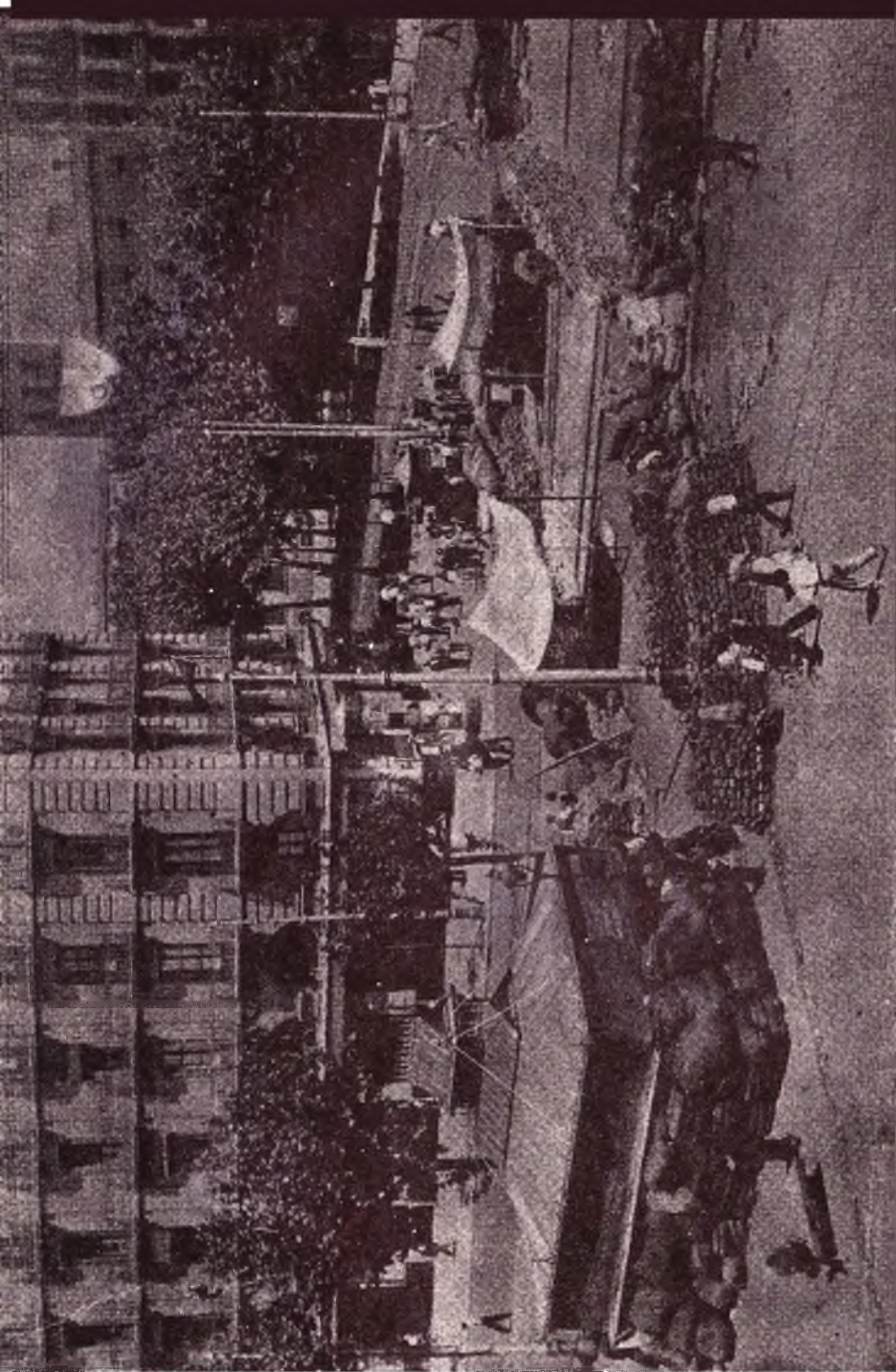
First, by signing the pact the UGT implicitly recognizes the failure of collaboration with the political and parliamentary system. As a logical consequence of this recognition, it will terminate any kind

of political or parliamentary collaboration with the present regime. Second, for the revolution to be effective, it must completely destroy the social and political system that regulates life in the country. Third, the new way of life born of the revolution will be decided on by the free choice of workers freely gathered together.

Once more the invitation was not answered.

Events came faster and faster. Falangist terrorism, "the dialectic of pistols," intensified. Giménez de Asúa, Largo Caballero and Eduardo Ortega y Gasset barely escaped the bullets. Was this an attempt to provoke revenge upon one of the Rights' "fat cats"? Finally a lieutenant in the Assault Guards, the Leftist José del Castillo, was killed and three days later his fellow officers took vengeance on the leader of the National Block of Rightists, Calvo Sotelo, who had declared himself in open Parliament to be a Fascist. Was that the psychological effect the Right had sought? A military takeover now had its banner, its martyr, its mystique.





*Barricades in Barcelona, July 1936.*

## 7. Spain in Flames

On July 17, 1936 the army of Spanish Morocco began the revolt which spread to the Peninsula within a day. The leaders who made themselves known were Generals Yagüe in Morocco, Quiépo de Llano in Seville and Mola in Navarre. The commander-in-chief, General Sanjurjo, died when the plane carrying him to Spain crashed in Portugal.

The government of the Republic, which had minimized the significance of the events, began to realize the scope of the revolt and resigned. Caught short, the new president, Martínez Barrio tried to negotiate with the rebels instead of organizing a defense. The government either lacked arms or feared to arm the people. In any case the insurgents, gaining new strength from the weakness of the government, took advantage of the delay. It was the people, starting from zero, who defended the Republic.

The different movements and parties began to come out of their initial shock. The unions called the people to action; the parties expressed their loyalty to the government. The night of the 18th, the National Committee of the CNT called on syndicalists, by way of Radio Madrid, to prepare themselves for war. In Barcelona a group of CNT activists stormed several boats anchored in the harbour and removed the weapons on board. They were deposited at the Metalworkers' Union after a dispute with police sent by the Catalan government to recover them. The Regional Committee of the CNT for Catalonia at once issued a manifesto calling for a general strike the moment the troops appeared in the streets. The military offensive took place in the early morning hours of July 19. In virtually all of Spain troops left their garrisons, declared a state of war, and occupied strategic points. To disguise their revolt they

shouted pro-Republican slogans. Falangists, Rightists and reserve officers were mixed in with the soldiers.

The defeatist government of Martínez Barrio was followed by another, led by Dr. José Giral. In fact there was no government. The people were the real government. Thanks to them the revolution was crushed in Barcelona and Madrid, and later in Malaga, Valencia, San Sebastian, Gijon and other cities. The rebels took control of two large, unconnected areas: the northern Meseta of Castile, including Navarre and Galicia; and in the south, the area around Seville, Cordoba and Granada. In addition to Morocco, they held the Canary and Balearic Islands, with the exception of the fortified island of Menorca.

General Franco flew in from the Canaries aboard an English plane. The Republic controlled the North, the Cantabrian range from Asturias to the frontier at Irun, virtually all of the former kingdom of Aragon-Catalonia, Valencia along with Murcia and Almeria, New Castile and Extremadura. The situation of Malaga, caught between the mountains and the sea, was tenuous, and that of some other parts of Andalusia, especially Cadiz and Huelva, confused.

Barcelona and Madrid were the principal rebel objectives. Barcelona was the capital of the autonomous government of Catalonia, the headquarters of the anarcho-syndicalist movement, the largest industrial city, one of the principal ports and the main commercial frontier with Europe. Madrid was the capital of the Republic, the official seat of the government and the diplomatic corps, and the geographic centre of the Peninsula. A quick occupation of these cities would have ended the war. With Barcelona and Madrid, the military could have won in eight days.

In Madrid the people had to besiege and overcome the barracks by assault. They, in turn, were threatened by the presence of insurgent garrisons in Toledo, Guadalajara and Alcalá de Henares. Forces in these cities planned to coordinate their attack on Madrid with Mola's columns, which were advancing across the Castilian plains. But Mola had to cross the Guadarrama mountains, which protect the northern side of Madrid. The impossible happened in time. The poorly armed people of Madrid captured the Montaña barracks and so broke the chain that surrounded the city.

In Barcelona, the insurgents were apparently planning a classic *pronunciamiento*, to be organized by General Goded, known for his expertise in manoeuvres. He had come to the city secretly from Mallorca. The Catalan capital had one of the largest



garrisons in Spain quartered both in the centre and on the outskirts of the city. The army occupied the city on the morning of July 19 but the people struck back at once. In the working-class districts the workers set up the first barricades and anarchist experience in street fighting was put to good use. In the centre of Barcelona, anarchist groups met the enemy and gave them no rest. The first counterattacks came from the balconies of houses. Union locals became little fortresses. Militants from the outlying districts came in to the nerve centres of the fighting in order to divide and subdivide the enemy with simultaneous battles. There, and in the port area (Plaza de Cataluña, Ramblas and Paralelo) the struggle took on an heroic aspect. Caught up in the spirit of the events, the Assault Guards joined the people, and the Civil Guards, at first neutral, finally followed their example. The enemy soon were separated and surrounded. The soldiers were the first to give in; they joined the people with their weapons. The places still under siege were the University, the Telephone Building, the great hotels Ritz and Colón, the Post Office and Telegraph Building, the Atarazanas fortress and the nearby Artillery School. The rebel command post was in the Captain General's Headquarters.

Militant workers intercepted an artillery column heading from Pueblo Nuevo to the Civil Government and Captaincy General by way of Barceloneta. Finding themselves under fire the soldiers chose to surrender to the people and were received with open arms. With their cannon now operated by spontaneous artillery men, the command headquarters was forced to give in. But the struggle had not ended.

The Atarazanas fortress still held out, besieged by the metalworkers who were urged on by Buenaventura Durruti and Francisco Ascaso. Ascaso fell dead with a bullet in the head, and this tremendous loss redoubled the fierceness of the siege. The fortress was taken, along with its armoury and powder magazines. Once the army had been beaten in the streets, it was relatively easy to take the barracks. The CNT and the FAI were the incontestable heroes of the day after 36 hours of ceaseless struggle, and they were able to take control of a large quantity of war materials. Cars, trolleys and buses triumphantly draped with red and black flags drove through the city to the applause of an ardent and exultant public.

From Barcelona, armed squadrons left for the other Catalan provinces and Valencia, where a confused situation took some time to clear up. Valencia at this time was the main link between

Barcelona and Madrid. There the soldiers had shut themselves in their barracks only to be dislodged by force.

The enthusiasm of the people was indescribable: even they were surprised at their success. Having defeated their enemy, the people in their anger dragged the rebel accomplices from their hiding places and gave them summary trials. The butt of this wrath was the clergy, both the parish priests and the religious orders, from whose institutions and churches arms had been turned against the people. The revolutionaries took an implacable revenge on their traditional enemy. This settling of accounts escalated as information spread of the brutal "house-cleaning" that had occurred in the enemy camp from the first moments of the insurrection. Civilians, whether extremists or moderates, atheists or believers, had been executed after tortures, humiliations and rapes, merely for being Republicans or for having voted for the parties of the Left.

After the initial passion of battle, the situation was very confused on both sides of the barricades. Two armies were face to face, ready for a life and death struggle. One was professional, the other improvised. The first, with the advantage of military skill, had planned ahead and chosen the best moment for the coup. The second had to improvise everything. Even its hatred and revenge were weakened by improvisation. The revenge of the conspirators was coldly calculated. The people, having improvised their heroic defense now had to improvise the political, economic and military structures that were deserted or destroyed; they also had to seek out international assistance. The enemy could be sure of the unconditional aid, given in advance, of the Axis dictators. Without the backing of two powerful states it is possible that the coup would not have been risked; if it had been risked, it would have been abandoned after the first setbacks. Some held that after the popular reaction of July 19, the military had lost irremediably. Their persistence in spite of an obvious defeat must have been because they had obtained more than promises; from the first days, Italian tri-motor planes had been landing in North Africa.

The first priority of the rebels was to link their Northern and Southern territories. The South was the most threatened. Quiapo de Llano took over the major cities of Andalusia, but he had a hard time with the peasants in the villages. Armed with pistols or hunting rifles or not at all, they put up a fierce resistance. There were villages in Andalusia whose capture cost thousands of lives.

The solution lay in the shock troops of the Army of Morocco

which had started the revolt, and which soon set up a connection across the Straits of Gibraltar. The Republican warships would have been able to break this connection, for two-thirds of the navy had stayed loyal, thanks to the heroism of the sailors who took control of the ships and threw their officers overboard. (Traditionally the officer corps of the navy had come from the aristocracy and had been even more reactionary than their colleagues in the army.) But the rebel bridge over the Straits was protected by artillery on both banks. And so the experienced Army of Africa, composed of shock troops and mercenaries, the Foreign Legion and the Moors, was able to cross to the Peninsula.

The occupiers took Andalusia and made a spectacular advance through the poorest, most depopulated, and bleakest areas of Spain, Western Andalusia and the "Spanish Siberia," Extremadura. The advance took them, in a few days, to the gates of Madrid and the occupied zones in the North.

The story of this occupation has yet to be written in detail. Moors and legionnaires, only slightly harrassed by poorly armed peasants hiding in the folds of land, the brush and the mountains, unleashed a wave of pillage, murder and rape. "Your women will give birth to fascists" was a slogan they painted in large letters on walls. They left behind them a trail of bodies and smoking ruins.

The crossing of the Strait resulted in the loss of Irún and San Sebastián in the first days of September, of Badajoz on the 14th and Toledo on the 27th. The loss of Irún cut off the loyalist sector of the North from the French border, and condemned it to a slow death.

In the first days of the military uprising the Asturian proletariat had repeated its success of October, 1934. Anarchists from La Felguera and Gijon and Socialist miners took over the capital city of Oviedo. In Gijon they took the Simancas barracks by assault. But apparently through an excess of confidence they lost control of Oviedo to the astute Colonel Aranda, reputedly a liberal and a freemason. He fortified himself in the inner city of the Asturian capital, and diverted the attention of the besiegers until a column was able to come to his relief from Galicia at the end of September. This series of military disasters had a terrible effect on the course of the war and on the revolution that the people, inspired by the CNT, had undertaken.

On July 20, after crushing the military revolt, the CNT was in absolute control of Catalonia. Following the recent accord of Zaragoza it could have proclaimed libertarian communism, but

Catalonia was not Spain. In the rest of the liberated regions the different parties and movements were jockeying for supremacy. And fascism was more menacing than ever. In nearby Aragon, the enemy had been able to take the capital cities of the provinces of Huesca, Zaragoza and Teruel. Teruel posed a special threat to communications between Barcelona and Valencia.

The imperatives of military organization posed another, no less pressing, problem. Cooperation was necessary between all political and syndical groups. Any discord among these forces would play into the hands of the enemy. The CNT itself had to bow before this terrible reality. Members came out of a meeting with the President of Catalonia, Luis Companys, convinced that they did not have the power to impose their entire revolutionary program. So in the meeting they set up the terms for democratic cooperation. But the CNT was as yet unwilling to accept its incorporation pure and simple into the Catalan government. Its anti-State tradition weighed heavily upon it and, furthermore, it knew it was strong enough to impose an intermediate solution on its allies.

And so, in response to the demands of the CNT, a separate body was created to administer the antifascist struggle in Catalonia. The Central Committee for Antifascist Militias of Catalonia was installed in the Naval School. This compromise between purist revolutionary separatism and open participation in the government saved the prestige of the revolution. But it left to the Catalan government the maintenance of relations with the central government. In a show of inter-governmental solidarity, the central government refused to recognize any extra-official power in Catalonia.

The central government itself had come out of the military and revolutionary events badly discredited for its passivity and weakness. The people could not forgive it for not having put a stop to the revolt at an early stage. Instead, it had folded its arms and issued bland orders to the provincial governors. Afterwards it had refused to arm the people, and had attempted to make an "honourable settlement" with the rebels. In the first days of the revolt the government was a ghost whose only sign of life was a mechanical proliferation of regulations and decrees, Olympian decrees and regulations that always came too late, and which nobody took seriously.

But no administration wants to die. Nor will any government commit an honourable suicide. We have already noted that

Catalonia's situation was unlike that of the rest of liberated Spain. In the central region, a young and energetic CNT was surrounded by old-style political elites, each with its own blind followers. These old leaders, schooled in traditional politics, were frightened by the revolutionary boldness of the CNT.

The central government held the diplomatic connections with the outside world. In certain respects foreign powers were also sensitive to an inter-state solidarity. The very situation of anti-fascist Spain went in favour of the central government in the eyes of foreign democracies. The achievements of the revolutionaries, the takeovers and the socializations in Catalonia and other places, made the diplomatic community and the financial and economic interests it represented very nervous. No matter how distant foreign governments were, the possibility that the fire of revolution might cross their borders or enter their ports made them edgy. That is why they set in motion the counter-revolutionary policy known as non-intervention.

Non-intervention put both governments—legal and rebel—on the same legal footing, and denied to the legal government the aid it would have been able to obtain in the course of normal diplomatic and commercial relations, such as the purchase of arms. Citing the Republican victory in the February, 1936 elections, the Madrid government insisted on its legality. But the legal status of the government was in doubt, due to the patent civil war, and the effects of this doubt were noted by all of its diplomatic representatives abroad. So it was decided that any threat to the government that represented Spaniards abroad—for instance, its replacement by a new revolutionary body—would merely be breaking the last connection between the Republic and the international political community. The foreign powers were waiting for any pretext for breaking off diplomatic relations with "Red Spain" and openly recognizing the rebel Junta de Burgos.

The central government perfectly appreciated its own diplomatic significance, exploited this advantage in its bickering with revolutionary organizations, and was completely unconcerned that, for the time being, they were paying little or no attention.

Thus, alongside the revolutionary organizations created by the anarcho-syndicalists, the traditional structures of national, civilian, administrative, economic and military power continued in place. What at first glance seemed a remarkable coexistence between two historically irreconcilable doctrines was really a slow process of destruction. The traditional power of the State

gradually absorbed the revolutionary groups, first by limiting their actions, then by constraining them to work within the legal system, and later by brutally eliminating them.

The spectre of war, with its pressing need for an efficient military apparatus, a unified command structure, strong government and collective discipline, ideas repeated with a tiresome insistence, wore down the initial enthusiasm of the revolutionaries. The heroic idealism of the first days turned to scepticism and demoralization, especially as a growing bureaucracy had its stultifying effect. Even old-guard extremist leaders were infected by the disease.

The general course of events is exemplified by the case of Catalonia. The Central Committee of Antifascist Militias was an extra-official body on which all union and political groups were represented, including the PSUC. The Unified Catalan Socialist Party (PSUC) had been formed shortly before by orthodox Communists and fellow travellers from the middle class. This new party, organized from Moscow, superseded the Catalan Section of the Spanish Communist Party, and immediately joined the Communist International.

We have already mentioned the split in the Spanish Socialist Party that led to the founding of the Communist Party. García Quejido, Daniel Anguiano, and Ramón Lamóneda afterwards returned to the fold, and Oscar Pérez Solís in time gravitated toward Catholicism and Falangism. During Primo de Rivera's dictatorship the Communist Party suffered more from internal divisions than from the dictator who apparently was not worried by it. When normal constitutional government resumed, the Kremlin ordered its militants to try to take over the CNT. They sought to exploit the Confederation Congress' adhesion to the Third International in 1919, but their campaign was stymied by the stubbornness of the anarchists. That failure led to another effort, the "reconstruction of the CNT" with renegades like Manuel Adame, José Díaz and others from Andalusia. This strategy also failed and a third attempt was made, this time to set up a national labour federation with a clear communist affiliation, the CGTU (General Confederation of United Labour). This also was a fiasco; the Communists of the Catalan-Balearic region did not go along with it and had to be expelled. Those expelled, including Joaquín Maurín and Julián Gorkín, founded an independent communist party called the Worker and Peasant Block. A small Trotskyist group called Communist Left broke with Trotsky in 1934 and joined with the Worker

and Peasant Block, which in 1936 became known as POUM (Unified Workers' Marxist Party).

In 1934 the Socialist Party began to make overtures to the Left, matching the Comintern's movement to the right. This was the time of Hitler's elevation to the head of the German state, the defeat of social democracy in Austria, and finally the *bienio negro* in Republican Spain. At that time the Socialists had been removed from power. So Largo Caballero proposed a popular front and the Communists, who had participated in the Asturian revolution, joined the UGT. At the beginning of the civil war the PSUC members joined the Catalan UGT, which until then had been ineffectual.

The Central Committee of Antifascist Militias of Catalonia was "legalized" by decree of the Catalan government. The government itself was reduced to the role of ratifying things that already were in effect. All of the bodies created by the revolution had the legal approval of the government: Committee for a New Unified School; Economic Council of Catalonia; Supply Committees; Patrols (militia police); Control Committees for non-collectivized industries; Factory Committees of collectivized industries; Committees of Workers and Soldiers (control over the officers in the old army) and others. The Catalan government resigned itself to a purely decorative and paternal participation in this process in hopes of better times. The better times were not long in coming.

The Committee of Militias of Catalonia was a body with both police and military functions. It was set up to assure public order in the revolution and put an end to the excesses of independent vigilantes. It recruited volunteers for the Aragon front. The first militia column left Barcelona in July, 1936, composed of 3,000 volunteers, the majority from the CNT. This first column was led by Buenaventura Durruti, and carried as its technical assistant Pérez Farras. Its objective was the liberation of Zaragoza.

We already noted that the rebels had taken over the capitals of the three provinces of Aragon. From there they threatened the rest of the region and Catalonia and Valencia as well. Durruti's column arrived in time to intercept the enemy advance and drive it back to its base. Durruti headed for Zaragoza, the central sector of a wide front along the banks of the Ebro. At times his improvised army helped out other columns besieging Huesca, whether or not they were confederalists. In Valencia, where a popular front group was at odds with the representatives of the central government, col-



umns were formed to relieve the siege of Teruel, the capital of Lower Aragon. One of these was the anarchist Iron Column.

The columns were made up of volunteers from parties, unions and anarchist groups. The men most prepared for struggle were those of the CNT and the FAI, and they did not hesitate to occupy the most dangerous posts. These men of action were joined by companions from France or men in exile in France like the anti-fascist Italians. There were even intellectuals like Camilo Berneri and Fosco Falaschi, who had come to Spain electrified by the news of the social struggles and the revolution. Falaschi lost his life on the Huesca front, and Camilo Berneri died later in Barcelona.

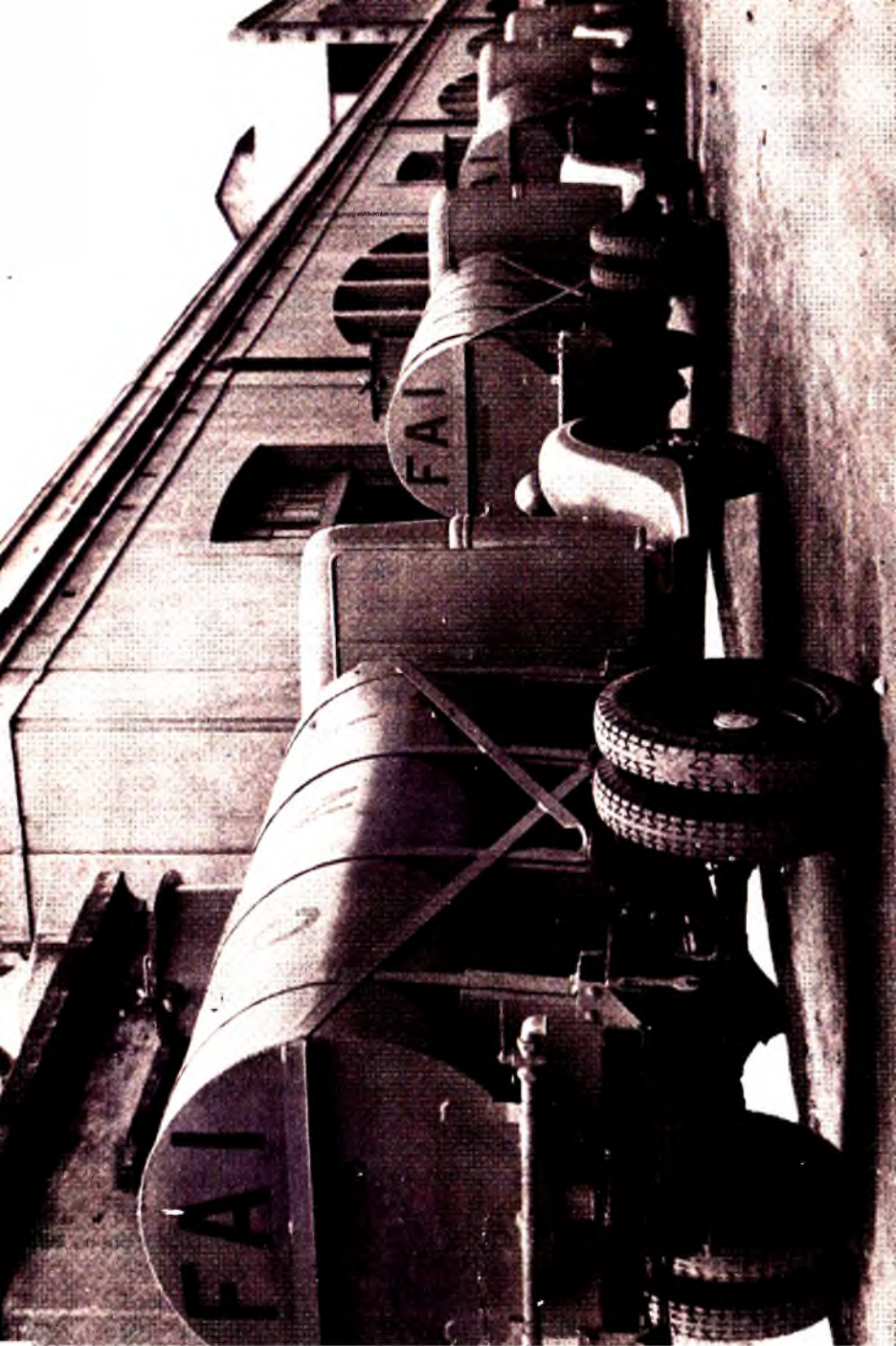
Durruti was determined to take Zaragoza. The fall of the capital of Aragon was a terrible blow for the CNT, the revolution and the war. Zaragoza had been the centre of Aragonese anarcho-syndicalism, and the anarchists there had shown their strength in the insurrection of December, 1933. Zaragoza, by way of the Rioja region, connected anarchist Catalonia with the libertarians in Guipuzcoa, Vizcaya, Santander and Asturias.

The CNT had held its national congress in Zaragoza two and a half months before the revolution and the congress had been a show of strength unprecedented in the history of worker gatherings. It ended with a meeting in the bull-ring attended by tens of thousands of workers from all over Spain. They came to Zaragoza by all kinds of transportation, including many special trains crowded with men and women. They filled the bull-ring to the rafters, waving the red and black flag and singing revolutionary songs.

The enemy had doubtless taken note of the impressive show of force, and was frightened by it. So the rebels marked Zaragoza for special attention. There they concentrated both military and paramilitary groups—the large garrison of the regular army and the Navarrese Requetés, fanatical fighters who had started a number of fierce civil wars in the previous century. Two men determined the fate of Zaragoza: the weak-willed governor, typical of the governors of the Second Republic; and the perfidious commander of the garrison, General Cabanellas, a crafty old officer who had let it be known that he was a republican and a freemason. It was probably for his actions in Zaragoza, rather than his age, that he was made president of the rebel Junta de Burgos.

Durruti's column hurried to Zaragoza in hopes of saving the anarchists there from extermination. But by the time it arrived at

the outskirts of the city the fighting was over, and the army had pitilessly crushed any possibility of resistance. Zaragoza had become a cemetery alive only with machine guns and artillery.



*Water trucks manufactured under workers' control at the former Vulcano factory in Barcelona.*

## 8. The Tide of Revolution

While the Republic's rearguard was being secured and governing bodies set up, the economy had to be set in motion again. In Catalonia the popular reaction to the coup took the form of a social revolution.

We have already seen that at the very outset the CNT countered the fascist coup with a revolutionary general strike. The workers laid down their tools and took up their guns. All production was paralyzed. But once the street-fighting was over, the anarchists could not forget one of the principles of their great theoreticians: the day after the revolution you have to give the people food. A revolutionary people that is hungry is always at the mercy of a demagogue (Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*). So the first task of the revolutionaries was to organize the distribution of food.

The first revolutionary organizations were the Supply Committees. These committees were born in the *barrios* (working-class districts), each of which was an armed camp. Those garrisoned in the *barrios* did not abandon their weapons. In the tense climate, the militants lost the very idea of sleep. Many did not return to their homes for five or six days, after their families had given them up for dead.

The first communal dining halls were organized in the *barrios* with food confiscated from nearby shops. These expropriations were called *requisas*, and were carried out by Supply Committees. The distribution network was set up before the factories were organized. The first Supply Committee was formed in Barcelona while the shooting was still going on, and others sprang up spontaneously in the outlying districts. These committees gathered the

contents of the small stores into large warehouses for redistribution. The stores continued to function, supplied by the committees, who sent mobile teams through the market gardens near the city and the villages of the region, requisitioning produce and making exchanges. A preliminary rationing system was begun. For example, certain products like milk, eggs and chicken were reserved for hospitals, especially the field hospitals that treated casualties from the fighting. Priority for certain goods was granted to children, the elderly and women. At first manufactured goods were exchanged for produce, without keeping strict accounts. The *requisas* were also made with coupons or receipts, which had no legal value, but which the shopkeeper or farmer carefully saved, especially after the Catalan government promised to redeem them in cash.

The Catalan government quickly moved to take control of the banks, and froze the assets of those suspected or convicted of collaboration with the enemy. The anarchists permitted this because in the first generous days of the revolution money mattered little to them. The paper money that they confiscated in the churches, convents and houses of the rich was disdainfully handed over to the antifascist committees or the government. Sometimes money was burned in the same bonfires as religious statues, property titles, stocks and Treasury bonds. The money requisitioned in episcopal palaces was saved for use in foreign trade. The new organizations soon came to understand that they had to arm themselves and that they needed money to buy arms abroad, especially when it became clear that the government was in no hurry to do the buying.

Following the example of the new governmental bodies, the unions expropriated buildings for their headquarters. As it had with the banks, the government assumed control of major art treasures both for safekeeping and with an eye toward future sale abroad and conversion to war materials. The revolutionary organizations participated responsibly in these activities. What little looting occurred was severely punished by the unions, whether officially or unofficially.

On July 28 the Local Federation of Barcelona Unions, in accordance with the Regional Plenary held on the previous day, ended the general strike and asked the workers to return to their factories and regular occupations. Militiamen and members of revolutionary committees were exempted. The factories began to run again, now under the direct control of the unions. The

communiqué of the Local Federation did not specify what form production was to take; it only noted that any nonessential industries should remain shut down, and that priority be given to the manufacture of war material under the supervision of the Central Committee of Antifascist Militia of Barcelona. But when the workers went back to work they took over the means of production and revolutionized the economy.

Their expropriations were made easier by the absence of owners and managers, many of whom had gone into hiding or fled to enemy territory. Others were imprisoned, and many had been executed for crimes against the working class. Collectivizing the means of production was more or less spontaneous on the part of the CNT workers. Those who had just finished risking their lives on the barricades would not go back to work on the same old terms. Beneath the red and black flag of the CNT, committees formed by workers and technicians of good will worked to ensure the efficient running of the factories.

CNT unions had been in existence on the factory level since 1918, and starting in 1931 there were efforts to form industry-wide federations of unions. So to a certain extent the CNT unions were prepared for their new duties. The appropriate union coordinated the various factories that manufactured the same product. Each confiscated enterprise was administered collectively by workers and the most qualified technicians, subject to the approval of workers in mass meetings.

The factory takeovers in fact preceded the Federation's communiqué to "end the general strike and return to work," issued on July 28. The takeover of public transport was announced July 25. The water works and the electric plants were taken on the 26th (and never stopped functioning afterward). The metalworkers made their announcement on the same day. The expropriation of industry was a unanimous, spontaneous action that started as soon as the fighting ended. The railway workers announced the collectivization of stations, lines and trains on July 21. The station had been a strategic enemy strong point. All of these expropriations occurred within a few days of the capture of the last enemy stronghold, the Atarazanas barracks, on July 20.

It was more difficult to expropriate firms with foreign capital. In these cases the workers finally had to renounce takeovers and resort to "worker control." This control included even the operating accounts of the business. The Control Committee that oversaw the business had to approve disbursement of any money from

accounts. These companies were forced to dismiss management personnel who had abused workers in the past and who might be able to sabotage production. Many of these foreign firms were partly financed in Spain, like Sales Potásicas Españolas and the Sociedad Española de Construcciones. These were simply confiscated, causing much protest from consular and diplomatic authorities.

Monopolies like CAMPSA (a branch of the international oil giants) were also taken over. Many of these monopolies had been set up during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. The Construction Union took charge of two adjacent buildings: the headquarters of the Fomento del Trabajo Nacional, the organization of wealthy Catalans that hired anti-CNT gangsters, the *pistoleros*, during the time of Martínez Anido and Arlegui; and the home of Francisco Cambó, the leader of the Catalan owning class. The Union converted the buildings into the Casa CNT-FAI House, headquarters for the committees of the CNT, the FAI, and the Libertarian Youth of Catalonia.

In some industries collectivization spread beyond the local area and encompassed the sources of raw materials. Enterprises of this kind were known as "socialized industries". The collective organized by the Woodworkers' Union of Barcelona included wood cutting, the making of wooden articles, and salesrooms. Small traditional workshops were combined to form large plants called "confederal workshops", ensuring maximum productivity from machines and workers as well as a maximum amount of technical and professional development.

Another socialization along the same lines occurred in the baking industry. As in all of Spain, bread in Barcelona was baked in hundreds of little bakeries, called *tahonas*, damp, dark, underground caves, nurseries for roaches and rats, where the work was done at night. The bakers abandoned these unhealthy caves and increased production in bakeries that were modern, well-equipped, and well-ventilated.

The collectivization of the Catalan and Aragon railway system was similar, for the UGT was also caught up in the enthusiasm of the revolution. Owners of expropriated companies against whom the workers had no complaints were kept on as workers or technicians, with the same rights and duties as the rest of the workers.

Industries dependent on foreign markets or raw materials that were difficult to obtain had a harder time. The Catalan government



controlled foreign exchange, and the central government maintained the commercial treaties. Most of the capital behind heavy industry was foreign, and international capitalists united behind the dispossessed stockholders. They or their head offices abroad lobbied against the revolution and organized sabotage and embargoes of raw materials and manufactured products.

In spite of considerable mineral deposits, Spain was far from economic independence. Even the operation of its mines was in the hands of foreigners: the Belgians in the Asturian mines; the French in Peñarroya; and the British in Riotinto. These concessions had been obtained cheaply, and the investors had tripled their capital in just a few years. Spain earned little for its minerals, which were mined with cheap labour and shipped back to the homelands of the investors for processing.

In the reign of Isabel II the railroads were contracted out to foreign companies but the Spanish government managed to reserve the right to designate the routes. Since the construction company paid 200,000 pesetas per kilometre to owners of land crossed by the railroad, the government made sure that the trains would cross royal properties, and the result was a tortuous, slow, costly network. The Queen herself changed the location of the Madrid station. Modern road construction brought the final ruin.

Some industries, such as the Catalan textile industry, built up with family capital, had come to depend upon protective tariffs. The woollen cloth of Barcelona and Sabadell could not compete with British products.

The revolution soon came in conflict with the international commercial system. Consular objections became more insistent, and English warships began manoeuvres off the Catalan coast. The CNT had to back down and publish a list of 80 foreign firms exempt from collectivization. Stores, factories, companies, and even Anglican churches were on the list which included Riegos y Fuerza del Ebro ("La Canadiense"), Sales Potásicas de Suria, and others. But the committee recommendations were not always followed by the unions, and even less by the more militant revolutionaries. This insubordination made problems for the prosecution of the war, but set a lasting example.

Collectivizations multiplied spontaneously as the general strike ended and the workers returned to their jobs. The unions considered the situation in meetings and assemblies. In a plenary session held in early August, the Local Federation of Barcelona Unions sought to direct and coordinate the collective movement.

At the same time a meeting of anarchist groups declared:

The economic system of the bourgeoisie has totally broken down, and democracy, which has failed politically and socially, has no solutions to offer. The workers' organizations, particularly the CNT and the anarchist movement, should lend themselves to the task of a complete economic reconstruction, from collectivization of the workplace to socialization of land, mines, and industries.

In companies that were impossible to collectivize, "worker control" was established. This consisted of a close watch over the movements and decisions of the administrative personnel in regard to both fiscal policy and information. The Control Committees set up in these factories tried to assess the economic state of the company. They found out the true value of products on the market, what demand there was for the product, the cost of raw materials, and all of the corresponding transactions. They inquired about machinery and its amortization, the size and cost of the work force, the amount of taxes, both direct and indirect, and they were on guard for embezzlement and counter-revolutionary sabotage.

The establishment of a Control Committee was often a preliminary stage of collectivization, a kind of waiting period that permitted the necessary technical and professional training, during which the Control Committee transformed itself into the collective's Factory Committee.

These revolutionary methods for organizing the means of production, distribution and administration were exported to the other liberated areas or sprang up spontaneously, almost always under the influence of anarchist activists. This development was limited by the resistance of political groups whose objections ranged from mental reservations to resolute opposition. The central government stood out among these reactionary groups; it was hostile in principle and probably by its very nature to popular revolutionary initiatives. The nearness of the fighting fronts complicated the process, especially in densely populated areas like Madrid. There it seemed that the revolution had to be sacrificed to win the war. From all available evidence this sacrifice was not in fact necessary and was usually a pretext for checking the advance of the revolution. Later political manoeuvring and a suicidal struggle for power demonstrated the duplicity of the slogan, "Before all else, win the war."

In the liberated zone of the North, which consisted of Asturias, Santander and Vizcaya (since Guipuzcoa and Alava were

soon lost), the daily drama of war, the need for an all-out defense, won out over revolutionary reconstruction. Vizcaya was an industrial centre second only to Barcelona and the leading centre for the production of metals. Its heavy industries in Bilbao were a kind of fief of British capitalism. There, the Basque nationalists dominated completely, and in general the politics of the Basque region were liberal-to-conservative, nationalist and religious. As good Catholics, Basques respected the Church and its institutions (and made others do so) and, in fact, their clergy were not as obstinate and reactionary as Spanish clergy in general. Basque nationalism was perhaps stronger than Catalanian and more oriented toward complete independence.

In the first years of the Republic, the Basque towns had prepared a statute of autonomy in which they included the province of Navarre. However, Navarre, the site of bloody Carlist wars lasting almost half the previous century, had always been the traditional centre of absolute monarchy and, faithful to absolutist traditions, angrily rejected the movement for autonomy.

In July 1936, the Navarrese response to the military coup was really a reaction to Basque nationalism. From the start, the military openly opposed the statute of autonomy, regarding it as a tearing-apart of the fatherland. The Navarrese participation in the uprising showed their traditional Basque enemies where their own interests lay. Moreover, the Republican government had been moving swiftly toward approval of the statute of autonomy, which was being considered in parliament when the military uprising occurred.

The influence of the nationalist party in the Basque area, although it did serve to keep important resources from the fascists, meant a total opposition to revolutionary change. There were hardly any expropriations there apart from those officially made by the Basque government. Those made by extremist groups led a tenuous existence, and the ones in Guipuzcoa were soon wiped out by the military advance.

In the industrial zones of Asturias revolutionary advances were guided by the two main labour organizations, the CNT and the UGT, although the UGT was traditionally more important in the area. Both organizations were equally represented on the Central Committees and the chairman of the committee was from the majority party of the industry. In cases of a tie his vote was decisive. The members of the committees had to have held membership in their respective organizations prior to the coup. Com-

mittee positions were unpaid and members performed their normal duties in the factories or mines. Exceptions to this rule were made only when absolutely necessary. The functions of these committees were defined in an agreement signed by the UGT and the CNT in January, 1937.

The Control Committees are precisely that: CNT-UGT Committees for Control. It has been agreed to inform the membership about the role of the Control Committee, which is neither administration nor technical direction, but rather collaboration with the management. The Committee should bring to the management all kinds of ideas and suggestions; it should become acquainted with production methods and ensure fulfillment of production quotas; and it should report all irregularities and defects to the management so that they can be corrected, the working conditions improved and productivity increased. The directors, managers and technicians all have the same obligations of information, suggestions and criticism to perform with regard to the Control Committees.

When compared to the Control Committees in Catalonia, those of Asturias clearly show the influence of the Socialists.

True collectivization in Asturias was organized by the fishermen. Fishing is the second largest industry in the region. Under the impetus of the fishermen's union, both the deep sea and in-shore fishermen were socialized from the first days of the revolution, along with derivative industries like canning factories and wholesale and retail markets. In the interior villages they formed distribution cooperatives that were joined in the Council for Provincial Cooperatives, which supplied them with fish.

During the first months of the experiment no money was exchanged among the fishermen. Each family was supplied on presentation of a producer booklet and a consumer booklet. The fishermen delivered their produce and received the booklets in exchange. With the agreement of members of the CNT and UGT a similar system was in effect in the town of Laredo, Santander.

In Valencia a plenary of Single Unions held in December, 1936, prepared guidelines for socialization in which they analyzed the absurd inefficiency of the petit-bourgeois industrial system. The document said,

The parochial selfishness of most manufacturers, because they lack technical and commercial education, has kept them from trying the ultimate task: consolidation into large factories in order to attain a more advanced technique and a more rational operation. The

socialization we propose ought to rectify these organizational defects within each industry.

They proposed,

When an industry is socialized, all groups working in that industry should pool their efforts to draw up a general plan avoiding the sectarian competition between unions which could disrupt the socialized industry. Production and distribution should be closely coordinated to avoid speculation by persons who do not have the interests of the socialized industry at heart.

This document was important for the evolution of the collectives. The workers realized that a partial collectivization would degenerate over time into a kind of bourgeois cooperativism. Fortified in their respective collectives, the industries would merely have replaced the old watertight compartments of capitalism and would inevitably lapse into bureaucracy, the first step in a new society of unequals. The collectives would end up waging commercial war against each other with the same combination of zeal and mediocrity that characterized the old bourgeois businesses. And so they attempted to expand the notion of collectivism to include, in a structural and permanent way, all industries in one harmonious and disinterested body. This is the kind of socialization that many anarchists and syndicalists had in mind; its practical application was soon choked off by political, government and military opposition.

After some first attempts to abolish all money and salaries, family salaries became common. To better explain this concept, which arose simultaneously in many areas, we cite conclusions of a plenary of unions of the Valencia region held in November, 1936. The individual as consumer was the basic unit, "without discrimination for race, occupation, or sex." A family booklet was set up, listing the number and ages of family members. The amount of the salary was determined by local economic councils according to local prices of consumer goods.

The basic family salary will be determined by the needs of an individual, who should be the head of the family, and after this has been established it will be increased by 50% for each family member over 16, and 25% for each family member under 16.

The system was not obligatory for those socialized industries where money had been suppressed and salaries were paid in kind.



*Civil guard searching peasant.*



## 9. The Tragedy of the Spanish Countryside

For a comprehensive picture of the July 19th revolution in the Spanish countryside, the agricultural problem must be outlined in its many aspects.

Spain is a predominantly rural country. More than half its population lives from, or better, gets by on agriculture. The fertility of the Spanish soil was legendary in ancient times, as confirmed by classical writers like Strabo and Columela. During the Roman era Spain was the granary of the Empire. But the soil's fertility diminished over the years. During the reign of the Catholic Kings, chroniclers began to complain about the dryness of the climate. Contemporary specialists<sup>1</sup> asserted that rain clouds from the Atlantic Ocean no longer reached the peninsula but were diverted along the Cantabrian coast.

Historical and political factors also contributed to the aridity of Spanish soil. The property system and constant wars that devastated the peninsula left great expanses of the central plateau depopulated. Prolonged sieges of cities and punitive expeditions led to the large scale destruction of woodlands. Abandonment of cultivation due to the wars led to erosion. Depopulation of certain areas with the expulsion of the Moorish peasants around the beginning of the 16th century and the Christians' extensive use of dry farming caused still more erosion. The eroded land became poorer, the dryness increased and the feudal system of property precipitated agricultural ruin.

Under the Roman Empire Spain was classified as one of the "nourishing" provinces. It was obliged to supply the metropolis with 20% of its cereals. The levies on peasants were crushing. Imperial officials swarmed over the countryside. Their job was to



tax peasants on their property; they measured fields and counted trees, plants and animals. The assessors obliged peasants to declare goods they did not own and imposed a tax on people as if they were human livestock.<sup>2</sup>

The Roman colonists were the first great estate holders in Spain. Imperial officials assigned themselves extensive properties in occupied zones, a practice which intensified when Spain was definitively incorporated into the Roman Empire.

In remote times agrarian collectivism existed among the indigenous peoples of Spain. This tradition is amply studied in a book by Joaquín Costa entitled *El Colectivismo Agrario en España* (Agrarian Collectivism in Spain.) The following fragment by Rafael Floranes describes the collective work of the Vacceos, ancient inhabitants of the peninsula's northwest, thus:

There were fortunes and misfortunes, good and bad harvests, increases and decreases of the flocks. But, whatever came, no one was dispossessed, as they are now. Everyone shared with each other. The entire community sustained vicissitudes and made up the community losses by returning to the soil. Public responsibilities, the defense of the territory, and other community needs were also shouldered collectively. They had no alternative. What a pleasure it would have been to live in those times! Today these advantages are unknown. Man no longer remembers or believes in those days when he enjoyed himself and had the means of doing so. This is thanks to the teachings of Aristotle and other false politicians, deceiving us with the pretention that man needs private property and domain because only natural avidity or covetousness, the desire to increase his holdings for himself and his family, can motivate him sufficiently for the work that must be done. How, then, was this not the case with the Vacceos?<sup>3</sup>

The Visigoths, who invaded Spain at the beginning of the 5th century, founded the monarchy and the nobility. They converted the slavery inherited from the Romans into serfdom. Apparently when they invaded Spain they divided all properties into 3 parts and reserved 2 of the 3 parts for themselves. The one part left to the inhabitants was subjected to heavy taxes. The Visigoths, to facilitate their plans for domination, converted to Catholicism. The conversion of their leader, Recaredo created an unofficial mutual assistance pact between the State and the Church, much as the conversion of the Roman Emperor Constantine. In this pact the Spanish Church was given large rural estates. Until then,

Modesto Lafuente points out, the churches and convents lived precariously on the proceeds of small businesses. From then on abbots administered the work of serfs for the benefit of their monasteries. The regular and secular clerical hierarchies became feudal lords. The theocratic system of the Visigoths also took the form of large estates.

The Arab invaders were intelligent and cautious with the Spanish who, oppressed by the Visigoths, received them as liberators. Their policies were marked by a broad tolerance for religion and customs and they had a great effect on the agricultural system, particularly in Andalusia and Levante, where they were firmly established for eight centuries. There they perfected irrigation systems, introduced new techniques and crops, and humanized the property system. Thanks to their industriousness, the lowlands of the Mediterranean coast were converted into rich orchards.

During the Reconquest the Christian nobles claimed land as the spoils of war or were granted it by the kings for their prowess. The clergy and the military benefited the most. But because the terrain they were conquering remained idle and unpopulated, the monarchy or the nobles themselves were apparently impelled to grant broad political guarantees to settlers. The nobles considered manual labour undignified. The privileges conceded to villagers consisted of charters of settlement, *fueros*<sup>4</sup> and free towns. The no man's land between the Christian and Muslim worlds was mainly settled in the form of free towns. The monarchy supported these towns as a way of counterbalancing the nobility and the towns defended and expanded their *fueros*. This system was followed throughout the Christian territory. Those municipalities that obtained *fueros* were imitated by others. Sometimes the *fueros* were acquired by direct revolutionary action: the municipalities banded together and created their own militias to defend themselves against the crown, the nobility and the abbots and bishops, in time obtaining their own representatives in the parliaments alongside those of the clergy and the nobility. The Spanish parliament was investigative and legislative, and a king could not take possession of his throne until he swore before his parliament that he would respect the *fueros*.

The decline of parliament, which began in the latter stages of the Reconquest, brought with it the decline of the municipalities, for the local and regional *fueros* were suppressed. The process of national political unification prepared the way for legislative cen-

tralization, another old tradition. The Visigoths had created a basic code of laws (*Fuero Juzgo*) which had been forgotten with the rise of Hispano-Islamic civilization. This code was unearthed in the 13th century by the Castilian king, Alfonso X (called *el Sabio*, the Wise). From then on, along with local and regional law-making, there emerged the national legal system of a nascent state. This gradually pre-empted the regional and local codes. The municipalities more or less came under control of the king's officials and police. Under the aegis of absolutism the old castes reappeared. Their privileges were revived at the expense of the peasants and free artisans who were forced by taxes and duties to abandon the land to nobles who entailed it. An unbridled plunder of municipal lands followed.

Much has been written in an impassioned tone about the landholders who were free in Castile thanks to Christian liberalism, while feudalism reigned throughout Europe. This thesis of priestly scholars does not correspond to reality. In order to consolidate their advance the Christians were compelled to populate and make productive the regions devastated by war. And since peasants would neither settle nor till the land for merely patriotic reasons, it was necessary to make more than promises. The absence of feudalism in Castile had little to do with the generosity of the kings or the political maturity of the Castilian nobility. The people took advantage of an opportunity to assert their rights. On both sides of the Pyrenees the nobility were the same. The king, constantly at odds with counts, favourites in disgrace, usurpers and ambitious bastards, had to buy the support of the people, knowing full well that what he "gave" them he could later take back. Whenever he was in a stronger position he attacked parliament, the local *fueros* and the municipalities. The nobility, on the other hand, continued to profit from their estates, which they had no intention of making productive. Thus feudalism came to our times intact. In modern times the owner of a large estate is an absentee landlord who lives in Madrid off the rents from his domain. His land is rented for a few pesetas a hectare, which provides him with a substantial income without any attendant worries. Rent is collected by an administrator, who is also the feudal lord's political agent. The local authorities and the guns of the Civil Guard support the administrator.

The population dependent on the leavings of the feudal lord is composed of tenants and workers who are unemployed for most of the year. This population is also the electoral constituency of

the lord, who does not leave Madrid unless attracted by his favourite passions, politics or hunting on his well-stocked estate. At election time he may be elected to Parliament or assigned to a ministry. The serfs have no choice but to vote for their lord or find themselves deprived of their rented lands or daily wages. These day-labourers are the most poorly paid in Spain. In some areas they must feed themselves for half the year on acorns, like pigs, because the working season lasts for only 4 or 5 months. In Spain there still exist villages entirely the property of one owner, including houses, lands and even the church. The proprietor can evict whoever refuses to pay an increase in rent. If he wants to, he can evict all the inhabitants of a village and leave it vacant, protected by the laws of private property. There is no law requiring an estate owner to keep his lands in constant production.

The political aspect of the large landed estates is called *caciquismo*. The administrators (*caciques*) organize the electoral victory of the owner by buying votes or threatening starvation. Victory is always assured. When the votes are counted, if money and coercion have not proved adequate, there is always recourse to the *pucherazo*, a miniature coup. *Caciquismo* left its mark on 19th and 20th century politics. Provinces in which large estates predominated or under powerful clerical and military influence were strongholds of reaction. There, democratic politics remained ever falsified by hunger and Catholicism.

Catalonia, Valencia, and the Basque Provinces are zones of small tenant farmers. The tenant pays his rent in kind or in money. Galicia is a region of small holdings. There it was not uncommon for fields of less than a hectare to belong to 3 owners. In Andalusia and Extremadura large estates predominated. According to Carlos M. Rama, who thoroughly examined the interrelationship of economic, historical and political factors, there are two Spains:

a leftist Spain comprising Catalonia, Levante, Andalusia, Extremadura, Galicia, Asturias, Pais Vasco, Zaragoza, Upper Aragon and Madrid and a rightist Spain made up of Leon, Castile, Navarre, and Lower Aragon, [that is] the central plateau and the interior valley of the Ebro, versus the coastlands and Extremadura.

Or, the provinces of medium properties, versus those of very small landholders, small landholders and large landed estates.

Rama adds, "Nearly all the exceptions to this scheme derive from the religious problem and the State's long-term difficulties in maintaining unity."<sup>5</sup>

In arid Spain the main crops are grains and olive trees. Both the large estates and small holdings resisted rural modernization. It was ironic that Spain, an agricultural country par excellence, had to import all kinds of agricultural produce at the cost of millions of pesetas. In 1931 Spain imported more than a hundred million pesetas worth of wheat. Another plague on the Spanish countryside was the inordinate power of the livestock producers associations.

In 1931, at the beginning of the Second Republic, a book was published in Madrid that was bound to wound the sensibilities of the republican rulers on the eve of their much proclaimed agrarian reform.<sup>6</sup> It reported figures from the land register of 1928 showing that in Castile and Leon 69% of the land was cultivated; in La Mancha, 54%; in Andalusia, 51%; in Extremadura, 50%. Provinces like Ciudad Real had 894 hectares in cultivation and over a million lying fallow.

Let us look at this in more detail. According to the same author, Cristóbal de Castro, there were about 5 million peasants in Spain at the time. There were 2 million peasants in the sample of 27 out of 49 provinces, and of these 1,444,000 were property holders. Of the property holders, 590,000 owned less than one hectare, which is much less than enough to sustain a family; 527,000 held between 1 and 5 hectares, generally insufficient to support a family; and 142,000 owned between 5 and 10 hectares, enough for a family to live on. In sum, of 2 million peasants, only 142,000 owned enough land to support a family.

But there were other landholders, above all in Castile, Extremadura and Andalusia, with estates of 1,000 to 5,000 hectares. There were landholders with 40,000 hectares, most of it unproductive. For example, in Seville, 49,000 hectares were devoted to raising fighting bulls. In Cordoba, 87,000 hectares were used for hunting reserves. That is to say, a large part of the arable land served to supply the bull rings or was used for the recreation of owners and their friends while day-labourers, tenants and small holders died of hunger. Those who would not resign themselves to dying emigrated to industrial zones or went overseas, leaving entire zones deserted.

Here is what Elorrieta, an economist, wrote about the destruction of forests:

There are less than 5 million hectares of forests in Spain. Twenty million are absolutely desolate, without a single tree. This figure indicates the true state of our misery and explains all the secrets of emigration, poverty, the unpredictability of our rivers, and even the character of our fellow countrymen.<sup>7</sup>

Many erudite Spaniards, like Campomanes, Floridablanca, Aranda and Jovellanos, tried to remedy this calamity. An effort was made in the 18th century to colonize the wastelands of the Sierra Morena, even with Germans and Dutch. Another scheme of the "brain trust" of enlightened despotism was the redistribution of land. But it was first necessary to buy the land since none was at hand. To secure the land for redistribution, owners of rural property bound in mortmain were induced to sell, primogeniture was prohibited and the clergy forbidden from acquiring new properties.

The laws of 1833 and 1855 gave an impetus to disentanglement, a financial manoeuvre to cover the costs of the Carlist wars. Its most venturesome advocate was Mendizábal. The municipalities suffered more than the Church, which managed to recover its property, and more, and put it in safekeeping, in the care of straw owners. The municipalities lost their remaining common lands, which had been used by residents who had no land of their own. The buyers, of course, were those with money and all kinds of adventurers, with no other purpose than speculation, rushed for the disentailed lands in order to resell them. Such speculation raised the price of land beyond the reach of the peasants who would have worked it.<sup>8</sup>

Disentanglement failed. So did other agrarian reform projects—Besada (1907), Alba (1916) and Lizárraga (1921). The agrarian reform of the Second Republic also failed. But the State did not fail to repress brutally all peasant uprisings. The scaffolds of Jerez de la Frontera and the funeral pyre of Casas Viejas bear witness to that.

The Republic was proclaimed on April 14, 1931. A program of agrarian reform was ordered by parliament in August. The commission's programme was not adopted until September 15 of the following year. Was the Right given time to prepare its reaction? The insurrection led by General Sanjurjo occurred on August 10, 1932. He did not achieve his aims, thanks to the rapid intervention of the Andalusian proletariat. Fear shook the reformers out of their lethargy. The agrarian programme aimed to give fields to peasants without land or with insufficient land, but the

procedure was infuriatingly slow and, according to Carlos Rama, would have required 20 to 30 years to carry out.

Felipe Aláiz sees the first program in the following manner:

First, the occupation of the land will be temporary; second, the law will fix the term of occupation; third, if the occupation is definitive, the owners will be compensated; fourth, the Institute of Agrarian Reform, the official and overseeing body, will determine on its own the minimum rent; fifth, the local bureaucracy will have the right to propose permanent occupation through compensation but the Central Council will have the final say; sixth, 'uncultivated lands of good quality' will always have priority. In other words, the land is going to be improved so that the owner can sell it to those who have improved it at a higher price after 5 or 6 years. The purpose of the program is to increase the number of owners. The State participates with its socialist midwives in order to give the impression that the problem of unemployment is solved, and at the same time the peasants increase the value of the lands.<sup>9</sup>

This first project was modified to satisfy the large landholders who were given time to sell off their lands.

By April, 1934, when the rightist government of Lerroux and Gil Robles repealed the agrarian reform, only 2,000 peasants had been given land by the State. The grandees of Spain whose lands had been expropriated in reprisal for collaboration with Sanjurjo, had them returned.

When the Left recovered power in the 1936 elections, agrarian reform seemed to proceed rapidly. Carlos Rama writes:

According to the figures we have, only 200,000 hectares of land were distributed in the first 5 years of the Republic, while in the period between March and July, 1936, 712,070 hectares were distributed to peasants without land.

In truth, the Popular Front government was confronted by a series of *faits accomplis*. At the end of the *bienio negro*, peasants carried out what Aláiz called "invisible expropriations", the invasion of lands bound in mortmain. In the majority of cases the government did no more than confirm the occupations.

Thus the revolution in the countryside began before July 19, 1936. From that date on the expropriations extended through all the free territory of the Republic. Rama reports that in March, 1938, when the revolution was to all intents and purposes under control, the Institute of Agrarian Reform compiled the following figures on expropriations: 2,432,202 hectares because of deser-



tion or for political reasons; 2,008,000 for public use; 1,252,000 provisionally occupied. Let us look at the contrast. In five years of agrarian reform, the Republican Government had legally distributed 876,327 hectares of land: in the course of a few weeks the peasants directly expropriated and for the most part collectivized 5,692,202 hectares.

The CNT was the muscle and the brain of the first agrarian revolution in Spain. In the celebrated congress of Zaragoza in May, 1936, the following demands were agreed upon:

- A) Expropriation without compensation of all holdings larger than 50 hectares.
- B) Confiscation of work tools, machines, seeds and surplus livestock of those expropriated.
- C) Inventories of communal properties for use by peasant unions for collective farming.
- D) Expropriated lands to be divided among the peasant unions for their use in direct and collective cultivation.
- E) Abolition of taxes, debts, and mortgage payments on property, work tools and machines that constitute a livelihood for those who own and cultivate their lands without regular help from, or exploitation of other workers.
- F) Abolition of the rent in money or in kind, that small tenants, *rabassaires*, tenant woodsmen, and so on, are presently obliged to pay to large landowners.
- G) Development of irrigation works, lines of communication, livestock and poultry farming, reforestation, agricultural schools and experimental stations for wine production.
- H) Immediate end to unemployment; shortening of the working day; and the adjustment of wages to the cost of living.
- I) Direct seizure by the peasant unions of uncultivated lands, which constitute a sabotage of the national economy.

The ideas and aims of revolutionary syndicalism were clearly formulated: it only remained to carry them out. The opportunity was given by the military insurrection. Let us see how it was taken advantage of.



*Group of peasants who worked the land of their imprisoned comrades, Alguaire, Lerida, 1933.*

## 10. The Revolution in the Countryside

In the light of the preceding observations, it is not surprising that July 19, 1936, effected a sudden and radical transformation of Spanish agriculture. In the countryside popular raids against *caciques*, feudal landowners, tax collectors, usurers, enforcers and their lawyers left large extensions of land, until then unused, in the hands of the peasants. As in the city, the urgent need to get production moving stimulated collectivization. Agrarian collectivization was part of the peasant subconscious. It was also the natural outcome of many decades of anarchist propaganda.

Many Spaniards wrote about the burning issue of agrarian feudalism. Unfortunately, their books did not reach the peasants and, even if they had, endemic illiteracy would have made them useless. However, the anarchist press reached where the books and lectures of academic specialists could not. The gathering together of a group of labourers in their quarters to listen to a reading of anarchist literature under the flickering light of an oil lamp was a common scene in the Andalusian countryside. The one who read was usually the only one who could read. Simply written tracts of 20 or 30 pages placed select doctrinal themes within the grasp of the peasants. One of the most circulated pamphlets was "Among the Peasants", by Errico Malatesta.<sup>1</sup> Another anarchist concern was to create schools and rudimentary libraries in communities isolated from large urban centres. Schoolteachers, schools and libraries were sometimes mobile.

There were also itinerant speakers, some of them peasants, who travelled the countryside, addressing the villagers in simple words about understandable topics. The efficacy of this type of propaganda can easily be understood if we remember that the

illiterate is not necessarily a brute and that lack of learning often hides a perfectly good intellect.

Revolutionary syndicalism had been educating villagers for a long time and the seeds began to flower before the 19th of July. During the insurrectionary actions of the first period of the Republic, groups of small peasant proprietors made revolutionary experiments in free community living. *La Revista Blanca* of May, 1933, cited various examples of free communities in the provinces of Burgos and Santander, in the lowlands of Lerida, and in rural Soria, Asturias, Andalusia and Extremadura. The accounts were illustrated with photographs. One of the picture captions said: "Villages living under libertarian communism". Quietly and gradually, libertarian communism was being proclaimed in Spanish agricultural villages. The bourgeois press, astonished, had to confirm the fact, commenting respectfully upon the spontaneity of this movement. Other captions read:

Here are the woodcutters of Quintanar de la Sierra, a small village in the Urbion Sierra in the heart of Castile, working in common, dividing the profits equally and consuming communally from the collective stores. A tranquil and bucolic scene! Oxen graze while men cut trees in the heart of the forest.

"Here there are no rich and poor," declares a villager, "no social problems or unemployed workers. Here products are divided equally and all of us, working, live peacefully and happily." In the same issue a caption under a photo read:

Here are teams of workers of the agricultural villages that proclaimed libertarian communism, simply dispensing with the municipal government, all authority and all patronage. The municipal government was dismissed and a new life organized.

These quotes refer to Cabrales and the five villages in an Asturian township, which abolished "those peasant obsessions—the payment of land taxes, consumer taxes and the draft." Another picture shows the villagers of Alguaire (Lerida) selflessly working the land of their comrades imprisoned in the capital of Lerida for their involvement in a revolutionary movement earlier that year.

In coordination with the anarchist insurrections under the Republic, the CNT, FAI and independent libertarian publishers issued much revolutionary literature. This literature included more or less classic works by international authors, new works by Spanish authors, and small booklets by anarcho-syndicalist militants who wrote with more enthusiasm than competence. Some

collective efforts in the form of recommendations by assemblies of unions were published also. No less than a hundred of these served as the basis for the report, "Concept of Libertarian Communism", drawn up by the confederal congress of Zaragoza in May of 1936.<sup>2</sup> This preoccupation with revolutionary literature had a considerable influence on the course of the anarcho-syndicalist revolution.

On July 19, 1936, in villages where there were unions affiliated with the CNT and UGT, revolutionary or antifascist committees were formed with the political parties. These organizations arranged the first confiscations of land, tools and products. At first the revolutionary committees took the place of the town councils. Later they themselves became the municipal government, with proportional representation for all of the member groups. The organization or the party with the majority assumed the presidency or mayoralty.

Confiscated lands were delivered to the peasant unions, which organized the first collectives. Many collectives were formed by CNT militants who pooled land, work animals, tools, poultry, livestock, fertilizers, seeds, and even harvests. Fields that were very far away from the centre of the collective were exchanged for closer ones belonging to villagers who were not members, and who were sometimes given better fields in the trade. People who had nothing to bring to the collective were admitted with the same rights and duties as the rest.

Smallholders who resisted collectivization were called "individualists". Generally they were respected, as long as they worked their lots with their own labour or with family labour, that is, without wage labour. They got along with much difficulty, especially at harvesting and plowing, because they were not able to hire labourers. The meagre size of their holdings meant they did not have agricultural machinery. In some villages the "individualists" resorted to mutual aid associations but nevertheless their harvests declined in both quantity and quality. Before giving in, which is what joining the collective meant to some of them, they preferred to abandon the village, leaving their work animals tied up in the stables (Montblanc). They also had trouble getting provisions since the regular shopkeepers were suppressed in some places as useless and pernicious intermediaries and the municipal government in charge of provisioning them was negligent. However, most of the collectivists were not so strict with individualists. In Monzón (Aragon) the collective loaned them its machinery and even furnished them with necessary goods. Some individualists



distributed their products by way of the collective co-operative and some ended up entering the collective, as in Más de las Matas.

The revolutionary committee confiscated the property of large landowners in many villages. An assembly of workers, in which all the village participated, was in charge of dividing the land between collectivists and individualists. A commission would set the general lines for the operation of the collective. When the CNT and UGT had methodological disagreements about collectivization, two distinct collectives were formed in the same village. In Cuenca the CNT and UGT confiscated all the land and ordered that, in case of a split, it would be divided proportionately.

The collectivized area varied according to the density of the population and the political awareness of the peasantry. The rural collective of Barcelona encompassed nearly 1000 hectares of market gardens, which the collectivists divided into various zones. The neighbouring collective of Hospitalet de Llobregat comprised 15 sq. km. In Sueca (Valencia) the collectivists cultivated 5,700 acres of rice fields, 510 of market gardens and 180 of orange groves (all formerly the property of the Marquis of Peñafiel). In Belvis del Jarama (New Castile), 1,430 acres of irrigated land and 2,240 of arable dry land was collectivized.

There were notable variations in the amount of land collectivized in some villages due to the misfortunes of war, the reactionary politics of the government and the military assaults of the Communist columns. In Peñalba (Aragon) the collective initially comprised all the village. After an attack by Communist columns in May of 1937 many small proprietors reclaimed their lands with the support of Russian bayonets (see Chapter 19). In Brihuega, after repelling an offensive by Italian forces in March, 1937, many small proprietors left with the retreating invaders. The district of Alcarria was almost completely collectivized.

In the collectives, work was organized around groups of workers headed by a delegate. The lands were divided into cultivated zones. In Barcelona these zones surrounded the outer barrios. The collectivized lands of Hospitalet de Llobregat were divided into 38 zones and in Montblanc into 5. Monzón was also divided. Delegates worked like everyone else. After each working day they gathered with the Administrative Commission to draw up the work plan for the next day. Every morning workers went to assigned locations where they were given relevant technical advice. There were always enough volunteers for the less desirable tasks, such as nighttime irrigation. Both the group delegates and

the Administrative Commission were named by the general assembly of collectivists, which was sovereign when important questions were raised.

The great majority of the collectives did not have a fixed timetable for work. In Barcelona itself Sundays, including the mornings, were workdays. The usual pattern was to work from dawn to dusk six days a week. A workday of 9-10 hours was established in some places and, where there was a scarcity of workers, even 12. It should be pointed out that the youth of these villages was absent on the war fronts.

The definition of working age also varied, ranging between 14 and 60 years. Single women worked in collective workshops or in branches of the distribution co-operatives. Married women, detained by household chores, were free from these obligations, though in times of need they also contributed their efforts. Pregnant women were given special consideration. Everyone worked according to physical ability. Days lost to illness were considered workdays in Cuenca. Men over 60 had the option to retire but, in Graus, they organized themselves and took on whatever work they could do.

For reasons already stated the collectives varied in size. The one in Lerida numbered 100 families. In Hospitalet de Llobregat there were 1000 members, both men and women. Of the 4,000 residents of Calanda, 3,500 were members of the collective. In Más de las Matas, 2,000 of the 2,300 inhabitants were members. All the residents of Peñalba (1,294) were in the collective when it started; after the Stalinist repression this was reduced to 500 members. The collective of Belvis de Jarama began with 75 members; in 1937 it had 140. Utiel's collective, one of the largest and most advanced, had 600 families.

Once the economic necessities of the collective itself were covered, the surplus was sold or bartered on the external market, directly or by way of confederal organizations. In some Catalan villages the agricultural unions of the bourgeois period continued to operate, furnishing small landholders, renters and sharecroppers with supplies and distributing their products. The Montblanc collective entrusted such a union with the wine and olive oil it produced. However, the collectives usually created their own co-operatives along new lines. In Barcelona the agricultural collective opened shops in the city. This marked the first stage in the evolution of distribution in the agricultural sector of Barcelona; later the Central Market of Fruits and Vegetables (Borne) was



collectivized. In Aragon, distribution was handled by the Regional Federation of Collectives, founded in February, 1937.

The collectivists received supplies from their cooperatives, often located in churches taken over during the revolution. The churches were ideal as warehouses, and all the products needed for local consumption were piled in them. Various arrangements were made for provisioning families. In Lerida peasant families were provided with a "consumer booklet" which recorded the articles taken from the collective warehouse. Each week the family was given the difference between what it had contributed to the cooperative and what it had consumed. In Montblanc articles were purchased with the collective's own money. In some villages a communist libertarian system of distribution was introduced in the first months, on a first come, first serve basis. Articles were taken from the warehouse according to one's need without any accounting. In other places distribution was organized with vouchers, a kind of non-circulating money. In Llombay (Castellón) foodstuffs were distributed in fixed quantities per family. Wherever prices were needed, they were established by the Administrative Council. In all cases, rationing was applied when articles were scarce. In such circumstances, children, the sick, the old, and pregnant women had priority for the rationed goods. Rationed non-essential items were distributed by a system of "points", a kind of rotation system. In Peñalba a medical receipt was necessary to establish priority for rationed goods.

Generally the collective supplied its members with abundant amounts of some food, such as vegetables and fruits, without any kind of restrictions. The cooperatives eliminated middlemen—the small shopkeepers, wholesalers, and black marketeers—so that products were cheaper for the consumer. The collectives tried to eliminate the prime parasites on the villagers, and they would have completely succeeded if some of the parasites had not been protected by corrupt officials and political parties.

The non-collectivized population also benefited indirectly since the cooperatives often offered better prices than so-called free commerce. We have already mentioned that many small holders distributed their products through the cooperatives of the collectives, which in turn supplied them with items they needed. Collectivists received some services free, such as wood, haircutting, movies and education.

Some products were bartered among collectives. Transactions involving money were handled through the municipal government.

Prices were regulated (Montblanc) and transactions made with special money. Barter was not rigorously regulated. In some places items were valued in terms of July 19th prices; in others, according to current prices in the free market. Among the Aragonese collectives there was not much control over what was exchanged. Calanda exchanged olive oil for fabrics from Barcelona. In Ademuz (Valencia) both barter and commerce were common.

At first urban merchants completely refused to barter. But as the war continued, as the most basic foodstuffs became scarce and money depreciated significantly, they came to prefer barter to commerce.

The collectives diversified to include secondary concerns: bakeries, barbershops, carpentries, blacksmiths, livestock operations, and so on. In Vilaboi (Barcelona) a farm costing 32,000 pesetas was set up. It boasted 20 dairy cows, 200 pigs, 27 beef cattle and a variety of poultry. That of Amposta in Tarragona was valued at 200,000 pesetas. That of Graus, housing some 6,000 animals of various species, was famous for its modern techniques. It had showers for the animals and scientific methods for treating livestock diseases.

All the collectives had work animals and essential tools and few were completely lacking in some kind of agricultural machinery. Hospitalet de Llobregat acquired machinery valued at 180,000 pesetas, including a truck. Amposta had 14 tractors, 15 threshers and 70 plough horses at its disposal. Alcolea de Cinca bought a thresher, a tractor and a truck. The collective of Alcañiz had 3 olive oil presses, 3 flour mills and an electrical power plant. Calanda had reapers, threshers and tractors.

Some portion of collective profits were used for public improvements and to expand production. The Cuenca collective used 25% of its profits for teaching and 25% for machinery and tools, leaving 50% at the disposition of the collectivists. When Seros was taken by the enemy on March 27, 1938, its collective had very little cash but had 1,200 sheep, 100 pigs, 30 cows, 36 horses and mules, a healthy-sized poultry farm and a threshing machine. The collective of Hospitalet de Llobregat registered more than 5 million pesetas income and some 4,200,000 pesetas outlay between September, 1936, and August, 1937. It devoted 7,000 pesetas each week to improvements in collective installations, among which was the channelling of the Llobregat river for flood-control. In March, 1938, the collective of Sueca, composed of 225 families,

announced the following assets: 850,559 kg. rice, 38,000 kg. oranges and 140,000 pesetas worth of merchandise in the cooperative. Amposta established 15 new schools, a clinic, a hospital and a water purification project to provide the drinking water that swampy area so badly needed. In Montblanc the collectivists uprooted all the old and dying vines. Their tractors ploughed the fields deeper to yield better harvests. In many Aragonese villages the collectivists built new roads and improved those already existing. They installed modern flour mills and processed the products of their agriculture and livestock. In some villages, like Calanda, they set up public baths, and in almost all they set up libraries, cultural centres and schools. In Almagro such centres were established in the former villas of the bourgeoisie and baptized with revolutionary names such as "Villa Kropotkin" and "Villa Montseny".

The preoccupation with culture and teaching was unprecedented in the Spanish countryside. The collectivists of Amposta organized classes for semi-literate adults, a canteen for young school children, and a school of arts and crafts. The school in Seros was open to all residents, whether in the collective or not. Graus set up a printing press and bookstore, an arts and crafts school with 60 students, a school of fine arts, and a museum. It established an elementary school named after Joaquín Costa, who in the 19th century defined the basic needs of the Spanish as "school and food". (Joaquín Costa died in Graus in 1910, raving against half the world, above all against governments and political parties.) In the Calanda school complex 1,233 students were lodged, taught by 10 teachers. The more advanced students were sent to the high school in Caspe and the collective paid their expenses. The school of the Alcoriza collective had 600 children and 12 teachers. Many of these schools were set up in monasteries. The Granadella school had been the barracks of the civil guards. In some villages the collectivists established the first cinemas; Peñalba's was set up in the church. The collectivists of Viladecans founded an agricultural experiment station.

The collectives were not always composed of CNT members only. The UGT generally was sympathetic except in Catalonia, where the UGT was used by the Communists to counter the hegemony of anarchism. In the rest of Spain the UGT and CNT got along well, especially during the first months of the revolution. UGT members in Belvis del Jarama withdrew from the Institute of Agrarian Reform in order to enter into economic relations with the

Regional Federation of Castilian Peasants, a confederal organization.

The CNT, directly or through revolutionary committees, carried out its expropriations and turned the land over to allied peasant groups. The combined economic power of collectives was the major source of the CNT's political strength. On all levels—local, regional and national — the CNT assured its control over the collectives by setting up an economic system tied into its network of unions. This prevented the collectives from falling into a kind of petty regionalism. Thus the CNT's district and regional federations had both economic and syndical functions.

Some collectives, like Granadella, refused to pay taxes to the State. Lagunarrota always defied the tax collectors. Graus, on the other hand, believed it an honour to pay all its taxes, saying that it was necessary to contribute to the expenses of the government that carried the financial burden of the War. Alcolea de Cinca never paid taxes, but felt a solemn obligation to supply the front directly with all kinds of agricultural produce. The collective invested what would have gone for taxes in equipment.

The payment of salaries varied considerably. In Vilaboi, the collectivists assigned themselves a daily wage of 60 centimos. After the first harvest the weekly salary was raised to 70 and 85 pesetas. At the end of 1938 they collected 150 pesetas a week. The rate of inflation and its relation to the cost of living must be kept in mind when interpreting these figures. With the same lack of precision, Hospitalet tells us that the collectivists' weekly payroll amounted to 90,000 pesetas. In Alcañiz, 9 hours of work earned 10 pesetas. In Cervera del Maestre, men were paid 350 pesetas a week, women 250, and minors, 150. In Llombay, all persons over 15 were paid 5 pesetas a day. In Granadella, all productive persons over 18 earned 2 pesetas a day and those under 18, 1 peseta. Retirement age was 60 years, or younger where necessary. Remember that some of these collectives practised a libertarian communism system, in whole or in part, in which wages were not paid in pesetas but in some kind of local money. From this comes the very pronounced differences between one kind of allotment and another.

At the beginning of the movement many collectives did not have salaries at all. People worked as much as they could and consumed what they needed. The common mess system was in general use, as in the cities. But the inclination toward private life made the "family salary" popular. Still there was the problem of

single persons not connected to any household. In Lerida single persons were allotted 50 pesetas, half of which was paid directly, and the other half to the collective dining hall. 60 pesetas was allotted to married couples without children and 70 to those with children. In Pla de Cabra, the worker earned 5 pesetas a day, plus 2 pesetas for each member of the family. In Orriols the collectivists switched from the "common cashbox" to the family salary: the husband earned 5 pesetas and the wife, 2; the single person over 15, 8; those under 15, 3. In Monzón, 9 pesetas was allotted each married couple, plus 3.50 for each child under 14. Children over 14 got 4 pesetas. In San Mateo, the head of the family was paid 3 pesetas, his companion, 2, single persons, 3, and those under 16, 1.50. Married couples in Brihuega earned 5 pesetas and 0.75 for each child. Whether they worked or not, everyone was paid daily.

In the collectives which did not use State money, payments were made in their own money, or money was replaced by "tokens" or "coupons" exchangeable for articles. In Peñalba there were rigid methods for preventing the accumulation of money. With or without such methods, money became completely devalued or, more accurately, worthless throughout this dramatic period.

In Seros, the collective fed single persons without families in its dining hall and supplied them with clean clothes. Upon marriage, the collective covered the costs of setting up the new household. In Graus a newlywed couple received an expense-paid week of holidays as a honeymoon. The cooperative supplied them with furniture, a house, and other things, which they paid off over time. In Peñalba each newlywed couple received a complete dowry. In San Mateo the women of the collective took care of the washing and cooking for single men.

Decision-making within the collectives was fiercely democratic. The Hospitalet de Llobregat collective held a general assembly every three months to examine the course of production and to attend to new needs. On this occasion the Administrative Council displayed its account books. In Ademuz assemblies were held every Saturday. In Alcolea de Cinca they were held whenever necessary.

The collectives devoted much attention to medical and health services and generally they were free. The Masroig collective paid a doctor a yearly wage to attend to its members. The members of the Granadella collective subscribed to the Hospital del Pueblo in Barcelona. In Peñalba the doctor, the visiting nurse and the vet-

erinarian were full members of the collective. The Federation of Aragonese Collectives subscribed all its representatives to the General Hospital. In some places (Montblanc) medical services were handled by the municipal government.

During the War's most disastrous phase, villages invaded by the enemy were evacuated. The collectives absorbed most of the refugees, taking them in with an admirable spirit of solidarity. In the spring of 1938 the problem of refugees worsened, due to the collapse of the Aragonese front. The Aragonese collectivists evacuated en masse toward Catalonia, carrying with them as much as humanly possible: machinery, tools, draft animals, livestock. Their exodus was one of the most heroic; for many it ended in concentration camps in France.

The agricultural collective of Barcelona took in 600 refugees from the invaded zones. That of Vilaboi took in about a hundred families. Amposta, situated on the firing line, took in 162. Graus maintained 50 until it, too, had to be evacuated. The Utiel collective cared for some 600 families evacuated from the Centre fronts.

The voluntary provisioning of the fronts was another aspect of collectivized solidarity. On one occasion the Utiel collective sent 1,490 litres of olive oil and 350 kilograms of potatoes to the Madrid front. Other times it sent thousands of kilograms of beans, wheat and rice. Perales de Tajuña sent huge quantities of bread, olive oil, flour and potatoes to the military Quartermaster and eggs, milk and meat to the Artillery hospital. Hospitalet sent to the front several trucks full of assorted garden produce and 8 wagons of artichokes valued at 30,000 pesetas.

The solidarity of the collectives is much more impressive when it is remembered that their sons were in the trenches. At first the Barcelona collective paid its own militiamen. The small collective of Vilaboi had 200 of its members on the front. Viladecans had 60, Amposta 300 and Calanda 500.

At first, one became a member of the collective without any formalities. In Ademuz new members were obliged to declare how much they owned, but were allowed to decide what they would contribute to the collective. In other cases a member handed over all his property to the collective: land, tools, draft animals and so on. Everything handed over was registered and its value assessed. In some collectives the members put in their own funds, as in Pobla de Granadella (Catalonia), Lagunarrota (Aragon), and Cervera del Maestre (Valencia). Some collectives, like that of Granadella, also took over the debts of entering members. The only debts these

collectives would not pay were those contracted with usurers. When someone left the collective, all that he or she brought, or its value in pesetas, was returned, sometimes with a 15% discount. In all questions concerning the terms of entry and departure the general assembly had the final word.

There were not many cases of expulsion. Those who violated the collective's rules were forgiven the first time; if the violation was repeated the case was presented to the general assembly. Only it could decide to expell after hearing the accused and the accusers. In Cuenca, the delegates of the work groups were not authorized to administer sanctions. Irregularities were reported to the Administrative Council, which presented the case to the assembly, which then made the final decision. Work delegates and Council members who abused their authority were suspended by the assembly. Any collectivist who abused another person — whether collectivist or not — or who committed any kind of violation, was censured. If it occurred again, the violator was expelled from the collective and lost all his rights.

There were two syndicalist peasant organizations. As anarchists, peasants were affiliated with the Peasant Union of the CNT or the FAI, both of which advised them about union organization and ideology; and as collectivists they were affiliated with a Regional Federation of Collectives. In Catalonia the collectives that continued to belong to petit-bourgeois Agricultural Unions were directly connected by the Regional Committee of Peasants.

The Regional Federation of Aragonese Collectives was established in Caspe in February, 1937 at a congress attended by 500 delegates. According to the rules passed, the Federation's goals were to defend the interests of the collectivists; to take care of the experimental farms and advise the agriculturalists about the productive capacities of the various kinds of land in cultivation; to prepare young people with special training classes; to form technical teams to improve agricultural and livestock production; to regulate market conditions; to establish production statistics and regional reserves; and to provide cultural and educational resources, in such forms as movies, lecture and theatre, for its members.

To join the Federation, the collectives had to attach to their request the minutes of the general assembly in which the decision to affiliate was made and agree to follow faithfully the general statutes. The congress directed the collectives to deliver to the Federation a report of their production and consumption and, in



accord with the norms of autonomy, to federate themselves on the district level. Using local statistics the District Federation of Collectives drew up a production and distribution plan. At first there was an agreement to suppress State money among the collectives and create a system of "ration cards" in its place. Generally, the collectives had enough money to meet their own needs and were to contribute, according to their resources, to the Federation's Regional Reserve Fund.

Other measures gave to municipal institutions the administration of expropriated lands and suppressed municipal property boundaries in order to simplify the task of socialization. Productive members not needed in their own collectives were assigned to collectives with too few. The congress established the rule that rural and urban land expropriated from fascists, as well as lands rented or sharecropped, were to be turned over to workers' organizations for collectivization. Small landholders resisting collectivization were not allowed to hold more land than they could work with their own labour and were informed of the disadvantages that they would encounter in the new society.

In Catalonia, where small landholders and family agriculture predominated, the collectives faced serious difficulties. The farmers were increasingly involved in political schemes and plots. A significant portion of Catalan sharecroppers were under the influence of the governing political party. On September 5, 1936, a regional congress of peasants was held in Barcelona to examine the problems posed by collectivization in the Catalan countryside. The congress decided that it was necessary to respect small landholders who cultivated their lands with family labour. With this concession they hoped to prevent the individualists from sabotaging the revolution. They were confident that the example of the collectives and their obvious advantages would finally weaken the resistance of the recalcitrants. Complete collectivization was to take place wherever there were no objections.

The Regional Federation of Peasants was not active until February, 1937. It had been created by a Regional Meeting of Peasants to encourage the development of mutual aid while respecting the special characteristics of each collective. Credits and aid were offered, without interest or other inconveniences, to collectives in need. Free health clinics and cultural centres were set up for collectivists. For all this the collectives were assessed 1% of their total productive wealth.

The collectives of the region of Valencia, including Murcia,

were more numerous and more substantial. Valencia, the provisional seat of the government, was in the midst of a vast, fertile lowland, the most important agricultural zone in Spain. The anarchist movement, contrary to the pattern in other regions, was stronger and more conscientious in the villages than in the cities. The collectivization process was not so spectacular but it was more competent. It must be kept in mind that after November, 1936, the crushing bureaucratic and political apparatus of the State, the Loyalist government itself, had descended on Valencia. This official pressure greatly obstructed the development of popular revolutionary goals, as much in the countryside as in the city.

The Republic published a decree on October 7, 1937, which subjected to narrow legal conditions the land seizures made by the unions. This was ignored because of the enormous revolutionary tension of those months. When the government installed its ministers in Valencia it began to take an unhealthy interest in the collectives. In December, 1936, Vicente Uribe, a Communist and Minister of Agriculture, told small landholders, who were the enemies of collectivization, that the guns of the Communist Party and the government were at their disposal. From the Agricultural Ministry the Communists set up a new Peasant Federation in opposition to the Federation of Agricultural Workers (UGT) and the National Federation of Peasants (CNT). One of the leaders of this new Federation proudly proclaimed:

Such is the sympathy felt for us in the region of Valencia that thousands and thousands of peasants would join our party if we wanted it. Many of the peasants believe in God and pound their chests in private. But they love our party as if it were sacred.

*Claridad*, a left-wing Socialist paper at the time, reported,

In villages the Communist Party is recruiting members from the old Autonomist Party, which, besides being reactionary, is evil.

The October 7 decree, enthusiastically greeted by the Communist press as the most revolutionary measure of all times left many loose ends. It did no more than sanction those expropriations already realized by the people and the seizures of lands from Fascists although, even there, it still recognized the property rights of their heirs. The Socialist, Zabalza, commented,

Before any Communist minister even entered the government, the peasant organizations, guided by our Federation, had *de facto* confiscated all the land belonging to rebels.

And CNT of Madrid said:

The peasants do not need decrees to solve their vital problems; indeed, they anticipate them by expropriating both the lands of owners who participated in the military conspiracy and those of owners who did not. The authorities now know that the 19th of July destroyed the unjust regime of the privileged forever.

In June, 1937, socialist peasants tried to have seizures allowed in the decree extended to include landowners who for long periods before July 19th had oppressed workers. Both the Ministry of Agriculture and the Institute of Agrarian Reform, a creature of the Ministry, ignored their request. On the contrary, many dispossessed owners had their lands returned to them. The right of the original owner was reaffirmed and peasants who had been given the land had to content themselves with lands of poorer quality. The conservative decree of October 7 was an attempt to demoralize the collectivists and lead to dissension and competition among the peasantry. It persuaded others to recover fields they had voluntarily turned over to the collective. The CNT publicly accused officials of the Ministry of Agriculture of visiting the collectives with proposals of intrigue and defeatism.

About the summer of 1937, Uribe made a tactical switch. A ministerial order in June recognized, in a way, the existence of the collectives and offered them a certain degree of support. But those that were not legally constituted would be automatically dissolved within a brief period of time. What had happened? Simply that the chaos and demoralization among the peasantry was endangering the harvest. At the same time the decree was a peremptory warning to the collectives to reorganize according to some complicated principles. It was a declaration of a limited armistice "for the current agricultural year," which ended on October 31. Collectives not legalized by that date would automatically be illegal and their lands would be returned to their former owners.

The Regional Committee of Peasants of Levante began with maximum speed to reorganize and legalize the collectives. It carried out a rigorous statistical review showing the productive and consumer capacities of the collectivized centres. This work was done by the Section for Advice and Statistics, which carried out about 50 judicial and economic consultations a day. At the November regional congress the Section announced that 340 collectives were legally constituted and the rest of the 500 CNT collectives were awaiting ratification. The same congress laid the

basis for a new collectivist organization in the form of district, provincial and regional federations.

In June, 1937, the National Committee of the CNT convened a National Meeting of Peasants with the express purpose of creating a National Federation of Peasants attached to the confederal organization. The primary objective defined in its statutes was the national integration of the agricultural economies of all the zones under cultivation, embracing both collectives and small proprietors. The Federation would accept UGT collectives and be responsible for technical consultation of all kinds through its regional branches. Small landholders, individual cultivators and collectives attached to the Federation would have full freedom to initiate agricultural development in their respective zones, but they would not be subject to national plans designed to ensure the best crop yields, the transformation or substitution of some crops for others of greater economic value and the combatting of crop and livestock diseases.

The federated cultivators were obliged to supply statistical data to the National Federation about current and projected production and whatever else necessary for general planning. The Federation was the sole distributor and exporter of produce.

Cultivators could reserve enough of their production to meet their own consumption needs but had to observe restrictions which might be called for at a given time "to ensure the equal right of all consumers without discrimination." Surpluses were to be turned over to the Federation, which would pay for them "according to local values" or as determined by a national price regulating board. By the same mechanism cultivators were to receive supplies at cost for their cooperatives—fertilizers, machines and the means to improve their livestock and crops—with a small additional charge for transportation and administration. These exchanges were carried out through the appropriate Regional Federation. The Federation would facilitate the moves of peasants from zones short of cultivable lands to zones needing workers. It would establish relations with all the economic organizations of the CNT and other groups, national or international. It created an auxiliary service to even out payments across diverse zones, national and foreign. Solidarity and mutual aid, including compensation for fires, accidents, pestilence, sickness, retirement, orphans, would be available even to individualists not participating in the collectives.

Such are the broad outlines of the beginnings of collectiviza-

tion in the Spanish countryside. Unfortunately, the open counter-revolutionary offensive began very soon and the possibilities for expansion were greatly reduced.<sup>3</sup> As soon as the 1937 harvest was in, the government resumed its anticollectivist campaign. This government, largely composed of Communists, pro-Communists and crypto-Communists, began its assault with an attack on the Council of Aragon. The 11th Division was dispatched under the leadership of the Bolshevik, Enrique Lister. Another Communist division, the 27th, completed the punitive mission against the collectives in the zone of Huesca. There were hundreds of arrests and a number of assassinations. The prosperous Aragonese collectives were handed back to the former landowners, many of whom were Fascists in disguise.

There was another tactical shift with a eye on the 1938 harvest, but this time it was too late. The collectives had been reorganized and had sown their seeds, but this time Franco did the harvesting. In the spring of that year, the Aragon front fell. The military catastrophe had begun.

The anarchist agrarian revolution of the CNT, in spite of its imperfections and errors, was the only solid and constructive achievement of this dramatic episode in Spanish history. The collectives have not been seriously studied. The tragic collapse of the resistance, the constant hardship of the militants, the pressure of a thousand and one problems to attend to at the same time, the permanent climate of tension in the face of the adverse course of the war, and the ceaseless struggle to escape political manoeuvrings, both internal and international, precluded the tranquility necessary to complete the experiments or to take a precise inventory of what was accomplished on the level of constructive socialism. Documentary treasures were abandoned to the fascists, scattered and lost, redeemed only in the memories of survivors languishing in the shadow of the dictatorship or forever far away from the struggles. A methodical study of the collectives remains to be done.





*International volunteers with the Durruti Column.*

# 11. From the Army of Africa to the Army of the People

As one step in their domination of the nobility, Ferdinand and Isabella created Spain's first standing army solely responsible to the Crown. To lure the nobles from their estates to the court, the monarchs offered all kinds of honorary titles, including that of Palace Guard. The Guard, established in 1512, was called Gentlemen of the House and Body of the King. Its members, drawn from the most distinguished families of Castile, Aragon and elsewhere, were paid a salary.

Notice the change. The nobility, undisciplined and independent, became the nucleus of an army whose main function was internal order. Other forces of internal order had similar origins. Ferdinand and Isabella created the Holy Brotherhood to protect people from the nobles for it was the nobility, more than bandits or professional criminals, who posed a constant menace in the villages, cities and highways. In time the lure of the court meant that nobles left their lands uncultivated or in the hands of *caciques*. Vast lands were left without people, and great numbers of people without land.

In 1516 the regent, Cardinal Cisneros, set up an army of 30,000 men known as the *Gente de Ordenanza*<sup>1</sup> to deal with a civil war that appeared likely upon the accession to the Spanish throne of the Hapsburg Emperor, Charles V. The people and part of the nobility were opposed to the new king. Born and educated abroad, he was a stranger to them. He did not even speak Spanish. His rival for the crown, the Infante Ferdinand, was Spanish.

In 1520 the Cardinal's army intervened in the dispute between Charles V and the Castilian towns and their representatives—the *Comuneros de Castilla*. Later it was involved in a series of wars



undertaken by Charles V against the Reformation and Francois I of France. In 1591 the troops of Philip II entered Zaragoza and put an end to the Aragonese *fueros*. In the 1640's the king's troops put down a revolt in Catalonia which they themselves had provoked. The regional *fueros* were ignored, just as they would be in the Basque country during the Carlist wars and, later, there and in Catalonia from 1936 to 1939. The Spanish army was the tool of the Austrian Hapsburgs and the victim of their international plans, especially in the bitter struggle against the Dutch patriots. The wars of the Hapsburgs impoverished the nation and led to its partial dismemberment.

At the beginning of the 19th century the people fought a long war of independence against Napoleon with the aid of only a few soldiers and officers. A biographer of General Espartero described the army's disgrace as follows:

The military came out of the War of Independence with its prestige shaken. Spain was freed from the Napoleonic invasion, not by the regular army, but rather by the efforts and sacrifices of civilians and peasants, who fought the great Napoleon with tactics that rendered all his scientific expertise and strategy useless.<sup>2</sup>

The army's lethargy at home contrasted with its energy in the New World, where it sought to frustrate the colonies' rightful desire for independence.

During the Carlist Wars the army assumed a liberal posture. The officers who returned to Spain after the loss of the American colonies had been affected by the liberalism prevalent in the New World. They resented a monarchy that had abandoned them to their fate while it persecuted liberals at home. They had been passed over for promotion, and stigmatized as *ayacuchos*, after the battle of the same name in which the colonial army was decisively defeated. The pretender Carlos Maria Isidro started the civil wars, proclaiming the same absolutist principles as his brother who stirred up the patriots of South America and caused the loss of the colonies. The liberalism of the officers was not based upon prior convictions. After the peace of Vergara the generals began struggling for power among themselves, giving rise to an endless round of *pronunciamientos*.

General Riego was the first to pronounce. Imprisoned by Napoleon, he had embraced the liberal ideas of the First Republic in France. O'Donnell, another Spanish General, accompanied General Angoulême's troops who came from France to free Fer-

dinand VI from "constitutional tyranny." He, Narváez and other generals made conservative pronouncements. Prim was the last liberal general, and one of the main participants in the Revolution of 1868 that dethroned Isabella II. With his death the army resumed its former role of propping up the Church and the Throne. Generals Pavia and Martínez Campos championed the Bourbon restoration: Pavia abolished the First Republic; and Martínez Campos proclaimed Alfonso XII king. The despotic administration of other Generals in the New World—Pola Vieja, Marina and Weyler—lost Spain the last vestiges of its empire. Upon their return to Spain, these generals exemplified the supremacy of the military in the new Bourbon period.

The new epoch was characterized by a virulent military chauvinism that increased as the Spanish people and the intellectual elite reacted more and more to the colonization of Spain by its own army. Military catastrophes in Africa increased the antimilitarism of the people, which took political and revolutionary forms in some parts of the country. The army fell completely out of favour, but antimilitarism was generally tempered by a sentimental attitude toward the common soldier. The people made a distinction between soldiers subject to military discipline and their fatuous, arrogant, reactionary and belligerent officers. The phenomenon of the *pronunciamiento* thrived only because people did not want to fight their class brothers, the soldiers. That is why the people were defeated in Barcelona in 1909 during the *semana trágica*, why Francisco Ferrer was shot, and why the events that followed were allowed to happen.

In those days conscripts posted to border towns or seaports frequently deserted *en masse*. Barracks life was unbearable. Military discipline was more a humiliation to human dignity than an effective tactic. Wars were continually being provoked in Africa by officers seeking advancement, increasing the desertion rate still more.

From time to time new voices were heard in the army, but they were soon stifled by the weight of the past. The Juntas Militares de Defensa inspired hopes of a resurgence of the liberal militarism of the previous century. During the revolutionary crisis of 1917 both old and new anti-dynastic and pro-regionalist parties hoped for a change of mentality in the young officers, but the looked-for miracle failed to happen. Their hopes were destroyed when the guns were turned on the people. The Juntas themselves, whose only goal was to open up the system of promotion controlled by the

higher officers, were even then speaking in terms of a military dictatorship. For instance, they said:

Circumstances may impose on us the sacred duty of intervention in the life of the nation to impose moral customs and procedures, justice and foresight upon the politicians, for without these qualities Spain will come to ruin and disaster.

Civil legislation was overridden by drastic measures which created taboos protecting the army. The army was above all criticism and any violation of this dictum automatically fell under the jurisdiction of a military tribunal. Open questioning of military despotism was held as anti-patriotic and anti-Spanish. "Impatient" officers who considered judicial proceedings a waste of time took justice into their own hands and shut down opposition newspapers.

It was the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera that put an end to the legend of military liberalism. Liberalism and militarism became two mutually exclusive categories. The anarchists increased their anti-militarist propaganda in barracks and incited soldiers to rebel. The first result of their campaign was the mutiny of the Carmen Barracks in Zaragoza on January 8, 1920. Angel Chueca, the anarchist civilian who led the revolt, died in the conflict. Corporal Godoy, implicated in the events, was executed.

In 1926 there was the attempted assault on the Atarazanas barracks in Barcelona. The anarchists thought they could count on the complicity of some of the soldiers, but the soldiers defected at the last minute. From then on, the CNT appears to have been very prudent in its conspiracies with military officers. They began to demand as a prior condition of any joint action that the military bring their guns into the streets first.

Beginning in 1933, army barracks were the prime objective of anarcho-syndicalist insurrections. January began with an assault on the La Panera barracks of Lerida which failed tragically. In December, part of the garrison of Villanueva de la Serena, in Badajoz, revolted in alliance with the CNT. The organizer of the revolt, Sergeant Pio Sopena, died in the ruins of his fort. The FAI distributed a clandestine newspaper *El soldado del pueblo* (The people's soldier), to the army. This propaganda undermined military discipline, above all in garrisons located in areas of political and social struggle. On July 19, 1936, when the first anarchist groups clashed with the army in Barcelona, they no longer gave any thought to the old sentimental idea of the soldier as the "slave

of discipline." They attacked soldiers and officers with resolution, and the soldiers, faced with having to defend their own lives, opted for joining the people.

The military uprising of July, 1936, has been considered a failure by the experts. Its only complete success was in the 6th and 7th military regions. In the more important regions, the 1st, 3rd and 4th, (Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona), it was wiped out (without so much as a struggle in the 3rd). To win in Galicia, the 2nd region, took all their resources.

The Navy received a terrible setback but the popular counteroffensive to the *pronunciamento* was not vigorous enough. The people broke the tradition of successful *pronunciamentos*, but they could not avoid a war.

In the past, *pronunciamentos* went off like a military parade. At most there would be one battle, usually without bloodshed. Often a printed proclamation (called a *bando*), announcing a state of war and posted on street corners or the walls of the town square, was sufficient. It would be followed by the procession of a regiment watched and applauded by curious spectators. There had never been an open civil war caused by a *pronunciamento*. The Carlist civil wars were not military *pronunciamentos*, but rather clerical ones supported by some of the military.

So the classic *pronunciamento* failed, but a civil war was launched with unprecedented fury and destruction, thanks to modern weaponry. Although their *pronunciamentos* were embarrassing defeats for the military, the civil war favoured them right from the start. From the first moment, the war was the major obstacle to the revolution. The bruised and battered institutions of the State found in the war an impressive argument to muster against revolutionary idealists. To face the enemy army required an army. An army is a very serious thing. It has to be disciplined, under command of officers, militarily prepared, obedient to the voice of a strong government, centralized and representative of all the antifascist forces. This argument, unquestionably supported by events, was aimed towards one end that could not be waived: the disarming of the people.

Some CNT-FAI militants let themselves be taken in, and if at times they perceived the ulterior motive behind the argument they offered only passing opposition. Nevertheless, the government could not have made itself any clearer. Shortly after the coup, the Minister of the Interior proclaimed in a *bando*,

the use of vehicles by persons carrying arms of any sort is completely prohibited, and the order has been given to detain and disarm anyone not having a special authorization for a specified duty.

On July 24, a column of three thousand volunteer militia, commanded by Buenaventura Durruti and advised by Commander Pérez Farrás, a Catalan republican, set out for Zaragoza. From Madrid, the seat of the predominantly republican-socialist government, the militia left for the Guadarrama mountains, where the passes were threatened by the rebel columns of General Mola. There the revolution and the war took different directions.

At the beginning of August the central government issued a decree mobilizing the reserves of 1933, 1934 and 1935. They were to report to barracks and obey the orders of professional soldiers. Many youths called up had already enlisted in militias and were fighting on the front, and others were ready to follow their example.

In Barcelona the reserves rebelled against the decree and, at first, the CNT supported them. In a meeting ten thousand youths agreed to go to the front as militia, but not to the barracks as soldiers. They hated barracks discipline and despised the professionals who had turned against the Republic after swearing allegiance to it.

The CNT declared in a manifesto:

We cannot support the existence of a regular army, uniformed and conscripted. The army should be replaced by popular militias, by the people in arms, the only guarantee that liberty will be enthusiastically defended and that new conspiracies will not be hatched in the shadows.

On August 2, a plenary meeting of the FAI voted in favour of popular militias and against converting them into regular army units. But the FAI agreed that "some organization for the struggle, indispensable in any war" was necessary, and the dispute was solved by a compromise. On August 6, the Central Committee of Antifascist Militia issued a note ordering those mobilized to report to the barracks, where they would be at the disposition of the Committee of Militias itself. The CNT participated directly in their military training. The barracks were given new names more in keeping with the circumstances, *Bakunin*, *Durruti*, *Carlos Marx*, and *Lenin*. The technical personnel of the old army, purged by the worker groups and the parties, were supposed to report to the barracks to agree on how their help could be used. But since the

loyalty of the officers remained suspect, the CNT and the UGT set up Workers' and Soldiers' Committees in all the army camps to supervise them.

In the central region, militias were militarized without problems, since it was part of the Marxist strategy, and the Marxists were in the majority. There, the CNT created its own Defense Committee that performed exceptionally well and stiffened popular resistance during the first weeks of the siege of Madrid.

On August 10, in the first war-time rally held in Madrid by the CNT-FAI, García Oliver gave a speech that marked a new attitude toward the army. To counter the central government's efforts to revive the old army, he proposed the creation of a new one:

A people's army growing out of the militia should be organized on new principles. We will organize a revolutionary military school where we will train technical officers who will not be carbon copies of the old officers, but rather simple technicians who will follow the instructions of officers who have proven their loyalty to the people and the proletariat.

This is how the War School was created.

On September 4, when Largo Caballero took office, he told foreign correspondents, "First, win the war, then we can talk about revolution." On September 27, the Catalan government was reorganized under the Title of Council of the Generalidad, with three anarcho-syndicalist members. The political declaration of the new government declared,

A concentration of maximum effort on the war, holding back no means that will contribute to its rapid and victorious conclusion. A single command, a coordination of all the fighting units, the forming of obligatory militias and the strengthening of discipline.

On October 25, a pact was signed in Barcelona by the CNT, UGT, FAI and the PSUC. The fourth paragraph in this pact established:

- a single command to coordinate the activities of all the fighting units, the creation of conscripted militias which will become a great popular army, and the reinforcement of discipline.

The Council of the Catalan government automatically superseded the Central Committee of Antifascist Militia of Catalonia. García Oliver declared, "The Committee of Militia has been dissolved because the Generalidad now represents all of us." Santillán explained after the war the reasons for that shift,

We knew we could not win the revolution if we could not win the war, and we sacrificed everything for the war, even the revolution, without realizing that in doing so we were also sacrificing the objectives of the war. The Committee of Militias stood for the autonomy of Catalonia, the purity of the legitimacy of the war and resurrection of the Spanish heart and soul . . . but we were always being told that as long as we persisted in keeping it, that as long as we persisted in maintaining the power of the people, no arms would come to Catalonia, nor would they give us the foreign exchange to buy them abroad, nor would they furnish us with raw materials for our industry. And since losing the war meant losing everything . . . we abandoned the Committee of Militias to join the Catalan government in the Defense Council and other vital departments.<sup>3</sup>

In the first Council of the Catalan government the Minister of Defense was a technician, Díaz Sandino, an air force officer who had distinguished himself on July 19 by bombing the Atarazanas barracks. Nevertheless, his advisors were anarchists. The CNT took over the Department of Defense during the first government crisis, on December 13.

Like it or not, we watched the formation of a kind of Catalan army, dependent more on the Catalan than the central government, and subject to conditions of the statute of autonomy. The slogan of "discipline" was meant for the people to swallow, while the Catalan politicians gave it a more flexible interpretation when applied to themselves. As for the central government, the promise to give arms to the confederal militia if it was militarized was a gross deception. Even after militarization the anarchists were always the worst armed of all units.

During August, there was much discussion in the propaganda offices of the CNT-FAI about a phrase spoken by Durruti in a radio broadcast from his headquarters in Bujaraloz. "We renounce everything except victory." The anarchist fighters resisted militarization tenaciously and it was nearly impossible to convince them. Some said Durruti meant that he was ready to give up the revolution for the war. But that interpretation is inconsistent with his personality, his revolutionary beliefs and the revolutionary changes he made in his wide zone of operations. When Durruti went to Madrid, pleading for arms from the central government for his columns, he told the Madrid press:

As for my column, I am satisfied. We are making war and revolution at the same time. Revolutionary changes not only are taking place in



Barcelona, but reach right down into the trenches. Every village we take begins to develop along revolutionary lines. On the path we have taken there are only fighters. Everyone is struggling for the war and the revolution. This is our strength.

For Durruti, "This is our strength" meant that the revolution provided the energy for the war.

In the first days of September a National Plenary of CNT Regions was held to consider Largo Caballero's invitation to participate in the central government. The Plenary's response was a counter-proposal that the government be transformed into a National Defense Council. The same document recommended:

the creation of a war militia of obligatory nature to be controlled by Councils of Workers and Militiamen constituted by joint CNT-UGT commissions; a simplification of commands, limiting them to the direction and administration of the military technicians; the creation of a single Military Administration, a commissariat for war, named by the National Council of Defense with representatives of the three groups in the struggle against fascism (republicans, marxists and anarchists).

On November 6, 1936, the government left Madrid for Valencia, leaving the defense of the city in the hands of a *junta* composed of all parties and groups, including the CNT and the Libertarian Youth. On December 12 the Militia Office announced in the papers there was

an indispensable necessity for the efficiency of our war to create a regular army, keeping in mind the government's decree on the militarization of the militia, and, for this end, to organize all militia units and battalions from the different organizations into regular battalions and brigades.

These new units would be "the only ones recognized in terms of pay, and those resisting regularization [would be] denied pay and supplies."

This decision was ratified by General Miaja, president of the Junta of Defense, in a proclamation of December 24.

It is forbidden to all except regular forces under orders of regular officers to carry guns within the city. Other armed groups without official duties were to be "considered rebels and prosecuted under the Military Code of Justice.

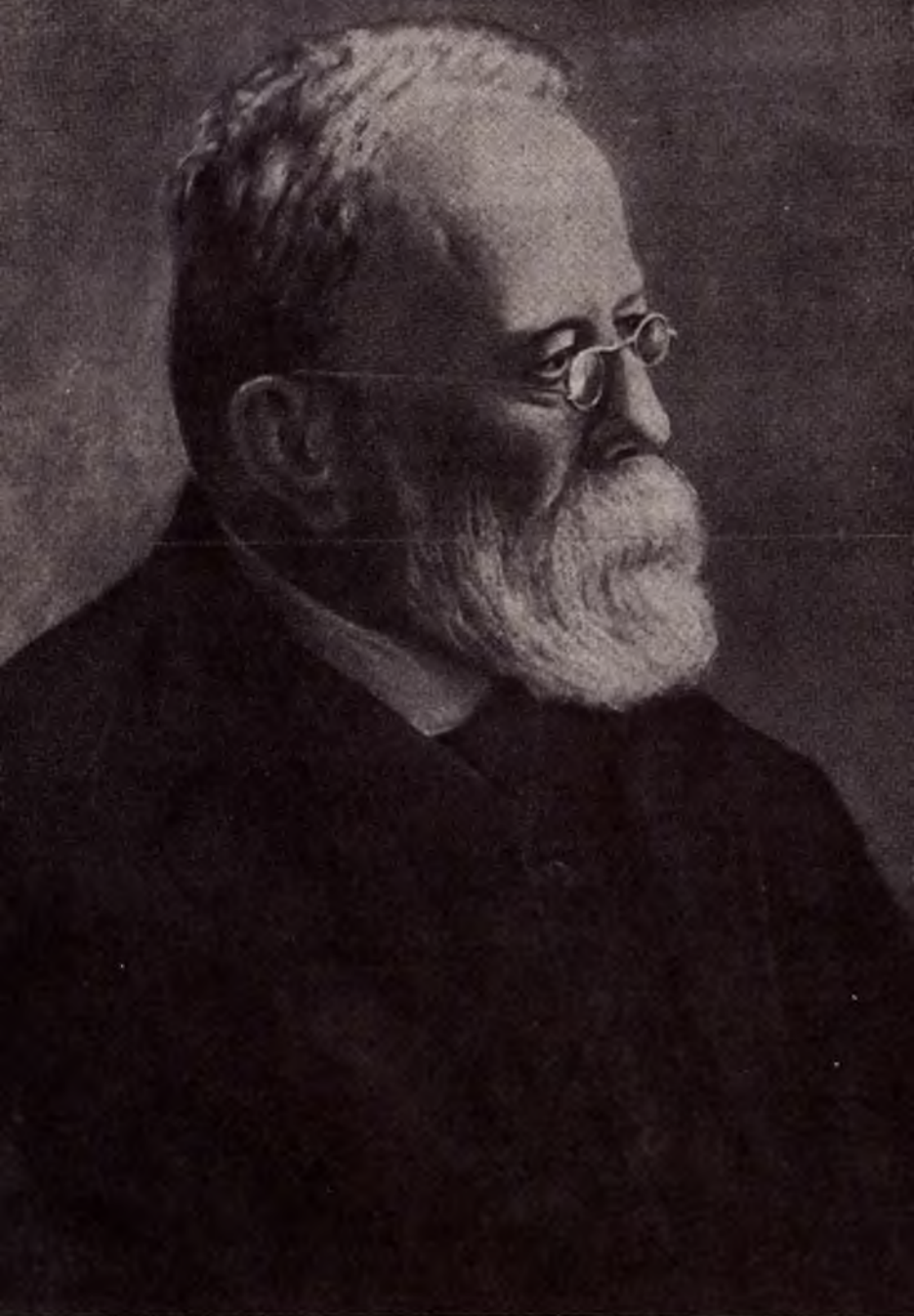
*Solidaridad Obrera* announced on October 30 that members of antifascist groups were composing a new Code of Military

Justice. The next day the newspaper attacked the recently issued decree of the militarization of the militias, which referred to the existing military code "until the new one is completed." *Solidaridad Obrera* wrote,

It is one thing to recognize, as we do, the need to regulate the caprices and changeability of the militiamen, to bring a sense of solemn responsibility to the combatants . . . but it is quite another to do this along the old lines, which the military itself completely discredited by their betrayal.

The decree militarizing the militias produced angry responses from anarchist volunteers. The most intransigent left for the front immediately. Those approaching military age and the draft, faced a choice between being officially drafted and sent to the hated communist brigades or freely enlisting in a confederal division, and they did not hesitate. Many, on the eve of reporting to the recruiting stations, went directly to the front to join a unit of their own ideology. The Durruti column, after his death, became the 26th division. Other confederal columns on the Aragon front became the 25th and the 28th divisions. *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Liberty) and the *Columna de Hierro* (Iron Column) became the 153rd and 82nd brigades.

The Communists were in their element. They were the most insistent supporters of "militarization," "iron discipline" and "unified command." From the start of the war, under Moscow's orders, they were organizing militarily the notorious "Fifth Regiment." On August 31, they marched past the War Ministry in the "Battalion of Steel": first came a band, then eight pretty militia women, then 400 men armed with rifles and machine guns. The military organization of the Communists grew by leaps and bounds, thanks to their propaganda campaigns and, above all, thanks to their first call on Russian weapons. This priority became a monopoly.



*Anselmo Lorenzo (1841-1914)*

## 12. The Main Stages of Apolitical Syndicalism

On November 4, 1936, the Prime Minister, Largo Caballero, reorganized his cabinet to include four ministers from the CNT: García Oliver, Federica Montseny, Juan Peiró, and Juan López. For the first time the CNT broke with its separation from politics and its tradition of direct action. Before analyzing the consequences of this shift, let us examine the main stages of revolutionary anarcho-syndicalism in Spain.

Twenty years before the International Association of Workers was founded, peasants and workers in Andalusia and Catalonia were demonstrating their discontent in insurrections and general strikes. At the time of the political revolution of September 18, 1868, Bakunin sent a messenger to Spain to spread the program of the International and the Alliance of Democratic Socialists. His messenger, Fanelli, made contacts with federalist centres in Barcelona and with a group of young workers in Madrid. Popular movements had been brewing for years in reaction to the vacillations and betrayals of politicians; the people eagerly received the anarchist ideas of Bakunin and Fanelli.

All progressive political movements in those days were stifled by the machinery of bureaucratic administrations. Conspirators generally came from the ranks of unemployed civil servants and their main interest was to find a place at the public trough. Benito Pérez Galdós described the saga of unemployed civil servants in his work *Episodios nacionales*.

In October, 1868, the Geneva internationalists wrote to the Spanish workers at Bakunin's suggestion: "Today there can be no doubts. Liberty without political equality, and political equality without economic equality, are a total sham." The people had

placed great hopes in the revolution of 1868, and its failure increased the political skepticism of the Spanish workers. Max Nettlau observes,

The people were fooled after the revolution as they had been before it. There was no republican initiative, merely vacillation between revolution and elections, and the reaction soon set in. Workers were not interested in saving the skins of the republican leaders, and must have welcomed the International as the true expression of their hopes and interests.<sup>1</sup>

The most significant phrase in the call of the International was, "The workers must free themselves." Anselmo Lorenzo interpreted it thus: "Let it be known that a militant proletariat has come forth to replace a Third Estate already ruined by well-being and opposed to progress."<sup>2</sup> Proudhon had already noted, "The proletariat came to take up the flag of progress dropped by the bourgeoisie." The cause of the exploited had served as a cynical pretext for all kinds of political ends. The exploited themselves were now proposing to emancipate themselves by their own means, without forgetting that the end of man's exploitation of man was not only the freeing of a class, but also the "melting of all classes for the benefit of all humanity" (Anselmo Lorenzo). In one of the first public meetings held by the internationalist group Lorenzo said:

We have not come to speak to you of the Republic, as you seem to think; there are many others who can do this with much greater eloquence than we can . . . and with the enthusiasm of those who are working for themselves.

In the group's first manifesto, issued December 24, 1869, they wrote,

We are all workers here. And we expect everything from the workers. If you join us, you are doing your duty; if you remain indifferent, you should know that you are committing suicide.

The internationalist group in Barcelona was formed at the beginning of 1869 and worked parallel to that in Madrid, even though located in the Republican Federalist Centre. It maintained direct relations with Bakunin. Its members came out of the federalist movement headed by the politician, writer and philosopher, Pi y Margall, the first translator of Proudhon into Spanish. However, the group soon broke with the federalist electoral movement.

The Madrid group came to Barcelona for the first congress of the Spanish International in June, 1870. That congress established a clear anti-political stance:

Any participation of the working class in the middle class political government would merely consolidate the present state of affairs and necessarily paralyze the socialist revolutionary action of the proletariat. The Federation is the true representative of labour, and should work outside the political system.

In July, 1870, the Franco-Prussian War broke out, and on March 18, 1871, the Commune was proclaimed in Paris. The French internationalists, caught up in the subsequent repression of Thiers, could not attend the London conference in September. Marx took advantage of their absence to set the International on a political course. Anselmo Lorenzo, representing Spain at the conference, came away with a very unfavourable impression.

I had the honour of presenting the only genuinely proletarian and emancipatory proposal, the Study on Organization formulated by the Valencia Conference. I felt very much alone and, perhaps from a streak of pride, considered myself the only real internationalist present, and therefore incapable of doing anything useful. When I expressed my disillusion, they heard me as if they were hearing rain fall; I had no effect on them.

The London Conference took place September 17-23, 1871. Marx received Anselmo Lorenzo with a kiss on the brow; it was the kiss of Judas. Three months later Marx dispatched his son-in-law Paul Lafargue to divide the Spanish Bakuninists and organize a political party. Lafargue first visited Pi y Margall and set forth his plans. Pi answered that the Spanish workers were not even interested in *his* party. Next Marx's representative contacted the Spanish Federal Council, where he proposed the formation of a workers' party. According to Max Nettlau, "absolutely all" its members turned down the idea, considering it "contrary to the principles of the International Association of Workers." Lafargue then took up two additional arms: flattery and slander. With flattery he made himself some allies, and with slander he denounced the Spanish members of the Alliance of Social Democrats for conspiring with the International. The schemer and his friends were expelled from the alliance and founded the Madrid Federation, which was recognized by the Federal Council in London in August, 1872.

The plot to divide the movement had little effect. The work-

ers of Spain turned their backs on the political intrigues of Marx, Engels, and Lafargue. Max Nettlau summarized the events with these few words:

The intrigues were thwarted by the vast majority of Spanish Internationalists, who wanted neither a workers' party nor the tutelage of Engels and Lafargue.

The International itself split in the congress held in The Hague in September, 1872. It was a fixed convention, convoked by Marx in order to have a packed majority approve a resolution previously approved by the London Conference. The first paragraph read,

In the struggle against the collective power of the owner classes the proletariat cannot act as a class, but must become a political party opposed to all the old parties formed by the owner classes.

Spain was represented in The Hague by four delegates. They walked out of the congress along with the delegates of Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, Holland and parts of the delegations of France, England and the United States. They gathered in an anti-authoritarian convention at St.-Imier shortly afterwards and issued a declaration:

The destruction of all political power is the prime duty of the proletariat. It is illusory to think that any revolutionary political government will be temporary. Such a government would be just as dangerous for the working class as the governments that now exist.

In December, 1872, when the Spanish delegates made their report to the congress in Cordoba, the congress immediately approved their actions.

On February 11, 1873 the First Spanish Republic was proclaimed in Parliament. A memorandum from the Federal Council, dated February 24 in Alcoy, commented:

We are pleased with the change of government, not for any promises it might make to the working class—for these are always derisive and exploitative when they come from bourgeois organization—but rather because the Republic is the last bastion of the bourgeoisie, the last stand of the exploiters of the fruits of our labours, and it will lead to the final disenchantment of all our brothers who have hoped for so much from governments, not understanding that politically, religiously, and economically the workers have to free themselves.

Indeed, the Republic soon made itself unpopular, since the



republican bourgeoisie had no intention of letting the advantages of the new regime reach the workers. The workers responded with a series of strikes motivated by moral or economic reasons. The republican ministers, seeing no further than the aspirations of their friends, the owners, sent in the police. The worst incidents took place in Alcoy, the seat of the Federal Council, where workers fought back bravely after being provoked by the mayor and the guards. There were deaths on both sides, and the Federal Council answered official propaganda with a manifesto:

The workers you slander today are the same ones you flattered and incited to revolt when it served your own purposes. These workers you call vandals and assassins are the same ones you told that the right to rebel was legitimate in the face of attacks on individual rights, for you never considered that some day you yourselves would be the reactionaries.

Workers' acquaintance with the various political fauna was enriched by their dealings with the republicans. In January, 1874, they encountered another species when the monarchy was restored. The two major parties alternated their profiteering from then on. When the republicans were full, they let the conservatives eat. The opposition served a theoretical and symbolic function—it gave an appearance of reality to the parliamentary spectacle. A French author describes the scene:

The political *turno* meant a regular succession to administrative sinecures. Public offices became benefits, not occupations. People compared politics to a chop that had to be browned on each side.

At the beginning of the century there was an upsurge of Catalanism. To slow it down, the liberal monarchist minister Sigismundo Moret sent Alejandro Lerroux to Barcelona. Lerroux founded a so-called Radical Party, supported by a group of activists, called the "young Barbarians." His ideology was anticlerical and revolutionary. In one electoral meeting, he said that this was the last time he was asking for the workers' vote before he led them to the barricades. One of his famous anticlerical phrases was, "We have to lift the veils of the novices and raise them to the category of mothers." The farce of Lerrouxism lasted until the *semana trágica* in 1909 when Lerroux, "Emperor of the Paralelo," was out of the country.

The National Confederation of Labour (CNT) was formed while memories of the *semana trágica*, Lerroux's treason, and other Catalanist and republican escapades (such as the Catalanist

party's paper, *La Vue de Catalunya*, calling the people to inform on the 1909 revolutionaries) were fresh in people's minds.

Revolutionary syndicalism was beginning an expansive phase. One of the resolutions at the founding congress of the CNT was,

The congress declares that the workers must free themselves. Therefore it declares that the unions which make up the Federation shall be only those constituted by workers earning wages in companies and industries exploited by the bourgeoisie and the State.

In June and July of 1918, a Catalan regional congress of the CNT approved a statute to the effect that the CNT "will always struggle on purely economic grounds, that is, direct action . . . completely dropping all political or religious entanglements." Another agreement stated:

In the struggle between capital and labour, the unions joining the Confederation must employ direct action unless unforeseen circumstances arise which truly justify the use of different methods. Any groups not formed by workers or professionals to resist capitalism should not interfere directly in matters affecting the unions . . . professional politicians can never represent workers' organizations, and workers' organizations should never become identified with any political group."

The National Congress of 1919 adopted the following resolution without discussion: "An organized proletariat must be united by direct revolutionary action and must abandon the archaic systems previously employed." The Congress of 1931 was even more categorical in regard to contacts between workers and political parties. As Juan Peiró put it,

It is an established principle within the CNT that anyone belonging to and representing a political party cannot be a militant of the Confederation nor hold any representative or administrative position. It was agreed at the Congress of 1919 and reaffirmed in 1922 in Zaragoza not only that representatives of political parties holding elected positions on town councils, provincial assemblies, or the Parliament were ineligible for representative positions in the Confederation, but that it was enough merely to be a member of a political party to be ineligible.

The 1931 Congress reaffirmed this stand and set up procedures for expelling second offenders.

Whenever there was any question about the activities of comrades or unions there was great protest. The congress of 1919 severely rebuked the Barcelona organization for having gone to the office of the mayor to join a mixed commission of workers and owners under the arbitration of the mayor.

In 1931 strict accounting was demanded of committees and individuals who had maintained conspiratorial contact with politicians and officers during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. The Catalan organization removed its secretary general, Francisco Ascaso, for having declared the end of a general strike from the government radio station in October, 1934.

Because of its power and its deep popular strength, the CNT was always coveted by envious politicians of the Left who tried in vain to take it over for their own electoral purposes. This jealousy became an obsession. Since they could not obtain their goals they took to twisting the meanings of words and deeds to give them a political significance. The bait was always out for the unwary. The Zaragoza conference of 1922 had issued a report with the following superfluous phrases:

just because we call ourselves anti-political we should not be inhibited from confronting any problems posed by the life of the nation... the meaning given to politics is arbitrary; it does not simply refer to the art of governing nations.

The political press found these statements sufficient basis for their announcing the event of the century: the CNT was entering the parliamentary arena. For their own ends they had twisted words which, however inopportune, were not open to such interpretation. *Solidaridad Obrera* of Valencia, edited by Eusebio C. Carbó, replied on June 21, calming as best it could the furor caused by the resolutions:

Does anyone not know that we want to participate in public life? Does anyone not know that we have always done so? Yes, we want to participate. With our organizations. With our papers. Without intermediaries, delegates or representatives. No. We will not go to the Town Hall, to the Provincial Capital, to Parliament. The Confederation... is incapable of such shocking apostasy, of such an insulting surrender.<sup>4</sup>

Unable to lure the CNT as an organization into the parliamentary arena, the politicians of the Left began to work on some of the more noted individual members with sedulous flattery. This tactic also proved fruitless. Or almost fruitless. They

could change the minds only of mediocre people who had no influence in the unions or whose influence had long since passed.

The politicians did not even respect the dead; they enjoyed post mortem speculation about Salvador Seguí. One of the most noted militants at the close of the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, Salvador Seguí's influence among the membership was immense, but not charismatic. The average militant was not easily swept off his feet. In mass movements leaders are generally creatures of the masses. Seguí had to resist with all his strength the multitudes and certain suicidal elements of the most gigantic crowd he ever addressed. This was in the Barcelona bull ring at the time of the Canadiense strike of 1919.

Seguí was murdered in broad daylight by killers hired by the government. After his death some CNT members leveled serious charges against him, saying that Seguí agreed before his death to be a candidate in a political party headed by Layret, Companys, and Eugenio D'ors. Even the name of the would-be party was "known," though not until the deaths of Layret and Seguí. There were no leaders in the Confederation above criticism, but it can be said of Salvador Seguí that there was never any serious reason to doubt his conduct as a syndicalist and as a revolutionary.

Angel Pestaña was perhaps the only influential CNT militant who succumbed to temptation. His convictions began to waver during the events leading up to the Republic. These transitional periods are dangerous, because they try men's courage. Conspiracies entail alliances between different parties and organizations with a common goal: the overthrow of the dictatorship. The most diverse people are persecuted and shackled in the same cell. Old enemies become friends. When they are face to face, and get beneath the sometimes metaphysical abstractions of platforms and rhetoric, people end up by understanding each other. But then the dictatorship fell and people returned to their own worlds. Some received rewards for their sacrifices—the laurels of victory; others kept on the same hard path. The possibility of changing into a respectable person with a good position and remuneration, is tempting for one facing anew an obscure and tiring struggle, full of sacrifices and dangers, and sparing, very sparing of any kind of reward.

Pestaña had been known for his incredible tenacity. On many occasions he had demonstrated a stoicism, even a contempt for death. He had felt the bite of a bullet in his flesh. He suffered imprisonment and deportation time and again. He publicly accused

the policeman Bravo Portillo of being a German spy in the middle of the war, when to do so was to invite death. Pestaña, the cold, steely man, calm and silent, had been Salvador Seguí's antagonist on the far left.

During the clandestine period before the Republic, Peiró challenged Pestaña, and afterwards both were part of the outlawed moderate wing. Pestaña broke off from it in 1932 and founded the Syndicalist Party, an enterprise doomed from the start. Finally in 1936 the Popular Front threw him a line, and he became a deputy. The CNT and even the members of his faction left him to go alone on his senile adventure. On July 19, 1936, during the streetfighting in Barcelona, he happened to be captured by the rebels and was freed by CNT-FAI guerrillas.

It was then a question of who would return to whom—Pestaña to the CNT or the CNT to Pestaña. He returned to the organization as a regular member, and in the few sessions of Parliament he was a deputy of the CNT.

Here was a great irony. Angel Pestaña, the apostate, was only a humble deputy, a kind of lawyer without any cases, while the CNT, who had expelled him for being a politician, had ministers in the government.

Pestaña died on December 11, 1937, still a member of the CNT which, by this time, had been thrown out of this government and all governments. Let us examine more closely how this change occurred.





## 13. The Ministerial Collaboration of the CNT

Two features distinguish Spanish anarcho-syndicalism from other political and syndicalist movements—its anarchist philosophy and its complete rejection of electoral and governmental systems. Though indisputably influenced by anarchist principles, the CNT owes its unique antipolitical attitudes to all that was done in the name of the mass movement. Philosophy, because of the analytical strength it demands, played a part only in the circles culturally prepared for it. It could never, of itself, have produced a mass movement. A rationale more within reach of the understanding of the workers was needed to form the popular mystique.

It was the antipolitical stance, easily assimilated and pragmatic, that made the CNT into a mass movement. Such a stance was spontaneously confirmed by the endemic corruption of the political parties and their leaders, especially the democrats and liberals. Exaggerated propaganda was not necessary to convince the exploited that their emancipation depended entirely on their own efforts. The tactic of direct action, formulated and reaffirmed in all the congresses of the libertarian worker movement, was the only logical choice.

From the time of the medieval guilds and spontaneous peasant uprisings, Spanish workers have tended to form organizations in spite of an equally long history of deeply-rooted individualism. The history of guilds and professional brotherhoods was marked by heroic struggles, like that of the *Germanias* of Valencia and the Balearic Islands at the beginning of the reign of Charles V. Motivated by the endemic injustice of agrarian feudalism and relentlessly suppressed, peasant groups revolted throughout the 19th century.



The antipolitical posture—the allergic reaction to political parties and false prophets of reform—constituted the principal impetus for the anarcho-syndicalist movement in Spain. This antipolitical, anti-electoral, and anti-reformist position was not contrived, but was a natural response to the tortuous and contradictory positions of political parties and their spokesmen. Without such a firm antipolitical stand, Spanish anarchism almost certainly would have remained the philosophy of an elite with no influence among industrial workers and peasants and therefore without any major role in the political, social and revolutionary events of the country.

One can criticize Spanish anarcho-syndicalism for its inflexibility and lack of mental agility. It failed to gather its intellectual resources into a common channel that could, when needed, have supplied each group with the total mental energy of the movement as a whole. Thus, many of its actions began in a blind exuberance and often developed into an event it could not control.

On the other hand its very vitality enabled it to recover with minimal losses from the repressions it brought down on itself. In spite of these defects anarcho-syndicalists could still arouse the proletariat from indifference to their own exploitation and the political rackets of the *caciques*. Out of taverns, brothels, the shadows of religious superstition and the influence of demagogues, the anarcho-syndicalist movement forged a new fighting class. This consciousness-raising was done by the CNT. Militant anarchism was known for its libraries, publications, schools and adult education centres. These were not the products of intellectual elites, whose revolution was limited to literature and the universities. What Ossorio Gallardo said of political reformers like Cánovas, Maura, Romanones, Dato and Canalejas applies to the intellectual elites, "They were so caught up with political problems that they never got around to the social ones." Luminaries like Miguel Unamuno looked down on the schools for the people set up by Francisco Ferrer. Others did worse, exploiting the tragic death of Ferrer for political ends.

Spanish anarcho-syndicalists broke with their apolitical past in September, 1936, just as they were on the verge of success. Confronted with very dramatic and what they considered to be "new" circumstances, they abandoned the essence of their movement. How did such a complete reversal come about? Some critics explain it by a lack of revolutionary foresight.

But neither Fabbri nor the libertarian writers of the time posed the problem of revolution in the context of a civil war against fascism,

nor in a country in which there was a powerful anarchist movement, as in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

This judgement is not accurate. Anarchist literature had explored all aspects of the major revolutions of modern times, especially the Russian revolution of 1917. But the anarchists were unable to apply the lessons of the past to the present.

Especially in Spain from 1930 on, anarchist literature foresaw many of the problems that a revolution would entail. Some aspects were not satisfactorily resolved, but this was due either to a lack of analytic capacity, or because the problems had no possible solution. Even the most heroic resistance will fail against a superior force. It is possible that the anarcho-syndicalist movement lacked the bravery, self-confidence and serenity necessary to reject the easiest solution, but we repeat: all predictions, all hypothetical solutions, even the warnings of outsiders yield before the force of current events—especially when our individual and collective existence is at stake. Faced with death, the first instinct of persons and, by extension organizations, is one of self-preservation. However, sometimes the actions taken in self-preservation are misguided.

The charge of lack of foresight was made after the event by the committees and the other “apostates” in an effort to justify their own actions. This disguised remorse can be discerned beneath the arrogant or belligerent polemics of the CNT and FAI leaders. A good example is the report of the National Committee of the CNT to the congress of the International Workers Association [AIT] held in Paris in December, 1937.<sup>2</sup> According to the report, the CNT was in absolute control of Catalonia on July 19, 1936, but its strength was less in Levante and still less in central Spain where the central government and the traditional parties were dominant. In the north of Spain the situation was confused. The CNT could have mounted an insurrection of its own “with probable success” but such a takeover would have led to a struggle on three fronts: against the fascists, the government and foreign capitalism. In view of the difficulty of such an undertaking, collaboration with other antifascist groups was the only alternative. Such a collaboration inevitably included participation in the government.

The document continues:

In fact, in all the villages and provincial capitals, the CNT took part in the official bodies, the committees of the Popular Front and the Antifascist Militia Committees, and carried out the functions of true

government in the former municipalities and provincial governments, courts of law, jails and police stations. The CNT lost control of itself completely. We were fully engaged in political action without agreeing to it, without premeditation, without calculating the consequences, without even expecting them. The only thing remaining was for the CNT to become involved in the government.

This official explanation is not very convincing in the dilemma between "anarchist revolution" and "participation in government". Nor does it convince us that antifascist collaboration must inevitably lead to participation in government. Still less that CNT and FAI co-operating with popular revolutionary organizations, either newly created or transformed by popular initiative, automatically implies official collaboration. Those revolutionary organizations were transformed into official ones or gave way to traditional political organization when "governmentalist" fatalism was making inroads on the thinking of the CNT and FAI leaders. Some of these leaders saw no alternative to remaining with them, apart from an anarchist dictatorship, which itself would have been suicidal.

The report continued:

Levante was defenceless and uncertain, with the garrison in rebellion in its barracks. We were in a minority in Madrid. The situation in Andalusia was unknown; groups of labourers armed with shotguns and sickles were fighting in the hills. There was no information from the North, and we assumed the rest of Spain was in the hands of the fascists. The enemy was in Aragon, at the gates of Catalonia. The nervousness of foreign consular officials led to the presence of a great number of war ships around our ports.

Parenthetically, the loss of Zaragoza, the link with the Rioja region and the North, and the potential loss of Andalusia meant the loss of half the CNT forces.

The report continues, detailing ways in which the revolutionary strength of the CNT was sapped:

Our companions in the South resisted bravely with their hunting rifles, but they were pushed back. We had to send them rifles, machine guns and artillery from Catalonia, weakening us in turn. In Levante, the comrades finally decided to attack the barracks and again we had to send rifles and machine guns; we had to send troops and weapons to Madrid and the Central fronts under attack by the Italian and German air forces.

Even the Aragon front, where there were 30,000 militiamen, ran

out of munitions. "We would have needed 6,000,000 cartridges every day, and at times we had none. The bourgeois democratic governments prevented our buying and receiving war material."

The CNT-FAI dominated the Central Committee of Antifascist Militia of Catalonia, which assumed the organizing and directing of the war along the entire Aragonese front.

We were finally asked to tone down the public aspect of the revolution by dissolving the Central Committee of Antifascist Militia. They explained to us the re-establishment of the Catalan government, led by the bourgeois liberal Companys, would lead foreign countries to believe the revolution was becoming less radical. We were so well organized and enjoyed such formidable political, military and economic strength in Catalonia that had we wanted to, we could have inaugurated a totalitarian anarchist regime without lifting a finger. But we knew that without outside help the revolution was lost, and that we, as anarchists, neither had nor could expect support from abroad. This alludes to the wait-and-see attitude taken by the international proletariat toward the Spanish revolution and also the dilettantism of foreign anarchists.

The central government then began to surround the revolutionaries in a stranglehold.

Our columns were the largest and most active in the fighting. They were also the columns most neglected by the government, as it began persecution and intrigues against our comrades. The government hindered every move of the CNT's work of expropriation and reconstruction. This work could not be done without gold. They systematically denied money, merchandise and arms to Catalonia, Levante and, in general, to all sectors of the rearguard where the CNT was dominant. Marxists and republicans formed an alliance, giving priority to their partisans for foodstuffs, arms, army commands, intelligence and transportation. Catalonia was left to compete with the rest of Spain in foreign markets for food for its cities as well as supplies for the Aragon front. . . . Those who governed, abetted by our desire to maintain the unity of the antifascists and formal foreign relations, used their diplomatic contacts to sabotage us ruthlessly at every turn.

That was the CNT's official explanation of *why* the Spanish libertarian movement took on government responsibilities. Now we shall turn to the *how* of the matter.

An attempted coup d'etat in August, 1936, has been attributed to the CNT-FAI, not in the document we have been studying, not

in any other official or confidential memorandum, but rather in a book published in France by a former Republican deputy to the Cortes, Clara Campoamor. Her version is the source for other authors like Rabasseire, Koltsov, and Carlos M. Rama, who says that the mystery will be cleared up when the unpublished memoirs of Largo Caballero are released.

According to Campoamor, after the loss of Badajoz on August 14, 1936, the CNT and UGT prepared the overthrow of Dr. Giral's government and its replacement by a Revolutionary Junta under the control of the proletariat. The Republicans would be excluded, and Largo Caballero would preside. The plan was supposedly shelved, partly because Azaña threatened to resign as President of the Republic, and partly because the Soviet Ambassador, Marcel Rosenberg, warned the conspirators of the embarrassing international consequences of a coup d'etat which would destroy the Republic, the government's last vestige of legality.

Whether or not there was such a conspiracy, it is certain that the CNT wanted all power to be in the hands of a revolutionary proletariat. This goal is unmistakably clear in all the editorials of the libertarian press of the period. The affair finally ended on September 4 in a government that included six Socialist ministers, headed by Largo Caballero. The Communist Party did not yet have any outstanding leaders; in fact it never really had any. Largo Caballero, the "Spanish Lenin," had advocated a "proletarian revolution" since the 1933 crisis within the Socialist Party<sup>3</sup>. In effect, the Soviets had put Largo Caballero into office using the promise of diplomatic and military aid as leverage.

According to Largo Caballero's speech to Parliament on October 2, 1936, he personally tried to make sure,

the proletariat holding power in the country would be represented in the government. At first the offer was accepted, but it was rejected at higher levels.

In an interview in the *Daily Express*, reprinted in the Spanish press on October 30, Caballero declared,

When this government was formed two months ago we asked the CNT to participate, because we wanted the government to represent all of the forces fighting against the common enemy.

Whether it was unprepared or held back by the scruples of rank-and-file members, the CNT refused to join the government. The meetings of the Regional Plenaries held in Madrid on the 15th and 28th of September seem to have been convened to overcome

this kind of hesitation. The first worked out a plan to model the State "into a national organization capable of directing military matters and co-ordinating political and economic matters." The new organization would not be called a government, but rather the National Council of Defense. Ministries would be changed into "departments." Ministers would be called "delegates" and would represent political doctrines (Marxism, anarcho-syndicalism, republicanism) rather than parties. The army would be converted into "War Militia," police into "Popular Militia," and military commanders into "military technicians." Largo Caballero would remain as President of the Council and Manuel Azaña as President of the Republic. The economic program would include socialization of the Bank, major industries, commerce and the property of the Church and large landowners. The unions would enjoy the benefits of the means of production and socialized exchange. Free, revolutionary, popular economic experimentation would be legitimized and harmonized with the "normal progress of the economy." The plan was sent to the UGT with a proposal for an alliance.

Apart from a certain audacity in economic matters, it is apparent that the Council of Defense was merely a government by another name; that is why Largo Caballero rejected it. From the content of the program it was obvious to the head of the government and secretary of the UGT that the CNT would soon capitulate.

The strength of the anarcho-syndicalists lay in the federalist pattern that was emerging throughout the Republican zone. The autonomy of Catalonia was more complete than ever, and a *de facto* autonomous zone existed in the liberated part of Aragon. In Levante the Popular Executive Committee had refused to hand over power to a Junta appointed by the central government. On October 2, Parliament granted autonomy to the Basques. In the middle of October the first Council of Aragon was formed in Fraga by the anarchists. In December the Madrid Junta of Defense and the Regional Council of Asturias were formed.

The federalist movement, then at the height of its popularity and strength, would have ended in triumph for the CNT if the CNT had been able to form an alliance with the autonomists. But the CNT both frightened the bourgeois nationalists and clashed with the ingrained centralism of the Socialists and the Communists. It is a great irony that the bourgeois autonomists of Catalonia and the Basque Country preferred hardline Communists. At every turn the

Communists pre-empted the clumsy opportunism of the anarchists, who were new to political scheming. Moreover, the autonomist movement itself had problems. In some parts of the country it started too late, and the increasing militarization of the country did not favour the decentralization of power and the maintenance of local freedoms.

On September 28, 1936, after a period of 10 days of sounding out the response to the campaign for the National Council of Defense, the National Plenary of Regionals of the CNT again met in Madrid, a city profoundly shaken by the intense climate of war. The Plenary drew up a long manifesto complaining of the short-sightedness and irresponsibility of the other union and political groups for disdaining the confederal project:

Those who could facilitate the creation of a national organization of Defense, and do not, incur an immense responsibility before history and their own consciences.

Every line of the manifesto seems to prepare for capitulation. "The exclusion of a movement with the CNT's weight and importance from the leadership of the struggle serves to fragment that leadership." In order to save face, the manifesto makes one last appeal to the revolutionary pride of the UGT:

The CNT, which foresaw this situation clearly, proposed a Revolutionary Alliance at its congress in Zaragoza. Today it redoubles its efforts, for it believes that unless the CNT and the UGT come to an understanding, the revolution will go astray.

The document also contains a harmless threat.

The CNT is not going to impose its doctrines on others. If others try to do so, not in order to unify the nation, but rather to divide it, the CNT solemnly declines any responsibility for what transpires. True to its traditions and principles it will continue to contribute wholeheartedly, because the struggle against fascism is more important than anything else.

This paragraph serves to sound a disorderly retreat, accentuated by the announcement in the same document of the formation of the Council of Catalonia with CNT participation. To agree to the Council of Catalonia in order to put pressure on Largo Caballero seems an incredibly ingenuous move: it produced the opposite result. More innocent still was the notion of calling a "council" something that in fact and by law was a government. "A Govern-



ment has not been formed," proclaimed the committee of the Catalan CNT, "but rather a new organization appropriate to present circumstances, to be called the Council of Catalonia."

This play on words could not deceive anyone. It is obvious that the CNT merely wanted to change the name of the government before entering it. The Catalan politicians found it convenient to give this minimal satisfaction to the CNT, knowing that, in the end, the waters would run to their mill. It was by the same reasoning that Largo Caballero knew that the fruit would fall when ready. He did not bother to compromise.

According to the National Committee's report to the AIT, an agreement to participate in the Catalan government was reached by "a regional meeting of local and district committees held in Catalonia in August." The same report reveals that the CNT decided to participate in the national government at the September 28 Plenary.

The National Plenary of Regionals held in Madrid on September 28, 1936, was informed of the steps taken by the National Committee of the CNT to achieve the formation of a National Council of Defense. The Committee had encountered many difficulties and there was an urgent need to take an active role in the direction of the war, government and the economy, in order to stop the continual sabotaging of our organization, collectives and military columns. The National Committee was therefore given a strong mandate to secure the participation of the CNT in the government, since it was impossible to form a National Council of Defense.

Because of the haggling over the apportioning of ministerial appointments, the CNT did not actually join the government until November 4. "We shall not relate now," the report to the AIT reads, "the numerous obstacles put in our way by persons in high places. These were most evident when it came to the number of ministries we would receive." The CNT demanded six—the same number as those held by the Socialists—but had to settle for four: Justice, Health, Industry and Commerce. In reality they only received two. Industry and Commerce had always been a single ministry; Health was never a ministry, but rather the General Direction of Health. The Socialists, on the other hand, controlled six of the most important posts—War, Sea and Air, State, Housing, Labour and Interior—and, in addition, the Presidency. The government was expanded to include three ministers without portfolio, so the number of Republican representatives was also six.

The Communists retained the Ministries of Agriculture and Education.

In the report, the National Committee reiterated the federalist structure and functioning of the CNT:

Some foreign comrades have mentioned rumours to the effect that the CNT has abandoned its federalist principles. Furthermore, the committees are supposedly acting on their own and imposing their decisions on the rank-and-file. It is imperative that we expose these misrepresentations.

To bolster its claim of contact with the membership the report states that from July 19, 1936 to November 26, 1937, 17 Plenaries of Regionals and "dozens of plenaries of local and District Federations within each region were called . . . as well as various Regional Congresses of Unions." Moreover, "the present National Committee, in office since November, 1936 has sent out 110 circulars to the unions; from October 4 to November 17, has sent 14 circulars to Local Federations and District Committees." It adds that from May 18 to October 21, 1937, 21 issues of the Information Bulletin were sent out; from June 8 to November 7, 15 issues of the *Bulletin of Internal Orientation*, "and lately 3 issues of a Bulletin to the Unions with a summary of the actions of the National Committee."

The report implies that some problems in communications may arise from a need for security.

We are currently surrounded by political adversaries and spies, and we are deluged by new members, whom we have not been able to investigate fully as to their beliefs and background. Given this situation, the adversary and the enemy immediately know the resolutions we adopt, even when they are discussed only in meetings of militants.

The report continues,

All of you must realize that some of the problems that must be taken up are so complex and so sensitive that they can be confided only to veteran militants from before July 19.

It next explained how the National Plenaries of Regionals are organized:

The National Committee uses a circular, with appropriate agenda and report attached, to call a plenary. The Regional Committees relay the circular to Local and District Federations, depending on the sensitivity of the agenda. Militants take up the agenda in large

meetings and adopt resolutions, which they then defend in the Regional Plenaries of Local and District Federations. These decisions are in turn defended by the delegations of the Regional Committees in the National Plenaries of Regionals. In this manner always abiding by the anarcho-sindicalist principle of majority rule, resolutions are adopted after the militants' full and free discussion.

To those who know the traditional procedures of the CNT well, this detailed explanation demonstrates that an effective, working federalism was completely suppressed in the CNT of the time. The flood of circulars sent out to the unions by the National Committee shows that it was merely giving out instructions. It is abnormal for a higher committee to relate directly and frequently with the lower levels of the organization, and merely use the intermediate levels as post offices. Normal procedure would have the higher committee mainly in contact with the intermediate committees.

The same can be said of the excessive number of National Plenaries, above all when it was not the union assemblies that called or controlled them. These plenaries were called by the National Committee with circulars and agendas. If this means that the National Committee set up the agenda, then the practice is antifederalist. The agenda is normally drawn up according to the suggestions of the unions. But this is not the most serious matter. The National Committee confesses that its circulars are sent "to the Local and District Federations or to the Unions, depending on the sensitivity of the agenda." In other words, if the agenda is "sensitive," the circular does not reach the unions. Moreover, the "sensitive" matters put to the organization are the products of the Committees and "large meetings of militants" of the old guard. An organization in which only the militants discuss and decide is an organization of elites, in which only a minority makes decisions. To speak then, of the "anarchist principle of majority rule" is hypocritical. And when the report refers to "large meetings of militants of the old guard from before the 19th of July," it is saying that not even all the militants from before the 19th of July were able to discuss certain questions, but only the "old guard" from before the 19th of July; that is, the chosen among the chosen. In point of fact, it was not always the case that only veteran militants could participate in "sensitive deliberations". The Economic Councillor who represented the CNT in the first Catalan government, Juan P. Fábregas, was unknown to many veteran militants from before the 19th of July. And the subordinate committees of the organization

very naturally abounded in militants from after the 19th of July. The confederal columns on the fronts were full of "veteran militants" who in no way shared in the political process.

Hence it is safe to assert that the significant resolutions in the organization were adopted by the committees, very rarely by the mass constituency. Certainly, circumstances required quick decisions from the organization, and it was necessary to take precautions to prevent damaging leaks. These necessities tempted the committees to abandon the federalist procedures of the organization. The criticisms of the committees cannot be labeled "rumours" and "misrepresentations". The report asserts that the CNT "continues to develop along federalist lines" and immediately demonstrates the opposite.

The Spanish delegates attending the AIT Congress in 1937 (José Xena, David Antona, Horacio M. Prieto, and the Secretary General, Mariano R. Vázquez) made the CNT's impotence public in order to escape an avalanche of problems and situations that were difficult, even impossible, to solve without compromising principles. They also denigrated those principles, because they had not had the ability, the firmness, nor the material possibility to preserve them. And they erred in their presumptuous attempt to modify the statutes of the AIT to fit the new CNT "new look".<sup>4</sup>

There are admissions of powerlessness in the report that are moving for their profound sincerity. We all understand perfectly that leading to the period of collaboration was a chain of events that placed the CNT in a morally dramatic and materially helpless situation. I believe this process is common to all the great revolutions of history. If a thorough analysis of the process were to be made, the idea of revolution itself might be brought into question.

From a distance of more than 20 years, I believe that those of us who consistently opposed collaboration with the government had as our only alternative a principled, heroic defeat. I believe there was an unavowed complicity among many militants who were enemies of participation and who were self-righteously angry while they permitted the participation to take place. And yet they were sincere in their own way, sincere in their powerlessness. They could offer no solution that would simultaneously preserve so many precious things: victory in the war against fascism, progress in the revolution, complete loyalty to their ideas, and the preservation of their own lives. Lacking the power to perform miracles, these men consoled themselves by clinging to their principles.

Among them, were some whose refusal to compromise cannot be lightly dismissed. For them the only solution was to leave an indelible mark on the present without compromising the future of the organization. The indelible marks they made—constructive revolutionary experiments like the collectives, artistic and cultural achievements, new models of free, communal living—can survive the most ferocious counterrevolution. Acting positively without compromising the future of the organization meant staying out of intrigues, avoiding complicity with the counterrevolution within the government, protecting the organization and its militants from the vainglory of rulers or the pride of the newly rich. It meant avoiding contacts with a petty world of petty appetites in favour of a future as vast and eternal as space and time, in which all of us will be judged by our deeds, and not by the cleverness of our explanations and justifications.

Two things have to be distinguished in a revolution: the constructive work of changing peoples' minds and economic circumstances, which is the result of an incorruptible integrity; and the historical outcome of the revolution itself. It is not always possible to control the fate of a political revolution, which has its own laws of rise and decline. But we can see to it that when the revolution is over there remain concrete, constructive achievements. Perhaps this residue of permanent achievement is the only real and useful revolution.

Pity the revolution that devours itself in order to obtain victory. Pity the revolution that waits for a final triumph to put its ideals into practice. In spite of all the difficulties and deceptions, the Spanish revolution had the good fortune to come to full fruition. The revolutionary work of the collectives will be an indelible mark in time and space.

The rest will pass on into history like a bad dream. So too will pass into oblivion those who, remembering with pleasure their positions as ministers and their military commands, are still thinking, twenty years later, about an impossible kind of libertarian political party. The real Spanish libertarian movement has historical, psychological, and popular roots that go deep. When uprooted, the movement dies.



*Antonov-Ovseenko accompanied by the Captain of the Russian ship, Zirianin, in Barcelona.*



## 14. The Growth of the Spanish Communist Party

One of the main reasons for the spectacular growth of the Spanish Communist Party during the civil war was the decision by the Soviet government to give military support to the republican government.

When the military revolt broke out, in spite of its propaganda campaigns the Spanish Communist Party had little influence among workers and peasants. It had no leaders of note and only 30,000 members. Both the CNT construction and the CNT metal-workers' unions in Barcelona had more members.

Today the motives prompting the Soviet Union to aid the republican government are known. They were diplomatic and strategic. After the Second World War, the chancelleries of the winning allies published documents revealing the true ends of non-intervention and covert intervention. England, Germany, and USSR were following the main lines of their respective foreign policies in Spain.

Before the Spanish civil war, power in Europe was balanced around Germany. The foreign policies of Germany and England determined those of Italy and France, respectively. The creation of the French Popular Front was influenced by the foreign policy of the Soviet Union, which had sent out word after the 7th Congress of the Comintern to set up popular antifascist fronts. Basically, however, French foreign policy was subordinated to the interests of Great Britain. In France, traditional "reasons of state" prevailed over the reasons of the government of the time. That is why the policy of Non-Intervention was proposed by Leon Blum and supported by the Foreign Office.

To understand better these reasons of State, one must go back



to 1918, when the Russian revolution burst upon post-war Europe. England and France tried to crush the revolution by direct and indirect intervention, and by imposing a blockade. All of this opposition nurtured the totalitarian tendencies of the Russian State and led it to export its revolution westward. Communist agitation in the West and the Russian revolution itself stimulated other revolutionary movements, all of which, combined with the Treaty of Versailles, gave impetus to the rise of fascism.

The fascists began by attacking leftist parties and organizations. Capitalists and large portions of the middle class in the West rejoiced at the rise of fascism because they were apprehensive about worker and revolutionary unrest, especially in Italy and Spain. Fascism was welcomed by democratic governments as an antidote to the expansion of Communism.

When Adolph Hitler came to power in 1933 he began to attack not only Communism, but also the "rotten democracies" responsible for the Versailles Treaty. Great Britain and France would have been able to stop him but, in the process, they would have removed a major obstacle from the advance of Communism. Germany's military strength was already formidable after rearmament, the revival of military service and the occupation of the Rhine. So they adopted the strategy of turning Germany with all her military might eastward. The Kremlin arrived at an equivalent strategy. The USSR tried to turn the German military menace toward the west, away from the borders of Russia. Whichever side was successful would be able to observe the war from the sidelines, and would come out of it the true victor without firing a shot. The Second World War showed that both underestimated the role that Germany herself would play.<sup>1</sup>

When the Spanish civil war began, the Soviet Union had been struggling for several years to break out of its diplomatic isolation. It had entered the League of Nations in 1934, and in 1935 adopted the strategy of popular fronts. In order to set up popular fronts in all the democratic countries Communism had to renounce its revolutionary rhetoric and feign concessions to liberal and petit-bourgeois ideologies. This tactic was used during the first stages of the Spanish civil war.

When the military uprising took place in Spain, the main European powers, in view of the climate of international tension, saw it as an incident that could set off a worldwide conflagration. Since this incident occurred in the West, and since the two fascist powers had intervened from the start, the democratic governments

acted with great caution. The Soviet leaders were relieved that the long-feared incident had occurred far from Russia's borders. They resolved to exploit the conflict in either of two ways: to make military pacts that would end Russia's long isolation; or if that were impossible, to poison the conflict so that the fascist and democratic powers would be drawn into a confrontation. One of Stalin's directives to his representatives in Spain was that they should keep themselves "out of the range of the artillery."

Under England's leadership the western countries were willing to make concessions in the East to German expansionism. That is why the Austrian and Czechoslovakian crises were resolved to the satisfaction of the Third Reich. Italy and Germany, no less convinced of the imminence of a second world war, used the Spanish conflict to threaten France on another border to gain more naval bases in the Mediterranean and to gain access to certain strategic minerals in Spain.

The war that began in Spain in July, 1936, soon became a contest between the fascist powers and the USSR. The fascists wanted to finish it off as soon as they had tested their new weapons and trained their pilots, artillerymen, and tank commanders; Russia wanted to prolong the war until it converged with a wider European conflict, in which Russia would be only a spectator.

That is the reason for its measured aid to the legitimate governments of Spain. But this aid, as we shall see, did not come without conditions. To achieve their ends, the Russians wanted control of the military operations, which meant control of government, which in turn meant putting an end to the revolutionary forces. A group had to be installed that would obey the instructions of the Kremlin. The Spanish Communist Party, which was very weak compared to the Socialists and the anarcho-syndicalists, had to be strengthened.

To make a strong Communist Party, all opportunities had to be grasped and all political, economic and military weaknesses exploited. This mission was given to a large group of specialists in political intrigue sent in by the staff of the Comintern under the guise of advisors and technicians. Among them were many agents of the NKVD. The establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and Spain in August, 1936, facilitated the operation.

The Communists did all they could to exploit every aspect of the situation: the disastrous progress of military operations; the lack of training and discipline of the worker militias; the power of revolutionary committees that ignored the government; the dis-

content of the petit bourgeoisie and the rural small-holders with collectivization; the humiliations of professional politicians by the CNT and left-wing Socialists; the jealousy of bureaucrats and civil servants swept from their roosts by the revolution; the need for ending the revolution itself in order to raise the state of siege imposed on the Republic by the non-intervention governments; and the internal crisis in the Socialist Party.

The Spanish Communist Party failed in its repeated attempts to take control of the CNT by frontal assault or infiltration. After 1934 and the revolution in Asturias, it changed its tactics and began to work on the UGT. In 1935-36, because of the revolutionary posture adopted by Largo Caballero, it began to undermine the Young Socialists who devoutly followed Caballero's lead. With the complicity of another Socialist leader, Alvarez del Vayo, who had secretly gone over to the Russian camp, some Young Socialists were invited to visit Moscow. They returned converted to a new faith. Immediately the word was sent out to merge Socialist and Communist youth groups. Largo Caballero, who at the time was using Soviet-type rhetoric for his own ends, went along with the idea, assuming the more numerous Young Socialists would absorb the Young Communists. The first agreement, made in March, 1936, was that the young Communists would join the Young Socialists until a future congress established the basis for fusing the two movements. The pro-Communist Socialists who presided over the joint Socialist-Communist body never called the congress. The pro-Communist Socialist youth leaders soon joined the Communist Party secretly. The most notable among them was Santiago Carrillo, a disciple of Largo Caballero and son of Wenceslao Carrillo, an old pro-Caballero Socialist. The new group was called the United Young Socialists (JSU) and from the first months of the war was one of the most useful tools of the Spanish Communist Party.

On the eve of the civil war the Spanish Socialist Party was divided into three competing factions. Largo Caballero dominated the largest which included the UGT and the Young Socialists; Indalecio Prieto dominated the Executive Commission of the Socialist Party; the academician Julián Besteiro led the smallest faction. These factions were at odds over Largo Caballero's intention to break off collaboration with the bourgeois parties in favour of social revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Largo Caballero's position may well have been determined by the growth of the CNT in the Central region at the expense of the UGT. In any

case, on the eve of the civil war there were extensive negotiations between the Caballero Socialists and the Communists about a possible merger into a united proletarian party. Similar negotiations in Catalonia in the first months of the war led to the formation of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC). Set up to compete with the CNT, the PSUC was composed of the Catalan Section of the Spanish Communist Party, the Socialist Union of Catalonia, the Spanish Socialist Party and the Catalan Proletarian Party. The PSUC soon joined the Comintern.

The Communist Party and its PSUC affiliate had to be strengthened; also, the solid structure of anarcho-syndicalism in Catalonia and throughout Spain had to be weakened. The new line was that the Communist Party was fighting in Spain, not for a social revolution, but for a democratic and parliamentary Republic. According to its propaganda, the revolution in Spain corresponded exactly with the French revolution a hundred years earlier. In this way they hoped to deny the significance of the revolutionary social and economic achievements of anarcho-syndicalism and at the same time win to their side the petit bourgeoisie of the cities and the smallholders of the countryside adversely affected by expropriations and collectivizations. They also acted as though they wanted to placate the international bourgeoisie and obtain its military aid for the Republic. In reality, they were following the orders of the 7th Congress of the Comintern to form popular fronts that would support the strategic interests of the USSR. The same strategy would lead to the acceptance of the Communist party by conservative members of the Spanish republican parties and by bureaucrats, intellectuals and military officers stranded by the tide of revolution.

This position, stridently proclaimed by professional agitators and a propaganda machine, had a profound effect on the petit bourgeoisie and the small land-owners. For these people, the Communist Party demanded a respect for private property. The watchwords of obedience to the government after a Popular Front victory at the polls buoyed the spirits of republican politicians. The party of order saw the offensive against the committees and the militias as the re-establishment of all the prerogatives of the State. Even the large land-owners whose lands had been expropriated took hope. For many sincere and convinced revolutionaries, all of this was a price that had to be paid for the help of a great power, their only hope to stem the continuing advance of the Franco forces and only realistic hope for victory. The result of this

strategy was an unprecedented growth in the ranks of the Communist Party, which claimed more than a million members at the end of 1936. The majority of those that joined this cloudburst of support were not Communists, but the important thing is that they adapted themselves perfectly to the Party's aims.

The keystone of this great counterrevolution was the formation of a strong and amply representative government. The governments that had followed one another since the military uprising had lacked prestige. Largo Caballero was ideally suited to head a strong government, and the Communists were the first to support the long-time Socialist leader. The government would have a very important task: the removal of the popular committees from power. The CNT was brought in to participate in the government so that it would find itself compromised through an involvement in the counterrevolution and the transfer of the government to Valencia. It had been feared that, once the government departed, the CNT would take over Madrid. Indeed, the people of Madrid considered the government's move an act of desertion and cowardice.

The anarcho-syndicalists who were Ministers defended their actions by the need to legalize the conquests of the revolution. History repeated itself once again. Those who conquered the State were conquered by the State. It did not take long for the anarcho-syndicalist Ministers to adopt the government's arguments. "Either the government or the committees are unnecessary," declared CNT Minister Juan Peiró in one of his first public appearances. With the approval of the anarcho-syndicalist Ministers, decrees were issued to abolish the committees and replace them by municipal and provincial councils. It was with their blessing that civil governors were restored to power and with their consent that disarming of the people and repression of revolutionaries began.

After the government was reconstructed with the participation of all the political parties and the union organization, the next step was to rebuild the State piece by piece. The State is founded on repression. The first item in the reconstruction of the State was the organization of the police. On September 20, 1936, shortly after Largo Caballero formed his government, the first decree about the organization of Militia for Rearguard Vigilance was issued. This decree authorized the Ministry of the Interior to organize in Spain a temporary police force with the militia of all organizations and parties then exercising duties of vigilance and investigation.

The new provisional police organization was instructed to co-operate with the regular police force. Hamstrung by public

reaction and understaffed by its members' desertion to the enemy, the police had been unable to carry out its duties. The decree noted severely. "Those who attempt to carry out the functions of the militia created by this decree without belonging to it will be considered rebels."

The short life of the Militia for Rearguard Vigilance shows that from the start the government had in mind the rapid creation of something more substantial. A second decree, published December 28, 1936, created a National Security Council with branches in all of the provinces with the exception of the autonomous regions—the Basque Country and Catalonia. There the problem of public order was beyond the jurisdiction of the central government; but in fact it had already been solved in the same way in the Basque Country, and was in the process of being solved in Catalonia. The decree created a single Security Corps. "The Security Corps will be the only corps concerned with the maintenance of public order and vigilance." The old National Republican Guard (formerly the Civil Guard), Security, Assault Guards, Investigations, and also the new Militia for Rearguard Vigilance were all declared dissolved. Members of these bodies were permitted to apply for admission to the new corps within 15 days. The National Security Council was headed by the Minister of the Interior, along with two councillors from the UGT, two from the CNT, one from each party, and representatives of the offices and personnel of the different armed units.

The decree did not mention the Carabinero Corps, which before the civil war served only as customs officers at frontiers, ports and coasts. It was comprised of 15,600 armed and uniformed individuals and answered to the Ministry of Finance. When Juan Negrín took over the ministry in September, 1936, he converted this corps into a police army. By April, 1937, the Carabinero Corps in the Republican zone alone had grown to 40,000 men, all equipped with the latest arms.

The army was another pillar of the reconstructed Spanish State. After the rearguard militia had been stigmatized as "out of control," a propaganda campaign was unleashed against the "indiscipline" of the militia on the front lines.

It must be admitted that when the local revolutionary struggle was transformed to a wartime activity, with army units spread over broad fronts, the revolutionary militia were incapable of successfully blocking the advance of an enemy army that was trained, disciplined, and commanded by professionals. Franco's army in-



cluded experienced shock troops like the Legion, the Moorish regulars and the Navarrese *Requetés*, and, from the outset, was supported by modern transport planes and bombers of the Italian air force. (Russian planes which began to arrive in Spain in October, 1936, did not see action at the front until November.)

The few military experts who remained on the Republican side were not trusted by the soldiers, for understandable reasons. Some officers took the very first opportunity to pass over to the enemy. Later it was learned that some of the officers of the old army lionized during the defense of Madrid had belonged to the Spanish Military Union, the organization of the military rebels; two such officers were General Miaja, made a hero by Communist propaganda, and General Rojo, who ended the war as Chief of Staff. Both became regular members of the Communist Party.

Although lamentable cases of indiscipline in the militia cannot be denied, they were greatly outweighed by instances of exceptional bravery. What lack of discipline there was can be traced to a decline in morale. The militia became dispirited when they saw how the war was dragging on, and compared their own inadequate weapons with those of the enemy. Their morale was also weakened by the government policy of abandoning columns not submitting to "political discipline." When Soviet material began to arrive, Communist units had no need to ask for favouritism. In this respect the government itself was hardly disciplined.

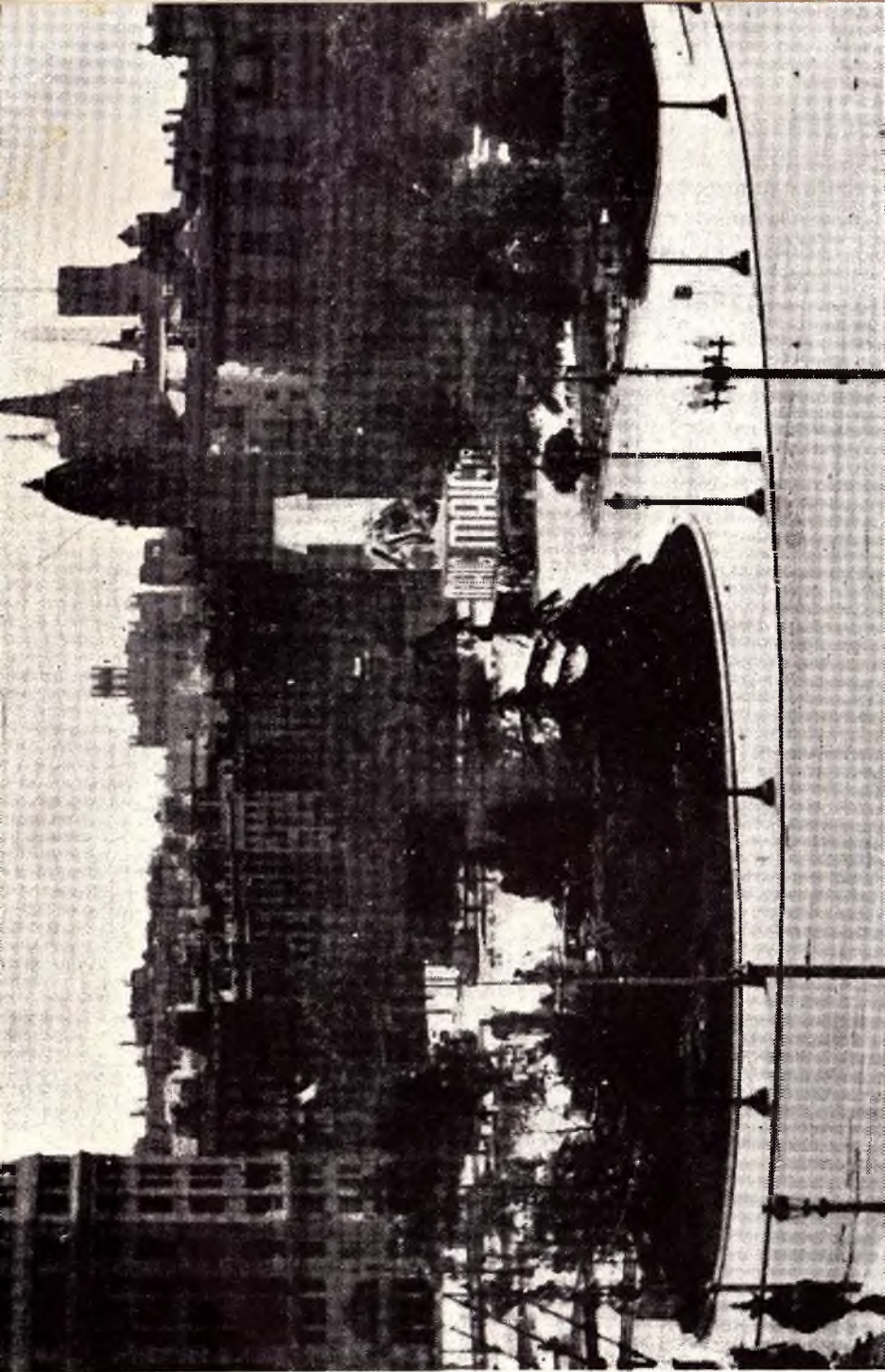
The anarchist militia were not best suited for open field and trench warfare. Traditionally, the Spanish people had used guerrilla warfare, and in mid-1938 the anarchists considered adopting this tactic. By then it was too late. But it should be noted that insurrectional movements in Spain from 1931 on never used guerrilla tactics. The struggles took place in the streets of villages and cities and when the anarchists had been overcome in the streets the insurrection was considered over. With the exception of Andalusia, anarchist support came from the larger cities and towns.

When the State was reconstituted in 1936, the anarchists arrived everywhere too late. They had strong reservations to overcome. The most difficult "evolution" imposed upon them was the regularization of the army and the police. When the anarchists finally decided to accept the militarization of a militia column, after stormy arguments, those who decided to remain and those who left parted with tears in their eyes.

The Communists in this matter had no such scruples. They spontaneously formed the first disciplined military contingent: the



so-called Fifth Regiment which, by virtue of special shipments of Russian arms, was soon transformed into the Fifth Army Corps. The Communists were always first to arrive at the different corps and institutions. One by one they took over the Security Corps (into which they introduced the GPU), the new Popular Army (where they insinuated Russian "experts") and the Commissariat Corps (in which they set up their own propaganda machine). Using the blackmail of Soviet military assistance they were able to set up a private staff within the Spanish State. Once they held key positions they made life impossible for those bureaucrats or officers who disdained their bribes and sinecures.



*May 1, 1937 in Barcelona.*

## 15. Prelude to the Great Drama

By the beginning of 1937 the new State was ready to take on the revolutionaries. Until then its motto had been, "The war must be won before the revolution." Now its motto became, "Before the war is won the revolution must be crushed." A leader of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) had declared, "Barcelona must be taken before Zaragoza."

The revolution was represented by the CNT-FAI, the left wing of the Socialist Party and the Marxist Workers Unity Party (POUM). The counterrevolution included the Communist Party and its affiliates, the regional and national Republican parties and the right-wing Socialists led by Indalecio Prieto. Whatever their fundamental differences, the latter groups were united by their opposition to the revolution. Communists and anarchists opened hostilities on May 3, 1937.

There are those who claim that the events of May were part of a vast scheme to overthrow the President and Minister of War, Francisco Largo Caballero. Largo Caballero himself believed that the Communist offensive was directed only against himself. In his book, *Mis Recuerdos*, he writes, "The Communist ministers took advantage of the May events to precipitate the crisis in the government that they had long been preparing." In fact, the scheme was even more ambitious, for it was an attack on the entire revolution. If the objective had been merely the government in Valencia, then why did so much happen in Catalonia? The answer, of course, is that Barcelona was the stronghold of the CNT-FAI, which led the revolution. The anarcho-syndicalists controlled the Catalan government. Their unions and collective had a strong influence on the economy, and their war industries

and militia columns at the front affected the progress of the war.

A systematic bid to take over the State began August-September, 1936, when Marcel Rosenberg and Antonov-Ovseenko became, respectively, USSR Ambassador and Consul-General in Spain. In coordinated operations, the Ambassador, with Communist Party help, worked to impose Russian policies on the central government; the Consul-General, with PSUC help, worked on the Catalan government to the same end. The Republic's diplomatic isolation and the Soviet military aid facilitated their operations. The Soviet aid was not disinterested: since December, 1936, the gold reserves of the Bank of Spain had been held in Moscow as security for commercial transactions between the two countries.

The Communists turned against Largo Caballero when he resisted the Soviet Ambassador's political and military meddling. Also, he had rejected a proposal for merging the Socialist and Communist Parties into a single workers' party called the Unified Socialist Party of Spain.

In December, 1936, Stalin sent a personal letter to Caballero with insolent political advice, telling him to protect the petty bourgeoisie and put an end to the revolution. His pretext was the need to reassure the western democracies belonging to the Non-intervention Pact. In February, 1937, Stalin wrote again to Largo Caballero, openly proposing the formation of a single proletarian party. Caballero's reply to the first letter had been courteous but evasive. The second response was a flat negative. The Spanish Communist Party immediately opened fire.

After his experience with the merger of the youth groups and formation of the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia, Caballero knew what to expect. He, the "Spanish Lenin," was destroyed by the agit-prop. Caballero wrote, "The portraits disappeared everywhere. They took pleasure in destroying the idol they themselves had created."

On February 8, 1937, the propitious moment arrived: Malaga fell to the enemy. At once the Communists produced a propaganda campaign playing on the emotional aspect of the disaster. They chose as scapegoat General Asensio, Largo Caballero's assistant in the Ministry of War. Unlike Generals Miaja, Rojo, Pozas and others, Asensio had refused to join the Communist Party. The campaign against him seemed to punish him for his refusal to toe the Communist Party line and to subvert the authority of the head of government and Minister of War.

At the same time, Caballero's personal enemies within the Socialist Party and UGT worked to isolate him from his own party. On February 24, 1937, his friends protested publicly that a number of Socialist Party activists had been detained without the knowledge of the regular police. In mid-April anarchist newspapers denounced a rash of assassinations of peasants by "persons carrying C.P. cards." Shortly before, in late March, there had been a clash between the collectivists of Vilanesa (Valencia) and the police, after a protest against the commercial tariff policies of the government. The police exceeded their authority, assaulting and destroying the collective's headquarters, in spite of the peasants' fierce resistance. At the same time Francisco Maroto, anarchist commander of militia on the Granada front, was accused of complicity with the enemy. The source of these allegations was the Governor of Almeria, Gabriel Morón, a Communist masquerading as a Republican. Maroto had made several forays into enemy territory, including the city of Granada, which the enemy had held since the first days of the uprising. The Communists based their charges of high treason on these incursions. The National Committee of the CNT came to Maroto's defense, "If Maroto entered Granada, it is because he was more skilled than Morón, 'the hero of Almeria'." Maroto was condemned to death, but his sentence was commuted. In 1939 he was shot by those who won the war.

April 20, 1937 saw the abcess that had been sapping the strength of the Madrid Junta of Defense burst. The Junta had been formed from all parties and unions when the government abandoned Madrid in November, 1936. Within it, the Communist Party gave full rein to its sectarian intrigues. Its Counselor for Public Order was José Cazorla, a former Young Socialist, now a Communist in the JSU like Santiago Carrillo and others. Cazorla detained a youth who turned out to be nephew of the Undersecretary of Justice, Mariano Sánchez Roca. For seventy days the fate of the youth was unknown until Melchor Rodríguez, special delegate for Prisons, learned he was being held in a Communist Party "cheka" (secret, unofficial prison) on calle Fernández de la Hoz. This sensational discovery led to others. It was said that Cazorla was ransoming prisoners to get money for the Party. The government took advantage of these accusations to dissolve the Junta of Defense on April 23 and install a Municipal Council in its place.

The scandal of the "cheka" had only begun. The existence

of another, this in Murcia, was made public. *Castilla Libre*, the CNT paper, published this note:

We have not opposed, nor will we oppose the shooting of any fascist, whoever he may be. But we will always be opposed to torture. Yet not only fascists were tortured in Murcia. Members of revolutionary groups and Popular Front parties were sadistically tortured in its infamous secret prison. Even a CNT member . . . suffered the terrible torture of having his eyes torn out before his wounded body disappeared.

The Socialist Party press joined the protest campaign, for many of its members had also been tortured in Murcia.

The dissolution of the Madrid Junta of Defense embittered the campaign against Largo Caballero. He responded with decrees that purged police forces of Communist Party members. He wrote in his book,

I issued another decree revoking the appointment of all Commissioners named without my signature. One of those most responsible had been Alvarez del Vayo, Minister of State, member of the Socialist Party, and Commissioner (General), who until then had been my unconditional friend. He called himself a Socialist but actually he was entirely in the service of the Communist Party. I made him appear before me; I reproached him for his conduct and for the appointments made without my knowledge and signature, which numbered about 200 in favour of the Communists.

From that moment the Communists sought a successor for the head of government. In his book, *I Was Stalin's Agent*, ex-general Walter Krivetsky reveals,

Caballero was then universally considered the Kremlin favourite, but Stashevsky had already picked Negrín as his successor because Caballero had not supported the GPU activity which under Orlov's direction had begun in Spain, as in Russia, a great purge of all dissidents, independents and antistalinists whom the party lumped together under the name "Trotskyists".

A counterrevolution accompanied the political changes. On November 26, 1936, CNT and UGT national representatives had signed a preliminary agreement that seemed to foreshadow an alliance between the two federations. The Communist Party claimed there was a conspiracy of labour unions against the political parties, in particular the Communist Party. The Republican parties took the bait, and the right wing of the Socialist Party re-



newed negotiations with the CP for a Single Proletarian Party.

Shortly afterward, the first division within the Catalan government was instigated by the Soviet Consul-General. He published a note accusing the POUM paper, *La Batalla*, of "selling out to international fascism." That note, brazenly abusing consular prerogatives, contained a synthesis of all successive slanders against the POUM. It was published on November 27, and the crisis of the Catalan government occurred on December 13.

The PSUC declared that it would end the crisis only if the POUM was excluded from the government. This purge served as a preliminary to the physical elimination of POUM leaders and also as the first move against the CNT and FAI. Throughout the world Communist parties were engaging in "anti-Trotskyist" purges, a persecution begun when Kirov was "assassinated" in 1934. These sectarian struggles were only part of the Stalinist hostility to the POUM: there was also competition for control of the unions. The POUM had a great influence in the Catalan UGT, to which it had given life long before the creation of the PSUC. After July 19, 1936, the parties opposing the CNT had given the UGT a new image and from then on it would find its strength in the petty bourgeoisie. The Stalinists had to eliminate POUM influence in UGT unions. Hence, the crisis in the Catalan government was instigated to eliminate the POUM politically.

The crisis was resolved on December 15, by the creation of a "government without political parties" formed by the UGT, CNT, Sharecroppers' Union, and the Republican Left of Catalonia representing the petty bourgeoisie. There was hardly any change in people: Comorera and Valdés, who had represented the PSUC in the government, now represented the UGT. It was they who had precipitated the crisis; they were the same characters in different costumes. But the POUM had been eliminated.

In the new government the different departments were redistributed. The Supply Department passed from the hands of CNT member Domenech to the Communist Comorera (secretary general of the PSUC) who immediately began a slanderous campaign against his predecessor. He stepped up rationing of articles of primary necessity, especially bread, and attributed chaos in the bread industry and a scarcity of flour to the previous administrator and collectivization. The truth is that large quantities of goods were stored away to provoke public protest. When the people protested, Communist agents started rumours that the



CNT was responsible for the bread shortage, and this led to well-orchestrated demonstrations against the CNT.

About that time, on January 20, 1937, a Soviet ship arrived at the port of Barcelona with a declared cargo of 901 tons of wheat, 882 tons of sugar, and 568 tons of butter. The people in the street joked a lot about the butter, since it was hardly ever used in Spain. They let themselves believe the "butter" was really guns and planes. Even though it was confirmed in official circles that it was real butter made from cows' milk, nobody believed it. Lower government officials themselves ended up believing that the Russians had disguised war materials in order to circumvent the controls of the Non-Intervention Pact. The truth is that the Russians never unloaded war materials in Barcelona, but rather in Alicante or Cartagena, far from the anarchist columns. The Russian government bolstered the reputation of the Catalan government's new Councillor for Supplies with these shipments of foodstuffs.

Another accomplishment of the new government of Catalonia was the reorganization of the police. On December 24, The Councillor for Internal Security, a Communist named Artemio Ayguadé, appointed as a new Police Commissioner a PSUC member, Eusebio Rodríguez Salas. The new commissioner quickly began a campaign against "uncontrolled elements" who, according to him, were undertaking unauthorized investigations and executions. Another of his sensationalist campaigns was against the so-called "clandestine cemeteries", really the burial places for rebels killed on the first day of the rebellion. Executions like these had taken place throughout the republican territory and all the parties and groups had participated, above all the Communists, who now wanted to lay the blame on their political rivals. To make a better impression on foreign observers, Rodríguez Salas went about digging up the bodies and encouraging funeral processions of widows and other family members. The rebel radio, especially Radio Sevilla, took great pleasure in commenting on the macabre activities of the new Police Commissioner. These intrigues also were ultimately directed at the CNT-FAI.

On January 23, 1937, the Catalan UGT, guided by the PSUC, held a "congress" of small peasant landowners. The congress, really a propaganda stunt against the collectives, was run by non-peasant Communist speakers. These shady tactics soon bore fruit among the smallholders opposed to collectivization. They took arms in La Fatarella, a small village in Tarragona, and

were harshly repressed by the Control Patrols, a kind of mobile police formed by all the parties and groups in August, 1936. The punitive action of the patrols aided by the Assault Guards of the Catalan government left 30 dead among the smallholders, and several dead and wounded patrolmen. Responsibility for the event was collective, but the PSUC leaders sought to blame it entirely on the POUM and the CNT.

The conflict between the two sides escalated and a few isolated incidents occurred on the streets of Barcelona when the police of Rodriguez Salas tried to disarm all civilians. The Councillor for Internal Security, apparently on his own initiative, decreed the following: the dissolution of the Internal Security Corps formed by all antifascist groups; the dissolution of the Councils of Workers and Soldiers charged with purging the ranks of the old officer corps; the dissolution of the Control Patrols; and the prohibition of policemen, officers and police chiefs from belonging to unions or political parties, under penalty of expulsion. These decrees appeared on March 4, and their publication precipitated a new government crisis in Catalonia.

About this time, 12 tanks were stolen from the warehouses of the war industries of Barcelona. The robbers were discovered to be high officers in the Vorochilof barracks, which was controlled by the PSUC. *Solidaridad Obrera* of March 7 commented,

If they did not remove the tanks to take them to the front, why was such a brilliant operation undertaken at all? We assume that this was the first step in a dictatorial coup, against which, everybody knows, we would immediately rise.

The new government crisis was precipitated on March 26. As a solution the CNT demanded strict observance of the principle of proportional representation when departments were distributed. It also demanded the revoking of the Decrees of Public Order. A FAI communiqué said, "The Department of Supplies should serve the interests of the people as a whole, not those of the parties. And Internal Security should not be filching that which is essential to the revolution in progress." The crisis lasted one month, and while it was under negotiation there were moments of dangerous tension. On March 30, the CNT Regional Committee instructed its activists, federations and unions to keep alert and in constant contact.

Another cause of the crisis was the Communist campaign against the Councillor of Defense, the CNT member Francisco

Isgleas. He was blamed for the lack of offensive operations on the Aragon front. We have already pointed out that on the Aragon front there was a great lack of weapons and, above all, ammunition. Nevertheless the leaders of the Communist Party presumptuously called the anarchist militiamen cowards. The Communists also slandered Catalan war industries which had been created precisely for the purpose of protecting the militia in Aragon from the sometimes intentional indolence of the central government. After Bilbao, Barcelona was the main centre for heavy industry in Spain. The war industries were mounted under the exigencies of war. Their products were sent to all of the fronts of the Republic. Workers and technicians of the CNT devoted all their skill and professional expertise to the enterprise. It was a true product of the CNT unions.

In a congress organized by the Young Communists in Madrid at the beginning of April, 1937, the speakers cast slurs on the Aragon front, arguing that its paralysis was attributable to its being 75% anarchist. Without any justification, the JSU Secretary General declared that there existed in Catalonia magnificent war factories given over to the production of pistol bullets. Other speakers added that Catalan war factories were making domestic appliances instead of machine guns and rifles. These allegations were amplified by the official papers of the CP, *Mundo Obrero* (Valencia) and the PSUC, *Treball* (Barcelona).

As we have seen, the government crisis in Catalonia lasted exactly one month. It ended on April 26 with the same cabinet as the previous government and a suspension of the Decrees of Public Order. But the incidents had only begun.

On April 25, 1937, in a town near Barcelona called Molins de Llobregat, a mysterious murder took place. At a crossroads, persons unknown fired on an automobile and killed its occupant, the PSUC activist Roldán Cortada. This murder served as pretext for arresting a number of anarchists in the Bajo Llobregat district. To understand better the mysterious circumstances surrounding the crime, one should know the following:

1. The Bajo Llobregat district was one of the most pro-anarchist in all Catalonia. During the revolutionary movements of January 8 and December 8, 1933, libertarian communism had been proclaimed in Hospitalet de Llobregat, the headquarters of the district committee.
2. The anarchists of Bajo Llobregat had always distinguished themselves by the extremism of their revolutionary fervour. Bar-

celona conservatives accused the workers of this district of being anti-Catalan, because many of them had emigrated from different regions of Spain, especially Murcia. For the same reason, anarchist of Hospitalet were labeled "Murcians" and "foreigners" by Catalanist politicians.

3. After July 19, 1936, Bajo Llobregat had been very heavily collectivized. (See Chapter 10)

4. When the CNT joined the government, the militants of Bajo Llobregat, true to their radical anarchism, formed an opposition movement to the CNT-FAI participation and the militarization of the militia. They published the journal *Ideas* in Hospitalet de Llobregat which objected to any deviation from libertarianism.

5. In spite of intensive police investigations, Roldán Cortada's murderers could not be found. Nevertheless, several militant anarchists were detained and tried, including Luis Cano, Councilor for Defense of the Town Council of Hospitalet de Llobregat. The judge found Cano and his companions not guilty of the assassination and stated, "With respect to the central issue of the indictment, neither the aforementioned Cano nor the six prisoners released had any part, direct or indirect, in the Cortada murder." Cano was convicted only of "exercising functions limited to the Department of Internal Security."

6. Let us see who Roldán Cortada was. In the old days he had been a CNT member. Like many other militants, he had taken refuge in France during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship. Afterwards he went to Switzerland, possibly expelled from France like many others who conspired there against the dictatorship. On the eve of the fall of the dictatorship he returned to Spain secretly to continue the struggle against the military regime. In the first years of the Republic, Cortada worked very actively in the Construction Union of Barcelona and was one of the 30 signers of the dissident manifesto in the 1931 schism. Finally, after the military revolt of July 19, Roldán Cortada entered the PSUC, making a name for himself by his attacks on his former comrades.

With these facts we can advance the hypothesis that Roldán Cortada may have been assassinated by the Stalinists themselves to create enmity against the CNT. The site chosen for the attack — an extremist stronghold — makes motives for the attack seem self-evident, especially since Roldán Cortada was a renegade who might have betrayed the secrets of his former organization when he joined the Communists.

The opposite hypothesis is difficult to sustain. The indicting

judge found no evidence of anarchist participation in the crime. Furthermore, in all CNT history there were very few cases of reprisals against its renegades and these few were only against the gunmen of the Free Unions who, paid by the government, had assassinated CNT members such as Salvador Seguí, Evelio Boal, José Comas and the CNT lawyer, Francisco Layret. The reprisals took place in the first weeks of the revolution, and the main victims were Ramón Salas, Inocencio Faced and Desiderio Trillas, with whom we are already acquainted.

The mere act of going over to the enemy had never brought about reprisals. Some of the Communist leaders had once been anarchists. Joaquín Maurín and Andrés Nin were the founders of the Communist Party in Catalonia, although they later deviated from the orthodox line. Ramón Casanellas had taken refuge in Russia after participating in the attack that led to Prime Minister Eduardo Dato's death. On his return to Spain in 1931, he became a Communist leader and undertook campaigns against the confederation with impunity. Another great renegade was Rafael Vidiella, who had been the editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* in 1922, and was one of the founders of the PSUC. Another leader of the Spanish Communist Party, Manuel Adame, was a CNT member who divided the organization in Andalusia and other provinces when the Republic was proclaimed. José Díaz himself, the secretary general of the Spanish Communist Party during the civil war, had been an anarchist in Andalusia.

It is well known that the CNT never took revenge upon those members who changed their political creed. The violent struggles between anarchists and communists in Seville, Malaga, Cordoba, Granada and so forth were struggles for control between rival groups, never reprisals against renegades.

The PSUC exploited the assassination of Roldán Cortada in order to add to the mounting hostility against the CNT and to set the stage for the great provocation that was soon to come. At the funeral, the PSUC organized an imposing demonstration that was "spontaneously joined" by military forces and police, who paraded for hours down the main streets of Barcelona in a provocative manner, shouting threats against the anarchists. Cortada became the martyr, the Calvo Sotelo of the Communist crusade.

Soon threats were realized. Within a few days, Stalinists and carabiniero troops from the central government clashed with the CNT militia who had been guarding the French frontier since July 19, 1936. Near Puigcerda, three CNT activists were killed in an

ambush. The agitation spread to the whole frontier when confederal reinforcements arrived from Lerida, Aragon and Seo de Urgel. The incident ended only after the Barcelona CNT committees intervened and handed the town of Puigcerda over to central government troops.

And so the first of May arrived, a day traditionally celebrated in Spain in memory of the Chicago martyrs. The tension in the air spoiled any celebration of the brotherhood of the revolution. The central government, on pretext of support for fighters on the fronts and the need for war materials declared the day to be a "day of work". In Catalonia, the police "worked" hard, harassing civilians with searches in the streets and other investigations. CNT members were disarmed and detained. Union cards and other confederal documents were destroyed in the presence of their holders, who were further subjected to gross indignities.

On May 2 *Solidaridad Obrera* admonished the government in the following terms:

The guarantee of the revolution is the proletariat in arms. To disarm the people is to put oneself on the other side of the barricade. No matter how much of a councillor or a commissioner one may be, one cannot order the disarming of workers who struggle against fascism with more selflessness and heroism than all the politicians of the rearguard. Workers! Let none of you be disarmed under any circumstances! That is the watchword!

This was the prelude to the great drama.





*Young anarchists assassinated by the Communists in Barcelona, May 1937.*



## 16. The Events of May

The tragic events of May, 1937 began on the second of the month, at about three in the afternoon. Troops of the Assault Guard from the Commissariat of Public Order made a surprise attack upon the Telefónica in the Plaza de Cataluña in the centre of the city. The Telefónica was an American enterprise confiscated by the CNT and UGT under the collectivization decree and had on its business committee a representative of the Catalan government. The Councillor for Internal Security, Artemio Ayguadé, ordered its takeover without consulting his colleagues in the Cabinet. The workers blocked off access to the upper stories as they gave the alarm to the entire confederal organization.

On the next day the struggle spread through the streets. The PSUC, the UGT, and *Estat Catala* extremists sided with the forces of public order. Defending the revolution were the CNT, FAI, Libertarian Youth and Unified Marxist Workers Party (POUM). The libertarian militants had reacted spontaneously but the higher committees of the CNT-FAI were, from the start, partisans of compromise. In their negotiations they tried to show that the Councillor for Internal Security had exceeded his authority and asked for his resignation. President Companys' vacillation and the sectarianism of the political parties hampered the negotiations.

From the start of the hostilities the people's forces held the outlying residential districts while government troops held strategic points in the city around key buildings, police barracks and party headquarters. Police surrounded CNT union headquarters. Revolutionaries were able to dislodge them from the old Exposition building and several movie theatres they had fortified.

All kinds of weapons were used in the fighting: automatic rifles, machine guns and hand grenades. Some small armoured cars were used on each side for liaison and supply with isolated units. The Casa CNT-FAI was surrounded by forces from the neighbouring Police Headquarters. On the revolutionary side, fighting was coordinated by neighbourhood Defense Committees, organizations with a long revolutionary tradition that had played an important role in the July 19, 1936 fighting. The higher Committees of the CNT-FAI, busy with their negotiations, had no part in the fighting.

The struggle was particularly intense in the inner city where the government troops were concentrated and where the narrow winding streets easily lent themselves to barricades. Blockaded in their own headquarters, the political and union leadership of both groups made more or less sincere efforts to obtain an armistice. But they also delayed negotiations in hopes of reducing the military strength of their adversaries. The slogan "Cease Fire!" constantly transmitted by the CNT-FAI radio, dampened the spirits of the people's forces. In its May 4 transmission the station declared,

We are not responsible for what has happened. We are not attacking; we are defending ourselves. Workers of the CNT and UGT, remember well what you have gone through, the dead already bloody in the streets and on the barricades! Put down your arms and embrace as brothers! We will be victorious if we unite; we will fail if we struggle among ourselves! Think it over! We hold out our arms to you without weapons; if you do the same, all will be over! Let there be peace among us. War to the death against fascism!

From the Catalan government radio, political leaders spoke in the same terms, but they said one thing and did another.

As for the central government, as soon as they heard about the events they adopted strict measures to put down the seditious "uprising" in Catalonia. The CNT ministers, García Oliver and Federica Montseny, offered to serve as mediators and left for Barcelona. Representatives from the UGT Executive Committee and the CNT National Committee went for the same purpose. These people spoke on the radio to calm things down. "Comrades," García Oliver declared, "for antifascist unity, for the unity of the proletariat, for those who have fallen in battle, pay no attention to provocation." Among the anarchists who were fighting, the rumour circulated that those addressing them on the radio

had fallen prisoner to the Communists and were speaking under duress. García Oliver referred to this rumour when he continued, "I am telling you what I think. You understand me, you know me well enough to know that at this moment I am acting solely of my own free will . . . no one will be able to wrench from me any declaration that is not genuine." The rumour about the supposed hostages reached such extreme that anarchists controlling the fortress of Monjuich trained their artillery on the Catalan Government headquarters.

Negotiations, begun on May 4, proved fruitless. President Companys demanded as a prior condition police control of the streets. This only intensified the struggle. On May 5, the entire Catalan government resigned. The CNT demanded the expulsion of Artemio Ayguadé from the government because they held him responsible for what had happened. There was a lull in the fighting and the government took advantage of it to surround the headquarters of the Libertarian Youth and the Health Union.

That afternoon, the CNT Regional Committee proposed a new solution: hostilities would end with each combatant holding his position. The formula was accepted, but government troops did not stop fighting. The Regional Committee had to suspend a meeting to defend its own building from a furious attack by the Assault Guards.

The confederal policy of pacification led to a deep disgust among the union fighters, and an extremist group emerged called "Friends of Durruti". This group's paper, *El Amigo del Pueblo* (The Friend of the People) used revolutionary Jacobin language:

In Barcelona a Revolutionary Junta has been formed. Those responsible for the attempted subversion, people acting under government protection, will be shot. The POUM will be admitted to the Revolutionary Junta because it sides with the workers.

The higher committees of the CNT immediately disavowed this group, which never had the importance ascribed to it by some foreign historians. The relative unimportance of its members, POUM participation, and the Marxist flavour of some of its communiqués all served to dilute the real influence of the "Friends of Durruti".

On the same day the Local Committees of the CNT and the UGT finally agreed to broadcast instructions to all workers telling them to return to their workplaces and factories.

The tragic events during the last 48 hours in our city have prevented workers in Barcelona from going to their work. The conflict which caused this abnormal situation, so deleterious to the cause of the proletariat, has been successfully resolved by the representatives of the parties and the antifascist organizations, meeting in the Palace of the Catalan government. Therefore the Local Federations of the CNT and the UGT have agreed to contact all their members, ordering them to return to their regular workplaces immediately.

As usual, police forces took advantage of the confusion produced by the directive to take new positions. Also the central government adopted two important measures: it assumed the functions of public order from the Catalan government, in violation of the statute of autonomy, and dispatched an expeditionary force to Barcelona from the Jarama front. The Minister of the Navy had also sent a number of warships. French and English warships took up positions outside Barcelona harbour.

At the same time the negotiators had agreed on a smaller cabinet, consisting of Antonio Sesé (UGT), Valerio Más (CNT), J. Pons (Rabaisaires) and Martí Faced (Catalan Republican Left). But an unexpected development complicated matters. Antonio Sesé was killed driving through a skirmish on his way to the Catalan Government to assume his position as Councillor. Almost simultaneously and in like circumstances, Domingo Ascaso, brother of the famous fighter, was killed and the official car of the Minister of Health, Federica Montseny, was shot up from behind a government barricade. Her secretary, Baruta, was wounded although the CNT Secretary General, Mariano R. Vázquez, was miraculously unhurt. However, the government and their allies accused only the CNT, calling it responsible for the death of Sesé, in spite of the CNT's offer to demonstrate that the shots in question had come from a government barricade in the Paseo de Gracia.

So hostilities resumed. Communist military forces from the Karl Marx Barracks furiously attacked the French station defended by CNT railway workers. This was in total disregard of the orders for military neutrality given by Councillor for Defense, CNT member Francisco Isgleas. The central government took advantage of the situation to reassert its old powers. General Pozas took over as Captain General, automatically superseding the Defense Council.

On May 6 the CNT and FAI regional Committees issued a manifesto to the "international proletariat":

We have rejected any notion of dictatorship. We have let minorities be represented by Ministers in proportion to their strength . . . and we have not insisted on the fulfillment of our plans. We have weighty proofs that the events of May 3 were the work of political provocateurs. On May 2, a couple of days after the assassination of the anarchist mayor of Puigcerda and three of his companions, the attack on the Telefónica took place. All the workers of Barcelona considered this attack an enormous provocation. After that police began to attack union offices and workers took up arms and raised the barricades. Negotiations failed; whenever the CNT and FAI gave in, certain provocateurs would only become more aggressive. The Catalan anarcho-sindicalist headquarters has been surrounded and besieged. Would-be dictators are trying to crush by armed force the Catalan workers' organizations that have a history of over a half century. This is the true meaning of the events.

In the last hours of May 6, the CNT-FAI made new proposals, offering to have the fighters abandon their barricades and release their hostages, but until 4:45 the next morning there was no reply. Clearly the government was hoping to gain time while awaiting the arrival of the expeditionary forces of the central government. When agreement was reached the anarchists went on the radio to speak to "all workers": "Since representatives of the parties and unions have reached an agreement, we inform you that you will receive appropriate orders from the committees in charge so that complete normality may be restored."

This communiqué once more recommended "serenity in the face of provocation," but nevertheless there was more fighting during the morning. There was no way to agree to abandon the barricades simultaneously. The confederals finally left first, apparently out of disgust for what they considered a suicidal capitulation. The people began to come out into the streets, return to their daily tasks and, above all, get some fresh air and resupply their households after the seven-day siege.

In the last hours of May 7 in a caravan of 120 trucks with 5,000 guards, predominantly pro-Communists, the expeditionary forces entered Barcelona without opposition. The CNT believed, or acted as though it believed, that these forces would bring peace. In a final manifesto it declared,

Now that we are witnessing the end of the tragic events that have

filled Barcelona with mourning, the CNT Regional Committee and the Local Federation of Unions make known their complete desire to cooperate in the most efficacious and loyal way to re-establish order in Catalonia. We are happy, then, to reaffirm our participation in the Catalan Government and our support of the new Delegate for Public Order sent by the central government, Lieutenant-Colonel Torres. We appreciate the excellent perspective he brings to such a sensitive task in Catalonia.

Lieutenant-Colonel Emilio Torres Iglesias, who arrived in Barcelona by plane to assume control of the Office of Public Order (no longer the Delegation of Public Order), had a good reputation among the anarcho-syndicalists. He had served as the commander of the *Tierra y Libertad* column on the Madrid front. The CNT had chosen this old friend to head the expeditionary forces so that they could get their own comrades to submit and avoid reprisals. But their political enemies took the CNT and POUM retreat from the barricades as a sign of weakness. The Stalinists, on the side of government from the start, were largely successful in changing the expedition from pacification to repression.

The passage of the expeditionary force through the Catalan villages produced an uprising of pro-government factions (police, military and civilian) against the forces of the revolution. At Tortosa, on the southern border of Catalonia, the CNT-FAI militants who had put down the Communist uprising were instructed by their national committee not to obstruct the progress of the expeditionary forces heading for Barcelona. When these forces entered Tortosa, political groups and the UGT came out of hiding and took over offices and communication centres. They then jailed their old enemies and invaded peasant collectives. Some of their prisoners were sent to Tarragona, where their corpses were later found beside those of other CNT members.

In Tarragona, the May events had followed the same course as in Barcelona. Police had taken over the telephone building and then fiercely attacked CNT and Young Libertarian headquarters. Those attacked defended themselves valiantly, but their attackers had powerful military support, including a battalion of Coast Guards and a nearby air force garrison. The anarchists were promised there would be no reprisals and invited to throw down their arms, but, once disarmed, they were declared prisoners. Many of those detained were killed, their bodies dumped on the outskirts of the city.

Similar events occurred in the northern districts of Catalonia, where Carlism had left strong reactionary traditions. The textile factories there had drawn workers from Barcelona who brought with them their revolutionary syndicalism. But clerical influence held its own among peasants, smallholders and the middle class and these were the groups recruited by counter-revolutionary politicians for a crusade against anarchist supremacy.

The Estat Catalá extremists, who had always fought for the separation of Catalonia from Spain, were part of the counter-revolutionary coalition. Proponents of separatism and of simple autonomy had found the CNT, with its internationalist principles, a major obstacle. The resentment of these groups increased as they watched the CNT master the streets after July 19. Many Catalanists had felt the influence of Stalinism: the Catalan Proletarian Party had joined with others to form the PSUC. In December, separatist extremists had organized a plot to bring about Catalan independence with the aid of either democratic or fascist foreign powers. When the plot was uncovered, the Catalanist Commissioner of Public Works, Reverter, was shot. Others fled abroad, among them the President of the Catalan Parliament, Juan Casanovas. It is possible that those events were the reason for the active participation of members of Estat Catalá on the side of the Stalinists against the CNT-FAI the following May.

In Barcelona alone, the bloody events of May left 500 dead and 1,000 wounded, according to official figures. The casualties were higher than on July 19, 1936. One of the conditions for the May 7 armistice was the release of all prisoners. The government side had two kinds of prisoners; those in the regular prison, and those who ended up in the secret cells of the Stalinist GPU. Many of the latter were murdered after torture.

The government prisoners included members of the CNT-FAI and POUM, who were kept in the same cellblocks as fascist prisoners. Some were charged with military rebellion, others held without charge.

Until May 11 there was no word on the missing. About then a mysterious ambulance dumped the bodies of twelve young anarchists, completely disfigured, in a cemetery near the village of Sardañola-Ripollet. Among these it is possible that there was the body, never identified, of Alfredo Martínez, a member of the Regional Committee of the Young Libertarians. *Solidaridad Obrera* wrote with indignation,



For three days there has been a systematic and terrible manhunt. If not, let us hear from the 12 militants of San Andrés, taken from their houses and carried to the cemetery of Sardañola. Let us hear from the five watchmen of Eroles, also murdered. Let the 15 CNT members speak whose bodies were found on the outskirts of Tarragona, and the others whose bodies were found in different parts of Catalonia. Let the lifeless body of Camilo Berneri speak.

Camilo Berneri was killed on the night of May 5, along with another anarchist compatriot named Barbieri. Berneri was one of the finest figures of international anarchism. Exiled to France during the Mussolini dictatorship, he joined the Spanish revolution in 1936. On the Huesca front he fought as a simple militiaman. Later he moved to Barcelona, where he edited the journal *Guerra di Classe*. At the time of his death, he left a well documented work on Italy's intervention in Spain, entitled *Mussolini a la conquista de las Baleares*. *Solidaridad Obrera* explained his disappearance and death with his friend Barbieri in the following terms:

At six in the afternoon on Wednesday, twelve men came to his house . . . they made comrades Berneri and Barbieri come out and informed them that they were under arrest. Barbieri asked for the grounds for their arrest. "It appears that you are counter-revolutionaries," was the answer. Berneri became indignant. Twenty years of militant anarchism justified his indignation. On the morning of May 6, police assured Barbieri's female companion that the two prisoners would be released at noon. But on the same day, the families of the two missing persons learned from a card on file at the Clinical Hospital that the two bodies, riddled with bullets, had been recovered by the Red Cross near the Catalan Government building on the night of the 5th.

From the onset of hostilities the CNT higher committees had opted for peace, trying to believe that after an armistice normality would be restored without victors or vanquished. But once the central government had been called in to impose order, it pursued only one course: the disarming of all groups except government troops and, in Catalonia, the only group besides the government forces was the revolution. Other civilian combatants were protected in advance by their support of the official order.

On May 13, the Minister of the Interior issued a proclamation declaring that any individuals or groups not forming part of military forces or other armed forces of the State, who had in their

possession rifles, explosives, tear gas or asphyxiants, tanks or armoured cars would be punished for "adhesion to the rebellion" with the penalties prescribed by the Code of Military Justice. Another order from the same minister on the same day read,

Article One. Beginning with the day of the publication of this ministerial Order . . . there will be a 72-hour period in which all citizens, political parties, unions, committees, town councils, and any other form of association or entity possessing large-bore weapons may hand them in, in Valencia at the General Direction of Security, in Barcelona at the Delegation of Public Order of the central government, and in the remaining regions at the place designated by the Governor or the national delegate.

At the end of the 72-hour period, searches were to be made in all the places mentioned. If arms were found everyone was to be detained and handed over within the required time to appropriate judicial authorities. By the same order, all pistol permits issued by union or party officials were revoked.

These measures were immediately enforced by frisking on the streets and searches in homes and offices of the anarchists. Some of the searches seemed more like full-scale assaults. The most spectacular took place against the headquarters of the Central Defense Committee of Barcelona, in the building known as Los Escolapios. In this operation government forces brought along even artillery and tanks. Nevertheless those inside the building defended it bravely for several hours while arms were being taken out and compromising documents destroyed.

The crisis in the Catalan government was resolved by transforming the Cabinet into a very small Executive Committee consisting of Valerio Más for the CNT, Rafael Vidiella for the UGT and a representative of the Republican Left of Catalonia. The Gazette listed José Echevarría Novoa as Delegate of Public Order and Emilio Torres Iglesias as Police Chief. Torres, the man who had the confidence of the CNT, was reduced to an insignificant subaltern. But things went further than that. At the beginning of June, even he was replaced by a sectarian Communist, Ricardo Burillo. Echevarría was also replaced because, according to the FAI, "he did not obey instructions to persecute our Movement." The new officials quickly enforced the old law on meetings, according to which permission for any public meeting or event had to be obtained in advance, and could take place only in the presence of a government representative. By the same token, people were

notified that any public meetings "detrimental to public order" would be forbidden.

A FAI manifesto complained that prisons were full of unindicted antifascist prisoners while "dangerous *requeté* and fascist elements" went free in the city. These vague protests brought no results. The old writer, historian and geographer Gonzalo de Reparaz, an assiduous contributor to the libertarian press, was detained and indicted for criticizing government war policies. New measures were taken against the gains made in the July 19 revolution. The famous Control Patrols were dissolved, as well as the worker control committees in the armed forces; that is to say, the decrees of Public Order of March 4 were fully implemented. The government also occupied the radio stations of the CNT-FAI.

There are many hypotheses as to hidden causes of the May crisis. The CNT National Committee, in a very garbled document further mutilated by the censor, accused the Catalanist extremists of mounting the May events with the aid of foreign powers, democratic and fascist. They related the activities of influential Catalanist exiles in Paris, Biarritz and Rome to the foreign warships anchored off the coast while events were taking place.

Another hypothesis originated with General Franco, who told Hitler's ambassador that 13 of his agents, scattered throughout Barcelona had precipitated the bloody days.

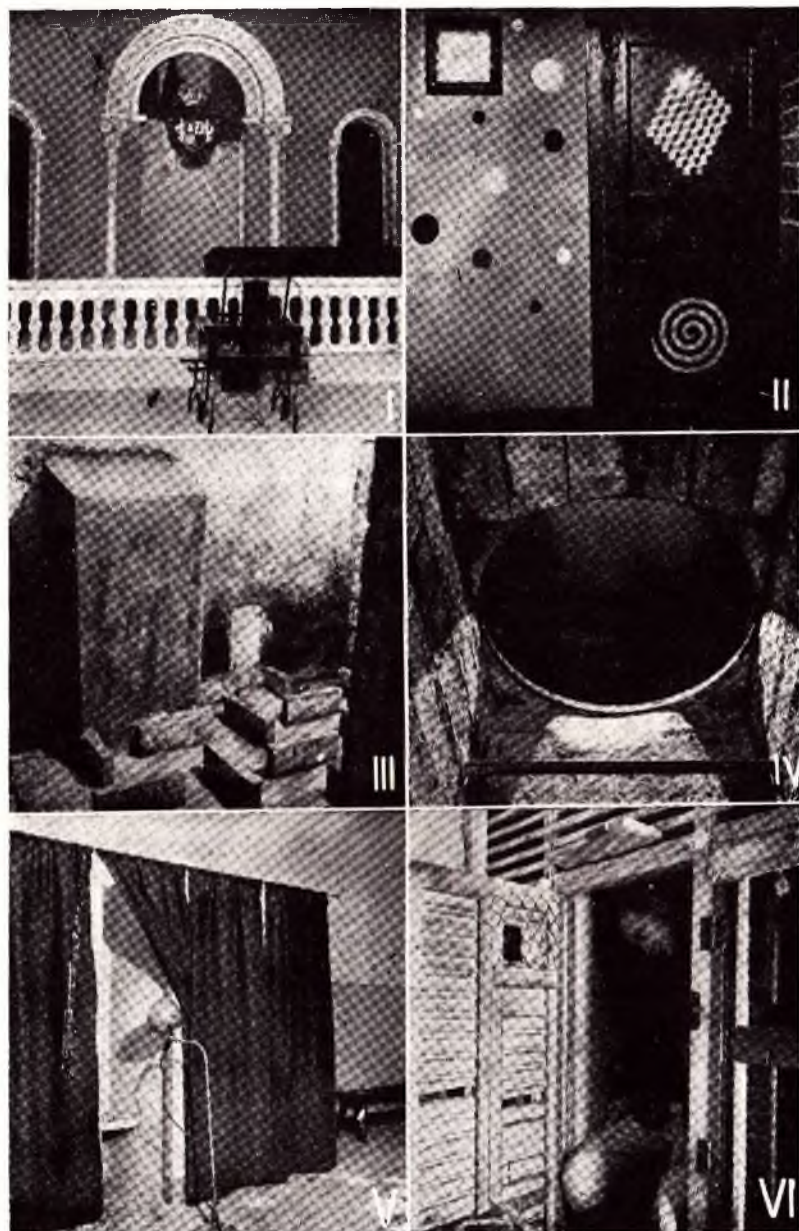
From the first, the Spanish Communists accused the POUM of provoking and maintaining the "rebellion". "The rebels in Catalonia who put up barricades against legitimate government must be implacably punished," declared José Díaz, Secretary General of the CP.

In his book, *I was Stalin's Agent*, Walter Krivitsky, among other interesting revelations in this regard, has this to say:

These reports led to the conviction that the GPU had conspired to crush the "irreducible" elements of Barcelona in order to impose the authority of Stalin. The fact is that in Catalonia the great majority of the workers were resolutely anti-Stalinist. Stalin knew a show-down was inevitable, but he also knew that opposition forces were divided and could be overcome with decisive action. The GPU fanned the flames and set syndicalists, anarchists and socialists against one another. After five days of butchery . . . Catalonia had become the arena in which Largo Caballero's fate was decided. (pp. 134-139)

Finally, there are those who think the events were not the

result of a premeditated provocation, but simply the showdown that was inevitable at that time. The atmosphere was full of tension and lacked only the spark to set it off. There were many who knew this was so and who, instead of moderating their rhetoric and restraining their activities, let themselves go and thus set off what happened.



*Torture instruments used by the S.I.M.*

## 17. The New Iberian Inquisition

Although the crisis in Catalonia was past its peak, the Communist Party continued its campaign of slander and calls for repression. Its Secretary General, José Díaz, proclaimed "All the parties and organizations of the Popular Front must condemn publicly the criminal uprising in Catalonia. Those who do not are not worthy of representation in the government."

The newspaper *CNT* of Madrid replied, "What does the Communist Party want? To provoke a crisis that will leave the CNT out of the government?"

Indeed, on May 15 in a Cabinet meeting, the two Communist ministers did provoke a crisis. In his autobiography, Largo Caballero referred to this meeting and the attitude of the Communists:

Then they proposed the dissolution of the CNT and POUM. I let it be known that this could not be done legally and that as long as I was Prime Minister it would not be done; that if the courts proved that some crime had been committed . . . they could do it, but the government would not.

According to Federica Montseny, the two Communist ministers reacted to the Prime Minister's attitude by walking out of the meeting. Without making a move, Caballero said, "The Council of Ministers continues." Then, without warning, Prieto, Negrín, Alvarez del Vayo (all Prietist Socialists), Giral and Irujo (Republicans) left the room. Caballero then said, "Given this situation there is now a crisis."

Prieto made no attempt to justify his conduct until many years after the war. In a speech in Mexico in 1946, he said that he had only suggested to Caballero that it would be opportune to pose the

political problem to the President of the Republic. But the truth is that the Prietists and the Communists were working together. Caballero received a vote of confidence from the President of the Republic and tried to form a new government, but the Communists and the Prietists blocked him. So he gave up, and Negrín formed the new cabinet, excluding the CNT. Indalecio Prieto held the key position of Minister of War which, under the new name of Ministry of National Defense, included the Army, Navy and Air Force. The two Communist ministers continued in the new cabinet.

Faithful to their alliance with Largo Caballero, the CNT declared on May 18: "since Negrín's government has been formed without us, in keeping with our policy we will not help it in any way." In fact, the CNT had been expelled from the cabinet and with it the UGT represented by Caballero. The moment was propitious for a new attempt at an alliance between the two major union federations.

The CNT's revolutionary strategy had led to dropping the Popular Front for the Antifascist Front. The Popular Front included only political parties; the Antifascist Front grouped political parties and union organizations. The Communists, seeking to put the CNT out of circulation, had long been calling for a return to the Popular Front under the pretext of giving the government a better image abroad. For the legitimacy of the government was based on the elections of February 16, 1936, in which the Popular Front had triumphed.

On May 23, 1937, the CNT held a Plenary of its Regional Confederations in Valencia that adopted resolutions in keeping with the new political crisis. In that meeting they agreed "not to participate directly or indirectly in the new government", which they accused of seeking a dishonourable armistice with the enemy. These instructions were to be spread among combatants on the battlefronts and armed groups on the homefront. They called for a more effective understanding with the UGT, a careful avoidance of any provocation which would draw the CNT into a desperate struggle in the streets. Finally, "all war-making capacities" of the organization were to be held ready.

This anticollaborationist position was modified within a few days, possibly because the UGT was not ready to confront the situation in a violent way. In the Plenary it had been stated that if the UGT "backed down" the National Committee of the CNT would convoke another Regional Plenary "to reconsider the position of our Movement". This second Plenary decided to accept a



collaboration "under dignified conditions and in just proportion to our power." A minimal program was drawn up to be submitted to the government, parties, and organizations. The program proposed a reorganizing of political, economic, and military activities that would assign a more important role to the union organizations. Then the CNT embarked on a series of public meetings in which it openly sought participation in the government.

But events continued to move in another direction. During a reorganization of the Catalan government, which had been functioning provisionally since the bloody days of May, plots of the Catalanists and Communists succeeded in expelling the CNT. Police repression intensified against the unions, towns and collectives. The CNT and FAI protested in a communiqué on June 11: "These days have seen an increase in persecutions, attacks on the collectives, and the expulsion of our representatives from the town councils."

On May 27, four CNT ex-ministers began a series of lectures in Valencia to explain to the public what they had done and what obstacles had been put in their path by the government. The most important message of these lectures was that no revolutionary action of any kind was possible from within the government. Juan López, former Minister of Commerce, declared:

[within the government] those of us who represented a revolutionary and unitary economic attitude . . . were only two . . . and those who defended and now defend the economic status quo of capitalism . . . were in the majority.

When Juan Peiró, Minister of Industry, assumed his position he began to draw up a decree collectivizing all industries. Largo Caballero advised him that England, France and Belgium possessed strong economic interests in Spain and would withdraw diplomatic recognition from the Republican government if the interests were collectivized. Peiró began all over again and prepared a decree whereby the government would intervene and nationalize all industry. The Council of Ministers fought it and made several amendments. From Council, it went to a committee of ministers, which reduced it to skeletal form. But in order to put it into effect, it needed money — credit granted by the Ministry of Finance. The Finance Minister haggled like a miser, and finally granted an insignificant amount. For the money to be granted both ministers had to agree on certain terms. But there seemed to be no way for them to meet; the Minister of Finance was always busy.

Finally the Bank of Industry intervened, lowered the amount even more, and charged heavy interest, which lowered the amount even further. To top it off, the crisis of May 15 occurred before the Minister of Industry could put into effect what by then was an eminently conservative decree.

The two great unions had lost their place in the government but, if they had united, they could have made it impossible for any other government to survive. The CNT's forces were intact but the UGT was suffering from the same three-way split as the Socialist Party because every member of the Socialist Party was also a UGT member. Also, Communists had infiltrated the UGT en masse, using tactics acquired in their training schools. Largo Caballero could no longer count on the Socialist Youth, taken over by the JSU Communists, nor the UGT, because his control of the Executive Commission did not extend to the organization as a whole. What influence he and his unconditionals exerted was confined to the Executive Commission and the leadership of the provincial branches, and even these branches were undermined by a resolute minority supported entirely by the Socialist Ministers. The mass of the workers supporting Largo Caballero was confused by propaganda urging them to take a new direction.

Not until July 29, 1937 did the UGT Executive Commission and CNT National Committee sign a new agreement wherein the most important clause concerned the formation of a liaison committee "to study whatever problems face us". It was understood that the two organizations were separate bodies and would separately put into effect whatever agreements were made. This timid step toward labour unity, besides being late, produced nothing tangible, but it was the fear it engendered among the Communists and Prietist Socialists that proved fatal for Largo Caballero. In October the Communists and Prietists, with government and police aid, took over all the pro-Caballero newspapers and thus completely isolated the Executive Commission. By the beginning of 1938, Largo Caballero had been removed from all his positions in the Socialist Party and the UGT: the Executive Commissions of the Socialist Party and the UGT were in the hands of the pro-Communist faction.

When Negrín's government was installed, the new Justice Minister, Manuel Irujo, a Basque Catholic, had declared that the people's cause was stained with blood.

The Republican rearguard has seen many murders. Roadsides, cemetery walls, jails and other places have been strewn with bodies.

Oppressors and decent folk died together and are piled in the same monstrous heaps. Women, priests, workers, shopkeepers, intellectuals, professionals and outcasts have fallen victim to the *paseo*, the euphemism that colloquial usage has given to what would more appropriately be called "murder". I raise my voice to oppose this system, and I say that the time of the *paseo* is over. The defense and judgment of citizens is in the hands of the State, and the State would not be doing its duty if it did not react with all its power against those who took justice into their own hands, no matter under what name or flag. There were days in which the government did not have power; it was powerless to stop social disorder. Those days are over.

In spite of these impressive words, crime was never so refined as after May 15, 1937, that is, after the government "took power into its hands". It was then they began to commit the most horrible crimes of our political history. GPU dungeons multiplied like the circles of Dante's inferno. The assassination of Andrés Nin alone, given the dubious circumstances in which it occurred, ought to have been enough to force the abrupt resignation of the Catholic Minister of Justice. Yet Irujo did not resign. He waited until more than a year later to resign, and when he did it was not because of humanitarian scruples or religious squeamishness, but because of a political disagreement with his colleagues in the cabinet.

Let us examine the "defense and judgment of the citizens" as administered by Irujo. He reformed the Revolutionary Tribunals, purging them of all revolutionary influence. As a result the jails were filled with antifascist prisoners. From the Ministry of Justice came the order to disinter the bodies of those executed during the revolutionary days of July and August, 1936, and the Communist authorities organized the famous parade of their victims' widows in full mourning. The organizers of this macabre celebration had been just as involved as anyone in the "uncontrolled orgies".

On July 2, 1937, a War Tribunal was held against the survivors of the Communist massacres. CNT militants had been murdered in May, 1937, by the PSUC Communists. But their comrades, not their assassins, were now put on trial and, ironically, accused of "revolutionary crimes". There were no convictions; one of the best Spanish lawyers of all times, Eduardo Barriobero, was able to reduce prosecution arguments to a shambles.

The POUM repression that Largo Caballero refused to authorize was approved by Negrín, and its members were sent before the tribunal for Espionage and High Treason, a tribunal originally

created to judge fascist detainees. The Soviet GPU experts concocted a plot to justify the arrests. The Spanish police had in their possession a military map of Madrid drawn up by the Fifth Columnists. On the back of the map was a note to Franco, said to be written by Nin.

The order to detain POUM militants came from the Central Committee of the Communist Party, under the orders of Orlov, Geroe, and other people from the GPU. The General Director of Security, a rabid Communist named Ortega, transmitted the order by teletype to Burillo, Delegate for Public Order in Catalonia, and also a Communist, who made the arrests. Some of the prisoners were taken to Valencia, but Nin disappeared without a trace. The order to try the prisoners did not come until Nin's disappearance had begun to disturb national and foreign public opinion. Irujo himself officially announced the indictment of the POUM leaders, together with a group of Falangists.

On June 28, 1937, the CNT National Committee, in an extensive document sent to the President of the Republic, the Speaker of the House, the Prime Minister, the Ministers of Justice and Interior and the central committees of all parties and organizations said, among other things:

The Minister of Justice's decree establishing the Special Tribunals . . . behind closed doors and with fearsome power . . . appears to be another attempt to eliminate the party known as Marxist Unity, conceived and put into practice by the Communist Party in Spain and Russia. And we think that Spanish liberal opinion will not tolerate it. Let the USSR solve its problems as it must, or as it sees fit. It is not possible to bring the same methods to Spain and mercilessly persecute . . . an opposition party, or the dissident faction of an ideology.

On July 21, Federica Montseny made the following accusations in a speech delivered in Barcelona:

They have told us that the bodies of Nin and two of his comrades have been found in Madrid. This news has not been confirmed, but until the government denies it and tells us where Nin is, we must believe it to be true. They cannot with impunity trample on the will and the dignity of the people. They cannot arrest a group of men, accuse them of something that they do not prove, put them in a private house . . . take them out at night and kill them. The CNT and FAI have the right to bring this situation to the attention of the Spanish people. Spain is a nation that has shown it can die for

freedom. We reject Rome, and Berlin, and Moscow!

Until August 4 there were no official explanations for Nin's disappearance. The Minister of Justice said only that Nin had been detained along with other leaders of the POUM and put at the disposition of the Tribunal for Espionage and High Treason. Nin had disappeared from the clinic in which he was detained, "all efforts of the police to rescue him and his guards having been fruitless to date."

Soviet agents in the National Security Directorate kidnapped Nin in order to force a confession that would connect him with the map found on the falangist agents. They were experts in breaking people's wills. Orlov took charge of the operation and tried to sap the prisoner's mental energies. Nin resisted this terrible trial heroically. Then he was tortured physically. This, too, he resisted to the end, but he was left a bloody wreck. The torturers could not make Nin talk, nor could they give him back to the police, for the terrible state of the prisoner would have told the whole story. With Nin alive, the whole monstrous plot would come out so he had to disappear. But his disappearance had to be in accord with the accusations against him, so the following explanation was given: Nin was freed from his prison by German Gestapo commandos, who disarmed and bound his guards. On the floor of the cell they found a wallet with German documents.

The body was never found. During the trial, which was held in October, 1938, espionage charges were dropped. The inscription on the back of the map of Madrid was declared a forgery: handwriting experts said that the writing was not Nin's. Nevertheless, the rest of the accused were sentenced to heavy terms of imprisonment.

These unsavoury acts provoked outrage abroad. A delegation of foreign intellectuals met with the government and representatives of several parties and organizations. But the Communist papers started a slanderous campaign against the visitors. *Mundo Obrero*, the official organ of the Communist Party, used typical arguments in the August 27 issue:

The foreign Trotskyites, like those of Spain, follow the orders of the Gestapo and have formed a so-called Committee for Defence of Antifascist Revolutionaries, which is located in Paris and has had the audacity to approach newspapers and antifascist organizations in Spain for support for its proposals to hinder the action of popular justice in Spain.

On August 15, 1937, a decree was issued creating the Military Investigation Service (SIM). The scope of the decree was not noticed by most Spaniards, possibly not even by the Minister of National Defense himself, who signed it. For it seemed natural in a time of war to set up an agency for counter-espionage; people were far from suspecting that an agency designed to counter enemy espionage activities could be turned into a powerful instrument of one party against opposition parties. This is what happened with SIM; it was converted from a secret service of the General Staff into a branch of the Soviet GPU.

The new service was created under the inspiration of Russian agents. The private jails they had used had become notorious. With the creation of SIM these same procedures could be called official. The secret nature of this service, the latitude it was granted, the abundant funds at its disposal, all admirably served the purposes of the Soviet secret service. As soon as SIM was created, the Communists took it over just as they had taken over the National Security Council and, after the latter was dissolved, the National Security Directorate.

Díaz Baza, Vicente Uribarri, and Santiago Garcés were the directors of SIM. The service had a budget of 22,000,000 pesetas. In Madrid alone it had 6,000 agents. These agents were assured a bonus of 30 percent of the value of whatever jewels they confiscated. Uribarri escaped abroad in April, 1938, with several million pesetas in stolen jewels.

SIM soon became a spy network covering army units (companies, battalions, brigades, army corps) parties and organizations; even government offices were infiltrated by SIM agents. On the battlefield, SIM agents, located on all levels of the military hierarchy, had as much if not more power than commissars and officers. These agents were named by a mysterious process. A recently mobilized soldier could be transformed overnight into a SIM agent for a battalion or brigade, equal or superior in command to a captain or commander.

On the homefront, SIM agents inspired fear even in the police. Every known SIM agent had another, secret one watching him. At first the Minister of National Defense was the only one who could name or remove agents, but a ruling in September, 1938, delegated this authority to the head of SIM.

SIM accomplished some work against Fifth Column falangists, but too often the work loudly publicized in the press had been done previously by other organizations. The secret of its success

was terror. Torture was applied to fascists and non-Communist anti-fascists alike.

Secret agreements between parties and organizations were spied on by SIM agents. On the battlefield soldiers or officers noted for heroism or military skill paid dearly for rejecting Communist Party cards. SIM agents also used blackmail as a political weapon, learning about the private lives of political adversaries and buying cooperation in exchange for silence.

The torture cells of SIM were often hidden in palatial mansions surrounded by trees and gardens. The Spanish people called all secret prisons "*chekas*". At first the SIM jails were dark and spooky, located in old houses and convents. The regime of torture that they used in them included the normal kinds of brutality: beatings with rubber whips followed by very cold baths; simulated executions and other painful and bloody tortures. The "Russian advisors" modernized these ancient techniques. The new cells were smaller, painted with bright colours and paved with sharp-edged tiles. The prisoners had to stand continually under a powerful red or green light. Other cells were narrow tombs with a sloping floor, where remaining on foot meant a complete tensing of nerves and muscles. In others there was an absolute darkness, and metallic noises could be heard that made the prisoners' heads ring.

The interrogations took place in rooms that were almost artistically furnished. The thugs made their inquiries slowly or rapidly, switching from gentleness to authority to sarcasm several times in the same session, according to the effect they wanted to achieve. Such studied contrasts disoriented the victim mentally and physically. Recalcitrant prisoners were shut up in the "freezer", or in the "noise box" or tied to the "electric chair". The first was a cell two meters high with curved walls; the prisoner was submerged in freezing water for hours on end until he said what he was supposed to. The noise box was a kind of chest inside of which one heard a terrifying cacophony of buzzers and bells. The electric chair was a variation of the kind used in American penitentiaries but which did not kill. Compared to those used by the German Gestapo, the NKVD in the USSR, and General Franco's executioners, there was nothing new in these tortures. But in those days they were innovations in police repression.

Let us say to end this difficult and shameful story that SIM had its own concentration camps. Or, more accurately, the labour camps set up by the anarchist Minister of Justice, García Oliver, for the redemption of fascist and ordinary criminals (he foresaw no



other kind at the time) inevitably fell into the hands of SIM. The prison regime in these camps was brutal in the extreme. Meals were few and deficient. The work was exhausting. Prisoners could not receive visitors from the outside. To avoid escapes, the prisoners were separated into groups of five. If one escaped, the responsibility fell on the other four. The penalty was death. In this way, each prisoner was the best guard of his fellow prisoner. Reprisals were applied to all prisoners regardless of their political affiliation, to fascists as well as those of the POUM and the CNT. Fascists and antifascists were mixed together in the camps. For SIM, all its prisoners were fascists.





*Durruti with Manzana, Sol Ferrer and Sebastian Faure.*

## 18. The Iberian Anarchist Federation

The Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) held an historic Peninsular Plenary from July 4 to July 7, 1937, in Valencia. The FAI had been created in July ten years before at another Peninsular Plenary in Valencia. It is ironic that the creation of the FAI had been to ensure the ideological integrity of the CNT, while the Plenary of 1937 served to push the CNT into participation in the government.

Before going farther we will retrace the principal stages of Spanish anarchist organizations. The existence of two parallel organizations with common origin, one syndical and other anarchist, goes back to the time of the First International. When Giuseppe Fanelli arrived in Madrid in 1868 to carry out the important mission assigned to him by Bakunin, he brought with him the statutes of the International and the program of the Social Democratic Alliance, Bakunin's secret organization.

The Alliance's program contained Bakunin's revolutionary ideas: abolition of classes, complete economic and social equality, abolition of private property and inheritance, everybody's right to a proportional share of what is produced, collective ownership of the earth and tools by associations of producers, universal right to education, the absence of any kind of state and any revolutionary action not having as its immediate end the emancipation of workers and the transformation of political and authoritarian States into the simple administration of public services.

The Alliance worked within the organization of workers against any possible anti-revolutionary deviation. In Catalonia, it was formed before the International and, in fact, prepared the ground for it. Already in Barcelona there was a labour tradition

influenced by the Federal Party. On his way back to Italy, Fanelli was able to make contact with a group of youths from the Federalist Centre of Workers' Societies, founded in October, 1868. The first issue of the Centre's journal, *La Federación*, founded in August, 1869, declared that the kind of government most suited to workers was a federal republic. By the end of 1869, members of the Alliance were able to reverse the policy of participation in electoral politics and in February, 1870, were able to convert the Federalist Centre into the headquarters of the International. The same group of youths took on the preparatory work necessary for the first Congress of the Spanish Regional Federation, which began its deliberations in Barcelona on June 19, 1870.

By 1927, the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera was clearly in decline. Exiles began to return secretly to reorganize and conspire. With them came many Portuguese anarchists, victims of a dictatorship in their own country. This made it necessary to revitalize the declining National Federation of Anarchist Groups, and give it a peninsular character. The initiative came from Catalan groups and the Federation of Spanish-Speaking Anarchist Groups in Marseilles. Two Portuguese delegates participated in the conference held on a beach near Cabañal in Valencia. The most important agreements were: creation of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), bringing together Spanish and Portuguese anarchists in one family; and an intensification of anarchist involvement in the CNT.

It appears that the first Peninsular Committee was located in Seville. The Portuguese delegates declined an offer to make their country the headquarters. In spite of the noble intentions of uniting Portuguese and Spanish anarchists, the FAI remained essentially Spanish and rather than a preserver of ideology, it acted, perhaps due to the idiosyncracies of the Spanish character, as a revolutionary organization.

Although it published many periodicals subject to the press laws, and many speakers proclaimed themselves its representatives, the FAI as an organization always developed outside the law of association. So it was a clandestine but not secret organization, comparable to Masonic lodges and the Carbonari of the previous century.

The FAI had a great influence in the CNT unions, which almost all of its members belonged to, even holding positions on the committees, considering it their duty to guide the CNT from positions of responsibility. One of its great preoccupations was to

watch for deviationist heresies in the non-FAI CNT leaders. What the FAI considered deviationism was less philosophical weaknesses than vacillation in the separation from politics.

The systematic anarchist intervention in the unions represented a very significant step if we remember the anarchists' rather individualistic position at the turn of the century. Later, when the ideological tempest stirred up by the Russian Revolution had dissipated, they decided to abandon their deep-rooted fear of the "tyranny of the masses," and modified their antipathy toward everyday problems of economics and unions; they owed much to syndicalism during the height of the industrial struggles, from 1916-1923.

If the FAI influenced the CNT, the opposite was also true, so it was not correct to speak of an anarchist dictatorship. Anarchism lost much of its special character when anarchists tried to lead the anarcho-syndicalist federation. In fact, the anarchists were run by the union. The CNT, an essentially revolutionary organization, made the anarchists into its own image, providing them with a sphere of action, masses and positions of leadership. The CNT provided the FAI with new militants, who brought their own syndicalist and revolutionary preoccupations. So in the end the union was the winner, unless it be considered fatal for anarchists in Spain to draw their strength from the working class.

The great activists of the heroic period from 1916 to 1923 were more syndicalist than anarchist. José Prat, like Ricardo Mella one of the best anarchist theoreticians, complained, in 1922

The magazines *Ciencia Social*, *Revista Blanca* and *Natura* went on to a better life while in their infancy, because of a lack of money and interest. A daily anarchist newspaper, with an active intellectual editorship, has not yet been possible in Spain. Many years ago *El Productor* failed in Barcelona; not so long ago *Tierra y Libertad* failed in Madrid. The only collection of anarchist authors was made by the "bourgeois" F. Sempere. The anarchist milieu is producing nothing, although its individual members think they are in the vanguard.<sup>1</sup>

Its failure as a cultural and spiritual movement led the FAI into the whirlwind of syndicalist organization. Excessively influenced by flattery, it abandoned its role as the brain and discipline behind the CNT to become instead its source of virility. Blinkered by participation in union committees, the FAI became incapable of

a wider vision. Its brilliant record of service, sacrifice and abnegation in battles and insurrections did not compensate for its many errors.

Delegates to the confederal congress of 1919 protested that the National Committee, an anarchist group, was resorting to unnecessary and unacceptable threats and coercion. In 1929, in an argument sparked by José Peiró, Eusebio Carbó and Manuel Buenacasa against the deviationist Angel Pestaña, the Peninsular Committee of the FAI declared:

It is a sophism to believe in the neutrality of the workers' movement and the union's independence of ideological orientation and subversive propaganda . . . all the more so when there is a minority within the organization that is the source of its moral and social strength. And so, if the CNT really wants its influence to be powerful . . . it must, without forsaking its special independence, seek a formal link with that group which agrees with its tactics and its principles. If on the other hand, the CNT does not accept the proposal of this Secretariat, it runs the grave risk of a very dangerous deviation . . . for only under constant anarchist influence will it become fully, openly anarchistic.

The "formal link" they sought later became known as a "*trabazón*" — the presence of official FAI representatives on CNT higher committees, committees caring for needs of prisoners, revolutionary committees, and others. For the same reason the FAI became guest of honour at all congresses and plenaries of the confederation, but only in an advisory capacity. It had no right to deliberate or vote. As time went on, the FAI began to take for granted its special position in the CNT. And when, in 1931, the CNT did not extend to the FAI an invitation to the Confederal Congress, the FAI turned up anyway. To make matters worse, it tried to participate as an active member. The result was an enormous scandal.

After the congress, the situation worsened to the point of schism. In a large measure the division was caused by the ideological errors of a group of tried and true syndicalist militants, a kind of disease contracted from political and military contacts during the conspiratorial period, but it would not be fair to place all the blame on the syndicalists.

The schismatics were also reacting to a revolutionary strain that they considered demagogic. In their dissenting manifesto,



the 30 syndicalist militants described their own criteria for revolution:

We mean by this that the preparation (for revolution) must be not only aggressive and combative, but also moral, for it is this aspect that today is the strongest, most destructive and hardest to overcome. The revolution must depend not exclusively on the audacity of a minority, but rather on an overwhelming movement of the masses of the working class moving towards ultimate liberation. To counter the chaotic and incoherent idea of revolution that the former [the FAI and its wide circle of influence] hold, we propose an idea that is ordered, foresighted, and coherent. [The FAI] are playing with riots, banditry and revolution; in fact, they are holding back the true revolution.<sup>2</sup>

A FAI that served as "brain and discipline" of the CNT would have easily avoided such a pernicious conflict; the FAI that served as the CNT's "virility" could not resist being judge and jury. During the loud and unedifying debates that followed, the dissident unions made much of the "dictatorship of the FAI" and the FAI facetiously labeled them "traitors".

The participation of the anarchist group in the mass movement CNT helped to ensure the CNT's revolutionary nature. But the FAI's paternalism aroused hostilities that soon became irreconcilable and much of the most valuable energy in the movement was dissipated.

It was not the first time that the anarchists — who were only human — did not live up to their ideals. The Alliance of Social Democrats, which did so much for the establishment of the International in Spain, fell into the same paternalistic error. A man as ill-disposed to it as Paul Lafargue had to admit,

The Alliance is composed of men who . . . put the interests of the International above all else, and only see in the Alliance a way to organize and group the most energetic elements of the working class, so that if persecutions come there will be groups of men ready to resist and maintain the sacred flame and again form the International as soon as circumstances permit.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, one of its most fervent members, Anselmo Lorenzo, gives the other side of the story:

How much better it would have been if instead of manipulating agreements and solutions by surprise the Alliance had undertaken the task of education and teaching that would have led to agree-

ments and solutions based on free and reasoned decisions! In the Alliance it was much easier to destroy than to build. At first, in order to build it was necessary to be aware of everything that was going on inside the organization, to have prepared solutions in secret meetings and work within the sections, the federations, commissions, committees, councils, newspapers, congresses and lectures to obtain the desired result. Later all that was needed was a slander against an individual or group, mailed in a letter, to produce the necessary hostility and obtain the desired result.<sup>4</sup>

From the first days of the revolution of July, 1936, the CNT and FAI seemed tightly linked. Their acronyms were joined: "CNT-FAI". In Catalonia vehicles that dared to circulate without these letters invited massacre by the guards on the barricades. The headquarters of Barcelona anarcho-syndicalism was the Casa CNT-FAI. There the CNT-FAI Offices of Information and Publicity, the CNT-FAI radio station, the CNT-FAI School for Activists and the multi-lingual CNT-FAI Bulletin were located.

After the Atarazanas fortress surrendered, Luis Companys, President of the Catalan Government, called the CNT and FAI into his office to organize the governing of Catalonia. Both organizations chose to co-operate with other political groups; that is, they jointly renounced their "totalitarian revolution". In the first public meeting, held on August 10, both CNT and FAI speakers took part. The FAI, alongside the CNT, began to be part of all the organizations being formed: the economic councils, the popular tribunals, the town councils, the militia committees, and others. Both the FAI and CNT signed the first pact in Catalonia with the Communist UGT and PSUC. And although it was not stated officially, the FAI was represented in the central and the Catalan governments by Federica Montseny, a member of the Peninsular Committee, and Antonio García Birlán. The FAI and the Young Libertarians took part in the Regional Council of Asturias that was formed after the military uprising.

The connection between the CNT and FAI had never been so complete. On September 12, there was a regional plenary of syndicalist and anarchist federations in Barcelona. On October 8, CNT unions and FAI groups met in a congress to take up educational and cultural issues. The FAI, doubtless against its will, did not form part of the Madrid Council of Defense, but was part of the Municipal Council of Madrid installed by decree when the former was dissolved.

A National Plenary of CNT Regional Federations, in which the FAI Peninsular Committee participated, was held after the fall of Largo Caballero. It adopted the following resolutions:

1. The Regional (Federations) are free to set up the liaison Committees proposed by Catalonia, as long as the committees of the three organizations in question, CNT, FAI and Libertarian Youth, are in agreement.
2. We accept the plan of organization for an Information and Coordination Service proposed by the National Committee (of the CNT) in which the three organizations participate.

This agreement was the basis for what later became the Spanish Libertarian Movement, the merger of the three organizations into one. This merger had been a constant goal of the CNT National Committee as it moved to centralize in its hands the entire Iberian anarchist movement.

On June 14, 1937, another joint plenary was held in Barcelona to consider the Catalan political situation. There, following the deliberations of the previous plenary, a liaison group was set up called the Advisory Council on Political Affairs, made up of two CNT representatives, one FAI, one Young Libertarians, and one of the Peasant Federation.

When the new Minister of Justice, Manuel Irujo, decided to reorganize the popular tribunals, he expelled the FAI on the grounds that it was a clandestine, and therefore illegal, organization. On those grounds the FAI could have been expelled from all the bodies of the Antifascist Front. In those days the CNT and FAI claimed proportional representation on all political, economic, and military bodies. If the FAI were excluded from representation, anarcho-syndicalists would be left in a situation inferior to that of other political groups who, in effect, had a double representation (Communists and Socialists had their double representation in the UGT). The solution to this problem was the legalization of the FAI.

We can follow the FAI's changes after July 19 in the organization's documents. Immediately after the military plot was crushed, the Peninsular Committee was reorganized and reinforced with noted activists. Circular #1 (undated) said that the FAI had made sure the anarchist movement was closely linked to the CNT, "making a united front" and "joining in a single acronym the letters representing this movement and the confederal movement." The FAI had been able to influence the CNT, the Circular

continued, "to take decisions of great importance that involve a change in direction." And it added, "We are sharing the responsibility for new bodies created by the imperatives of the upheavals of the revolution."

Circular #3 (October 25, 1936) seeks to justify the FAI's participation in governmental units, referring to

the imperatives of circumstances . . . Because we were unable to realize our ideals rapidly and completely, because collaboration with other groups is necessary [in order to win the war], to keep hostile political parties working together for the duration of the war, and because the people have called for it, we have favoured participation on these official bodies.

It continues that the FAI was resigned to the transferral of revolutionary activity from its customary place in the unions to "the popular bodies . . . that we have helped to form and have participated in as an integral part of the antifascist block." It should be remembered that at this time the CNT and FAI (the latter by unofficial representatives) were taking part in the Catalan government and were ready to take part in the central government.

The Circular also says that the FAI should take up the vacuum left by the unions because of circumstances.

The unions, converted into political hybrids by the circumstances that we have already mentioned, cannot address their activities to functions other than those professional duties assigned to them. New energy is needed to move the unions in that direction. That energy can come only from the FAI.

To achieve this mission the FAI said that it needed to renovate its own structure, widen its base of support and attract a large number of activists. "We have to look for capable members who can live anonymously. The syndical organization (the CNT) can be an inexhaustible mine of activists." We should note a few things here. To start with, it seems that the FAI did not "join in a united front and unite its letters with that of the CNT" voluntarily, but only under pressure from the CNT from the first moments of the revolution. The power of the CNT National Committee over the FAI Peninsular Committee is explained by its superiority in number of available supporters, and by the fact that all of the members of the FAI were also members of the CNT, while only a minority of CNT members were part of the FAI. The FAI was a passive follower of the CNT, and conscious of this state of vassalage it sought to reverse the equation. This is what it alludes to

when it speaks of "widening its base of support." Widening the base of support meant increasing the thin ranks of the FAI with material from the "inexhaustible confederal mine." Since anarchists did not spontaneously appear, they would have to be made.

The conversion of the FAI into a mass organization on a peninsular scale, a kind of pilot for the CNT, "a fabulous motor for moving the unions," in effect, a political party exactly what the Socialist Party was for the UGT, those are the propositions sketched out in the Circular dated October 25, 1936. This decisive step was taken by the Peninsular Plenary in July, 1937.

In a resolution adopted by this Plenary, the FAI declared a set of "circumstantial" principles. The distinction between ultimate goals and the exigencies of circumstances is posed in the following extract:

The creation of new collective interests had modified the relationship of anarchists to their surroundings. In the new order of things, those of us who, until recently, ceaselessly fought the inhumane expression of injustice and tyranny now find ourselves on the side of the new institutions that have arisen during the revolution in response to the deepest wishes of the masses. We are struggling for the total disappearance of what bourgeois elements remain, and we seek to strengthen all the organizations serving this purpose. Therefore, we consider that, in contrast to our obstructionist attitude in the past, it is the duty of all anarchists to participate in whatever public institutions can help to guarantee and advance the new order.

The FAI does not explain clearly what it means by "public institutions" but we can understand what is meant if we keep in mind that by July, 1937, all institutions of this kind had fallen under State control. The anarchist definition of the State had itself lost the clarity of definitions made before July 19. On September 15, 1933, *Tierra y Libertad*, the official organ of the FAI, had declared, "All governments are detestable, and our mission is to destroy them." At the end of the previous century the Alliance of Social Democrats, the mother of Spanish anarchists, declared, "The enemy of all despotism, [The Alliance] recognizes no form of State." In contrast to these categorical statements, the Peninsular Plenary of 1937, when proclaiming its aversion to government, referred only to *totalitarian* government. It also renounced the integral (they called it "totalitarian") establishment of libertarian ideals.

The FAI declares that our revolution cannot be the expression of

any totalitarian creed, but rather must be open to all popular groups influential in social and political life. As anarchists, we are enemies of dictatorships, whether of caste or party; we are enemies of totalitarian government and believe that the future direction of our people comes from the joint action of all groups agreeing on the formation of a society without class privileges. In such a society, the organisms of labour, administration and community will be the principal instruments for satisfying the different regions of Spain in a federal system.

After these revisions of principles and goals, the FAI prepared to welcome the masses to its bosom.

Any manual or intellectual worker can belong to the FAI who completely accepts the general lines set forth above and who is prepared to co-operate in bringing them about, while respecting the agreements made to that effect in the organization's regular meetings. Anyone desirous of joining the FAI will send his request to the local Group . . . with the support of two current members. In each case there will be an investigation after which the general assembly will decide whether the admission should take place. There can be full and provisional memberships. Current FAI members, and militants of syndical and cultural anarchist organizations active before January 1, 1936 can be full members. Provisional members will not be able to hold office or be representatives until six months after admission.

Finally the FAI gave itself a new structure in accord with the changes. The "affinity group", the traditional organization composed of from five to ten individuals, was to all intents and purposes abolished. The new basic unit would be the "Group" (*Agrupación*) with several hundred members. In the cities, there would be a Group for each *barriada*. Provincial groups would form local and regional federations.

The resolution we have discussed provoked a violent reaction from the local and regional plenaries of Catalonia. After a stormy session in the Regional Plenary in early August, 1937, a number of delegates left the room with shouts of "Viva la anarquía!" Those who left because of the suppression of the affinity groups were soon placated, but those who felt that the FAI had renounced its old anti-State principles and had turned into just another political party continued their rebellion. This was so for two groups in Hospitalet de Llobregat, *Ideas* and *Irreductibles*, and many elsewhere.

The changes in the FAI continued as the war drew to its end. On the one hand, a small minority led by Horacio M. Prieto made a sudden shift to the right and formed the Libertarian Party. On the other, there was a tardy return by the majority to orthodoxy.



**ARAGON**  
**OS PIDE AYUDA**

**EL CONSEJO DE DEFENSA DE ARAGON  
SALUDA A LA COMANDANTIA ARAGONESA**

## 19. The Council of Aragon

The National Plenary of Regionals of the CNT on September 15, 1936, recommended that all political and syndical components of the Antifascist Front form Regional Councils of Defense. These councils would be related federally in a National Council of Defense, which would function as the central government.

Although the National Council of Defense never came into being, some regional councils were set up. On September 27, the autonomous government of Catalonia was reorganized as the Council of the Generalidad. Two weeks later in the town of Fraga (Huesca), the council of Aragon was established. It was composed entirely of anarchists — Joaquín Ascaso, Adolfo Ballano, Jose Mavilla, Miguel Jiménez, Francisco Ponzán, José Alberola, Adolfo Aznar and Miguel Chueca. The liberated part of Aragon was largely occupied by CNT-FAI militia and it was under their aegis that the Council came into being.

The Council of Aragon was presented as a *fait accompli* to the government of Largo Caballero. He did not object, although he did not recognize the Council either. However, the Communists immediately attacked the Council as “cantonalist” and “seditious”.

The Council tried to justify its existence by criticizing the excesses of the other militia, both republican and Communist, in Aragon.

Committees created by popular elections are dissolved; men who have risked their lives for the revolution are disarmed and threatened with execution, jail and torture; new committees are created to perpetuate these excesses. Without any attempt at control, foodstuffs, livestock and property of all sorts are capriciously requisitioned. Today Aragon must sow its grain and it has no seed,

fertilizer nor machinery. All of these things are available in other regions, but money or some exchangeable merchandise is needed to acquire them. Without them the future is grim, not only for the Aragonese people but for all Spaniards who are struggling for a better society.

At the beginning of November Joaquin Ascaso, President of the Council of Aragon, went to Madrid to secure recognition from the central government. His request was made at length in a document published in the newspapers at the time:

The abnormal situation of the Aragon region has demanded the creation of administrative institutions for social, economic and political matters. The complete absence of Civil Governments, Provincial Administrations, and all other administrative institutions in the three Aragonese provinces, and the occupation of part of the region by undisciplined military columns . . . has resulted in a chaotic situation threatening to ruin the economy of the region. An institution that would assume all the now abandoned public functions was needed. Its creation has the full consent of the generous people of Aragon.

The document tried to forestall some of the government's objections by allowing for the participation of other political groups on the Council. "And this Council, in which all political and social groups in Aragon will participate . . . seeks the approval of the government of the Republic in order to have maximum authority." After expressing its "absolute allegiance to the government of the Republic and its firm intention to have the government's decrees observed," the document outlines the composition of the Council.

Made up of councillors representing proportionally all parties and syndical organizations in the region, the Council's authority would cover the following functions:

1. Those of the Civil Governments and the Provincial Deputations;
2. Those delegated to it by the central government;
3. Those made necessary by the unusual situation of the region.

In concrete terms the Council claimed authority for public order, economic reconstruction in industry and agriculture and aid to the military command in the effective execution of the war.

Official recognition of the Council of Aragon came only on December 17, 1936, after long and laborious negotiations. The anarchists kept 7 posts in the new organization; the Republican Left, UGT, and Communist Party were each given 2 and the

Syndicalist Party 1. Subsequently, the syndicalist delegate aligned with the anarchists, and the Republican Left and the UGT delegates turned out to be Communists in disguise.

Toward the end of July the Communist press launched a campaign denouncing a series of terrorist assassinations that they alleged the anarchists were planning. The CNT warned, "If the accusations are not proven, those responsible for the slander deserve to be called traitors." The Communists then took to defending the Soviet Union against recent criticisms. At a meeting in Barcelona commemorating the 19th of July, Federica Montseny had attacked Russia in the following terms: "The Russian revolution went beyond the Kerensky period; the people destroyed the tyranny of the czars, but they created the tyranny of Stalin. The shootings continue." On August 4, *Solidaridad Obrera* commented on Moscow's generosity in foreign aid:

We are infinitely grateful to the USSR for its aid to Spain. But that does not mean that what Russia has done gives [Spanish Communists] the right to run everything in Spain. If that occurred Russia would lose any claim on our gratitude. Gratitude is for what is received, what is given generously, not what is bought and sold.

When this controversy seemed to be over, there was another attack on a different flank. Juan Comorera, head of the PSUC, vociferously attacked the Catalan anarchists at a meeting in Valencia on August 8, 1937:

The proletariat was under the influence of anarchism and the parties of the left. With the merger of the four Catalan Marxist parties, things began to change . . . Today we are the victors and have put an end to the provocations and the fascists. We have overcome problems and got rid of those who were brave on the highways but cowards at the front.

Later events show that all these attacks were the fireworks before the large-scale political operation. The object of the attack was the Council of Aragon. The Communists thought they had crushed the anarchist stronghold of Catalonia: they now proposed to destroy the libertarian stronghold of Aragon.

In his commemorative speech on July 19, 1937, the President of the Council of Aragon was extremely pessimistic. His speech turned out to be a kind of epitaph:

. . . it would be regrettable if anyone tried to make trouble for [the Council of Aragon], for that would force [the Council] to unsheathe its claws of iron and teeth of steel.

Subsequently the President reported on the accomplishments made over the first year: speculation and usury had been suppressed; roads and highways had been constructed with the disinterested help of the militia; freight and passenger lines set up and telephone lines strung; a rail line, promised 16 years before and forgotten, was under construction; the townships had assumed their true sovereign role; and the Aragonese collectives, in spite of their deficiencies, were the wonder of the revolution.

The President particularly emphasized the agreement signed by representatives of all political and union forces in Aragon. One of its clauses stated,

In order to avoid the discontent that might be created by rapid change, the council will protect the right of peasants to work the earth individually or collectively. But, although it will defend the smallholder, it must hold firmly to the agreement of the two unions — UGT and CNT — to avoid any return to the despicable system that existed before July 19.

Other clauses of the agreement referred to public order behind the lines and collaboration in the war effort.

The Council of Aragon, which will collaborate enthusiastically with the legitimate government of the Republic, will increase production in the rearguard, mobilize all the region's resources for the war effort, arouse the antifascist spirit of the masses . . . and undertake an intense purge in the liberated zones; it will impose unrelenting order and hunt down hidden fascists, defeatists and speculators.

At the beginning of August, the so-called Popular Front of Aragon, formed by the Communist Party, the UGT and the Republican Left, met in Barbastro. Those attending agreed that the policies of the Council of Aragon were wrong and were against the economic interests of the region; they decided to ask the government to appoint a "federal governor" who would have real power.

In response to the Barbastro meeting, the CNT held a Regional Plenary in Alcañiz. A significant passage from their resolutions is worth citing here:

In Aragon the CNT, assured and conscious of its responsibility, states that, although it has no wish to see the antifascist front destroyed by political greed nor the betrayal of a pact before the ink is dry, it will under no circumstances permit the reversal of political, social, or economic conquests.

Five days later Federica Montseny spoke in Alcañiz. It was the last of a series of speeches delivered in Aragon, in which she attempted to dispel the notion of a Communist campaign against the Council. Nevertheless she did mention that the "Popular Front" was of recent origin, and had been detrimental to the "Antifascist Front."

The Popular Front had been formed exclusively by political parties in February, 1936 for the upcoming elections. The Antifascist Front, born from the struggles on the barricades of July 19, 1936, included all political and union groups. The revival of the Popular Front was a Communist manoeuvre to eliminate the CNT from positions of authority; in Aragon it had been brought back in order to destroy the Council.

On August 11, 1937, a government decree comprised of two articles and a short preamble dissolved the Council of Aragon and dismissed its president and councillors. The preamble spoke of a crisis of authority in Aragon and the imperative of concentrating the authority of the State. At once a crypto-Communist, Ignacio Mantecón, who had been a member of the Council as a republican, was named Governor-General. Mantecón continued to follow the Communist line throughout the war without abandoning his disguise as a republican. Only in exile did he drop the mask.

The Aragonese Popular Front came to the defense of the Council of Aragon. However, before he released the dissolution decree, Prieto, Minister of Defense, had sent the 11th Division to Caspe under command of the famous Communist commander Líster. These troops installed the Governor-General under protection of bayonets, but this was just the beginning of their job. Peasant collectives were attacked. Their land and equipment were handed back to the former landowners. More than 600 CNT militants were detained, some killed and others wounded; more than 1,000 militants had to move to other regions or take refuge in the trenches at the front.

The smallholders divided up the land, seed and harvests under military and police protection. Collectives founded by mutual consent of smallholders, who had merely combined their property, were also destroyed. The 27th Division (PSUC) and the 30th Division (Catalanist separatists) followed the example of the 11th Division in their sectors; the anarchist divisions (25, 26, 28) were ordered by the higher committees of the CNT-FAI not to leave the front. The new vandals also assaulted the headquarters of the libertarian organizations.



A favorite Communist tactic has been to combine a treacherous attack with slander. On August 12, 1937, *Frente Rojo*, a Valencia Communist paper, applauded the repression:

One of those uncontrollable governments capriciously controlled the fate of loyal Aragon. The unhappiness of the antifascist population was obvious in the last meeting of the Popular Front of Aragon. The representatives of the people took note of the tyranny of the ruling clique and the protest submitted by the mass of the people. The Aragonese peasants, the people of this loyal region, breathing as if leaving a prison, are as happy as if awakening from a nightmare. There was a very clear, yet very sad, method in the procedures of the Council of Aragon. It can be seen in the trial of its president for smuggling gems.

That this last slander was groundless became evident when Joaquín Ascaso, detained with the anarchist councillors, was released after about a month's imprisonment because there was no evidence for the charge.

The Communist military forces invaded the Aragon rear-guard like conquerors. When they broke into a CNT office in Caspe they tore up a portrait of Durruti, laughing and making vulgar jokes. *Nuevo Aragón*, the official organ of the Council, was suppressed and in its place there appeared *El Día*, a Communist paper. When they invaded Alcañiz they arrested members of the Regional Committee of the CNT, and for a number of days no one knew where they had been taken. The CNT National Committee protested energetically to the government and, thanks to its intervention, the executions which seemed likely did not take place.

Among the prisoners from the Regional Committee were some people who had escaped from the rebel zone during the first months of the war. The military judges (needless to say they were Communists) persistently accused them of maintaining relations with the enemy, but finally had to free them.

Under the military occupation, town councils were dissolved and replaced by acting commissions, as in the old days of the *bienio negro* after the October, 1934 revolution. The new councillors were orthodox Communists or fellow travellers. The CNT councillors had been detained, their houses ransacked and their possessions, including personal clothing, stolen. The invaders paid particular attention to CNT typewriters and archives.

The forces of the 27th Division (PSUC) entered Esplus firing



at peasants working in the fields and made a number of arrests. They also took by assault the village of Alcolea de Cinca. There they detained town councillors, confiscated most of the food stored for the villagers and moved into the CNT-FAI offices and hung the Russian flag from the balcony. In Barbastro police and Communist civilians assaulted the CNT office and arrested 70 persons.

Catalanist forces from the 30th Division entered Angües and invaded CNT headquarters, where they confiscated and destroyed much material. Four anarchist town councillors were arrested. Repelled by soldiers of the 28th Division stationed in Angües, the aggressors retreated, carrying off with them everything they could, even poultry.<sup>1</sup>

When the counterrevolutionary operation had been completed on August 14, *Frente Rojo* delivered an epilogue to the dramatic events:

The government of the Popular Front has made a truly triumphal entry into Aragon. The peasants welcomed it with joy and hope. Aragon has begun to breathe. There can be no doubt that an odious and tragic era has ended. Under the reign of the now defunct Council of Aragon . . . neither citizens nor property could count on the least guarantees. The whim and control of a handful of autocrats had been elevated to a way of government. And this system was imposed by means of terror. Aragon is an immense armoury: the government found itself with gigantic arsenals of weapons and ammunition, stockpiles containing thousands of grenades and hundreds of machine guns of the latest model, artillery and tanks. And all this was reserved, not for combat on the battlefield, but rather for those who sought to make Aragon into a fortress for struggles against the Republic. The best proof is that the trenches of Aragon did not face those of the traitor Cabanellas<sup>2</sup>, but rather the other way. As for the collectives . . . we will say that there is not a single Aragonese peasant who has not been forced to join them. Those who refused to join suffered the effects of terrorist sanctions both in their person and their property; thousands have emigrated from the region rather than endure the thousand and one oppressive measures imposed by the Council.<sup>3</sup>

Needless to say, the Communists, who throughout the world hold an unbeatable record for cynicism and slander, were never able to prove the gross fabrications that they knowingly propagated. CNT papers constantly challenged them for proofs of the

fantastic arsenals encountered in the rearguard of Aragon, but the slanderers always replied with evasions or went off on tangents.

Contrary to appearances, the war had not yet ended with a victory for the Republic; the time had not yet come to divide the spoils. Contrary to all appearances, we repeat, on those very days the fate of the North was in the balance. Bilbao had fallen June 19, 1937. Santander in turn fell on August 25 and Gijón would fall October 20, last of the loyal zone of the North. Franco's armies, freed from the obstacle that held them up for 16 months, would soon be ready to turn toward the Mediterranean and choose the weak point for the final blow.

The republican command's response to the critical situation in the North was a series of questionable operations. The Brunete offensive (July 6-28, 1937) cost the people's army 25,000 casualties, but gained nothing. On the day that Santander fell, August 25, an offensive was landed at Belchite, supported by another near Huesca, the objective being the defense of Zaragoza. Although the confederal forces had been filled by the counter-revolutionary activities we have described, they bravely carried the brunt of the battle. The 25th Division and the 153rd Brigade distinguished themselves in the assault on Belchite. On the northern part of the front the 28th Division advanced along the Gallego River. In the centre, the 26th Division was prepared to advance when the enemy, attacked on its flanks, fell back. But the main offensive from the South along the Ebro was checked a few kilometers from Zaragoza, and the 28th Division, its position untenable, had to return to its original lines.

Historians have not been able to agree whether the objectives of these offensives were military or political, but they do agree that the Brunete offensive was absurd. For a long time the general staff of Largo Caballero had planned to divide enemy territory by an attack in Extremadura. Russian advisors sidetracked this project by planning the Brunete offensive instead. The Zaragoza offensive, planned for a location which provided the enemy with ideal means for regrouping its forces, was no less absurd. Possibly, this offensive was chosen to counteract the power of the anarchist militia and to put an end once and for all to its influence in the Aragonese rearguard; numerous Communist forces would be sent to the Aragon front and the revolutionary collectives would be destroyed. That the Communists were in on the secret of the military operation is obvious in the article we have cited from *Frente Rojo*. The last paragraph read, "Soon the East-

ern front will render the glorious front of the Centre unnecessary, and this will not be the least of the victories of the government.”

Statements in the Communist press itself support the notion of a political plot. They claimed that the glorious advance along the Ebro was due to the removal of the Council of Aragon and the use at the front of the *clandestine arsenals* discovered in the rear. The truth is that the libertarian militia of Aragon had received for the first time the arms and vital tactical support they had been requesting in vain since the beginning of the war. They knew how to use these materials so well that while most of the 11th Division was merely serving as police force for Governor Mantecón, the 25th Division and the 153rd Brigade were taking the fortress of Belchite by frontal assault.

Lister himself intervened to prevent these forces from receiving too much of the credit and, by a sleight of hand, attributed the victory to his own subordinates. At the peak of the operation he sent a telegram to General Miaja which he simultaneously released to the press:

In the historic moment in which our glorious army advances on Aragon, counteracting the brutal invasion of the North, I send a warm greeting in the name of all the fighters of the 11th Division, who have fought with the same ardour and enthusiasm that they showed on the Madrid front.

The Aragonese regional CNT was authorized to hold a Regional Plenary of Unions from September 6 to 11, 1937. It took place in Caspe in the shadow of the bayonets of the 11th Division. There a motion was adopted, calling for release of the prisoners that had not been tried, early trial of those indicted, an end to persecutions, reopening of the unions, permission to reorganize the collectives and reorganization of the Town Councils.

Two hundred delegates, mostly members of collectives, attended this plenary. It was practically a plenary of collectives, as the following resolution reveals:

Taking into consideration that our communication, both in union and in economic affairs, must be simplified, we think it would be appropriate if, alongside the Regional Committee of the CNT, there were a commission for matters relating to collectives which would carry out the same functions as the present Regional Committee of Collectives.

One indication of the effect of the repressions was that more than

twice as many had attended the first Congress of Aragonese Collectives the preceding February.

In any case, the collectives once more began to grow, but with greater difficulty and reduced membership. The Peñalba collective which, at the beginning of the revolution, was composed of the entire village of 1,500 people was reduced to 500 members. It is very possible that in this second phase the collectivization better reflects the sincere convictions of the members. They had undergone a severe test and those who had withstood it were proven collectivists. Yet it would be facile to label as anticollectivists those who abandoned the collectives in this second phase. Fear, official coercion and insecurity weighed heavily in the decisions of much of the Aragonese peasantry.

As for the government's benevolent permission to form collectives again, this should come as no surprise. The agrarian policies of the Minister, Vicente Uribe, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, had always been characterized by a series of brusque changes. We can see this in his decrees and orders. The decree of October 7, 1936, was anticollectivist. That decree was modified in the summer of 1937 by an Order designed to reduce the chaos it had caused. Because the harvest had to be saved at any cost, the Order provided for a period in which collectives could legalize their organization according to complicated and obstructive rules; collectives not legally recognized by October 31, 1937 would be dissolved and their lands restored to former owners.

Once the harvest of 1937 had been saved (the true purpose of the order), the repression closed in on Aragon and the collectives were destroyed and the *danse macabre* of Communists and reactionary landowners resumed its ruin of Aragonese agriculture. Collectivists not already in jail, or who had not taken refuge in other regions or the confederal militia, were persecuted. When it came time to prepare for the next harvest, smallholders could not by themselves work the property on which they had been installed. Dispossessed peasants, intransigent collectivists, refused to work in a system of private property, and were even less willing to rent out their labour.

In that difficult situation, after projecting the economic repercussions, the government had to compromise once more in order to get done the autumn work that would be necessary for another year's production. Collectives were once more authorized. Prisoners were freed. Collectivization began. Once more the lands

were sown but this time they were harvested by Franco: in the spring of 1938, all of Aragon and part of Catalonia and Valencia were invaded by the fascist armies.

It is impossible to demoralize a front and a rearguard without paying a price. The phrase we have cited from *Frente Rojo* ("Soon the Eastern Front will render the glorious front of the Centre unnecessary") takes on another meaning in retrospect. In effect, the collapse of the Eastern front would put an end to the glories of all the fronts.

**Adelante, juventud; a luchar como titanes!**



*Graphic which appeared in the Catalan Libertarian Youth paper,*

## 20. The Iberian Federation of Young Anarchists

The social characteristics of Madrid — a centre of State bureaucracy, decadent nobility, political bosses, petit bourgeoisie running primitive rudimentary industry — for many years had favoured the moderate tactics of the Socialist Party and General Workers Union (UGT). Nevertheless, anarchists constantly strove to recover the hegemony they had enjoyed at the time of the First International. From the turn of the century they worked doggedly to make themselves heard in Madrid, above all through publications like *La Revista Social* (1881-84), *La Anarquía* (1882-85, 1890-93), *Tierra y Libertad* (bimonthly in 1888 and daily in 1896), *La Revista Blanca* (1898) and *El Libertario* (1909).

With only two exceptions (in 1917 and 1934), the Socialist Party had existed on temporizing tactics since its founding by Pablo Inglesias in 1872 and had enjoyed a substantial stability from this appearance of moderation. In the years after the military coup of 1923, it lost some of its prestige and with the fall of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship anarcho-syndicalism began to eat into its preserve.

Socialist participation in the first republican government from 1931 to 1933, Largo Caballero's questionable management of the Labour Ministry and the anti-worker repressions—especially against the CNT—did not weaken anarcho-syndicalist support in Spain nor impede the CNT's growing influence in New Castile and Madrid, to the detriment of the UGT.

The CNT in turn was affected by events in Madrid. Militants of the Centre of Spain had their own ways of doing things, which came into relief as groups of them left the Casa del Pueblo<sup>1</sup> to form unions. Some of these unions, like the Construction Union, were



not only condescending toward their Socialist rivals, but bigger and stronger. UGT "resistance societies" could not compare with the modern organization of the CNT unions. Further, when electoral masquerades were over and the messianic politicians' promises broken, the tactics of the revolutionary unionism seemed most reasonable and effective. "Direct Action" in spite of all its drawbacks, was preferable to "Political Action," for it seemed clear that in order to get political action there would have to be direct action first.

The new confederal activists from the central region made their own contributions to the common pool of experience and tactics. They brought with them the best aspects of the movement they had left and quickly assimilated the experiences of the new movement they had joined. These activists were known for their pride and seriousness and their pragmatic view of problems that ignored and, at times, disdained doctrinal subtleties.

This new blood went well with the Castilians who had been in the movement for a long time and also had their singular qualities. Worthy of note are members of the group called "The Equals", Feliciano Benito, Cipriano Mera, Pedro Falomir and others with Mauro Bajatierra at the head.

One activist stands out: he was young, intelligent, very knowledgeable, an anarcho-syndicalist — that is, a practical idealist — a fluent writer and brilliant speaker, an old-Castilian and an internationalist, a propagandist and an organization man, an excellent theoretician and a redoubted polemicist. All of these things was Orobón Fernández. Rudolph Rocker wrote:

Shortly afterwards another Spanish comrade arrived who stayed with us for a few years: Valeriano Orobón Fernández. Orobón was born in 1901 in Valladolid, so he was a little younger than Santillán. And like Santillán he was very gifted, with excellent intellectual qualities that unfortunately were never fully developed because of his premature death (in 1936). Orobón taught Spanish at the Berlitz School of Berlin and in his free time wrote prolifically for our Spanish periodicals and did translations. He had an excellent knowledge of languages and became proficient in German in a surprisingly short time. Orobón came upon the anarchist movement as a young student. Although his father belonged to the Socialist Party, Valeriano and his brother Pedro were sent to an anarchist school in Valladolid that was modeled on the Modern School founded by Francisco Ferrer in Barcelona. Under the circumstances it was not

surprising that the brothers were attracted more to the robust libertarian movement in their country than to the moderate socialist notions of their father. Indeed, Orobón was very soon drawn to anarchism, which absorbed his best energies until his death. He went to Vienna for a time in 1927, and I gave him a warm recommendation to Nettlau, who shortly afterwards wrote me, "The brave Spaniard you sent me is an excellent and capable individual. He has an historical sense and understands the continuity of history. This saves him from exaggerations that lead only to sophistries, for belief in a revolution that with one blow will break all links with the past and create something completely new is a form of messianism. The Jacobins and Napoleon really believed in such a possibility, but anarchists should be the last to share in such a fantasy." Orobón took a job for a year in the Berlitz School of London to perfect his English, but when the winter came with its thick fogs he returned to Berlin: he already had trouble with his lungs, and it became worse. But most of us didn't know anything about it, since he never complained.

When the Republic was proclaimed, Orobón returned to Spain, settled in Madrid, and began proselytizing on his own. First he attracted a group of intellectuals to the CNT, as sympathizers, militants, or temporary supporters. Among those who stayed on were journalists and writers, for the most part young, like Cánovas Cervantes (director of the daily *La Tierra*), J. García Pradas, Eduardo de Guzmán and, for a while, Ramón J. Sender.

Those were the times of the song "To the Barricades!", the red and black banner, the Group of Free Women, the Young Libertarians, the Revolutionary Alliance, the revolution of libertarian communism — most of these came from the new militant generation of the Central region.

After the 1933 repressions and the electoral defeat of the left, when Largo Caballero was beginning to act like the "Spanish Lenin", Orobón published a famous article in *La Tierra*, ardently and intelligently defending the Revolutionary Alliance of Asturias.

The repression now decimating the CNT ranks is a shamefaced and shameful preview of fascism and an eloquent testimony to how the middle of the road mentality and abstract tenets of bourgeois democracy are easily pushed to extremes. In the hour of struggle the democrats forget their political affiliations and revert to class affiliations. Let those comrades who isolate themselves for shallow and puristic reasons in the theory of we alone (translator's note:

*nosaltres sols* — the Catalan form) learn from this example. To overcome the enemy now gathering against the proletariat, a solid block of all workers is necessary and those turning their backs on this need will be left alone and will bear a grave responsibility to themselves and to history. A thousand times preferable to the defeat that such isolation would inevitably bring down is a partial victory for the proletariat. For the proletariat is not the exclusive domain of one or another of the different tendencies but instead unites the common denominators of all participating groups — the minimal hopes and aspirations that begin with the destruction of capitalism and the socialization of the means of production.

This is one of the most far-reaching documents of the period. The young CNT of the Central region adopted its thesis unanimously, and the Asturian anarcho-syndicalists put it into practice in 1934.

The Young Libertarians, which spread from the Central region to all parts of Spain, held their first national congress in Madrid in 1932. The principal resolution was to organize as a peninsular unit (like the FAI) and take the name of Iberian Federation of Young Libertarians (FIJL). A part of their declaration of principles follows:

To accomplish these goals, this Group will struggle against property, the principle of authority, the State, politics, and religion. Against property because it is an inhuman injustice. Against the authority principle because it presupposes a weakening of human personality. Against the State because it suppresses the free development and normal process of ethical activities . . . and defends private property by means of armed bodies, police and the courts. Against politics because it presupposes the abolition of individuality by handing over one's will to another . . . and is the system that legitimizes the interests of property and the laws for the care and defense of the State. Against religions because they hamper the free thought of man, creating for him a moral hierarchy which predisposes him to accept without protest any tyranny, and because they corrupt social relations by the addition of terror and fanaticism, the negations of reason and scientific progress.

Like the FAI after 1927, the FIJL was never really a peninsular federation, in the sense that it never really incorporated Portuguese youth, just as the FAI never really represented the Federation of Portuguese Anarchists. Although both organizations were called Peninsular they were in fact Spanish. Almost from the start there was a split within the Young Libertarians. The anarchist

youth of Catalonia were in the main opposed to a national federation and considered the youth groups to be adjuncts to unions and anarchist federations. They saw their contribution as cultural activities and propaganda, education and self-education, tasks that the unions and groups could not attend to in the thick of economic and revolutionary struggle.

Older anarchists and syndicalists saw a dangerous potential for defection in the notion of a separate youth federation. It also revived an old dispute on the counter-productiveness of dividing the young from the old, a dispute that was in fact one between the young and the old, with all of their mutual suspicions and impertinences.

But, this aside, the youth had their own split. The young Catalans labeled their brothers from the Central region "organizationalists" and "centralists" and in turn were called "Catalanists" and "separatists". This division sharpened after July 19.

From the first months of the revolution the FIJL in most of the liberated zone adopted the same policy of co-operation as the organizations of older anarchists, and in general followed FAI and CNT policies. Properly speaking, deserted by the more active majority who, carried away by the prospect of combat, had enlisted at the front, the FIJL was reduced to those militants who had been exempted from military obligations because their work was indispensable. In the first months of the war, such exemptions were granted by the confederal committees and only when necessary. Later, exemptions became the prerogative of the authorities, and were granted upon request of political committees or unions, thus creating a bureaucratic class that tended to become a caste in all bodies of the rearguard.

During those first months of the war enlistment was voluntary only. The government made continual mobilizations by decree, but they were on the whole ineffective. Official recruitment centres had little support. Those who felt a moral obligation to go to the front exercised a strong moral force on the indecisive and the hesitant, producing excellent results during the first flush of revolution. Both young and old preferred to join voluntarily the battalions organized by their favourite committee.

The emigration of the youth to the front favoured the subordination of the youth groups in the rearguard to the adult organizations. The FIJL participated as an organization in many of the coalitions of the Anti-fascist Front, taking administrative and gov-

ernmental responsibilities. Their co-operationist line led to contacts with other youth organizations, and an active part in the proliferation of unity pacts, which were ultimately controlled by the United Young Socialists.

It is only fair to add that although the FIJL put up little resistance to the psychosis of "circumstantiality" that engulfed the CNT and FAI, they were able to remain, like their elders, immune to the Stalinist infection. The dogged proposals of the Young Socialists (themselves a prime example of Stalinist infection) to set up a one big youth front, which they would then control by absorbing their allies, were foiled by the no less dogged resistance of the FIJL. In their contacts and agreements with the young Communists, the young anarchists knew enough, as the saying goes, to keep an eye on their clothes while in the water.

We will try to tell the story chronologically. The relation between the Young Libertarians of Catalonia and their brothers in the rest of Spain is apparent in a motion made at a congress held by the Catalans in Barcelona on November 1, 1936, where they discussed "the proposition of the National Plenary of Regionals to the Young Libertarians of Catalonia that they join the FIJL." The response was as follows: "As for the proposition of the FIJL, the congress unanimously approves its entry, claiming full autonomy for the Catalan Region so that it can maintain its relations with the FAI."

This conditional adherence betrays the Young Catalans' classic attitude whereby they saw themselves as an affiliate of the FAI. Ironically, the FAI responded to their loyalty in the worst way, by coercing, threatening and manipulating them into following the tortuous "general line of the movement." Later, when they became aware of how they had been defrauded, the Catalan Young Libertarians converted to another creed they considered superior: a belief in what they called "consubstantial and permanent principles and tactics", in opposition to what they called "circumstantiality", the facile theory then prevalent according to which "unforeseen and imperious circumstances" had imposed "circumstantial sacrifice of principles."

In the congress of November 1, a split occurred between the majority of the representatives and the members of the Regional Committee. The Committee was in favour of joining the FIJL, but the members as a whole refused to compromise their position and placed conditions upon joining. Thus there were three divisions: between the Regional Committee and its constituency; between

the Young Libertarians of Catalonia and the confederal and anarchist committees of the same region; and between the Catalan Young Libertarians and those of the rest of Spain. The conflicts were latent during the rest of 1936, with most of the youth at the front. They revived as the deceptions of politics began to take their toll, and as the so-called "organic" discipline of the higher committee became more oppressive.

Until these problems appeared the homefront committees made ample use of their powers. On November 17, 1936, the Committee of the Young Libertarians of Catalonia signed a pact with the United Young Socialists of the region which was a kind of sequel to the pact signed in August between the CNT, FAI, UGT, and PSUC. The content of the youth pact, like that of the adult organizations, was rather surprising:

Understanding that given the times we are living in a maximum co-ordination of forces is necessary . . . we hereby form a Liaison Committee . . . to establish immediately the close co-ordination between both organizations that is necessary to win the war and achieve a social transformation at the same time . . . This Liaison Committee will also serve as the first step toward a close collaboration between all the antifascist and revolutionary youth. Its basis may be widened when both parties deem it appropriate.

The document concludes with what had become the watchwords of the time: the proportional representation of all antifascist tendencies in political and economic administration; a full and rapid conscription to win the war; technical-military training of young fighters; military, not barracks-type discipline; creation of a true war economy; and a clean-up of fascists on the battlefield and the homefront. The document was signed by the Regional Committee of Young Libertarians, Alfredo Martínez, Fidel Miró and Juan Bautista Aso.

Relations between libertarians and Stalinists were already fairly strained. The negotiations and promises were mainly diversionary tactics or publicity stunts that soon began to lose their credibility. The break was not long coming. In March, 1937, the Regional Committee of Catalan Youth organized a large meeting in the Plaza de Cataluña to provide an outlet for the discontent caused by the fall of Malaga. Several persons from the front and the rearguard spoke to an audience of 50,000, but the United Young Socialists refused to participate because of the presence of representatives of the POUM youth group, the Iberian Communist

Youth. Everything connected to Trotskyism — and any unorthodox communist was a Trotskyite — was being purged by Stalin. The Young Socialists wanted their rivals expelled from the podium, and the recently concluded pact was jeopardized because their demand was not met.

There were similar strains on the national level. In February, 1937, the FIJL had held a National Plenary of Regionals in Valencia. Here are the numbers of members represented: Andalusia, 7,400; Extremadura, 1,907; Levante, 8,200; Centro, 18,469; Aragon, 12,089; and Catalonia, 34,156. The youth from the Free zone of the North could not attend because of the war.

The most important resolution of the Plenary was the proposal for a Revolutionary Youth Front of all revolutionary youth groups. The following declaration figured in the program of the Front drawn up by the Plenary:

We consider that it is not possible to form the Revolutionary Youth Front without recognizing the social and economic transformation that the Spanish people have undergone since July 19. So all the groups that join this front should undertake to guide this social transformation . . . Win the war, make the revolution, that is the mission of the Revolutionary Youth Front.

This clause was a challenge to the murky politics of unity of the Stalinist youth groups. In the National Conference of the JSU, held one month previously, their Secretary-General, Santiago Carrillo, declared:

We struggle for the Democratic Republic, and we are not ashamed to say so. Yes, comrades, we struggle for a Democratic Republic; that is, for a democratic and parliamentary Republic. This is not a strategem to fool the Spanish democratic public, nor the worldwide democratic public. We sincerely struggle for a Democratic Republic because we know that if we committed the error of fighting now — or even many, many months after victory — for a socialist revolution, we would contribute to the victory of fascism.

In the first days of April the young Stalinists organized a Youth Congress in Madrid. They invited all the youth organizations of every stripe: Libertarian, Republican, even Catholics, which was unprecedented. Two Young Libertarians sought to speak and, when the first stood up, the congress organizers made everyone, as if tripped by a spring, stand and applaud, while a band solemnly played the anarchist hymn. The Young Libertarian did



not let himself be swayed by that rain of fake flowers and, without preliminaries, began his speech:

I have to disagree with almost everything that has been said so far. Here you are frightened by the word 'revolution'. Yesterday a noted JSU activist said it was necessary for a few men to go and organize the youth of Catalonia. We seek a youth alliance on a solid foundation, which no one has wanted to deal with here, which in fact people have done their best to avoid, the foundation for an alliance that will hold together tomorrow as well as today, but we see no possibility of agreement. Everything must be sacrificed, as we have done with our honoured principles. In the name of the Young Libertarians I have to inform you that the proposal of the JSU is completely devoid of social content and we challenge them to present a program with substance.

The audience had not yet recovered from their disappointment with this speech when the other young anarchist came to the podium and just as imperturbably began his speech:

I came to this congress hoping to find something new. The JSU organized a congress in Valencia in which they considered the situation of Spanish youth. And we Young Libertarians went to Valencia, too, with a firm and clear position, that had authentic revolutionary content. The Young Libertarians want a revolution with a social ethic. The JSU have brought this congress the same program approved in Valencia. There they had said that all those fighting for the legitimate government must be gathered into an alliance, "including the Catholics". How can the JSU go so far as to join up with the Catholics, when the Catholics are always using religion for personal advancement? . . . Here it has been said we are struggling for a democratic and parliamentary Republic. This is all right if it is a Republic in Plato's sense, if democracy means government of the people by the people. But parliamentary? Never. We cannot agree with parliamentarism. The unions should control the policies and economy of Spain.

The divisions between the Libertarian Youth of Catalonia and the Peninsular Committee of the FIJL deepened after the bloody events of May, 1937. In the course of those events the Communists assassinated and horribly mutilated 12 young anarchists they were holding prisoner, one of them being Alfredo Martínez, a member of the Regional Committee and Secretary of the Revolutionary Youth Front of Catalonia.

On May 15 there was a special regional congress in Barcelona

to determine the future course of the Young Libertarians and name a new Regional Committee. The sessions were very stormy, but it was clear that an overwhelming majority of the organization wanted to go back to the old libertarian traditions. The new Regional Committee followed the classic anarchist line but, in order to avoid all doubt, passed a resolution which defined the new line praising "the eternal element of our ideas" and condemning the "apostasy of circumstantiality".

This insubordination disturbed the CNT-FAI chiefs, and they used all means at their disposal to subdue the rebels, for the FAI was preparing to cross the Rubicon. Although the FAI was particularly belligerent to the youth group, the CNT was not far behind. In opposition to *Ruta*, the organ of the new Regional Committee, and one of the few anarchist periodicals opposed to circumstantialism, *Solidaridad Obrera* began, on June 17, a special column, "Revolutionary Youth", putting it into the hands of the very minority that had just been defeated in the congress.

The fear in the higher circles of the CNT-FAI was that the rebellion of the Young Libertarians would spread to other anarchist groups (which began to happen in July) and the unions, from Catalonia to the other provinces. The peninsular Committee of the FIJL demanded complete submission from the youth, citing promises of solidarity that had never been made. National Plenaries of Regionals began to be held with dizzying frequency in order to weaken the resistance of the "redskins", as the dissenters came to be called.

The issue of a united youth front was the principal source of strain. The new Regional Committee of Catalonia declared null and void all pacts of the previous Committee, including those made under the name of the Revolutionary Youth Front, for they foresaw that the Revolutionary Youth Front was soon to be dissolved by those who had created it. Two blocks competed for the youth organizations: the Antifascist Youth Alliance created by the JSU in January, 1937, which included republicans and Catholics, and the Revolutionary Youth Front founded by the FIJL the following month, which included POUM youth. The JSU group was undergoing a serious crisis, for after the speeches of the young anarchists at the Madrid congress some Young Socialists loyal to Largo Caballero realized they had been duped by Santiago Carrillo and his friends and the Asturian and Valencian sections of the JSU declared themselves in revolt.

Frightened, the JSU staff hurried to construct a united youth

group that would be attractive enough to lure in the FIJL. Points of friction had to be eliminated; there had to be a "revolutionary" declaration which would be traded for the elimination of the POUM. The leaders of the anarchist youth also demanded the elimination of the young Catholics.

Nevertheless, contacts were kept up and perhaps that was what made the young Catalans mistrustful. The Peninsular Committee of the FIJL published a long manifesto on August 10, 1937, describing how the negotiations for the Alliance had been broken off:

On other occasions we had refused to participate in a body that brought together all the antifascist revolutionary youth groups, but excluded a given fraction of our group...because it meant youth groups of a religious nature could join. After the two plans, ours and that of the Federal Union of Spanish Students, had been presented, and after long debates, we let the latter plan serve as a basis of discussion. What we were unable to accept or compromise on, because neither dignity, decorum nor a feeling of humanism permitted it,...was the unamended fifth clause of the Student proposal, which read, "And the Trotskyites will be marked as the agents of fascism, enemies of the unity of the people and the antifascist youth, and organizers of the spy ring recently uncovered by the police."

The so-called Federal Union of Spanish Students was nothing more than an ill-disguised branch of the JSU cooked up for the occasion. This use of fronts was a common tactic in the Stalinist manoeuvres. In any case an agreement was soon reached, which was not the first time that the anarchists sacrificed the "Trotskyites" for the sake of the "supreme realities". In fact the young POUM members had already been abandoned, and it was only a question of avoiding an insult.

And so on September 10 both blocks joined forces in the Antifascist Youth Alliance (AJA), which proclaimed as its first principle: "The Antifascist Youth Alliance, recognizing the political, social, and economic transformation of our country since July 19 of last year, commits itself to the consolidation of the achievements of the revolution.

The youth organizations will, moreover, actively support the alliance between the CNT and UGT unions in order to win the war and advance the revolution. They would also favour the unification of nonpolitical forces for the same ends.

The Youth groups forming this Alliance support the proposition that

all political organizations of the people participating in the anti-fascist struggle should be represented in the government of the people, according to their strength and influence, once there is a common program to facilitate our victory over fascism.

The Young Communists made no revolutionary concessions by proclaiming these principles because the "political transformation" served as an overwhelming counterweight to the "social and economic transformation". Favouring the CNT-UGT alliance when the UGT was about to fall into the hands of the Communist Party was likewise no concession at all. (The Stalinization of the UGT was completed at the end of the year.) Finally, the entry of the CNT into the government, which is the meaning of the last paragraph, was a rather vague commitment, and depended on the mood of the moment.

The CNT wanted to govern at any cost. It had been brave enough to accompany Largo Caballero in his downfall (see next chapter) and now regretted it. All the documents of this period are scored with the CNT's hunger for government. It even made a deal with the Communist Party, which the Party betrayed perfidiously. The CP then held the keys of the kingdom, and so it was of the CP that the CNT begged for crumbs of power. A journal controlled by a faction favouring Largo Caballero commented sympathetically on this unfortunate frenzy: "We were right when, after reading the document of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party, we said nobody should trust it and that all it wanted was to make the CNT its tool."

The CNT was vacillating between two strategies. It had recently renewed its pact of unity with the UGT, which was not yet dominated by the Communists. Then, as CNT members saw the Communists were taking over, they felt an irrepressible impulse to cross over to the camp of the victors. The CP saw far ahead, and played its cards well. On the one hand, it disrupted the CNT-UGT alliance, and on the other it infiltrated the UGT and took it over. It toyed with the CNT, keeping it torn between hope and betrayal. The Young Libertarians' entry into the Antifascist Youth Alliance is understandable only in terms of these events and the power dangling in front of the anarchists.

Although the Antifascist Youth Alliance admitted the Young Libertarians, it was never able to absorb and digest them, as the JSU had done with the Young Socialists. The agreements that were signed proposed a series of meetings to spread the good news throughout the loyalist zone. The AJA, whose president was a

libertarian, went immediately to the Young Libertarians of Catalonia, asking them to organize one of these meetings. The Young Libertarians refused. Since there was no affiliate of the AJA in Catalonia, there was no way to apply the agreements. The Peninsular Committee of the FIJL intervened, but the response was the same. The superior committees of the CNT-FAI ran up against the stubbornness of the Catalan youth. Finally it was decided to go around them, and in the youth section of *Solidaridad Obrera* the Peninsular Committee of the FIJL announced the meeting under its own sponsorship. The Regional Committee of the Young Libertarians replied in another newspaper that if the autonomy of their organization was challenged in this way, the young militants would sabotage the meeting, if necessary with violence. Given this firm attitude, the Peninsular Committee backed down and the matter was dropped.

On October 10 the Young Libertarians of Catalonia held a special regional congress to deal with a general charge that the youth group's "headstrong" attitude was the result of the "dictatorship of the Regional Committee". There were very touchy questions on the agenda like, "Discussion of the report sent by a group of militants against the Regional Committee", "Should the Young Libertarians continue to serve as the cultural and propaganda arm of the FAI?", "The position of the Young Libertarians of Catalonia with regard to the Antifascist Youth Alliance", and "The naming of a new Regional Committee". Briefly summarizing, the actions of the Regional Committee were approved by a crushing majority and that impressed the Committee of the FIJL, which had been expressly invited to witness the deliberations. The members of the Regional Committee, for the most part, were confirmed in their posts.

This demonstration of unity in defense of principles was spectacularly repeated a few months later at the second congress of the FIJL, held in Valencia February 6-13, 1938. Catalonia had the largest delegation and forming a solid block with it were representatives from seven fighting brigades which had come specially from the Aragon front. Two factions — one centralist, the other autonomist clashed from the outset. The congress had to pass on a report and on a special resolution. The report spoke of the subordination of principles to supreme interests based on concrete realities; the resolution maintained the principle of autonomy based on free agreements. Although the autonomists were defeated, the young rebels did not give in; they lost some ground, but held firm, with a resilient defense in essential matters.



**U.G.T.  
C.N.T.**

**UNITAT OBRERA  
PER A AIXAFAR EL FEIXISME**

GRAFOS

*The 1938 pact between the CNT and UGT.*

## 21. The CNT-UGT Pact

With the fall of Gijon and Asturias on October 20, 1937, the enemy ended its Northern campaign and began to shift its operational forces to prepare for a two-pronged attack on Madrid. The Republican high command, desperately seeking to avoid the Madrid attack, mounted a precipitous offensive against Teruel on December 15. With 40,000 men, among them CNT members from the 25th Division and two brigades of the 28th, they attacked a city defended by only 10,000. Their casualties were enormous, though more from the cold than battle. On December 29th, when their offensive had reached past the plaza (although it was not yet in their hands) the enemy began a counter offensive. Its recapture of the plaza was so severe a blow to the popular army and general loyalist morale that the occupation of extensive territory in the Sierra Palomera was easily achieved.

Drawn to the area by the Republican high command's own choosing, the enemy rapidly mounted its spring offensive. The heavy casualties of the militiamen in the winter argued for further battles of attrition. The principal objective of the new offensive, begun March 8, 1938, seems to have been the Mediterranean. The advance began from Zaragoza, protected on the right by the Ebro. Its success, perhaps unexpected, whetted the rebels' appetite; all the more so when they noted that the auxiliary operation on the Huesca front had far surpassed its objectives. Unhampered by the completely disorganized Republican troops, they easily crossed the Ebro at Pina. While their main operation continued through the Maestrazgo to the sea, they also took over the north and west of Catalonia. In a matter of days almost half of the loyalist territory of Catalonia, the remainder of Aragon and part of Valencia were



invaded. In Catalonia proper, the rebels halted their advance either because they were getting too far from their bases, or from a fear of the French who were mobilizing troops in alarm at the frontier, or because they thought Catalonia would put up the greatest resistance. The Catalan front stabilized on a line that followed the Noguera Pallaresa, Segre, Cinca and Ebro Rivers.

In Barcelona, the seat of the Republican government since November, 1937, repercussions of the military disaster were enormous. Rumours carried by soldiers who had fled the front added to the demoralization. Enemy bombers gave the city no rest. Terrified, the workers abandoned their factories. The largest towns in the region were slowly demolished by bomber planes from Mallorca and by bombardments from warships that approached the undefended coast. During the new "*semana trágica*" more than a thousand civilians were killed and an enormous number wounded.

The gravity of the situation prompted the declaration of a political truce and for a while sectarian quarrels were postponed, if not eliminated. Parties and organizations forgot their bickering to join in pathetic calls for calm and serenity. Deserters from the fronts and political leaders remaining in cities under enemy occupation were bitterly reproached for cowardice and threatened with heavy sanctions. One document signed at that time by the CNT and UGT said, "The names of men and women workers included in the sanctions will be handed over to the War and Fortifications offices.

The Aragon disaster at least caused the representatives of the CNT and UGT to sign an agreement for national unity. Negotiations for unification had been going on since January, and as usual were deadlocked. At the end of 1937 the faction of the UGT represented by Largo Caballero had been annihilated. We will briefly relate the story of that oppression.

The wing of the Socialist Party that had been pro-Prieto and was now pro-Negrín had controlled the Executive Commission of the party since before the war. It began its offensive in Valencia by means of the local group. Their first victim was the Valencia provincial group, on July 26, 1937. Led by the Socialist Governor of Valencia, Molina Conejero, assisted by assault guards loaned by the Minister of the Interior, Julián Zugazagoitia, they seized the newspaper *Adelante*. *Adelante*, first edited by Carlos Baraibar and then by Cruz Salido, was another of Largo Caballero's strongholds.

On July 29, the beleaguered UGT and CNT signed a provisional agreement for merger, subject to the approval of the next UGT congress. On the same day two more papers were taken from Largo Caballero by his rivals: *Claridad* (the old outpost from which he had fought *El Socialista*) and *Las Noticias*, his paper in Barcelona. Caballero made public his intention to denounce his enemies in a series of speeches, and on August 19 *La Correspondencia de Valencia* ("La Corres"), the last official paper in the hands of Caballero, denounced the merger of the Socialist and Communist Parties of the city of Jaen into a new party called the Unified Socialist Party. The Union was revoked by the President of the Socialist Executive Commission, Ramón González Peña.

The usurpers put pressure on Largo Caballero, still in control of the UGT Executive Commission, to convoke the representatives of the National Federations. He agreed to do so but, sticking to the rules, refused to recognize the Federations more than two terms behind in their dues. The delinquent Federations were not paying in complicity with the usurpers.

On October 1 the usurpers assaulted and attempted to take over Executive headquarters. Finding the door shut, they decided to hold a National Plenary outside on the stairs. They proclaimed themselves a dissident Executive Commission, which was thereafter nicknamed the "Executive of the Stairs."

On the 2nd, they tried to take *La Corres*. When the attempt failed the government ordered the Bank of Spain not to accept the cheques of the authentic Executive, although it had a legally registered signature, and the money was handed over to the apocryphal Executive. On the same day, there was a large public demonstration in favour of Largo Caballero.

On the 7th, the Socialist and Communist Parties took advantage of the division in the UGT by having the Liaison Committee invite the CNT to participate in joint public meetings; the CNT agreed on condition that a common program be drawn up by all the parties and organizations of the Antifascist Front.

On October 19th Largo Caballero gave a long speech in the Pardiñas cinema in Madrid in which he denounced, to the acclaim of a surprisingly large crowd, all the plots by the Communists and his fellow Socialists of which he had been the victim since his refusal to serve Russia from the government. In one significant passage he declared,

Ah! Why did they undertake that campaign? Do you know why?  
Because Largo Caballero refused to be a tool of certain people in our

country, and Largo Caballero defended the national sovereignty in military matters, in police matters, in political matters and in social matters. And when certain people understood, certainly a little late, that Largo Caballero was not their tool, ah, then they began their campaign with a new slogan against me. But I can state here that right up until they began their campaign against me they offered me all that could be offered to a man with ambitions and vanity; I could be head of the Unified Socialist Party, I could be the political strongman of Spain, I would have the support of all the people who were talking to me, but it would be on the condition that I follow the policies that they wanted; and I replied that there was no way.

Caballero proposed to continue his campaign of meetings throughout the country, but the government would not let him. The Minister of the Interior, Julián Zugazagoitia, his old colleague from the Socialist Party, had him detained by the Assault Guards.

Finally, on January 3, 1938, there was a Plenary meeting of the two factions of the UGT, presided over by Leon Jouhaux, who served as mediator. In *Mis Recuerdos*, Largo Caballero writes:

Jouhaux acted as a con man. This "friend" had collaborated with the Communists in France . . . and came to Spain with that point of view. He gave a number of speeches, always favouring the "stairs" faction. In one meeting it was decided to name a commission, presided over by a representative of the Union Federation, that would propose a solution; on Jouhaux's advice the resolution merely called for a commission that was made up of both sides. Pascual Tomás told us that he had been pressured by Jouhaux to finish quickly, so that Jouhaux could leave that night for France. When they chose the names of those who would make up our half of the commission they elected me, but I refused. This is how they removed me from a post that the National Congress had unanimously confided to me.

It was with this Executive Commission that the CNT signed its agreement, an agreement made possible by the pressure of Franco's armies. In a meeting in early February, 1938, the Executive Commission approved a program to be submitted to the CNT by the delegates Amaro del Rosal, César Lombardía and Edmundo Domínguez. The first meeting took place toward the middle of February when the CNT, represented by Mariano R. Vázquez, Horacio M. Prieto and Federica Montseny, presented its counterproposal. But the conversations did not bear fruit until the terrible enemy offensive of March 9.

Let us compare the UGT and the CNT proposals and the document finally approved by both organizations on March 18, 1938. To simplify the study we will summarize the respective propositions or clauses.

### **Military Affairs**

*UGT* — Proposes the creation of a powerful army imbued with antifascist spirit, to defeat Franco and foreign invaders. Unions should support the government completely, providing it with all manner of assistance to achieve this end.

*CNT* — Expands the UGT proposal to strengthen the army with a view to military operations abroad.

*CNT-UGT* — Combines both proposals.

### **Commissariat**

*UGT* — The Liaison Committee to be formed will get the unions to support the work of the War Commissariat.

*CNT* — Adds that within the Commissariat antifascist forces should be fairly represented to counter any monopolistic tendency.

*CNT-UGT* — Accepts in substance the CNT viewpoint.

### **War Industries**

*UGT* — Both union organizations will co-operate with the government to create a powerful war industry rapidly. They will be responsible for vigilance against sabotage and the adaption of peacetime industries to the needs of the war. The immediate formation of National Councils of Industry with the participation of the unions. The duties of the councils will include regulation of production, prices, salaries, and the use, importation and exportation of products, always in accord with government directives. The councils would be responsible to a Superior Economic Council created by the government.

*CNT* — The Creation of an Undersecretariat of War Industries and a National Council of Industry similar to that proposed by the UGT with representation of the government and the union organization. The Council would take over the technical administration and management of war industries.

*CNT-UGT* — The first part of the UGT proposal, which calls for a powerful war industry and assigns responsibilities to the workers, is kept. The Undersecretariat of Armaments, already existing, would take sole control, in accord with the Council for War Industries, in which the unions would participate. The centralization of all raw materials.

**Nationalization**

*UGT* — Nationalization of basic industries and government centralization of nationalized industries. Administration of the industries by experts designated by the appropriate ministry, but taking into account the opinions of the workers. Centralization of banking facilities with a view toward eventual nationalization.

*CNT* — Rapid nationalization of industries essential to the production of war materials: mines, railroads, heavy industry, banks, telephones, telegraph and merchant marine.

*CNT-UGT* — The CNT proposal is adopted. The government will decide when nationalization is necessary. Nationalized industries should be decentralized.

**Banks**

*UGT* — The government should begin centralization to pave the way for nationalization.

*CNT* — While the Bank is being nationalized, the State must guarantee impartial availability of credits to collectives. The State recognizes the Union Bank of Iberia (decided on by a National Economic Plenary January 15, 1938).

*CNT-UGT* — No special mention of nationalization of the Bank, much less the Union Bank of Iberia. The State will aid those collectives that are economically useful as long as they abide by its legislation.

**Municipalities**

*UGT* — All assets, liquid or non-liquid, of fascist owners are the property of the State. Urban properties will be rented by municipalities according to laws determined by the government.

*CNT* — The general municipalization of housing with the exception of government buildings and those with low rents; of the normal urban public services, of those judged to be in the public interest, not involving liquidation of interests at an unjust price; and of Health and Social Services, making in all of this the Municipality's interests compatible with the State's.

*CNT-UGT* — The municipalization of those urban services that seem necessary because of their size and characteristics. Urban property will belong to the State, except where rent is low, and the Municipalities will rent it out according to laws promulgated by the government.

**Economy**

*UGT* — The creation by the government of a Superior Economic

Council to plan production.

*CNT* — The formation within the State of a National Economic Council composed of representatives of the State and union organizations. It will direct production, distribution, credit, forms of payment, commerce in general, inspection of workplaces and planning; provide all necessary information and plans to experts of the collectives and the State; establish State supported schools for professional and technical training.

*CNT-UGT* — Creation of a Superior Economic Council within the State, with union participation. It will prepare the national economic plan and regulate, particularly in nationalized industries, production, distribution, credit, prices and profits, imports and exports, salaries, commerce and the inspection of workplaces. The government will consult with the Council on economic legislation. Apart from State efforts to provide professional training the unions will help to raise the level of technical and professional competence of the workers by means of special courses financed by the State.

### **Agriculture**

*UGT* — The land nationalized and industrialized, and rented to peasants for collective or individual cultivation. Intensification of agriculture so that no corner of arable land goes to waste. Improvement of farm workers' living standards by revaluing their produce. The government will furnish machines, seed, fertilizer and credit through the Agricultural Credit Bank. The establishment of experimental farms and agricultural schools to prepare technicians and administrators.

*CNT* — The earth and the minerals beneath it are property of the nation. Land will be granted for use by CNT and UGT unions, preferentially. The government will support agricultural collectives of both organizations through credits (from the Agricultural Credit Bank until it is nationalized), technical assistance and training and experimental centres. The gradual industrialization of agriculture and rationalization of crops by the National Economic Council. In all institutions created for the reconstruction of agriculture, both unions as well as the government, will be represented.

*CNT-UGT* — A rapid nationalization of the land. This will be granted for use preferentially to CNT-UGT Collectives and Cooperatives. Both organizations will defend all conquests of the peasants and make an effort to intensify agricultural output. Control over farms so that the individual farm does not inhibit the collective. Improvement of peasants' living standards by raising the

price of produce. Progressive industrialization of agriculture and rationalization of crops.

### **Collectivizations**

*UGT* — Identification of the collectivist movement and the agricultural co-operative. Respect for the rural smallholder who farms his own land. Land used by individual farmers not to exceed what they can cultivate with their own families. Intensification of agricultural co-operatives (one per village) and the immediate legalization of collectives already formed. Co-operatives grouped in regional or provincial federations and incorporated into the national and international co-operative movement.

*CNT* — The legal recognition, defense of, and an intensification of the collectivist system in industry, the countryside, commerce and the entire economic system not yet nationalized. Recognition of the right of collectives to organize together and create their own economy, in accord with official regulations and tax laws. Expansion of consumer co-operatives to counter the speculations of bourgeois retailers. Freedom in both organizations to encourage co-operatives according to their point of view. A revision of the laws concerning co-operation.

*CNT-UGT* — Legalization of collectives. Determination as to which of these should continue to exist. Need for legislation as to their manner of constitution and functioning. Collectives not conforming to the law must dissolve. Those conforming to the law and of recognized economic usefulness will be aided by the State. Legislation on collectives will be proposed by the Superior Economic Council. Favour the organization of strong consumer co-operatives, and also producer co-operatives, subject to very restrictive laws. State support for existing rural collectives, with preference for those of the *CNT* and *UGT*, and those which farm workers voluntarily form in accordance with the law. The government will preferentially furnish the *CNT-UGT* collectives with machinery, seed, fertilizer and credits through the Agricultural Credit Bank. Agricultural schools and experimental farms will be created to train experts, mechanics and managers for collectives and co-operatives. The will of the individual farmer will be respected.

### **Salaries**

*UGT* — The establishment of a minimum salary related to the cost of living, keeping in mind professional categories and the production of each person. The principle of "more pay for more and better



production" will be applied in industries without regard to age or sex.

*CNT* — A readjustment of salaries. Wages that permit a minimum necessary to cover basic necessities. Formation of a National Mixed Commission on Wages and Worker Control, dependent on the National Economic Council, to regulate pay in each industry and town in accord with statistics and study formulae for family payments.

*CNT-UGT* — The UGT proposal is adopted, with the addition of a National Commission of Prices and Wages with union representation. The government will undertake a study of how to set up family payments by law.

### **Worker Control**

*UGT* — The government should make a law of Worker Control that fixes the rights and obligations of workers in this respect. It should include: control of production and vigilance over output by workers; participation in management and profits; working conditions; and the defense of social legislation. The Control Committees will be democratically elected by direct ballot of the workers in factories and workshops.

*CNT* — Legislation on worker control in the enterprises not directly administered by workers.

*CNT-UGT* — The formula proposed by the UGT.

### **Social Legislation**

*UGT* — Maintain the gains made by the proletariat. Revision of existing legislation to include those advances and eliminate laws that conflict with the gains already made.

*CNT* — Revision of laws to recognize the advances of the revolution. Elimination of any laws that would involve giving up these gains. Legislation on Worker Control, Accident Insurance, Social Insurance (sickness, old age), creation of a National Mixed Council for Education supported by the State with the participation of both unions for the re-education of the people in rational methods and in keeping with the scientific and moral progress implied in the revolution. Special legislation on foreign firms in Spain to recuperate the national patrimony. Revision of all civil, penal and commercial legislation. In all bodies of a syndical, state or mixed character formed for these various purposes, the CNT and UGT should be represented in proportion to their membership.

## Politics

*CNT-UGT* — Incorporate the gains of the proletariat into existing legislation and repeal laws conflicting with them. Legislation on accident insurance and pensions. Revision of all civil, penal and commercial legislation. Recuperation of national assets to completely secure the country's liberty. A CNT-UGT policy that would in every way contribute to rapidly winning the war. In all syndical or State organizations formed for these purposes the UGT and CNT will participate in proportion to the forces they represent in a given location.

*CNT* — Now and forever there is a commitment to defend a social regime that is a true democracy, and combat totalitarianism of class or party. There will be a new era of constitutionality that embodies the people's hopes for a socialist, democratic and federalist republic. The CNT commits itself to ensure the effective involvement of the proletariat in the governing of the Spanish State, without excluding from it non-proletarian forces in the corresponding proportions. The CNT calls for the immediate formation of an Antifascist Popular Front and reorganization of the government in accord with the proportional representation of each party and organization.

*CNT-UGT* — Both organizations are committed to the right of the people, especially the working classes, to give themselves, after the war, the form of government that within a true democracy they have earned with their sacrifice. Both organizations will without delay study the question of their inclusion in the Popular Front. The UGT declares that it will not object to the participation of the CNT in the functions of the government.

So much for a summary of the various proposals; let us consider the results. We note first that the CNT agrees to the formation of a powerful army controlled by the State, and adds to the intrinsic power of the army the extrinsic characteristics of a military, without any guarantees for the people except what little the Commissariat gives, but it, too, is also under State control.

As far as war production, the CNT agrees that union organizations can participate only by means of a Council that in turn is subordinate to the State, or the State's branch, the Undersecretariat of Armaments. It bodes ill that the Undersecretariat takes "sole control" and at the same time will act "in accord with" the Councils.

The CNT spontaneously agrees to the nationalization of basic industries in accord with the State's criteria. The State continues to be fixed at the apex of the social pyramid. The same goes for the nationalization of the Bank, which the CNT enriches by donating another, the Union Bank of Iberia.

On Municipalization, the CNT definitively abandons its support for the classic concept of the Free Municipality, which the CNT itself fathered when it said it was the prime objective in the struggle for libertarian communism. Libertarian communism always means this: a social regime that has as its nucleus the free municipality or commune, a unit both autonomous and capable of federating with others, and diametrically opposed to State centralism or co-existence with the State. See, for example, the resolution approved by the CNT congress held in May, 1936, in Zaragoza, concerning the "Confederal Concept of Libertarian Communism."<sup>3</sup> In the CNT-UGT pact the Municipality continues to be a simple administrator for the property of a centralized, militarized and usurious State.

The best proof of the centralist attitude of this pact is the section on Economy. A Superior Economic Council *within the State*, composed of State representatives and union organizations, will control everything. The State owns the army, industry, towns and the whole economy, even the land. Peasants are simply tenants. State usury is continued by means of nationalized banks of credit.

By common accord, in the proposal on the Superior Economic Council, the CNT and UGT reserved for the State the right to legislate about collectives, and the very curious right to intervene in their affairs, as well as the right to determine which should continue and which be abandoned. Only those in accord with the law would be aided by the State.

Both organizations accept subsistence wages for salaried labourers and wage scales by professional categories, as well as the Stachnovist principle of wage incentives, without distinction by age or sex.

Control Committees will be elected democratically by workers, but the government will determine the powers of the controllers who, in turn, will be controlled by a State that ought to be itself under control.

The two parties propose to incorporate the advances made by the proletariat in social legislation, and to eliminate retrograde

laws. Since there had basically been few or no changes, this meant very little.

And to conclude, they took up short and long term political matters. For the present, the CNT made unlimited concessions. It began by reducing its irreducible incompatibility with the State to a simple declaration about a form of government. It objects only to a totalitarian form of government, and forgets the lesson that every government carries the cudgel of totalitarianism beneath its cape. The CNT opts for a "true social democracy", a "Social Democratic and Federalist Republic". This riddle is perhaps explained by the next phrase proposing to open a "new Constitutional period", that is, to participate openly in elections, a pure and simple abdication of its apolitical past. And if there was any doubt left, the CNT commits itself to yoking the proletariat to the wagon of the Spanish State.

At the end, as a postscript, the CNT throws out of its ragged bag its immediate demand to participate in present and future governments, counting instead on the UGT, the opportunity provided by the pact, and the electorate.<sup>4</sup>

The lines with which an old Socialist like Luis Araquistain greeted this pact are its best epitaph:

The Socialist Party was radicalized, as was proven by the proposed reform of the old platform approved in March, 1936, by the Socialist Group of Madrid. The UGT also was radicalized both in terms of politics and union activity, with most unions subscribing to revolutionary socialism and accepting the revolutionary mission that Marx and Lenin ascribe to unions in the transition from capitalism to socialism. The CNT in turn was socialized in the sense that it came to recognize the necessity of the State as an instrument of struggle and means for consolidating the revolutionary gains inside and outside the country. What a pleasure for a socialist to read the program of nationalization, of municipalization and collectivization contained in the CNT proposal! The articles seem as though taken from our socialist program and above all from the aforementioned reform project of the Madrid Group. Bakunin and Marx would embrace each other over this CNT proposal.





*Emma Goldman with, l. to r., Alfonso Miguel, Lola Iturbe, José Carbó, Martín Gudell, Pedro Herrera, Juan Manuel Molina, Gregorio Jover.*

## 22. The Crisis in the Libertarian Movement

When hostilities began on July 19, 1936, the FAI was almost completely subordinate to the CNT. However, this was not the case throughout the war. Beginning with the bloody events of May, 1937, a latent crisis smoldered within the libertarian Movement. The "cease-fire" of the higher CNT committees deeply offended the revolutionary rank-and-file, who were ready to have it out once and for all with their enemies and their enemies' allies. It gave respite to the enemy and changed the equilibrium of forces. The enemy took strength from its knowledge of the weak point in the anarchist organization — the incapacity of CNT-FAI officials themselves to take concerted action. Each of the tragic encounters provoked by the enemy was a test of how far it could go in future aggressions and the militant anarchists' reaction to the ceasefire stemmed from their presentment of the rapid decline of their influence as a movement. In effect what took place after May, 1937, was a systematic dismantling of the conquests made by the anarchists since July 19, 1936.

For a while there was some hope that the war would be won by the peoples' militia. But after the disaster in Aragon in the spring of 1938, the future was tragically clear to everyone. The custom of censuring the slightest sign of vacillation or doubt about ultimate victory was seriously challenged by the complete loss of the North, the reconquest of Teruel by the enemy, and the disaster in Aragon, followed by the alarming invasions of Valencia and Catalonia. Those who had bent their anarchist convictions so much for the sake of the common struggle against fascism began to ask themselves whether any more sacrifices were worth the trouble.



As it became more certain that the war was being lost, stormy debates increased among the militant leadership. The National Committee of the CNT had sacrificed everything for the war, and now, perhaps to avoid the torture of self-doubt, supported Negrín's policy of a fight to the finish. In Circular #12, of May 10, 1938, it said,

and we shut the mouths of the defeatists, pessimists, those who will not listen to reason and those who take advantage of the circumstances to speak of revolutionary losses, cave-ins, treasons and liquidations.

This accusation was aimed at the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, through which a certain circle of anarchists, particularly in Catalonia, proposed to do everything possible to save the prestige of anarchism. Let us consider the emergence of this opposition.

After signing the unity pact with the UGT, the CNT, with the aid of the FAI, intensified its campaign of political demands. Circular #7 of the FAI Peninsular Committee, dated April 1, 1938, called for "inclusion of the CNT and FAI in the National Popular Front," and "immediate involvement of the CNT in the government." Dr. Negrín acceded to the second of these requests on May 8 by reorganizing the government to include a CNT minister. It is possible that the main purpose of reorganizing the government was to expel Indalecio Prieto who, although he was Minister of Defense, did not conceal his conviction the republican army would be defeated. A policy of resistance and false optimism was the basis of the dictatorship of Negrín and the Communists.<sup>1</sup>

Although Jesus Hernández, a Communist, left the cabinet for a high post in the General Commissariat, Communists and Socialists still dominated the government from the key ministries. The way the CNT minister had been chosen could not have been more humiliating. Negrín had asked for three names from which he would choose the minister. The names given were García Oliver, Horacio M. Prieto, and Segundo Blanco. Blanco was chosen, which was an affront to the FAI.

With the collapse of the Aragon front the words "Libertarian Movement" began to be applied to the combination of the CNT, FAI and FIJL. The National Committee and all other national committees of parties and organizations followed the government to Barcelona in November, 1937. On April 2, 1938, just before Catalonia was cut off from the rest of the republican zone, a special Regional Plenary of unions, anarchist groups, Young Libertarians, and militants was held in Barcelona. García Oliver delivered a

report on the disastrous military situation, and as a result a special body was created called the Executive Committee of the Libertarian Movement of Catalonia. Its duties were: to intensify the war effort until final victory; to accept militarization, with all the consequences; to act against deserters, fugitives, subversives and saboteurs; to support only imprisoned comrades whose innocence was proven; to support the participation of the CNT in the governments of the Republic and Catalonia and in all the political and administrative organisms of the country. This executive committee, "in accord with the committees of the Movement," was authorized to expel individuals, groups, unions, federations or committees "who do not obey the general resolutions of the movement or who by their actions injure the movement," whether on the battlefield or the home front.

This formula for the unification of the Libertarian Movement was subsequently adopted in the Central-South zone. The First National Plenary of Regionals of the Libertarian Movement was held in October, 1938, and after the end of the war the General Council of the Libertarian Movement was formed as a compact, homogeneous whole.

In its formative period the Libertarian Movement permitted each of its branches to act independently, for most of them resisted total absorption. Indeed, it was precisely at the time that the organizations and parties were joining together in a united movement that deep differences began to show up between the CNT National Committee and the FAI Peninsular Committee.

The FAI joined the National Popular Front, but in May, 1938, it came into conflict with the government over Negrín's declaration of war objectives; Negrín, on the pretext that its publication was urgent, had not first submitted the declaration to the representatives of the Popular Front. The British Parliament was considering giving arms to the enemy, and Britain and France were negotiating recognition of Italy's conquest of Abyssinia in return for withdrawal of her volunteers from Spain. The declaration included a thirteen-point programme: the independence and integrity of the national territory (including the African Protectorates); a new constitutional structure for the Republic, determined by a plebiscite to be held immediately after the war; guarantees for regional freedoms without prejudice to national unity; respect for citizens' rights and private property; support for the small property holders; recognition of foreign interests that had collaborated with fascism; freedom of religion; sweeping land reform to do

away with semi-feudal estates; rural democracy to guarantee the peasant ownership of the land he cultivates; advanced social legislation; an army in the service of the nation; renunciation of war as national policy; development of Spain into a Mediterranean power; development of national defense; complete amnesty for all Spaniards willing to work in building a new Spain; and a guarantee to the defeated that no vengeance will be taken upon them.

The Peninsular Committee of the FAI immediately took issue with the declaration. In a Circular dated May 3 it denounced it as "a return to the government we had before July 19."

What it is trying to do is to make more or less precise offerings to Franco-British capitalism in order to bring it around. But there is no doubt that the proposal is consonant with the desires long harboured by the current government to render void whatever revolutionary transformation has been made in Spain.

The circular ended with a reproach to the CNT for sharing responsibility for the declaration and noting that the FAI, "free from any such commitments, can and should continue to represent the hopes and desires of revolutionary anarchism."

In its next circular the Peninsular Committee continued the attack.

What is significant in the document is what is not there. We find not even the most oblique reference to July 19, to the counterrevolutionary forces that then rose in arms against the people and were exterminated in the streets; nor do we find any formula guaranteeing the workers' and peasants' conquests. On the other hand, the State promises to guarantee property, individual initiative and religious freedom, to stimulate the development of small private property, and to indemnify foreign capitalism.

The National Committee of the CNT took up the heavy task of defending the government. In Circular #12 it analyzed each of the points of Negrín's programme in order to refute

the negative affirmations of the defeatists . . . In the Plenary of September, 1937, we agreed to support and defend the principle of elections under the auspices of a Socialist and Federal Republic. In our proposals presented to the UGT and approved by the National Plenary of Regionals, we included a section containing the September agreement. The government declaration . . . spoke of a Popular Republic, which is not opposed to our principles. It is necessary in a declaration of principles to emphasize our respect for religion, especially when we know what an important role it plays abroad,

particularly in England and the United States. In both countries the winning over of Catholics to our side would have an enormous importance. We cannot ignore . . . that Britain, France, the United States or any democracy cannot be socialized and will not look favorably on or aid in the triumph of a regime of collectivizations, socialization, or even nationalization controlled by the workers, for fear of setting a precedent.

The National Committee reiterated in its Circular that most of the points in Negrin's declaration were mere "facades".

In spite of the acrimony of the circulars, on May 10 the National Committee invited the Peninsular Committee to a meeting.

Given the last circulars sent by the FAI Peninsular Committee to its Regionals, this National Committee is obliged to try to provide orientation to the activists. We cannot continue these clashes between committees, with some trying to seem more revolutionary and consistent than others, because this would lead to divisions dangerous for the unity of the Libertarian Movement.

The letter ended by inviting the Peninsular Committee to a meeting with the rest of the representatives of the Libertarian Movement.

The meeting was held on the following day, and it appears that because of the enmity of the two antagonists the FIJL had to serve as peacemakers. Finally they reached the following agreement: that in order to have a single line of action and avoid the break-up of the Libertarian Movement, committees should not tell their affiliates of disagreements, but should try to resolve them in private, through joint meetings. The Political Section of the National Committee, composed of members from all three groups, was charged with deciding on the policies that the three groups would follow.

In spite of this agreement a FAI release said it was determined

not to accept any control over our attitudes and positions, since our organization is the only one that can tell us whether our positions as the Peninsular Committee are right or wrong.

It made its participation in the Political Section of the CNT subject to its being "a truly effective body."

Another incident took place when the National Popular Front prepared to support publicly Dr. Negrin's 13 points. The FAI declared itself in rebellion, and in Circular #23 explained its reasons:

to demand our unconditional support for this declaration when we were in no way consulted while it was drawn up and distributed by the government is to demand too much. It is enough that we tolerate its publication without protest.

Nevertheless, to avoid responsibility it submitted its decision to the Regionals, giving a lapse of three days for them to reply by telegram. Catalonia replied rather vaguely and the other regionals did not agree with each other. A decision was made in a joint meeting of the Political Section of the National Committee, referred to in a release of the Peninsular Committee dated May 27:

We went to the meeting and found that all the delegations there wanted the FAI Peninsular Committee to sign the National Popular Front's note supporting the 13 points. But, given the insistence of the delegations represented, even though we did not share their opinion, and disassociating the responsibility of the rest of the FAI from what we were doing, and without prejudice to our raising the problem when it seems appropriate, we said we would sign the note . . .

The note was published on May 19. Its last paragraph read, the members of the Popular Front have in this note an excellent set of guidelines. All Spanish antifascists should seek to have these guidelines understood and put into practice. The National Committee invites everyone's attention to them.

Another storm had passed, but it was not the last. On August 11, the government was in crisis. The ministers representing the autonomous regions — the Basque Manuel Irujo and the Catalan Jaime Ayguadé — resigned because decrees concerning intervening in industries and militarization of ports threatened regional autonomy. The decrees were an even greater blow to the interests of the workers, but by its silence the National Committee of the CNT approved the measures. In any case these measures of centralization had been implied in the pact with the UGT. The FAI raised its voice once more:

The decrees approved by the cabinet are an attack on the liberties and rights of the Spanish people. [The FAI] calls on all parties and organizations . . . to repudiate the policies that these decrees imply.

The CNT-UGT pact permitted confiscation of war industries by the Undersecretariat of Armaments of the central government, as well as nationalization of raw materials, railways, the merchant marine, fisheries and the Bank. In return for this increased power

the government would permit a partial control by the unions. Those called to control were themselves controlled. The government freely confiscated factories for some time before it even considered how to set up a control organization.

The government's centralist offensive was countered by the workers, especially in Catalonia where the war industries had been created in the first critical months of the war, when the government wanted only to rebuild the bureaucratic apparatus of the State and reorganize the police. After the government took over the war industries, which included the vast majority of factories, the workers quickly realized that a plague of bureaucrats had descended on them. The new managers, chosen on the basis of party favouritism, were completely inept technically, managerially, and politically. Some of the so-called experts were in fact Russians who were more interested in getting hold of information about war production than in professional competence.

The internal crisis of the Libertarian Movement burst within the organization as a whole in the second half of October, 1938. From October 16-30 the first National Plenary of Regionals of the Libertarian Movement was held in Barcelona to reformulate policies and coordinate the activities of the three branches. In this Plenary the angry energy generated and repressed in the CNT National Committee and the FAI Peninsular Committee exploded. The National Committee committed itself to a total circumstantialist fatalism and criticized the "ideological baggage" that blocked the CNT's progress toward hegemony. The Peninsular Committee strongly criticized the Movement's failures and moved toward correcting them. Both sides made harsh reproaches and bitter accusations.

The Secretary-General of the CNT declared:

We have to abandon our literary and philosophical baggage, which has become an impediment to our eventual assumption of power. The present weakness of the Movement stems from the scruples that the comrades have felt from the start about militarization. The collectives should have accepted the government's guidance, for then it would have given them financial aid.

He criticized the actions of Garcia Oliver as Minister and of Joaquín Ascaso as President of the Council of Aragon, whom he called "quixotic." He called the pact that the CNT had signed with Largo Caballero a "non-aggression" pact, while he exalted the virtues of the CNT-UGT pact signed on March 18 which, accor-

ding to him, had the effect of stopping the enemy's advance. He attributed the same miraculous power to the re-entry of the CNT into the government and the National Popular Front. He praised Dr. Negrín and claimed there was no one around any better. In his opinion Negrín's government had successfully confronted the Communists. Most of his speech was devoted to attacking the FAI Peninsular Committee, one of whose documents he termed ridiculous and treasonous.<sup>2</sup> He also accused the FAI of plotting the end of the war with Azaña.<sup>3</sup>

The Peninsular Committee made no effort to restrain its reply:

It is necessary to remove those who belittle our principles. He who is without ideals should not lead our Movement. The "doctrinal baggage" and the "hackneyed literature" that have been referred to cannot be disregarded by anyone who still takes pride in being an anarchist. If anyone dislikes our doctrines . . . let him leave. This tendency to justify anything at all is noxious, and puts us in disgraceful positions. We are optimists because we believe in what we have created, and we must overcome our present weaknesses by removing from the leadership of our movement those who either out of ignorance or apostasy no longer believe in the Organization. It is important to tell the truth in our media. It is a betrayal to fool the members. To hold a deep sense of responsibility is a duty for those who call themselves anarchists. Nor can we justify our present errors by those of the past. Those we committed we should remember so we will not repeat them. We are in favour of the CNT-UGT pact, but with guarantees for revolutionary actions that it does not yet have. We do not grant it the virtue of having stopped the collapse of the Eastern Front: our comrades who fought heroically to halt the enemy do not merit such a dismissal. Similarly our entry into the Popular Front solved nothing; we were invited by the Communists. Nor can our entry into the government be considered a success: it came about after we had begged for power. Power is not asked for; it is either taken by force, or handed over because it suits the interests of others. For our movement, ethics is not a luxury item, but rather something essential that distinguishes us from other groups. We have to recover our vast strength by working within our Organization, and considering the government to be, as it is, something temporary. We should not forget our revolutionary objectives for a moment. The Libertarian Movement must recover. It is up to us, united here, to show the way. We are a committee of an anarchist organization, and we know the limits of our mission. We are responsible to our members, and we are not the ones who give the orders.



Another of the salient aspects of the Plenary was that in addition to the fatalism of the National Committee and the sporadic reactions of the Peninsular Committee a third position emerged which was even more committed to throwing "philosophical baggage" overboard. It was represented by Horacio M. Prieto, who was said to be the real power behind the Secretary-General of the CNT. Judging from his speeches, Prieto had been able to draw the logical conclusions from the report of the FAI National Plenary of Regionals of July, 1937. The gist of his proposal was to convert the FAI into the political party of the CNT. The FAI would assume complete responsibility for a frank correction of tactics and principles.<sup>4</sup> "The syndical organization," Prieto wrote in a polemic published at the time, "can directly intervene and, if desired, help out, only because it is a class group with one-sided aspirations and interests. To transform the CNT into a political body is unconsciously to will its demise, one way or another. If the CNT becomes the political representative of the Libertarian Movement, then the FAI is superfluous. If the Movement wants to separate politics and class action, the FAI will have to take over political direction."<sup>5</sup>

After tempestuous debates, resolutions were worked out with relative calm. The discussion of the first item on the agenda had taken 12 sessions. All the CNT and FAI delegations except the Young Libertarians of Catalonia had supported National Committee policies. The heresy of Horacio Prieto was rejected by the young Catalans, along with the FAI's of Levante and Andalusia. Some delegates not named in the documents supported his proposal.

In general the youth delegations were not impressive. The group from Levante always supported the National Committee, as did the FAI representative from the North (Prieto), who always supported the CNT Secretary against the Catalan delegations. A number of delegates accused the Catalans of Catalanism. At the end of the last session, Mariano R. Vázquez declared that the National Committee was incompatible with the Peninsular Committee. But the Plenary avoided the question of the cabinet. The CNT Secretary-General suggested that each organization be given specific responsibilities, a proposal the Plenary rejected twice. Finally, in the 21st session, the Plenary severely reproached the Catalan Regional Committee of the FIJL for the criticisms and insubordination of its periodical, *Ruta*. It was agreed to remedy this in one of the reports.

The resolution on activities arrived at the following conclusion:

Our direct participation in the administrative bodies of political, economic, and military life . . . was motivated by our high sense of responsibility and the need for co-operation in the fight against fascism . . . in order to facilitate a victory . . . [This participation] has not been a correction of our tactics, but rather an intelligent addition to our methods in accord with circumstances and in response to an abnormal situation in the life of the people.

A picturesque affirmation of principles was made:

The Libertarian Movement, having taken part in politics in violation of its tradition, declares: the political Power, the State, will always be the antithesis of Anarchism, and [our] circumstantial participation in Power has been . . . for the purpose of opposing to the greatest possible extent, from a position in Power and from everywhere else, the strangulation of the revolution.

The declaration recognized the existence of different points of view but minimized their importance:

Since July 19, 1936, the Libertarian Movement has had within it differences of opinion, and considers them a product of the preoccupation with how best to win in the struggle of the Spanish people, but with the unanimous adoption of the resolutions of this Plenary these differences have been overcome.<sup>6</sup>

To the question, "Should we continue to participate in politics when circumstances require?" the Plenary replied, "we can continue to participate in politics when circumstances require, as long as the joint National Plenaries of the three branches of the Libertarian Movement . . . consider it necessary."

The next question was, "Should it be the CNT that continues to participate in the cabinet?" The reply stated, "As long as there are no new political developments, so recognized by the Libertarian Movement in its regular sessions, we consider that the CNT should represent the Libertarian Movement in the government." That is to say,

The CNT in its participation in the government represents the Libertarian Movement as a whole, without prejudice to the participation of other branches of the Libertarian Movement as well. [More participation may] be necessary for the Libertarian Movement to have representation proportional to its strength, compared to the Marxist and Republican groups.<sup>7</sup>

So there were three very clear positions: (1) the majority view that if necessary all three branches of the Libertarian Movement should participate in politics; (2) Horacio Prieto's view that the FAI should be converted into the political party of the CNT and represent the Libertarian Movement in the government; (3) the point of view represented, if rather feebly, by the Young Libertarians of Catalonia that all participation in the government should be renounced.<sup>8</sup>

The majority position, leaving the door open for all three branches of the Libertarian Movement to participate directly in politics, if necessary, provoked energetic protests from the FAI and the Young Libertarians of Catalonia.<sup>9</sup> The resolutions, in fact, were not approved unanimously. When the majority reached an agreement the minority was sacrificed so that it would appear there was no dissent. This was not normal anarchist procedure.

It was also decided that future propaganda would have to be rigorously coordinated.

The written and spoken propaganda of the Libertarian Movement has to be as closely interpenetrated, coordinated and supervised as possible, with a wide latitude left for style of presentation and also for noble and well-considered criticism. Calumny and slander, low and scurrilous criticism when habitual in a comrade, committee, or organization, will be punished by sanctions that can include expulsion. When a comrade or committee expresses itself in a way damaging to the Movement, it will be called to their attention by the relevant bodies which will take action after listening to the arguments of the person or committee in question.<sup>10</sup>

Other aspects of the plan for the future included seeking representation in public offices proportional to available strength. The comrades holding those offices, whether they be politicians or officers in the military, would obey the orders of the committees. Those comrades not holding the confidence of their respective regional organizations could not hold positions on the national committee of the Movement. Members expelled from the CNT could not be admitted to the FAI or the Young Libertarians, or vice-versa. A National Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement was created to "provide political advice in all matters, combining the diverse opinions of the different National Committees . . . in their regular meetings. It will be faithful to all decisions made by this sovereign Plenary."

The "unanimity" with which the agreements were made did

not wash away the antagonisms that were fermenting within the movement. The Plenary was a desperate attempt to unify the three libertarian organizations by adopting draconian measures, creating strong coordinating bodies, establishing a single policy for all, vowing to repress severely any dissent and convince everybody that circumstantial opportunism was not a deviation from the true way of anarchism.

The opportunists in fact had become much more entrenched in the organization. The Plenary resolutions included proposals for reforming parliament, the cabinet, diplomatic relations, the courts and the administration, reforms with more form than content and worthy of liberal republicans. The reformed constitutional structure, to be called the Democratic Federal Republic, was an exercise in sophistry. Summaries of the debates veiled something much more important — the antagonism between the CNT and FAI in the light of the gloomy war situation and Dr. Negrín's policies of resistance.

In his book, *Por qué perdimos la guerra* (Why we lost the war), Diego Abad de Santillán, a member of the FAI Peninsular Committee, makes a serious accusation: "And our dissidence increased as we saw the CNT follow the Communist line." (p. 181) Although the summary of debates that we used for this chronicle has a note on the 23rd session which reads, "The most interesting part of this session has been the argument between the FAI Peninsular Committee and the CNT National Committee about the Communist Party, rudely attacked by the FAI and defended by the CNT", we do not believe that the Communist Party had any direct influence on the CNT National Committee. But there is evidence that Dr. Negrín's policy of a last-ditch defence influenced the committee or, more specifically, its Secretary-General, Mariano R. Vázquez. The exchanges of the rival committees in the debates leave no doubt on this point. But a distinction must be made. What for Dr. Negrín, a political adventurer, were the whims of the moment were for the Secretary of the CNT honourable convictions. Vázquez sincerely believed in something that was a very common idea at the time — that the war should be prolonged in the hope of merging it with World War II.

The Peninsular Committee was sceptical on this point. It may well have thought that as long as the Spanish civil war continued, from which all the major powers that had intervened were learning so much, there was no chance that the conflict would spread. Their idea was supported by the fact that in 1938 the situation in neither

Austria nor Czechoslovakia sparked an European war. The FAI Peninsular Committee favoured a negotiated settlement through the good offices of Great Britain. It was opposed to all-out resistance, and feared a sudden collapse of the republican front. The battles of attrition that took place in those days on the Ebro and the Segre quickly dispelled all false optimism.



*Anarchist militia preparing to go to the front.*

## 23. Communists and Anarchists in the War

There is no doubt that the enemy had more and better weapons, was more able technically, tactically and strategically, and had a seamless unified command, above all after the fall of 1936 when Franco was elevated by his fellow generals to the status of "caudillo." But these facts still do not explain the series of military disasters suffered by the Republic beginning in 1938. By that time, apart from the Communist Party and their advisors, no one on the Republican side was waging war.

Underlying this series of catastrophes was a total erosion of fighting spirit among the most experienced soldiers. When the Aragon front collapsed many soldiers and officers of every stripe went as far as Barcelona in their headlong retreat. Others were detained near the frontier. The 43rd division, led by Communists, retreated toward France through the valley of Arán. It is possible that the officers thought the loss was a total one. But when the front stabilized along the Ebro and Segre rivers, the 43rd Division returned to Catalonia by way of France. What had been a shameful retreat, even to the extent of having to hand over their weapons to French authorities, was converted by the propaganda of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party into a glorious feat of arms.

The rout affected even the volunteer fighters who had been on the front since the first days of the war. On August 25, 1938, the Commissar of the Group of Armies of Catalonia, Gil Roldán, informed his organization, the CNT, about the numerous desertions taking place on the fronts. Many of the soldiers who deserted were veterans who until then had fought bravely. The soldiers did not desert to the enemy, but rather toward the home front, discontented because of lack of food and clothing (especially footgear —



many soldiers protected their feet by wrapping them in sacks), delays in pay, news that their families were not being cared for and irregularity in the mails because of slow and inefficient censorship.

There were other deserters — those who could not stand the stupid, brutal discipline of the Communist brigades. These deserters, for the most part, simply changed brigades. If they were anarchists they took refuge in confederal brigades.

Difficulties were no longer as stoically endured, as in the first months of the war, when the struggle had a pure and romantic character. The military bureaucracy appeared on the scene. The brand new uniforms of the Assault Guards and Carabineros were seen. (For his personal use, Negrín counted on the Carabineros, which the people called the “hundred thousand sons of Negrín”.) The new military caste was in danger of inheriting all the defects of the old army. Its notions of discipline were extreme.<sup>1</sup> The war colleges for the education and training of officers, as well as the commissariat schools, were completely controlled by the Communist Party.

The civilian population suffered from hunger, and their poverty in turn deeply influenced the soldiers, above all when there were other families in the cities who were privileged: the families of the new military caste and those of political leaders. The prerogatives of the collectives were constantly threatened on any pretext. If trucks were needed to carry supplies to the troops, the first trucks requisitioned were those of the collectives. In the absence of any means of transportation, the agricultural produce of the collectives rotted in warehouses while food shortages grew in the civilian population. A result of the shortages was hoarding and black marketeering, known as *estraperlismo*.

However, the main reason for discontent among the soldiers was political sectarianism in the army. Endless orders and decrees were issued to stop it, but they were never effective. Many military operations were conceived for political reasons, with catastrophic results. Anarchist fighters claimed with alarm that they were being used as cannon fodder, for some of them were deliberately separated from the corps or divisions they normally belonged to. The 25th Division was sent to form part of the operational army for the Teruel offensive. The 153rd and 121st Brigades were similarly separated from their divisions. The true reason was to separate the anarchist units, which were stumbling blocks for the aims of the Communist Party.

According to the report of the FAI Peninsular Committee to

the October, 1938 National Plenary of Regionals of the Libertarian Movement, the Communist Party had gained control of 80% of the army commands by 1938. In its military section the FAI report discusses the general situation of the Army, the larger units, sections, arms, services, inspectorates, general staffs and war councils. According to Mariano R. Vázquez, the report was an act of high treason.

The Superior War Council, theoretically composed of representatives of all political parties and union organizations, was supposed to meet periodically to consider major military problems. In fact it virtually never met, according to the report. The head of the government, who had the obligation to convoke it, neglected to do so except in the greatest of catastrophies.

The Central General Staff had as its head General Vicente Rojo, and as heads of Personnel and Information, the most important sections, Díaz Tintero and Manuel Estrada. All three were members of the Communist Party. The majority of the lesser officers also belonged to the party.

The Undersecretary of the Army, a noted Communist, Antonio Cordón, ran the office of Information and Control, where the union affiliation and party membership of all generals and officers was listed. Fighters on the fronts had priority for specialized positions, such as the air force, the tank corps, or officer training school. The notice of openings appeared in the *Official Journal of the Army*, but Communist brigades were alerted before it arrived at the front so they could prepare their candidates to hand in their applications before non-Communist soldiers. Antonio Cordón was responsible for this manoeuvre. From the Undersecretariat of the Army he also controlled promotions and the naming of new generals to fill vacancies in the Army Corps.

So it is understandable why Communist soldiers rose rapidly through the ranks. For example, during May, 1938 in the 27th Brigade (formerly the Karl Marx Brigade) there were 1,280 promotions (corporals, sergeants, lieutenants, captains, commanders and commissars of every rank). Those newly promoted were sent to fill vacancies in other divisions, brigades and batallions, in which for political reasons the soldiers could not advance so freely. In this way the Communists conquered positions in the anarchist, Socialist, republican or neutral units. The FAI report claims, "We can affirm without fear of contradiction that, since May, 7,000 soldiers of different ranks have been promoted and 5,500 of them have been members of the Communist Party."

The same sectarian policy was applied to discharges. As a consequence of the disastrous retreat of the Spring of 1938, the CNT member Miguel Yoldi was dismissed as head of the 24th Division. Yoldi was no more responsible for the retreat than any other general involved. Yet the divisions of some of these generals were reorganized with full honours, and some generals were even promoted. The 24th Division was also reorganized, but with another command. Also, a Communist was placed in charge of one of its brigades, the 153rd, formerly the *Tierra y Libertad* Brigade, made up of anarchists at the time of the seige of Madrid. Commander Trueba, another Communist, had failed miserably in the Republican offensive of September 1937 and was rewarded with the command of another division; he was defeated again in May, 1938, but he retained his command.

The Undersecretary of the Army was also in charge of the General Transport Administration, where he also made promotions along party lines. The FAI report said of the Transport Battalions, "out of 19, 10 or 12 are in the hands of the Communist Party, and 1 or 2 in the hands of anarchists, in spite of the fact that 80 or 90% of the rank and file belong to the CNT."

The same occurred with Artillery and Supplies. The Supply Department was a centre of corruption. Foodstuffs taken for the troops, leaving desperate shortages on the home front, did not reach their destination; they disappeared on the black market while the soldiers were dying hungry in the trenches. Most of the heads of the General Inspectorate were Socialists or Republicans, but the lower officers were Communists, particularly in the Health section. We have already discussed the SIM, the Military Information Service, in which the Soviet GPU was entrenched in order to control the Spanish Communist Party itself and eliminate its political adversaries. The airforce and the specialized corps such as the tank corps were the closed preserve of the Party, or were under the direct control of Russian specialists.

In the second half of 1938 there were two Army Groups: one for Catalonia (separated from the rest of the Republican territory), and another for the Centre-South zone. The Catalonia Group was commanded by General Hernández-Sarabia, who followed the Communist line. This Group was composed of the Armies of the East and the Ebro. The Army of the East was commanded by Colonel Perea, who was not a Communist, and maintained good relations with the CNT. The Army of the Ebro was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Modesto, one of the Communist leaders with a

whirlwind career and one of the founders of the famous Fifth Regiment<sup>2</sup> which afterward became the 5th Army Corps. Modesto gave the command of the 5th Corps to Lister, another lucky commander, when he became chief of the Autonomous Army of the Ebro with the rank of colonel.

The Army of the East was composed of three Corps: one commanded by the anarchist Gregorio Jover; and the other two commanded by the Communists Francisco Galán and José del Barrio. Of the 9 divisions and 27 Brigades that made up this Army, anarchists commanded one division and 5 brigades; the rest were commanded by Communists or others.

The three Corps of the Army of the Ebro were commanded by the Communists Lister, Vega, and Tagüeña, all three lieutenant colonels. In this Army, Communist control was even more accentuated at the division and brigade level. Only two brigades were commanded by anarchists; the rest were held by Communists or others.

In September, 1938, the 24th Army Corps was being formed in Catalonia, with the CNT commanding one division and two brigades. However, these comparative lists do not give as true a picture of the significance of anarchism on the Catalan front as does the fact that 60% of the soldiers were members or sympathizers of the Libertarian Movement.

The Group of Armies of the Centre-South Zone was made up of four Armies: Levante, the Centre, Andalusia and Extremadura. It was under the command of General Miaja, a member of the Communist Party.

The Army of Levante was commanded by Col. Menéndez, who also followed the Communist line. Of the six Army Corps in his jurisdiction, two were commanded by anarchist sympathizers. Three divisions out of 20, and 13 brigades out of 55 had anarchist commands; the rest were commanded by Communists or others.

The Army of the Centre was commanded by Col. Segismundo Casado, a career officer who had refused promotion, and who maintained good relations with the Libertarian Movement. Of its four corps, one was commanded by an anarchist, Cipriano Mera. One division out of 12, and 3 brigades out of 45 were commanded by anarchists, the rest mainly by Communists. (This information was incomplete, and it is possible that there were additional anarchist commands.)

The Army of Andalusia was commanded by Col. Moriones, whose only political persuasion was that he was anticommunist.

This Army was a fief of the Party, which dominated the command of the two corps. Anarchists commanded one brigade and one division.

The Army of Extremadura was commanded by the pro-Communist Socialist Colonel Pradas. Three of the 11 divisions and 9 of the 31 brigades were commanded by anarchists. The totals are as follows:

	Units	Anarchist	Communist and others
Army Groups	2	0	2
Armies	6	2 sympathizers, 1 neutral	3
Army Corps	21	4 sympathizers, 2 anarchists	15
Divisions	70	9 anarchists	61
Brigades	196	33 anarchists	163

It is difficult to specify the number of Communists holding high commands, since many times they were disguised as Socialists or Republicans. We do know there were Socialists or Republicans who were Communists and obeyed the orders of the Communist Party. It was similarly difficult to specify the proportion of officers of one or another tendency in the smaller units (battalions, companies, sections), given the constant movement of personnel between them because of transfers or casualties.

The Administrative and Service units, both in the rearguard and at the front, should also be considered. For example, out of the 19 Centres for Recruitment, Instruction, and Mobilization (CRIM) only one, the 18th, was controlled by the anarchists. The rest were commanded by Communists or more or less pro-Communist professionals. As for the 20 or 23 Rearguard Battalions (for the control of strategic communication centres and the coast guard) not one had a libertarian commander. It was also very rare for the military commander of the garrison of important cities and towns to be an anarchist.

The Commissariat Corps was one of the principal fiefs of the Party. The pro-Communist Osorio y Tafall was the General Commissar of the Army. Jesús Hernández, who resigned as a Minister to become Commissar-General for the Centre-South zone, belonged to the Political Bureau of the Party. The Commissar-General of the Catalan zone was an anarchist, Gil Roldán, but

since the government was installed in Catalonia, the true Commissar was Politburo member Enrique Castro, since he was Secretary-General of the Commissariat, Osorio y Tafall's second-in-command. In sum, the anarchists had no more representation in the Commissariat than they did in the army. They held the commissariat in only 4 of the 21 army corps.

All of this was the result of political sectarianism, backed by the blackmail of Soviet aid. It was a sickness that came to undermine the physical and moral health of the army. For the sectarianism was not limited to propaganda and ostentatious pride: it was accompanied by dark manoeuvres, intrigue, and murder.

The following quotations are from a report by a Brigade commissar, a Catalanist Republican named Pedro Puig:

The Communist Party and the United Socialist Party at present have 50% of the generals, officers and commissars obeying their orders. They have two organizations within the army: the Education Clubs of the Unified Young Socialists, that work publicly, and the cells in the companies and *troikas* in the battalions, that work secretly. The Clubs claim merely to unite the antifascist youth in order to provide an instrument in the service of the commander and commissar of each unit. They arrange to have some anarchist and republican soldiers join, and even put some up as leaders, but they always make sure they are in the majority. They serve as a centre for the reception and distribution of Communist propaganda, and in many units have not been able to be formed because of opposition from the commander or the commissar. The other organization, the secret one, has wider objectives. Each Company cell has a secretary, who is exempt from service. The same goes for every Battalion *troika*. They transmit communications daily or weekly. They hold meetings, for which minutes are kept. There they draw up the lists of those who will attend the war colleges and also list those who have to be "suppressed". It is these cells that send telegrams of support to the government, reputedly from the units as a whole, whenever the government is in a difficult situation.

What follows is a fragment of the report of a Communist *troika* to the Political and Military Commission of the Communist Party:

On this front there is a general subcommissar, Gil Roldán, from the CNT, and a division commissar, Tomás Sanz, also from the CNT. Another commissar, a socialist, Peregrín Gurrea, of the 58th Brigade, is in very close touch with them. Even before the Commis-

sariat was created I was attached to the General Staff. The CNT was very interested in holding a commissariat or preventing a Communist from holding it. For this reason in the Frijola case Sanz and Gurrea with a rare unanimity agreed that the colonel and myself were at fault, insinuating that it was strange that he should have gone over to the enemy when it seemed that he was an active member of a certain party (Communist Party), which is false. Taking advantage of the situation, they put forward Gurrea for commissar of the sector, and he was turned down. And then to avoid having a Communist, the subcommissar named Tomás Sanz provisionally . . . and it is said that one of these days his appointment will probably be confirmed. The Rincon de Ademuz is a prize coveted by the CNT because among other reasons, it has produce and animals that they want so that their co-operatives<sup>4</sup> will not fail. At present the Supply Department is ours, which means free transportation for our co-operatives in the area (taking advantage of necessary trips one can justify the use of gasoline.) A few thousand pesetas are still around that can be useful to our organizations. This work, and that of Comrade Montesino who is in charge of Party work in the war zone, has meant that in spite of the enormous political backwardness of this district we are beginning to have an effect on these hamlets. With a FAI commissar in this village they will try to ruin everything, and the CNT District Committee would return to power. Do not forget that our proposal for change of commands that is still with the central General Staff has to be expedited. With our own commanders we could quickly transform this sector.

In July, 1938, the commissar of the 26th Division, Ricardo Rionda, was removed and arrested for refusing to distribute to the troops a newsletter edited by the Commissariat of the 11th Army Corps, commanded by the famous Communist Francisco Galán. The newsletter contained various articles about "Trotskyite traitors," referring to the soldiers of the dissolved 29th Division<sup>5</sup> who had joined the 26th Division. Commissar Rionda had also protested against the prohibition of the showing of the film, "The Three Bengal Lancers", featuring Gary Cooper, an actor who had expressed his sympathy for the cause of the Spanish people; and he had also protested the distribution of *Espionaje en España*, an anti-Trotskyite book written expressly to justify the repression against the POUM.

On March 25 the CNT National Committee approached the Minister of Defense to protest a meeting of Communist officers in



which discussions dealt, not with how best to defeat Franco's army, but rather with how to eliminate the soldiers of the Libertarian Movement. The meeting had been held in Torralba de Aragón in March, 1938. Here are the minutes:

The session begins at 10 in the morning with the words of the Division delegate, who delivers all kinds of orders for all kinds of struggle, and stresses the unavoidable necessity for everyone to work intensively for a more effective propaganda effort and the need at all costs for the propaganda effort to take place even in the trenches. Afterwards the delegate from Barbastro made his presentation, greeting all the comrades present and supporting the words of his predecessor. He then gave the meeting over to Sergeant Martin Galdós, who said, "I am accomplishing my mission little by little. The new recruits are quite passive, but I will get what I want out of them. The membership cards that I received are already distributed, and I need many more. The campaign I have undertaken calls for more speed in making and delivering the cards, but the battalion commissar is delaying my work because he will not allow party politics. I don't know what organization he belongs to since he always speaks in public as an antifascist and in the name of the popular republican government. I believe it is absolutely necessary for the healthy progress of this Battalion 565 that he be replaced or eliminated, because with him in it the Party will not be able to obtain any results in this Battalion."

Commander Menéndez spoke next: "Comrades, because I have recently joined this Brigade, I have little to tell you. First of all, my greetings to those present, and my assurances that for my part I will do everything in my power to follow and have followed the orders of our Party. There will always be facilities for propaganda in the unit under my command. As for the 565th Battalion, I can say that the orders cannot be followed there today. There are too many organizations, too many anticommunist soldiers. The commissar cannot continue one more day. He must be eliminated. We cannot tolerate a commissar like that, for he is blocking our work. With respect to the commander who replaced me, the one named Carrillo, he must be transferred. He is inept, a bumbler. He has stripes but does not deserve them. Simply speaking, who does he speak for? He is from the CNT."

He ended his speech by calling for direct action in these matters. The second in command of the Third Company of the 565th Battalion reported, "My Company is all right. Much work has been done.

But politically nothing can be done. I have a Commissar in the company I don't relate to at all. He is incapable. He spends all his time sleeping. The commissar of the Battalion, on the other hand, is doing a lot. He moves around a lot, although there are always two guards following him around with rifles — with all the rifles that are needed on the front lines! I think that he will be a great obstacle in accomplishing our orders, and for this reason, and in order to give a boost to our propaganda, he must be relieved."

Lieutenant José Peris reports: "Given what has been said by the comrades, I have little to add. My Company works hard. The head of the Brigade himself, in his last visit, congratulated me and gave me a radio. As for the Battalion commissar I have little to say. The Battalion line is very long. He comes often, gives talks, always of an antifascist nature, and following government lines; there is no party content. So this meeting should make its decision."

A. Merino, Chief of Staff, summarizes what has gone before and adds details that he has received, and everyone pledges to follow the new plan: First, the clear need to intensify propaganda. Second, the recruitment of new militants. Third, the immediate formation of "troikas" in the Companies. Fourth, swift reports on the activities of officers and commissars who are not members of the Party. Fifth, the immediate study of ways to transfer, relieve, or eliminate those who are not members. Sixth, holding meetings more frequently. Seventh, intensified discrediting of officers and commissars who are not Party members.

After ending the meeting he proposed once again the idea of elimination, saying, "Everything you say is well and good, but I think I have stated it clearly enough. He who is troublesome, during a visit to the trenches, an accidental shot, and he gets it. Or if not, take him to the barbed wire, four shots, the report is he deserted to the enemy, and we will see that it goes no farther."

Again, before leaving they swear for the action they are jointly undertaking, and the Division delegate adds "that tomorrow or day after tomorrow another meeting will be held attended by the head of the Division."

When they were leaving the Commissar of the Brigade and the one from the 568th compared their opinions on what was discussed, although the one from the Brigade didn't think it was wise for him to take part in it. (signed) Guillermo García, Command Post, March 17, 1938

Following are some specific cases taken from documents in the CNT and FAI archives:

On October 11 the captain and commissar of a company were shot without trial on the front, accused of having lost a position in a battle. The Commissar, Joaquín Rubio, belonged to the CNT.

Felipe Mingo and Antonio García, from the CNT and UGT, respectively, were shot on the Central front accused of taking a trip to the rearguard without permission. Such minor cases of indiscipline were usually punished with a few weeks of hard labour in a disciplinary company.

On May 25, 1938, two recently drafted young anarchists were absent without leave from a military instruction base in Catalonia. They were arrested three days later and shot.

At the beginning of 1937, in a village in the Central region near the front, some soldiers were shot for protesting a humiliating punishment imposed on two of their comrades for having gone on a brief escapade to the rear. Such misdemeanours were considered so inoffensive that those who committed them were called "tourists", not considered deserters.

The head of the 79th Brigade, the well-known anarchist, Miguel Arcas, was sentenced to death by a "troika". In order to disguise the crime, it was decided to assassinate at the same time the Commissar of the brigade, who was a Communist. The Commissar found out about the plot and in his own interest warned Arcas of their common danger.

A confederal battalion of the 70th Brigade was reinforced during a difficult encounter with the enemy. As soon as the reinforcements arrived the captain, Francisco Montes, shot the commissar of the confederal battalion in the back. The commissar, who at the time was urging his troops to battle, died instantly.

Juan Hervás and Jaime Trepát belonged to the dissolved 29th Division. When the repression began against POUM members, they joined the 141st Brigade under the command of the Communist Eduardo Barceló in a Signals company which had as its commissar an anarchist called José Meca. Commissar Meca and the Brigade commander were very much at odds. Although all kinds of Communist literature arrived without problem, the newspaper of the Catalan CNT, *Solidaridad Obrera*, was intercepted and burned. Since Meca, Hervás, and Trepát were ill-regarded for their political beliefs as anarchists and "trotskyists", it was natural that they should become close friends.

At a meeting of a "troika" it was decided to eliminate the three men. On March 15 or 16, 1938, when they were on the front line, they were called to the Brigade command post, several

kilometres in the rear. A telephone call advised them on the route they should take to arrive most quickly, a seldom used, inhospitable path. Meca, Hervás, and Trepát became suspicious and took some precautions. The first two went ahead, and the last waited before starting. About half way Trepát heard some submachine gun shots. Fearing the worst he made a detour and continued on his way. When he arrived at the command post the commander Barceló was very surprised to see him, and without further explanation ordered Trepát to be taken to a disciplinary brigade. The following day a brigade report stated, "The Commissar of Signals, José Meca, and soldier Juan Hervás have disappeared. It is assumed that they have deserted to the enemy or left the front." A day later another report said, "Soldier Jaime Trepát has disappeared. It is assumed that he deserted to the enemy or left the front."

The report of the FAI Peninsular Committee to the Plenary of the Libertarian Movement stated:

Our comrades have the feeling that no one is looking out for them, that they are at the mercy of the unhealthy policies of the Communist Party. It is not a question of a few identifiable cases, but rather of thousands and thousands of comrades who confess that they are more afraid of assassination by the enemy at their side than death in battle at the hands of the enemy in front of them.

On the Eastern Front the anarchists maintained the Young Libertarian organization intact. We have seen that at the 2nd Congress of the FIJL in Valencia delegates attended from the 26th and the 28th Divisions. Later, for reasons of discretion, the Young Libertarians of the Eastern Front adopted the name of the Durruti Cultural Groups.

On October 17, 1938, the Cultural Groups of the 26th Division wrote the CNT National Committee in no uncertain terms,

The case of the 153rd Brigade is the closest to us. The despotism of the officers, who are the worst soldiers; the overt activities of the Communists . . . have reached an intolerable extreme. It is a question of life and death for many comrades who are active militants in our Movement. The latest news . . . could not be more serious. The comrades in the 153rd Brigade are ready to sell their lives dearly. Their cause is our cause, and it is possible that our patience will run out if what is in everyone's interest to foresee and avoid in fact happens to our brothers in the 153rd."

The "*Tierra y Libertad*" anarchist column was formed in

Catalonia in the fall of 1936, and fought with determination in the defense of Madrid. At the time of militarization, it was transformed into the 153rd Brigade. In September, 1937, the Brigade took part in the offensive that took Belchite and put the loyalist forces within artillery range of Zaragoza. After the Aragon disaster in the spring of 1938 it was deprived of its commanders, as was the 24th Division, and then added to other divisions having Communist commanders, until it fell under the aegis of the 30th Division. The command of the Brigade and most of the officers were taken over by the Communists in a series of classic manoeuvres. Officers suspected of anarchism were removed, put on the available list or transferred to other units in distant fronts. For a number of pretexts the commanders, Teresa and Leal, were removed from their command. Leal had been the hero of the dangerous operation across the Segre River in August, 1938 in support of the Republican offensive on the Ebro. In October, 1938, the entire command staff of the Brigade was removed in favour of another staff named by General Sarabia. Some of those removed were sent to join the troops fighting the fierce battle of the Ebro.

Finally the inevitable occurred. One day the new commissar of the Brigade was assassinated. Was it a provocation to justify new reprisals? Was it in fact an act of desperation by anarchists? If we accept this second hypothesis it would appear that the avengers made a miscalculation, since the assassinated commissar apparently had not offended them in any way. What is undeniable is that the murder called down a new repression in which even inquisitors from the SIM participated. That is how the 153rd Brigade was finally conquered by the Communists.

It should be understood that the anarchists were far from willing victims. In May, 1938, troops of the 26th Division were finishing a period of reorganization and training away from the front before an important offensive. One day, some of the soldiers were assembled on a wide esplanade and a new chief of staff was introduced to them. Captain Navarrete, who had been named by the 9th Army Corps, was burning with desire to shape up that gang of undisciplined anarchists. Since, in addition to being a rabid Communist he had been an Assault Guard in the not so distant days of anarchist strikes and insurrections, Navarrete both feared and hated the revolutionaries who had given the guardians of order so much trouble. He delivered an insulting speech, taking issue with the inelegant appearance of the soldiers and officers. With insulting haughtiness he promised drastic measures to put them in their

place. Such an immoderate discourse almost provoked a mutiny among the more experienced soldiers, who quickly recognized in his rudeness the mark of a political enemy.

A few days later artillery could be heard and the offensive got underway along a line that stretched from Lerida to the foothills of the Pyrenees. The 26th Division was flanked by strong forces under command of prestigious Communist officers like Lister and Del Barrio. But the Communists did not advance, instead they suffered heavy losses. The anarchist soldiers were the only ones to break the enemy line, reconquer two villages and take almost a thousand prisoners and a large number of weapons, including hundreds of guns, machine guns and mortars.

Captain Navarrete, hardly able to believe his eyes, sought to explain the miracle, attributing it to his own skill in transforming undisciplined cowards into heroes. And although he tried to make amends there was no reconciliation. One night, while he was peacefully sleeping in his hut, stretched out on his laurels of victory, he was rudely awakened by an exploding bomb. Navarrete had to be evacuated, seriously wounded, without a chance to savour his victory.







*Prisoners of the Nationalists.*

## 24. The Last Bastion

The final defeat of Catalonia came at the end of a series of ill-starred manoeuvres on the part of the General Staff of the Republic. Franco's army, having reached the outskirts of Madrid in November, 1936, only to be stuck there, undertook three major offensives to surround the city completely: one in the north, to cut off the retreat of the militia defending the Guadarrama mountain passes; another in the southeast, to cut off communications between Madrid and Valencia; and another in the northeast, connected to the previous offensive, to complete the circle. This last included the Battle of Guadalajara, begun by huge numbers of Italian troops equipped with an impressive array of weapons and ending in their ignominious defeat in March, 1937.

After the defeat at Guadalajara the rebels decided to end the war in the North before launching another offensive against Madrid. Republican resistance in the North ended in October, 1937. Immediately after the fall of Asturias Franco's high command shifted its experienced forces from the North to the new front at Guadalajara. But his offensive could not begin, because the Republicans began their own at Teruel. It is possible that this offensive saved Madrid, but it had the disadvantage of attracting the operational army of the rebels to one of the most dangerously strategic points in the Republican zone; the coastal corridor between Castellon and Sagunto, threatened since July, 1936, by the Teruel offensive.

If they sought to divert the attack on Madrid, why did they choose Teruel, which was relatively close to the planned offensive of the enemy, instead of attacking by way of Extremadura? In Extremadura the situation was reversed. There the Republican posi-

tions, located a few kilometers from the Portuguese frontier, threatened communications between rebel positions in the north and south.

The battle of Teruel had a logical outcome, given the superior strength of the rebels. It was a battle of attrition, in which those with the least strength had the most to lose. Once they had recovered from their surprise (the rebel high command was surprised precisely because of the absurdity of the Republican manoeuvre), the rebels could easily reinforce their positions with the reserves they held ready nearby. The upshot was that Teruel was retaken and Republican forces thrown back behind their original positions.

After the lull that follows every engagement, believing, perhaps justifiably, that the Republicans would concentrate their forces around Teruel to protect the coastal corridor, the rebels mounted a three part offensive: one from Zaragoza toward the sea along the right bank of the Ebro; another across the Ebro toward Lerida; and a general offensive along the entire Huasca front. In the first week of April Franco's troops reached the ocean at Benicarlo and then turned toward Valencia, following the narrow plain between the mountains and the Mediterranean. In Catalonia the advance was stalled in a line running from the Catalan Pyrenees along the Noguera Pallaresa, Segre, Cinca and Ebro Rivers.<sup>1</sup>

Franco's high command turned its back once more on Catalonia as it chose the best locations to defend its recent conquests. Once more it became preoccupied with the conquest of the Central region. But the Republican general staff, no less obstinate, soon caused it to change strategy.

At the end of June the Republican general staff set up its next plan of operations. 1. Resistance in Levante — defence of Valencia. 2. Offensive on the Ebro. 3. Attack on Extramadura. The Extramadura operation was postponed and then preempted as the rebels attacked there on July 19, occupying 1,000 square kilometers of land and 24 of the best villages of the region.

Stubbornly maintaining its strategy of drawing the war to Catalonia, the Republican command began the battle of the Ebro on schedule. It was the largest battle of the Spanish civil war. Both sides were prodigal with men and material. Casualties were enormous. Those of the Republican side were officially estimated at 70,000 — the equivalent of all the reserves available in the Catalan region. Franco must have understood this when he decided to finish off the front. Valencia had been saved, but Catalonia would be lost, and with it, the war. The battle of the Ebro ended

November 15, 1938. On December 23, Franco began his general offensive. On January 26, 1939, a starving and demoralized Barcelona resigned itself to defeat. On February 10 Franco's troops planted their banner on the last stretch of the Pyrenees. Republican troops that had not fallen prisoner or perished sought refuge in France along with masses of civilians. French concentration camps were the reward for about half a million refugees who had dreamed of liberty and sacrificed everything for the international antifascist cause.

The café military strategists who joked at the beginning of the war about the indiscipline and ineptitude of the popular militia have at their disposal striking evidence of the tactical and strategic blunders committed by the general staff once the army was militarized. Operations leading to the division of the Mediterranean sector and later the defeat of Catalonia were the work of the loyalist high command. It planned the offensives, the battles of attrition that only wasted its own soldiers and played into the hands of the enemy.

During the general offensive against Catalonia the difference in men and materials was evident. The defenders lacked reserves and most of the fighting units were incomplete. Brigades were reduced to battalions, divisions to brigades, and so on. The Republican high command was unable to realize that if Catalonia fell the central zone would be isolated, and the war would be as good as over. The reasons were simple. Catalonia was the industrial zone of the Republic, where most of the war industries were located and where the specialized workers were living. And Catalonia was the most important port in Spain, as well as the Republic's last frontier with France and Europe.

It is not known whether so many errors were committed out of military ineptitude, or following the secret designs of a "friendly" great power. By 1938 Russia wanted to disengage itself as soon as possible from the Spanish struggle for very self-interested reasons of wider strategy — the policy of alliance with Germany that culminated in the Russian-German Pact of August, 1939.

In January, 1939, the government decreed a general mobilization. Had the decree been fully enforced all organizations and parties would have had to shut down for lack of militants, so it was seen by some people as a political manoeuvre against certain organizations and parties. The suspicion was fostered by the impossibility of a truly general mobilization. At most, there were weapons available for 50% of the conscripts. The decree also

placed all economic activities under military supervision, which threatened the gains of the revolution. Anarchists and syndicalists tried to have a given number of militants of all groups exempted from the mobilization decree, as had been done since the start of the war. In an FAI Plenary on January 19, 1939, a delegate declared,

The decrees are politically motivated and harmful to the organization and the country in general. The [FAI] Centre will not accede in any way to the dismemberment of the Movement, and if the government will not allow the exemption of enough members, the Movement will exempt them in spite of official orders.

Apparently the Secretariat of Armaments, which controlled the war industries, blindly mobilized workers of all industries. In the FAI Plenary a delegate from the Central region maintained that the mobilization would paralyze 55% of the industries. In the factories government representatives constantly threatened workers with the Code of Military Justice. The delegate stated, "As long as they do not guarantee that there will be enough weapons, we will seek to have the mobilization annulled."

However, this opposition was not shared by other political groups or the UGT, nor was it unanimous within the Libertarian Movement. From January 20 to 23, 1939, a National Plenary of Regionals of the Libertarian Movement was held in Valencia. At the beginning of the session on January 23, delegates were informed that a state of war had been declared for the entire country. The rebels began their insurrection by declaring a state of war, thus placing all political and civilian activities under martial law in the territory they controlled, but, in the 32 months of fighting, the Republic had not made such a declaration until this time.

Because of the military situation, neither the Catalan union and anarchist organizations nor the National and Peninsular Committees could be present. The CNT National Committee was reported in the Plenary to have agreed to the decrees, in spite of their rejection by the FAI Peninsular Committee. The CNT delegate from Levante thought that rejecting the mobilization would facilitate Marxist dominance in the military command structure; that had happened in 1936 when the Movement contested the militarization of the militia. "What we should do," he said, "is to lead the mobilization, because I do not think it is a political manoeuvre." A committee was sent to question General Miaja, head of the Army Group of the Centre-South zone, who said he was ready to draft 50% of the workers.



A further split developed between the CNT and FAI subcommittees when the CNT members maintained their support for the programme outlined by their Secretary-General in the Plenary of the previous October. The FAI criticized him for not having put into effect the agreements of the Plenary, particularly the agreed to Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement. At the FAI's urging the Liaison Committee was finally set up on January 30, 1939 and it was agreed to do everything possible to have certain officers replaced. For example, so that General Miaja could be removed from the Army High Command, to which he had been named by Negrín during the tragic events in Catalonia, he would be made Inspector-General of the Army and Colonel Segismundo Casado, a man trusted by the CNT and FAI, would be proposed as head of the Army Corps. A Supreme War Council (composed of parties and organizations) would be set up for fiscal administration.

On February 1 the Secretaries of the three branches of the Libertarian Movement sent General Miaja a letter that was very significant in this respect,

The military authorities that today are in charge of governmental functions cannot carry out their tasks efficiently without the help of all antifascist organizations; their existence and authority cannot be minimized or ignored without risking unfavourable consequences for the antifascist cause. And so we consider it our duty to suggest that Your Excellency set up a broad, permanent contact with the authorized national representatives of the antifascist organizations of the Centre-South region.

The anarchists reported on February 3 that General Miaja promised them that he would shortly create a national organism for all antifascist groups. Generals Menéndez and Matallana were contacted by the anarchists to put pressure on Miaja in this respect. The CNT, which was less demanding in these matters and at times confused its wishes with reality, repeated rumours or government-planted falsehoods to the effect that the United States was about to abandon its position of neutrality and, even more naïvely, that abundant arms shipments were about to arrive at the Central Zone from the United States.

On February 10 and 11 a new Plenary of Regionals of the Libertarian Movement was held. It was reported that almost 35,000 requests for draft exemptions had been presented to the Group of Armies. Furthermore, General Miaja had completely

dismissed any control on the part of the organizations and parties, sticking to the position that he alone was the government, and that he did not wish to share political or military authority with anyone. He even came to the point of saying that he would not hand his power over to Negrín, unless Negrín was accompanied by the President of the Republic. "We have to let Miaja know," said one delegate, "that 150,000 anarchist rifles are not to be trifled with." But other organizations and parties did not take the same firm stand as the Libertarian Movement.

A delegation was sent by plane to Catalonia for information, but it could not land there, and had to land in Toulouse instead. It reported, among other things,

As a result of the fascists' advance on Barcelona there has been a demoralization in the groups and parties, including the government itself. This attitude caused people to think that all was lost and not to bother with an effective resistance which would not have been able to clear up the situation, but which would have permitted a more ordered retreat with a smaller loss of men and weapons.

In the second session of this Plenary a delegate reported that the government was in the zone negotiating a settlement of the war. The Defense Section of the Central Region contradicted the CNT National Subcommittee (which denied the possibility of a Communist coup d'état), saying "The naming of Miaja as General-in-Chief is very significant. He did not delay in issuing suspicious orders." The Plenary agreed to visit Negrín and put "the situation as bluntly as necessary" to him.

The Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement repeatedly asked Negrín for this meeting. When they were turned down they wrote an energetic letter. Negrín replied accepting, but on condition that he be sent another "more polite" visiting card. When this was done he received them. Forseeing an attack, he craftily took the offensive himself. He began by rejecting the FAI representative (Grunfeld) on the grounds that Grunfeld was an Argentinian and therefore not able to discuss internal Spanish matters. Grunfeld replied that he was not there as an individual, but as a representative. Negrín backed down when the delegation threatened to walk out, but his objective had been achieved. Apparently the authentically Spanish delegates could not muster enough courage to speak to Negrín on an equal basis. Negrín, of course, had had no scruples in talking to other foreigners, notably



the Russians, about the private affairs of the Republic, and had even shared State secrets with them.

The Defense Secretary of the Libertarian Movement, in his February 14 circular, which informed the organization of the loss of Catalonia, gave his impression of the talk with Negrín.

In this conversation Negrín led us to believe that the abundant and valuable material evacuated from the Catalan zone could be recovered, and expressed the hope that a prolonged resistance in our zone could weaken the cause of international fascism . . . Given the inaccuracy of these statements, our Movement has adopted an attitude of extreme vigilance regarding political contingencies from now on.

On February 15th a meeting of the CNT Central Region organization with national representatives was informed of the arrival of the CNT Minister, Segundo Blanco, who carried with him signed instructions from the Secretaries of the CNT National Committee and the FAI Peninsular Committee in exile in France. This document said that Azaña and Negrín had reached an agreement to put an end to the war and that the Mexican government had agreed to accept 30,000 "select" families of those most compromised. It recommended that energies be focused on rescuing the activists and that the government get as many foreign ships as possible to carry out the evacuation; that they demand a role in the government commission in charge of this work; that the commission not deviate from the idea of saving the most compromised militants; that everything possible be done to charter a boat exclusively for the evacuation of "our militants". Until they were able to send a direct delegation to the Centre-South zone, the Subcommittees were to exercise maximum "organic authority". It also recommended that the CNT, FAI and FIJL work together as the Libertarian Movement in order to avoid duplication of efforts.

On the 16th a meeting of the Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement was held in Madrid, possibly a continuation of the previous one. Lieutenant Colonel Cipriano Mera was called to the meeting and accused of having taken "positions and making decisions on his own account" and of letting himself be influenced by another person who, although it is Casado, is not the Organization." Mera energetically defended himself. He presented himself as a disciplined member, and denied the charge that he was subordinate to the head of the army. He, in turn, at-

tacked: "The committees should stick to their responsibilities; their failure, in any revolutionary situation, is paid for by being shot."

Mera was told that the organization should work in a compact, co-ordinated way. While certain negotiations were going on, other decisions could not be made. All paths had to be explored; any false step could provoke a disaster, for which all the enemies would blame the anarchists. There was no alternative to supporting Negrín or whatever government, as long as they were closely watched. Mera's help was counted on.

Mera insisted that he lacked confidence in the committees. He gave as an example the conduct of some of the delegates during the meeting with Negrín:

The commission carried with them concrete resolutions of the Organization. It had been decided to speak to Negrín as one power to another. Instead, Negrín impugned one of the comrades on the pretext that he was a foreigner, and the commission meekly gave in. Men and organizations have to answer to history for their deeds.

Mera left the meeting, and the Subcommittee continued its deliberations. "It was also agreed," read the minutes of the meeting, "that Negrín will be told, by way of Blanco, that he would not be permitted to give any posts to the generals and commissars arriving from France. It was also agreed that the Defense Commission of the Central Region should meet with Col. Casado to inform him directly of our position, and prevent Modesto, Lister, or any Communist from being set up in any command in the army."

On the 22nd, a meeting of the FAI Peninsular Committee (so called because the powers had been transferred to it from the other committee which was trapped in France) raised the question of "the equivocal position of the Minister Segundo Blanco, suspected of favouring Negrinist policies," and "the inferiority complex of certain comrades in their official capacities, among them the Secretary of the CNT National Subcommittee himself." Given the "uselessness of Segundo Blanco as a minister and as defender of the interests of the Movement, definitive solutions had to be adopted."

On February 25, 1939, in the meeting of the National Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement, the FAI opened its attack.

The President of the government is fooling our Minister, who in turn

is fooling us. We must put an end to all this. The Communist Party is putting its pawns in place. We are lost if we wait to act after everything has happened. There is no chance of an honourable peace with this government. There is no alternative but to form a new government or a Defense Junta that we can trust.<sup>2</sup>

In another meeting of the Liaison Committee, held February 26 in Madrid, the FAI continued to accuse the CNT of having private relations with the government by way of Segundo Blanco. The meeting agreed to propose to the Popular Front, composed of all parties and organizations, the formation of a Supreme War Council based on the Popular Front model, and the appointment of Colonel Casado as the chief of the Central General Staff.

At the request of the CNT the three national committees of the Libertarian Movement met at the beginning of March; no longer were they called subcommittees. The CNT National Committee began by attacking the Liaison Committee of the Libertarian Movement for hindering decision making. It proposed that one committee only, that of the CNT, be granted executive responsibility, with the aid of the other two. The FIJL Peninsular Committee replied, "The National Committee of the CNT should come out and say what it wants: to monopolize the direction of the Libertarian Movement." The FAI, for its part, accused the CNT of being in open revolt: "At this moment the National Committee wants us to become its accomplices in the non-fulfillment of the accords of the Organization, and is declaring its revolt against those accords."

On March 3 another meeting was held, attended by the minister, Segundo Blanco, who gave a rather contradictory report on the situation. He reported the resignation of President Azaña, and that his successor, Speaker of the House, Martínez Barrio, refused to return to Spain. He confirmed that France and England had recognized Franco. "As for the military situation," he added, "nobody with any common sense can hope for a definitive victory." He said that fears of a Communist takeover were unfounded and so any hasty action should be avoided; that the evacuation of militants from organizations and parties was being organized; and that the civil governors had been instructed to issue passports.

In the discussion following his report, it was agreed that the speech that the head of the government was going to make should be free of personal or demagogic content. In regard to the military situation the FAI proposed that the Movement's security plan be put into effect. This meant reorganizing the Central Command

under Colonel Segismundo Casado; creating the Supreme War Council; reorganizing the Commissariat; and replacing the Commissar-General, Jesús Hernández, and Army Subsecretary, Antonio Cordón.

Negrín and his ministers arrived in the Centre-South region accompanied by the Communist high command, composed of Lister, Modesto, La Pasionaria, Tagüena, Francisco Galán, Valentín González and others; the Military General Staff remained in Toulouse. What were Negrín's objectives? What were those of the Communists? Negrín was perhaps sincere when he said he was ready to continue the resistance in order to reach an honourable peace with the enemy. He may also have been sincere in his belief in the imminence of an international conflict. But none of this ruled out the possibility that he might seek a glorious place in history without much personal risk. For Negrín was the opposite of a romantic. His glory could not be that of a romantic suicide at the head of his people: he had his escape well arranged to insure against whatever setback.

The Kremlin, having long since abandoned the Republic militarily, knew better than anyone that its days were numbered. They knew in Moscow that the inevitable victory of Franco would open an abyss in Spanish history. It was a question for them, perhaps, of saving the future reputation of Spanish Communism, at present so blemished, by means of a final resistance under the hammer and sickle. It would be a resistance down to the last foot of earth, the last man, the last cartridge. In addition to having a great propaganda value in contemporary international circles, this defense would leave an indelible impression on future generations.

To attain their objectives, Negrín and his Communists needed close control of political and military power. The Communists especially needed to eliminate political opposition and the first stage of the process was slander. During the worst of the Catalan military disasters, the Party issued a series of calumnies against its adversaries, especially Largo Caballero, whom it accused of cowardice, treason and murder. When *Mundo Obrero* arrived in the Centre-South zone it continued this vile campaign against "those responsible for the loss of Catalonia", despite censorship. When the newspaper was banned, the campaign was continued by means of printed manifestos.<sup>3</sup>

When he arrived in the Centre-South zone, Negrín held a long meeting with Col. Casado. The Chief of the Army of the Centre informed the president of the desperate situation in the Madrid sec-

tor. There was not even milk for babies. The few war industries lacked power, prime materials and means of transportation. The people would be obliged to give in if the enemy succeeded in cutting communications with Valencia. The soldiers lacked clothing and were hungry. Their morale was very low, for the loss of Catalonia had deeply affected them. They had few reserves, and those inexperienced and poorly armed. The enemy had marshalled near Madrid a force estimated at 32 divisions, with masses of artillery and tanks.

Negrín replied that he had 600 planes, 500 artillery pieces and 10,000 machine guns at his disposal . . . in France. He said the same thing to the heads of the other Armies, Air Force and Navy. According to him, the Catalan army could be counted on (in fact it had been disarmed and thrown into concentration camps in France), but most of the commanders seriously urged him to begin peace negotiations.<sup>4</sup>

From this response, Negrín realized that the earth was giving way under his feet and he would have to begin preparations for a coup-d'état, perhaps already foreseen, which he would disguise as a reorganization of the command structure. General Matallana would be named the head of the Central General Staff; Col. Modesto, promoted to General, would replace Col. Casado in the Army of the Centre; Lieutenant Colonel Galán would be installed in Cartagena as head of the Naval Base.

At the end of February the most select of the anarchist militants of the Central Region met to create a Regional Defense Committee composed of military, statistics, political police, propaganda, economic advice, transport, and other divisions. A few days later the same anarchists presented to Col. Casado the need for a National Defense Council in opposition to Negrín's government. Casado would be in charge of gathering sympathetic military forces.

At the same time Negrín went on the offensive. He began by inviting Casado to Valencia, telling him to leave his command in the hands of a Communist, Col. Ortega. But Casado, suspicious, handed command over to his own chief of staff and took advantage of the trip to contact all the chiefs of the other Armies, in order to reach an agreement. On his return to Madrid he compared notes with the anarchist leader of the 4th Army Corps, Cipriano Mera, his closest collaborator. These suspicious activities soon reached the ear of Negrín, who once again called in Col. Casado. Casado knew that this time he would be arrested, and warned Miaja and

Matallana, who had also been called in, of his suspicions. On that day the orders were published promoting Modesto to General and naming Vega, Tagüeña, and Galán as the military commanders of Alicante, Murcia and Cartagena, respectively. Negrin sent Galán to Cartagena because he had received word that Admiral Buiza and a number of officers and commissars were conspiring with Casado.

Galán's appointment had serious repercussions: the naval squadron declared itself in revolt, causing a confusion which some fifth columnists were able to take advantage of to gain control of some forts. The uprising was finally overcome, but as a precaution the fleet set out to sea. Once it was in the Mediterranean the French government suggested that it take refuge in the Tunisian port of Bizerta. The French government handed the fleet over to Franco immediately after the war. It had taken the fleet to its own ports in the first place in order to tip the balance of naval forces in the Mediterranean in its favour. This treacherous manoeuvre was a veritable disaster for the general evacuation.

Negrin pressed Casado to come to his residence. Casado knew that if he did not rebel at once he would be a prisoner of the Communists. Consequently, in the early evening of March 4, the conspirators installed themselves in the basement of the most solid building in Madrid, the former Ministry of Housing. At 11:30 an anarchist brigade arrived to take up strategic positions in its defence. At midnight, after the announcer had read the military news on Radio Spain, the members of the Council of Defense read their proclamation on the radio:

...As revolutionaries, as proletariat, as Spaniards, and as antifascists we cannot continue passively accepting the lack of foresight, the ineptitude, the lack of organization, and the absurd slowness that Señor Negrin has demonstrated. Several weeks have passed since the war in Catalonia ended in a general desertion. While the people sacrificed hundreds of thousands of their best sons, the men who demanded resistance were deserting their posts. This cannot go on. While the people are preparing to fight to the death, we cannot allow their leaders to prepare for a comfortable flight. To avoid all this... a National Council of Defense has been formed to take up the power thrown away by the government of Dr. Negrin. Dr. Negrin's government lacks any constitutional basis. We proclaim that we will not desert, nor will we tolerate desertion. We promise that no one will leave Spain until everyone who wants to

can leave. Dr. Negrín has said, "Either we are all saved, or all of us perish." Well, then, the National Council of Defense proposes to put these words into effect. To that end we request your help, and for our part we will be inexorable with those who seek to avoid their duties."<sup>5</sup>

The Council was made up of the following persons: President, General Miaja (who learned what was happening by radio); Defense, Col. Casado; Foreign Affairs, Julián Besteiro (all three were presented as without party affiliation); Interior, Wenceslao Carrillo (Socialist Party); Housing and Agriculture, González Marín (CNT); Justice, M. Sanandrés (Republican); Education, José del Río (Republican); Communications and Public Works, Eduardo Val (CNT); Labour, Antonio Pérez (UGT).

Negrín also learned of the radio proclamation of the National Council of Defense. He called Casado at once, first with threats, then with hypocritical flattery. Casado replied that he was allowing three hours for General Matallana to be set free or all the members of the government would be shot. Matallana was immediately freed. Members of the government and parliament immediately boarded planes and left Spain. No less hastily, leaders of the Spanish Communist Party and the remainder of the Comintern departed. Negrín and his Communists installed themselves in a village near the port of Alicante and the Cartagena naval base. This was called the Yuste Position and was ringed with airfields and guarded by sympathetic military forces.

After proclaiming the Council of Defense, Col. Casado sounded out Lieut. Col. Barceló, Bueno, and Col. Ortega, chiefs of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Army Corps, respectively. The first expressed his unconditional loyalty to the Defense Council, the second replied vaguely and the third asked for time to think things over. Casado concluded that he could only count on the 4th Corps commanded by the anarchist Cipriano Mera; as it turned out, Barceló was the first to begin the counterattack.<sup>6</sup> In Levante, where three of the Army Corps leaders were Communists, a column of armoured cars approaching Valencia was stopped and the situation quickly stabilized. In Extremadura and Andalusia the counterattack was also checked.

So the battle was confined to the Central region. On the morning of March 5, a division of the 1st Army Corps entered Madrid with tanks and artillery. In the Guadalajara sector the enemies of the Council took over the capital and the town of Torrejon de Ardoz. On the 7th the battle was hard fought.



Barceló's troops occupied the centre of the capital and surrounded the Council members. Casado was forced to call on Mera for reinforcements, and Mera sent his 14th Division largely composed of anarchists to Madrid. These forces, having put down the mutinies in Guadalajara and Torrejón, entered Madrid and fell on the rear of the Communists, taking thousands of prisoners. In the centre of the city the battle went on fiercely. Things did not change until the 10th, when the headquarters of the 3rd Division surrendered and Ortega offered to speak to Barceló and Bueno about surrender. They said they would surrender if their lives were spared, their newspaper allowed to appear, and a delegate from the Party made a member of the Council. This last condition was not accepted but lives of those who had not committed crimes would be respected. Consequently Lieut. Col. Barceló and his Commissar Conesa were shot for having killed in reprisal a number of pro-Casado military officers. With the last Communist offensive liquidated, the next step was to negotiate peace.

On March 7 the CNT, FAI and FIJL merged their respective national committees in a National Committee of the Libertarian Movement. Most urgent necessities were termination of the war with an honourable peace, relations with the Council of Defense and what to do about the Communist Party. This last question was postponed until the end of the street-fighting. "We have justification," said Juan López, Secretary of the new National Committee, "for eliminating the Communists, as well as the Republicans and Socialists, who have been the cause of our failure. But we have no wish to exterminate any party. The Communist Party should join the Popular Front, and help the Council, but without a share of the power."

In case the peace negotiations were fruitless the following measures were to be taken: evacuate the militants, preserve the values of the Movement, and leave a clandestine organization in place. During seven days of street fighting negotiations were impossible and did not begin until the 12th when Franco agents spontaneously appeared for this purpose.

The National Committee of the Libertarian Movement met again on the 16th to consider the negotiations of peace which "if not obtained will force us to consider how to save our moral and material values." There was little time to lose; if an honourable peace could not be obtained, a desperate resistance would have to be organized. Two members of the Council, Val and Marín, attended the meeting and claimed that the Council had sent a delega-

tion abroad to prepare for the evacuation. All Communist periodicals were suspended and Communist Party leaders were given 6 days to state their position; those not choosing to support the Movement would be given passports to leave Spain. The SIM was reorganized and Lieut. Col. Mera transferred to the Army of Extremadura. Councillor González Marín was delegated by the Council to send commissions to Paris, London, and Mexico. (Those taking part in these commissions were named by the Libertarian Movement the following day.) It had been agreed that CNT and FAI committee members already in France would not be used for these tasks, but instead were to return to the Centre-South region, along with a great number of militants, as soon as possible.

On March 17, 1939, the Communists distributed a manifesto among the soldiers which said,

...The repression against the Communist Party continues. The Defense Council has opened talks with our Central Committee. The Party has proposed the following conditions: The establishment of unity; immediate freedom for the Party; freedom for our prisoners, and their return to their offices; a worthy and honourable peace that assures the independence of Spain. If the Council does not accept these conditions the Party will fight it with all that that implies.

The leaflet ends saying,

Prepare yourselves for everything, to impede the capitulation and betrayal of the people and, above all, the Communists... Contradict all the slanders against the Party. Make it understood that the formation of the Council is a manoeuvre of international capitalism to liquidate the conquests of the people, enslave it and eliminate the Communists, its best defense... We will obtain a worthy and honourable peace with unity and the will to resist...

As of the 13th the Council already knew Franco's conditions for surrender. They could not have been more severe; the only condition for peace was unconditional surrender. The caudillo would be generous to those who had been misled and those who did not commit crimes. If they wished, such persons could emigrate. Those imprisoned would be freed as soon as they paid for their crimes. There would be no signed promises.

The Defense Council fully understood the significance of this note. The only solution was a holding action that would permit evacuation. To buy time, they sought to negotiate with Franco on the basis of his memorandum. They did not receive the go-ahead

until the 19th, and on March 23rd two Republican officials arrived at Burgos to negotiate.

On the 22nd the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement issued an extensive manifesto to its members and to workers in general. It answered the accusations contained in the Communist Communiqué and the "precipitate declarations of enthusiasm for totalitarianism" of false antifascists:

Whoever has profascist sentiments cannot remain at liberty. He who by his words and deeds seeks to weaken the morale of our fighters or the security of our home front must be judged and condemned... with all the severity of the laws of war... [The Libertarian Movement] has the moral courage to declare publicly the advantages of a peace that avoids further bloodshed [which would not be] a situation of every person for himself [but rather] an honourable solution that permits everyone who so desires to leave Spain and protects from reprisals those who stay.

On the same day, in accord with the Council, the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement arranged for two comrades to leave immediately for France with Col. Romero, on matters relating to supplies, and the commission to Mexico was postponed. In another meeting of the Libertarian Movement, held two days later, the anarchist councillors reported on the Burgos peace talks. The Council emissaries had been unable to discuss any condition. The Francoists had merely given them a document calling for an unconditional surrender much more severe than the first one. They would not agree to signed promises, and offered no guarantee other than the very vague one that the caudillo had only the best of intentions.

At the same meeting the anarchist councillors reported in detail the latest memorandum of Franco, a series of orders for surrender. On March 25 the Republican airforce should surrender symbolically at certain designated airfields. "We told them," the councillor added, "that we would not surrender without a signed agreement. The enemy confirmed the concessions made on February 28 to respect all lives, with the exception of those whom they considered criminals."

The anarchist councillors were sent back to the Council that afternoon with the following instructions from the Movement meeting:

Demand [that the Franco authorities] sign a document, pact or agreement, which stipulates the conditions under which peace must

be established, in accord with the bases that we initially presented. Without such a guarantee it will be necessary to break off negotiations and prepare for a bloody defense of our interests, lives and liberty.

At the request of the anarchist councillors another meeting was held March 26. The Republican emissaries had gone to Burgos again with new proposals. When the meeting began, Franco asked by telephone whether the airforce had surrendered as demanded on the day before. When the reply was negative, without listening to the technical reasons that made the surrender impossible, he ordered that the talks be broken off.

In spite of the opposition of the anarchist representatives, the Council decided on the symbolic surrender of the airforce, and so informed Burgos by radio message. The reply was that since a general offensive had begun that same morning, there was no other action possible except to raise the white flag. On the same day the National Committee of the Libertarian Movement suggested a measured retreat to the coast: "We should not forget that we will be attacked everywhere by fifth columnists." At that very moment they learned that the enemy offensive had easily broken the Andalusian front.

On March 27 the anarchist councillors informed the National Committee that the enemy was meeting little resistance on the Andalusian front. Within the Council of Defense a debate was going on about a radio broadcast that spoke of evacuation.

The broadcast is dangerous because it is demoralizing. Talk of evacuation is intended to prevent collective panic, but in fact it does not. After its victorious advance, a new note to the enemy camp would be useless. The policy of the Council is mistaken. Only after a hard-fought resistance will we be able to approach them for talks.

The issuing of passports broke the will to resist. There were even cases of hysterical flight among the anarchists. "On all fronts," said the councillor Marín, "desertions multiply. Every day airplanes take off with officers, especially Communists. The people do not want to struggle. The enemy attacks, and the soldiers do not react. We have tried without success to stop those in flight. If we are not ready for another Numancia . . . we can at least save our militants. Let us make a list of those who should be saved. Let us concentrate our forces at a point and organize resistance around that point."

The concrete agreement of that meeting was to form a Council

of Evacuation. But the meeting continued into the afternoon, when it was learned that the Defense Council had decided to form Evacuation Councils in all the Armies. Those compromised from the Central Zone, who were the most threatened, would leave first. Apparently there were four large ships anchored in the Valencia harbour. As much money as possible would be gathered for the evacuees, who were estimated to be 40,000 persons. Each Evacuation Council would receive a portion of the money. Wherever the enemy attacked ground would be yielded slowly as people were evacuated. In Valencia full passports would be issued, but only to persons who were compromised, not to their friends and relatives.

On the 28th the evacuation of compromised people from Madrid began. By the next morning all the Armies of the Republic were effectively dissolved. The soldiers abandoned their trenches and fraternized with those of the enemy camp. The fraternization at times took the form of songs and dances. This was the simple and generous peace of soldiers. The peace of the General Staffs and the military and political high commands would be very different.

In Valencia, jammed with militants of all parties and organizations, with military and civilians from all cities and fronts, the Evacuation Council was more symbolic than effective. On the 29th messages were sent to the heads of all the democratic States asking for visas and means of evacuation. Those offered by certain consulates were for select personalities. The possibilities of evacuation could not have been more doubtful. In Valencia itself fifth columnists showed themselves openly and already took over positions in buildings and public offices. The transmission of powers took place with a degree of cordiality, proof that without the morbid spur of the rebel authorities — military and ecclesiastical, Falangist and Carlist — the coming of peace itself would have disarmed all hatred.

Alicante was the farthest port from the battle front. For that reason, and because it was confirmed that boats were anchored there, or because a certain amount of credit was given to General Franco's verbal promises, most of the evacuees went there. They were also counting on international sentiment. A caravan composed of hundreds of vehicles, preceded by a military detachment headed for the port of salvation, which was soon converted into a frenetic warren. Very few of those desperate people, whether they arrived early or late, were able to leave Spain. The few ships anchored there were outside the territorial limits. They were waiting in vain for guarantees from the French or the English fleet that

would enable them to draw up to the docks under a flag that would be respected. It was said that Negrin's government still had 1,150,000 tons of ships under contract in France until May, but that at the last minute the shippers preferred to transfer their contracts to the government of General Franco. Business was business. Much of the French press still spread the notion that the Spaniards who sought refuge in France were common murderers instead of political expatriots. The French government let the hours go by without acting, on the pretext that the Minister of the Interior had not authorized the disembarkation of evacuees in France. The ships, as we have said, had been outside of Alicante since March 29. In Gandia French and British warships agreed to take aboard only the members of the Defense Council, and to compound the farce they also took aboard 169 Italian fascists, whom they left at Palma de Mallorca.

On April 4 the Italian armoured troops under General Gambara entered the port of Alicante. Did they do it on their own? Did they want to win a last victory from those who had defeated them two years back at Guadalajara? Or did General Franco want to be able to blame the Italians for this cruel and shameful manoeuvre, in order to attenuate his responsibility in the face of history?

More than 4,000 proven antifascists were imprisoned at Alicante. For most of them the justice of Franco was death. Many of them chose to commit suicide. Franco had declared that he had the names of a million Republicans guilty of criminal acts. Those who committed suicide did so not out of fear of Franco's justice, but rather to spit out their shame in the face of a so-called civilized and democratic world which coldly watched the worst political crime in contemporary political history. Those men, mixed in a jumble of prisoners from all the villages and cities, were piled into jails, bull rings, and improvised concentration camps. There they waited for a minute selection process undertaken by bloodthirsty Falangists accompanied by informers. The "marked" prisoners were separated and beaten with staves. The whole time prisoners were obliged to form into single files, and vultures hungry for carrion passed them in review, to pull out their chosen victim with kicks and punches. The victim was the secretary of a union, the executive of a collective, the mayor, the councilman, the deputy. The informer was the owner whose land or factory had been expropriated, or the brother, son, or father of someone who was shot. Those chosen were handed over to those who asked for them like animals in a weird cattle market. The beatings did not preclude

court martial and execution. Many went to their death already wrecked. These atrocious settlings of accounts were worst, most savage and bloody, with prisoners coming from villages. The diffuse mass of prisoners of war, who did not merit the honour of being shot got heavy sentences in the stockade, fell into a slavery known only in ancient times. Formed into forced labour battalions until the end of the Second World War, under the constant menace of the whip, the pistol, and the machine gun, they rebuilt bridges, built highways, raised churches and mausoleums worthy of the Pharoahs.

During interminable decades a third of the population of Spain would purge its great crime behind the walls of jails or stockades, with the pain of the body and the beating of their bones in the police stations, with death by the cemetery wall, with hunger and with humiliation. Their great crime was to have been the first nation to stand up to international fascism. Alone in all the world, the Spanish people had taken this stand against the Black Death of the 20th century.



# Notes

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>Federico Urales, *Mi vida*. Vol.2, Barcelona, 1929-1930.

<sup>2</sup>F. Tarrida de Màrmol, *Les inquisiteurs d'Espagne*, Paris, 1897, 344 pp.

<sup>3</sup>The Instituto Libre de Enseñanza (The Free Institute for Education) was founded in Spain by Francisco Giner de los Rios when 19th century Restoration politicians made life impossible for some professors in the official universities. Under the influence of the Catholic Church the government tried to purge all atheists and professors faithful to an educational mission that did not follow the official line. The Instituto acquired its own buildings and the services of many distinguished professors.

<sup>4</sup>*Congreso de constitución de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT), Ediciones "CNT", Toulouse, 1959, 48 pp.

<sup>5</sup>It is not yet clear, for lack of access to Spanish archives, whether or not a CNT convention was held in 1911. Manuel Buenacasa, in *El movimiento obrero español, 1886-1926*, is sure of it, and in addition claims that it was the founding convention of the CNT. Renée Lambert also mentions it in her history, *Mouvements ouvriers et socialistes* (Paris, 1953). The only undisputed fact is that the CNT was founded by the Congress of Worker Solidarity in 1910. It is possible that the following year, already formed, the CNT held its convention in the same locale (the Palace of Fine Arts). Conflicts in sources would then stem from a confusion between two different "Congresses of Fine Arts".

<sup>6</sup>Very little is known about the personality and motives of Manuel Pardiñas. As Canalejas alienated the extreme right as well as the extreme left it is not known with certainty whether he was a victim of the Handcuff Law or the Padlock Law. Because of Canalejas' assassination the latter law was never voted by Parliament.

<sup>7</sup>"Syndicalist" was the term generally used in Spain to refer to members of the CNT. Not all syndicalists were anarchists, though anarchists and their ideology dominated the CNT, and not all anarchists were syn-

dicalists. "Faistas," or members of the FAI, were all anarchists, among the most militant of them.

<sup>8</sup>*Memoria del Congreso celebrado en Barcelona los días 28, 29, y 30 de junio y 1° de julio de 1918*, second edition, Toulouse ("CNT"), 1957, 92 pp.

<sup>9</sup>The strike of La Canadiense occurred in the beginning of February, 1919. A note from the local confederation of Barcelona unions states that the cause of this conflict was the firing of eight workers. The first response was a slowdown (*brazos caídos*) and eventually a general strike throughout Catalonia. Workers from different unions (wood, construction, metalworkers, and later, gas and electricity) worked at La Canadiense and acted together from the outset. At first the management's attitude was one of scorn. Later they sought out the leaders of the workers for negotiations. When the company was taken over by the government the workers made the resumption of work conditional upon the release of prisoners and freedom to organize. The struggle intensified when military authorities mobilized workers who were reservists and imposed the Handcuff Law. The strike spread to the city transit system. On March 13 a state of martial law was declared, which in Spain means a kind of intimidation of apocalyptic proportions, complete with the military code of justice. The worker organization continued co-ordinating the strike, and its instructions were followed with surprising unanimity. On March 19 the essentials of an agreement were worked out with a government representative. This agreement was a complete triumph for the working class over the company and the government. The most important thing was left to be done: convince the workers to return to work. Twenty-five thousand persons met in the Las Arenas bull ring. A large proportion of those present opposed returning to work until all prisoners were free, and even such an effective speaker as Salvador Seguí could not dissuade them from insisting on that condition. The military authorities saw their chance to add fuel to the fire and kept all prisoners indicted by military judges in jail. The response was a general strike throughout the region that was enthusiastic the first days, but subsequently ineffective. This time the generals brought the artillery out into the streets. From then on it is hard to follow clearly the disintegration of the strike. (See José Viadiu, "La huelga de La Canadiense," articles in *Solidaridad Obrera*, Paris, Nos. 802 ff. August 14, 1960.)

<sup>10</sup>On June 9, 1918, the daily *Solidaridad Obrera*, edited by Angel Pestaña, published a number of handwritten letters by Bravo Portillo. One read: "Police Department. Atarazanas District. First Section. Barcelona. Dear Royo: The bearer is the friend I told you about; he has my trust; he will provide you with information about the *Mambro*, which will depart the 20th at 9; please refer him to the person you know. A thousand thanks from your friend, who embraces you. Bravo". The *Mambro* was a ship that carried war material to France and England.

<sup>11</sup>The Fomento de Trabajo Nacional was the seat of the Catalan plutoc-

racy. It eventually occupied an enormous building on the Via Layetana, in downtown Barcelona. The first thing that the anarchists did after defeating the counterrevolution of July 19, 1936 was to convert the building into their most imposing fortress. The Fomento de Trabajo Nacional, among other things, organized the gangs of gunmen that shot down our companions in the streets with impunity.

<sup>12</sup>*Idea y tragedia*, Manresa, 1923, 80 pp.

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>The term *Compañero* (companion) was most commonly used. Less frequently used was the gallicism, *camarada*. In the 30's both terms were used by anarchists, but after the Communists monopolized the use of *camarada*, the anarchists reacted spontaneously by using the word *compañero*.

<sup>2</sup>*Memoria del congreso de 1919*, Barcelona, 1932, 386 pp.

<sup>3</sup>Angel Pestaña, "Memoria que al Comité de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo presenta de su gestión en el II Congreso de la Tercera Internacional, el delegado Angel Pestaña", Madrid, n.d. The work is signed, "Barcelona and prison, Nov. 1921".

<sup>4</sup>J. Oller Piñol, *Martínez Anido. Su vida y su obra*. Madrid, 1943. The "Free Unions" were made to look like workers rebelling against the dictatorship of the anarchists in the "Single Union." According to M. García Venero (*Historia de los Movimientos Sindicales Españoles*, Madrid, 1961), who in turn quotes Feliciano Baratech Alfaro's *Los sindicatos libres en España* (1927) "The truth is that the Free Unions came out of the traditionalist circles of Barcelona (Jaimistas, as they were then called), formed by workers from that political group, which counted at that time about 20 worker centres in Barcelona alone, and it was the youngest workers who raised the flag of rebellion against the monster of anarchist terrorism..." The constitutive assembly took place October 10, 1919, in the rooms of the Legitimist Workers' Atheneum, called Tapinería, 32, ground floor. The Council was composed as follows: Ramón Sales (president), José Baró (secretary), Salvador Franis (Treasurer), Antonio Cavestany, Ruperto Lladó, and José Gaya (councillors).

<sup>5</sup>Francisco Madrid, *Las últimas 24 horas de Francisco Layret*. Buenos Aires, 1942, 78 pp.

<sup>6</sup>*Ideas y tragedia*. Barcelona, 1921.

<sup>7</sup>In August another clandestine plenary session was held in Logroño, which disavowed the delegates who had gone to Russia in the name of the CNT.

<sup>8</sup>Emma Goldman, *Living my life*. New York, 1931, p.912.

<sup>9</sup>Angel Pestaña, *op. cit.*, p.86.

<sup>10</sup>Andrés Saborit, *Julián Besteiro*. Mexico City, 1961, p.185.

<sup>11</sup>Pierre Brué and Emile Témine, *La révolution et la guerre d'Espagne*, Paris, 196 pp. The first confederal congress that Nin attended was no doubt that of 1919. Going over the Memoir of this congress we encounter

a remark of his on p.374, "I, who was a member of the Socialist Party until it decided in its congress to stay in the Second International . . ." The congress in which the Socialist Party decided to remain in the Second International was held December 9-16, 1919. Given that the CNT congress occurred at the same time (December 10-18), and Nin was speaking prior to the 17th, it is hard to see in what capacity Nin was attending the CNT congress. The memoir says only that he represented the Union of Professionals of Barcelona. But when had he joined the CNT? When did he resign from the Socialist Party? One thing that may explain many others is that in addition to unions affiliated with the CNT, representatives of the UGT, autonomous unions, and possibly certain individuals were also invited to attend.

<sup>12</sup>The AIT — the second version of the International Association of Workingmen (Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores) has existed since 1924. The First and Second Internationals died out after World War I, and Lenin tried to found a Third International that would be a tool of Moscow. The libertarian delegates who had attended the first congresses in Moscow met in Berlin to consider the consequences. They even convened a conference to which they invited Russian representatives, who, as might be expected, left the conference after getting wind of what was going on. In his book *Revolucion y repression* (Buenos Aires, 1952, p. 146) Rudolf Rocker writes, "I have participated actively in the development of the AIT from the start, and I can honestly say that I devoted my best efforts to get it founded. As one of its Secretaries, I personally participated in all of its international meetings, in all of the meetings that led to the adoption of its constitution: in the constitutive congress in Berlin, 1922-1923." The AIT continues to function symbolically in Sweden, where it is composed of a series of factions and minority groups of little international influence.

<sup>13</sup>M. Garcia Venero, *op. cit.*, p. 418.

Thanks to information provided to me by one of the surviving participants I can elaborate on the dramatic events that led to the removal from office of Martinez Anido and Arlegui. The fake assassination attempt began with an agent provocateur, Inocencio Feced. Feced was what at that time they called a *confidente*, a police spy. He presented himself as a fugitive in the city of Badalona, a city five or six kilometers north of Barcelona. He was the one who proposed the attempt on Anido and Arlegui, with the complicity of his would-be victims. Anido and Arlegui were to attend a gala performance at the Lyceum Theatre, which would end at about one in the morning. Then the official coach would go down Las Ramblas, and turn into the Paseo de Colón, heading for the Government Palace by way of the Police Headquarters. Feced and Tejedor would throw grenades at the official coach. Claramonte and Pellejero would fire from a sidecar, in which they would pursue their victims if necessary. Five more men would be posted nearby to cover the retreat. Let us see who these people were. Tejedor and Pellejero were policemen

in disguise who had introduced themselves like Feced as "companions" recently arrived from Russia with the mission and the means of doing away with the tyrants. Feced took charge of preparing the plan and the explosives, which turned out to be grenades loaded with sawdust. He enlisted five authentic activists, and had Claramonte come from Valencia with his sidecar. These six men were the only bona-fide terrorists. On the day of the attempt Feced, Tejedor, Pellejero and Claramonte went to Barcelona. The other five followed by train. They arrived at the France Station at nine in the evening. From there they went to a nearby bar where Tejedor was to furnish them with weapons and explosives. But contrary to plans, only three of the five went into the bar. Uneasy at the last minute, the two others waited outside. Barely five minutes later they saw no less than ten policemen, led by Feced and Tejedor, leave the bar with their three companions as prisoners. Miraculously the two escaped and quickly warned the most well-known Barcelona militants. The editors of certain papers were informed of the assassination attempt "that was going to happen." The news reached the government, and its leader, Sánchez Guerra, knew that he would have to take decisive action. But a final tragedy could not be avoided. At the site of the attempt in the Paseo de Colón Feced explained the absence of the Badalona group by calling them cowards. Feced himself pointed out the official coach. Claramonte was about to start his motorcycle when Pellejero pointed his gun at him. Claramonte was quicker and fired his own. Claramonte and Pellejero fell dead at the same time. The prompt dismissal of Arleguí that same morning, followed by that of Martínez Anido, avoided a mass execution of syndicalists. The point of the plan was to justify an extermination. The "St. Bartholomew"-type plan only barely failed.

### Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, *Alfonso XIII desmasqué*. p.48.

<sup>2</sup>General Silvestre had promised to capture Alhucemus July 21, 1921, the feast of St. James the Moor-slayer and the anniversary of the transferral of the remains of the Cid to the Cathedral of Burgos.

<sup>3</sup>Angel Ossorio y Gallardo, *Mis Memorias*. Buenos Aires, p.136.

<sup>4</sup>F.Largo Caballero, *Mis recuerdos*. Mexico City, 1954, pp 91-92.

<sup>5</sup>Henri Torrès, *Accusés hors série*. Paris, 1957.

<sup>6</sup>See "Memoria del Congreso Extraordinario celebrado en Madrid los días 11 al 16 de junio de 1931" pp 66-72.

### Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>Taken from the book, *Un año de conspiración*, by Bernardo Pou and J.R. Magriñá, Barcelona, 1933. Much of the information in this chapter comes from this book.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Memoria del Congreso Extraordinario celebrado en Madrid los días 11 y 16 de junio de 1931*, pp 69-70. Miguel Maura in his book, *Cómo cayó Alfonso XIII* [How Alfonso XIII fell] (Mexico City, 1962) says, "It has been stated repeatedly that in the Pact of San Sebastian we asked for and received the aid of the anarchists and the CNT. This statement is false from start to finish. They did not attend the meeting, and we did not talk to them among other reasons, because we would not have known who to talk to."

It is obvious that the CNT did not participate in the Pact of San Sebastian. It is not so clear that the pactmakers did not talk with the CNT because they did not know who to talk to. In the confederal *Memoria* cited above Peiró affirms, "And so they sent two delegates from the Committee of the Left—the present Minister of the Interior (Miguel Maura), and the present Director General of Security (Angel Galarza). And because Massoni and I didn't represent anybody, and the National Committee had its headquarters in Barcelona, we arranged for these gentlemen to speak the next day with the National Committee." Pou and Magriña's book is more categorical. See pp. 113-119, where Magriña describes the conversation he had with Maura and Galarza.

<sup>4</sup>See Miguel Maura, *op. cit.*, p. 99. "I have already said that I had a very funny reaction upon reading it for the first time. Read today, with historical distance and coldness, it is almost hilarious. But we must admit that all programs of governments born in conflict must appear the same way. Since time immemorial to promise is one thing, to deliver another."

<sup>5</sup>On the UGT's defection in the general strike of December, 1930, see *Mis Recuerdos*, pp. 107-119, in which Largo Caballero accuses Saborit and Besteiro of sabotage.

## Chapter 5

"From this collection of laws I only wish to mention two: the new Law of Worker Associations, and the Law of Inspection of Labour. The first, misunderstood by the National Confederation of Labour, removed the right of association from the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry, the governors, and the police, and put it in the hands of the Ministry of Labour, through the intermediary of the Inspectors. This innovation was most important for the working class, and had already been introduced in other countries. The second created a corps of inspectors recruited by examination, with substantial salaries to protect them from influence or bribery, and charged with making sure that social legislation was complied with." Largo Caballero, *Mis Recuerdos*, pp 123-4.

<sup>2</sup>Jacinto Toryho, *La Independencia de España*, Barcelona, 1938, pp 104-113.

<sup>3</sup>A complete history of sacreligious fires that included all of those perpetrated by the Catholic Church against mosques and synagogues, and

against Christian churches during periods of international struggle would make those committed by the people in July 1909, May 1931, and even in July, 1936, appear ridiculous by comparison. Fire was the favourite weapon of the Church against heretics.

<sup>4</sup>Eduardo Barriobero y Herrán, *Un tribunal revolucionario*. Quoted by Toryho in *La independencia de España*.

<sup>5</sup>On April 14 when the Republic was proclaimed, the anarchists of Barcelona took over the Government Palace, ousting Emiliano Iglesias, who had named himself ruler, and putting Luis Companys in his place. Emiliano Iglesias was a follower of Lerroux, who had a bad reputation in Catalonia because of his role in the revolutionary events of 1909.

<sup>6</sup>See the essay of Father Casimiro Martí, *Orígenes del anarquismo en Barcelona*, 1959.

<sup>7</sup>*El luchador*, Barcelona, September 19, 1932.

<sup>8</sup>Miguel Maura, *op. cit.* p. 274.

<sup>9</sup>*ibid.*, p. 240.

<sup>10</sup>*ibid.*, p. 48.

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup>Private speech before the IVth Congress of the Radical Socialist Republican Party (*Mi política en España*) vol. 1, p. 398.

<sup>2</sup>Gordón Ordás, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 134.

<sup>3</sup>In *El Liberal* of Bilbao (Jan. 11, 1936) a completely different and in no way revolutionary program of the rebellion was printed. See Rodolfo Llopi's booklet, *Octubre del 34*, Mexico City — Paris, 1949, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>*Tiempos Nuevos*, Barcelona, Jan. 17, 1935.

<sup>5</sup>"Thanks to the egregious defect in the electoral law of an excessive bonus to the majority party (which so pleased Don Manuel Azaña), the same excessive victory occurred in the 1936 election as in 1933, except in the opposite direction, for the Popular Front had obtained 4,500,000 votes against 4,300,000 for the coalition of the Right, with only a 240,000 majority [?] the Left had 266 seats, as opposed to 153 for the Right" (Gordón Ordás, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 253.)

Carlos M. Rama gives the following figures: leftists, 4,838,449; rightists, 3,996,931 in his *Ideología, regiones, y clases sociales en la España contemporánea*, Montevideo, 1958.

In these elections of February, 1936, unlike those of 1933, the anarchists had only a symbolic absenteeist campaign. (See José Peirats: *La CNT en la revolución española*, vol. 1, pp. 97, 102.)

<sup>6</sup>The authenticity of the document discovered in Madrid at the beginning of the war was confirmed by Goicoechea himself in the course of a speech made in San Sebastian, November, 1937. Along with others he had signed the pact with Mussolini.

<sup>7</sup>On July 11, the eve of the military uprising, Falangist commandos occupied the Valencia radio station and announced: "Radio Valencia. The



Spanish Falange has taken possession of the transmitter by force of arms. Tomorrow the same thing will happen at all the radio stations in Spain." Almost at the same time the prime minister, Casares Quiroga, when informed of the danger of an uprising, replied, "So you're assuring me that the officers are going to rise! Very well, gentlemen. Let them rise. I, in contrast, am going to lie down." (S. Canovas Cervantes; *Proceso histórico de la revolución española*, Barcelona, 1937).

## Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup>Ignacio Alagüe, *L'Espagne au XX siècle*. Paris, 1960.

<sup>2</sup>Modesto Lafuente, *Historia de España*.

<sup>3</sup>Joaquín Costa, *El colectivismo agrario en España*. Buenos Aires, 1944.

<sup>4</sup>*Fueros* were charters granted by the king to towns and their hinterlands in the Middle Ages and to entire regions after national unification. They gave the inhabitants of the area special laws and concessions, which were later challenged and revoked in periods of further royal consolidation.

<sup>5</sup>Carlos M. Rama, *Ideología, regiones y clases sociales en la España contemporánea*. Montevideo, 1958.

<sup>6</sup>Cristóbal de Castro, *Al servicio de los campesinos*. Madrid, 1931.

<sup>7</sup>Agustín Nogué Sardá, *Los problemas de la producción agrícola española*. Buenos Aires, 1943.

<sup>8</sup>Recent studies show that the rural problem in Spain has not changed. (See above book by Ignacio Alagüe.) Ignacio Fernández de Castro has recently written, "We calculate that out of a total of 32 million Ha. of privately owned cultivatable land, 8 million are fragmented into very small holdings that are rented, sharecropped, or owned in tiny lots by the rural proletariat. The privileged not only own the 24 million Ha. which are not fragmented into small holdings, but also a good part of the lands that are, collected from them a rent or a share of the crops . . . In Cordoba, where a melancholy people go hungry on a fertile land, one proprietor, one single family, the dukes of Medinaceli, own 79,000 Ha. of land . . . This class of small land holders, tenants and sharecroppers suffer the most from poor yields for lack of mechanization and fertilizers in a precarious economy." The rural subproletariat, which is not even tied to the land "by the weak ties of labour contracts", is composed of "some four and a half million persons . . . spread over the southern half of Spain, whose most pronounced characteristics are misery and uprootedness." (Ignacio Fernández de Castro, *La demagogia de los hechos*, Ruedo Ibérico, Paris, 1962.)

<sup>9</sup>Felipe Aláiz, "Alcance y crítica de la reforma agraria", *Estudios*, Valencia, 1931-1932.

## Chapter 10

<sup>1</sup>In the work of José Sánchez Rosa we find an example of this simple, colloquial, and readable literature. He was a true emulator of Salvochea.

Here are the titles of some of his pamphlets directed to the peasantry: "The bourgeois and the peasant," "The capitalist and the worker," "The union worker and his boss," "In the countryside: the guard and the worker," "Among good friends," "The anarchist idea," "Two forces: reaction and progress". Rosa was also the author of a book that was widely distributed, *The Worker's Lawyer*. This apostle of the exploited was assassinated by the military in July, 1936.

<sup>2</sup>Here is a very incomplete list of revolutionary literature [titles translated in English] published or republished between 1930 and 1936:

Diego Abad de Santillán, "The bankruptcy of the political and economic system of capitalism".

Diego Abad de Santillán, "The economic organization of the revolution; how we live and how we would live".

Felipe Aláiz, "The invisible expropriation".

Felipe Aláiz, "The problem of the land; agrarian reform and social expropriation".

Anonymous, "Libertarian communism, the possibilities of its realization in Spain".

Anonymous, "The revolution in Asturias; what the anarchists did".

Anonymous, "The society of the future".

E. Armand, "History of the experiences and the forms of common life without State or authority".

Camilo Berneri, "The anarchists and small property holdings" (articles in *La Revista Blanca*, 1932).

Pierre Besnard, "The unions and the social revolution".

J. Bonet, "In the service of libertarian communism".

Christian Cornelissen, "Libertarian communism and the transitional regime".

Sebastián Faure, "Anarchy".

Sebastián Faure, "My communism".

Evelio G. Fontaura, "How is it possible to live under anarchy now?"

Alejandro Gilabert, "The CNT, FAI, and the social revolution".

E. Horizonte, "The construction and revision of a new economy in a free society" (articles in *Estudios*).

Ignotus (Manuel Villar), "Anarchism in the Asturias insurrection".

Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchy is inevitable".

Gastón Leval, "The communist libertarian society: its structure and functioning".

Gastón Leval, "The economic problems of the Spanish revolution".

Bruno Lladó, "Libertarian communism".

José Maceira, "State Communism and libertarian communism".

Alfonso Martínez Riso, "1945, the coming of libertarian communism".

Alfonso Martínez Riso, "A Spanish engineer explains libertarian communism".

Alfonso Martínez Riso, "The city of the future under libertarian communism".

W. Morris, "The future society".

Max Nettlau, "An opinion from 1912 on the immediate impossibility of libertarian communism in free municipalities" (article in *La Revista Blanca*, 1932).

Max Nettlau, "On the world crisis and anarchy".

Higinio Noja Ruiz, "Toward a new social order".

Antonio Ocaña, "The free municipality".

Floreal Ocaña Sánchez, "Toward libertarian communism".

Rafael Ordóñez, "The love of libertarian communism".

V. Orobón Fernández, "The CNT and the revolution" (text of a lecture).

Solano Palacio, "15 days of libertarian communism in Asturias".

José Peirats, "Toward a New Concept of Art".

Juan Peiró, "Ideas about syndicalism and anarchism".

Angel Pestaña, "Syndicalism, what it is and where it is going".

Horacio Prieto, "Problems of the Spanish revolution".

Issac Puente, "The CNT goal: libertarian communism".

Macario Royo, "How we set up libertarian communism in Más de las Matas".

Ramón Segarra, "What is libertarian communism?"

Federico Urales, "Free municipalities".

Federico Urales, "The revolutionary ideal".

Silverio Valenti, "From exodus to paradise; an essay on libertarian communism".

<sup>3</sup>It is a great misfortune that the fascist rebellion of July, 1936, took over the part of Andalusia where anarchist influence was strongest and where there was a tradition of struggle against feudal despotism and armed force. This misfortune prevented an experiment in revolutionary agrarian reform there that would have enriched the historical inventory and set fruitful precedents for the future. Some things took place in the part of Andalusia that was won back from the fascists, but other kinds of problems, of a political and military sort, minimized its progress. Moreover, for reasons unclear to the historian, the collectives in Almeria, for example, and those in the areas of Granada and Cordoba that remained free had no spokesman in any widely circulating revolutionary publication. Perhaps they never reached print at all. The same may be said of other southern provinces which were very near the line of fire. While evocative, dramatic, and even lyrical manifestos and proclamations were abundant in the press of the region, more prosaic documents of a more constructive sort were rare or completely absent.

## Chapter 11

<sup>1</sup>Rafael Altamira; *Manual de Historia de España*, Buenos Aires, 1946.

<sup>2</sup>Conde de Romanos; *Espartero o el general del pueblo*, Madrid, 1954.

<sup>3</sup>Diego Abad de Santillán; *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, Buenos Aires, 1940.

## Chapter 12

<sup>1</sup>Max Nettlau, *Bakuniñ, La Internacional, y la Alianza en España*. Buenos Aires, 1925.

<sup>2</sup>Anselmo Lorenzo, *El proletariado militante*. Barcelona, 1923.

<sup>3</sup>Pierre Vilar, *Histoire d'Espagne*. Paris, 1960.

<sup>4</sup>Quotation in Manuel Buenacasa, *op. cit.*

## Chapter 13

<sup>1</sup>Carlos M. Rama, *La crisis española del siglo xx*.

<sup>2</sup>*Informe de la delegación de la CNT al Congreso Extraordinario de la AIT y resoluciones del mismo*. Barcelona, 1937.

<sup>3</sup>It is well known that Caballero became a convinced Leninist when he was in prison for the October events.

<sup>4</sup>This attempt was unsuccessful, but it succeeded in the following AIT congress, where due to CNT pressure the AIT had to modify some of its statutes. Later, in the first AIT congress held after the Second World War, it was the CNT itself, now repentant, that asked that the changes be rescinded.

## Chapter 14

<sup>1</sup>Burnett Bolloten, *The grand camouflage*. London, 1961, 95-103.

## Chapter 18

<sup>1</sup>In Barcelona, in the first days of the revolution, the FAI tried to turn its weekly, *Tierra y Libertad* into a daily, but failed for lack of support. Throughout the war the anarchist daily *Nosotros* appeared in Valencia, financed by the militia of the Iron Curtain with expropriations made on July 19.

<sup>2</sup>"The Manifesto of the Thirty," so called because it was signed by thirty noted activists.

<sup>3</sup>Max Nettlau, *Miguel Bakunin, la Internacional, y la Alianza en España*.

<sup>4</sup>Anselmo Lorenzo, *El proletariado militante*, vol. 2, p. 291.

## Chapter 19

<sup>1</sup>What has been described is only a pale reflection of the reality. A few days after these events the author had occasion to speak with one of the soldiers who under Líster's orders had participated in them. "Our brigade," he said, "has just liberated thirty villages and cities from the clutches of fascism." Surprised that the army of the people had been able to make such fantastic advances, we asked for details, and the hero informed us that among the places taken from the fascists were Alcañiz and Caspe.

<sup>2</sup>General Miguel Cabanellas, Captain General of the Zaragoza garrison at the time of the military uprising, subsequently head of the rebel Junta of Burgos.

<sup>3</sup>At that time Stalin, the great patron of the editors of *Frente Rojo*, was undertaking forced collectivizations in Russia. Those who did not want to collectivize could not escape. Whole towns of rebel peasants were deported to Siberia. The only difference between the collectives was that the Russians were unacquainted with liberty, because they were tools of the State.

## Chapter 20

<sup>1</sup>In the 19th century, a *Casa del Pueblo* (People's House) was any place that lodged syndicalists or workers. In this century, the Socialists and Lerroix's party in Catalonia called their meeting places *Casas del Pueblo*. Perhaps mainly to distinguish themselves from Lerroix's party, the anarcho-syndicalists called their meeting places Local Federations or, simply, union halls.

## Chapter 21

<sup>1</sup>Julián Zugazagoitia and Cruz Salido were handed over to Franco and shot on his orders when the Germans occupied France. The ex-minister and CNT member Juan Peiró and the ex-president of the Catalan government, Luis Companys, suffered the same fate.

<sup>2</sup>The *Correspondencia de Valencia* was finally taken over by Pro-Negrín UGT members on November 30, 1937.

<sup>3</sup>José Peirats: *La CNT en la revolucion española*, Vol. 1, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup>It is very clear that the fundamental proposition of the CNT in this pact was to gain entry into the government. Note the discreet evasion of the UGT in this respect.

## Chapter 22

<sup>1</sup> The documentary source used for the rest of the chapter is a series of unpublished reports from the archives of the CNT and the FAI.

<sup>2</sup>The FAI document in question notes military errors and assails the influence of the Communists in the army, the Russian technicians in the general staff, and the scandalous abuses of the SIM.

<sup>3</sup>When the FAI became convinced that people in high places shared their views on the need to get rid of Negrín, it set up an appointment with President Azaña to sound him out. A. García Birlán, who set up the meeting, told the author, "It was our own show (the FAI): Federica Montseny, Santillán and I went to tell him bluntly what we thought of Negrín and himself and ask him to get rid of the dictator, but by then he

was already too frightened." Araquistain has written afterwards that Azaña had tried to remove Negrín, but the latter replied, "You cannot remove me, and if you try I will resist at the head of a mass movement and the army, which is on my side."

<sup>4</sup>The textual quotes are from the notebook of a delegate at the Plenary.

<sup>5</sup>The review, *Timón*, Barcelona, September, 1938.

<sup>6</sup>The Plenary decided that the resolutions would be adopted unanimously. In cases where this was not possible they would have to be submitted to the membership by referendum.

<sup>7</sup>The parties were represented in the government in the following proportion: 4 pro-Communist Socialists, 4 Republicans, 2 autonomist Republicans, 1 Communist, and 1 CNT. The Communist Party got another ministry during the August crisis in José Moix (PSUC), who replaced the Catalan Republican Jaime Ayguadé. Another autonomist Republican, Tomás Bilbao, replaced Manuel Irujo, who resigned.

<sup>8</sup>During one of the sessions the Catalan FIJL had said, "To try to join the State in order to destroy it is like taking your wives and sisters to brothels in order to abolish prostitution."

<sup>9</sup>José Xena from the Catalan FAI provoked an incident by saying that the document should not say that the FAI could participate in politics. He left the room, and on being brought back he protested without any result except having his protest figure in the minutes.

<sup>10</sup>This last paragraph was introduced in the report especially in order to punish the youth journal *Ruta*, and any similar cases in the future.

## Chapter 23

<sup>1</sup>In the battle of Levante (Summer of 1938) some artillery pieces were left exposed during a sudden retreat. The military commander in charge, without checking further, ordered soldiers to go and blow up the guns. But when the soldiers who went to execute his order saw that the enemy was not yet advancing, instead of destroying the guns they dragged them back to their own lines. The guns had been saved, but the order had been disobeyed. So the commander, who had erred in not learning of the enemy positions, was about to shoot these courageous soldiers who were as gifted with initiative as they were ignorant of the absurdities of discipline.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter 24.

<sup>3</sup>The Chief of Staff who had gone over to the enemy.

<sup>4</sup>Collectives.

<sup>5</sup>The 29th Division, accused of abandoning the front lines with the intention of returning to Barcelona, was dissolved after the events of May, 1937. The facts are rather confusing. Some of the troops of the 29th Division left the front with this intention, but it is not clear that the front was really abandoned. Forces of the anarchist 28th Division had done the same thing, anyway, and none of the forces went farther than Barbastro.

## Chapter 24

<sup>1</sup>It is possible that the attitude of the French government, which mobilized its troops to the Pyrenees to show Franco that it would not stand for his troops on the Rosellon border, was, more than the Republican resistance, the reason why the offensive against Catalonia stopped.

<sup>2</sup>This is probably the origin of the National Council of Defense, which was formed on February 4, 1939.

<sup>3</sup>The Catalonia front was first broken in a sector commanded by Communists.

<sup>4</sup>On February 27 the British government informed the Loyalist parliament of its intention to recognize the government of Franco, based on the occupation of Catalonia, and because the most important industrial centres were in the hands of the rebel general. "I understand," said the British prime minister to parliament, "that the French government will announce a similar decision. His Majesty's government has received with satisfaction the public declaration of General Franco with respect to his determination and that of his government to maintain the independence of Spain and to proceed only against those who are charged with crimes."

<sup>5</sup>J. García Pradas, *La traición de Stalin. Cómo terminó la guerra de España*. (New York, 1938).

<sup>6</sup>Segismundo Casado, *The Last Days of Madrid*. London, 1939.



## Glossary of Names

**Abad de Santillán, Diego** (real name Sinesio Bandilio García): Born in Spain. Studied medicine in Rosario de Santa Fe, Argentina. He left his studies to devote himself to the revolutionary struggle. In 1921, he was the delegate of the Regional Workers' Federation of Argentina at the founding Congress of the AIT in Berlin; there he met Elisa Kater whom he married and they emigrated to Argentina.

For many years, he collaborated with Emilio López Arango on the daily *La Protesta*, founded on June 8, 1897. Santillán ran the bi-weekly *Suplemento* which became a well-known international organ. He, also, translated from German works of Max Nettlau and Rudolf Rocker.

At the beginning of General Uriburu's dictatorship in Argentina (1930), he went to Uruguay. In 1933, he fled to Spain because of the dictatorship of Doctor Terra. In Spain he joined *Tierra y Libertad* becoming its director. A few months later he founded *Tiempos Nuevos*, and later, as a member of the *Grupo Nervio*, started the *Editorial EtyL*. Author of numerous works on history and libertarian economics, he became Economic Advisor to Catalonia during the revolution. He wrote *Por que perdimos la guerra* (Why we lost the war) and, more recently, *Una contribución a la historia del Movimiento Obrero Espanol* in three volumes. Santillán now lives in Buenos Aires.

**Adame, Manuel** (possibly a pseudonym): Ex-anarchist militant who joined the Communists in the 1920's becoming a member of the Central Committee until his expulsion in the 1930's. Later, he joined the UGT.

**Alaiz, Felipe**: Native of Belver de Cinca. Anarchist writer, whose

journalistic output was immense. He also wrote some books. Former director of *Tierra y Libertad* and *Tiempos Nuevos*. In exile, he was the director of the CNT in Toulouse.

**Alberola, José:** Born at the end of the 19th century in Ontiñena in the province of Hueca. Rationalist teacher, orator and contributor to the anarchist press. Died in exile in Mexico during WW 2.

**Alfarache, Progreso** (used various pseudonyms): Born early 20th century. Anarchist militant from Andalusia. Director of *Comunidad Ibérica* in Mexico where he died in exile.

**Alomar, Gabriel:** Socialist writer from the Balearic Islands.

**Altamira, Rafael:** Born in Alicante and died in exile in Mexico. One of the best historians of modern Spain.

**Alvarez del Vayo, Julio:** Belonged to the Socialist Party although he served the Communists. According to his own comrades he was the "Judas" of the Party, instigating the fusion of the Socialist Youth with the Communists. He also tried to fuse the Communist and Socialist Parties.

**Andrade, Juan:** One of the founders of the Spanish Communist Party which he later deserted.

**Antona, David:** Orator. Governor of Ciudad Real, then called Ciudad Libre or Leal. During the first days of the civil war he was accidentally Secretary-General of the National Committee of the CNT. He was one of those trapped after the fall of Alicante and treated so inhumanly by the conquerors.

**Araquistain, Luis:** One of the best socialist journalists. Published the magazine *Leviatán* and others. Died in Geneva in exile.

**Arcas, Miguel:** Distinguished Andalusian militant who held a high position in the Popular Army.

**Arlandis, Hilario:** CNT militant who was a member of the second CNT delegation to the Comintern in 1921. His conduct there was disapproved of at the 1922 Conference of the CNT in Zaragoza. After, he declared himself openly a member of the CP.

**Armand, E:** French individualist anarchist writer who had a great influence on Spanish anarchists in the 20's and 30's.

**Ascaso, Francisco:** Anarchist militant. Member of the famous group *Los Solidarios* which tried to kidnap Alfonso XIII in France. The assassination of Cardinal Soldevila was attributed to him (unconfirmed fact) because he suffered persecution at his hands. He travelled through various American and European

countries always being persecuted and on the point of being extradited on the petition of the Spanish or Argentinian Governments. He was one of the members most representative of the FAI although his activities revolved around his own group which contained non-FAI elements. Died of a bullet wound to the head during the July, 1936 assault on the Atarazanas barracks in Barcelona.

**Badia, Miguel:** Young Catalan nationalist, Former police chief during the *Generalidad*. Bitter persecutor of the CNT amongst whom were many of his victims. Assassinated with his brother by avengers.

**Bajatierra, Mauro:** Veteran anarchist militant. He was charged with the assassination of Eduardo Dato and found not guilty. He was correspondent for the confederal press during the civil war. Staying in Madrid after the final defeat, he died face to face with the enemy having used his last cartridge.

**Ballano Bueno, Adolfo:** Aragonese anarchist writer. Publisher of the magazine *Agora* in Barcelona. He was jailed accused of instigating the attack on the restaurant *El Oro del Rin* in Barcelona. Member of the Council of Aragon, he later had military commands. Exiled in Mexico.

**Barceló, Eduardo:** Communist Commander who took part in the treacherous liquidation of POUM and CNT militants on the Huesca front.

**Barceló, Luis:** Dyed-in-the-wool Communist who commanded the 1st Army Corps on the Eastern front. He turned his troops on the Council of Defense during the fratricidal struggle at the end of the war. Shot alongside his commissar, Conesa, accused of executing hostages.

**del Barrio, Jose:** Member of PSUC. Commanded various divisions, such as the 27th on the Aragon front, during the war.

**Barriobero, Eduardo:** Full-time lawyer of the CNT. Garroted in Barcelona by the Fascists. It is said he would not leave his hospital bed during the evacuation of Barcelona, thus becoming a martyr.

**Batet, Domingo:** Republican Army General who put down the Barcelona insurrection of October 6, 1934. After the July 19, 1936 insurrection he refused to betray his oath of loyalty to the Republic and was shot by subordinates.

**Benito, Feliviano:** CNT militant in Madrid.

**Berenguer, Donato:** General who took the place of the overthrown

dictator, Primo de Rivera. He had to account for his complicity in the defeat of the Spanish Army in the Rif in 1921. He was condemned but, later, amnestied.

**Berneri, Camilí:** Italian anarchist writer who went to Spain to fight against the Fascists. For his well-documented campaigns against Italian Fascists and Communists, he was assassinated on the orders of the PSUC or Catalan Government during the May days of 1937 in Barcelona.

**Besnard, Pierre:** French Syndicalist who was Secretary of the AIT at the time of the civil war. He opposed the participation of the CNT in the Catalan and Madrid Governments.

**Besteiro, Julián:** Socialist academic, professor of logic. He formed with Saborit a faction within the Party after the Asturian events of 1934. He was not active until the end of the war when he became a member of the Council of Defense, the so-called *Junta de Casado*. He would not leave Madrid after the defeat and died in prison.

**Blanco, Segundo:** Asturian confederal militant, disciple of Quintanilla. He took part in the Asturian insurrection. In 1938, he was named Minister of Education. Repudiated by his comrades who accused him of having aided to the end the policies of the dictator, Negrín, he died in Mexico.

**Blasco Ibáñez, Vicente:** Novelist and politician. Author of a series of novels some of which are outstanding in their use of regional colour. He died in exile in Menton (France) during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

**Blum, Leon:** President of the Popular Front in France. Architect of the policy of neutrality which was prejudicial to the cause of the Spanish Republic during the war.

**Boal, Evelio:** Native of Leon. Secretary-General of the CNT during the repression in Barcelona of Martínez Anido, and one of his favourite victims.

**Bolleten, Burnett:** American writer of British origin. Specialist in the history of the civil war.

**Borghi, Armando:** Italian writer dedicated to propaganda journalism. He represented the *Unione Sindacato Italiana* at the Congress of the Comintern in 1920 and returned deeply disillusioned. During the Mussolini dictatorship he was exiled in the United States.

**Bravo or Brabo Portillo:** Barcelona police inspector, German spy

during World War I. He assassinated CNT members who discovered his dual role.

**Brué, Pierre:** Wrote, with Emile Tamime, quite objectively about the civil war in their book, *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain*.

**Buenacasa, Manuel:** Aragonese anarchist militant who published various newspapers, including *El Productor*, and authored *Historia del Movimiento Obrero Espanol 1888-1928*. During much of the Primo Rivera dictatorship, he was exiled in France. In the civil war, he trained new militants in the *Escuela de Militantes*, which he founded. Died in exile in France.

**Burillo, Ricardo:** Colonel in the Popular Army during the civil war. After the bloody events of May, 1937, he became chief of police in Barcelona. His repressive acts were renowned. He was apparently shot by Francoist troops at the end of the war.

**Cabanellas, Miguel:** Oldest general on the register. Declared republican until the military insurrection of 1936 in which he took control of Zaragoza causing a cruel repression of Leftists of all kinds. He was named President of the *Junta Insurreccional de Burgos* until Franco became the Generalísimo with total power.

**Calvo Sotelo, Joaquín:** Chief of the monarchists who was killed in reprisal for the assassination of an officer of the Assault Guards. He was acclaimed as a martyr by the Francoists.

**Cambó, Francisco:** Chief of the Catalan financiers and Minister until his property was confiscated in the revolution to become the seat of the CNT-FAI, at which time he emigrated to France.

**Cordón, Antonio:** Anarchist militant from the South East. During the civil war, published the CNT paper, *Cartagena Nueva*. He was killed in Cartagena in March 1939.

**Cánovas Cervantes:** Publisher of the daily *La Tierra*, an extreme left republican paper which became the official organ of the CNT before disappearing during the military insurrection.

**Carbó, Eusebio C.:** Confederal journalist and polemicist. He was jailed in the repression which followed the death of the Conde de Salvatierra, former strong man of Barcelona. During the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, he was exiled in various European countries. He was a member of the Secretariat of the AIT, editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* and publisher of *Más Lejos* in Barcelona. Died in exile in Mexico.

**Carrillo, Santiago:** Son of Wenceslao Carrillo, Socialist leader. During the civil war he came under the orders of Stalin forming the Stalinist *Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas* (United Socialist Youth). In exile, he became Secretary-General of the Communist Party.

**Casanellas, Ramón:** One of the participants in the assassination of Eduardo Dato and the only one who managed to flee Spain and take refuge in Russia. Converted to Communism, he returned to Spain after the amnesty which preceded the fall of Alphonso XIII.

**Casado, Segismundo:** Famous for having concocted the *junta* which bore his name and unseated the dictator, Negrín, at the end of the war. He died in Madrid on returning from exile.

**Casanovas, Juan:** Catalan politician who, after having played a deplorable part in Catalan politics during the war, fled to France before the end of hostilities.

**Casares Quiroga, Santiago:** Galician politician, one of those most responsible for the surprise which overtook the Spanish people at the time of 1936 insurrection. Died in exile repudiated by his comrades.

**Castro, Girona:** Monarchist General who betrayed the Sánchez Guerra insurrectionary movement at the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

**Cazorla, José:** Young Communist, member of the *Junta de Defensa* of Madrid who promoted the *checas* during the war.

**Clará, Sebastián:** Native of San Feliu de Guixols. Former director of *Acción Social Obrera* and editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* when it re-appeared in 1930. He signed the manifesto of the *treintistas* which marked the decline of his revolutionary principles. In exile, after the civil war, he was part of the group which placed itself under the orders of Franco's verticle syndicates—a move which failed.

**Claramonte, José:** Anarchist militant who perished in the trap of the false assassination attempt which Martínez Anido prepared against himself.

**Claramunt, Teresa:** Distinguished CNT militant, orator and propagandist.

**Comas, Franciso:** Confederal militant who was killed in the same attack of the *pistoleros* as Salvador Seguí.

**Comorera, Juan:** Catalan militant, founder of the PSUC of which

he was Secretary-General in Spain and in exile. Renounced for his dirty politics, he was a member of nearly every Catalan Government. In exile, he fell into disgrace and, to escape a Stalinist purge, he had to seek refuge in Barcelona where he was either discovered by the police or betrayed by his ex-comrades. Died in Burgos jail.

**Companys, Luis:** Former CNT lawyer, leader of the *Rabassaires*. On death of Maciá, he became President of the Catalan Government. He played the games of all opponents of the confederal movement. After the war he went to France and was handed over to Franco by the Gestapo during the Vichy régime. Shot in Montjuich.

**Cortado, Roldán:** Member of the CNT who, after signing the manifesto of the *treintistas*, joined the Catalan Communists and became one of the major oppressors of his former comrades. Died victim of an unresolved assassination.

**Cruz, Solido:** Socialist who was given up to Franco by the Vichy Government. He was shot alongside Julián Zugazogoitia.

**Checa, Angel:** Instigator of an uprising at the Carmen barracks in Zaragoza, in which he was killed alongside Corporal Godoy and various soldiers.

**Chueca, Miguel:** Aragonese anarchist militant, member of the first Regional Council of Aragon. Died in exile in an accident.

**Dencás, José:** Member of the Catalan Government at the time of the October events of 1934. Before the siege of the army, he escaped by an obviously pre-arranged plan through sewers, and took refuge in Mussolini's Italy.

**Despujols, Ignacio:** Civil Governor of Barcelona whose only merit was the signing of the statutes of the CNT in 1930 which allowed it to function openly.

**Díaz, José:** Former anarchist militant who, later, had a brilliant career in the Communist Party. As Secretary-General of the Party in the civil war, he obeyed without question the directives of Kremlin agents. After the war he went to Russia where he died in mysterious circumstances. The Russians said he committed suicide.

**D'Olwer, Nicolás:** Catalan politician who was a member of the first government of the Second Republic. His later activities were obscure.

**Domenech, Juan:** CNT militant who occupied various positions in



local and regional confederal organizations in Catalonia and was an active orator and propagandist. He returned to Spain after many years in exile.

**D'Ors, Eugenio:** Catalan writer who started out as a vanguardist and who, later, tried to lead some anarchist militants through the hoop of parliamentary politics. Died as a scribe of Francoism.

**Doval:** Colonel of the Civil Guard renowned for his sadism in repressing Asturian revolutionaries in 1934 after they had laid down their arms.

**Durruti, Buenaventura:** Anarchist activist who, with Francisco Ascaso, distinguished himself by revolutionary agitation during the Republic and was prominent in the success of the fight against the insurgents by galvanizing the people of Barcelona. He led the first militia column which left Barcelona to free Zaragoza. He liberated half of Aragon but was unable to achieve the main objective. Transferred with some of his best troops to the Madrid front, he died there in November, 1936, face to face with the enemy.

**Eroles, Dionisio:** Anarchist who had spent many years in jail. Liberated during the Republic, he was active in local and regional congresses of the unions. After the defeat of the insurgents he was put in charge of the Barcelona police force where, sad to say, he lost a great part of his prestige. Disappeared without trace in exile: possibly assassinated and secretly buried by Francoist agents.

**Fábregas, Juan:** CNT minister in the first Catalan Government which followed the military insurrection. Economics expert. Left Spain after the civil war.

**Feced, Inocencio:** Former CNT member before the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, he became a police informer for Martínez Anido. Although he wrote memoirs in which he exposed the crimes of his *pistolero* colleagues without incriminating himself, he was captured and executed at the start of the civil war, possibly by anarchists.

**Falaschi, Fausto:** Italian individualist anarchist writer who spent his youth in Argentina, from where he was deported to Italy during the Uriburu dictatorship. He was lucky to escape from Italy to Spain. He died on the Huesca front where he was fighting in the *Rioja y Negra* militia column.

**Falomir, Pedro:** Confederal militant from the Madrid Railroad Workers' Union. He held responsible positions in National Con-

gresses, conferences and meetings. Emigrated to Great Britain after the war.

**Fanelli, José:** Introduced the ideas of Bakunin to Spain from which grew the Spanish working class movement.

**Faure, Sebastian:** French anarchist propagandist who wrote the *Enciclopedia Anarchista* which was interrupted on the completion of the first volumes. Died during the German occupation of France.

**Ferrer, Francisco:** Catalan petit bourgeois who passed through republicanism, masonry and took part in riots causing him to emigrate to France. There he became an anarchist. He was working as a Spanish teacher, when one of his pupils left him a large legacy which he used to further the revolutionary movement in Spain along two specific lines: to achieve the revolution by the general strike; and the rationalist education of working class children. He was accused of being one of the leaders of the 1909 riots by the manoeuvring of the Church which wanted to finish once and for all his work in education. After a summary trial he was condemned to death, without proof of his guilt, and executed in Montjuich by the Maura and La Cierva government.

**Foix, Pedro:** Began as a Catalan anarchist militant. He was exiled in France during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. On his return, with the constitutional guarantees in force, he worked on the confederal daily *Solidaridad Obrera*. After the crisis of the *treintistas* he moved towards Catalan nationalism although he was unable to create a platform for himself. He later dedicated himself to writing biography.

**Fontaura** (Pseudonym of Vicente Galindo): Veteran anarchist, an individualist in his early days. He was exiled in France during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship without missing a single opportunity to write in the confederal and anarchist press which published in France and some parts of Spain. When the Republic was proclaimed, he became a rationalist teacher in Elda, publisher of the weekly *Proa* and, later, during the civil war, editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*. Trapped in the central zone at the end of the war, he eventually got to France where he became a member of exile committees and published *Cenit* in Toulouse. He is one of the most constant working class journalists.

**Fornells, Ricardo:** CNT militant, editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*. He was active in the Food Workers' Union. Exiled in France, he

became a member of the group which went to Spain as monitors of Franco's vertical syndicates.

**Foronda, Marqués de:** Principal shareholder in the streetcar company in Barcelona, dyed-in-the-wool opponent of the syndicates who joined in anti-worker repression.

**Franco, Ramón:** Brother of the Generalísimo. He toyed with revolutionary action when in 1930 he led a squadron of airplanes which dropped satirical leaflets on the Palace. He was forced into exile. On his return during the Republic, he continued his demagogic play with the Leftists. However, at the start of the civil war he placed himself at his brother's orders and was one of the pilots who martyred Barcelona with their bombs. Apparently, he disappeared in the Mediterranean with his plane or, perhaps, was assassinated by his brother.

**Galán, Fermin:** Infantry captain who organized the anti-monarchist uprising in the Jaca barracks in 1930. For his actions, he was condemned to death and executed alongside Captain García Hernández who was also implicated in the uprising. This martyrdom wounded the Spanish people and was a contributory factor in the declaration of the Republic.

**Galán, Francisco:** Son of Fermin. Soldier who joined the Civil Guard. During the civil war he commanded various Republican army units, especially the 10th Army Corps. He left Spain with the fleet when it abandoned Cartagena.

**Galarza, Angel:** Former Socialist. Minister of State in the Largo Caballero Government. Left Spain after the civil war.

**Gambara:** Italian general who commanded the "volunteer" *Littorio* division. He became celebrated when he took over the last republican stronghold in the port of Alicante. It is debatable whether he betrayed his promise to make that port an international zone or whether he was forced to occupy it by order of superiors.

**García Birlán, Antonio:** Veteran Andalusian anarchist who was active in Barcelona after renouncing his position of primary teacher by mailing his title to the Minister of Education. He authored various anthologies and the magazine *Revista Nueva* which appeared in Barcelona during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. He was Minister of Health in the first Catalan coalition government in September, 1936. Published *Cenit* in exile and

contributed frequently to the press. On retiring, he went to Argentina.

**García Oliver, Juan:** Native of Reus, Tarragona. Anarchist militant from his youth, member of the *Nosotros* group. Fiery orator with a rather demagogic personality whose major obsession was the unleashing of the social revolution and the declaration of libertarian communism throughout Spain. Imprisoned during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and, later, for his intervention in the 1933 insurrection. He held many important positions prior to the revolution and participated ardently in the street fighting during the July, 1936 uprising. Named Minister of Justice in the Largo Caballero Government. Exiled in Mexico.

**García Pradas, José:** Born near Burgos. Lived in Madrid and Valencia where he was a construction worker. On demonstrating literary talents, he began to write for the press becoming editor of *Tierra y Libertad* and, later, publisher of *CNT* in Madrid during the civil war. He left Spain with the *Junta de Casado* and lived in London where he wrote several pamphlets which demonstrated his skills as a writer and poet.

**García Quejido, Antonio:** Socialist who was very involved in the discussions within the Party concerning affiliation with the Third International.

**Germinal, Domingo:** Old time anarchist propagandist who went to Spain after being expelled from Cuba during the Machado dictatorship under which he suffered imprisonment and torture. In Spain, he became one of the original popular orators making his speeches more appealing with sentimental anecdotes.

**Gilabert, Alejandro:** Militant in the Barcelona Woodworkers' Union. Regional Secretary of the Catalan *CNT* and editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*. Emigrated to Ecuador after the conflict.

**Gil Robles, José María:** Chief of the CEDA who led the resurgence of right-wing reaction against the Republic. During the civil war he emigrated to Portugal, returning afterwards to Spain where, as a lawyer, he was distant from the régime.

**Gil Roidán, Angel:** Known in the Republican Army as a commissar with confederal tendencies.

**Giral, José:** Successor to Martínez Barrios as President. Replaced by Largo Caballero.

**Goded, José:** Francoist general who was taken prisoner in Bar-

celona during the first days of the military uprising. Executed in Montjuich.

**Goicoechea, Antonio:** Monarchist leader who signed the pact of aggression against the Republic with Mussolini under which the *Duce* was to send arms, munitions and metal.

**González Marín;** Confederal militant of the Centro, member of the so-called *Junta Casado*. Took refuge in France after the conflict.

**González Mallada, Avelino:** Asturian anarchist militant who assumed responsibility for the *CNT* of Madrid at the end of 1932. Died in a car accident in the United States during a propaganda tour.

**González Peña, Rafael:** Orator, Portuguese militant active in Analusia. Emigrated to Panama after the war.

**González Regueral, Fernando:** A governor of Vizcaya responsible for atrocities against members of confederal organizations. Killed in revenge by his victims.

**González, Valentín:** Known as *El Campesino* by Communist troops during the civil war. It is said that he imposed brutal discipline with his troops. After the civil war he emigrated to Russia where he fell out with the authorities and was imprisoned, as he recounts in a book after escaping to France. He committed guerrilla acts on the Spanish frontier and tried to undertake a guerrilla action against the Franco régime. The French authorities expelled him many times for his activities.

**Gordón Ordax, Félix:** Minister in the Second Republic, ambassador to Mexico during the civil war. Member of the government-in-exile in Paris. He moved to Mexico where he published several volumes of memoirs.

**Gorkin, Julián:** Among the first Spanish Communists. Later he was a member of the *Bloque Obrero y Campesino*, then the POUM, and wrote several books. After the events of May 1937 in Barcelona he was detained and tried with his comrades in the Communist attempt to stage a "Moscow" trial in Spain. They could not be given the death penalty sought by the prosecutor but were imprisoned in penal servitude until the end of the war.

**Grave, Juan:** Apparently a pseudonym, French anarchist writer, friend of Kropotkin and collaborator in Ferrer's *Escuela Moderna*.

**Grunfeld, José:** Argentinian anarchist who went to Spain during the civil war. Active in the FAI. Returned to Argentina after the war.

**Guero, Herno:** Known in Spain during the civil war as one of the executioners sent by Stalin under the guise of technical advisers. He was later known for his bloody part in the repression of the Hungarian insurrection. Considered to be one of those responsible for the assassination of Andrés Nin in 1937.

**Guzmán, Eduardo de:** Started his career as a journalist with *La Libertad* of Madrid and became publisher of *Castilla Libre*, a Madrid evening paper. He was among those trapped in the port of Alicante. Passed through concentration camps, condemned to death and pardoned. He has written about his experiences in many books. Many other of his books were written under a pseudonym so he could get a living.

**Hernández, Jesús:** Communist known for his sectarianism in the Central Committee of the Party and the government of Largo Caballero. Active in the movement to oust Largo Caballero. At the end of the war he went to Russia and, later, to Mexico where he died. Wrote a book which revealed the secrets of his, and his comrades', betrayal of Spain.

**Horizonte, E:** Pseudonym for Eusebio C. Carbo.

**Ibáñez, Jesús:** Asturian militant who was a member of the second delegation sent to Moscow by the CNT in 1921. Refuting his participation, he disappeared from view.

**Ibaruri, Dolores (La Pasionaria):** Leading Communist militant, elected deputy in February, 1936. During the war, she was a powerful orator for the Party, one of her favourite sayings being, "Vale más morir de pie que vivir de rodillas." ("It is better to die standing up than living on your knees.") She was a member of the *Circo Krone*, as the supporters of Negrín who ended up in the central zone after the fall of Catalonia were called, until it was dismantled by Casado's *coup d'état*. Taking refuge in Russia after the war she continued making tours in western countries which would grant her entry.

**Iglesias, Pablo:** Patriarch of Spanish Socialism, member of the First International in the 1880's. Founded the Spanish Socialist Party which was affiliated to the Second International. Founded and published the Party organ *El Socialista*.

**Iglesias, Emiliano:** Bosom-friend of Alejandro Lerroux, implicated in the execution of Francisco Ferrer.

**“Ignotus”:** Pseudonym of Manuel Villar.

**Isgleas, Francisco:** Militant from Gerona, delegate of the Cork Workers at CNT congresses. Active in *Acción Social Obrera* in San Feliu de Guixols. During the war he was Minister of Defence in the Catalan Government. After the war, he went to France.

**Irujo, Manuel:** Basque politician from Navarre, minister in the Negrín Government. He organized processions of widows of executed fascists and sat back during the repression of the POUM after the events of May, 1937. His cowardice was particularly noticeable during the kidnapping and death at the hands of the Communists of Andrés Nin.

**Jiménez, Miguel:** Anarchist militant, founding member of FAI, member of the first Congress of Aragon. Emigrated to France after the war.

**Jover, Gregorio:** Veteran anarchist who was a member of the *Los Solidarios* group. Comrade of Durruti and Ascaso, he travelled with them through Europe and America. During the war he was leader of 10th Army Corps. After the war, he went to France and, later, Mexico where he published a pro-communist newspaper. Died in Mexico.

**Krivitski, Walter:** Soviet agent active in the civil war who later wrote a book, *I was Stalin's Agent*. In his book, *The Spanish Civil War*, Hugh Thomas says that *probably* at least part of the book was written by an American Soviet expert and, on the same page, that Krivitski was *probably* murdered in a Washington hotel (my italics). This use of “probably” casts doubt on the origins of the book and on the fact that Krivitski was, like many others considered traitors by Stalin, killed by an international band of assassins. On the other hand, Robert Conquest in *The Great Terror*, page 437, writes, “On 10 February 1941 he was found shot in a hotel room in Washington.” Similar acts repeated on an international scale should have made Hugh Thomas more concrete in his tendentious information.

**Kropotkin, Peter:** Russian revolutionary of noble origins. He went to the West after escaping from jail, becoming the theoretician *par excellence* of anarchist communism. During World War I, his support of the allies caused a grave crisis in the international



anarchist movement. He returned to Russia in the revolution and died there in dignity.

**La Cierva, Juan:** Government minister during the revolutionary activity of July, 1909 and right hand man of Prime Minister Antonio Maura. Both played principal roles in the sacrifice of Ferrer.

**Lafargue, Paul:** Son-in-law of Karl Marx who sought refuge in Spain after fleeing from the repression after the *Commune*. He created the discord which split the Spanish Internationalists.

**Lamoneda, Ramón:** Socialist who during the internal fighting in the Party was Secretary-General, a fellow traveller of the Communists at the end of the war.

**Largo Caballero, Francisco:** Secretary, almost permanent, of the UGT until near the end of the war when he was deposed by rivals. Followed Dr. Giral as head of government in 1936 and was forced to resign by Communists and Socialist rivals after the events of May, 1937. In exile, he was persecuted by the Vichy Government who handed him over to the Gestapo. He spent the rest of World War II in a German concentration camp from which he was liberated by Russian troops.

**Layret, Francisco:** Catalan politician, lawyer of the CNT who was one of the first assassination victims of Martínez Anido's *pistoleros*.

**Leal, Feliciano:** Commander of militias during the war who was responsible for the dangerous crossing of the Segre whose opposite bank was occupied by the enemy. He was injured in the operation.

**Lerroux, Alejandro:** Demagogic, unscrupulous politician, who was sent to Barcelona by the liberal governor, Moret, to prevent the resurgence of the Catalan nationalist movement. He contributed indirectly to the downfall of Ferrer although he later apologized publicly to him after he had escaped to France.

**Leval, Gaston (pseudonym):** French anarchist who abandoned France to avoid being drafted in World War I. He took refuge in Spain where he was active in anarchist groups, being a member of the delegation to the Congress of the Third International in 1921. He was the only delegate to speak out at the 1922 Conference in Zaragoza against the dictatorial regime in Russia. Having lived in Argentina for several years, he returned to Spain during the Republic and studied the collectives formed during the war. After the war he had to return to France.

**Líster, Enrique:** Militiaman who made a career as Colonel in the popular army thanks to Russian help. He took charge of the invasion of Lower Aragon behind Loyalist lines destroying, at bayonet point, the peasant collectives, ordering the detention of confederal militiamen and some members of recently overthrown Council of Aragon. A favourite tactic was to deceive his troops into believing that they were capturing villages from the enemy; many believed him. At the end of the war he emigrated with the Communist elite to Russia. He was also in Cuba as an adviser to Fidel Castro's army.

**López Ochoa:** General who conspired against the government of the Republic when it fiercely put down the Asturian insurgents in 1934. Executed by the people of Madrid during the military uprising in 1936.

**López Sánchez, Juan:** Confederal syndicalist. Director of the weekly *Acción* during Berenguer's dictatorship. In the factional struggle, he signed the *treintista* manifesto, and attended the Congress of Zaragoza of May, 1936 where unity was restored. During the war he was Minister of Commerce until the crisis in the Caballero Government. He left Catalonia at the time of its fall after having participated in the *pronunciamento* of the *Junta de Casado*. After living in London and Mexico, he was welcomed back to Spain collaborating totally with the regime until his death.

**Lorenzo, Anselmo:** Played a principal role in the founding of the International in Spain. After the founding congress in 1870 and the Valencia Conference of 1871, he was delegate to the AIT conference in London, where he stayed in Karl Marx's home, returning with a pessimistic view of the influence of the Marxists. At the time of the crisis in the Spanish section of the International (the work of Lafargue's intrigues) he took a neutral position which resulted in his voluntary resignation as Secretary. He went to France where he stayed until the proclamation of the First Republic. Returning to Spain, he continued to be active in the libertarian movement and later worked as a translator for Ferrer's publishing house. A founding father of the CNT in 1910, he is also regarded as its first historian with his *El Proletariado Militante*. Died in 1914 disillusioned by the crisis in the International anarchist movement caused by the support given the allies by Kropotkin whom he admired.

**Llacer Bertrán, José:** Executed in the attempted assault on the Atarazanas barracks in 1924.

**Lladó, Bruno:** Veteran CNT militant, orator and pamphleteer.

**Llopis, Rodolfo:** Socialist militant from Alicante who supported Largo Caballero in the Party split. Went to France after the civil war and, after the German occupation, he became active in the organization of the government-in-exile. He headed one of the exile governments from which he resigned because of the negotiations which Indalecio Prieto, with the connivance of British labour ministry, was having with moderate Spanish monarchists. The negotiations were unsuccessful.

**Lluna, José:** Old guard anarchist who maintained a pose of typical Catalan realism against the Andalusian internationalists. Founded the anticlerical, revolutionary, satirical weekly, *La Tramontana*.

**Macia, Francisco:** Abandoned his army career for Catalan separatism. Exiled in France during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and conspired against it. He was the first President of the autonomous Catalan Government. On his death, Luis Companys succeeded him.

**Madrid, Francisco** (Possibly a pseudonym): Official journalist of the *Esquerra*, who wrote critically of the libertarian syndicalists.

**Magre, Ramón:** CNT militant. Emigrated to France during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. In 1930 was one of the editors of *Solidaridad Obrera*, at its reappearance. He disappeared from the scene when he resigned during the *treintista* crisis.

**Magriña, J.R.:** Anarchist militant who emigrated to France during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Returning to Spain, he became involved in a conspiracy against the monarchy. He collaborated with Bernardo Pou in writing a book, *Un año de conspiración*, a history of the events leading up to the proclamation of the Second Republic.

**Malato, Carlos:** French revolutionary writer. Collaborated with Ferrer in the *Escuela Moderna* library.

**Mantecón, Ignacio:** Governor of Aragon after the overthrow of the Council of Aragon. Passed himself off as a Republican while, in fact, he belonged secretly to the Communist Party, a fact which he admitted in exile after the war.

**March, Juan:** Famous Mallorcan smuggler. The Republic jailed him but he escaped out of the country by bribing his jailers. He is considered to be a principal financier of the military insurrection. He held an honored position amongst the rebels until his death.

**Maroto, Francisco:** Militia officer arrested by the Governor of Almeria and falsely charged by the Communists with being an enemy spy. He was condemned to death but CNT-FAI intervention on his behalf saved his life. Killed by Franco's conquering army.

**Martí, Casimiro:** Catalan priest, author of an interesting essay on the origins of anarchism in Barcelona.

**Martín, Pablo** (pseudonym): Conspirator who tried to invade Spain across the Vera de Bidasosa frontier during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Executed in Spain, with two others for the action.

**Martínez, Alfredo:** Militant of the Barcelona Libertarian Youth, member of the Regional Committee of Youth who disappeared without trace during the Communist purges following the May, 1937 events.

**Martínez Anido, Severiano:** Military Governor of Catalonia who acted as Civil Governor with the agreement of the Minister of State. He proposed to eliminate, with blood and guns, syndicalism in Barcelona, according to the expressed wish of the Barcelona ruling class who put him in power. Bands of assassins, formed by him and paid for by the bourgeoisie, were responsible for hundreds of deaths and injuries. He was removed after he personally organized a false attempt on his own life in which many syndicalists, caught in the trap, were killed.

**Martínez Barrio, Diego:** Republican politician who split with his leader, Lerroux. In his youth he passed through the Andalusian anarchist movement. He was president of the Council of Ministers several times and, after the military uprising of 1936, he proposed an *entente* with the rebels which was refused. In exile, as Speaker, he had to assume the Presidency of the exiled government on the resignation of Azaña.

**Martínez Campos, Arsenio:** General who led an uprising in Sagunto in 1874 resulting in the restoration of the monarchy in the person of Alfonso XII.

**Martínez de Velasco:** Leader of the Agrarian Party who participated in the overthrow of the Second Republic.

**Más, Valerio:** Catalan CNT militant, secretary of the regional CNT in 1936-7. In exile, he provoked the downfall of the Republic; he was active as International Secretary of the emigre organization from 1938. Died in exile in 1972.

**Masquelet:** Republican general who declared the rumours of military insurrection were unfounded shortly before it took place in July, 1936. He was Minister of War.

**Massoni, Petro:** CNT militant in Barcelona who was seriously injured in one of Martínez Anido's attacks on the CNT. Publisher of the daily *Solidaridad Obrera* in 1930.

**Matallana, Manuel:** General who, possibly for reasons of geography, remained loyal to the government in July, 1936.

**Mateu, Pedro:** CNT militant who was killed in the attack on the President of the Council of Ministers in 1921.

**Maura, Antonio:** Mallorcan liberal politician who became a conservative and took part in repressive acts against the syndicalists with Juan de la Cierva. Both men, succumbing to pressure from the clergy who detested rationalist education, were responsible for the court martial decision to execute Ferrer.

**Maurin, Joaquín:** CNT militant from Lerida, delegate to the Comintern Congress of 1921, a founder of the Catalan Communist Party. Later, he tried to remove Catalan Communism from Moscow's orbit. He was trapped in enemy territory at the end of the war where he managed to survive the first purges under an assumed name. Eventually liberated, he joined his family in the United States where he died in 1973.

**Mavilla, José:** Aragonese CNT militant, member of the Regional Committee of Aragon persecuted by Lister's troops in the invasion of Lower Aragon. Went to France during the evacuation of Catalonia.

**Mella, Ricardo:** Renowned writer and theoretician of Spanish anarchism, author of the famous reply to the book of psychiatrist César Lombroso, which branded anarchists as born criminals. He followed Kropotkin in his support of the allies in World War I, defending himself with polemics in the anarchist press. Afterwards, he retired from the organization and movement although he always remained loyal to the ideals.

**Mendizábal, Juan:** Minister of Finance at the time of the Carlist Wars, author of a decree which allowed the wealthy bourgeoisie to buy lands expropriated from the clergy. Because of his stature he was called "Juan y medio" ("John and a half").

**Menéndez, Arturo:** Commander and director-general of security who was responsible for the peasant massacre at Casas Viejas.

**Menéndez:** Republican Army colonel who, although he had played the Communist game, placed himself under the orders of the *Junta de Casado* at the end of the war.

**Mera, Cipriano:** CNT militant in the Madrid Construction Union, member of the Revolutionary Committee in the Aragonese anarchist insurrection in 1933. During the war he excelled in the confederal militias, joining the Popular Army he became commander of the IV Army corps. After the war he went to Morocco from where he was extradited, court martialed, condemned to death, a sentence later commuted to imprisonment. After being freed, he went to France where he continued to be active in the movement, working as a mason until his retirement. Died October 25, 1975.

**Miaja, José:** General who headed up the *Junta de Defensa* in Madrid when the Government transferred to Valencia because of the pressure exerted by Franco's troops on Madrid.

**Miláns del Bosch, Felipe:** Reactionary general active in the Cuban war who later held several military commands, particularly during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

**Miró Fidel:** Member of the Spanish Libertarian Youth in which he served as Secretary, first editor of the youth paper, *Ruta*. After the war he went to Santo Domingo by way of France and, later, to Mexico where he founded an important publishing house.

**Modesto, Juan:** Communist militant who became commander-in-chief of the Army. Exiled in Russia after the war.

**Moix, Jose:** CNT militant from Sabadell. During the CNT crisis of 1933 he was expelled. In the war, he joined the PSUC and, in 1938, became a minister in the Negrín government.

**Mola, Emilio:** General who controlled the strategy of the July, 1936 uprising. The term "fifth column" is attributed to him. (He said, "I have four columns surrounding Madrid and a fifth one inside.") Died in a plane crash in 1937 when he was on his way to the siege of Bilbao.

**Molina, Conejero:** Governor of Valencia during the civil war.

**Montseny, Federica:** Daughter of Juan Montseny and Teresa Mañé, better known by their pseudonyms Federico Urales and Soledad Gustavo. She started writing as a youth for *La Revista Blanca* of Barcelona, published by her parents since 1923, distinguishing herself by her vigorous style. At the beginning of the Republic, she became active in the CNT although she could not be a member as she had no boss. On the formation of the union for

intellectuals and liberal professions she became a member dedicating herself to written and spoken propaganda, at which she excelled. She was Minister of Health in the Largo Caballero Cabinet. After the war, she went to France where she was imprisoned by the German puppet government and narrowly avoided being extradited to Fascist Spain. In exile, she became publisher of the weekly, *CNT*, in Toulouse. She has held many positions in the exiled organization.

**Morón, Gabriel:** Governor of Almeria after the fall of Malaga at the beginning of the war, who earnestly desired to see the anarchist commander Francisco Moroto tried and executed. However, he did not succeed in his sinister plan.

**Morral, Mateo:** As a collaborator in the Escuela Moderna in Barcelona he threw a bomb at the wedding procession of Alfonso XIII killing many people but not harming the royal couple. Soon after, he committed suicide in a roadman's hut. This act caused Ferrer's first trial on the charge of abetting fanatics.

**Muñoz Grandes, Agustín:** Francoist general who, during the Republic, formed and trained the police shock troops, the Assault Guards. During World War II, he commanded an expeditionary corps of volunteers on the eastern front against Russia.

**Narváez, Ramón:** General who became Prime Minister in the reign of Isabel, renowned for his bloodthirstiness. He is supposed to have said to his confessor on his death bed: "I don't wish to forgive my enemies because I've shot all of them."

**Negrín, Juan:** Socialist who left his profession as a scientist to take up politics at the beginning of the war. As Treasury Minister in the Largo Caballero government, he arranged for the transportation of the Bank of Spain's gold to Russia as a guarantee for arms. The gold never returned and the war material received was used to hurry the defeat of the Republic. He was overthrown in March, 1939, by the *Junta de Casado*. Died wealthy in exile.

**Noja Ruiz, Higinio:** Anarchist militant in his youth. Later, he was journalist, essayist and novelist. Detained at the end of the war, he died in Franco's Spain. Apart from his books, he worked extensively on the review *Estudios* in Valencia.

**Nicolau, Luis:** CNT militant who took part, with Mateu and Casanellas, in the death of Prime Minister Dato in 1921. He managed to flee Spain but was detained in Germany and extradited to Spain. Sentenced to death, he had his sentence commuted to life



imprisonment and was freed when the Republic was proclaimed. **Nin, Andrés:** Left the socialist camp and became the Secretary-General of the CNT. He was a delegate to the Comintern congress and remained in Russia as Trotsky's secretary. After Trotsky's disgrace, he returned to Spain. With Maurín and others from the Workers' and Peasants' Block, he founded the POUM. After the May, 1937, events he was detained by agents of GPU and disappeared without trace. At his trial a letter, with Nin's forged signature, was presented which implicated him in the activities of the fifth column.

**Ocaña, Antonio:** Father of many anarchists active in Spain until the end of the war. He devoted himself to rationalist education. Exiled in Mexico after the war.

**O'Donnell, Leopoldo:** General at the time of Isabel who participated in military riots aimed at ending the power of General Narváez, the long-standing favourite of the queen. In power, he covered in blood every attempt at military rebellion.

**Orlov, Alexander:** Agent of GPU which swarmed over Spain plotting, spying and assassinating under orders from the Kremlin. His name is stained with the blood of Andrés Nin.

**Orobón Fernández, Victoriano:** Syndicalist from his youth. Disciple of Rudolf Rocker and Max Nettlau whose book on Elisée Reclus he translated. During the Primo de Rivera dictatorship he lived in France and Germany. On returning to Spain, he involved himself in a propaganda campaign against International Communism in which he made public documents exposing intrigues.

**Ortega y Gasset, José:** Philosopher and metaphysician. After the dictatorship he was converted to Republicanism and originated the saying, "Delenda est Monarquia". Among books he wrote were *La España Invertebrada* (Invertebrate Spain) and *La rebellón de las masas* (The revolt of the masses). In the civil war he left Spain, returning after the victory of Franco. To a certain extent he represented to the new generation the opposition to Franco. For the many young people attending his funeral, it was like taking the oath of the new opposition to the régime.

**Osorio y Gallardo, Angel:** Faithful conservative, member of Antonio Maura's party. Governor of Barcelona during the *semana trágica*, he wrote a quite objective pamphlet about what happened. Because of these events and the fall of the Maura-La Cierva cabinet tainted with blood, he split with his leader and formed the

Maurist Party. After the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, during which he practised as a lawyer even defending accused anarchists like Enrique Guiot, he declared himself a "Monarchist without king" and served the Republic faithfully to the end. Exiled in Argentina, he continued to attack the Franco régime.

**Ovseenko, Antonio:** First consul-general of the USSR in Spain, *eminence gris* of the PSUC. It is believed that he was responsible for the May, 1937 events. Later, purged and killed by Stalin.

**Palacio, Solano:** Asturian militant, author of various books on the war. Took refuge in Chile after the war but decided he was too old to continue the struggle and returned to Asturias.

**Palmiro de Lidia or Adrián del Valle** (possibly both pseudonyms): Anarchist novelist who writes short, ironic books.

**Pallás, Paulino:** Famous for throwing a bomb at Martínez Campos during a parade in Barcelona. The general escaped but Pallás was executed.

**Pardiñas, Manuel:** Assassinated José Canalejas in a Madrid bookstore. Little is known about him.

**Pavía, José:** Leader of the *coup d'état* which overthrew the Parliament of the First Republic.

**Peirats, José:** Born in the province of Castellon in 1908, moved to Barcelona in infancy. Hardly completed elementary school, held various jobs until the outbreak of the war. Secretly active in the Young Libertarians and anarchist groups during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*, of *Acracia* of Lerida, of *Ruta* of Barcelona and of *CNT* in Toulouse from 1953-59. He was a member of the 26th Division (formerly Durruti Column) from 1937 until the end of the war. He passed through France and various South American countries after the war. He returned to France in 1947 and became active in the CNT-in-exile of which he has twice been Secretary-General.

**Peiró, Juan:** Eminent syndicalist theoretician from Barcelona who was several times Secretary-General of the clandestine CNT and director of *Solidaridad Obrera* on its appearance in 1930. Signatory of the *treintista* manifesto which split the CNT in 1933, he became active in the press of the so-called "opposition unions". Reunited with the CNT at the Zaragoza Congress in 1936. He was a member of the Largo Caballero cabinet as Minister of Industry. He went to France after the war whence he was extradited to Spain by

the Germans. Having refused to co-operate with Franco's vertical syndicates, he was shot in Paterna, near Valencia.

**Pérez Cicario, Rogelio:** Official executioner of Barcelona who was assassinated by anarchists in 1924, unleashing reaction against the CNT.

**Pérez Farrás, Enrique:** Army commander went to Aragon as a technical advisor with the Durruti Column.

**Pérez Solís, Oscar:** Early Communist polemicist, orator. One of his polemical encounters was with Eusebio C. Carbo. As an army officer, he was converted in a "crisis of conscience" by the Jesuit, Padre Gafo. In the war, he fought in the Falangist columns.

**Pestaña, Angel:** Renowned confederal militant who was the first publisher of *Solidaridad Obrera* in 1916. He was wounded several times by bands of assassins. In 1920, he was the first delegate of the CNT to the Comintern Congress whence he returned completely disillusioned and was influential at the Zaragoza Conference of 1922 where the CNT broke with the Soviet régime. In the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, he moved towards support for the concept of social legislation, maintaining fierce polemics with his comrades who remained loyal to the original principles of the CNT. His "crisis of conscience" led him to be probably the inspiration behind the *treintistas*. As he moved further away from the CNT, he formed the Syndicalist Party which won Parliamentary seats in the 1936 elections. During the war, he held the position of Commissar. Died of ill health in 1937.

**Pi y Margall, Francisco:** Early President of the First Republic, considered by some to have been influenced in his federalism by Proudhon. Although he was an admirer of Proudhon and his translator, his federalism was also rooted in the Spanish Middle Ages. (Spanish anarchism was also influenced from two sources, the ideas of Bakunin and those of Pi y Margall.) However, his federalism did not influence the Second Republic.

**Pola, Vieja:** General from the Cuban war who, like others, was responsible for martyring the Cuban People in their long war of independence which they finally won, as in the case of the Philippines, with the not disinterested aid of the United States.

**Ponzán, Francisco:** CNT militant who, during the war, made several incursions into enemy territory which he continued to do from his exile in France to help the resistance inside Spain. He also helped shutdown allied airmen, escapees from concentration

camps and threatened Jews to get into Spain. Caught in Toulouse, he was killed with a group of comrades by the Germans.

**Portas, Narciso:** Officer of the Civil Guard responsible for the torturing in Montjuich of prisoners tried for the explosion during the procession in the Calle de Cambios Nuevos. Many were later shot.

**Portela Valladeres, Manuel:** Former Prime Minister who was charged by Alcalá de Zamora with the dissolution of the Government during the *bienio negro* and the calling of the 1936 elections which were won by the Leftists.

**Possá, Manuel:** Catalan anarchist who, in 1910, attempted unsuccessfully to assassinate the ex-president, Antonio Maura, in reprisal for the death sentence on Francisco Ferrer.

**Pou, Bernardo:** Anarchist militant from Mallorca who spent his life in Catalonia and France. Collaborated with J.R. Magriña in the writing of the book, *Un año de conspiración*, which recounted the events preceding the fall of the Monarchy. In exile, he was Sub-secretary of the AIT and a specialist in international syndicalism.

**Pozas, Sebastián:** Republican general during the civil war.

**Prat, José:** Old guard anarchist, member of the *Tierra y Libertad* group. Wrote various popular books. He entered into friendly but animated polemics with Ricardo Mella on the subject of Kropotkin's support for the allies.

**Martínez Prieto, Horacio:** Basque anarchist militant, active in the North and in France during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Little is known of his activities before he became Secretary of the CNT National Committee. He presided at the Zaragoza Congress, May 1936, where he gave evidence of his great talents. He was confirmed in his position by that Congress which also took the decision to move the National Committee from Zaragoza to Madrid. On the eve of the insurrection, he travelled to the North to warn the comrades there. He stayed there trapped by the events. On returning to Madrid, he took up his position again from David Antona who had discharged it in his absence. He supported CNT participation in the government; this being realized, he gave up his position to Mariano Rodríguez Vazquez, then Secretary of the Catalan Regional Committee, but he continued to act as *eminence grise*. On the eve of the National Plenary of Regionals of the Libertarian Movement (CNT, FAI, FIJL) in October, 1938, he proposed that only the FAI, constituted as a political party should represent

the movement in government. His proposal failed and the CNT continued to discharge this function. In exile, he has continued to insist on his thesis supported by a small group of friends. He is a respectable, reasoned orator however his writing does not share these virtues in its use of arbitrary neologisms.

**Prieto, Indalecio:** Moderate socialist politician much attracted to Republicanism. His collaboration with the Republicans led to his bitter split with Largo Caballero. The rivalry between these two men almost destroyed the Party, leaving it at the mercy of the Communists. Prieto was one of those most responsible for the installation in power of Negrín, later becoming one of his victims. But it was already too late to reunite the dispersed remnants of the Socialist Party. He helped Negrín destroy the Council of Aragon and aided Lister in his attack on the Loyalist front in Aragon from the rear. After the Teruel disaster he was dismissed from the government and Negrín, himself, took over his position as Minister of War. In exile, he tried to forge a pact between the Socialist Party and moderate Monarchists in Spain, in accordance with the wishes of the British Foreign Office. However, the Monarchists turned their backs on him because Franco had promised an eventual return to Monarchy. Disillusioned he practically retired from politics devoting his last years to political journalism.

**Prim, Juan:** Catalan General and political conspirator who bloodily persecuted Catalan workers. He participated in the first Moroccan War gaining new honours, and as a diplomat during the attempted invasion of Mexico by European troops where he angered the Queen by withdrawing the Spanish expeditionary force. Entering into many conspiracies, he was finally responsible for the downfall of Isabel II. He restored the monarchy in the person of Amadeo de Saboya, an act which indirectly served as provocation of the Franco-Prussian War. On taking possession of the throne Amadeo was presented with Prim's corpse. His assassin is still a mystery.

**Primo de Rivera, Miguel:** General in Africa who made a coup-d'état in Barcelona in September 1923 with the consent of Alfonso XIII. A series of political blunders on his part caused a general mobilization which resulted in the end of his dictatorship and, eventually, the overthrow of the monarchy.

**Primo de Rivera, José Antonio:** Son of Miguel Primo de Rivera, founder of the *Falange Española*. Aided by unknown money sources, he contributed to the broadening of the political crisis to

which the Republican Government itself also contributed by its repression of workers and its arrogance. At the height of the crisis he launched the "dialectic of pistols" which was followed by several assassination attempts against prominent Leftists, including, among others, Largo Caballero and the militant Socialist lawyer, Giménez de Asúa. His moves against the Assault Guard led to the assassination of the right-wing Monarchist, Calvo Sotelo, by the latter, which, in turn, provided the pretext for the July, 1936 insurrection. Imprisoned in Alicante during the insurrection, he was condemned to death in payment for the atrocities which were being committed with impunity in the Fascist zone. He was shot on November 20, 1936 in Alicante, his corpse becoming an object of religious veneration for the enemy.

**Proudhon, P.J.:** French writer and economist who started out as a worker. He split with Marx over the issue of authoritarianism. He has become butt for all the attacks of the Marxists against anarchism. The mutualist, federalist system of Proudhon influenced greatly Spanish anarchists.

**Puente, Isaac:** Basque doctor and socialist, propagandist for libertarian communism. He collaborated on the syndicalist and anarchist press and was a permanent contributor to the Valencian magazine *Estudios*. He was arrested and tortured by the police as a member of the revolutionary committee which organized the December, 1933 insurrection in Aragon. The July, 1936 rebellion left him stranded in enemy territory where he was immediately shot.

**Queipo de Llano, Gonzalo:** General and former conspirator against Primo de Rivera. He was Director-General of the Carabineros during the Republic and was an insurrectionary general in July, 1936 when he single-handedly took control of Seville. It must have been a great surprise to him that he was not assisted by the Italian planes transporting Moorish to Tablada airfield and mercenaries to Cadiz from Melilla and Ceuta.

**Quemades, Salvador:** Former CNT member and distinguished journalist. He later joined the Republicans with whom he ended his political life in obscurity.

**Quintanilla, Eleuterio:** Asturian syndicalist, disciple of Ricardo Mella. One of the best CNT orators and brilliant journalist. As a militant from his youth, he was disappointed at the Madrid Congress of 1919 when his proposal for the fusion of the CNT and UGT was strongly opposed. At the same Congress his reservations

about the revolutionary actions of the Bolsheviks in Russia cooled out the enthusiasm of the majority deluded by the "red paradise", and led the Congress to accord only conditional adhesion to the Third International.

**Rama, Carlos:** Uruguayan writer of Spanish descent. Author of several books on the social and political problems of Latin America and an extensive work, *La crisis política española del siglo XX*.

**Réclus, Elisée:** Most famous member of a French family of writers and researchers, who specialized in human geography about which he wrote many books, the most famous among anarchists being *El Hombre y la Tierra* which was translated into Spanish by Anselmo Lorenzo and published in Barcelona by Ferrer's *Escuela Moderna*. He was imprisoned during the Paris Commune in which he participated with an unloaded gun. He escaped the firing squad and deportation to New Caledonia through the intervention of a large group of internationally renowned intellectuals. He was a friend of Bakunin and participant in the First International. Died in 1905.

**Reparaz, Gonzalo:** Writer and diplomat of Portuguese origin who became naturalized Spanish. Having retired from the diplomatic service, he devoted himself to the study of geography, history and politics. He gradually approached anarchism and collaborated in anarchist publications after his disillusionment with the Republican leaders. He wrote extensively about the Middle Ages, especially the Reconquest, dispelling the many prejudices against the Moors propagated by the Catholic Church. During the war he wrote a series of daily articles in *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona, later published in the book, *Diario de nuestra guerra*, in which he used his extensive diplomatic experience to criticize errors in strategy by the Republican high command. These criticisms led him once to jail and brought down many denunciations on the paper. He died an old man, soon after arriving in Mexico after the war.

**Rionda, Ricardo:** Political commissar during the civil war who worked alongside Durruti until the latter's death. In 1937, he was demoted to a secondary position in the military judicial administration because of his opposition to political proselytizing by the Communists in the 26th Division.

**De los Ríos, Fernando:** Minister of Education in the first Republican government, later ambassador in Washington. He was a cul-



tured man and a humanist socialist, about which he has written a book. In Washington he fought desperately to get the Americans to abandon neutrality during the civil war. During the twenties, he was sent by the Socialist Party to Russia to find out what was happening in the Bolshevik régime. He met Kropotkin there who told him about the totalitarian evolution of the régime under Lenin. On returning to Spain his report to the Party caused it to withdraw from the Comintern, as the CNT did.

**Rocker, Rudolph:** German anarcho-syndicalist and writer, founder, after WW I, of a syndicalist centre and the second AIT which was not very influential. He wrote several humanist books, e.g. *Nationalism and Culture*, and revolutionary ones, e.g. *Theory and Practise of Modern Syndicalism*. When Hitler came to power, he emigrated to the USA. During WW II he supported the Allies in much the same way as Kropotkin in WW I.

**Rodríguez, Melchor:** Confederal militant who during the war became Director of Prisons. He did not allow reprisals against fascist prisoners and remained in Madrid after the war. After having been detained and condemned to death, he was freed through the influence of his former prisoners who made known his humanitarian conduct. His conduct has been a subject for discussion among his comrades since he was praised as a "red angel" by the same fascists who did not hesitate to shoot "bad red angels".

**Rodríguez Salas, Eusebio:** In his youth, he belonged to the CNT in Tarragona. Later he resigned or was expelled from the CNT. In the second year of the war he was promoted to a high police position by the Communists, since he had joined the Party in Catalonia. He was responsible for the provocative manoeuvre of attack on the *Telefónica* in Barcelona which led to the bloody May days of 1937 and, after, the decline of the CNT.

**Rodríguez Vazquez, Mariano:** As an abandoned urchin, he spent his childhood in the funereal *Asilio Durán*, under despotic friars, and the Model Prison in Barcelona where he was introduced to revolutionary ideas by political prisoners. After, he had a distinguished career in the CNT. From simple militant, he became Secretary-General of the CNT National Committee in the fall of 1936, a position he held until the end of the War. The conduct of Marianet (a pseudonym which dated back to his unhappy childhood) was, and still is, much discussed. He was reproached for his weak attitude towards Negrín and his abandonment of fundamental anarchist ideas in favour of bureaucratism. In exile, he tried to

reunite the anarchist movement into a single organization with himself as Secretary of the General Council. However, his life in exile was short as he was drowned in an accident on the River Marne in the summer of 1939.

**Rojo, Vicente:** Soldier of the Escuela de Toledo who became Commander-in-Chief of the Republic after the dismissal of the Generals Asensio and Castelló during the civil war. Unlike General Asensio, he managed to hold on to his high position until the end of the war by pledging himself to Negrín and the Communists. However, in the ending he rebelled by refusing to become a member of the *Circo Krone*. He went to Chile and Argentina where he wrote technical books on the civil war. In old age he obtained re-entry to Spain where he wrote another book on the defense of Madrid.

**Rojas:** Captain of the Assault Guard who committed the atrocity at Casas Viejas when he set on fire the hut in which several revolutionaries had barricaded themselves, all of them being burnt to death.

**Romanones, Conde de:** Politician of the old school who systematically practised the *turno politico*, that is, government alternately by the liberals and conservatives. He advised the King to leave the country in 1931 in spite of his monarchist convictions. He was a powerful landowner.

**Rosal, Amaro:** Officer in the Popular Army who became a rabid Communist. He wrote a tendentious book on the history of the workers' movement.

**Rosenberg, Marcel:** First Russian ambassador to the Republic. Conspired with Ovseenko, the Russian Consul-General in Barcelona, against any edict which did not correspond with the policy of the Russian State, and made sure that arms were supplied only to the party subservient to Soviet policy. He intervened actively in the political, military and diplomatic affairs of the Republic for which he was snubbed by Largo Caballero.

**Rull, Juan:** *Agent provocateur* who, in the first decade of the 20th century, planted bombs in Barcelona at the orders of the authorities to compromise the working class organization. Finally, he was indicted for his dirty deeds and executed.

**Sabater, Pablo:** CNT militant who was one of Bravo Portillo's first victims.

**Saborit, Andrés:** Socialist who was jailed with Largo Caballero and

**Julián Besteiro**, as one of the supposed leaders of the 1917 revolutionary strike. All were elected to Parliament in the next elections, enabling them to exchange prison for a parliamentary seat. He is the author of some excessively impassioned and partisan histories of the Socialist Party.

**Sales, Ramón**: One of Martínez Anido's *pistoleros*. He was prominent in the organization of the assassinations of Salvador Seguí and Peronas, and the wounding of hundreds of other victims. He was summarily executed by CNT militants during the first days of the civil war.

**Salvador, Santiago**: Anarchist who threw a bomb in the Lyceum Theatre in Barcelona causing much damage and killing many of the cream of the Catalan bourgeoisie in revenge for the death of Paulino Pallás. He was executed for this act.

**Salvatierra, Conde de**: Governor of Barcelona who initiated bloody repression against the CNT. In revenge, he and his wife were killed as they were travelling through Valencia.

**Salvochea, Fermín**: Andalusian revolutionary who came from a bourgeois family. He was sent to England to complete his studies. His political career began in the Federal Party of Pi y Margall where he was soon influenced by anarchist ideas for which he later suffered persecution and imprisonment. Although a revolutionary, he was by nature pacific, and his championing of the peasants, oppressed and brutalized by the Civil Guard and Church, earned the deserved title "apostle of the oppressed" given him by those he helped. However, he was sentenced to more than a hundred years in jail.

**Sánchez Guerra, José**: Former Prime Minister, exiled in Paris during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. In 1929, he led a plot against the dictator but was detained as he disembarked in Valencia. The Queen Mother intervened preventing his execution. During the General Berenguer's government he delivered an important speech in the Zarzuela Theatre disassociating himself from the Monarchy with the classic line: "No más servir a señores que en gusanos se convierten." ("No longer serve men who turn themselves into worms.") These words were directed personally against the King.

**Sánchez Roca, Mariano**: Lawyer who, during the civil war, placed himself at the service of the CNT in the Justice Ministry.

**Sánchez Rosa, José**: Andalusian anarchist who brought anarchist

literature to the peasants in a language they could understand. He wrote a book called *El abogado del obrero* (The workers' lawyer) which was intended to inform the lowly about the legal process.

**Sanjurjo, José:** General of the African old guard. During the transition from the Monarchy to the Republic he assured the neutrality of the Civil Guard as its commander. He accompanied the Royal Family to the border. As Director-General of the Civil Guard he was responsible for its atrocities against peasants and workers, proclaiming the Civil Guard was "the soul of Spain". After falsely giving allegiance to the Republic he led an insurrection on August 10, 1932 which failed and resulted in his arrest in Seville. He was condemned to death but the sentence was commuted to 30 years in jail. He escaped from prison and took refuge in Portugal from where he contributed to the July 18, 1936 rebellion of which he was predestined to be the leader. However, he was killed in an air crash as he was attempting to return to Spain.

**Segarra, Ramón:** Militant anarchist, distinguished as a newspaper cartoonist.

**Seguí, Salvador:** Founding member of the CNT as a very young man, one of its earliest leaders and organizers. He played a prominent part in the 1919 Canadiense strike in Catalonia and his famous speech in Las Arenas bullring probably avoided a massacre of workers prepared to assault Montjuich Fortress to free the prisoners. He was part of the group imprisoned in the Castillo de la Mola where he gave an important speech, of which only fragments remain, defining the boundaries of syndicalism and anarchism. He took part in the 1919 Congress of the CNT at which his view of the problem of the Russian Revolution prevailed. He was the victim of many assassination attempts by the *pistoleros* by whom he was eventually killed in 1923. In order to avoid a funeral demonstration, the authorities buried him clandestinely.

**"Seisdedos":** Pseudonym for the leading anarchist burnt in the hut at Casas Viejas in January, 1933, by the Assault Guard under the direction of Captain Rojas.

**Sempau, Ramón:** Anarchist who tried to avenge those martyred in Montjuich in 1896 by ineptly firing at the executioner Narciso Portas, an officer of the Civil Guard.

**Sender, Ramón:** Author of numerous novels beginning with *Iman*, a criticism of the 1921 Moroccan disaster in which he participated as a soldier. He also wrote *Siete dominos rojos* when he was in the

CNT and a member of anarchist groups. During the civil war he had a crisis of conscience becoming a Communist fellow-traveller. He quickly corrected this move by continuing to write novels of a political and anarchist nature.

**Serrano Suñer, Ramón:** Franco's brother-in-law who was trapped in the Loyalist zone during the civil war and later exchanged. As was to be expected he joined the Fascist ranks becoming eventually Foreign Minister in the rebel government. Fallen into disgrace he disappeared from the political scene.

**Sesé, Antonio:** Ex-anarchist member of PSUC who was killed by a stray bullet during the May events of 1937 in Barcelona while he was on his way to the Generalidad building to take up a ministerial position.

**Silvestre:** Monarchist general, friend of Alfonso XIII with whom he plotted the disastrous Moroccan campaign of 1921 in which he died.

**Sirvent, Manuel:** Member of various Superior Committees of the CNT, he shunned publicity.

**Soldevila:** Cardinal Archbishop of Zaragoza who was assassinated by anarchists apparently to avenge the death of Salvador Seguí. Although many were accused of the assassination with varying degrees of certainty, among them Francisco Ascaso, only the militant, Escartín, was detained and sentenced to life imprisonment.

**Sopena, Pío:** Republican Army sargeant who tried to intervene in the December 8, 1933 insurrection plotted by the anarchists. He died in the attempt.

**Tarrida del Marmol:** Engineer who belonged to a well-off family when he joined the Catalan anarchists. Implicated in the explosions in the Cambios Nuevos, he was imprisoned in Montjuich. Family influence managed to free him from prison in exchange for exile. From England and France, he waged a noisy campaign against the "Spanish inquisitors" which he substantiated in a book of the same name. Died in exile refusing ever to return to Spain.

**Tagüeña, Manuel:** Communist who had an outstanding career in the Popular Army becoming commander of the 15th Army Corps thanks to the good offices of the Communist Party.

**Témime, Emile:** Author with Pierre Brué of *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain*, a quite objective history.

**Tomás, Pascual:** Socialist militant from Valencia of great prestige in the inner circle of the Party for whom he was a deputy in Parliament. In exile, he was Secretary of the UGT until, old and sick, he returned to Spain where he died.

**Torres Escartín, José:** Anarchist who was accused of the assassination of Cardinal Soldevila for which he was sentenced to life imprisonment. Freed at the proclamation of the Republic, he was quite deranged from the maltreatment he had suffered in captivity. Because of his mental state he was put in an asylum where he was killed by Franco's troops when they occupied Catalonia.

**Torres Iglesias, Emilio:** Colonel in the Republican Army who distinguished himself in the bloody May days in Barcelona. He was soon relieved of his command for having been a former CNT sympathizer and replaced by Colonel Burillo, a prominent Communist.

**Toryho, Jacinto:** Joined the CNT after the proclamation of the Republic becoming the initiator of the Libertarian Youth. Skillful as a journalist he soon became editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona and later editor of *Tierra y Libertad* published by Abad de Santillán. During the civil war, he first worked effectively as head of the office of Culture and Propaganda and, after, as publisher of *Solidaridad Obrera* until 1938. After the war, he emigrated to Argentina.

**Trillas, Desiderio:** Former CNT member who later used his position as head of the dock workers to form an autonomous union in which he was accused of discriminating against CNT dock workers. At the time of the rebellion he tried to affiliate his union with the UGT, fearing reprisals by the CNT. However, one day his body was found riddled with bullets.

**Unamuno, Miguel:** Philosopher of Basque origin. He fell out of favour with Primo de Rivera who exiled him in the Canary Islands from where he fled to France, living near the Spanish border and contributing to propaganda against the Dictator. On returning to Spain he joined a parliamentary group "At the service of the Republic" with Ortega y Gasset and other intellectuals. Nearly all of them retired from politics seeing that they could not influence the development of the new Parliament. In the civil war he remained in insurgent territory where his conduct continued to be paradoxical. First he incensed the rebels and detracted from the Republic; then he gave a violent speech against the new régime by

which he was then ignored. He died soon after isolated from everything and everybody.

**Urales, Federico** (Pseudonym for Juan Montseny): Former cooper who became a writer in the anarchist press and schoolteacher. During the repression after the bombs in Cambios Nuevos he was imprisoned in Montjuich. He was released to exile in England and, later, France. He returned clandestinely to Madrid where he worked as a journalist. He founded *La Revista Blanca* and *Tierra y Libertad* as a daily. He got to know Francisco Ferrer during his first trial for the bombs in the Calle Mayor and wrote for the Escuela Moderna publishing house a text book which later became famous, *Sembrando Flores*. He then moved with his family to Barcelona after the birth of his daughter, Federica, founding again as a family enterprise *La Revista Blanca* and many other publications which freed him from journalism. Shortly before his death, in exile, he wrote many narrative works and his autobiography, *Mi Vida*, in three volumes.

**Uribe, Vicente**: Communist Minister of Agriculture in the Largo Caballero government. From his Ministry he did everything he could to hold back revolutionary collectivization to the point of totally disorganizing the agriculture of the country. He died in Russia.

**Val, Eduardo**: CNT militant from Madrid where he emerged as a prominent organiser of resistance while a member of the Confederal Defense Committee, during the siege and eventual isolation of the Central Zone. He was one of the founders of the Junta de Casado on the resignation of Manuel Azaña. When the fronts were abandoned, he took refuge in Valencia whence he was taken to London in a British warship. Later he went to France where he still lives.

**Vega, Etalvino**: Communist militant who took command of the 12th Army Corps.

**Viadiu, José**: Catalan anarchist who was imprisoned in the Castillo de la Mola with, among about fifty others, Salvador Seguí and Luis Companys. Because of the friendship with Seguí he could write a short biography of him. In 1938, he replaced Toryho as publisher of *Solidaridad Obrera*, a position he held until the end of the war. Exiled in France, he later settled in Mexico where he was reunited with one of his sons who had been evacuated to a children's colony in Russia at the height of the war. His other son died fighting for the Red Army on the Leningrad front during WW II.



**Vidiella, Rafael:** Former anarchist who became Second-in-Command of the PSUC and one of the most vicious enemies of anarchism. He was a member of *Solidaridad Obrera* when it was forced through repression to move to Valencia in the 20's. After the war, he emigrated to Russia.

**Vilafranca, Soledad:** Friend of Francisco Ferrer, collaborator in the Escuela Moderna.

**Villaverde, José:** Galician anarchist militant. Published in Vigo *El Despertar Marino*, perhaps *Solidaridad Obrera* of la Coruña and lastly *Despertad!*, a paper that had wide circulation among confederal militants throughout Spain and contributed powerfully, together with *Acción Social Obrera* of San Feliu de Guixols and *Acción* of Barcelona to the militant awakening during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and, at its fall, to the reorganization of the CNT. He was a talented working class journalist and orator, talents he used to great effect in the North West. He was assassinated by Franco's henchmen at the beginning of the civil war.

**Weyler, Valeriano:** General who, like others, hurried the loss of Cuba by his atrocities. He conspired against Primo de Rivera during the dictatorship.

**Yagüe, Juan:** Enemy general during the war. He was responsible for the advance from Melilla to Madrid of a force comprised of Moroccan mercenaries and the dregs of the Nationalist forces. He was part of a conspiracy against Franco which resulted in his banishment from front line commands.

**Yoldi, Miguel:** Navarrese anarchist militant, active in the National Committees of the CNT. He commanded an army division in the East but was demoted through Communist intrigues and was about to be shot at the time of the enemy offensive of the spring of 1938 which destroyed the Eastern Army completely up to the Secret front.



**José Peirats**  
**ANARCHISTS IN THE SPANISH REVOLUTION**

Translated from *Los anarquistas en la crisis política española* (1962), this is the most comprehensive, critical history of the Spanish Civil War 1936-39, and the role played in it by the CNT-FAI, the anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists. The first hundred pages are a brief survey of the working class movement in Spain, going back to the foundation of the Spanish section of the First International in 1869, and the political struggles which were a prelude to the Civil War.

**An appendix.** In 1988 José Peirats wrote a history of Spanish anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists in exile after 1939, which he apparently intended as an appendix to this book. To have added it as an appendix to this edition, however, would have prohibitively increased the cost. It is published in full, under the title 'Spanish anarchism in exile' in *The Raven* number 23 (Freedom Press, £3 post-free anywhere), with other essays on Spain under Franco and after.

**José Peirats Valls** (1908-1989) started work at the age of eight. At the age of fourteen he became an apprentice brickmaker and a member of the clandestine Libertarian Youth. During the Civil War he fought with the anarchist militias, escaping to South America in 1939. From 1947 he lived in Toulouse, where he edited two Spanish-language journals and wrote a three-volume history *La CNT en la Revolución Española*, 1951-53. After the death of Franco he returned to Spain and spent the rest of his life in the village of his birth.

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