

# **The CNT in the Spanish Revolution, Volume 2**

José Peirats Valls

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# Glossary of organisations

**BOC** Bloc Obrer i Camperol/Worker-Peasant Block; an anti-Stalinist communist party

**CADCI** Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria/ Autonomist Centre for Shop and White-Collar Workers; a Catalan white-collar and shop workers' union, the leading union in this sector

**CEDA** Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas/Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rightists; the main rightist party in the 1930s, of quasi-fascist persuasion

**CGT** Confédération Générale du Travail/General Confederation of Labour; Europe's leading anarcho-syndicalist union before World War One, it later fell under socialist and communist influence

**CGTU** Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire/Unitary General Confederation of Labour; formed by communists and allied to the RILU

**CNT** Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/National Confederation of Labour

**CRT** Confederación Regional del Trabajo/Regional Confederation of Labour; the regional bodies that made up the CNT

**ERC** Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya/Republican Left of Catalonia; a middle class republican party

**FAI** Federación Anarquista Ibérica/Iberian Anarchist Federation; the pan-Iberian federation of anarchist affinity groups

**FIJL** Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias/Iberian Federation of Young Libertarians; the anarchist youth movement

**FJS** Federación de Juventudes Socialistas/Socialist Youth Federation; the youth movement of the PSOE

**FNTT** Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra/National Federation of Land Labourers; the UGT agrarian workers' union

**FOUS** Federación Obrera de Unificación Sindical/Workers' Federation of Trade Union Unity; a dissident communist union federation close to the POUM

**FSL** Federación Sindicalista Libertaria/Libertarian Syndicalist Federation; a moderate anarcho-syndicalist answer to the FAI formed during the power struggles in the CNT prior to the civil war

**ICE** Izquierda Comunista de España/Communist Left of Spain; a small Trotskyist grouping which helped form the POUM in 1935

**IWA** International Workingmen's Association; the world organisation of anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist groups

**JCI** Juventud Comunista Ibérica/Iberian Communist Youth; the PCE youth movement

**JJ.LL** Juventudes Libertarias/Young Libertarians; the Catalan association of young anarchists

**JSU** Juventudes Socialistas Unificadas/Unified Socialist Youth; an amalgamation of the JSU and the JCI under Stalinist hegemony

**PCC** Partit Comunista Català/Catalan Communist Party; a dissident communist group which helped form the BOC in 1930

**PCE** Partido Comunista de España/Communist Party of Spain; the official pro-Moscow communist party

**POUM** Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista/Workers' Party of Marxist Unification; a dissident communist, anti-Stalinist party

**PSOE** Partido Socialista Obrero Español/Spanish Socialist Workers' Party; the Spanish social-democratic party

**PSUC** Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya/Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia; the Catalan Communist Party formed at the start of the civil war in order to rival the power of the revolutionary CNT-FAI and the POUM

**RILU** Red International of Labour Unions; Comintern union federation

**SS.OO** Sindicatos de la Oposición/Opposition Unions; made up of anti-FAI anarcho-syndicalists

**UGT** Unión General de Trabajadores/General Workers' Union; the PSOE-affiliated union movement

**USC** Unió Socialista de Catalunya/Socialist Union of Catalonia; a quasi-Fabian-socialist party which split from the PSOE due to the latter's centralist stance on the national question. Very close to the ERC before the civil war, it later joined the PSUC.

**U. de R.** Unió de Rabassaires/Union of Sharecroppers; a Catalan tenant farmers' union close to the ERC

# The life and struggles of José Peirats

*‘Concerning original history...the content of these histories is necessarily limited; their essential material is that which is living in the experience of the historian himself and in the current interests of men; that which is living and contemporary in their milieu.*

*The author describes that in which he has participated, or at least which he has lived; relatively short periods, figures of individual men and their deeds...it is not sufficient to have been the contemporary of the events described, or to be well-informed about them. The author must belong to the class and the social milieu of the actors he is describing; their opinions, way of thought and culture must be the same as his own. In order to really know phenomena and see them in real context, one must be placed at the summit - not seeing them from below, through the keyhole of morality or any other wisdom.’*

Hegel, ***Reason in History***

*‘Yo soy escritor modesto que salió del barro de una bóvila’*

(‘I am a modest writer who emerged from the fired clay of an oven.’)

José Peirats

In terms of their general outline, the life and struggles of José Peirats Valls were largely indistinguishable from the lives and struggles of thousands of other workers of his generation. He formed part of the ‘generation of 1936’, which, having become radicalised and politicised in the 1920s, rebelled against the injustices of Spanish society during the 1930s, channelling their profound revolutionary energies into the educational, para-military, political and syndical organisations of the libertarian movement. This was the generation which rose up to defeat the military coup of July 1936 and which experienced the exhilarating months of revolution, a sublime summer of liberation that gave way to the bitter defeat of 1939 and the long winter of exile. Like thousands of other *cenetistas*, for whom the contours and vicissitudes of their private lives were inextricably bound up with their activism, we can say then that to write José’s biography is also to write the biography of his generation.

The similarities evidenced in the biographies of the ‘generation of 1936’ also underscore the profound osmosis between the most radical section of the Spanish working class and the CNT, a linkage which ensured that the life histories of *cenetistas* are inseparable from the organisational history of their trade union. José’s biography, therefore, is a collective biography, the biography of the social movement of the most revolutionary segments of the Spanish working class to which he devoted nearly all of his life.<sup>1</sup> Yet, for all the ordinariness of José’s life, he

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<sup>1</sup> This approach reflects the so-called ‘Particularist approach’ to social movements, which is concerned with the individual motivations and socialisation process of those who make up the movement and which focuses on biography and collective biography as a means of teasing out the meaning of movement membership for the individual. See Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison, *Social Movements. A Cognitive Approach*, Cambridge: Polity, 1991, pp. 30-1.

was also an exceptional individual: a child labourer and brickmaker, proletarian bohemian, self-educated playwright, revolutionary organiser, indefatigable propagandist and, most famously of all, activist-historian, the 'Herodotus of the CNT'.

José Peirats Valls was born on March 15, 1908 in Vall d'Uixò, a small village in the province of Castelló, the most northern of the three Valencian provinces, which bordered Catalonia. At this time, Castelló, like most of Valencia, was overwhelmingly agrarian, specialising in fruit production for export. While most of the Peirats clan worked as land labourers, José's parents were day labourers, specialising as espadrille-makers (*espardenyers*), the rope-soled shoes frequently worn by urban and rural workers in Spain. This would have ensured that José's family was somewhat better off than many of their extended family and that family life, while humble, was far from poverty-stricken. The strong family and community networks that existed in Vall d'Uixò also provided further defence against hardship. Because the Peirats family was numerous, working relatives or family friends would always support those relatives who experienced the misfortune of unemployment or ill health. This popular reciprocity largely compensated for the underdeveloped state welfare system in Spain and, judging from José's positive recollections of village life, his family had no real experience of the deprivation and hunger experienced by the rural dispossessed of Andalusia.<sup>2</sup>

It would be inaccurate, however, to paint an idealised, bucolic picture of the living conditions of the rural lower classes anywhere in Spain during the first part of the twentieth century. So, while the Peirats family may have been relatively better off in comparison with the most downtrodden sections of society, the harsh realities and suffering that characterised everyday working class life nonetheless entered José's world from a very young age. Spain's high infant mortality rates ensured that, following the death of four of his brothers and sisters, José was left with one sister. Castelló was also bereft of educational provision; there was mass illiteracy, especially among women, and the number of those who could neither read nor write was comparable to Andalusia,<sup>3</sup> an area which is often taken to epitomise cultural backwardness in modern Spain. José's mother was illiterate; she spoke Catalan, the first language of the lower classes in Vall d'Uixò, and was blissfully ignorant of Castilian, the official state language. This linguistic divergence highlighted the de facto autonomy enjoyed by local, especially peripheral, communities, and the laissez-faire attitude of the weak Spanish state on such matters; indeed, most village life in the Vall de Uixò took place without any genuine contact with the state.

During the period in which José lived in Vall de Uixò, the social structure of the village was largely undifferentiated. There was no history of the dramatic agrarian struggles that became endemic in the estates of the rural south. Even in the years immediately prior to the 1936 revolution, a period of sustained agrarian mobilisations, not a single strike was recorded in the village.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This account of life in Vall de Uixò is, for the most part, based on Peirats's own account in his unpublished memoirs which were kindly given to me by Federico Arcos and from the fragments published in José Peirats, 'Una experiencia histórica del pensamiento libertario. Memorias y selección de artículos breves', *Anthropos. Suplementos*, 18, Barcelona, 1990, pp. 7-8. A slightly contrasting version is provided by Víctor García, his lifelong friend from Barcelona, who claimed that 'misery, hunger and suffering in the village forced his family to emigrate to Barcelona' (Víctor García, 'Un retador nato: José Peirats', *Polémica*, October 1989, p. 20).

<sup>3</sup> José María Jover Zamora, 'La época de la Restauración. Panorama político-social, 1875-1902', in Manuel Tuñón de Lara (ed.), *Revolución burguesa, oligarquía y constitucionalismo (1834-1923)*, Barcelona, 1993 [2nd edition], p. 324

<sup>4</sup> There is no record of CNT presence in the Vall de Uixò prior to the 1936 revolution (Eulàlia Vega, *Anarquistas y sindicalistas, 1931-1936. La CNT y los Sindicatos de Oposición en el País Valenciano*, Valencia, 1987). Certainly, José makes no reference to the CNT in the village in his memoirs, although a CNT-run collective was established in the

The traditional divide in the village remained the river which bisected the settlement and which provided water for the more productive farmland in the lower part of the hamlet. Nevertheless, class divisions had begun to inscribe themselves on the more traditional geographical divisions. According to José's memoirs, the lower part (*abaix*) of the village was the home to wealthier tenant farmers who sometimes employed the farmhands and labourers who, for the most part, resided in the upper part (*dalt*) of Vall de Uixò, where the Peirats family lived.<sup>5</sup> Although the tensions between the two parts of the village sometimes resulted in small outbreaks of violence, this was largely the outcome of parochial and family feuds rather than any underlying social antagonisms.

In 1911, when José was just three years old, his mother successfully convinced the rest of the family to move to Barcelona, the Catalan capital and Spain's industrial capital, where her brother had established an espadrille shop. It was a decision that was to change young José's life irrevocably. This marked the start of a lifelong journey of discovery and struggle, an odyssey that would take him to three continents and numerous countries in the course of a life that resembled that of the Quixote: the idealistic dreamer, ever poised to confront injustice and tyranny in the course of a semi-nomadic existence.

In sharp contrast to the parochial and insular rural life in Vall d'Uixò, by the early 1910s Barcelona was a thriving and cosmopolitan commercial and cultural centre. It was the capital of Spain's labour movement which, from the middle of the nineteenth century, had been strongly influenced by libertarian or anarchist ideologies: from the 1860s onwards, every major trade union federation was formed in Barcelona. Urban growth during the last quarter of the nineteenth century had been vertiginous. The 1888 World Exhibition reshaped the cityscape dramatically, drawing in thousands of immigrants from the poor and depressed rural areas of Spain. Like the Peirats family, these immigrants arrived in the hope of finding a better life in a city José later described as the 'Catalan California'.<sup>6</sup> Yet there were definite limits to the 'Barcelona dream': despite the vast wealth generated by local industry, economic incertitude was the norm for the city's workers, particularly the immigrants. The Spanish state and the authorities were singularly incapable of responding to the welfare requirements of a rapidly industrialised and urbanised city, resulting in an acute housing crisis. With low-cost accommodation in particularly short supply, landlords (or more correctly slumlords) became the scourge of working class Barcelona. Much housing was unmodernised and insalubrious, bringing in its wake a string of diseases, such as cholera, typhoid and tuberculosis. Worst still were the social conditions facing the many immigrants that resided in the shantytowns built on the beach or on wasteland in and around the city. The state also failed to serve as a stimulus to industry as was occurring in Germany at this time. Spain's limited internal market, which was distorted by the army of southern landless labourers who survived on subsistence wages, was a further brake on industrial development. The wellbeing of Catalan industry was tied to its privileged access to the protected colonial markets in Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico, at least until the 'Disaster of 1898', when Spain lost its remaining colonial possessions. In the crisis that ensued, the fragile nature of Barcelona's economy was savagely exposed. The Catalan bourgeoisie, ever keen to maximise the slim profit margins generated by its uncompetitive industries, sought to ensure that the costs of the economic crisis would

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village after July 1936; see Aurora Bosch Sánchez, *Ugetistas y libertarios. Guerra civil y revolución en el País Valenciano, 1936-1939*, Valencia, 1983, p. 390.

<sup>5</sup> Víctor García's prologue to José Peirats, *La Semana Trágica y otros relatos*, Móstolet, 1991, p.14

<sup>6</sup> José Peirats, *Figuras del movimiento libertario español*, Barcelona, 1978, p. 89

be unevenly distributed and that local workers would bear the brunt of austerity measures and job losses. The already calamitous situation facing Barcelona's working class deteriorated further and social antagonisms rose sharply. Because workers made up the bulk of the conscripts who perished in Spain's overseas military adventures, many proletarian families lost their main breadwinner. Class hatreds were further fuelled by the knowledge that the middle and upper classes, notwithstanding their vocal patriotism, could, at a nominal cost, take advantage of a 'buy-out option' that allowed them to remove the names of their children from the draft list. In a context of social effervescence and popular resentment towards futile and costly colonial wars, the labour movement-sponsored culture of proletarian anti-militarism took root among broad sectors of the working class.

Class conflict was inevitable. Throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century workers had struggled to organise trade unions but Barcelona's industrialists were implacably hostile to any checks on the authority of capital in the workplace, opposing even a token union presence in the factories and redoubling their efforts to crush organised labour. Whenever possible, dismissals were directed at trade union militants. In 1901 employers opted for the 'hunger pact' (*el pacte de la fam*), a lockout of working class activists aimed at destroying labour organisation. Yet the determination of local workers to improve their living conditions guaranteed that union organisation survived the employers' offensive. Partial, economic strikes continued, culminating in the February 1902 general strike. The Madrid government responded by declaring martial law: 371 labour activists were jailed and street fighting between pickets and the army left 17 dead and 44 injured.

While the military had long been deployed to counter challenges to public order, after the colonial defeat of 1898, the army élite became increasingly obsessed with internal politics and settling scores with the 'unpatriotic', proletarian 'enemy within', whose 'Red subversion', it believed, had undermined the warrior spirit of the Spanish people. In Barcelona, army power was embodied in a network of garrisons and Civil Guard posts dotted around the city and in the hill-top military fortress of Montjuïc, which cast a repressive shadow over the city. The use of the army as a domestic policeman, combined with new and equally disastrous foreign adventures in Morocco, heightened the anti-militarist spirit of the Barcelona working class, large sections of which regarded the military as the instrument of both an unpopular centralist state and the defender of an unjust social order. Popular anti-militarism came to the surface during the so-called 'Tragic Week' of July 1909. What started as a peaceful general strike of Barcelona's trade unions against the colonial war in Morocco sparked off a spontaneous uprising in the proletarian *barris*. Protected by a network of barricades, the workers of Barcelona exacted their revenge on the Catholic church, which had many financial interests in Spanish Morocco, burning over 50 religious buildings across the city. One hundred and four civilians died and 125 were injured in the repression of the urban insurrection. As the authorities clamped down on rebel Barcelona, over 2,500 people – for the most part trade unionists and left-wingers – were imprisoned. Seventeen death sentences were passed, five of which were carried out.

The 'Tragic Week' moulded the perspectives of the main social actors in Barcelona for years to come: for Spanish conservatives, it illustrated how the Madrid-based centralist state could ill afford to deviate from its mission of pacification in this most undisciplined and disloyal city; for the Catalan bourgeoisie, who regarded the Spanish government as an anti-Catalan and anti-industrial force, it showed that the agrarian-dominated central state was a necessary ally in the struggle against the Barcelona working class; and for the working class, who refused to accept the



claims of catalaniste employers that their oppression was national rather than social, it revealed the need for a new unity and organisation. It was this last sentiment that led to the formation of the CNT in 1910.

The Barcelona encountered by the Peirats family in 1911 was, therefore, a divided, polarised and conflictive city. In keeping with prevailing patterns of working class immigration, the Peirats's arrived in instalments: first of all the male members of the family came and secured accommodation in the Poble Sec district, close to the centre of Barcelona, whereupon they were joined by José's mother and sister. Described by US historian Joan Connelly Ullman as a 'slum district', Poble Sec was a long-established, almost exclusively, working class district, which had been a receptacle for many of the migrant workers, particularly the Aragonese and the Valencians, who came to Barcelona before the 1888 Exhibition.<sup>7</sup> Since many of these earlier immigrants spoke Catalan, they were fairly easily integrated within the city and, by the time José and his family arrived, Poble Sec would have possessed a pronounced Catalan atmosphere and, was, therefore, not too disconcerting for the Catalan speakers from the Vall de Uixò. Typical of much of proletarian Barcelona, illiteracy and overcrowding were serious problems in Poble Sec. In 1909, illiteracy ran at 54.6 per cent in District VII, the municipal district that included Poble Sec.<sup>8</sup>

Poble Sec also had a pronounced bohemian atmosphere, bordering as it did the Paral·lel, 'Barcelona's Broadway', a centre of popular revelry that housed music-halls and theatres. The Paral·lel also connected Poble Sec to the port and Barcelona's District V, which had a large marginal population of urban poor (beggars, street vendors, prostitutes, drug dealers and war-mutilated soldiers). Nevertheless, the lives of the inhabitants of Poble Sec were dominated by the rhythms of industrial capitalism. Because the overwhelming majority of the area's inhabitants lived from wage labour, at certain times of the day, afternoon and evening the streets of Poble Sec would be packed with workers making their way to and from work. Young José could not have avoided the legions of workers drawn to *La Canadiense*, the huge hydro-electric plant on Paral·lel, or the thousands of labourers who journeyed to factories in District V or to those in Sants, an industrial neighbourhood immediately to the east of Poble Sec.

It would have been equally impossible for José to ignore the history of class struggle in Poble Sec, which was palpable. For many decades an important centre for the labour movement, the Paral·lel's theatres were frequently used for mass union meetings and leftist political rallies, while during the 'Tragic Week' numerous convents and religious buildings had been torched in Poble Sec and on the adjoining Paral·lel.<sup>9</sup> Equally, a sensitive child like José could not have overlooked the manifest injustices and visible poverty in his new neighbourhood. Fuelled by Barcelona's notoriously corrupt market traders and shopkeepers, there was huge inflation in the city at this time: during the 12-year period that preceded the arrival of the Peirats family, the cost of staple parts of the working class diet such as dried cod and bread rose by 25 per cent, while meat

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<sup>7</sup> Joan Connelly Ullman, *The Tragic Week. A Study of Anticlericalism in Spain, 1875-1912*, Cambridge, Mass., 1968, pp. 272, 276. In fact, this description might have been extended to all proletarian Barcelona.

<sup>8</sup> Jordi Monés i Pujol-Busquets, 'A la recerca de l'home nou', in Borja de Riquer i Permanyer (ed.), *Història, Política, Societat i Cultura dels Països Catalans. L'Època dels nous moviments socials, 1900-1930*, Barcelona, 1995, volume 8, p.313.

<sup>9</sup> Connelly Ullman, *The Tragic Week*, p. 211

in the city was more expensive than in London.<sup>10</sup> It was this urban setting that nourished an awareness in José of the entrenched social and political divisions in the city, a myriad of conflicts which inspired a lifelong commitment to rebellion and struggle, both against the world around him and with himself.

Unlike many children of his generation, José found little cause for rebellion at home. In sharp contradistinction to the parental authoritarianism that suffocated the developing spirit of many children at this time, the Peirats household provided a relatively free and liberal environment within which José could develop and begin to frame his understanding of the external world. Despite their lack of formal education, José's parents displayed no religious or obscurantist traits whatsoever; in fact, they exhibited free-thinking, even atheistic, tendencies, and relations between children and parents were relatively open and supportive. There was however no tradition of political activism among José's parents. While some members of the Peirats clan described themselves as republicans, anarchists and socialists, this was a declaration of leftist political sympathies and not an indication of organised militancy. Most of the energies of José's parents were devoted to working in his Uncle's espadrille shop. The hard work of José's parents and the dual income they enjoyed was sufficient to satisfy the great aspiration of most working class parents at this time: to improve the life chances of their children by sending them to school to receive the education they themselves had been denied as children.

In 1913, at the age of 5 years, José entered a church-run infant school. This choice of school did not contradict the prevailing anti-clerical spirit within the Peirats family; rather, it reflected the absence of state educational provision and the de facto monopoly enjoyed by the clergy over the education of children. This proved to be a far from auspicious initiation in the world of learning and ideas for José. The new school contrasted sharply with his experiences in two ways: firstly, all teaching was in Castilian rather than the Catalan spoken by the Peirats family;<sup>11</sup> secondly, the pedagogical creed, which assumed that fear would instil obedience and respect, reflected the authoritarian essence of Spanish Catholicism and clashed frontally with the relative freedom experienced by José at home. This authoritarian schooling was deemed to be all the more applicable when it came to the 'education' of working class children, who the clergy sought to immunise against potential perversions such as anarchism, socialism and syndicalism. In practice, the church school model was based on the repression of the free and imaginative spirit of young children and the clergy had a deserved reputation for physical brutality and verbal and sometimes sexual abuse. The punishment and humiliation inflicted on children in what one working class commentator dubbed 'the prison-school' reached such extremes that they inadvertently produced rebellious, priest-hating, anti-clerical pupils.<sup>12</sup> To be sure, José's formative experience of what he described as the 'despotism of the teachers' left him with a burning hatred of the priesthood that would stay with him for the rest of his life; it also provided him with his first rebellion against authority.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Joaquín Romero Maura, *'La Rosa del Fuego'. Republicanos y anarquistas: la política de los obreros barceloneses entre el desastre colonial y la Semana Trágica, 1899-1909*, Barcelona, 1989, pp. 145-6.

<sup>11</sup> Whilst in his autobiography Peirats refers to himself as a speaker of 'valenciano', the differences between it and Catalan were limited to accent and to a few words and were far fewer in number than the differences between American English and the English spoken in the British Isles.

<sup>12</sup> Emili Salut, *Vivers de revolucionaris. Apunts històrics del Districte Cinque*, Barcelona, 1938, p.26

<sup>13</sup> Peirats, *'Una experiencia histórica...'*, p. 9

José, like many of his contemporaries, registered his rejection of authoritarian church education through truancy, by voting with his feet in an attempt to liberate himself from the repressive grasp of the priests. The protest of truancy constituted José's first experience of rebellion and solidarity, the beginning of a lifelong commitment to non-conformity and opposition to authority, as he spent as few as one day per week at school, preferring instead to wander the streets and parks of Barcelona. The open spaces of the streets and parks were the main sites for the socialisation of working class youth, relatively free spaces in which children could play and establish new bonds of loyalty beyond the control and mediation of parental and clerical authority.<sup>14</sup> For José, the streets provided a space in which he developed a desire for freedom from authority as he forged social relations with his peers.

José's first rebellion came to a premature end when his parents found out about his truancy. José relates in his memoirs how, having grown accustomed to violent encounters with his clerical 'tutors', he expected a sound beating from his father. Yet the much-feared recriminations did not materialise and José's parents remained calm as they apprised themselves of their son's motives, inviting him to articulate freely his objections to the church school. José's anti-school protest presented his parents with a dilemma: they were fully conscious of the intelligence of their rebellious progeny and therefore wanted José to receive an education, but they also recognised that this was patently not occurring at the church school and they could ill-afford to waste their hard earned money on the useless discipline of the priests. After some enquiries among friends and neighbours, José's parents removed their son from the church school and enrolled him in one of Barcelona's rationalist schools. Modelled on the pedagogical principles of Francesc Ferrer Guàrdia, the doyen of liberal educational initiatives in Spain, the rationalist schools were part of the union-funded peoples' athenaeums (*ateneus*) that organised drama groups, choral associations, libraries, evening classes and hiking groups. An immensely popular element of working class life, these cultural centres compensated for the underdeveloped welfare state by providing a series of educational and leisure services. Yet there was also a transforming element to the *ateneus*: they aimed to forge a counter-cultural vision of the world that would raise the consciousness of the working class and challenge capitalist hegemony. And the *ateneus* were very successful in achieving this objective, for in the absence of any rival leisure activities or educational institutions, they became essential elements within an alternative, grassroots social infrastructure, allowing for the establishment of new interstices between the CNT and the Barcelona working class. In the period leading up to the civil war, the *ateneus* and the rationalist schools helped sustain and nourish the CNT: many of its leading activists emerged from the rationalist schools, while the *ateneus* played an active role in creating and propagating a distinctly proletarian culture.<sup>15</sup>

José's entry into the rationalist school constituted his first real contact with the world of the organised anarcho-sindicalist movement. The contrast between José's old and new school could not be greater: in the rationalist school classes were conducted in Catalan by teachers who were frequently CNT members or anarchist activists; discipline was preserved through the charisma of the teachers; boys and girls were educated together; and children were encouraged to formulate ideas freely, without prejudice, coercion or respect for established dogma or orthodoxy. This liberal, freethinking education was far more in keeping with the disposition of both José and

<sup>14</sup> This is pattern is commonly described in autobiographies of workers from this period.

<sup>15</sup> Pere Solà, *Els ateneus obrers i la cultura popular a Catalunya (1900-1939)*: L'Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular, Barcelona, 1978, passim.; Josep Termes, 'Els ateneus populars: un intent de cultura obrera', *L'Avenç*, 104, 1987, pp. 8-12.

his parents, and José was transformed into an attentive pupil who made great progress with the 'three R's'. However, his educational development was curtailed by state repression: in the course of a trade union conflict the authorities closed down all of the rationalist schools in Barcelona; in his memoirs, José recalled the sadness he felt when the police arrived one day to detain all of his teachers.<sup>16</sup>

Encouraged by José's progress as a scholar, his mother hoped that her son would continue his education in one of the legally functioning schools in the city. These hopes were stymied, however, by José's commitment to rationalist pedagogy and his reluctance to return to a church-run school, which effectively brought his formal education to a premature end. Nevertheless, José's ephemeral educational experiences shaped his later trajectory in two crucial ways: firstly, his time in the church school instilled in him a determination to resist all external coercion; and secondly, his spell in a rationalist school imbued José with a belief in reason that shaped his world view for the remainder of his life, leaving him with an unquenchable thirst for knowledge and a constant craving for the written word.

In the course of a discussion between parents and son about José's immediate future, his mother suggested that young José consider joining the world of work in order to contribute to the family economy. Although he was only eight years old, José accepted, and found employment making thumbtacks for coffins.<sup>17</sup> It should be borne in mind that there was nothing exceptional about José's baptism in the world of work. At this time, it was the norm for most working class boys to leave school at 10, while children from the poorest families rarely saw the interior of a school. Education was sacrificed to the material imperatives caused by the grinding poverty of working class families and the need for all family members, regardless of age, to contribute to the proletarian family economy. It also reflected the limited prospects facing workers and the culture that accompanied this, which meant that many proletarians saw little reason to keep their children at school.<sup>18</sup>

José's first job was in a metalworking factory that produced screws. He was ill-suited to this work. Neither the tallest nor the strongest of children, he was known to friends and relatives as 'Pepet' ('little José'), a nickname that he never shook off. His physical power was also affected by a childhood illness that left him with a slight limp in his left leg, which was significant enough for him to be exempted from military service and which later on made it unnecessary for him to abscond to France like many other draft-dodging anarchist youths.<sup>19</sup> Later photographs of José during his teenage years, nevertheless, reveal a fit and able-bodied young man, transformed physically by his early experience of manual labour. Yet factory life work was anything but a gymnasium for young workers. In general terms, factory conditions had always been atrocious in Barcelona, even among traditionally 'aristocratic' sectors of the workforce, such as printers. Retarded by the combined and uneven development of the Spanish economy, the city's industries were, for the most part, small-scale, under-capitalised concerns, which yielded limited profit margins. In this context, employers adopted a cavalier attitude towards what they viewed as costly

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<sup>16</sup> Victor García, 'José Peirats Valls: una bibliografía biografiada', Various, 'José Peirats Valls: Historia contemporánea del Movimiento Libertario. Visión crítica de un compromiso anarquista: la Revolución Social', Anthropos, 102, 1989, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> Federico Arcos, 'José Peirats: A Comrade, A Friend', Fifth Estate, December 1989.

<sup>18</sup> Salut, *Vivers de revolucionaris*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>19</sup> Peirats, 'Una experiencia histórica...', p. 16.

health and safety measures, even when required to do so by law.<sup>20</sup> Such was the seriousness of the situation that even the bourgeois press periodically condemned workplace safety.<sup>21</sup> Arguably working conditions were even worse when José started work in 1916, when Spain's neutrality in World War One, and the privileged position this created for manufacturers who supplied both sides in the conflict, gave rise to a mini-industrial revolution in Barcelona. A new type of *nouveaux riches* employer emerged during the war who, obsessed with profits and personal gain, sought to cut production costs ruthlessly, irrespective of the dangers to employees. If this were not bad enough, it was widely accepted that working conditions were worse still for young workers, who were on the receiving end of the brutal labour discipline imposed by adult foremen. Workers, therefore, had an accelerated journey through life: their childhood ended at eight, they were adults at 14 and old at 40.

José's employment in the screw factory was brief, followed by a succession of manual jobs: he was a messenger in an electrical shop and at a photographers' studio and then a labourer. It was common for unskilled workers to change jobs on a frequent basis. By moving from job-to-job in search of improved pay and working conditions, the unskilled compensated for their lack of bargaining power and influence over their labour and regained a degree of control over the pace of work. Yet the limited choices facing the unskilled were such that José finally ended up labouring in a glass works and, then, in a brick works. Brickmaking was notoriously tough work. Shoeless and dressed in nothing more than a pair of baggy blue shorts, brick workers toiled in high temperatures in what were normally insalubrious and badly-ventilated workshops. It should also be remembered that the most perilous tasks, such as scurrying in and out of the ovens, were reserved for young workers. Unskilled and underpaid, brick workers were perceived negatively by more skilled workers, who looked down upon them as the rogues of industry. Nevertheless, of the many jobs at which José was to work in the course of his life, it was brick making which he regarded as his own and which most formed his identity as a proletarian, a choice that is entirely in keeping with his sympathy for the underdog and the undervalued. Indeed, even when he had a reputation as an anarchist intellectual and writer, José remained proud of his trade and his printed calling cards proclaimed his status of '*Ladrillero*' ('Brick maker').<sup>22</sup>

José's entry in the workplace coincided with his family moving from their flat in Poble Sec. This was not exceptional. A mixture of housing shortages, poor housing stock and rent inflation impelled working class families to move around in search of better or cheaper accommodation. The Peirats family moved to the neighbouring district of Sants, another established working class area, which, like Poble Sec, had a strong Catalan feel. Although this new abode was still relatively central, it was almost certainly cheaper than the old family flat in Poble Sec. After a short while, the Peirats's moved again, this time to a flat in the Collblanc district of l'Hospitalet, Barcelona's southerly neighbour that was part of the Catalan capital's rapidly-expanding urban periphery. Collblanc formed an axis with the contiguous district of La Torrassa, both of which had developed vertiginously during the inter-war era as thousands of immigrants arrived in Catalonia in search of work and cheap housing. By the early 1930s, l'Hospitalet was the second largest population centre in Catalonia, with around 40,000 inhabitants, most of whom were concentrated in

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<sup>20</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo y Previsión, *Estadística de los accidentes de trabajo*, Madrid, 1930, pp. 114-47.

<sup>21</sup> *La Vanguardia*, 15 August 1931.

<sup>22</sup> García, '*José Peirats Valls*', p. 15.

Collblanc-La Torrassa.<sup>23</sup> Over one-quarter of the population of Collblanc-La Torrassa consisted of depressed southern immigrants, earning the area the nickname ‘*Murcia chica*’ (‘Little Murcia’). Urban conditions in Collblanc ranked among the most wretched in the Barcelona area. Large jerry-built ghetto areas rose up almost overnight after World War One and, because demand for housing constantly outstripped supply, shanty town communities were also established. Since rents were cheaper in Collblanc, it is fairly safe to surmise that the Peirats family was experiencing financial problems of some sort. What we can be more certain of is that this decision had a profound impact upon José’s life, for Collblanc-La Torrassa constituted one of the bastions of anarchist purism in pre-civil war Spain.

The myriad regional differences between the ghetto-dwellers of Collblanc-La Torrassa were submerged within the community of resistance founded in an attempt to ameliorate the manifold inequalities they faced in their everyday life. The strong bonds of neighbourhood reciprocity, solidarity and mutual aid that united the workers of this area help explain why Collblanc-La Torrassa emerged as a key CNT heartland, with the greatest density of CNT supporters in whole of the Barcelona area, and, in José’s words, ‘an anarchist fortress’.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, the giddy expansion of this area from World War One onwards had taken the authorities by surprise: these densely-populated districts had become relatively autonomous areas, small republics where state power was negligible, much to the distress of local economic élites.

Although Collblanc enjoyed fairly good transport connections with Barcelona, the bus service was very expensive and so José found employment in a brick works in the neighbourhood where he resided. This was an era of great social ferment as the CNT, which had expanded massively during World War One, now flexed its muscles. José’s workplace was full of talk of the CNT and of *Solidaridad Obrera*, its most important daily newspaper, for which José would later write.<sup>25</sup> It was around this time that José’s elder cousin Vicente was jailed for picketing and firearms offences during a strike of the CNT bakers’ union, an episode that had a deep impact on the young brick maker.<sup>26</sup> It should come as no surprise therefore that José soon embarked on a new rebellion with one of his new work mates, Domingo Canela. Reminiscent of his joyous days of freedom with his fellow truants in the 1910s, José’s relationship with Canela was based on friendship and camaraderie:

‘We initiated ourselves in the social struggle and in the world of ideas in a happy and enthusiastic manner. It was a little like a game. We always had the desire to joke, to laugh, to run...and this was how our activism developed, in a way that was enjoyable and meaningful at the same time.’<sup>27</sup>

This sense of humour, of joyous rebellion, remained with José throughout his life, developing into a mordant adult wit.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Overall l’Hospitalet grew by over 200% between 1920 and 1930, while the La Torrassa-Collblanc district grew by 456% (Josep Roca Cladera and Enriqueta Díaz Perera, ‘*La Torrassa. Un antecedent de barri-dormitori*’, *L’Avenç*, 28, 1980, pp. 62-9).

<sup>24</sup> José Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 13.

<sup>25</sup> Peirats, ‘*Una experiencia histórica...*’, p.14.

<sup>26</sup> Peirats, ‘*Una experiencia histórica...*’, p.14.

<sup>27</sup> *Anthropos*, 102, p. 46.

<sup>28</sup> Felipe Alaíz, *Tipos españoles*, Paris, 1965, pp. 179-83.

In 1923, at the age of 15, José joined the CNT's *Sociedad de Ladrilleros* (Society of Brickmakers). From the start, José was more than just a passive member of the anarcho-syndicalist union. He regularly attended the union offices on Olmo Street, where he met Pere Massoni, a seasoned revolutionary syndicalist, who José later hailed as the 'spiritual father of the brick makers of Barcelona'.<sup>29</sup> Seriously wounded in 1919 during an assassination attempt by gunmen in the pay of the Barcelona employers, Massoni remained a tireless organiser, despite being paralysed in his right arm. Massoni's sacrifices for the union cause were the source of inspiration for all who knew him and had a profound impact on José.<sup>30</sup>

In September 1923, just weeks after José joined the CNT, General José Primo de Rivera imposed a dictatorship on Spain that placed the Confederation outside of the law. With prominent activists such as Massoni forced into exile in Paris, a younger generation of *cenetistas*, which was largely unknown to the authorities, came to the fore. According to José, these younger workers were 'the spearhead' of the CNT during the dictatorship.<sup>31</sup> José was deeply involved in the clandestine activities of the *Sociedad de Ladrilleros*, participating in illegal strike actions and working in the armed picketing teams that were responsible for sabotage and deterring 'scabbing'. His first public action for the CNT consisted of overturning a cart in the street in the course of a strike. Years later, José reflected on his motivations during this period:

'[I was] stimulated by revolutionary romanticism...I was attracted most of all by ideological problems. The business of sticking stamps on union cards and assembling the workers to preach to them did not appeal to me. I preferred getting involved in conflicts with the employers, confronting the security forces, writing for our press, offering to give speeches and talks, and reading the works of our teachers.'<sup>31</sup>

José was, then, emerging as a classic anarcho-syndicalist 'man of action': 'If it proved necessary I carried a small pistol in my pocket'.<sup>32</sup> But strikes were infrequent during the dictatorship. Instead, this was more of a time of cultural reflection and consciousness-raising for members of the CNT, something which gave José an opportunity to satisfy the craving for knowledge that had been aroused by his brief time in a rationalist school. After becoming a child worker José, like thousands of other labourers, untiringly nourished a passion for education within the constraints imposed by capitalist economic imperatives, attending evening classes or studying alone at home at the end of the working day.<sup>33</sup> In the course of the twenties José fell hopelessly in love with ideas. He was in awe of the pure beauty of ideas and developed a voracious appetite for the written word. ('I submitted to the all-consuming fever of books; my friends led me along the road towards the world of reading, both homespun and works from around the world...I read tirelessly.'<sup>34</sup>) José amassed a small library in the Collblanc family flat, which included a stock of anarchist classics by Bakunin and Kropotkin, and many general works such as Pi i Margall's study of the Middle Ages as well as numerous other books which reflected his fascination with the natural world and geography. During a febrile period of reading, José consumed the work of

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<sup>29</sup> José Peirats, 'Secularización de Horacio M. Prieto', *Polémica*, October-December 1985, p. 12.

<sup>30</sup> *La Humanitat*, 8 June 1933.

<sup>31</sup> Peirats, '*Una experiencia histórica...*', p. 15.

<sup>32</sup> From a 1977 interview cited in *Anthropos*, 102, p. 26; Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 2.

<sup>33</sup> Peirats, '*Una experiencia histórica...*', p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> Peirats, '*Una experiencia histórica...*', pp. 15, 17.

Tolstoy, Darwin, de Quincey, Bakunin, Kant and Schopenhauer, Ibsen, all of whom he would then discuss with friends in bars and cafés.

This insatiable quest for knowledge and his appreciation of aesthetics went hand in hand with José's growing anarchist sentiments: in his view, enlightenment, beauty and the exalted ideas of anarchism were ennobling, just as they promised to satisfy the aesthetic demands of humanity. In a manner that presaged the later stance of the Situationists, José viewed the realisation of art and the pursuit of revolution as being closely linked: 'A true revolutionary creation is like a work of art. And anyone who wishes to achieve great deeds must be enthusiastic.'<sup>35</sup> He embraced all that tended towards freedom of the spirit, recognising that 'life in itself is an act of individual affirmation.'<sup>36</sup> His craving for art and literature was a counterbalance to the deadening spiritual slavery induced by capitalism, something that embellished his existence.

Like many from the 'Generation of '36', José reached intellectual maturity in the 1920s, when he acquired a degree of political and philosophical awareness that would enable him to play a decisive role in the revolutionary struggles of the 1930s. Knowledge and culture were never regarded by José in contemplative terms. Rather, they led him further into the world of the activist. Thus, by the mid- to late twenties José was a convinced anarchist and a member of an 'affinity group' (*grupo de afinidad*), the basic cell of libertarian sociability and organisation in Spain. Yet José's proletarian origins ensured that his anarchism and his activism were heavily inflected with trade union concerns. A clear example of this came at the end of the 1920s, when José and several other 'Young Turks' among the brick makers pressurised the Barcelona CNT's *Sociedad de ladrilleros* to establish a newspaper. This resulted in *El Boletín del Ladrillero* ('The Brickmakers' Bulletin'). The new publication was largely the work of an anarchist 'affinity group' formed by young brick makers, who, inspired by their own rapid cultural and ideological development, were firmly convinced of the transforming power of the written word. Issue one of *El Boletín del Ladrillero* included José's first published article. Entitled '*La palabra ladrillero, sinónimo de perversión*' ("Brickmaker", a synonym for perversion'), this was a fierce attack on the culture of gambling, drinking and whoring that prevailed among young brick makers. At this early stage, we see a number of the hallmarks that would characterise José's writing, especially his journalism, over the coming decades: the combative title; the vehement and implacable moral tenor; the unyielding view that misery must be transcended by beauty.

As a twenty-one year old, who had only recently started to write in Castilian, José could not have appreciated that this would be the start of a long writing career that would continue until his death. Nevertheless, there were indications of José's potential as a writer and of the range of his creative energies. So, just months after its launch, José was named editor of the *Boletín del Ladrillero*, which was also attracting contributions from some of the leading figures within the CNT. Further evidence of José's cultural-propagandist inclinations came in 1929, just two years after the appearance of his first article, when he published a short play, *La Venus Desnuda* ('Naked Venus'), that was serialised in the *Boletín del Ladrillero*. The start of José's life as a writer in the *Boletín del Ladrillero* give additional meaning to his later judgement of his output: 'I am a humble writer who emerged from the fired clay of an oven.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> José Peirats, *Presencia*, no. 5, September-October 1966.

<sup>36</sup> José Peirats, 'García Lamolla y el surrealismo', *Ruta*, 8 July 1937.

<sup>37</sup> Cited by de Llorens, Peirats, '*Una experiencia histórica...*', p.5.



But as the 1920s came to an end so too did this period of frenetic cultural activity. During 1929-30 Primo de Rivera's dictatorship collapsed, only to be replaced by that of General Berenguer, who was entrusted with introducing a limited democratic opening. This was now a time of action rather than words: in April 1930 the CNT was allowed to reorganise after seven years of clandestinity. This is discussed in Chapter II of volume I, when José narrates events in which he participated, including the triumphant first rally of a revitalised Barcelona CNT at the Nuevo Theatre, which proved incapable of accommodating the huge number of workers who answered the call of the Confederation.<sup>38</sup> The vertiginous growth of the CNT reflected the extent to which social demands had accumulated during the dictatorship, when wage levels and working conditions pushed back to pre-1923 levels. The struggle for economic demands could not be pursued without a struggle for political and civil freedom. And José immersed himself in the fight for civil liberties, becoming a leading figure in the *Comisión pro-Guiot-Clement* ('The Free Guiot and Clement campaign'), a campaign in favour of two anarcho-syndicalists awaiting trial on armed robbery charges for which they faced the death penalty. One of the accused – Enrique Guiot – was a brick maker and José formed part of a delegation from the *Sociedad de Ladrilleros* which visited General Berenguer to make what was a successful plea for clemency.<sup>39</sup> As the CNT rose from its slumber after seven years of enforced inactivity, José was part of the human engine of the Confederation, fitting in a succession of legal and clandestine meetings around his working day:

‘we were the industrious ants of our movement, organising and declaring strikes that we sustained with blows and coshes; we drew up the “demands” which we later negotiated with the employers’.<sup>40</sup>

The wave of social mobilisations and strikes spearheaded by the CNT during 1930-31 coincided and, at times, dovetailed with the political protest of republicans and socialists who sought to establish a more inclusive and democratic political system. Beset and bedevilled by its own internal and external contradictions, the monarchy was increasingly discredited by the growing dynamics of protest it engendered, until, on 14 April 1931, the Second Republic was proclaimed.

It was during the republic that the worker-activists of José's generation, the 'Generation of '36', came of age: they were part of a new mass working class formed by the accelerated industrialisation of the 1910s and 1920s and whose youthfulness had prevented them from playing a leading role in the pre-1923 struggles. In the course of the 1930s this younger working class created a space for itself on the social stage, becoming the major protagonist of the social struggles that radicalised the CNT in the prelude to the July 1936 revolution.

As new spaces opened up in which the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalists could organise, José and his comrades now saw the moment to disseminate the revolutionary ideas that they had consumed and been inspired by in the 1920s. As José explained in his memoirs:

‘...[W]e endeavoured to instil our members with a social culture. We had swotted up on literature and sociology during the eight years peace of the dictatorship...We were romantics who contemplated the world through rose-coloured glasses. We lived

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<sup>38</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 3-4.

happily on the interface of dream and reality, proud of showing off our ideals and of making our small contribution to the great labour: the liberation of humanity'.<sup>41</sup>

This process of cultural transformation was accelerated by the rapid expansion of athenaeum across the proletarian neighbourhoods of the Barcelona area, something which in turn reflected the huge demand for cultural consumption among the largely illiterate immigrant workers that had continued to arrive from the rural south during the 1920s to work in Catalan industry. Despite this vast increase in population, the public authorities failed to expand educational provision and so anarchists sought to bring culture and knowledge to the dispossessed. Thus, early in the Republic, José helped found a new athenaeum in La Torrassa. Situated in a rented building in Llansá Street, this cultural centre consisted of a library, meeting rooms and a theatre and organised a programme of social and educational activities, including evening classes, theatre productions, musical recitals, discussion groups and public talks. Reliant on financial contributions and donations from its impoverished and sometimes unemployed members and supporters, the ateneu invariably led a precarious existence and survived by virtue of the creative thinking of its organisers. For instance, books were routinely ordered from local publishers for the library and, with no money to pay for them, the bills were simply ignored as they arrived.<sup>42</sup>

This grassroots cultural initiative proved immensely popular with the workers of La Torrassa and the athenaeum became firmly integrated into the social fabric of the neighbourhood. The local community had a sense of ownership of the athenaeum, which functioned as a community institution, with entire families attending the various activities that were organised. Theatre productions at the athenaeum sometimes attracted audiences of over 200. More popular still were the excursionist and hiking groups that attracted workers out of the polluted inner-city areas to the countryside on Sundays. Although an important leisure activity, these groups were viewed by their organisers as a step towards the creation of a proletarian para-society and they possessed a clear political and pedagogical component. For instance, the members of a small hiking group would spend part of their day discussing important political questions or a previously arranged text. Similarly, the mass picnics, which attracted entire families, provided games and learning for children, whilst adults were encouraged to participate in open air study groups and political discussions. In the 1930s these excursions flourished into the day-long *jiras de concentración libertaria*, which, on occasion, attracted as many as 3,000 men, women and children into the countryside, further cementing the already close ties between the anarchist movement and working class communities.<sup>43</sup>

The central objective of the athenaeum was to sustain a cultural alternative, a counter-culture capable of penetrating the veil of obfuscation that bourgeois ideology placed around the mechanisms of capitalist society. This self-sufficient cultural universe provided the CNT with a movement culture, a culture capable of guiding the Confederation in the course of its struggles with the state and capital. Because of the structure of material coercion that weighed down on proletarians and curtailed their schooling at an early age, there was a cult of the auto-didact, the self-taught worker who selflessly pursued their education as far as circumstances allowed. As José himself recognised:

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<sup>41</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 4.

<sup>42</sup> Myrna Breitbart, 'The Theory and Practice of Anarchist Decentralism in Spain, 1936-1939: The Integration of Community and Environment', unpublished PhD thesis, Clark University, 1978, p. 147.

<sup>43</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 33.

‘Very often it is the material impossibility of being able to bathe in the waters of methodical learning that gives rise to the auto-didact. Ninety-nine per cent of the anarchist contingent in Spain is a living example of the auto-didact. Private education is inaccessible to the pockets of the workers.’<sup>44</sup>

Cultural development then took place at the end of the working day or at weekends, as workers stole from their leisure time, or during enforced periods of inactivity occasioned by unemployment or imprisonment. Accordingly, the ‘schools’ and ‘universities’ for CNT activists were cafés, taverns, street corners, parks, jails and, of course, the athenaeum.

It is perhaps opportune to emphasise here the proletarian nature of the Spanish anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. The ‘intellectuals’ of the CNT and the anarchist movement were, for the most part, auto-didacts, José being a case in hand; they were self-educated ‘organic intellectuals’ drawn from within the working class and indeed from within the ranks of the movement and the cultural associations within its orbit. The advantage of this was that CNT ‘intellectuals’ were highly loyal to the movement in which they were formed. Moreover, because these ‘intellectuals’ maintained their ties with the world of work, they had direct experiences of poverty as well as a profound awareness of working class problems, something that allowed them to gain the respect of fellow workers; as one rank-and-file activist put it, CNT organisers and worker-intellectuals ‘came to feel the cause of the workers more’.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, these ‘intellectuals’ constituted a vital linkage between that movement and the rest of the working class. At the same time, there was an intense distrust of middle class intellectuals within the libertarian movement and the CNT, which sometimes manifested itself as anti-intellectualism.

In the wave of optimism that accompanied the fall of the monarchy, José immersed himself in all the spheres of activity of the Spanish libertarian movement. He was a committed vegetarian, a practitioner of free love and an active hiker. He was also a devotee of naturism, which he practiced with likeminded young anarchists in the countryside or at the beaches outside Barcelona. These activities complemented José’s aforementioned love of nature and his appreciation of beauty and art as a counter-point to a world made ugly by capitalist avarice, shanty houses and industrial pollution. In the athenaeum in La Torrassa, he moved from working as a make-up artist to acting, while his experience painting stage sets encouraged him to cultivate his artistic potentialities, becoming a part-time art tutor in the *ateneu*. It was through this involvement in anarchist-organised community theatre groups in La Torrassa, that José entered the *Juventudes Libertarias* (JJ.LL), the Catalan Libertarian Youth movement.

Around this same time José also began channelling his activist energies into a new ‘affinity group’: *Afinitat* (‘Affinity’), a ‘group for propaganda and action’ which included his old friend, Domingo Canela, from Sants, and other like-minded young anarchists they had both met in Rationalist Schools and *ateneus* across the Barcelona area.<sup>46</sup> What is striking was the degree of diversity within ‘*Afinitat*’. According to José, ‘there were various tendencies among us: there were those who worked within the trade union organisation and those who preferred to do so within the *ateneu*; there were those who rejected violent methods, and those who accepted ev-

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<sup>44</sup> José Peirats, ‘El autodidacta’, *Evolución*, September 1937.

<sup>45</sup> Manuel Vicente Alcón, cited in Anna Monjo, ‘*La CNT durant la II República a Barcelona: líders, militants, afiliats*’, unpublished PhD thesis, Universitat de Barcelona, 1993, p. 293.

<sup>46</sup> Peirats, ‘Una experiencia histórica...’, p. 20.

everything.<sup>47</sup> In his memoirs, perhaps for obvious reasons, José says little about when, precisely, *Afinitat* was constituted or about its specific actions.

Naturally, these commitments drew José into the world of social protest. Just two weeks after the birth of the Republic, he, along with some 150,000 other workers, attended a monster CNT May Day rally in Barcelona. This was followed by a demonstration to Republic Square, the site of the city's main official buildings, at the end of which the marchers planned to submit a list of their demands to the new authorities. As the march arrived in Republic Square, what had been a peaceful demonstration turned violent. A gunfight between police and CNT stewards lasted for around<sup>48</sup> minutes, resulting in a huge *melée* in which José was nearly crushed. After losing his shoes in the ensuing scramble for safety, he had the good fortune of finding another pair that fitted him before he started his journey home to Collblanc.<sup>49</sup> José also participated actively in a new strike by his fellow brickmakers who, like so many other workers, believed (mistakenly as it turned out) that the coming of the Republic was a propitious moment to attain their longstanding demands. In the case of the brickmakers, this was, as José explained, a strike for 'our classic objectives: the abolition of piecework and the disappearance of the contractors who exploited the day labourers.' When the strike started, 'our first task was to go and hunt "scabs"', although José also formed part of the union negotiating team that met with the employers.<sup>50</sup>

Increasingly, José assumed greater responsibilities within the CNT. By the end of 1931 he was addressing CNT meetings. The circumstances of his first address in many ways typified the loosely-structured nature of the CNT: while walking down a street in La Torrassa, José saw a CNT poster announcing that he was due to speak at a meeting in Collblanc. No one from the organisation had asked him whether he was available to address the meeting but, following some hurried preparations, he did just that.<sup>51</sup> Having risen to this challenge, José was soon addressing CNT meetings and rallies across provincial Catalonia, speaking also at meetings of the *Comité pro-presos* (Prisoners' Support Committee), the body responsible for raising funds to assist jailed activists and their families.

This phase in José's activism coincided with the most serious split in the twenty year history of the CNT.<sup>52</sup> Although many of the protagonists on both sides of the emerging breach within the CNT were unable to appreciate this at the time, the schism had complex origins. In part, it was the consequence of the unresolved tensions between anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism; on another level it was the outcome of the ongoing debate in the movement over the relationship between revolution and democracy. These issues were brought to a head by the new political context occasioned by the collapse of the monarchy in April 1931, which prompted a shift within republicanism from a discourse of freedom to a discourse of order. Consequently, the uneasy alliance in the streets between the CNT and the republicans in the fight against the monarchy came to an end as the new republican authorities were impelled to limit the freedom of manoeuvre of what had become a mass, anti-state social movement. As José himself later acknowledged,

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<sup>47</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 28.

<sup>48</sup> José Peirats, 'El autodidacta', *Evolución*, September 1937.

<sup>49</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 6-7.

<sup>50</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 18.

<sup>51</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 25.

<sup>52</sup> Chris Ealham, 'The crisis of organised labour: the battle for hegemony in the Barcelona workers' movement, 1930-1936' in Angel Smith (ed.), *Red Barcelona*, London, 2002, pp. 88-107.

‘the republicans had arrived at the end of their journey and they alighted from the train...We continued now alone on the road towards “complete emancipation”’.<sup>53</sup>

The two factions inside the CNT diverged over how to relate to the Republic while marching along the road to ‘complete emancipation’. The ‘moderates’, who consisted mainly of older activists, more committed to anarcho-syndicalist practice, believed that the Republic provided new opportunities in which to consolidate the industrial and organisational structures of the CNT prior to a revolutionary take-over of the economy. These activists – the ‘*Treintistas*’ as they became known after they published a manifesto signed by 30 leading Barcelona *cenetistas* at the end of August 1931<sup>54</sup> – espoused a technocratic approach to revolutionary transformation. The other faction, the ‘radicals’, had more insurrectionary inclinations. The radical position has often been unfairly and simplistically identified with that of the FAI, the Iberian Anarchist Federation that had been created in 1927 to preserve libertarian purity inside the CNT and coordinate the activities of the myriad anarchist grupos de afinidad scattered across the peninsular. Certainly, there were many *faistas* in the radical camp but the split was always far more complex than this. Indeed, Joan Peiro, one of the most prominent *treintistas*, remained an active member of the FAI during the worst time of the split. Rather, what united the radicals – who consisted both of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists – was their fear that the working class might be integrated in the ‘parliamentary fiction’ and, thereby, diverted from its revolutionary vocation. Furthermore, the radicals were strongest among the workplace activists and members of the *Comité pro-presos* who were most sensitive to the recrudescence of state repression under the Republic and the limits placed on everyday syndical activities. The most famous activists to become identified with the radical position were Francisco Ascaso, Buenaventura Durruti and Juan García Oliver, who advocated ‘revolutionary gymnastics’, a series of ‘insurrectionary pendular movements’ designed to train the revolutionary masses for the final struggle against capitalism and the state.

There was a strong geographical dimension to the split, which was mainly focused on the Catalan and Valencian regions and which had few ramifications in other areas of CNT strength like Asturias, Zaragoza and Andalusia. One could be forgiven for assuming that José would be a staunch supporter of the radical position: at the time of the split, he resided in l’Hospitalet, one of the bastions of radical opposition to the *treintistas*; he was an habitué at *La Tranquilidad*, ‘the least tranquil café on Paral·lel’, where Durruti and his comrades met regularly<sup>55</sup>; and his *grupo de afinidad* almost certainly would have affiliated to the FAI very soon after its formation. This, along with José’s activist stance and philosophical disposition, doubtless inclined him towards the message of the radicals; however, as he later recognised, he and his *grupo de afinidad* ‘were always opposed to the schism and to those who had initiated it’.<sup>56</sup> With the two factions adopting increasingly entrenched positions and an ‘inward-looking mentality’, José, who remained committed to an essentially anarcho-syndicalist belief that the CNT should preserve the unity of all those dedicated to anti-state revolution, was appalled by those who pursued ‘a split that was perfectly avoidable’.<sup>57</sup> In particular, José was repelled by the maximalist style and intolerant manner of the radicals, later describing Ascaso, Durruti and García Oliver as a ‘combustible trio’

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<sup>53</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 6.

<sup>54</sup> The manifesto is reproduced in volume 1 of this study.

<sup>55</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 32.

<sup>56</sup> Peirats, ‘*Una experiencia histórica...*’, p.25.

<sup>57</sup> José Peirats, ‘Cabezazos en el muro’, *Frente Libertario*, June 1974.

(*el trío de la benzina*).<sup>58</sup> As a humanist, José was generous towards his adversaries and he lacked the petty insular spirit to dedicate himself to an internecine, sectarian conflict. Perforce, José found himself at loggerheads with Francisco Tomás, a close ally of Ascaso, Durruti and García Oliver, who led the l'Hospitalet CNT after the split and who disdainfully viewed Peirats's cultural initiatives as 'reformist'. For José, Tomás and his cronies amounted to 'a small number of demagogues who believed or appeared to believe that libertarian communism was just around the corner'.<sup>59</sup> They epitomised all that was nefarious about the insurrectionists: their cursory, peremptory judgements about their adversaries, their exaggerated rhetoric and their maximalist practice that, all too often, brought state repression crushing down on all the activities of the anarchist movement, including the cultural initiatives so valued by José. Consequently, José adopted a complex, almost agnostic position in the split in the CNT.

On a personal level, José would have been deeply affected by the impact of the split on his first mentor in the liberation struggle and fellow brickmaker, Massoni. Like many other lifelong trade unionists, Massoni was hounded from the CNT by the radicals. Partially paralysed following a gun attack by right-wingers during the period of post-World War One *pistolerismo*, Massoni had previously been employed by the CNT in the *Solidaridad Obrera* print shop. However, after signing the '*Treintista* manifesto', radicals in the Barcelona Print Workers' Union saw to it that Massoni was expelled from the organisation and from his work. Physically weak and with few prospects of finding work, Massoni fell into a bout of deep depression and died in June 1933, while still in his mid 30s.<sup>60</sup> Showing little compassion to their erstwhile comrades, as Massoni was on his death bed, a manifesto of the radicals in the Print Union denounced him as spokesperson of all 'splitters', who 'deserves not the slightest trust'.<sup>61</sup>

Massoni's death coincided with the most violent phase of the split in the CNT, when there were frequent armed clashes between *treintistas* and radicals, the rival factions disrupting each others meetings, wielding a range of weapons, such as coshes, knives and pistols. It was then a measure of José's great affection for Massoni, and his naivety towards the scale of feeling generated by the split, that he attended Massoni's funeral. Although José was not identified with the violent sectarianism of the radical opponents of the *treintistas*, he was still a member of the CNT and well-known locally as a militant anarchist; such was the hostility of Massoni's *treintista* comrades, José was forced to leave without saying his final farewell to his mentor.<sup>62</sup>

As the CNT turned in on itself, José withdrew slightly from an organisation that was moving a direction that was not to his liking. Certainly, the costs of activism in the CNT and the anarchist movement had risen sharply for José during the Republic: the split had sewn new and bitter conflicts within the 'libertarian family', poisoning friendships and relationships. José also experienced republican police repression, facing police visits to his house and spending nights in the station only to be released without charge. Yet José remained a worker and thus dependent on wages. Here too the costs of activism had taken their toll. He was on several employer blacklists in Barcelona.[63] Added to this, the split in the CNT had reduced its muscle and meant that it was less able to find work for its blacklisted members. Meanwhile, the construction industry was in turmoil due to the 1930s economic crisis, which had a powerful impact on associated indus-

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<sup>58</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 34.

<sup>59</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 9.

<sup>60</sup> *Sindicalismo*, 17 and 24 March, 7 April and 16 June 1933.

<sup>61</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 8 June 1933.

<sup>62</sup> José Peirats, '*Secularización de Horacio M. Prieto*', p. 12.

tries like brickmaking. Although José found occasional work in bakeries, he was forced to look elsewhere for employment. At the end of 1932 José returned to the Vall d'Uixò, where he stayed with his uncle Benjamín and worked as a peasant labourer, harvesting oranges and performing agricultural tasks. Interestingly, José's uncle was a socialist supporter and the pair of them had long debates about politics, particularly the governmental role of the PSOE and its part in the repression of the anarchist movement. For the first time, José's life approximated to that of the Quijote, the semi-nomadic dreamer, devoted to a life of adventure and ready to confront any injustice and tyranny he found in his path. José remained in Vall d'Uixò until the spring of 1933. He idealised the countryside: 'It was with great regret that I left those simple people who inhabited an uncomplicated world of brilliant blue skies and aromatic mountains. Pure nature prevailed there...'<sup>63</sup>

All the time, José concentrated on his writing, finishing two plays (his second and third) in the early 1930s, the unpublished *Violín de Ingres* and *Revivir*, which appeared in 1932.<sup>64</sup> In 1933, he began to write more frequently for the anarchist press, contributing both to *Tierra y Libertad* and *La Revista Blanca*; since he was now well-known to the police, he used pseudonyms, either 'Jazmín' or 'Afinidad', the name of his 'affinity group'. As well as contributing to the daily *Solidaridad Obrera*, he also began writing regular pieces for the Lleida anarchist weekly *Acracia*, which was edited by Félix Lorenzo Páramo.<sup>65</sup> Around this time, José's talent for sharp prose was spotted by Felipe Alaíz, editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* and one of the few middle class bohemians attracted to the anarchist movement. Alaíz took José under his wing and became Peirats's new mentor in journalism, drafting him onto the editorial board of *Solidaridad Obrera* in August 1934. As José later acknowledged, Alaíz was his 'tutor in journalism'.<sup>66</sup> To be sure, his contribution to José's apprenticeship as writer and historian is incalculable. José's writing style revealed the same caustic sense of humour that was the hallmark of his mentor's writing.

José's writing now flourished, reflecting his broad range of cultural, social, philosophical and political interests. Testimony to José's enduring cultural interests, his first pamphlet, *Para una nueva concepción del arte Lo que podría ser un cinema social*, dealt with 'social cinema'.<sup>67</sup> Like all his writing, this study had an explicit aim: 'to forge a cinema to meet the moral necessities and desires for change of the people...to counter-balance the disastrous effects of the moral code of American cinema and the warlike tendencies of German cinema, the breeding ground for all manner of reactionary elements'.<sup>68</sup> This study revealed the depth of José's knowledge of this new medium, beginning with an analysis of the 'the expansion and dimensions of the cinematography industry, before considering the import of the 'realism of images and the conquest of space' and the role of technical processes in sound, technicolour and television. He then went on to assess the 'historical and psychological process: from the police novel to the idyll of the salon, passing by the north American west', before critiquing the moral code of cinema and its development not just in Hollywood but in fascist Italy, Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia. Finally, José asked

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<sup>63</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 30-1.

<sup>64</sup> José Peirats, *Revivir*, l'Hospitalet, 1932.

<sup>65</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 52.

<sup>66</sup> Peirats, 'Una experiencia histórica...', p. 39.

<sup>67</sup> José Peirats, *Lo que podría ser un Cinema Social*, Barcelona, 1934.

<sup>68</sup> Peirats, *Lo que podría ser un Cinema Social*, p. 32.

‘what a social cinema could be’ in the future, considering ‘the role of the screen in the pedagogic methodology and in technico-professional orientation’.<sup>69</sup>

As José’s fame as a cultural critic and journalist grew, he was invited to write for more and more publications, contributing to important Spanish anarchist journals from outside the Barcelona area, such as *Más Lejos*, *Tiempos Nuevos* and *Ética*.<sup>70</sup> Yet most of José’s journalistic activities were devoted to *Solidaridad Obrera*, where he emerged as a talented and intrepid roving reporter, travelling throughout Catalonia in an increasingly Quijotesque manner, covering conflicts in factories and fields or CNT meetings. José also covered trials involving *cenetista* pickets and activists, his style of dress – he always wore traditional proletarian rope-soled *alpargata* sandals instead of shoes – periodically eliciting adverse comments from court judges.<sup>71</sup>

By this stage in José’s life, he was a classic CNT ‘organic intellectual’, a proletarian bohemian, alternating between full-time journalism and wage labour. But this was neither a frivolous nor a contrived bohemia. Rather, it was part of a conscious project to find freedom from the alienation engendered by local capitalism, a radical opposition to the material pressure of everyday life through the celebration of other values, such as fraternity and solidarity. Accordingly, José exuded an unfailing honesty and generosity of spirit as he pursued his permanent rebellion against the orthodoxy of his age, swimming against the current and dignifying the human condition through his fight against the indignities and inequalities of the world around him. His spells in work rejuvenated him physically, keeping him fit and agile, and providing a balance between mental and manual labour. Often this balance between the physical and the intellectual was beyond José’s control and was conditioned more by official bans on the CNT press.

By late 1933 José was returning to the activist fold, this time within the specifically anarchist organisation in Barcelona. This was a key moment in the history of the Spanish anarchist movement. Since the start of the Republic, the radicals within the CNT and the FAI had initiated three insurrections in accordance with the ‘revolutionary gymnastics’ described above. The results had been anything but positive for the organisation, which had been severely buffeted by wave upon wave of state repression. As José put it in his memoirs, ‘we considered these events to be absurd, both in terms of their conception and their implementation’.<sup>72</sup> In the final revolutionary uprising, in December 1933, José was very nearly killed by a group of anarchists in an episode that underlined the poor organisation of the risings. Prior to the rising a password had been agreed upon in order to allow insurgents to identify one another in the streets. Apparently fearing that the password had been leaked to the police, some groups unilaterally decided upon a new password, without ensuring that all anarchist groups were informed. Unfortunately for José, he was detained on the streets with a pistol by a group of anarchists who mistook him for a plainclothes policeman. Fortunately, José was able to convince his interrogators of his real identity before it was too late.<sup>73</sup>

After the events of December 1933, José’s heterodox readiness to resist the current ensured that he and his affinity group were among the first to raise their voice against the ‘revolutionary gymnastics’, demanding that the organisers of the uprisings justify their position to the movement. ‘We were always in opposition within the FAI’, he later acknowledged, his *grupo* preferring

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<sup>69</sup> Peirats, *Lo que podría ser un Cinema Social*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>70</sup> Peirats, ‘Una experiencia histórica...’, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 64.

<sup>72</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 31.

<sup>73</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 37-8.



a process of education and mass revolution to what they saw as the quasi-Bolshevik militarism of the insurrectionists.<sup>74</sup> José was intensely concerned about certain procedural issues, such as the growing interventionist role of the FAI in the CNT. Moreover, he was horrified to find out that certain anarchist groups, principally the *Nosotros* group of Ascaso, Durruti and García Oliver, talked in the name of the FAI without actually being members. Suggesting that the tide was turning against the insurrectionaries, José was named secretary of the Barcelona local federation of the FAI in early 1934.<sup>75</sup>

The timing of this appointment was hardly fortuitous for José. Shortly after the failed December rising, the Generalitat, the autonomous Catalan government, assumed control of public order from Madrid, as part of a rolling programme of devolution of power to Barcelona. Keen to prove it could provide a safe pair of hands on the law-and-order front, the Generalitat unleashed a fierce repression of every manifestation of the CNT and the libertarian movement in general.<sup>76</sup> At times, things became so hot for José, that he would take off to spend some time with an Auntie who lived in the countryside.<sup>77</sup>

With the CNT facing near continuous harassment from government censorship and bans, José was responsible for producing *FAI*, a new clandestine newspaper of the Barcelona anarchist groups, what José described as a ‘pamphlet of combat’. With the anarchist movement in open war with the state, *FAI* adopted a fierce and uncompromising message that infuriated the authorities. ‘Our little paper drove them mad’, José later recounted, and the police worked furiously around the clock in an attempt to close *FAI* down. And yet, as José added, the origins of *FAI* were a closely guarded secret: ‘My own comrades in the secretariat didn’t even know who produced the paper. I did it all myself, from the writing stage right up to the printing’. The only help José received was with the distribution.<sup>78</sup>

In April 1934, while José served as secretary to the Barcelona FAI, his old friend Canela became secretary of the Catalan FAI Regional Committee. ‘Without actually setting out to do so, the *Afinitat* group had won control of the two highest positions within the organisation of the FAI in Catalonia’, José later reflected.<sup>79</sup> Increasingly, *Afinitat* strove to quell the insurrectionism inside the CNT and the FAI and, moreover, ensure that decisions were taken in a more democratic and open manner. However, the reputation and standing of the members of *Nosotros* were such that this was anything but a smooth process. Finally, frustrated by the autocratic control exerted over the movement by Ascaso, Durruti and García Oliver’s *Nosotros* and the ‘authoritarian’ procedures favoured by Diego Abad de Santillan’s *Nervio* group, José resigned as secretary of the Barcelona FAI and from the organisation in July 1934.<sup>80</sup>

Following this frustrating experience inside the ‘specific organisation’, Peirats returned once more to CNT activities, particularly those surrounding *Solidaridad Obrera*. As a member of the editorial board, José joined the *Sindicato de Profesiones liberales* (Liberal professions union), which he represented on the Barcelona CNT local federation, a body that consisted of representatives

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<sup>74</sup> Peirats, quoted in *Anthropos*, 102, p. 30.

<sup>75</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 44.

<sup>76</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 44.

<sup>77</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 39.

<sup>78</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 45.

<sup>79</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 46.

<sup>80</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 51-2.

from all the unions in the city.<sup>81</sup> Like many others in the anarchist movement, José was finding it increasingly difficult to overlook the dangerous insularity and revolutionary elitism of the Catalan CNT and FAI. This situation was driven home during the events of October 1934, when a combination of leftist and republican groups took to the streets across Spain to protest at plans to bring the crypto-fascist Gil Robles and members of his CEDA party into government. In Catalonia, the opposition to Gil Robles was led by the enemies of the CNT: the Generalitat, which feared the loss of its autonomous powers, the *treintistas*, who were much more conscious of the need for united working class action against fascism, and the dissident communists of the BOC, who called a general strike on 6 October in the hope they could seize control of the movement and direct it in a revolutionary direction. The Catalan CNT, then facing sustained repression from the Generalitat, refused to join the mobilisation. On the first evening of the protest, as the Catalan police struggled to maintain control in the streets, José was almost shot when the security forces stormed the *Solidaridad Obrera* offices.<sup>82</sup>

Only in Asturias, where the local *Alianza Obrera* consisted of the united left (anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, socialists and dissident and official communists), did the protest really get off the ground. The Asturian CNT, under the influence of Valeriano Orobón Fernández, had long favoured the *Alianza Obrera*, a tactic that fitted within local *cenetista* traditions of cooperation with the UGT. At the time, José vehemently opposed the stance of Orobón Fernández on the issue of revolutionary anti-fascism, although this was a position that he later revised, acknowledging the importance of the need for a revolutionary entente.<sup>83</sup>

After October, the tensions inside the libertarian movement over the direction of the Catalan CNT reached new heights. There was a sustained debate over the stance of the CNT to the growing fascist menace and the isolationist opposition of the Catalan organisation to revolutionary anti-fascism à la Asturias grew. Several anarchist *grupos de afinidad* left the FAI in protest at the machinations of *Nosotros* within the Barcelona CNT and the FAI and in dismay at the woeful consequences of the 'revolutionary gymnastics'. Inside the FAI, Francisco Ascaso and Sanz, both of whom had issued orders to the Catalan CNT and the FAI in October, faced harsh criticism of their decision to order a return to work when the workers of Asturias were still fighting to keep the Spanish army at bay. There were even calls from some *grupos de afinidad*, including *Afinitat*, for the expulsion of *Nosotros*. This was matched with renewed demands for the introduction of grass-roots democracy in the FAI.<sup>84</sup>

Like other leftist groups, the CNT faced a rising curve of repression after 'Red October'. With the other *Solidaridad Obrera* editors now in jail, José began to write the daily editorials. Later, when his older comrades decided that José was a 'virgin' insofar as he had not been initiated in prison life, he was selected to become the 'official director', effectively a 'fall guy' type position which meant that he would be jailed whenever the authorities – often quite capriciously – decided that *Solidaridad Obrera* had exceeded existing press legislation. José stoically accepted

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<sup>81</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 63.

<sup>82</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 57.

<sup>83</sup> Fidel Miró, *Anarquismo y anarquistas*, Madrid, 1979, p. 125; José Peirats, 'Cabezazos en el muro', *Frente Libertario*, June 1974

<sup>84</sup> José Luis Gutiérrez Molina, *La Idea revolucionaria. El anarquismo organizado en Andalucía y Cádiz durante los años treinta*, Madrid, 1993, p. 77.

the arrangement, which allowed *Soli* to continue working unhindered, while he faced over 30 charges for articles he had not in fact written.<sup>85</sup>

The ongoing repression eventually led to a growing current within CNT circles in favour of a return of the political left to power. In part, this reflected the need to find an improvement in the legal climate that would allow the CNT to reorganise its structures following the battering received by the organisation during the 'cycle of insurrections' of 1932-3. On another level, there was a growing awareness within the CNT that, should the right win the general elections that had been announced for February 1936, Spain might end up like Germany, where the Nazis had established a dictatorship following their electoral victory in January 1933. This all made the CNT receptive to supporting tactically and discretely the platform of the Popular Front, an electoral coalition of republicans, socialists and communists, both dissident and orthodox. As José later explained, a vote by *cenetistas* in 1936 was, under the circumstances, 'expedient'.<sup>86</sup> On another occasion, he elaborated on his position:

'I was strongly of the opinion that there should be no outrageous campaigns during the elections. We were a decisive player at this time and had our attitude influenced the election result in a certain way we would have been obliged to hastily mount some crazy operation so not to lose face. My disagreement consisted in the tactic of give and take practiced by the CNT, according to its mood and the circumstances.'<sup>87</sup>

Following the Popular Front victory in the February elections, and the start of a new period of reorganisation, José left *Solidaridad Obrera* to return to manual labour, working in both the brick making and baking industries. Finding his employment options in Barcelona limited at this time, ever restless, José decided to make his way south to Castelló to work harvesting the orange crop. With no money for a train ticket, José's passage was a typically Quijotesque adventure: like so many other unemployed workers, he gained access to a train and travelled free.<sup>88</sup> José was not alone – he encountered a group of unemployed workers making the same trip. After a while, conflict broke out between two of his travelling companions. With a fight apparently inevitable, José imposed himself on the situation and invoked his libertarian philosophy to calm passions, telling the two men in conflict:

'The world is big enough for us all to fit within it! Besides – I continued, attempting to raise the level of debate – fighting is not for rational people. We have to show that we are men and not beasts. Instead of fighting, the man who deserves the name must use his head. We must use our powers of reason. You must appreciate that we, along with many others, can all fit inside this wagon.'<sup>89</sup>

Having defused the situation, all the hobos bedded down together for a nights' sleep.<sup>90</sup>

The risks of 'tramping' were numerous. Many hobos were routinely beaten by private railway guards if they were discovered on trains. In José's case, his journey was brought to a premature

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<sup>85</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 60-3.

<sup>86</sup> José Peirats, *Examen crítico-constructivo del movimiento libertario español*, Mexico, 1967, pp. 26-7.

<sup>87</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 68.

<sup>88</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 70.

<sup>89</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 73.

<sup>90</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 75.

end by the police and he ended up in a cell, charged with vagrancy.<sup>91</sup> This coincided with a fierce judicial offensive against the unemployed, especially those who couldn't afford to keep their papers in order, who were routinely interned as 'vagrants'. José was detained for two days on 'suspicion' but was released as he did not have a record as a 'vagrant' and could prove his identity.<sup>92</sup>

José returned to Barcelona ahead of the May 1936 CNT National Congress in Zaragoza, a gathering that he knew would be decisive in shaping the future orientation of the union. Having immersed himself once more in local CNT activities, José's 'thesis' was adopted by the l'Hospitalet CNT and he was duly delegated to present it to Congress. José charted the proceedings of the Congress in volume I of this book. Years later, in an interview with the journal *Tiempo de Historia* in January 1980, José reflected on the Zaragoza Congress and its policy statement on libertarian communism: 'Nowadays the document may seem ingenuous or romantic and make a lot of people laugh. The fact is that we regarded ourselves as the last romantics.'<sup>93</sup> In his memoirs, José also described the spectacle created by the arrival of the militants in the Aragonese capital, which constituted:

'a veritable Confederal invasion. Trains and coaches arrived without respite. Locomotives were adorned with our colours and banners. There were passengers balancing on the foot boards of the carriages and even suicidal people who made the journey on the roof...The capital of Aragón seemed occupied by a foreign army. Traditional Zaragoza hardly ventured onto the streets through fear of being confronted by that plague of devils. The police behaved most correctly.'<sup>94</sup>

After the Congress, José returned to l'Hospitalet, where he submerged himself in a wide range of activities, in the CNT, in the local *ateneu* and at work, in a local brickworks. Yet political events were now developing rapidly. Since the February election result, most right-wing parties had given up any hope of overthrowing the Republic through legal means and had effectively thrown their weight and resources behind a conspiracy of extreme military conservatives and crypto-fascists to crush democracy. It was this conspiracy that culminated in the July 1936 coup.

Spain's political crisis meant that José made his last brick on Saturday 18 July 1936. Like every Saturday, José worked half a day, finishing at midday. He returned home to eat, to wash and freshen up before setting off for Barcelona, where he was attending shorthand notetaking classes in order to aid his journalistic work. Before leaving for his class, José had arranged for a friend to pass to discuss *ateneu* affairs. His friend brought more dramatic news: right-wing army officers stationed in Morocco had launched a coup. The news would not have shocked José as CNT and anarchist circles had, for weeks, been apprised of a conspiracy being hatched by the extreme right and sections of the army. What nobody knew, however, was the shape that events would take and how serious the coup might be. Vexed by this uncertainty, José left for his shorthand class armed with a pen and a pistol, the two most powerful weapons in the CNT arsenal. Yet he could hardly have predicted what was to follow in the coming hours, days and months: that his

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<sup>91</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 71.

<sup>92</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, pp. 80-1.

<sup>93</sup> Cited in Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Civil War. Revolution and Counter-revolution*, Hemel Hempstead, 1991, p. 769, n. 17.

<sup>94</sup> Peirats, Unpublished memoirs, p. 92.

revolutionary dreams would be acted out in the streets and factories of Barcelona and in the fields of much of Spain; and that the nascent revolution of the masses would eventually be consumed by the international geo-political conflicts in a civil war that would claim a million lives.

In his memoirs, José doesn't give any indication as to what he did after his class in Barcelona. However, as rumours spread about the military uprising, it seems likely that he would have dropped in at one of the many CNT centres in Barcelona to get an update on events and on the planned response of the Confederation. To be sure, on Sunday 19 July, when the coup spread to army garrisons in Catalonia, José joined with the most militant sections of the working class and loyal detachments of the republican security forces in quashing the army rebellion. In l'Hospitalet, the anarcho-syndicalist masses accounted for the vast majority of those who went onto the streets to confront the military. José was in the front line of the workers' counter-mobilisation. Along with friends from La Torrassa, he set about building barricades, a task in which José employed some of his brickmaking tools. Later that morning, José was part of a crowd, many of which had no experience of revolutionary action, which assembled to storm the Pedralbes infantry barracks on the l'Hospitalet-Barcelona border. This action underscored the audacity of the revolutionaries, who were largely unarmed but acutely aware of the pressing need to destroy their enemies before they were destroyed themselves.<sup>95</sup> For José, the storming of the Pedralbes barracks was the stuff of his dreams: the proletarian masses breaching the bastions of bourgeois state power and for many of the participants it was a crucial first experience of insurrection. This action was also part of a desire to reconquer space: the barracks had been built during the Republic on what had been a tree-lined public area where José used to go in search of solitude and where he read Hugo, Zola and the great Russian novelists. He watched as the barracks were built only then to find the entire area out of bounds due to 'security concerns'.

But now the workers had taken charge and revolution was in the air and on the ground. The Pedralbes garrison was hastily renamed 'Bakunin Barracks' on 19 July. New structures of revolutionary power began to operate. The bricks that had been placed one on top of the other by the likes of José to create barricades formed the basis for new grassroots revolutionary committees. As the armed workers who controlled the various barricades communicated with one another across the greater Barcelona area, a 'Federation of barricades' was established, the first and only truly revolutionary body to be formed after the uprising, which mirrored the 'District Federations' of the Paris Commune. One of the first acts of the 'Federation of Barricades' was to create a *Comité de Guerra* (Committee of War), located in the 'Bakunin Barracks', which established the first workers' militias, the armed embodiment of revolutionary power, formed to reconquer territory still controlled by the fascists.<sup>96</sup> Simultaneously, and spontaneously, local revolutionary committees were established, often based around the barricades, which were responsible for organising food distribution and supplies in the working class neighbourhoods.

José was deeply involved in this grassroots revolution in l'Hospitalet. The *ateneu* where he had previously organised plays and cultural activities 'had converted itself into a Jacobin club.'<sup>97</sup> In his memoirs, he described the hectic first days of revolution and the remarkable degree of local democracy that prevailed. Thus, José relates how, at one of the early meetings of the l'Hospitalet revolutionary committee, a speaker referred to Kropotkin's aphorism – 'If there is hunger the

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<sup>95</sup> *El Diluvio*, 22 July 1936; *Frente Libertario*, July-August 1971.

<sup>96</sup> Abel Paz, *Durruti, el proletariado en armas*, Barcelona, 1978, p. 360.

<sup>97</sup> Peirats, '*Una experiencia histórica...*', p. 38.

day after a revolution, then the revolution has failed' – and how this led directly to the formation of a *Comité de Abastos* (Supply Committee), which was located in a collectivised warehouse. This was local decision-making, revolutionary self-determination, motivated by the local needs of the working class community. Fuelled by revolutionary enthusiasm, it seemed that sleep was now an unnecessary luxury: José attended a succession of community assemblies and meetings of the l'Hospitalet revolutionary committee by day, while by night he baked bread before joining the armed workers' patrols on the streets.

For all the power they enjoyed in the July days, at the height of the revolution, CNT activists were still conditioned by a defensive mentality occasioned by the experience of decades of clandestine activity. This was highlighted by José in a telling anecdote: at a time when the anarcho-syndicalist masses were fully in control of the situation, something that was especially true in l'Hospitalet, José and his comrades converted a local brickworks into a secret arsenal. It was clear that the anarchists did not appreciate the scale of the power that was in their hands and that they could not escape the fear that they would be forced underground.<sup>98</sup>

While before the revolution, it could be claimed that the role of autodidacts and genuinely proletarian 'organic intellectuals' within the libertarian and anarcho-syndicalist movements was a source of strength, after July we can see that many of the leading militants in the Barcelona and Catalan movements possessed a very narrow and restrictive interpretation of anarchist thought and practice. This was graphically seen in the way that the potential of local revolutionary committees was ignored by the leaders of the CNT and the FAI. Rather than extend the control of the revolutionary committees over social and economic life, the most prominent figures within the Catalan anarchist movement resolved to adopt the Popular Front formula of 'anti-fascist unity'. First of all, the CNT and FAI leaders shored up the institutions of the Republic that had collapsed owing to the revolutionary and counter-revolutionary mobilisations of July; then, later, they agreed to participate in republican governments, first in Catalonia and then in central government. As the CNT and the FAI became increasingly drawn into to Spanish social and political life, both organisations became bureaucratised, losing their old autonomy to become 'top-down' organisations, which attracted careerists who wished to live from the 'revolution' and civil war. Incredibly, the FAI became transformed into just another political party, its basic unit ceasing to be the *grupo de afinidad*, becoming instead the *agrupación* (association) of 100s. Moreover, the CNT-FAI leadership sought to impose a 'general line' on its associated press and publications.

This situation impelled José towards a new stage in his life of rebellion and opposition: as an opponent of the movement to which he had dedicated his life. José's opposition was multi-faceted just as it was unyielding. Highlighting the new position of defiance adopted by José and his comrades, his *grupo de afinidad* now changed its name from *Afinitat* to *Los irreductibles* ('The Implacable Ones'). José was among the first to be frustrated by the pusillanimity and timidity of the anarchist leaders and their 'democratic collaboration' that gave political representation to other anti-Francoist forces even though they lacked the power of the CNT in the streets, factories and fields of republican Spain. The CNT and FAI in l'Hospitalet became one of the most important centres of opposition to the wartime stance of the leadership of the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements. As José later explained, 'despite comprising the overwhelming majority, we are in a minority.'<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> José Peirats, 'Razones y sinrazones de la participación libertaria en el Gobierno', *Polémica*, summer 1986, p. 63.

<sup>99</sup> Peirats, 'Razones y sinrazones', p. 63.

José became one of the most prominent figures within the Catalan JJ.LL which, unlike the FIJL, the state-wide anarchist youth movement, rejected the new 'reformist' direction followed by the CNT and the FAI. According to Fidel Miró, the secretary of the FIJL, José was 'leader' of the radicals who were dubbed 'redskins' ('*pieles rojas*') by the 'governmentalists' in the CNT and the FAI.<sup>100</sup> Certainly, while only 28 at the start of the revolution, José entered the centre of debates within the Spanish anarchist movement during this period. Fiercely independent, he inveighed against what he denounced as 'the new theology of circumstantialism' and crossed swords with its main supporters, the anarchist ministers Federica Montseny and Juan García Oliver. According to Juan Manuel Fernández Soria, José now emerged as 'one of the most outstanding young libertarian leaders'.<sup>101</sup>

In practice, the opponents of the anarchist hierarchy had little time for leaders, young or old, and were not inclined to create their own. Nevertheless, José was an energetic and assiduous contributor to the anti-collaborationist press, particularly *Ruta*, the JJ.LL newspaper, 'the organ of the Young Turks', according to Peirats.<sup>102</sup> He also wrote for *Ideas*, the newspaper of the Baix Llobregat CNT, which became one of the most vocal opponents of governmentalism within the Catalan CNT. Other newspapers for which he wrote included *Esfuerzo*, *Faro*, *Inquietudes* and *El Quijote*. Many of the above-named papers were periodically banned and suspended by the CNT-FAI, owing to their vociferous opposition to the 'general line' of governmental collaboration. José, for his part, was ready to accept the need for censorship in matters of military strategy, he could not countenance any limits to the traditional anarchist shibboleths of incessant critique of the authorities in the political sphere, notwithstanding the 'circumstances' of civil war.

But José was anything but uncomprehending of the need to win the war. In December 1936 he went on a mission to France to procure arms and meet with French activists, including Pierre Besnard, the then secretary-general of the IWMA. While he was there, as well as addressing meetings, he wrote a piece for *Le Libertaire* on the revolutionary autumn of 1936. In what was José's first trip outside of Spain – he had never been outside of the north-eastern corner, Catalonia, Valencia and Zaragoza – he made sure to find time to visit the artistic treasures of the Louvre.

Rather than remain in Barcelona and witness the revolutionary process being thwarted by the leaders of the libertarian movement, José left for the provincial Catalan city of Lleida, a city that was second only to l'Hospitalet in terms of its importance as a centre of radical opposition to the CNT-FAI leadership.<sup>103</sup> This decision reveals much about José's psychology and his characteristic restlessness, which periodically resulted in new odysseys and journeys of discovery. In political terms, Lleida presented new challenges: it was a stronghold of the dissident revolutionary communists of the POUM and the CNT was the second revolutionary force in the city; José was keen to build up the anarchist and confederal union movements in Lleida. Yet what most influenced Peirats' decision to go to Lleida was the offer from his old friend Lorenzo Páramo, the editor of *Acracia*, to join the team working on the city's leading libertarian newspaper. More of an an-

<sup>100</sup> Miró, *Anarquismo y anarquistas*, p. 32. According to Robert Alexander, 'Although not a major leader of the anarchists during the war, [Peirats] was of considerable significance as one of the most obvious opponents of the "collaborationist" policy followed by the anarchists throughout the conflict.' (*The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War*, London, 2002, vol.II, p. 1171).

<sup>101</sup> Juan Manuel Fernández Soria, *Cultura y libertad. La educación en las Juventudes Libertarias (1936-1939)*, Valencia, 1996, p. 64.

<sup>102</sup> José Peirats, 'Benito Milla Navarro', *Polémica*, December 1987, p. 29.

<sup>103</sup> Fidel Miró, *Una vida intensa y revolucionaria. Juventud, amor, sueños y esperanzas*, Mexico City, 1989, p. 205.

anarchist than a CNT publication, *Acracia* became one of the foremost adversaries of the Popular Frontist policies of the CNT-FAI leadership and Lorenzo Páramo wanted Peirats to enhance its critical line. In addition to this new opportunity for Peirats to air his oppositional spirit, *Acracia* had the further attraction of including Alaíz, his former mentor, among its staff. According to José's various autobiographical writings, this period in Lleida, where the revolution was in full swing, was one of the most fulfilling periods in his life. Immersed in the production of *Acracia*, José and his comrades forged a strong sense of purpose; as Peirats later explained, 'we established a perfect community in the newspaper office. We worked, ate and slept there.'<sup>104</sup> The energy of the *Acracia* team ensured that their paper became, according to José, 'one of the worthiest paladins of the revolutionary epoch.'<sup>105</sup> Indeed, José was so immersed in the revolutionary life of Lleida that he has been mistaken for a native of the city.<sup>106</sup> While this community of activists was an example to many, there is evidence that José stood out among his comrades, his abnegation and self-sacrifice setting an example to younger activists who were taking their first steps in the anarchist movement. These included Antonio Téllez Solá, who was inspired by José to pursue his first efforts at writing, going on to become a historian of the anarchist movement as well as a tireless fighter against the Franco dictatorship.

Besides his work for the press, Peirats also devoted much of his time to propaganda and organisational work in Lleida and in the surrounding countryside. During his stay in Lleida José became the most prominent figure in the local JJ.LL, reinforcing and shoring up what had previously been a rather weak group in the city, both in ideological and material terms.<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, José's strong interest in art led him to develop a close friendship with Antonio García Lamolla, a local revolutionary surrealist artist who did a few sketches for *Acracia*. In keeping with José's revolutionary cultural mission, he also reproduced a number of García Lamolla's surrealist works in the newspaper.<sup>108</sup>

Lleida was very much a revolutionary canton, far removed from the everyday realities of Barcelona, where the tensions between the supporters of the revolution and its enemies were reaching breaking point in the spring of 1937. The JJ.LL, always the bastion of revolutionary opposition, started publishing a new clandestine publication, *Esfuerzo*, a 'wall newspaper' designed in the form of a poster-sized sheet to be fixed to a wall. José contributed several articles to this novel publication, which consisted essentially of slogans and manifestos.

Tensions came to a head in early May during the so-called 'May Days', when the anti-revolutionary coalition finally struck against the remaining local revolutionary committees and armed workers' groups in the Catalan capital. A new anarchist group, '*Los amigos de Durruti*' came to prominence in the 'May Days'. '*Los amigos de Durruti*' was the only group from within the anarchist camp that attempted to convert the struggle in May into what its activists called 'the second revolution'. In the streets, '*Los amigos de Durruti*' had close ties to the

<sup>104</sup> José Peirats, 'Antonio García Lamolla', *Cultura Libertaria* (Vitoria), 7, January 1986.

<sup>105</sup> *Inquietudes* (Bordeaux), June 1947.

<sup>106</sup> Thus, it is possible to read: 'Peirats was a Catalan anarchist, probably from Lleida, who edited a newspaper, the *Acracia*, published in his home province during the 1930s...He also served as a lieutenant in the Republican Army. In the twenty-five years following the war, he became an historian commenting prolifically on the subject and on Spanish anarchism in general.' (James W. Cortada, in Cortada (ed.), *Historical Dictionary of the Spanish Civil War*, 1936-1939, Westport, Conn., 1982, p. 391.)

<sup>107</sup> Miró, *Una vida intensa y revolucionaria*, p. 205.

<sup>108</sup> See Antonio Téllez, *Apuntes sobre Antonio García Lamolla y otros andares con un recuerdo del mismo por José Peirats*, Vitoria, 1992.



other supporters of the revolution, the POUM and the few Trotskyist groupings in Barcelona. Naturally, '*Los amigos de Durruti*' and its newspaper, *El amigo del pueblo*, were quickly disowned by the CNT-FAI hierarchy.

While José was clearly aligned intellectually and organisationally with the radical wing of the libertarian movement, and although he doubtless knew many of its activists who were engaged in streetfighting during the 'May Days' in Barcelona and in La Torrassa, there is no evidence that he had any ties with '*Los amigos de Durruti*'. Given his history of dissidence it is perhaps surprising. José was certainly fully aware of the activities of '*Los amigos de Durruti*', who published an article in *Ruta* a month before the 'May Days'.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the stance of '*Los amigos de Durruti*' was very similar to the perspective adopted by *Esfuerzo*, to which José collaborated.<sup>110</sup> We might speculate that, had José been in Barcelona, where the activities of '*Los amigos de Durruti*' were focused, rather than Lleida, he would have played an active role in their struggles. Equally, it is possible that José remained aloof from the group since his affection for the CNT remained great and he was unable to take his criticism as far as '*Los amigos de Durruti*'.

Following the 'May Days', the tide turned definitively against the oppositionists within the CNT-FAI. Sensing the changed balance of forces, Peirats left Lleida for Barcelona, where he immediately assumed a position on the Regional Committee of the Catalan JJ.LL and on editorial board of its paper, *Ruta*. Indefatigable as ever, José also found time to edit *Frente y Retaguardia*, a tabloid of the Roja y Negra Column, led by Antonio Ortiz, veteran of the *Nosotros* group. Working from the headquarters of the CNT-FAI in central Barcelona, 'in the very beard of our pursuers'<sup>111</sup>, José was frustrated as the leadership of the movement exerted heavy-handed pressure in the face of any criticism from the rank-and-file. Thus, in addition to the unwanted attentions of the republican censor, *Ruta* faced coercion for the the 'higher committees' of the anarchist movement. Years later José explained how the editorial board of *Ruta* had been threatened by the elders of the libertarian movement in the following terms: 'Either we toed the line or we would suffer the circumstances of "circumstantialism"'.<sup>112</sup> José was never one to give in to threats – *Ruta* continued its revolutionary line and the FAI finally withdrew financial support from *Ruta*, whereupon it folded. Faced with an increasingly bureaucratised FAI, José quit the organisation in protest.<sup>113</sup>

In the new interregnum, José set about completing a project that he had carried around in his head for some time: an analysis of intellectuals and their attitude towards social transformation. The result was a 48-page pamphlet, *Los intelectuales y la revolución*. Divided into 12 sections, *Los intelectuales y la revolución* began by considering 'the popular element' of revolutions, something that, very much in keeping with CNT workerist anti-intellectualism, was juxtaposed with middle class intellectuals or, as José put it, 'counter-revolutionary mimesis'. This was followed by a theoretical analysis of 'the intellectual preoccupations of Marxism and social democracy' and, what was, during the civil war, a highly topical critique of 'anti-classist governmentalism'. José analysed specific historical experiences, analysing intellectuals and their response to nationalism and fascism, as well as the position of Spanish intellectuals during the dictatorship of Primo de

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<sup>109</sup> *Ruta*, 1 April 1937. According to Agustín Guillamón, *Ideas*, to which José regularly contributed, was the 'direct predecessor of *El Amigo del Pueblo*' (*Balance*, p.26).

<sup>110</sup> *Balance*, p. 36, n. 48.

<sup>111</sup> Peirats, '*Antonio García Lamolla*'.

<sup>112</sup> Peirats, '*Antonio García Lamolla*'.

<sup>113</sup> Juan Gómez Casas, *Historia de la FAI. Aproximación a la historia de la organización específica del anarquismo y sus antecedentes de la Alianza de la Democracia Socialista*, Madrid, 1977, p.225.

Rivera and the workers' alternative. José then moved to explore the contemporary crisis and the role of 'the intellectuals in the Republic of Casas Viejas', focusing on the Stalinist and Catalanist intellectuals, which formed a prelude to an appraisal of 'the ups and downs of the July revolution' and 'the political apprenticeship of the CNT'. Finally, José concluded his brief study with an appreciation of the 'intellectuals' of his generation and class – 'autodidactic heroism'.<sup>114</sup>

The impact of *Los intelectuales y la revolución* was limited. First of all, it was, to cite José, 'mutilated' by the republican censor; then, it was impounded by the authorities.<sup>115</sup> It seems likely that almost the entire print run later fell into the hands of the Francoists, who would have destroyed it. José, nevertheless, preserved a copy, and this pamphlet, especially its analysis of CNT 'intellectuals', marked the starting-point of what would later develop into José's critique of *cenetismo*.

By autumn 1937, some fifteen months since he stormed the barracks in Pedralbes and in the wake of a stream of military defeats at the front and political defeats and betrayals in the rear-guard, José knew in his heart and mind that the revolution was over. It was this awareness that induced him to enlist in the republican army in November 1937, despite his lifelong pacifism and anti-militarism. Although he entered the ranks of what had, at the height of the revolution, been the legendary Durruti Column, the unit had long been militarised and, while still led by anarchists, was part of the state-run military machine. Disillusioned with internal politics in the rear-guard, this decision was a reflection of his despair, 'a kind of personal suicide, provoked by the contradictions of the CNT'.<sup>116</sup>

Yet by now, with the popular hope that victory in the war might lead to a new Spain, there was no holding back the advance of the Francoist armies, backed as they were so generously by Hitler and Mussolini. As the republican army increasingly lost ground, José, like thousands of other Spaniards, was forced to retreat towards France and exile. Had José remained in Spain he would have been executed or, at least, faced a long jail sentence and slave labour, which was, in effect, a death sentence in itself. Had he evaded jail, having been blacklisted before the war, and with a history of union militancy, José would have found it very difficult to get work. In sum, like many more from his generation, he could not co-exist with Francoism because of either direct political repression or the economic repression and punitive economic policies that pushed hundreds of thousands into exile in search of peace and work in what was the biggest human exodus of people from Spain since the expulsion of the Jews in the 15th century.

At 31 years of age, as he prepared to enter an unknown life of exile in France with only the clothes on his back, José's life of rebellion against alienation and commitment to the CNT had impressed upon him a love of struggle, an appreciation of pure human friendship and a desire to render life beautiful and artistic; it had brought him no material gain – he had endured extreme personal hardships, unemployment and blacklisting; he had risked his life and freedom while picketing during strikes, and rifle in hand during the revolution and civil war; he had endured detention and police beatings for his cause in a life of struggle that had shaped his identity and his very being. He was no bureaucrat living from union dues – he was a man of the union, who lived for the union, fully accepting the suffering, poverty and danger this presupposed in the struggle against the state and the employers.

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<sup>114</sup> Adverts for *Los intelectuales y la revolución* appeared in *Esfuerzo*, 1 and 7 October 1937.

<sup>115</sup> *Frente Libertario*, April 1973.

<sup>116</sup> Guillamón, *Balance*, p. 88.

Upon entering France as part of the 26th Division of the defeated republican army, José was interned at the notorious Vernet d'Ariège concentration camp, where 12,000 former members of the Durruti Column were held amid insanitary conditions and awful overcrowding. José was one of the luckier ones in the camp. He was allowed to leave through an arrangement between the exiled republican organisations and various South American governments, which allowed for the controlled migration of Spanish refugees from France. Many of those ones who remained in Vernet d'Ariège were later sent to Nazi extermination camps during World War II.

The accumulated political enmities between the various anti-Francoist organisations continued into the post-war period. On one occasion, José, along with other *cenetistas*, was ready to leave France on a boat when they were asked to disembark, whereupon they were replaced by Stalinists.<sup>117</sup> The communist poet Pablo Neruda was especially active in 'filtering' Spanish refugees, ensuring that barriers were placed in the way of anti-Stalinists who wished to enter Chile.<sup>118</sup> Despite the growing uncertainty and obvious dangers facing the Spanish exiles who remained in Europe, José retained his characteristic generosity of spirit and sense of solidarity. Once, when José was due to set off on a boat for South America, he learned of the precarious situation of a previously unknown *cenetista* who was being hunted by former members of the Spanish republican police and who faced the prospect of being killed if he remained in France. José had no hesitation in allowing the wanted man to leave France in his stead, later explaining his decision in the following terms: 'We all have the same smooth skin. There are no aristocrats and plebeians among us.'<sup>119</sup> Shortly afterwards, however, José did manage to leave France.<sup>120</sup>

This marked the beginning of a new odyssey for José, who travelled to Casablanca, before moving on to the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Panama and Venezuela. His constant movements around South America certainly satisfied his childhood yearning for travel and his interest in geography but his circumstances of enforced exile and financial insecurity meant that this was anything but tourism. Whereas in Barcelona he had been able to find a balance between manual and intellectual labour, his first period of exile was especially tough, which he later described as 'seven interminable years'.<sup>121</sup> He had several different jobs at this time, labouring, woodcutting, farmhand, logging and working as a travelling photographer. First of all, in Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic, he worked in a cooperative with a group of Spanish exiles, living miserably, eking out an existence amidst tropical rainstorms that frequently destroyed their work and crops, and relying on donations from comrades.<sup>122</sup> José finally left the Dominican Republic with the help of a north American body, 'The New World Resettlement Fund', whose Secretary was the novelist John Dos Passos, an old friend of the Spanish Republic. Along with other exiles, José left for Saloya, in Ecuador, only to find a new patch of unproductive and unworkable land, resulting in another failed agricultural project. Writing of this period later in life, José described them as 'years of physical exhaustion and intellectual aridity...[T]he struggle for life and the hostility of the surrounding environment monopolised the mind and the energies of the refugee.'<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *Triunfo*, 21 August 1976.

<sup>118</sup> Peirats, *Figuras del movimiento libertario*, p. 252.

<sup>119</sup> Peirats, '*Una experiencia histórica...*', p.93.

<sup>120</sup> Juan Giménez Arenas, *De la Unión a Banat. Itinerario de una rebeldía*, Madrid, 1996, p. 69.

<sup>121</sup> Peirats, '*Antonio García Lamolla*'.

<sup>122</sup> *Triunfo*, 21 August 1976.

<sup>123</sup> García, '*José Peirats Valls*', p. 16.

Frustrated at having traded Franco's tyranny for the tyranny of tropical insects and diseases, José made arrangements to travel to Panama, during which he nearly died when the boat on which he was travelling encountered serious problems in the Pacific Ocean. Fortunately, he was rescued by a passing ship. In Panama, in 1945, José gave a series of talks on the evolution of the Francoist state. These were subsequently published under the title *15 Conferencias Breves. Disección del Franquismo*.<sup>124</sup> This marked the beginning of a new phase in José's revolutionary-intellectual life. The following year he moved to Venezuela and from 1946 onwards he started contributing once more to *Ruta*, the historic newspaper of the Catalan anarchist youth movement, then based in Toulouse.

With the end of World War II, the CNT in exile was beginning to reorganise in France, its coherency shattered by repression and exile which saw it reduced to fragments scattered across the four corners of the earth. José, nevertheless, was determined to return to the fold. He was selected as Venezuelan delegate at the 'Intercontinental Conference' of the Spanish libertarian movement, which took place in France in 1947. At the Conference, José was named secretary-general of the CNT. Given the conflicts and divisions within the movement following the revolution and civil war, this position was an extremely difficult one. However, just as José had opposed the split in the CNT in the 1930s, so now also he worked hard to mend fences and end the breach within the movement.<sup>125</sup> Like so often in the past, José placed the future of the movement ahead of his own life: ignoring the huge personal risks, he took the dramatic step of entering Franco's Spain clandestinely in order to meet with CNT dissidents, using the pseudonym 'Juan España Iber'. This trip must have been an emotional experience for José, returning to the country that had inspired his dreams of justice and freedom when it was living under the jackboot of Franco. José's mission took him to Madrid for the first time in his life, at a time when it constituted the heart of the Francoist beast. Notwithstanding the miserable conditions prevailing in post-civil war Madrid, José's love of beauty impelled him to indulge his aesthetic desires: he visited the Museo del Prado and he sunbathed in the nearby Retiro park. Despite the best efforts of people like José, the climate of intrigue and suspicion that shaped exile politics and the continuing fall-out from anarchist 'governmentalism' in the civil war ensured that the CNT did not reunify until the Limoges Congresses of 1960-1.

Ultimately José found exile politics utterly corrosive; he had no time for the personal rivalries, sterile polemics and petty vanities and realised that he needed a period of 'detox' from the CNT's internal struggles. Nevertheless, José never returned to South America – he could not be separated from his extended family inside the CNT and remained in France, becoming an agrarian labourer in Haute Garonne, in Languedoc, South-West France. While exile was materially easier in France, he lacked the legal guarantees that he enjoyed in south America which therefore brought its own precariousness. José was detained by the French police on several occasions; early on his papers were not always deemed to be 'in order' and he had no fixed abode. As we saw in the introduction to Volume I, he was arrested as a suspect in an armed robbery in 1951. The beating he received from the French police was so severe that José's health was seriously affected. Spiritually unbowed, his heart was physically weakened and he later experienced several heart attacks and was forced to take periods of rest.

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<sup>124</sup> José Peirats, *15 Conferencias Breves. Disección del Franquismo*, Panama, 1946.

<sup>125</sup> Miró, *Anarquismo y anarquistas*, p.216.128. Cited in García, 'José Peirats Valls', p. 18

Despite this, and the systematic slaughter perpetrated by the Franco dictatorship as it attempted to eliminate rebel culture of the CNT, and which led to the execution of many of José's close friends, his spirit remained unvanquished. Thus, in November 1965, in a letter to Victor García, a lifelong friend and the 'Marco Polo of Spanish anarchism', José wrote: 'all of my life as a militant has been a constant conflict with the machine...I have been an eternal rebel...I expect that I carry a constant dissatisfaction within...' [128] Indeed, despite the bitterness of defeat and exile, and faced with awful labouring tasks, José remained tee-total and abstemious and unwavering in his critique.

As many thousands of his generation were lost to history, cowed by the hard experiences of exile or by the silence of the graveyards imposed by Franco's repression, José's voice resounded from the wilderness. Writing gave him a voice, constituting a compensation for the emotional hardships imposed by exile. His output can be divided into three spheres: there were articles and pamphlets, with clear propagandistic goals, plays and short stories, and more developed and reasoned historical work. In 1958-9, while living in Toulouse, José wrote two more plays, *El Diablo*, a comedy in one act, which was published in 1958,<sup>129</sup> and *El Lobo*, which remains unpublished. He returned to the short story genre after 1977, which he adapted as a forum for memory and autobiography. All of his writing, however, was characterised by strong elegiac qualities: it was informed by his lifelong commitment to the struggle for freedom; and often his work was an ode to the beauty of anarchism. His writing style continued to bear some of the hallmarks of his mentor Alaíz, particularly his keen eye for synthesis, his short, clipped sentences and his aversion to an excessive reliance on adjectives. But he moulded these features with his own direct, clear prose style, 'from the oven', as José put it.

He contributed tirelessly to the CNT press, which, frequently harassed by the French authorities, responded by changing the names of its publications. From 1946 onwards, José continued writing for *Ruta*; he contributed 400 pieces to 'Crónicas' of the weekly *CNT* (Toulouse) between 1952-9; as editor of *CNT*, he gave the paper a truly international focus, cultivating a network of correspondents across the world. He wrote regularly for *Presencia* and *Frente Libertario*, both of which were based in Paris. He published an article in each edition of the monthly *Frente Libertario*, frequently reviewing works of academic history as well as writing on a wide range of topics, including a critique of *machismo*.<sup>126</sup> He also wrote for the international anarchist press, including *Cenit* and *Tierra y Libertad* (Mexico), the Dutch *De Vrije* and the Italian *Umanità Nova* and *Volantá*, using a range of occasionally ironic pseudonyms, such as 'John Rainbow'.

His history-writing emerged from his journalism: his first real excursion into history, an article on the ephemeral First Spanish Republic of 1873 ('*Historia de una Republica que nació muerta*'), was published in *Inquietudes*, in a section entitled 'Doctrine and Combat: Looking to the Past'.<sup>127</sup> Increasingly, he devoted his attention to historical studies, preparing his celebrated history of the CNT, as was described in my introduction to Vol. I of this study. In 1964, *Los anarquistas en la crisis política española* was published in Argentina,<sup>128</sup> an abridged version of the three-volume of *La CNT en la revolución española*, which was later translated into English and French.<sup>129</sup> This places José firmly within the tradition of anarchist historians, a tradition that extended back to

<sup>126</sup> *Frente Libertario*, October 1976

<sup>127</sup> *Inquietudes* (Bordeaux), October 1947

<sup>128</sup> José Peirats, *Los anarquistas en la crisis política española*, Buenos Aires, 1964. It was re-printed in Madrid, 1976.

<sup>129</sup> The English edition appeared as *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, Detroit, 1976. It appeared in French as *Les Anarchistes Espagnols. Révolution de 1936 et luttas de toujours*, Toulouse, 1988.

Anselmo Lorenzo in the nineteenth century. Writing at a time when ‘professional’ historians had not yet created social or labour history, these anarchist historians were moved to document the rich traditions of Spain’s anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements, inspired often by the adventures of the rank-and-file activists who, as José recognised, were ‘unique characters, authentic Goyaesque etchings.’<sup>130</sup>

Although José’s most famous historical study, *La CNT en la revolución española* is but part of his engagement with the past. He published biographies of Anselmo Lorenzo<sup>131</sup> and Emma Goldman.<sup>132</sup> His notes on his south American exile were collected and published in 1950 as *Estampas del Exilio en América*, in semi-autobiographical form.<sup>133</sup> His own experience of the exodus of 1939 presumably inspired José’s historical imagination to write a study of the Spanish jewry.<sup>134</sup> He produced several important critiques of *cenetismo*: *La práctica federalista como verdadera afirmación de principios*,<sup>135</sup> *Examen Crítico-Constructivo del Movimiento Libertario Español*<sup>136</sup> and *Mecanismo Orgánico de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*,<sup>137</sup> all of which were warnings to the rank-and-file. For José, *Examen Crítico-Constructivo del Movimiento Libertario Español* undoubtedly had the greatest importance, a study that he described fondly as his ‘Little red book’. These studies were on the interface between propaganda and history: in both José analysed the past crises of the CNT in the hope that they would serve future generations; among other things, they were a plea for unity within the CNT.

By the middle of the 1960s José elected to stand aside in order to allow a new generation to take charge at the helm of the CNT, resigning from the union in 1965. This decision was in no way a reflection of defeatism. To be sure, the futility and sterility of many of the ongoing polemics inside the organisation would have played a part. In addition, he knew that a new generation had to take the movement forward, just as his generation had done in the 1920s. Lastly, it seems likely that, having spent so many years working for the union, José wished to focus more on his personal life and focus on his relationship with Gracia Ventura, his partner. Nevertheless, rest was alien to José and he continued to write and started painting, later confessing that he had quietly studied the techniques of the Lleida surrealist García Lamolla during the revolution.<sup>138</sup>

In 1976, a year after Franco’s death, José returned to Spain for the first time since his clandestine mission of 1947. Arriving by train at Barcelona’s Estació de França, he was received by a large group of family, friends, comrades and readers of his books, who greeted him by singing the CNT hymn, ‘*A las barricadas*’, and the anarchist anthem, ‘*Hijos del Pueblo*’. Unlike some of the more high profile republican exiles who returned to Spain and met the press in their lavish hotel rooms, true to his proletarian bohemian traditions, José held court in the humble setting of his sister’s house in l’Hospitalet, where he received a constant stream of journalists and well-wishers seeking to meet the historian of the CNT.<sup>139</sup>

<sup>130</sup> Peirats, *Figuras del movimiento libertario*, pp. 5, 6, 297.

<sup>131</sup> José Peirats, *Anselmo Lorenzo. Los Prolegómenos de la CNT*, Caracas, 1974.

<sup>132</sup> José Peirats, *Emma Goldman. Anarquista de ambos mundos*, Madrid, 1978; reprinted as *Emma Goldman. Una mujer en la tormenta del siglo*, Barcelona, 1983.

<sup>133</sup> José Peirats, *Estampas del Exilio en América*, Paris, 1960.

<sup>134</sup> José Peirats, *La Sión Hispánica*, Toulouse, 1961.

<sup>135</sup> José Peirats, *La práctica federalista como verdadera afirmación de principios*, Paris, 1964.

<sup>136</sup> José Peirats, *Examen Crítico-Constructivo del Movimiento Libertario Español*, Mexico, 1967.

<sup>137</sup> José Peirats, *Mecanismo Orgánico de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo*, Santa María de Barberá, 1979.

<sup>138</sup> Peirats, ‘Antonio García Lamolla.’ </quote>

<sup>139</sup> *Triunfo*, 21 August 1976.

He returned to live in France for a while but the allure of Spain for this Mediterranean Quijote was irresistible. He addressed monster CNT rallies in the bullring in Valencia bullring and on Montjuïc in Barcelona, which attracted 300,000 people. During the transition to democracy of the 1970s, when the 'holy democratic alliance' spanning the official communist party across to the reconstructed Francoists preserved a consensual silence about the past, José's voice resounded from the margins once again. Although nearly 70, and physically weakened by the privations imposed on him in Spain, south America and France, he still espoused the same fresh, idealistic, youthful perspective, always optimistic and hopeful of pushing through social change, even during what he called the 'age of disappointment', the period after the transition to democracy that saw the frustration of another generation's popular hopes for genuine social change.<sup>140</sup>

José returned to his birthplace in Vall d'Uixò where, right into his 70s, he continued working and contributing to the anarchist press, especially *Polémica*, writing under the pseudonym 'Juan Espanya Iber', the same name he had used to enter Spain in 1947. He also wrote a series of short stories that comprised a history of the libertarian workers' movement in novel form, which sadly was to appear posthumously.<sup>141</sup> During this same time, he completed his memoirs, a 1,500 page manuscript. Planeta, one of the leading publishers in Barcelona, accepted José's memoirs for publication, but there was a disagreement over the editing process and José finally withdrew them, even though he stood to make a significant amount of money from this project. Instead, like he had done throughout his life, he lived in austerity with his partner, Ventura Gracia, the pair of them maintaining a unity rich in struggle and camaraderie and showing enormous generosity to their many visitors. Outside their home one could read the last two lines from Machado's 'Retrato':

'You will find me aboard, with little baggage,  
almost naked, like the children of the sea.'

('Me encontraréis a bordo, ligero de equipaje  
casi desnudo, como los hijos de la mar.')

His health continued to be weakened by heart problems. He had several heart attacks in the 1980s, leaving him able to work no more than three or four hours daily. But he continued working, committed to ensuring the place of the CNT and his generation in history. In November 1984 he suffered a heart attack as he left an International Colloquium in Barcelona on the Spanish civil war and had to be hospitalised for over three weeks. Yet José refused to heed medical advice and continued to work and be active.<sup>142</sup> Life, for José, had no meaning if there was no action: this had been the principle that guided his entire life and his struggle for a better Spain. He died while swimming in the Mediterranean Sea, on Burriana beach, on 20 August 1989, aged 81, as he threw himself, head first, into a wave. It was perhaps fitting that he should die in the midst of the Iberian landscape that he so adored and for which he had fought to improve and make more just. His ashes were later scattered in the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>140</sup> José Peirats, 'Aqui y ahora', *Cultura Libertaria*, September 1986.

<sup>141</sup> Peirats, *La semana trágica y otros relatos*.

<sup>142</sup> See the obituaries in *Polémica*, October 1989 by Victor García, Francisco Carrasquer and, in particular, 'M.S.'s 'Un Quijote mediterráneo', p.22.

Two days after his death, in an unsigned obituary in *El País*, he was described incorrectly as ‘theoretician of the CNT’.<sup>143</sup> He was, certainly, of the CNT: he devoted most of his life to the union and his life cannot be separated from it. But his life was much richer and complex than this: he was a worker, a striker, a union organiser, a man of action and words, a historian, a polemicist, a propagandist, a cultural critic, a pamphleteer, a playwright, a lover of beauty and life; and most of all, a permanent rebel, who rebellion ended only with his death.

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<sup>143</sup> *El País*, 22 August 1989.



# Chapter One: Spain and the world

When the rebellion broke out, the democratic powers had adopted a stance somewhere between bewilderment and expectancy. But as civil war ensued and promised to be protracted, France — with the assent of the Spanish Republican government — launched the idea of preventive neutrality to which all of the European powers subscribed under the label of ‘Non-Intervention’. The Blum government elected in May 1936 based its attitude upon an all-consuming preoccupation with peace in Europe. The Non-Intervention agreement was worked out towards the end of August 1936. In addition to France and Britain, the signatories included Germany, Italy and the Soviet Union. The support of the last-named for the pact strengthened the hand of the French government, which was able to announce to the Chamber of Deputies through Leon Blum: ‘The policy we are pursuing has encountered no opposition from any other power. The agreement I have just been advocating also bears the signature of the Soviet Union.’ The PCF, which had been orchestrating an intensive campaign of agitation for intervention on the side of Republican Spain, naturally embraced this policy.

The Non-Intervention agreement was tantamount, on the one hand, to tying Spain’s legitimate government hand and foot by denying it, in the matter of armaments, the privilege implicit in diplomatic recognition and the normal observance of commercial treaties; on the other hand, it gave Italy and Germany a free hand to support Franco militarily. Soviet aid was not forthcoming, and when it eventually did come had attached to it the political strings we saw earlier: that weaponry be funnelled to pro-Soviet military formations and that the power of the revolution be curbed, while the godfathers of the Falangist uprising mobilised all of their military might on Franco’s behalf.

During the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and on a visit by the Spanish dictator to Rome in the company of King Alfonso XIII, both dictatorships had entered into a secret agreement whereby Italy and Spain threw in their lots together as far as their Mediterranean policy was concerned. The collapse of the Spanish dictatorship left this undertaking a dead letter. But the urge to resurrect it was the motivation behind Mussolini’s whole policy of rapprochement with the Spanish military and other Spanish fascists.

In chapter 8 of volume 1, we reported the commitment obtained from the Duce in March 1934 by a right-wing commission spearheaded by General Barrera. The Soviet government itself, in an anthology of documents released to the public after World War Two exposed the treaty established on 28 November 1936 between Italy and the Francoists. This is the document in question:

‘The fascist government and the national government of Spain, partners in the common struggle against communism, which now more than ever threatens the peace and security of Europe, and prompted by the desire to develop and solidify their own relations and to collaborate with all their might in the political and social stabilisation of the nations of Europe, have made a detailed scrutiny of matters of concern

to both states, and, through the good offices of their representatives in Rome and Burgos, have reached an agreement upon the following points.

1. In future, the fascist government shall assure the national government of Spain its support and assistance in retaining the independence and integrity of Spain (whether the metropolis or the colonies) and in establishing the social and political order at home. Both states shall keep in contact in the future to this end.
2. Convinced that close collaboration must be of use to both states, and to the political and social order of Europe, the fascist government and the national government of Spain shall maintain liaison, coordinate their actions in every matter of interest to both states — in particular, matters concerning the Western stretch of the Mediterranean, where close coordination of their actions will be necessary — and shall mutually assist one another with a view to protecting their reciprocal interests.
3. Each party undertakes to have no part of any alliance or entente which may be directed against the other and not to favour, directly or indirectly, any sort of measures — military, economic or financial — directed against one of the signatory powers. Above all, they undertake to countenance no use of their territorial possessions, ports or jurisdictional waters for any sort of operations directed against one of the contracting parties, nor for the preparation of any such operations, nor for the transit of materials or armies belonging to any third power. To this end, both governments undertake to regard any foregoing agreements which may be in conflict with the present one as null and void, and to cease all implementation of undertakings implicit in these agreements.
4. The fascist government and the national government of Spain have reached agreement upon Article 16 of the League of Nations pact, the formulation of which, as it has recently been interpreted, represents a grave threat to peace and ought to be either revoked or radically amended. Should one of the contracting states come into conflict with one or with several powers, or should collective measures of a military, economic or financial nature be taken against either State, the other undertakes to adopt a position of neutrality in favour of the latter and to ensure that vital materials are procured, to afford it every facility for the use of its ports, airlines, railways and roads as well as for trade relations in an indirect way.
5. In this respect both governments are of the view that it would be useful to specify, upon the conclusion of peace, the methods by which their economic resources are to be utilised, especially raw materials and communications routes. As speedily as possible, the administrative agencies of both States shall have to conclude treaties consonant with the implementation of this plan.
6. The fascist government, and the national government of Spain deem it possible and necessary that their economic ties be built up so far as may be possible, along with their ties by sea and by air. To this end, and in keeping with these friendly relations, there shall be reciprocal grants of all sorts of tariff exemptions for merchandise, commercial outlets and civil aviation. Both governments undertake henceforth to review pertinent and existing trade agreements and maritime and aerial navigation agree-

ments accordingly. Trusting in which they append their signatures to this present protocol, this 28 November 1936.'

In the light of this protocol, Italy's attitude towards Spain and Franco's later attitude towards the democracies during World War Two are perfectly understandable. Nonetheless, by way of an historical curiosity, we shall venture to reproduce here some extracts from Count Ciano's diary — extracts which are illuminating as regards the Italian intervention in Spain. Thus, we read:

'Everything goes well in Spain. The offensive continues victorious. I telegraphed that the water supply should be cut off in Santander, so to speed the surrender. In any event, this draws near — perhaps tomorrow' (24 August 1937).

'Santander fell today beneath the onslaught of our legions. I broke the news to the Duce when we were in the airport awaiting the arrival of the aviators from the Damascus to Paris race. He was delighted by it and told me that he had been expecting good news from me today. It is a great victory! I believe that there are upwards of 50,000 prisoners. I think back to the feats of Guadalajara. Many were beginning to waver and, although I had faith, my hair began to turn white.' (25 August 1937).

'The victory at Santander is of great significance. It is not the beginning of the end, which is still a long way off, but it is a body blow to red Spain. I issued the order to bomb Valencia tonight with the planes based at Palma. One has to seize the opportune moment to strike terror into the enemy. The Duce has told me that the defeatists of Guadalajara shall pay dearly for their defeatism. This is a reference to Balbo. But he will be forgiven, or, as is his wont, he will let the thing persist'. (26 August 1937).

'The decision has been made in principle to dispatch to Spain 5,000 men indispensable for the maintenance of the current formations. I have no fear of European reactions being very strong, although our negotiations with London are in serious jeopardy. Russo told me this morning that the Soviets wish to be rid of Spain for reasons bearing on the China problem and that they will cut their aid to a minimum. That will be a great bonus. The mobilisation and training of volunteers continues.' (30 August 1937).

'Great naval activity: three torpedo attacks and one ship seized. In any event, international opinion is disturbed. Especially in England following the launching of a torpedo against an anti-torpedo vessel which fortunately emerged unscathed. We are now surrounded by controversy'. (2 September 1937).

'Great and concerted fuss by France, Russia and Britain. Subject: piracy in the Mediterranean. Responsibility: fascist. The Duce very calm. He watches London and does not believe that the British have any desire to tangle with us. He telephoned to me the reasoning behind his belief. Before his expedition to Russia, Napoleon had a study made of the weather conditions of the preceding 25 years so to discover the time when the snows begin to fall. Even so, he was out of luck. That year the snows were a month ahead of schedule. Before embarking on the Ethiopian venture,

Mussolini analysed the composition of the British population in terms of age, noting that it included 24 million women against 22 million men. Some 12 million male citizens were over the age of 50, the limit for men liable for military service in wartime. Outcome: the static masses outweigh the dynamic masses of young people. The quiet life, compromise, peace. He told me of an episode which is not without piquancy: in order to press on with his reading of a detective story Baldwin simply could not be bothered for one whole Sunday with the envelope containing the instructions concerning the Laval—Hoare Plan. The delay was enough to fuel the controversy in France and to lead to the foundering of the plan’.

(The intervention in Spain was used by the Duce as a counter to the failure of the League of Nations, and principally Britain, to grant recognition to his empire.)

‘To get back to current events, we are calmly standing by, and have prepared our plans for every eventuality. This storm will pass, like all the rest. I have managed to have the dispatch of reinforcements to Spain postponed until the day after the decisions regarding the recognition of the Empire will be made in Geneva. Should that recognition be withheld, we shall be free to proceed: should recognition be granted us, we shall likewise be free by virtue of the fascist law of the *fait accompli*’. (3 September 1937).

Among the intellectuals who joined the revolutionary vanguard represented by the CNT was the celebrated writer, geographer and former diplomat Gonzalo de Repáraz. His articles for *Solidaridad Obrera*, later collected into a book as *Diario de nuestra guerra*, Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, Barcelona, 1937) are the most comprehensive critical commentary upon the diplomatic and military issues raised by the Spanish revolution.

Choosing at random, we reproduce one of de Repáraz’s pieces, published on 13 January 1937 in *Solidaridad Obrera* under the headline ‘Diplomatic and Military Situation of Our Revolution’.

‘(a) Our problem is this: Spain, aborted seed of a nation, has fallen from the stature of colonial power to that of impotent candidate for colonisation, and the vultures of European imperialism have resolved to divide her up among themselves.

The demise began over two centuries ago, with Portugal’s breakaway and the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht. The sore symptomising the specific ailment by which we are consumed is Gibraltar. It is a great affliction to us in these bitter times. The Bourbon blight, then on the wane, delivered us up to the Napoleonic crisis from which we were rescued by the people (and its guerrilla warfare) allied with the British fleet. If that alliance were in existence now, our war would not be. It does exist because the British fleet is against the people of Iberia. This is a crucial point to which I shall return.

The Napoleonic invasion broke up Spain, leading to independence for almost all of her overseas empire. What survived was lost in 1898. In a celebrated speech, Salisbury proclaimed us deceased. The worms that ate us were unmoved. Nor was the worm-eaten body of the nation. In Paris, León y Castillo and I devised a powerful

antidote: to give Spain a great political and civilising mission in Morocco. If she succeeded her vitality stood assured and she was safe. If she failed, the decline would be fatal. Spain failed and Morocco's entry into the ranks of the dead nations was followed by her own. By then there was little enough of the world left to be shared out. Abyssinia, the Portuguese and Dutch colonies, China and Spain. Abyssinia has been overrun; China is being carved up; the division of the Portuguese and Dutch colonies is up for consideration, as was the carve-up of Spain and the possessions in north Africa unexpectedly presented to her in the wake of her last setback in 1898. The military defenders entrusted with defending Spain and its colonies have conspired to surrender them to the bandits who coveted their beloved nation and its possessions. And now the carve-up of the China of the west, has begun. We find ourselves confronted by this fearful dilemma: we can resign ourselves to disappearance or steel ourselves for recovery. Our disappearance has been the infamous handiwork of the classes which have led us without having any gift for leadership. Our recovery will be the glorious achievement of the Iberian people whom its exploiters have sold out to the enemy.

Such is our problem. The posing of it is itself the start of the revolution — of the necessary mental revolution, the one which is to place our destinies in the hands of the people. None of our statesmen knew this, nor even suspected it. Spain, a headless nation, has proceeded disoriented and tottering along her way until she has tumbled into the abyss at the bottom of which Hitler and Mussolini lurk eager to gobble her up, which they reckon to be able to do without any great bother other than tossing a few morsels to the dog democracies which beg but do not bite.

**(b)** The international complications. Hitler has said that what he does not want to see is the triumph of communism in Spain: a demented claim, like all of the claims of this melon of the north — first because Spain does not acknowledge his right to interfere in her internal affairs and then because the Spanish Republic is not communist. But were it our wish that it be so, then it would be so, despite Hitler, Mussolini and the whole of European capitalism which more or less brazenly supports them. What is more, we all know that what he seeks is colonies.

All Europe speaks through the mouth of this new Strutting Gander (Ganso Bravo), heir to that other Strutting Gander, the king of the Vandals (Genseric). It knows that he voices Aryan thinking and is confident of foisting it upon the new Abyssinians. Not only on account of Mussolini's direct assistance, but because it is obvious to him that France and Britain fear the Spanish revolution more than they fear fascist ambitions. For their part, France and Britain are delighted to see someone else embarked upon the work of destruction which they dare not undertake openly. Let the wonder be wrought, and let it be wrought by the Devil. And once that miracle has been worked, then we shall settle up between ourselves, they say, one and all.

The outward portion of the recently arranged friendship treaties and the inner portion are quite different, and it is the latter which counts. Britain asks Italy if she intends to hold on to the Balearics. Italy says not and almost acts offended by the

suspicion. Breathing easily, Britain rejoins (and this is what is not spoken), 'Then I have no interest in whatever else you may do in Spain.'

Italy, in the light of British disinterest, goes on dispatching troops to Spain. Hitler sends in his troops and Madrid is besieged by an Italo-German army, while the respective fleets mount a blockade of the Spanish coast. And Europe watches the tragedy as if in a circus, ogling with curiosity the contest between whites and reds. Thousands of children, women and old folk may fall, just so long as peace is preserved — the peace of onlookers. This they call civilisation.

There are naive souls in Spain who trust in aid from the world proletariat. I know that we can count upon their sympathies: I see that they help us insofar as they are able. But that aid cannot be effective unless they in their respective countries do what we have done make the social revolution. This they will not attain. At work in them is the doctrinal factor of culture and what has been learned, whereas the temperamental and the inherited are at work in us. Now the inherited is a much more powerful goad than the learned. To ask them to imitate us would be to make a great demand on them and should they be summoned by the beat of the drum to fill the cemeteries, off they will go as they did in 1914. They will not rise up against their own armies, as we Iberians have done to the scandal of their masters. It is that very example which has planted hatred of us in every chancellery. Consequently, we should rely upon assistance from no one.

(c) Our war and what must be done to win it — We stand alone against universal fascism. This is the truth, but we ought not to be alarmed by it. Let us see what must be done and let us do it forthwith.

First, we must arm ourselves. We have first-rate men and more than sufficient: we need an army of 500,000 men, a quarter of our male population of the correct age. We need rifles, machine-guns, munitions, planes and, above all, ships. In view of the Italo-German piracy, the two dozen rapid cruisers for which I called in my previous article are no longer enough. It is crucial that we have another two dozen submarines. It is not enough to win in the heart of the Peninsula. If we do not control our coastal waters, in the last analysis, it is we who will be defeated. The invaders will not take Madrid in order to get possession of Spain, but will take possession of Spain in order to take Madrid. Either way we shall end up slaves.

Our maritime activity will be on three fronts — North, South and East. In the North there will be three submarine bases with at least two units each: Bilbao, Santoña and Santander. The port of Guetaria has to be retaken as soon as possible and a powerful artillery bombardment laid down on the hill of San Antón y Gárate. A battery emplacement in Punta Ubidi would be very useful to us.

The Southern Front is the main one — We simply must dominate the Strait of Gibraltar. The bulk of our fleet, if our fleet has any bulk, should be active down there. I have made the crossing of the Strait 24 times and I have studied it well. I never mentioned it to anyone and have taken great care not to put it in writing. It is my secret and is carefully guarded pending the emergence of some statesman here on Iberian soil. But have no doubt about it, comrade reader, the Strait can be closed and communica-

tions between Ceuta and Algeciras severed. It only takes people in government who understand such things.

Málaga and Almería should be our operations bases until such time as Algeciras, Huelva and Cádiz are recaptured (and they must be recaptured with all haste). This is infinitely more important than capturing villages in the meseta, for the results will be speedy and decisive.

The Eastern Front is the most dangerous. The abandonment of the Balearics has been a huge and momentous blunder. With Alicante, Valencia and the Balearics open to attack, Madrid itself would fall should a thrust from Mallorca meet with success here. Since the order issued to the civil governors in July, banning them from issuing weapons to the people, the Iberian revolution has suffered no body blow comparable to this. Clearly, our principal base in this theatre has to be Cartagena.

But, it will be said: Where are they going to come from, these 500,000 rifles, the munitions, planes, cruisers and submarines? My rejoinder: they may be purchased from America, since in Europe the democratic powers are protecting Hitler and Mussolini. We shall make a portion of them in Barcelona, in Bilbao and elsewhere. What we cannot make, let us purchase. Use up the gold reserves, but buy what we need. We'll have to wait. Let us wait. Better late than never. But on the day when our shores are protected and we have even 500,000 men armed and organised, we shall afford ourselves the slight pleasure of laughing at Hitler, Mussolini, their hordes, the League of Nations and that accredited diplomatic laxative, the Non-Intervention Committee.

Then, confident that Madrid is not going to come under attack again, we will be able to mount our attack, starting with the launching of the reconquest of Andalusia, then Extremadura, then finally retaking our western shores, imposing absolute neutrality on the Portuguese dictatorship of Oliveira Salazar, by force if need be. You will see how, should he be forced to make an appeal to big-hearted Britain, which has been content to have him act against us, she will not afford us a free hand against him.

For all of these operations, we will have to create an army in the field to act as the executor of our offensive, operating whenever the need may arise. Its function, however, will not be to fight a siege war, indulging in infantile exercises in strategy, but rather to seek out the enemy army and to frustrate it. And, with it frustrated, every redoubt will fall. The obsession (to which we are very prone) with taking the towns instead of frustrating armies is one way of standing the war on its head and ensuring that it is a protracted affair.

When the vultures of civilisation see that we have an underwater army, planes and rapid cruisers, they will be convinced that we are not candidates for colonisation and will leave us in peace.

In which case the Spanish people will have pulled off the stupendous miracle of its own recovery and likewise have initiated the overhaul of the world.'

Despite its blunder over Non-Intervention, which, as far as Italy and Germany were concerned was tantamount to: 'I neither make nor break kings, but I do help my lord,' the Republican government walked straight into the snare of this democratic fiction from the very outset if one takes

into account the tardiness of its diplomatic fight back. This did not begin until mid-August and it began with an article by Indalecio Prieto, which appeared in Madrid's *Informaciones*, in which he stated:

'It is logical that a nation — in this instance, Spain — should purchase weapons and munitions abroad when required and if, when such are indispensable to it, these are denied, what are international protocols [*estipulaciones*] worth? In a sense, such denial would have some basis were Spain at war with another country. Then the neutrality of nations would prevail categorically, but when one is talking about an internal conflict, neutrality makes it obligatory that the lawfully constituted government — which is to say, the one recognised by outside powers — be supplied with war materials; for the shirking of that obligation on the grounds of the heterogeneous nature of the forces involved in that internal revolt is tantamount to interference in the internal affairs of the country being rejected. And this is where neutrality founders on the reef of dubious reasoning.'

However, on the opposite side of the diplomatic divide things were viewed very differently. Not only were the accoutrements and instruments of war supplied in whatever quantities were required, mortgaged against a Francoist victory, but the bogey of direct intervention was continually brandished as a threat. On the basis of the alleged murders of German subjects in Barcelona, Berlin threatened early in August that she would intervene militarily — in Morocco! And the State Department of the United States, remote geographically, strategically and almost diplomatically from the European crisis, espoused the cause of neutrality, which Roosevelt reinforced with the celebrated legislation placing an embargo on armaments. This absurd policy was redeemed by repeated offers of mediation.

28 September 1936 saw the start at the League of Nations in Geneva of a long series of laborious sessions, when the Spanish envoy handed in first a memorandum on the underhand intervention of Italy and Germany. About this time, Antonov-Ovseenko took over at the USSR's consulate-general in Barcelona. Antonov-Ovseenko and Rosenberg were two high-powered masters of intrigue in the pernicious labour of Soviet control and manipulation. Such were the trespasses of the then ambassador of the USSR that, following a violent argument, Largo Caballero bundled him out of his office, hammering home the point that he was not going to take advice regarding his conduct of the war.

As might have been foreseen, on 18 November, Rome and Berlin officially announced that they were recognising Franco's *junta*. On that occasion, the republican government addressed public opinion in a communiqué from which we borrow the following paragraphs:

'Henceforth the rebel Franco can rely upon the official endorsement of Berlin and Rome. Thus do the known forces of disorder and war in the international arena stride insolently forward, amid the pusillanimity of the governments and of the democratic nations, towards the establishment of the hegemony of the fascist states in western Europe...'

'Fascist Italy, denounced as an aggressor state by the League of Nations and which introduced into her Abyssinian campaign the very same tactic of mass destruction of the civilian population now implemented, without succeeding in making them



yield, against the population of Madrid, has found in Franco the puppet-accomplice she needed to attempt to turn Spain into a disguised colony which may add control of the Balearics to the imperial crown of Ethiopia.

Her worthy collaborator has been Nazi Germany, mistress of the art of violating international commitments, an absentee from the League of Nations because her aggressive designs are an affront to it, and who seeks in Spain, again with the connivance of the rebel generals, those raw materials she needs if she is to act upon her plans for aggression and war against the nation which may be unwilling to submit to her like a vassal . . .

The republican and proletarian government which, with four months of battle to its credit, has left behind the period of improvisation — and daily sees its militias converted into a regular army in the service of the people, its war production increase and its potential for expansion growing and snowballing, and which can call upon tanks and aircraft, thanks to the cohesion of all its regional components, the intimate understanding with which the central government proceeds along with the Generalitat of Catalonia and the Basque provisional government, today stands for an indivisible Spain sharing a common destiny, as demonstrated by the dispatch of Catalan troops to the Madrid front, and right now feels strong enough to win by its own endeavours. But the fact is that in addition it has the international Pro-Spain Front by its side. It can count upon the support of Mexico, the Soviet Union and the majority of the democratic peoples of the world . . .’

The statement concludes with the following exhortations:

‘General mobilisation from one end of the country to the other. Let there be no corner of free Spain which is not alive to the war and participating in it. Rationing such as an extended campaign may require. Let no one be sparing with his hours of work or sacrifices. Let each one feel that upon his conduct depend the lives of those comrades who are fighting on the Madrid front and the other freedom fronts. Let each and every Spaniard require of himself the daily, titanic effort of striving, in whatever his allotted place, in order to guarantee a future for us all. A single determination and one discipline and, with them, the security of victory!’

The German-Japanese agreement made public the day after Italy and Germany recognised the Franco regime was, in addition to laying the groundwork for the Rome—Berlin—Tokyo axis, a preventive measure against the eventuality of some democratic retort to the grant of recognition. Such retaliation was not forthcoming. Nothing more happened than a drive for mediation headed by Britain and France, and a tightening up of the embargo policy on the part of President Roosevelt. Meanwhile, the Italian legions continued to flood into Spain. On the loyalist side, the International Brigades entered the lists around this point and this helped the Stalinist press in Spain and abroad to create the impression that the brigades alone were defending the fronts.

The rumpus created by the Franco-British proposition also held the attention in the loyalist zone of the press, the party and organisational committees and the government itself throughout the month of December. The proposition was in three parts.

First: an agreement was to be sought regarding those powers, which were to be consulted about the necessity of mediation. Second: an armistice between the two contending factions would be negotiated. Third: in some form subsequently to be worked out, a national plebiscite would be held.

Scarcely had it got wind of the proposition than the loyalist press, without a single exception, opened up on it with all guns blazing. For its part, the government declared in a memorandum of 15 December:

‘In Spain one does not find two belligerents whose stature makes it licit for both to be addressed in the same terms. On the one side, our side, there stands a legitimate government whose origins lie in the elections of 16 February of this year, elections sufficiently recent for no one to be able to as much as query the import of the national will — and on the rebel side one finds men who have betrayed their own country and are bereft of any lawful mandate, who have risen up in arms out of defiance of the nation’s will as adamantly expressed on 16 February, and behind whom lurks a mixture of the thousands of Moorish mercenaries imported by the company from Morocco and the Italian and German fascist regular troops recently disembarked in Spain. To give credence to the Burgos crew, authors of the destruction of Madrid, covered in dishonour by their crimes and to grant them international recognition would be to take a step deeper into the degradation into which the international milieu has descended of late’.

The position of the CNT was set out officially and publicly in the following communiqué:

‘THE SPANISH PROLETARIAT MUST BE ON THE ALERT FOR POSSIBLE FOREIGN INTERVENTIONS: — Anyone who follows the course of the attitudes of the international milieu, which revolve about official and formal organisms, will have realised that some time ago a somewhat suspicious approach was adopted to matters relating to Spain and that this attitude has, to date, been assuming more serious and more complicated proportions.

We, who on 19 July made ourselves the promise that we would be the ones to employ the least apocalyptic language in striving intensely for the success of the war and the reconstitution of the economy, now consider that the time has come to amend our ways. No longer is it possible to keep silent; we must avert a situation wherein the Spanish proletariat, the popular masses striving, each person from their particular position, to crush the traitors, may find themselves some day caught off balance by intrigues which may attempt from abroad to foist certain norms and considerations upon us.

It behoves us to recall that, from 19 July onwards, the foreign powers lifted not a finger in the face of the revolt of the generals who reneged upon their homeland, but merely confined themselves to a spectator’s role. But the course of events, apparently, has taken a turn which they

had not so much as suspected. And so we note that, given Franco's frustrated attempt to seize Madrid, there has been a general about-face and now they all seek to intervene. How come these powers did not intervene prior to Franco's failure? How come they made no reply to the continual complaints that the Spanish government made to them, exposing the intervention of Germany and Italy on the side of the rebels? Why did they pay no heed to the demands of the Spanish government when it was pointing out that Germany and Italy were dispatching huge quantities of men and war materials to Spain? In short, why were these peace-loving gentlemen silent then? Maybe someone was cherishing the forlorn hope that Franco, with the support of international fascism, would wipe out the popular force that was defending liberty, the people's interests, art, culture — in a word, progress.

But the robust response of the Spanish people in burying at the gates of Madrid the Moorish, German and Italian hordes that were attempting to take the city awakened from their 'lethargy' those who 'did not see' or who 'had no interest in' what was going on down there.

Sweeping across the world is a wave of intervention which must necessarily work to the detriment of the loyalist forces fighting to defend themselves against the attack of Franco and his allies. And as soon as some power resolves to sell to the legal government of Spain the arms it is entitled to purchase under international law, the very arms that are required to repel this attack, immediately there follow manoeuvres to thwart these plans.

In 'democratic' France as she is known, that France which is the world's looking-glass, whose people marked out the trail which spread like a trail of gunpowder, by putting paid to the seigniorial, inquisitorial feudalism, it has just been decided that there will be no legal recruitment of volunteers wishing to join the anti-fascist struggle in Spain.

And continually one finds abrupt changes of tack in quarters which, by virtue of their positions, it is well nigh impossible to imagine linking arms in the subterranean intrigues against the independence of the Spanish people in arms. But for today, and for the sake of brevity, let us close with one categorical statement:

No matter who may intervene, no matter what may be done, the CNT will not give its consent to any 'Vergara embrace'. The blood of thousands of comrades who have fallen on the battlefronts, the sacrifice of all who give their life in defence of our homeland, which is not the home of the wealthy but the homeland of the people; the widows, the orphans, the fallen in this heroic struggle: the economic ruin to which the traitors have reduced our fertile soil; the dignity of the Spaniards, not the dignity of the tambourine-players and sherry drinkers, but the dignity of the rebel Spaniards of independent breed, the Spaniards who have always risen up

against every invasion — that classic, mellow dignity cannot countenance impositions from abroad. Any who attempt to make such impositions will have to annihilate the uncomplaining people which in this historic hour has managed to keep a better reign on its tongue than those who would submit to the jackboot of despotism’.

Only after 1 January 1937 did the Burgos *junta* set out its view on the matter. Franco did this in the course of statements made to a Portuguese journalist; through those statements, the rebels ruled out ‘any mediation or parley with the Valencia government’. Around this time, on 26 December 1936, the Spanish embassy in Paris had released a communiqué denying that the Basque home rule government was negotiating a separate peace with the rebels.

The month of January 1937 witnessed the following developments:

The German cruiser *Koenigsberg* carried out an act of piracy in the Cantabrian Sea in reprisal for the government seizure of an arms cargo destined for the rebels from on board the Nazi cargo ship, the *Palos*. The British plan for frontier, maritime and aerial monitoring was made public. (Excepting Russia, which voluntarily withdrew, the monitoring powers were to have included Germany, Italy and Portugal.) The presence of Italian troops on the Málaga front created a sensation. The French parliament gave its approval to the bill banning recruitment of volunteers destined for loyalist Spain (the 591 deputies present at the debate, including the socialist and communist ones were unanimous on this). Mr. Eden made a special declaration to the British parliament: ‘Britain will resolutely oppose intervention by any powers in the internal affairs of Spain and in the occupation of her territories.’ The US Senate discussed the new legislation placing an embargo upon arms destined for Spain (the bill was eventually approved in the second half of February). The law imposed the following bans — on the export of arms destined for the belligerents; on the transportation, aboard US vessels, or cargoes belonging to American firms and with the same destination; on the granting of credits to the aforementioned warring parties; on US citizens travelling aboard vessels belonging to the belligerents.

The newspapers on 26 February carried news of a fresh offer of mediation by President Roosevelt. Almost simultaneously, Largo Caballero, meeting his critics and ill-intended manoeuvres head-on, had this to say:

‘Whereas the state of affairs clearly outlined in the foregoing paragraphs has come to pass among us, on the other side of our frontiers there is talk of intervention in order to bring the fighting in Spain to an end. And it is said by those in government in foreign countries, which have interests contrary to those of the fascists, that our war must end. But they fail to add that it must end with our victory. Is there perhaps a desire to push us into

a 'Vergara embrace'? The arms of he who is today head of the cabinet will never open to embrace the traitors to his homeland, lackeys of powers which pose a tremendous threat to the peace of Europe and to the fortunes of the proletariat.'

The most salient development in the months of March and April was the coming into force of the control plan. Thereafter the Italian ambassador and representative on the London-based Non-Intervention Committee declared: 'There will not be any withdrawal of as much as one single Italian volunteer until such time as the war in Spain is over'. On 22, 23 and 24 March some 10,000 Italian legionnaires had disembarked on Cádiz. These were the 'heroes' of Guadalajara.

In reply to the increasingly persistent rumours of a separate, negotiated peace by the Basque government, the latter dismissed these murmurings as laughable. Queipo de Llano had turned his attention to this question over the airwaves of Seville Radio: 'I can state that at present negotiations are underway between Franco and the Basque government with Britain acting as go-between. God grant that they reach a happy conclusion so that we may be spared the grief of Bilbao being destroyed utterly.'

Now let us turn our attention to the progress of military operations, which got underway seriously at the beginning of August 1936.

The rebels' chief aim was to take the capital. The capture of Badajoz on 14 August enabled General Mola's army to link up with the army of Yagüe, as the armies of the North and South met. Mola had scheduled his entry into Madrid for 15 August. Four columns were committed to the attack: as the general himself claimed, the 'Fifth Column' was already within the city's precincts. This was a reference to covert fascist personnel who were due to spring into action just as soon as the first attacking troops burst on to the streets of Madrid. (Thus was the term 'fifth column' added to the popular lexicon as another phrase ready for export beyond Spain's frontiers.) On 10 August the Catalan militias made a landing on the Balearic archipelago and recaptured the islands of Eivissa and Formentera and there was a further landing on 16 August on Mallorca. With the exception of Maó, the Balearics were later abandoned on the orders of the defence minister (Indalecio Prieto) and thereafter the islands developed into the most powerful naval and air bases which the fascists possessed in the Mediterranean. These bases were under the direct control of Mussolini.

At the beginning of September, Navarrese troops occupied the town and the frontier at Irún. Lieutenant-Colonel Ortega, who had led the defenders later revealed that shortly before he pulled out of the town, in Hendaye there had been a train loaded with artillery and munitions — and sent from Barcelona — and that the French authorities would not allow it across the border until Irún had been evacuated. Only with great difficulty was Ortega able to prevent the arms and munitions from being handed over the rebels. As a result of the loss of Irún, Fuenterrabía and San Sebastián were lost for the shortage of defensive equipment and the attack on Bilbao was prepared. On the southern front about the same time, the enemy occupied

Talavera de la Reina, Maqueda and Torrijos. On 27 September, the rebels entered Toledo. Franco later declared: 'We made an error of tactics; it was the capture of Toledo which obliged us to redeploy troops which we had at the gates of Madrid. A month elapsed, which the government side used to prepare the resistance of the capital.'

The beginning of October saw the loss also of Navalperal, San Martín de Valdeiglesias and Sotillo de la Adrada along the approach to Madrid. But the chief military event of the month was the entry in Oviedo of the columns from Galicia, followed by Largo Caballero's announcement of a counter-thrust designed to break the encirclement of the capital which was well nigh complete following the withdrawals from Illescas (30 kilometres outside Madrid) and Navalcarnero. The announcement made by the premier was as follows:

'TO THE ARMED FORCES OF THE ARMY OF THE CENTRE: — The fascist forces which have concentrated significant efforts upon Madrid, are spent. Thus, the time has come to deliver the coup de grâce. While the traitors are bled white and lose their fighting capability, our ranks have gained in cohesion and above all our attack capability has soared. At present, we have redoubtable mechanised weaponry at our disposal. We possess tanks and a powerful air force. Tanks and aircraft are weapons of great importance in breaking the enemy; but in themselves, comrades, these weapons are insufficient for a victorious offensive. It is also vital that you place your revolutionary will to fight at its disposal. The destructive potential of the tanks and aircraft must have as its complement the élan of infantry. Whatsoever survives the onslaught of the tanks and aircraft should fall into your hands in a decisive push by the infantry. The infantry must destroy whatever may remain of the rebel columns and seize their weapons.

Listen, comrades! At dawn tomorrow, the 29th, our artillery and our armoured trains will open fire upon the enemy. Then our air force will appear, dropping bombs on the enemy and letting fly with their machine guns. Simultaneously with the aerial attack, tanks will hurl themselves upon the enemy's most vulnerable flank, sowing panic in his ranks. It will be at this point that, upon receipt of the order from their commanders, all combatants will have to hurl themselves upon the enemy, attacking him until he is annihilated. The traitors to their own country, who through deceit, falsehood and coercion have dispatched the meagre forces which follow them to their deaths, will at last be chastised by the people. Our womenfolk, our brothers, our sons who were to have been their victims will be saved thanks to the pressure from your weapons. Now that we have tanks, and planes, forward, comrades of the front, heroic sons of the labouring people! Victory is ours.

*The Minister of War, FRANCISCO LARGO CABALLERO'.*

This counter-thrust proved nothing more than a breathing space and merely retarded the strong enemy pressure brought to bear in the month of November. The early days of that month saw the CNT enter the government, the government's removal to Valencia and the setting up of the Madrid Defence Junta. Around 11 November the Aragonese forces led by Durruti reached Madrid. The rebels had occupied Getafe, Carabanchel and the Casa de Campo and seemed poised

on 16 November to enter the capital via the Puerta de Hierro sector. This was the noblest moment of the heroic defence, with the enemy on the left bank of the Manzanares, in the University City and in the Parque del Oeste. Durruti perished on the very day that José Antonio Primo de Rivera was shot in Alicante. The rebel generals had to reschedule their yearned-for entry into Madrid and contented themselves with 'disinfecting' Madrid by means of constant bombing. By December the battle had degenerated into trench warfare.

Of the heroic defence of Madrid at this time some marvellous pages have been written. Eduardo de Guzmán, a CNT journalist of some calibre, whose artistry with the pen will already be familiar to the reader of Volume 1, has bequeathed us the following testimony in his book *Madrid Rojo y Negro*.

'THE NIGHT MADRID WAS SAVED: — Each October day brought fresh grief and a new peril for Madrid. The heroism of the militias was not enough to contain the enemy advance. Time and again the lines of resistance collapsed before the onslaught of tanks, planes and artillery. Fascism made progress on all sides. Advances from Olías as far as Illescas. Passed Valmojado and infested Navalcarnero. Captured Puerto de San Juan and Chapinería. With mathematical regularity, the German and Italian aircraft began their visits of death and destruction over a city which was shortly to be a martyr.

In Madrid, the disarray was growing by the moment. No one in official circles knew what to do, what to think. The high command was on the verge of giving the capital of our revolution up for lost. Nonetheless, alongside this, the enthusiasm and determination of the masses were growing. The hour was near when there might be a total breakdown, a total collapse, when only the selfless heroism of the proletariat of Madrid might survive.

That hour was preceded by moments of difficulty. In the East, the heroic sacrifice of a handful of FAI personnel who held out for 20 days resisting in the cathedral of Sigüenza fended off danger. Not by this approach were the invaders going to reach the gates on Madrid on time. They had to modify their plan. Modify it they did. No longer were they to press on via La Alcarria en route for Guadalajara and Alcalá; they were to swing down through Cuenca until communications with Madrid were cut off. Crossing the Albarracín hills, the enemy attacked, making rapid progress towards the centres of communications. They encountered no one to bar their passage, no one to thwart their plans. The government could not spare the time to worry about communications. It was the Defence Committee which clearly perceived the danger. And warded it off by dispatching the del Rosal column at speed; this was to stop the fascist detachments in their tracks.

By now fascism was just 30 kilometres from Madrid, and threatened from the South and from the West. The unions had hearkened to the summons of their duty and were beginning to mobilise their members. The Construction Union brought the sites to a standstill and formed the first fortifications battalions. The Metalworkers' Union increased the speeds of the lathes and machinery. The others strove to galvanise people by mobilising their membership and training their men for the tough times ahead.

The confederal fighters on the Centre fronts number many thousands. They may be found in their hundreds in every single republican, socialist or communist column. In addition, they serve with the Tierra y Libertad column fighting on the Toledo front, with the Amor column fighting nearby, with the del Rosal column, with the soon to be glorious Sigüenza and Toledo battalions. But the CNT has still more men eager to fight, keen to pick up their weapons and gamble their lives in defence of the people's freedom. Hurriedly a column stronger than the rest was organised. This is the España Libre column. It is made up of men of proven mettle: militants of steely temper swell its ranks. But the España Libre column — 3,000 fighters ready to brave anything in defence of the revolution — is unable to sally forth into battle. They have no weapons; there is a reluctance to issue them with any. They do not ask for artillery, nor tanks, nor aircraft. They simply seek rifles. Rifles which are issued in abundance to other forces who lose them with undue ease. All negotiations aimed at procuring weapons founder. In mid-October *Frente Libertario* writes:

‘Whereas other columns and other battalions have been armed, the España Libre column goes on waiting. Why are they not issued with what they need so that they may set out, as they wish, to their allotted position? We do not know. No reason, no argument, no pretext even, can excuse this delay. There is no reasonably logical way of accounting for it. The only hypothesis that can be advanced is that it may be because the men of the España Libre belong to the CNT.’

That indeed is the only logical explanation. The whole thing boils down to guile and intrigue against the CNT militias. Every political grouping has an extraordinary interest in ensuring their failure. Should they succeed, should they cover themselves in the glory, which the heroism of their men deserves, nothing and no one would be able to stand in the way of the revolution. And there are many who, for all their talk, would prefer to lose the war than grant free passage to the revolution on the march.

And thus hours are squandered on squalid political manoeuvres; while cowards and incompetents seek to besmirch the CNT militias, saddling them with their own infamies, fascism advances. October draws to a close. The Largo Caballero government reckons that the time has come to gamble it all. On the 29th a thrill of delight passes through the ranks of our fighters. A proclamation from the Minister of War is generously distributed among the *milicianos*. Deeply moved, men on the parapets read:

‘We have the weapons we need! The time for the offensive has arrived!  
Forward! I look forward to your victory.’

15 or 20 tanks, and 10 or 12 planes are the sum total of the armaments. But the enthusiasm of the militias makes up for the shortage of equipment. A furious attack is mounted with boundless heroism. Los Torrejones and Seseña are captured, progress is made towards Illescas; the newspapers crow about our imminent victory. But the following day the illusion evaporates. On the 30th our poor aircraft disappeared into a cloud of Junkers, Fiats, Capronis and Heinkels; on the 30th each of our tanks faced 15 or 20 enemy tanks; the 30th saw the loss of conquered ground and the beginning



of the rout as the fascists occupied Parla and pressed on towards Getafe. On the 30th, all of the optimism collapsed and despair and depression settled over official circles. Now no one doubted that fascism was going to reach Madrid. No longer does anyone deny that a decisive battle for the fate of the world will have to be fought out in her streets.

Madrid enters a period of fever. Officialdom succumbs to pessimism. Neither Asensio nor Pozas believe in the possibility of defending the city. They banked on Navalcarnero and Navalcarnero fell. They believed in Brunete and Moors and civilians are still at close quarters in Brunete. They had expected the counter-thrust to be a success, and it has turned out a disaster. The militias have more than enough courage: but they are short of personnel organisation, discipline and technique. How can one win in those circumstances? How can one conceivably halt in their tracks the finest strategists of Rome and Berlin? Looking at things clinically, calculating the odds and reckoning the respective troop strengths, our high command cannot but regard the battle as lost.

But in the streets the people know nothing of military expertise. The men from the unions have not studied on Potsdam nor in Saint Cyr. The rudiments of strategy are a closed book to them. But they are determined and without fear. You may speak to them of the enemy's superiority. Unhesitatingly they will reply:

‘They shall not pass! And if pass they do, it will be over our dead bodies and through the firestorms consuming Madrid’.

Logic and reasoned argument make no impression on them. As Pozas and Asensio already know. Largo Caballero and Prieto have discovered this too. They are resolved to die and to take the enemy with them. The unions teem with members, enthusiastically caressing pistols. Dynamite is packed into empty canisters to make bombs. Gasoline is collected for the razing of buildings. The experts may take the line that this is a catastrophe. The people know that only thus will they be able to save themselves.

The enemy continues his advance on every front. Humanes and Griñón, Paria and Getafe, Villaviciosa de Odón and Fuenlabrada have already fallen. Madrid is within range of rebel artillery. For now the rebels are content to lay down a barrage upon the outlying districts.

On the 3rd, weapons are at last issued to the *España Libre* column. It sets out for Fuenlabrada. As it arrives, the Moors launch a furious attack on Leganés.

On the 4th, it is agreed that the CNT should participate in the government. Agreed because there is no alternative. The government is at a loss and Madrid on the point of capture. Agreement was perhaps calculated not only to bolster up the cabinet but also to make the change of residence easier. The ministers find Madrid oppressive. Many have already quit Madrid for Barcelona and Valencia. The government, too, is keen to get away. The first cabinet meeting at which men from the CNT are present broaches the theme of removal to Valencia. Our comrades set their faces against it.

‘Just as the people are ready to die in defence of Madrid, so we should be here’.

The cabinet meeting lasted for four hours. Four hours of wrangling. In the end, no decision is taken. On the 5th, the fascists enter Móstoles and Alcorcón, Pinto and Leganés. Panic sweeps officialdom. Many, without awaiting the government’s decision, have set off for Valencia.

On the 6th, the cabinet meets again. Largo Caballero is insistent upon the removal. He talks about the critical military position. Only the arrival of reinforcements could save it. But where were these reinforcements to be found? Durruti’s name is mentioned. Montseny volunteers to coax him to Madrid. The government commends the task to her and she sets out. Our comrades continue to set their faces against the removal of the government to Valencia. Largo Caballero gruffly sums up the situation:

‘If you persist in refusing, we have a crisis on our hands. And right now a crisis would be a catastrophe’.

There was no option but to give way. This very night, stealthily, as if running away, the government will set off for Valencia at a run.

November 7th dawns. Yesterday the enemy took Carabanchel Alto and Campamento. Fascist shells are falling like rain upon the Segovia and Toledo districts. No one slept last night. Aircraft have made repeated flights, dropping tons of explosives. The radio is never silent, barking out orders and watchwords. As on 19 July not one worker spent the night in his home. In the union locals, in great huddles around the entrance, stretched out on the floors, stairs and in the halls are thousands upon thousands of men awaiting the order to move up to the front.

The whole of the previous day had echoed to a succession of incisive summonses:

‘Metalworkers, report to the union premises at 7pm’.

‘Garment and clothing workers, at 8pm’.

‘Printworkers, mount a permanent guard upon your workshops’.

‘Catering employees, report at 5 p.m.’.

All of the unions have issued summonses to their men. All have placed them on a war footing. Every pistol is ready for firing. Everybody looks for a position on the parapets.

The struggle is organised and prepared by the Defence Committee. It has thousands upon thousands of men at its disposal. In the union centres and district ateneos. The entire libertarian movement is mobilised. Cool, calm, completely under control for all the gravity of the moment. Val orders:

‘Vallehermoso: 200 men with full equipment, to the Paseo de Rosales.

‘Puente de Toledo: Let everybody push towards Carabanchel. Open fire on anyone who may turn back.

‘Checkpoints: Let no one leave Madrid with rifles or handguns. Seize all the weapons you can. There are thousands of comrades just waiting for weapons.’

The CNT as a whole responds as one man. With rifles, guns, pistols, bombs, thousands of workers race to take up their positions. Two rivers of humanity rush through the streets of Segovia and Toledo amid the din of the adjacent battle. Down towards the Manzanares go the fighters who, with their courage, are going to raise the dyke against which the fascist tide will break. Bowed beneath the weight of their meagre possessions, the women and children from the suburbs stream across the bridges, fleeing the scourge of invasion.

Madrid’s defence is today in the workers’ hands alone. The government is on the road to Valencia. No one remains at the Ministry of War. Miaja has been issued with orders and invested with powers but, as yet, there is no telling whom he can rely on, nor what he can do. He stands ready to die at his post: but until tomorrow he will be able to do absolutely nothing. And tomorrow may well be too late.

In Carabanchel Bajo, in Usera, on the Extremadura highway and in the Casa de Campo is the liveliest, staunchest portion of the proletariat of Madrid. It fights with fury, energy and desperation. Death comes with a cry of “Long live the revolution” on their lips. Groups of Moors who have crossed the river attempt to clamber up Príncipe Pío hill towards Rosales. In position, there are a handful of guardias and some hundreds of workers and several anarchist militants. There are not enough weapons to go round. And no ammunition for the rifles that are available. When one man is brought down, another emerges from the shadows clutching his pistol. When the Moors momentarily slacken their attack, some workers leap the parapets, rush over to the enemy dead and strip them of their rifles and ammunition. With fascist rifles and fascist ammunition, the defence of Rosales goes on all through the night. Madrid is defended, with tooth and nail.

In Usera there are some makeshift trenches and parapets of paving stones. The same in Carabanchel. And along the Extremadura highway. They are of no use in concealing a man or keeping him safe from enemy gunfire. They are more of an obstacle than a defence. But behind them, as also in the houses and on the streets, there are thousands upon thousands of men determined to fight and die. Throughout the night, the fighting is very hard. For the first time the advance of the fascist tanks is hesitant. For the first time, the Moorish cavalry is swept aside en bloc. For the first time, loot-hungry legionnaires know terror and panic. There are no battle-hardened enemies in the districts of Madrid. But steadfast at their posts, dying and killing, there are the men from the unions.

No general directs this battle. If any of the handful of military left behind at the Ministry of War had been asked who was in charge of the fighting, he would not have been able to answer. Defending Madrid are a few columns mauled and demoralised by the fallbacks, short of manpower and low on determination. It cannot be they are denying the Moorish hordes’ control of the city today. Only the unions will have an answer to the question. Only the unions, the ateneos and the slum districts know

the provenance of these thousands of heroes. Only one man, Eduardo Val, held the reins of Madrid's defence in his hands through the night.

In Serrano Street, in a little hotel which formerly belonged to a monarchist marquis, the telephones are forever ringing and cars and motorcycles ceaselessly coming and going. A group of men increases and runs hither and thither, issuing orders and then away. Isabelo, Salgado, Barcia, Inestal, Gil, Antonio Rodriguez, Ortega, Juan Torres, Santamaría, the cream of Madrid's anarchist movement, are at this point the sole high command of their resistance. They have been without sleep for several days. And have not eaten a bite throughout the emergency. They have delivered 50 harangues and loosed off 300 shots. Now they are here: half an hour from now they will be on a parapet in Carabanchel; dawn will catch them making use of their rifles in the Usera district. They are where they have to be, where the enemy pressure is, where morale is weakening. They are, like the whole CNT, in the place of maximum danger.

And amid the agitation and the fighting, amid the din of events, a man in blue overalls smiles and issues orders with measured and forceful tones. The multitudes will never discover his identity. Never learn of his feats. But if Madrid is saved this night it is because her defence is in the trust of Eduardo Val.

November 7 dawns. The struggle remains dramatic. An endless stream of fresh groups of workers sets out for the districts that are in jeopardy. The bulk of them go without weapons, hoping to retrieve those dropped by the dead. As in July, people compete for rifles and for the positions of greatest danger. On the parapets, in homes converted into fortresses, the workers shoot without respite. Every round is an expression of the determination of a people.

'They shall not pass!'

Aircraft soar, the tanks advance, the artillery rumbles. The battle reaches new heights of violence. In Carabanchel some groups fall back. The enemy has broken through our lines, and advances almost to the Puente de Toledo. Then some comrades arrive. At their head are Isabelo Romero, the secretary of the regional committee, and Juan Torres. They shout:

'Cowards! Bastards!'

Shamefaced, some of the runaways stop. Others, seized by panic, wish to go on. Pistols are aimed at their heads. They have to turn back. Several comrades take up position on the bridge, on the parapets, their orders? To let no one flee. Clambering on to a window, Isabelo calls out:

'Let's go get them comrades! Forward! Long live the CNT!'

Isabelo is on the parapets like all our people. It seems that those who ran away are not our people. They follow behind Isabelo and Torres. This avalanche breaks the fascist advance. Groups of Moors are felled in the middle of the streets. Our people race after in hot pursuit. Advancing, they venture beyond Mataderos and reach Carabanchel Bajo. The enemy shall not pass this way.

Nor shall it pass through Usera, nor through Villaverde, nor the Extremadura road. The whole of Madrid has risen up. Republicans, socialists, communists and anarchists battle shoulder to shoulder in magnificent brotherhood, determined to win. The heroic contest goes on all day. They run out of ammunition, but the people do not retreat.

At 8pm on the 6th, Miaja received from the hands of the deputy minister for war a sealed envelope together with the instruction that it was not to be opened until 6am on the 7th. When he did open it, he saw that he had been entrusted with supreme command of the defence of Madrid, was instructed to form a junta and to take whatever measures were needed to ensure that equipment was evacuated. On the morning of the 7th, Miaja sprang into action. He sent for all of the parties and organisations, and clearly set out the gravity of the situation. The Madrid Defence Junta had to be set up that very evening. Nobody raised any objections. It came into existence amid the din of combat echoing through the tense atmosphere of the city. At noon one of Miaja's adjutants appeared on the balcony. Jokingly a journalist asked him:

'What's this? Looking for a way out?

Serious and grave the soldier replied:

'No. We don't leave. We shall die at our posts'.

Then, with a touch of irony, added:

'I popped out to see if the Moorish cavalry was in sight yet'.

The Defence Junta was formed that evening. When they reviewed the situation briefly, they were stunned. To defend Madrid there were no more than 100 boxes of rifle ammunition, enough artillery shells for a three-hour barrage and seven machine-guns in the process of being repaired. That was all. As for military forces, there were six demoralised, unenthusiastic columns crushed by a continual fallback. However, nobody hesitated nor trembled. Unanimously they determined upon:

'Resistance!'

In Burgos, Valladolid and Salamanca the rebels were cockahoop. Nobody doubted that Madrid would fall. As Franco said:

'We shall enter Madrid without a shot being fired.'

Mola endorsed the *generalísimo's* view.

'The capture of Madrid will be no more than a military stroll'.

Foreign experts were of the same opinion. In Paris, Rome, Berlin and London the pro-fascist newspapers prepared the headlines, which would inform the world of the triumph of the rebels.

In Leganés, under Vallellano's chairmanship, there was a gathering of Madrid's soon-to-be formed Council. Móstoles was a rallying point for the caravans bringing in

fascist dignitaries to witness the entry to the city. Franco decked out his civilian supporters, legionnaires and requetés in their finery. The Moors giggled, as they smelled the unsoiled flesh of Madrid womenfolk.

Franco, elated and boastful, chatted with some foreign correspondents.

‘We have Madrid in our clutches. We dominate all the high ground. No defence is possible. If they had any inkling of military science they would not even attempt a pointless resistance’.

The workers of Madrid laugh at his science. They are determined to win. With rifles, handguns, shotguns and hand grenades they race to the parapets. They let themselves be killed before they retreat by as much as one step. But fascism shall not pass.

In Albarracín there are 3,000 men from the CNT. These are fighters forged in Somosierra and Gredos. These are battalions that bear the glorious names: Mora, Ferrer, Orobón Fernández, *Juvenil Libertario* (Libertarian Youth). At their head are men of steely temperament, seasoned militants like Cipriano Mera, Carlos and Eusebio Sanz, Valle, Arenas, Dominguez, Román.

The 7th brings bad news from Madrid. Mera assembles his men and tells them:

‘Madrid is in danger. We must go all out to save her. Let no one deceive himself. We are going to perish. Any who wish to come along, let them take one step forward’.

Unhesitatingly the 3,000 men step forward. Mera smiles complacently. He had expected nothing less. However, he sounds a note of warning:

‘We cannot all go, and leave this front unmanned — 2,000 should be enough. The remainder can stay here’.

Nobody wanted to stay. He had a hard time persuading them. In the end, without delay, 2,000 men — in red-and-black neckerchiefs, with revolutionary cries in their throats and a lust for battle in their hearts — set off for the death and glory of the defence of Madrid.

In Tarancón are the survivors from Sigüenza. A few hundred men in addition to an equal number of peasants and Madrid workers. On 6 November, they receive the stark instruction:

‘Let no one through with weapons! All weapons are needed in Madrid!’

A lengthy motorcade emerges from Madrid. In the vehicles are the cowards fleeing from danger. In Tarancón rifle-bearing *milicianos* halt the vehicles.

‘Where are you headed?’

‘To Valencia’.

‘What business?’

‘Special mission’.

Special missions are all the rage. All those lacking in spirit have sought out a special mission for themselves. The militiamen are uncompromising.

‘You are cowards! Get back to Madrid!’

Shamefaced, some do turn back. Others insist upon being let through.

‘Fine, leave your weapons. You’ll have no use for them in Valencia.’

Along comes Pedro Rico, the mayor of Madrid, in one car. Curled into a ball, he cowers in the vehicle, his panic showing on his face. The milicianos burst out laughing at the sight of him. One of them calls out to him:

‘You too are trying to get offside, coward!’

Rico tries to justify himself. One interrupts him:

‘We should have lined you up face to the wall’.

He manages to get away, turns back towards Madrid, pursued by laughter and jeering. When he reaches the city, he will seek refuge in some foreign embassy.

Already the night is well advanced. In charge of the checkpoint teams is José Villanueva. He is a thin, resolute, determined man. He acquitted himself heroically in the capture of the Montaña barracks, at Guadalajara and in Sigüenza. As dawn comes up, he will set out with his men to lend a hand in the defence of Madrid. He will fight in the Casa de Campo and perish in the tough battle of Teruel before the foreign hordes.

A caravan of cars arrives. The militias bring it to a halt. A voice calls out to them:

‘Clear the way! These vehicles carry several ministers!’

All of the occupants are obliged to get out of the cars. One of them strides up to Villanueva.

‘This is an outrage! I am the Minister of . . . I’m on my way to Valencia’.

To which Villanueva replies:

‘Your duty as a minister is to stand by the people in this hour of drama. By fleeing, you undermine the moral of the fighting men’.

Three or four others have come up. They, too, are ministers. Villanueva disarms them and steers them into a room. Taken aback, one asks:

‘What are you going to do?’

‘If it were up to me’, says Villanueva, ‘herd you in front tomorrow when we go into action!’

‘This is an act of barbarism!’

‘It would be better to shoot you as you deserve’.

Villanueva telephones Val:

‘I have here four ministers who ran away from Madrid. What should I do with them?’

Val keeps a cool head. He is opposed to the flight of the government, which he interprets as desertion. He is caught up in the most dramatic moments of the defence of Madrid when everyone’s life is hanging by a thread. But to make prisoners of the ministers is no solution to anything. He orders:

‘Set them free!’

‘But . . .’

‘Never mind. Never mind. Do as I say!’

‘Fine, but since I won’t take that responsibility, send me a written order.’

Val dispatches the requested order. When he gets it, Villanueva peruses it slowly. Then says to the ministers:

‘The CNT, against my better judgement, sets you free. You may proceed to Valencia. But never forget your flight today, nor the heroism with which the people of Madrid are fighting.’

The nervous Ministers climbed back into their vehicles and raced off at top speed. A new day was already dawning. Standing in the middle of the road, Villanueva watched them disappear. Then exclaimed:

‘And now for us to perform our duty of saving Madrid!’

The men began to climb into their trucks, speeding off in the opposite direction to the ministers. Going to stare death in the face. And life also, which is the triumph of liberty.

On the morning of the 8th, Franco committed his hosts to the conquest of Madrid. This was the day on which the triumphal arches will be unveiled and the generalísimo feted for his great victory. Everything has been thoroughly organised. Everything is at the ready. It seems impossible that so much of a single part of the prescribed plan can misfire.

The attack begins at daybreak. Into the lines go the flower of the invading forces. Before them, tanks. In the air, flights of great black birds. Artillery prepares the way with an intense barrage. Carabanchel Bajo, Usero, Puente de Segovia and Madrid’s outlying districts are showered with shrapnel and fire. A little further out, the triumphal procession forms up in Leganés and Móstoles for the descent into Madrid.

But barring the path of the invader there are men determined to give their lives. Neither the aircraft nor the artillery manage to force anyone to take one step backwards. Men of every party and denomination have pledged to perish at their posts. Nothing



and no one will get them away from the parapets, the hovels, the steep banks where the independence of Spain and the freedom of the proletariat are being defended.

The fascists relied upon their tanks. Thus far the milicianos, unable to destroy them have taken to their heels when faced with them. But the situation has changed. Changed in that now all anyone thinks about is victory or death. Franco places his tanks in the van. They are to force a passage along the roads from Toledo, Leganés and Extremadura towards the heart of the unconquered city. And the tanks press forward, confident that no one will be able to bar their path.

Already they have come against a trench, and are letting fly with their machineguns. Suddenly a seaman leaps from the trench. He is young, tall, well built. The machine-guns take aim at him but he has hurled himself to the ground. The tank drivers believe they have hit him. They press on. When one draws near, the seaman scrambles to his feet, raises his arm and a bomb explodes against the armoured vehicle. The monster shudders in a death agony and is blown apart, lying motionless on one of its sides. The other tanks advance. The seaman drops to the ground to await them. When they draw near, he repeats the operation. Four of them are destroyed in the vicinity of the trench. The others retreat, bewildered.

The news spreads right along the loyalist trenches. A seaman, one Antonio Coll, has devised a way of containing the tank advance. The monsters are not invincible. A cool head, and some courage and the tank will go to its grave before it reaches the trenches. (Antonio Coll will perish a few days later on this very site while tackling the tanks. No matter! He has shown that tanks can be taken on. Many will ape his example. Ultimately, he will be one of the great heroes of the defence of Madrid.)

In Carabanchel there is exceedingly hard fighting all morning long. Legionnaires and Rifs, civilians and requetés strive at all costs to force a way through to the heart of Madrid. But the España Libre column is in Carabanchel, covering almost the whole of the distance between the Toledo and Extremadura highways. They had to wait many weeks for arms. Now they have arms, it will be very hard to wrest them from them again. Each man fights like a lion. They are sprawled on the ground, behind cover in the houses, firing round after round from their rifles and machine-guns. They are adept in the use of hand grenades. When the enemy approaches, when he makes ready to storm some building, the grenades explode leaving huge gaps in his ranks.

Now there are two fascist tanks coming down the General Ricardos Street with their machine-guns spitting fire. Up the General Ricardos Street comes a loyalist tank, also spraying gunfire. Beyond Mataderos, near Carabanchel Bajo, the trio of monsters clashes with deafening noise. The contest is short and savage, with a creaking of tracks and burst of machine-gun fire. The men of the España Libre leap the parapets, dodging the bullets and join in the fray with their bombs. Already it is too late to save our tank, which was destroyed in the act of destroying one of the enemy tanks. But not too late to put the other out of action. One of its tracks has snapped. It is crippled and cut off. The lieutenant in command of it gives himself up. In his possession are found documents that are to be of crucial significance in the defence of Madrid.

At 10 a.m. the retinue that is to be in attendance when Franco enters by the Puerta del Sol moves off. According to all of the plans, Madrid should have fallen by this time. Blithely they drive down in their cars from Leganés. The roar of the engines masks the din of the battle nearby. By the time they come alive to it, bullets are riddling the vehicles and four or five of the party are brought down while the remainder take to their heels, convinced that there has been a slight hitch in the triumphal entry.

The *España Libre* column is under the command of comrade Ramos. Before the revolution, Ramos was a teacher. A determined Ramos picked up his rifle as soon as the first shots echoed through the streets. Thereafter he fought on many fronts and risked his life against the invaders. In Carabanchel, Ramos fights on the most exposed parapets, encouraging his men, teaching them by his example. As evening falls, after a tough artillery barrage, the enemy goes back on the offensive. A group of tanks spearhead the assault. Ramos cries out to his comrades:

‘When they draw near I’ll blow up the trench. Watch how they fly!’

The foremost tank is still 30 metres off. Crawling over the ground, commander Ramos approaches it. With great emotion, scarcely breathing, a thousand men follow his heroic endeavour. Getting in close, Ramos straightens up, a bomb sails through the air, an explosion deafens everyone as the tank tumbles heavily on to one of its sides.

But even as Ramos attacked, the tank let fly with its machineguns. Nine bullets cut through his body. He falls heavily beside the fascist monster. Galvanised by his example, the men leap from the trenches and advance upon the tanks, driving them back with grenades. The tanks are routed. Ramos is dead. Madrid saved.

In what was the Ministry of War some enterprising men — Miaja, Rojo, Matallana — calmly survey the situation. The enemy has not taken Madrid, but the threat remains. A difficult day, a critical situation has been salvaged. But as yet the situation still hangs in the balance. In Villaverde, Usera, the Toledo road and Carabanchel, not a yard of ground has been surrendered. To the right of the Extremadura road, in the Casa de Campo, the enemy has made deep inroads. The troops garrisoning that sector — the Mangada Column, Galán Column, and the Libertad Column organised by the PSUC have acquitted themselves heroically. Even so, fascism has forced a way through between the hills of the former Bourbon estate.

And it is here, in this very spot, where the greatest danger lurks. The scheme of the traitorous generals is known, from the information taken from the lieutenant who had been in command of a tank group. Should they fail in their efforts today, should Madrid fail to surrender on the 8th, an operation on a larger scale would be launched. The invading troops are to race across the Casa de Campo, take the La Coruña road, cross the river at points where it is not forded and enter Madrid via Cuatro Caminos. In the very act of reaching Cuatro Caminos they will have attained two major successes. One: to cut off the troops defending the Sierra, and two, to cut off the water supply to Madrid.

The populace has fought with unparalleled heroism. The high command knows this is and is full of admiration for the feat of Madrid’s proletariat. It has seen how, in

an hour of tragedy, the unions mobilised all of their men. Seen how, this very day, the members of the Construction Union have published an exemplary ordinance. It states:

‘All construction workers who are not registered with and controlled by the Mixed Fortifications Committee shall report to the places indicated by their organisations, complete with packed lunches so that they may proceed to wheresoever they may be required in the defence of the people of Madrid’.

They march off to fight, to struggle, perhaps to their death. No one speaks to them of rewards. Instead, each individual is required to bring along his own food. And it has to be a source of pride to announce that not one single worker fails to comply with this, his harsh and onerous duty.

The high command has a blind faith in the people. But the last two days have been very hard. The fighting persists through the night. By morning the contest will be still more bitter. For all the improvement in their morale, the *milicianos* are shattered and the workers voluntarily fighting on the parapets dead from exhaustion and lack of sleep. Where the enemy strikes there are no fortifications nor have any provisions been made. Nor have they any reinforcements to send in to contain his advance. Ammunition is running short and there are no machine-guns. Unless reinforcements arrive this very night, Madrid, despite all of the people’s heroics, will be irremediably lost.

November 9 dawns cold and drizzly. The first International Brigade arrives at the Puente de Vallecas. These are doughty fighters, convinced revolutionaries, the elite, the heart and brain of European anti-fascism. It had been intended to dispatch them to Villaverde. But the plan has changed. They must go to the Casa del Campo, to confront the fascists who have just captured Garabitas and are pressing on with their advantage.

The International Brigade passes through the humid, silent streets of Madrid. It strides purposefully forward, with the clatter of hobnailed boots upon the cobbled streets echoing through the air. In French, in German, in Italian, they sing revolutionary anthems. People come running to watch them pass, to cheer and applaud them. The air throbs to the tune, first, of the *Internationale*, then of the *Marseillaise*.

Tall, robust in their great sheepskin jackets, the figures disappear into the distance and into the Casa de Campo. From there an echo drifts back to us . . .

*‘ . . . le jour de gloire est arrivé.’*

Halfway through the morning the trucks of the CNT militias roar into the city. In come the men who set off from the mountains of Albarracín and the ones who had been waiting in Tarancón under the command of Villanueva and Benito. They have also been joined by the men of the Toledo battalion, and the *Sacco y Vanzetti* battery. More than 3,000 men in all. At their head march the cream of the fighting men of the CNT, the FAI and the FIJL.

They march across Madrid without stopping. Waving red-and-black neckerchiefs in the air. Brandishing rifles. Their eyes speak of their staunch determination. A revolutionary anthem rises in their throats. They speed down along the Paseo de San Vicente along the heights of the Dehesa de la Villa. Cross the Puerta de Hierro and the Manzanares. Disappear among the greenery of the Casa del Campo. Trailing behind, like a wake, their profession of revolutionary faith:

*‘Por el triunfo de la Con-fe-de-ra-ción.’*

It is 9 November 1936.’

During the first days of 1937, there was a fresh rebel offensive in the north-west of the capital, involving German troops. Around this time, the following manifesto was issued by the Madrid FIJL:

‘Madrid is in the throes of her definitive crisis. The most formidable tempest furiously lashes our soil with its thunderbolts. Thousands of misguided mercenaries from Germany and Italy, the savage spawn of Africa and the whole idle clique of international crime founder against the unbreachable walls formed by the breasts of her heroic defenders. To date nothing has matched the redoubtable power of European fascism. Despite the ruin showered by its planes, despite the debris left by its shells, despite the torment unleashed by its unexpected attacks, Madrid remains standing, invincible, heroic, imperturbable, ready to resist and to attack until fascism is laid to rest. Neither strength of numbers nor armaments nor waves of attackers, nor death, make her surrender one pace. This present seditious endeavour avails nothing, any more than its predecessors did or future ones will. They shall not pass, they will not pass, they must not pass. Madrid was, is and shall be ours. Never to be trodden by the bestial paws of domestic and foreign fascism. Stand firm, you heroic people of Madrid! Dig in your feet and steady them in the earth which you are defending! If need be, perish, if need be, die like heroes and die a martyr’s death! Gunners, perish by the side of your cannons! Infantrymen, die confronting the enemy, with your naked bayonets glinting to the heavens! Dynamiters, die blown to pieces by the explosion of your bombs and your dynamite! Perish speedily and quickly, dropping like eagles upon the ravens of treason, black like crime in the night! Selfless Madrid, heroic Madrid! Stand fast in your vanguard and in your rearguard against the last terrible throes from the beast! Steel and tense your muscles, set your spirit alight with the flame which burned in the hearts of the heroes of 2 May! Resist and attack so that victory may be brought nearer for victory is near! May victory dawn wherever you may be attacked! Your lines of defence, your trenches are to be the grave that will swallow forever the army of your exploiters and executioners! Through faith, through valour, through constancy — on to victory!’

The offensive against Madrid was timed to coincide with another against Málaga, in which huge masses of Moors, Italians and requetés were involved. On 8 February 1937, this offensive ended with the capture of Málaga. This latest reverse unleashed a campaign of criticism directed against General Asensio, Largo Caballero’s military adviser, who was forced to hand in his resignation.

‘Since General Asensio started to take a hand in the management of the war, defeat has followed most mysteriously upon defeat. With the formation of the government of VICTORY, headed by Largo Caballero, misadventure was accentuated with the loss of Irún, San Sebastián, Talavera, and Toledo. The Málaga disaster has put the finishing touch to the sensation of unease in the public mind.’

Whereas the Spanish people bled on the battlefronts for scarcity of weaponry, victims to a law of democratic neutrality which bound it hand and foot and left it at the mercy of the Francoist hordes, those same hordes were, by contrast, kept plentifully supplied by the totalitarian countries, principally by Italy and Germany. Those two nations supplied Franco with enormous amounts of all manner of equipment and also with specialist advisers and masses of mercenary fighters. Víctor Alba estimates the scale of the totalitarians’ help to the rebels, stating that by the end of the war there were 10,000 German advisers, chiefly aviators, on the Francoist side: and 100,000 Italian troops. These latter consisted principally of the Littorio, Black Arrows and Blue Arrows divisions plus others, under the command of the fascist Generals Gastone Gambara and Annibale Bergonzoli. Bergonzoli was defeated in the celebrated Battle of Guadalajara by troops under the command of Mera, a member of Madrid’s CNT Construction Union who had shown himself to be, like Durruti, a gifted strategist.

The Battle of Guadalajara began on 8 March 1937. Several Italian divisions attacked via that sector intending to encircle Madrid from the north. Initially they managed to gain control of a number of villages in the Alcarria, but a counter-thrust by the popular forces, this time with aerial support, turned the Italian attack into a new Caporetto. This catastrophe was the rudest insult that could have been offered to Mussolini. The poet Antonio Agraz, editor of *CNT*, commemorated it in one of his inspired ballads:

*‘Bergonzoli sinvergüenza  
general de las derrotas  
si quieres tomar Trijueque  
con los bambinos que portas  
no vengas con pelotones:  
Hay que venir con pelotas!  
Bergonzoli, you villainous  
general of defeats,  
if you would take Trijueque  
with the kiddies you bring along  
do not turn up with platoons (pelotones):  
One should turn up with balls!  
(pelotas)’.*

Cipriano Mera, the hero of Guadalajara who was soon to be raised to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel commanding an army corps, had this to say:

‘I am convinced that the invasion of Italians and Germans places a new complexion on the struggle we are waging. It is no longer possible to look to the sort of defences that suit a civil war against mutinous soldiery. We have to wage war as it is presented to us by a regular army equipped with all modern fighting resources. And there is no way to do that other than to remove every difference between those involved in the contest. I want only combatants at my side. In my division, I have no idea who may belong to the UGT or the CNT, to a republican party or to a Marxist party. What is needed, and what I must henceforth insist upon is an iron discipline, a discipline that will have the value of being volunteered. From today forward, I shall bandy words only with captains and sergeants.’

Around this same period, the primitive militias were transformed into what would come to be known as the People’s Regular Army. The confederal and anarchist columns were the most refractory towards this reshuffle, which they construed as a decisive step in the direction of classical militarism, towards martial law and barrack-style discipline. When the superior committees of the CNT-FAI opted for across-the-board militarisation of the militias (something for which the CNT ministers had been pressing from their cabinet positions) there was grave confusion on every one of the fronts where the confederal fighters were serving. There were stormy meetings between the fighting men and committee delegations dispatched to the front with the unenviable task, which one can imagine. Many diehard milicianos who had presented themselves for front-line service in a volunteer capacity withdrew their commitment and returned to rearguard service. Later they re-enlisted. The Durruti Column was transfigured, upon militarising, into the 26th Division. Miraculously, the revolutionary ethos and comradeship between the new officers and men lasted until the end of the war.

On 22 March 1937, even as celebrations of the victory at Brihuega were in full swing, there was a General Assembly in a Valencia theatre of the celebrated Iron Column, whose anarchist orthodoxy we know from volume 1. At that assembly it was publicly agreed that the column would militarise — ‘the object being’, it was said, ‘not to hold aloof from the struggle being waged against fascism’. It was also agreed that the funds in the possession of the column be put to good use. This is what was agreed: 100,000 pesetas were allocated for the founding and funding of rationalist schools; another 100,000 pesetas became a gift to the CNT’s field hospital service; 100,000 pesetas was allocated for defence costs in international trials against anarchists and 200,000 for the purchase of provisions destined for the defenders of Madrid. A total of one million pesetas was to be expended upon anarchist propaganda — (a) by setting up a publishing house, (b) by founding a library and (c) by contribution towards the costs of the anarchist press internationally.

The same arguments used to press the case for the CNT’s participation in government, in the Generalitat of Catalonia and in the national government were used again to persuade the Confederation’s milicianos of the necessity of militarisation; cooperation and militarisation were prerequisites if demands for weaponry and the frequent requests for other equipment were to be heeded. Such requests were never

to be satisfied as far as the CNT divisions were concerned. And the fact of the matter is, despite the handsomely paid-for Russian aid, which consisted of shipments of a substantial nature of petroleum, artillery, machine-guns, tanks and planes, the problem of the dearth of weapons was one of the most enduring throughout the war. At no time did the Republic have a complement of more than 500 aircraft.

The Russian shipments began once Russia and Spain had exchanged ambassadors. Spanish recognition of Russia dated back to the early days of the Republic and some trade agreements had even been thrashed out between them, but the Spanish government had not matched these by extending the appropriate credentials to the Soviet ambassador. Formal relations were established by the Largo Caballero government and that same government granted Ambassador Rosenberg accreditation in Madrid. This highly placed functionary was very soon to be found at the heart of the repellent political speculation concerning the allocation of the Soviet aid.

The rebels' retort to their reverse at Guadalajara came in the form of the unleashing of an offensive against Bilbao. On 8 April, Eibar was captured and on 15 and 30 April, respectively, Durango and Guernica suffered barbarous air raids. On the government side, mention must be made of an ongoing local counter-thrust in the Madrid sector and the overrunning of the fascist redoubt in the Sanctuary of the Virgen de la Cabeza in the Sierra Morena.

But let us turn our attention to other interesting aspects of the first four months of 1937.

One of the basic underlying reasons for the dismal outcome of the Spanish Revolution and of the military defeat was the negative attitude of anti-fascists internationally. The totalitarian states' close and effective collaboration with Franco, and the fence-sitting attitude of the democracies, were not counterbalanced by a political and social campaign of support for the Spanish people's cause. From the military point of view, the so-called International Brigades, in addition to being much outnumbered by the Italo-German 'volunteers' and 'legionnaires', were, so to speak, recruiting sergeants for the international communist parties controlled by Moscow. From the moment that the International Brigades moved into front-line service in Madrid, the Stalinist press in Spain and abroad had a vested interest in creating the impression that the Brigades, and the Brigades alone were defending Madrid. In numerical terms, the foreign contribution to loyalist ranks by the middle of 1937 stood at around 45,000 servicemen. Among the 45,000 there were more than a few who might be described as authentic volunteers, anarchists and persons of other political denominations as well as persons of no party affiliation, who had come to Spain under the prompting of a genuine spirit of sacrifice.

As for anti-fascist aid, an important meeting was held in Paris on 14 August 1936, attended by Léon Jouhaux (of the French CGT), Debrouckère (president of the Second International) Jacques Duclos (of the PCE) and others representing various parties, organisations and anti-fascist committees. The only thing this meeting produced was measures relating to propaganda on behalf of Spain. On 20 August, an edition of *Pravda* had stated in Madrid that the Soviet proletariat had launched a subscrip-

tion amounting to several million francs, which had been placed at the disposal of the Spanish government. Such propaganda, loudly trumpeted by the Stalinist press worldwide, assumed the tangible form of the shipments which arrived aboard Soviet ships — shipments which, as we know, accounted for only the most minimal value of the gold deposited in the Soviet Union by the Republic's government.

Between 15 and 17 November 1936, there was an extraordinary plenum in Paris of the IWMA to which the CNT was affiliated. The plenum adopted the following resolution:

‘Assembled in Paris from 15 to 17 November 1936, the plenum of the IWMA declares its wholehearted solidarity with the CNT of Spain in its struggle against international fascism. It sends a message of admiration to the milicianos of the CNT-FAI and the comrades from other lands, as well as to the rest of the anti-fascist sectors fighting alongside them on every front of the Civil War.

Having listened to the exposition by the CNT's delegates regarding the overall situation, the plenum declares that it understands the motives that dictated to the CNT the decisions it has taken.

It takes note of the CNT's desire to see anarcho-syndicalism triumph in Spain and to extend, on the basis of that doctrine, which is the doctrine espoused by the IWMA, the gains of the social revolution in the measure in which this may be feasible.

The plenum takes note of the assertion of the CNT and of the national centrals, which declare that they will make every effort to assist the CNT to secure success in Spain for the principles of the IWMA.

With a view to rendering such assistance practical and immediate, the plenum requests its national sections to second to the CNT and its regional committees all available militants so that these may take part, alongside the militants of the CNT, in the economic ramifications of the reconstruction of society.

Furthermore, the plenum determines that, by agreement with the CNT, the IWMA should take charge of the propaganda abroad of its Spanish member in accordance with the overall plan to which the delegates of the CNT have given their approval, in so far as the said plan has been endorsed by the national committee of the CNT, by the IWMA secretariat or its representative.

Finally, being persuaded that the struggle being pursued against fascism in Spain is but one chapter in the battle which pits proletarian forces across the world against the forces of modern capitalism as represented by fascism, the plenum resolves to bring all of the effort of the IWMA Centrals to bear on behalf of the sectors most in jeopardy, these being, at present, after Spain, the ones in France and Belgium and, by agreement with the CNT, to lend full cooperation by every appropriate means.



Fascism assuredly shall not pass in Spain, and convinced that the components of the IWMA will be able to make all the necessary efforts to erect the unbreachable dyke to arrest its progress, the plenum hereby affirms its faith in the imminent total victory of the workers over the systematic barbarity of strong-arm regimes which stand for an odious past and are damned forever.

*Long live the CNT! Long live the IWMA! Long live libertarian communism and social revolution!*

It may be inferred from the text of this resolution that the governmentalist stance of the CNT was one of the main issues dealt with by the plenum. The plenum confined itself to a declaration that it understood the motives which dictated to the CNT the decisions it had taken which cannot be interpreted as anything other than simple acknowledgement of the fait accompli.

In the first half of March 1937 there was a congress in London of the International Socialist Federation (Second International), which was attended by the PSOE's Pascual Tomás and Manuel Cordero. Some 20 representatives from European countries were present. They included Jouhaux and Ernest Bevin. A dispatch from the Fabra news agency dated 12 March, had this to say:

‘The International Socialist congress concluded its business tonight by voting the following three resolutions: The first states — “It is apparent that we are witnessing a deliberate assault — by fascism — upon Spain and that the Spanish people find themselves embroiled, not in a civil war, but in a war of national liberation”. The resolution adds: “The two workers’ Internationals are not persuaded to the efficacy of the measures approved by the Non-Intervention Committee in confronting with the dangers implicit in the situation. The Spanish problem cannot be resolved and thus peace cannot be safeguarded except thanks to political loyalty to the precepts of collective security ensured through the good offices of the League of Nations. The only way of restraining the fascist powers is a determined effort by peace-loving peoples for whom peace is a treasure.” The second resolution looked forward to the organisation of an international week-long campaign during which a great propaganda drive will be made to inform worldwide public opinion. The third resolution took the shape of a telegram addressed to the leader of the Spanish government, assuring Largo Caballero that all socialist labour’s forces are to be summoned to play an energetic part in the campaign in favour of the Spanish Republic.

To entrust the resolution of the Spanish problem to the Geneva-based League of Nations was tantamount to damning it to failure and, also, hampering the genuine anti-fascist action so well grasped around this time by the steelworkers of Charleroi in Belgium. The latter advocated a general strike in order to force the Belgian government into lifting its blockade against Spain. Their call went unheeded. Thereafter

international aid against fascism boiled down to the organising of public subscriptions and the dispatch of provisions and medical equipment. What was excusable in the IWMA with its paucity of influence in international labour circles was unpardonable in the socialist movement which, as well as wielding political influence inside the governments of Europe, could call upon a substantial trade union and political movement. Some words of León Felipe's, lifted from *Solidaridad Obrera* of 21 April 1937, pose the real issue:

‘And now, the only thing that we have to do with him (a reference to Don Quijote) is that which I attempted to state at the Aid for Spain Congress which was held in Paris, and which I was not allowed to state. It was, more or less, this:

“We Spaniards are greatly thankful for your charity and the lint and ointments which you send us to repair Don Quijote's wounds; but we should be much more thankful if you were to outfit him with a new lance and an up-to-date shield.”

## Chapter Two: Organisational life and trade union unity

Let us now switch our attention to some of the minutiae of trade union and economic activity. We will begin with the regional plenum of CNT peasants in Catalonia, held in early January 1937. The report exposes the underlying differences in outlook between that peasant federation, the UGT peasants, and the Catalan republican U. de R. The report reads:

‘After the agreement of the rabassaires and ourselves to incorporate the UGT into our alliance and after an official invitation to this effect had been made to the members of the UGT, these decided that they needed to mull the idea over in advance. A fortnight later the joint meeting was held, with Ardiaca, Torrens and Roig in attendance for the rabassaires, M. Vázquez, C. Boldú and R. Porté for the CNT, and, for the UGT, Calvet, Poca and Colomé. This joint meeting proved a tremendous letdown for us, for the UGT portrayed the already existing pact between the rabassaires and the CNT as a counter-venture and that, in addition to being an utter misrepresentation of that agreement, represented an absolute breach of the agreement sealed between the UGT and the CNT as signed at the famous meeting in the Monumental bullring organised by the two organisations.’

The report goes on to explain that, on the above grounds, the negotiations were broken off. Subsequently they received an invitation from the Rabassaires to another joint meeting where they were to have examined proposals designed to narrow the gap between the respective interpretations. The UGT people employed all sorts of pretexts to postpone this meeting. When the UGT was enjoined to make a written statement of its views, it did so in the customarily vague tones. On the instigation of the rabassaires a further meeting was arranged, but this was aborted by the UGT people. It was at this point that the Rabassaires and the Confederation resolved to work out a new and separate agreement. The latter included the following clauses:

- ‘1. Each family is to have the land which may be its due. Surplus land and other lands taken in charge may be liable to collectivisation provided that there are individuals supervised by responsible organisations who seek to collectivise them of their own free will.
2. The size of the family plot shall be established in each village in accordance with its characteristics and the quality of its land.
3. The fruits of the earth are to belong to those who work it and they shall not be dispossessed of their land as long as they work it as it should be worked.
4. With reference to the organisation of collectives, they are to be organised on the basis of lands contributed to the collective by the collectivisers and of the surplus

lands of those who have too much land. It is an indispensable prerequisite that those who wishing to join the collective donate the entirety of their holdings in land and working tools.

5. Should a holding be located in the midst of collectivised lands, it will have to be exchanged with another plot, but this exchange must work to the advantage of the individual obliged to change his holding. This swap can only be effected if the said plot represents an impediment to the collective. Should there be more than one instance in the same amalgam of collectivised lands then, should no agreement be forthcoming, the dispute shall be referred to the liaison committee of the three organisations.

6. In other instances, even though amalgamation of holdings may be advisable, exchanges are to be made freely without recourse to coercion.

7. Produce and other items which may be discovered on the impounded farmsteads are to be made over to the collective fund of the agricultural union, to be used as collateral against credit to the collective, such credit to be available always in justified instances. In those instances where the farm is not collectivised, all of the resultant capital shall be absorbed into the union's funds. This provision shall not be retrospective.

8. All of the economic production collectives, whether family units or collective ventures, shall be amalgamated into one single agricultural cooperative in each locality.

9. Farms hitherto worked in trust shall be liable to collectivisation in whole or in part, provided that the locality can show a given number of land labourers freely desirous of collectivising them. The day labourers who may work said farms shall be entitled to join the collective should they so desire, or they may work family holdings or on such tasks as the union may organise. In every instance, the day labourers' rights are to be safeguarded from abuse.

10. In the case of widows having under-age children, they shall be able to seek assistance in cultivating their holdings from the municipality or the union or shall be catered for by other social welfare services, as may be deemed suitable.

11. Mutual aid shall be the rule of conduct.

12. So that these agreements may be implemented there shall be appointed a liaison committee comprising three delegates from each of the pact's signatory organisations. In so far as may be feasible, the said inter-union committee shall act in accordance with the office of the minister for agriculture of the Generalitat government

– Barcelona, 19 December 1936'.

This is how things stood when the CNT was invited by the Rabassaires to a further meeting; however, when the CNT representatives turned up for the appointment, in the belief that signatures would be put to the pact, they found that the rabassaires were reneging on it, or insisting that the commitment include also the UGT organisation which was present there. When the UGT declared that it 'was not accepting collectivisation of the land, not out of principle but rather for motives of timing', relations between the three organisations broke down.

There now follows an extract from the minutes, which include the declarations of several unions represented at the Regional plenum.

Up for discussion was Item No. 4 (in effect, Item No. 1), namely:

‘What attitude ought the peasants of the CNT to adopt vis-à-vis compulsory unionisation?’

‘... The vast majority of the peasants spoke up against the decree on compulsory unionisation. In this connection the claim was made that party-political ends were being pursued in the office of the minister for agriculture, controlled by the rabassaires. Mataró stated that in some places along the coast the landlords had gone over to the UGT and to the rabassaires. The agricultural unions have some regulations which make it possible for us to coexist. The Regional Committee spoke up to say that ‘compulsory unionisation’ did not undermine the value of the collectives. The intervention of the agricultural unions, by collectivising produce will ensure that we win over others’ sympathies. Such organisms serve only economic ends and imply no trespass against the doctrinal outlooks that predominate in each union. If we quit the agricultural unions we shall be ensuring that it is others who direct the economic order and we shall be left out in the cold. It is agreed that a working party be appointed to draft a proposition on this item’.

This is the resultant proposition:

‘We recognise that the agricultural unions have an essentially economic function and have thus no ties to any social or political tendency or denomination, and acknowledging that where such agricultural unions have been in existence for some time past, we also appreciate that they perform the economic function of handling produce and likewise the buying and selling of the same, procuring seed and fertiliser, to the utter satisfaction of rural workers. However, since that very essence of political and social neutrality, reinforced by the decree on compulsory unionisation which is under discussion by congress, means that remnants of the old state institutions, hostile of course to the collectivist spirit of the new economy spawned by the revolution we are living out, may be introduced into their precincts, we propose:

1. The agricultural unions should be run by the revolutionary union organisations, the CNT, UGT and U. de R. in those villages where such unions may exist. Wheresoever only one or two of these trade unions may exist, they or it shall have control of the administration of these agricultural unions.
2. The farm collectives born of the revolution shall be entitled to join said agricultural unions while retaining their own person-

ality and jurisdiction so that they may avail of their economic agencies in the acquisition of produce, seed, fertiliser and tools necessary for economic growth, said collectives being left free to enjoy access to produce for consumption as well as for effecting exchanges of produce with kindred collectives elsewhere.

3. All those members of the agricultural unions who, prior to the military rising, were active in or who sympathised with parties of the right shall have no entitlement to speak or to vote.

Insofar as these conditions offer an adequate guarantee of our personality, once our understanding and honesty in our dealings and relations with other peasants become apparent we could act by example, earning their sympathy and trust for our beloved ideals.

Persuaded that the times in which we live call for collaboration, in that the war demands it, we hope that Congress may so approve.

The working party's membership:

For Lleida, R. Oriol; for Igualada, A. Amerius; for l'Hospitalet, A. Sauch; for Gandesa, J. Valero; for Molá, F. Rebull; for Pla de Cabra, F. Anglés; for Seu d'Urgell, A. Martín; for l'Espluga de Francoli, J. Vidal; for the Regional Committee, R. Porté; for Alt Empordà, F. Callol.'

Item 4 was – 'How should we relate pricing of agricultural produce to production costs?'

'Trempe voices its opinion that, before products can be valued, an examination has to be made of outlay. It mentions instances of hoarding and of inflationary practices by unscrupulous traders. Steps must be taken to ensure that standardisation of prices is established in every region.

Arbiols reckons that the current circumstances of the peasant do not as yet meet the needs of the revolution. The middleman has to be eliminated since he constitutes a harmful element in the countryside.

Pi de Llobregat's understanding is that until such time as there may be an across-the-board socialisation of wealth it will necessarily be very difficult to attain the end in view.

Regional Committee says that . . . 'One thing it is important to hammer home is this business of middlemen and the abolition of taxes. Urban workers ought to set up cooperatives. This would enable shipments to be made directly and, in this way, an evaluation might be made. Abolition of taxes would do away with that percentage of civil servants who today make their living off the money they receive from the peasants.

Tortosa believes that cooperatives are best suited to handle distribution of produce and to lay down prices.

Antoni de Mar believes that, for the reasons already explained by the other areas, the fixing of prices is impossible. We must press on towards complete socialisation and in that way we will be able to create one huge community in Catalonia, wherein each individual may eat whatever he needs. We also have to go all out for the labour charter and he who does not work, neither should he be entitled to consume.

Regional Committee says 'that we must ensure direct exports, dispensing with the middlemen who currently handle exports'. It points out that the farming collectives are in a very poor condition economically and that help has been invited from people who are under an obligation to provide it without the results thus far having lived up to expectations.'

On this item, the following proposition was approved:

'It is the understanding of this working party that, so long as money is a factor in the purchase of the product of labour, it will not be possible to strike an absolute balance between the cost of living and production costs, since the peseta will have sufficient impact to produce imbalance in the market of supply and demand; nonetheless, a comparative approximation between living costs and the prices of farm produce can be achieved by implementing exchanges between city and countryside and the various production areas, making use to this end of the production and consumer co-operatives, with every encouragement being given to intercourse while simultaneously ensuring that production improves quantitatively and qualitatively with the effective assistance of agricultural expertise.

Another of the measures which the working party believes might be put into practice would be the abolition of charges upon consumer produce with the loss of revenues from said charges being compensated by other taxes which will more equitably and more equally affect all citizens.

This step would make possible a natural evaluation of farm produce and that would enable the peasant to improve production in every sense. This working party understands that the farming collectives should enjoy the same rights as the agricultural unions, especially with regard to external trade based on the swapping of homegrown with foreign-grown produce with the profits made by the farming collectives as a whole being set aside for sponsorship of the same.

In the event of such operations being put into effect, it shall be necessary to appoint a trade commission made up of one delegate from the committee of relations that will see to the establishment of the sum which is to be paid over to the producer and distribute profits to those collectives which the aforesaid commission may deem most in need of the money.

So that the commission may have a precise reckoning on the basis of which to prescribe the official price of items that the collectives have to adhere to, these collectives are to be obliged to compile statistics indicating the figure for production costs. For Masnou, E. Carreras; for Guixols, Joan Oliva; for Igualada, Angel Amanós; for Arbeca, Pedro Boldú; for Cabra del Camp, Antoni Ferrer; for Ascó, José Daura; for Solivella, Francisco Inglés; for Seu d'Urgell, Domingo Moliné; plus the Regional Committee'.

Item No. 6 on the agenda asked: 'What relations and solidarity ought to exist between the peasant collectives?'

The Regional Committee spoke up:

'The collectives afford a glimpse of the manner in which exchange may be established on the basis of the surplus in each area. The Regional Committee explains the necessity of the establishment of supervision to match consumer capacity with production.

Pla de Cabra stresses the necessity of wages being made equal.

The Regional Committee replies by pointing to the value of the collectives and of the family wage. It asserts that, until the capitalist system is destroyed, complete stability is not going to be possible.

Ginestà claims that some collectives conduct their dealings in a purely commercial intent, going so far as to increase produce prices continually. He advocates the adoption of the family wage throughout the region, arguing also that the federation of collectives must become a reality.

Lleida says that it has collectivised everything it was able to and following the setting up of the cooperative, has done away with the wage, leaving only 10 pesetas to each family as petty cash. It points out that in the capital there are many unemployed whereas in the countryside there is a need for manpower to work the land. It points out that industry does not liaise as it ought with the countryside.'

The working party devised the following proposition, which was accepted: 'In that the CNT is the driving force, lodestone and creator of the collectives, the latter should have a structure the same as the unions of the CNT, and their bonds of connection and solidarity ought to be based upon the following norms:

1. All of the collectives shall notify the Regional Committee of all produce destined for exchange.
2. At harvest times or at other given times when the collectives may have need of more manpower than the collective may boast, individuals from the collectives shall be able to move about from collective to collective for the purpose of showing one another such solidarity.
3. Through the agency of district committees engaged in the same line of production – that line can be rationalised, with productive capacity being brought into line with



consumer needs and special attention given to that which is in short supply, and ceilings imposed on what is overproduced. Thus, we shall demonstrate our constructive capabilities.

4. When collectives have reserve assets not required in their running, these shall be made accessible to those collectives which have the greatest need of them, solidarity thereby being put into tangible effect. When any collective may apply for assistance from other collectives, account shall be taken of its record of administration before any such advance be made to it. All statistical records bearing either upon production of secondments for the purpose of helping with harvesting or upon other urgent business are to be published in our press organ so that the collectives may have data to work from and may liaise with one another. The working party’.

Item No. 7 mooted the possibility of ‘Setting up a weekly peasants’ organ’ and the suggestion was favourably received.

Item No. 8 broached ‘The need to encourage poultry farming’. Poultry, of Barcelona, explained what needed to be done to get breeders to meet production needs. It stated that, as presently organised in the countryside, only 90 eggs per bird were produced each year, whereas conversion to more scientific methods would raise production by a further 20 per cent or more. In the rearing of chickens, account has to be taken of those used for meat and those used as layers. The rules of hygiene must not be overlooked. Poultry-breeding schools are fine, but first one should give some thought to a laboratory to research the prevention of poultry diseases.

Liberal Professions spoke of certain experimental farms that were to be put into operation. It is a mistake to think that technology is without value. They seek to teach more appropriate farm techniques by practical example, unlike the farm experts of the Generalitat who devote themselves primarily to politicking.

Ascó took the view that technical surveys were necessary but that these had to take account of the fact that survey and practice are not the same thing.

Vinebre said that we were moving into a new economy, and in order to avert an impasse it was imperative that production should be handled properly. There was a prejudice against technology.

Antóni de Mar gave its opinion that the collectives should work intensively and not confine themselves to working small plots, but rather work large holdings.

Torre del Español stated that technology would come to naught in the countryside on account of the land not being collectivised.

Liberal Professions claimed that technicians who had gone into the countryside had achieved nothing practical because they were laboratory technicians. The CNT will set up a laboratory where the appropriate experimentation may be carried out. Instead of reviews which no one – least of all the peasants – read, practical achievements count. ‘

The following proposition on the matter was approved:

‘The Agricultural Technicians’ and Engineers’ Section proposes:

Given that, within the CNT’s Liberal Professions’ Union there is an Agricultural Technicians’ and Engineers’ Section, the purpose of which is to place itself at the disposal of the agricultural unions in overseeing whatever new policies and practices technology may recommend, and it having been shown that the bulk of the delegate representatives in attendance who have contributed to the discussions on the agenda, acknowledged the need to attune our economy to the new revolutionary precepts, we suggest:

Various farm collectivisations have been organised by the CNT, most of them in the absence of expert supervision or advice. Because there is a risk of failure and that this will discredit the CNT, it being the organism accountable for their conduct, it is imperative that, in the oversight and direction of these collectivisations we avail of the services that can be offered by the technicians of our union, who will report upon the economic realities of collectivisation, on the amendments that need to be made and on the new guidelines that need to be laid down for farms and which are best attuned to their farming; their report will be considered by the Regional Committee of Peasant Relations so that this may see to the implementation of these guidelines within the appointed time-span and, in the event of recalcitrance in acceptance of them, all moral and trade union assistance is to be withheld from the recalcitrant collectives.’

An initial national plenum of the CNT’s Communications Unions took place in Valencia at the beginning of January 1937. At the plenum, a liaison committee was appointed and Madrid fixed as its place of residence. Here is a summary of what was agreed and passed on to the ministry in charge of communications:

- ‘1. The plenum hereby restates its strictly professional stance, removed from all political activity. It also requests to the government that all employees, whatever their class, category or affiliation, be deployed appropriately without any unfair exceptions or demoralising favouritism, and that an end be put to appointments and leave.
2. A declaration of opposition to implementation of the ordinance establishing dossiers in the selection of officials, on the grounds that such documentation is deemed vexation; the right to carry out such screening work is claimed for the trade union organisations.
3. The plenum urges that a national communications council be set up under the chairmanship of a government representative and with equal representation of the two trade union groupings; as a matter of utmost urgency, this council shall examine and propose immediate reforms of communications services and an organisational overhaul of those corporations which have in their charge the public responsibility for national communications. Likewise, it urges the establishment of regional and provincial communications councils with the same aims and composition.
4. It is important that international radio-telegraphic services be nationalised and that the union organisations be given a say in the structuring of these services at the appropriate moment.

5. The General Postal Inspectorate's Department of Junior and Rural Personnel should be run by an expert plus four junior staff members and two rural agents representing, in equal proportion, the two trade union organisations.

6. Persons belonging to the junior auxiliary corps of the state should cease to serve in communications unless they choose to join the corresponding posts or telegraphs organisations, to which end the appropriate ordinances should be passed.

7. In the economic sphere, the plenum broadly advocates the wage improvements granted under the wage legislation of 1932 and to this end, and lest the national economy be overburdened at the present time, the plenum insists that overtime and all sorts of gratuities which are not necessary expenditure be abolished, and that the budget allocations for such payments be used to improve the allotted wages of the more lowly paid categories.

And as for the rural agents, the plenum recommends that, in addition to the implementation of the decree of 9 March 1932 in those provinces where it has not as yet been put into effect, their rates of pay be increased by 40 per cent and they be granted recognition as public servants.

8. Without for the moment countenancing, on account of our present circumstances, the introduction of a set working day, the plenum declares that, in time to come, working hours will have to be those prescribed by the workers' organisations for comparable activities'.

On 19 February 1937, the *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI* (Barcelona) referred to a regional plenum of the anarchist groups of Catalonia that was held in advance of a peninsular plenum of Regional Committees.

A vague allusion is made to the plenum, whereby it is stated that it had concerned itself with the military and economic situation. A study had been made of the question of collaboration in the government, and it was agreed that certain steps be taken with regard to various aspects of relations with the central government. It was resolved to encourage regional autonomy movements, but that care should be taken to avert the wrong-headed notion of separatism. Regarding the role of anarchists in municipal councils and with regard to the reshuffling of the economy it was resolved, in accordance with the decision of a plenum of the Catalan CNT, that socialisation in industry and agriculture had to be intensified but without neglecting the interests of rural smallholders or small-scale industry. On the issue of the war the following proposition was adopted:

'Given that comment and digression upon the so thoroughly debated theme of militarisation are redundant, the following conclusions have been arrived at:

1. Catalonia's regional plenum of anarchist groups takes the line that militarisation is an ineluctable necessity imposed by the war against fascism and adopts as its own the provisions made in this regard.

2. Similarly, the plenum considers that the mobilisation lately decreed should be implemented as fully as possible, embracing all serviceable in-

dividuals who should devote their energies to labours of immediate relevance to the war. In this respect, the war economy must speedily turn its attentions to fortification works, the digging of trenches and the intensification of the war industries, etc.

3. Reaffirming its precepts of hostility to the state and to militarism, the plenum also asserts that the future of the emancipating revolution is dependent upon the measure of responsibility with which the anarchist organisation is able to put the conclusions of this present proposition into effect.

4. Finally, the plenum requires of all anti-fascist organisations, unions, collectivised enterprises, etc. that they immediately place all of their financial and monetary assets at the exclusive service of the war and of the revolution’.

On 23 February 1937 the press carried reports on the National plenum in Valencia of the steel and metalworking industry. This plenum gave birth to the National Industrial Federation (NIF) – comprising the mining industry, foundries, scrap yards, locksmiths’ shops, steel construction, machinery in general, bronze works, smelters, boiler making, small machinery production, automobile manufacture, shipyards, arms manufacture, electricians, etc.

February 26 saw the opening in Barcelona of a regional congress of the Catalan CNT. According to the reckoning of the confederal press, delegates representing 1,200,000 workers were in attendance. The most important topic discussed was the reorganisation of the unions. As we have had occasion to see through the comments upon this very subject during the CNT congress of 1931 (see Chapter 3 of Volume 1 of this work), the CNT’s traditional organisational structure, as adopted at the Catalonia regional congress in 1918 (which introduced the practice of having a *Sindicato Único* embracing a whole trade) had been called into question by many militants who believed it to be flawed from the point of view of industrial definition and ineffective in terms of the immediate and future achievements of revolutionary syndicalism. During the war, the advocates of NIFs expanded their influence and the events of the revolution themselves, with the enthusiasm for economic and industrial reconstruction, seemed to work on their behalf.

Joan Peiró, champion of the NIFs, returned to this theme just a month before the regional congress of the CNT sat down to business. This is from his article, entitled ‘Time for cool heads and realities’:

‘... In our ranks, the vehemence with which something may be argued does not and will not lend it any more weight today and tomorrow than it did in the past. As day follows eternally upon day, time has the last word, and so time is the judge that passes a verdict upon us all.

It is a commonly held belief in our circles that the heresies and schisms of yesterday have been transcended and elevated, perhaps even under the pressure of an inevitable transition imposed by history, to the status of – I am not going to say dogmas – but, yes, circumstantial doctrines determined by a war which jeopardises the meagre legacy of generations of humans past and the chances of building a new Spain, a Spain bearing the promise of great vindication of the dignity of a people, this generous people which has shed torrents of blood in defence of the revolution of its dreams.

To build means to revolutionise. A revolution which is not concerned to build is stillborn. To build, always to create, such is the mission of every revolution. But what they build and construct will be of no avail if, beforehand, they have not created the appropriate organs to perform the tasks of directing and administering the new creations.

Even at the risk of donning the mantle of heretic again, I find myself compelled to announce that in the CNT these organs to direct and administer the new economy are missing, and, as so often before, let me say that the CNT is now in need of the NIFs, because the world of production, the world of economics is, a nation as a whole, inconceivable when construed as a multi-form uncoordinated movement. The new economy, according to our theoretical constructs, can and should rest upon the union, which is the creative organ capable of marshalling it. But industrial activity and the economy make up an independent national whole, both because the industries of one zone have to march in step with comparable and kindred industries in other zones, and because the economy of the south of a country is intimately bound up with the north's economy, and the economies of both with the economies of the east and west; and it is the existence of this whole, the necessity of which is patently incontrovertible, which requires that the union be equipped with a nationwide superstructure and not with a general purvey but rather with concrete and specific responsibilities.

The profound sense of unity that we urge upon the proletariat is the same sense of unity which we have to carry into the industrial and economic theatre. Without that unity, the running of industry and of the economy cannot be regular; it must necessarily become anti-economic and negative because any industry, if it has an appreciation of its own economics, has to be familiar with the requirements of its markets and match them with the productive capabilities of each of its industrial zones, because economics ceases to be such whenever production outstrips con-

sumer needs and natural resources. And this unity in the realms of industry and the economy is attainable only through the NIF.

We have authenticating proof of the truth of what I say in the current circumstances in which our industrial and economic movement find themselves; thus, Catalonia fails to coordinate its industrial and economic activities with those of the Basque Country, and both have paid no heed to the rest of Spain. And the inevitable has occurred.

Just as Basque and Catalan industries are not functioning because they cannot without the economic support of their respective home-rule governments, so the industrial and economic machinery of the rest of Spain no longer budges with the assistance of the State. It is sad to relate, but it is a fact of life, born of improvisation if one likes, but still a fact of life for all that.

I am not the sort of man ever to conceal my thought and for this reason, I have repeatedly stated that the revolution must yield pride of place to the war. And in so saying, it was never my intention to renounce the revolution. That would be unforgivable. What I always sought to say and now I say again is that, over and above thought of collectivisations and socialisations, which today have an aftertaste of corporativism, preference must go to the task of creating the organs and the capability and to direct and to administer the new economy without any sort of reliance upon the state and its institutions.

But to create organs which may then help to effect the collectivisation or socialisation of society's wealth also implies making the revolution: because to take positions and school ourselves in those positions so that, once the war is over, we may organise the new economy, is likewise a profoundly revolutionary undertaking – much more revolutionary than the operation of destroying an economy through impoundment, collectivisation or socialisation of industries for which no preparations have been made, among other reasons for lack of the appropriate organs, the only ones for such an august and splendid politico-social endeavour.

And let us not lose sight of the fact that amendment of this tactical error is a duty incumbent upon us all. There is still time to face up to these realities with the equanimity demanded by a revolution on the march.'

The shortcoming alleged in the *Sindicatos Únicos* was that, whereas they provided a solution to the craft societies and professional unions and had eliminated whimsical and arbitrary duplication within the same trade, the very concept of the *Sindicato Único* failed to encompass every kindred

aspect and activity of any given industry. For instance, the transport sector, strictly the solitary activity of the several industries that it served, subsisted as a autonomous union entity. Joiners, who belonged with the construction industry, were attached in many places to the Woodworkers' Union instead. Broadly speaking, the latter union was by its very nature a subdivision of the construction industry. Then again, save for rare exceptions, the various unions of a locality had no contact or connection in a direct way with industrially kindred unions elsewhere in the country, but belonged to motley local federations in the bosom of which it was not feasible to concern oneself with economic and industrial issues in that, over and above the economic, the social, political, ideological and revolutionary considerations prevailed there. So what was lacking was the industrial union formed on the basis of the industry and embracing all of the related trades; and the industrial federation, or the coordination of these industrial unions with their industrial affinity, at national level, was likewise missing. The outcome would be the creation of as many NIFs as there were already industrial unions. The advocates of this superstructure saw in the industrial union, federated at local, regional and national levels, not merely a superb means of ensuring technical, economic and administrative training for the workers, but also the finest assurance of success on the morrow of the revolution, when the time came to have to replace the capitalist regime with the economic management of the unions.

The CNT's current union structure reduced the economic and industrial sensibilities of the members to a minimum. Economic activities were concentrated upon the technical sections of the *Sindicatos Únicos* and went no further than the trade locally. To all intents and purposes, the CNT was the sole local, regional or national liaison between the unions. And that liaison was essentially political or revolutionary in character. So the new structure implied the creation, alongside the political confederation of the unions represented in the CNT, of as many NIFs as industrial unions that might have been set up.

The crux of the problem lay, primarily, in the earlier definition – the definition of basic industry, with all of its kindred variations. The problem was not easily resolved, if one remembers that the same industrial specialisation may make a contribution to a number of basic industries simultaneously and yet boast characteristics of economic self-sufficiency. Many unions necessarily had to vanish upon being absorbed piecemeal into those industrial unions accepted as prototypes. And at the same time those unions doomed to disappearance advanced arguments for their continued existence on the basis of innumerable needs which were proper to them. One also had to overcome the obstacle of habit or the tendency to conserve a real deadening influence, inimical to all innovation. Nor was it an easy matter to delineate a basic industry, given the complex nature

of economic factors in the realms of production and distribution. The obvious step, then, was to begin with the least arbitrary measures possible – but measures that were inescapable, the arbitrariness of interpretation proved a catalyst of argument. Finally, precautions had to be taken against the possible collisions which might arise out of the coexistence of so many national organisations alongside the CNT itself. And all of this had to be put into effect at an accelerated rate, in the worst of circumstances (as far as equanimity was concerned) and amid the colossal bustle of the collectivisations.

The proposition on the definition of the industrial unions as adopted by the regional congress of the Catalan CNT, to which we are referring, had merely regional validity. We reproduce it below by way of information, to assist the reader in their appreciation of the constructive work of that important gathering. The proposition states:

‘The working party appointed to frame a proposition on the structuring of the NIFs hereby offers the following proposition:

1. That the number and the structure of the industrial unions according to the proposition placed before congress be accepted.
2. The constitution of the industrial unions must maintain and if possible increase solidarity and mutual aid between the unions from the collective point of view, and between Confederation members so far as individual effort is concerned.
3. The establishment of the NIFs implies the possibility of the latter being able to initiate all activities which they may find necessary as auxiliaries of the mother industry, in proportion with their potential and as normally corresponds with their economy and with the general economy.
4. Should the force of current circumstances make it necessary that the cordiality and support that ought to attend the conduct of all unions be intensified to the point of mutual understanding, this shall be done, without any of the parties thereby incurring loss of individual identity. In accordance with this view, the Land and Maritime Transport Union shall be able to make extensive use of the transport sections of specific industries provided that the general interest so requires and ensuring that the particular interests of the industries are not overlooked.
5. Possible disagreements between the parties concerned are to be resolved by speedy decision-making on the part of the appropriate local federation or by the local economic council when the latter has been established. – Barcelona, 27 February 1937.’



In accordance with the clauses of the proposition framed by the working party, the new schema of the trade unions, reshuffled into industrial unions, was to assume the following form:

UNION OF THE AGRICULTURAL, FISHING AND FOOD INDUSTRIES:

1. Agricultural workings and produce. 2. The flour industry. 3. Bread manufacture. 4. The manufacture of noodles for soup. 5. The confectionery industry. 6. The manufacture of vegetable preserves. 7. The biscuit industry. 8. The sugar industry. 9. The olive oil industry. 10. The ethnological products industry (vine-growing, wine-making, the production of alcohol and vinegar). 11. The brewing industry. 12. The flower industry. 13. Bee keeping. 14. The dairy industry and its by-products. 15. Poultry, livestock farming and hunting. 16. The fishing industry. 17. The coffee and cocoa industries generally. 18. The tobacco industry. 19. The catering industry. 20. Forestry. 21. The charcoal industry. 22. The cork industry.

FOOD – Oils and fats. Cafés, confectioners and sweet makers. Pastry and fancy cake makers. Chocolate, wines and liqueurs. Stockmen. Dairy-men. Milk retailers. Flour. Bakers. Luxury and Vienna breads. Noodle-makers. Biscuit makers. Federation of butchering industries. Poultry, eggs and game. Catering, which includes: waiters, cooks, hotel pastry cooks and billiard-room cooks. Stitchers and room service. Domestic service. Groceries (self-employed workers). Market employees. Veterinarians involved in beef and milk inspection. Flour salesmen. (Workers who travel in cereals and foodstuff travellers and travellers in preserves. Market and grocery employees. )

FISHING – Central fish market. Trawl fishermen. Small time fishermen. Porters, weekly employees and sellers. Transporters. Veterinarians involved in fish inspection. Fishing fleet. Mussel fishermen and shellfish collectors generally. Miscellaneous.

AGRICULTURE – Agricultural workings and produce in general. Irrigation works. The central market, El Born. Workers involved in muckspreading. Workshops given over to repair of tools. Engineers and agronomists. Stockbreeding veterinarians.

UNION OF THE TEXTILE, CLOTHING AND ALLIED INDUSTRIES:

1. Growing and manufacture of cotton. 2. Wool and fur manufacture. 3. Silk manufacture. 4. Manufacture of rayon and artificial fibres. 5. Hemp growing and manufacture. 6. Jute farming and manufacture. 7. Flax farming and linen manufacture. 8. Knitwear. 9. Haberdashery goods. 10. Upholstery. 11. Fabrics including non-textile substances (simulated leathers, fabrics for waterproofs, etc.). 12. Industrial textiles. 13. Clothing industry. 14. Footwear industry.

MANUFACTURING – Water trade: cloth bolts, dyes and finishes; also screen-printed fabrics. Machine operatives and drivers. Supervisors. Tech-

nicians from the water trade. Weaving technicians. Exports and imports. Representatives from the Woollens and Silk Committees. Second-hand clothing. Miscellaneous.

CLOTHING – Tailoring, shirt making, fashion. Waterproofs. Hat and beret making. Corsetry and mattress manufacture. Garters and suspenders. Glove making. Furriery. Artificial flowers. Shoemakers. Cane-makers. Moroccan leather work. Luggage. Harness-makers. Sandals. Glove-makers. Coney fur. Umbrella workers. Wickerwork and brooms. Shoeshine boys.

UNION OF THE WATER, GAS, ELECTRICITY AND FUEL INDUSTRIES:

1. Coal. 2. Petroleum. 3. Water service. 4. Water refinement and distribution. 5. Electricity generation and distribution. 6. General services in water usage.

LIGHT AND POWER –Water. Gas. Electricity. Accountants. Electric cable workers.

FUEL – Petroleum. Administrative personnel. Shipping. Outlets. Transport. Petrol pump attendants. Lubricants. Coal. Seams. Mineral coal workers.

UNION OF THE STEEL AND METALWORKING INDUSTRIES:

1. Heavy steel industry. 2. Machine industry. 3. Metalworking. 4. Copper and copper alloys. 5. Lead. 6. Aluminium. 7. Mercury. 8. Precious metals. 9. Enamel work. 10. Refrigeration equipment and materials. 11. Electric equipment and goods. 12. Automobile industry. 13. Aircraft industry. 14. Shipbuilding. 15. Light machinery. Scientific and precision instruments.

METALLURGY – Machinists. Tinsmiths. Electricians. Pipe fitters. Boilermakers. Coppersmiths. Lathe operators. Jewellers and silversmiths. Strongboxes and weighing machines. Jobbing locksmiths. Foundry workers. Itinerant knife-grinders. Mould makers. Workers employed in machine sales firms.

AUTOMOBILES – Technicians. Administrators. Die-makers. Sheet metalworkers. Foundry men. Painters. Harness makers. Mechanics. Miscellaneous.

AIRCRAFT – Technicians. Draughtsmen. Administrators. Woodworkers. Metalworkers. Upholsterers and harness-makers. Mechanics. Various.

UNION OF THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES:

1. Acids, salts and chemical fertilisers. 2. Colouring and explosive materials. 3. Oils, fats and soaps. 4. Chemical products for pharmaceutical and photographic purposes. 5. Essences and perfumes. 6. The glass and crystal industries. 7. The rubber industry. 8. The celluloid, galalite and allied industries. 9. The tanning, leather and wooden container industries.

CHEMICAL PRODUCTS – Laboratories and perfumes. Coloratives and explosives. Celluloid and galalita. Fats and soaps. Acids and fertilisers. Machinists and stokers. Rubber. Various.

GLASS – Sheet glass. Plate glass. Lamps. Bulbs. Optics. Torches. Tinted glass. Mould makers and machinists etc. whose work is exclusively concerned with the glass industry.

HIDES – Tanners. Harness and straps. Coney fur. Footwear employees.

UNION OF THE CONSTRUCTION, WOODWORKING AND DECORATION INDUSTRIES:

1. Construction, administration and maintenance of buildings.
2. Construction, administration and maintenance of amenities, including public amenities. Highways.
3. Natural and man made stone.
4. Brickworks.
5. Cement and asbestos building materials.
6. Artificial cements.
7. Lime, gypsum and natural cement.
8. Ceramics and heat resistant substances.
9. The carpentry and cabinet-making industry.
10. Painting and decorating.
11. Disinfectant, purification and ventilation installations.
12. Heating, water and compressed air fittings.
13. Water, gas and electricity installations.
14. Installations of fireproof materials.
15. Installations of elevators and service lifts.

CONSTRUCTION – Insulation and waterproofing. Workers on mouldings and reinforced steel. Mosaic-layers and installers. Heating technicians. Bricklayers and labourers. Stone and marble. Paper hangers. Pavers. Quantity surveyors. Stucco plasterers. Heating. Architects. Hodsmen. Ceramicists. Quarriers. Painters. Plasterers. Managers of city properties. Concierges. Public amenity employees, elevator and service lift installation teams, lamp makers, plumbers, electricity installers, oilmen and building maintenance. Sculpture workshops. Sales of construction materials.

WOODWORKING – Cabinet makers. Chair makers. French polishers. Upholsterers. Sculptors. Carpenters. Furniture makers. Mouldings and frames. Brushes and packaging. Tools. Cane furniture. Box makers. Coopers. Lathe operators. Basket makers. Billiard suppliers. Machine sawyers. Mattress makers. Gilders. Employees of wood yards and timber plantations.

UNION OF THE PAPER AND GRAPHIC ARTS INDUSTRIES:

1. The paper industry.
2. The cardboard industry.
3. Publishing trades.
4. Press.
5. Writing materials (paper, etc.).
6. Mills connected with allied industries.

UNION OF THE DISTRIBUTION AND ADMINISTRATION OF DISTRIBUTION INDUSTRIES:

Street markets. Foodstuffs. Fabrics and the like. Glass and crystal. Leather and allied goods. Metalworking. Booksellers. Chemical products. Graphic arts and miscellaneous.

ADMINISTRATION – Municipal employees. Generalitat employees. State employees. Pensioners. Customs officials. Various. Banking and savings. Insurance. Advertising employees.

#### UNION OF THE COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT SECTORS:

1. Posts. 2. Broadcasting. 3. Railroads. 4. Vehicular transport. 5. Basic haulage services. 6. Urban transport. 7. Maritime transport and services. 8. Port services. 9. Air transport and services. 10. Land and sea repairs.

COMMUNICATIONS – Postal technicians. Postmen. Urban. Juniors. Rural. Telegraphs. Telephones. Cable. Radio. All workers and artistes exclusively involved in radio broadcasting.

TRANSPORTS – Trams. Buses. Metro. Drivers. Cleaning staff. Wheeled vehicles. Stevedores. Stations. Docks and the like. Port workers. Blacksmiths.

MARITIME TRANSPORT – Seamen. Machinists. Radio-telegraphers. Masters. Ship's mechanics. Petty officers. Excavators (Workers with pick). Watchmen. Mooring supervisors. River carpenters. Shipwrights. Railroads. Air transport.

#### HEALTH, SOCIAL WELFARE AND HYGIENE UNION:

Doctors. Pharmacies and pharmaceutical/biological laboratories. Veterinarians. Dental surgeons. Midwives. Medical assistants. Intern medical students. Auxiliary and specialist nurses. Pest controllers and dog catchers. Health technicians drawn from other branches of chemico-biology. Sanitary equipment (repair). Administrative personnel. Hydrotherapy staff and establishments. Herbalists. Pharmaceutical wholesalers and wholesalers of pharmaceutical specialities. Barbers. Wigmakers. Manicurists. Masseurs. Laundry. Electrical medical equipment. Cleaning and washing. Funeral services. Cemeteries. Waste collection.

#### EDUCATION AND LIBERAL PROFESSIONS UNION:

Primary school teachers. Secondary school teachers. University teachers. Music teachers. Languages. Physical education. Crafts. Fine Arts. Trades and vocational school. Pure science. Writers. Administrators (cultural officials). Lawyers. Nurseries. Homes (orphanages). School colonies. Miscellaneous section.

#### UNION OF THE ENTERTAINMENTS INDUSTRY:

Cinematographic artistes. Cinematographic industries. Operators and projectionists. Variety. Circus. Concert maestros. Amusement parks. Swimming pools. Sports. Cinemas and theatres. Set-designers. Prompters.

Stagehands. Electricians. Programme sellers. Chorus girls. Equipment supervisors. Musicians. Authors. Water sports. Clubs.'

Earlier we mentioned a national plenum of the Communications Unions which took place in Valencia at the start of January. Let us now turn, albeit briefly, to another national plenum, this time of the fishing industry; it was held on 27 February 1937 in the very same city. We shall do the same with successive conventions that were held under the aegis of this new industrialist phase. Note the impulse to socialise manifest in all of the texts. The national plenum of the fishing industry unions adopted the following motion:

- '1. In the immediate term there shall be the socialisation of all of the industry and its appendages.
2. A plenum of the entire industry, CNT and UGT alike, is to be convened for the purpose of agreeing the essential points regarding socialisation on a national scale. The outcome of these plenums would be progress towards one national plenum embracing the industry in its entirety. This does not mean to say that the CNT unions may not proceed with immediate socialisation, insofar as this is feasible for them.
3. In accordance with the principles to which the CNT subscribes in the matter of the NIFs, be it stated that the transportation of fish must, as is only logical, fall within the purview of the NIF; the National Committee is to be informed that we refuse to countenance the idea of an auto-transport [federation] which smacks of centralism.
4. The functions of cooperatives are to be taken over by the unions; the latter shall receive the savings made.
5. A fund at national level shall be set up for the purchase of shipping. Such sums shall be provided by the unions. It shall be left to the discretion of the National Committee to determine, in the light of its assets, the capital outlay which may be required.
6. The National Committee shall participate, through delegates, in all of the leading central markets; the wages of said delegates shall be paid by the markets.
7. All reforms of a social and economic nature are to be accepted.'

In mid-March 1937 there was a regional plenum in Madrid of the transport unions. Items No. 5 and No. 6 on the agenda dealt with socialisation. After both items had been gone into, approval was secured for the following proposition:

'In order to oversee progress and to offer guidance to the unions regarding the socialisation set in motion by those unions, and also in order to ease the coordination of inter-regional relations between other unions, the Regional Transport Federation of the Centre Region shall set up a branch to be known as the regional economic council and the latter shall be in constant touch with all of those unions which may have socialised

the instruments of labour, the socialisation of which is to be overseen by the local councils which are to watch out for the economic development of said socialisation. Let it be borne in mind that, the more cordial are the relations of these committees, the more fruitful will the task entrusted to the unions turn out to be.

Those unions which may have a number of sections socialised are to recommend the formation of economic mini-councils (*consejillos*) which shall serve to liaise between the section and the union's general council – it being the competence of these mini-councils to suggest such charges, fixed transportation arrangements and whatever innovations they may consider to be of advantage to the proper progress of socialisation.

The union's economic council shall report to the regional council upon the progress of the various socialised sectors and the entirety of the incomes from the latter shall be in keeping and under the supervision of the regional council. Should this not be the case, we would find ourselves in a position where, within the bosom of the same union, economic privileges would arise in certain sections so that whereas a socialised sector might thrive and prosper, other sectors, by contrast, would suffer – this being an inequality that would lead to the conservation of class divisions.

The economic council of each union shall see to it that the economy of each section is egalitarian in its various features or requirements, and, to this end, all surplus assets of the different economic committees of the various sections are to be surrendered to the union fund, which shall avail of this surplus in order to introduce that equality which is unmistakable and necessary in rates of payment. Thus the regional economic council will so conduct itself that the wages of workers belonging to that socialised sector may be of equivalent size because, on lots of grounds, disparities of pay or economic improvements cannot be tolerated within the same settings. With the exception of cost-of-living allowances which may differ, say, between village and city, and for the purpose of monitoring these, as well as everything else, there is the need for the creation of such confederal agencies as shall prescribe the overall arithmetic index. All such committees shall operate independently so that their work may not be hampered by any trade union considerations.'

Another proposition from the same plenum was in answer to the following question:

'Should the means of transport in the Centre region be socialised?' Here are the findings of the working party.

- '1. They shall be deemed common property, administered and managed by the regional federation of the transport industry, advised by all federative organs upon which that industry must depend, ranging from the village union branch up to the regional federation, passing through the corresponding local and district federations.

2. Given that there are townships and provinces with a surplus of equipment, in terms of touring vehicles as well as of heavy transport, and recognising likewise that there are other cities inadequately equipped in that they lack basic requirements in terms of equipment, we propose:

(a) Those provinces or localities which may have a surplus of equipment are to let the Regional Committee of the federation have a detailed account of anything coming under the purview of the branches that are to make up this industry.

(b) On the other hand, those who are inadequately provided with the aforementioned equipment, shall, like the others, report what they have and what their requirements are to the federation.

(c) Both reports having been gone over with the industry's Regional Committee, the latter shall effect a distribution which may meet in full the overall needs of the organisation we have just established.

3. Bearing in mind that there is a need for organisation, inclusive of propaganda and other kindred concerns upon which no condition may be imposed, in that they could not bear this, the regional federation shall undertake to surrender to whatever bodies may be in need such touring vehicles as are required, bearing in mind that the body in need of such equipment will undertake to pay the full costs of the vehicle as well as fuel, driving and repair expenses, at all times working through the nearest transport union so as to encompass the above.

4. To give form to the economics of the socialisation of the transport industry, some councils, economic councils by name, shall be set up and these are to be charged with regularising the contracting of services rendered while also meeting the needs of the industries in respect of the conservation of equipment, the organisation and payment of the salaries of the participants in socialisation, and, finally, the uninterrupted progress by which the industry has to be distinguished so that it may expand daily.

5. These councils, as well as those that represent the regional, provincial and district federations, just like the branch unions, will have to liaise closely if they are to know the needs of each, so that when one of these bodies has need of it, the required solidarity may be forthcoming from those which are in better circumstances.

6. A technical corps is to be organised, which, in accordance with the industry's economic potential, will set up as many workshops as may be necessary for repair purposes, ensuring

that there is no trespass of any sort against the interests of the steel and metalworking unions, to which the production and manufacture of transport equipment is consigned.

7. This working party is of the view that for the duration of present conditions there can be no stinting of the efforts of those who contribute towards the smooth running of socialisation, and that no scheduled number of working hours can be prescribed in that this will depend upon the demands of the war and the revolution.

8. A uniform wage is to be established for all who make their contribution to socialisation, bearing in mind that the regional federation will work as intensively as it can, at full potential so as to organise the family wage, this being an equitable and humane formula.

9. The NIF in the transport industry is to liaise closely with other kindred industrial federations similar to it – such as the railway, maritime and airborne federations, so that our services can serve to link up the purposes of each of these; thus will we find ourselves prohibited from trespassing into services that can be met by the railroads, and the railway comrades will be precluded from intruding into the areas which fall to us.

10. This working party endorses the decision of the national congress of transport unions held in Valencia, wherein reference is made to a joint scrutiny, together with the National Committees of the Maritime, Rail and Road Transport Federations, of ways and means at arriving at an integrated transportation organisation.'

Scarcely had the plenum concluded when a national plenum of the Rail Industry Federation opened. The finest condensation of its findings is the following resolution:

'Given that, before socialisation of the present arrangement may be proceeded with, there is a need for a gradual transition of the industries towards that socialisation, this working party has worked out an approach, the details of which we offer below for your consideration; it, within the context of collectivisation, can steer us in the near future in the direction of the realisation of our ultimate ideal.

The problem facing the National Committee, as its circular no. 19 indicates very well, was and still is the problem of collectivisation. In view of the circumstances in which the industries presently find themselves, socialisation is not a feasible proposition in the estimation of the members of this working party;



and to this view we owe the study that we hereby present for your consideration, wherein we have sought to take account of the many phases of collectivisation, with the sole intention of ensuring that, once the different industrial sectors making up the country's economy are fitted for this, they may be able to move on, effortlessly, to socialisation.

So, in the light of above, we shall now set before you the basic principles upon which this working party understands collectivisation to depend:

#### BASES OF COLLECTIVISATION:

1. All of Spain's railway networks will have to come together into one collective, the organisation and administration of which will be handled by the workers themselves.
2. All of the assets and liabilities of the old companies are to be made over to the collective, with financial charges and debts contracted prior to the military uprising with uncollectivised firms being erased, but trade commitments with foreign agencies are to be honoured.
3. Once all of the railways have been collectivised, the product of their operation is to be held in common by all of the regions, with any loss there may be in less efficient regions being made good by the surpluses produced in the more prosperous ones.
4. Should the overall working of all the networks operate at a loss, the obligation to make good that loss shall be incumbent upon the agency in charge of regulating the life of the nation.
5. The railways collective – once its income has been brought into line with circumstantial living costs, shall forswear all profiteering, any surplus which there may be being utilised to improve railway services and equipment, for the good of the country, or to assist other workers' collectives which may have need of it.
6. Upon the formation of the railways collective, complete uniformity of fares, regulations, signals, rights and duties etc. will be a matter of urgency.
7. Once constituted, the railway collective will endeavour to work towards overall collectivisation of transport in all of its four branches – rail, marine, road and airborne, so as to bring maximum advantage to the country.
8. Given the possibility that (once fascism has been routed) Spain may be a federation of regions, and in view of the destruction of our lines, repair of the same shall be effected in accordance with the available contributions and efforts of the networks described

in Article 5 and with the assistance of the regional agencies overseeing the life of the region, with lines being reconstructed in accordance with the requirements of the villages, layouts varying on the basis of public utility and not individual whim.

#### ORGANISATIONAL COORDINATION OF COLLECTIVISATION:

**9.** For the sake of the proper pursuance of railway collectivisation, professional committees are to be set up, working closely with the region's railway union.

**10.** The regional professional committees are to have the powers of initiation and arbitration in regional matters and, in close collaboration with the national counterpart, as far as national matters go. They shall also report back to the National Committee on the affairs of their region.

**11.** For the reasons set out in the preceding articles it is understood that there must be a national professional committee comprised of one delegate from each region elected at a regional union plenum.

**12.** Given the national characteristic of the railways, the agency regulating national life shall have three delegates attached to the national professional committee, – each of whom should belong to the departments of Industry and Trade, Finance and Public Works – to participate and offer advice, speaking but having no vote in the deliberations of this body.

**13.** The national professional committee shall forward minutes of all its meetings to the federation's committee, and the regional professional committees are to forward minutes to the regional liaison committees.

**14.** The members of the national professional committee are to be full members of the National Committee of the federation on the very same conditions as outlines in Article 9.

**15.** On an annual basis, the National Committee, working from reports forwarded to it by the regional professional committees, is to draw up a report and give an account of its performance before a national plenum.

**16.** Offices shall be held for a term of two years, with the possibility of re-election.

**17.** Those comrades who may have to fill national or regional office are to be elected by regional plenums.

**18.** Should the professional committees, national or regional, fail to act in accordance with the wishes of the mass of the workers,

they may be deposed, respectively by the National Committee of the federation or by the regional liaison committees, which shall immediately report the matter to the unions and convene plenums to scrutinise the case and, if need be, appoint replacements.

**PRODUCERS:**

**19.** Every comrade, whether he does manual or intellectual work shall be looked upon as a toiler.

**20.** Any comrade who joins the collective is to be assigned to that work for which he displays preference or aptitude, care being taken at all times to ensure that his energies are deployed to the best advantage of the collective.

**21.** The collective is to seek by every means to make comrades' work human and dignified, availing of the advances of technology – ensuring physical and mental health as well as supplying the needs of workers in their old age and establishing trade schools, general cultural and recreational services, etc.

**22.** The collective shall stand as guarantor for its component workers as well as for their chattels and properties, dispensing with all insurance with outside companies.

**23.** Through national plenums, the railways collective will look into rules for entry into the rail service, in tune with the precept 'a place for every comrade and a comrade for every place', in accordance with the prescriptions of article 20. They shall also look into regulations for laying down principles of optimum fairness governing changes of residence.

**ADDITIONAL ARTICLE:**

If by chance, some regional networks are collectivised and some are not, the former shall be left independent in economic terms, retaining the product of the operation of its own collectivised lines, but their professional dealings with the non-collectivised remaining lines are to be coordinated.

The collectivised regional networks are to set up a common fund, as indicated in article no. 3, but their moral and material support are to be made available to the others for the purpose of achieving overall collectivisation.

That regional network which may be economically independent is to liaise with the organ which oversees the region in every respect.'

On 24 March 1937 the following announcement from the CNT National Committee was carried in the Confederation's press:

'To all professional technicians, engineers, architects, surveyors, draughtsmen, leaders of industry, company managers, accountants, scientific researchers, laboratory directors, specialists, technicians in various specialities and, generally, all who belong to a profession of a technical nature (excepting doctors and health personnel, and primary and secondary schoolteachers enrolled in the Health and Education Unions) and enrolled in CNT-affiliated unions.

All technicians' unions, technicians' branches of industrial unions or federations and teams of technicians affiliated to Liberal Professions' or other unions affiliated to the CNT are hereby invited to come together on 2 April for the celebration of a national plenum in Valencia, with an agenda as follows:

1. Appointment of a discussion group.
2. Submission and scrutiny of credentials.
3. Discussion of the commendability of replacing the Technicians' Unions with Regional Technicians' Associations, one for each region, with technicians being required to belong simultaneously to that association and to the industrial union covering the activity in which they engage.
  - (a) Organisation at regional, district and local levels, on the basis of specialisation.
  - (b) Definition of the status of professional technician.
  - (c) General classification of the technicians' branches and specialisations which each branch ought to encompass.
  - (d) Record of anti-fascism as a requirement for committee positions and representative office on official agencies at regional, district and local levels.
  - (e) Regional registration of associated technicians.
  - (f) Temporary union card which should ease recruitment of technicians as yet not organised in the CNT's industrial unions, etc.
  - (g) Periodical regional and national congresses or conferences of technicians grouped together by branch or by speciality, for the purpose of considering technical and professional matters.
  - (h) Regional experimentation and invention bureau.
1. Structure.
2. Workshops, laboratories, etc., for tests and trials.
3. Role of the planner or inventor.
4. Moral rewards for the inventor.

(i) A regional bureau for retraining and placement of technicians in urban, rural, mining industries, etc., so as to cater for the needs of the confederal organisation.

4. Establishment of the (CNT) National Technicians' Association.

(a) Its National Committee.

1. Composition.

2. Place of residence.

(b) Representation of the association on governmental (oficiales) or confederal national agencies to be determined by the CNT National Committee.

(c) The association's statutes.

5. Should the National Technicians' Association or its Regional Committees set up polytechnics?

(a) The affirmative case.

1. Appropriate format and upkeep.

2. Relations with the CNT education workers' unions and their regional and national bodies.

(b) The negative case.

1. How should technicians be deployed for the dissemination of technical learning?

2. Relations in this event with the CNT education workers' unions and their regional, district and local or national bodies.

6. Relations with the UGT.

7. General business.'

A regional congress of land workers in Castile was held in the Lara Theatre in Madrid at the beginning of April – 480 delegations attended, representing 84,895 members. Isabelo Romero, the general secretary of the CNT in the Centre, opened the meeting with an address in which he stated:

'Against the secret intrigues of those who conduct themselves as counter-revolutionaries, we, the men of the CNT, must prepare the people, showing it that we are ready, once fascism has been defeated, to ensure that things are not left as they have been hitherto. Such work by our comrades has borne fruit in many a village in Castile, where the comrades of the UGT have gone so far as to establish, with notable success, the free commune which our confederal movement urges and advocates.'

He explained the obstruction by politicians of the establishment of the village municipal councils or committees with CNT involvement. Their obstruction was based on considerations of anti-fascist integrity.

‘The PCE’, he said, ‘numbered only 10,000 members prior to 18 July. Today they claim 140,000 and do not describe themselves as parvenus, but they do place obstacles in the path of the establishment of local councils with CNT personnel, because their unions, in some villages, were constituted subsequent to July.

Against this background we find ourselves in a position where, whenever there is a village where confederal representatives are debarred from its municipal organs, the unions, as the rightful representation of the labouring masses, ignores and scorns the dispositions emanating from those bodies, which are born with the blight of ineptitude.’

He went on to explain what the CNT had done in respect of certain confiscations:

‘Do you know, comrades, what the CNT did with these valuables? Well, upwards of 30,000,000 pesetas were handed over to the Government so that it might turn them into arms with which to combat the common enemy. And another of our comrades’ concerns has been to hand over what funds remained to them – very little – to the unions of the region’s villages so that these might reorganise production.’

Several village delegations contributed to the debate on revolutionary unity. Here are some of the contributions:

‘DELEGATION FROM PRIEGO: ‘Unity is necessary, but let us remember that the Jesuits have yet to quit Spain. In our area there are many persons ensconced in political organisations which are the ones that oppose the wishes of the workers. The UGT knows them better than we do, because its ranks include persons opposed to this alliance. But in all our zone the fact is that the peasants are against the Stalinists and republicans because these have all of the caciques of the province in their ranks.’

SAN CLEMENTE: ‘We must make no mistake and we must know who are the enemies of unity, because unity cannot be achieved while the crimes committed with such impunity against our organisation continue.’

INFANTES AREA: ‘Agrees with the need for unity and upon the need to avert the sniping which is going on between both great unions.’

CAÑETE AREA: ‘In the UGT there are many mayors and bureaucrats who are obstructing unity because it would spell political death for them and for their privileges.’

VILLAYERDE: 'In our district, unity is a fact. The UGT and the CNT have already set up a collective which needs envy nothing of any formed in Spain.'

COMRADE PICAZO: 'In Almadén, the UGT, by agreement with the mayor, has stood as guarantor for all of the lads covered by the mobilisation, lest they risk their lives fighting fascism, which goes to show who it is who is in charge of the municipalities.'

The resolution agreed on concerning this matter pointed out:

- '1. That the UGT and CNT be urged to arrive AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE at an alliance between both union groupings, based upon solid and indestructible foundations;
2. That a commission be appointed, comprised of comrades from the UGT and the CNT, so that whenever impediments to this alliance may arise in some villages, due to its being obstructed by political elements, it may travel to said areas and take steps against the alliance's enemies;
3. This union is of the view that socialisation will have to be effected throughout the whole of Castile regardless of the interests of parties and organisations;
4. That in the workplaces only the members of the two organisations, the CNT and the UGT, may participate in the discussion of these foundations for alliance.'

One of the most important items on the agenda of the congress framed these questions: 'Is the creation of an agency to regulate industry's economy and effect trade a pressing need? In the event of an affirmative reply, what sort of format should we endow it with?'

A working party came up with the following proposition, which was approved:

'The working party having examined at great length the problem with which this item confronts us, it has concluded that the creation of such an agency which, on a completely new basis, may fully meet the economic needs of our organisation and at the same time fully ensure the interchange of our endeavours between one union and another, or one district and another, is a matter of the utmost necessity. In probing this matter, this working party has taken account of the circumstances through which our people are passing, so that, in framing our recommendations, we may congratulate ourselves upon having done so in full accordance with our principles and with the abnormal nature of the situation by which the country is beset. For this reason, we have divided the question into two different aspects. The first is the necessity of this agency's being created. The second is the format of the same, so that in the briefest possible time what we aim at may become a reality. In each union an economic commission is to be set up to oversee the endeavours of the collective:

(a) Let us say that the collective is to be administered directly by this union commission, which will undertake to effect the task of distribution, utilising the system proportionality with family size, whenever feasible. This commission will have to hand all figures regarding production and need, so that at any given moment it may know how interchange may be effected or assistance requested from other of our unions in that area.

(b) The aforementioned union economic commission will report to the district economic section about surpluses and deficits in produce, so that the latter may accurately determine the mode of exchange.

(c) This commission is also to ensure that those comrades who cannot directly participate in the liberating work we propose may be properly catered for, thereby averting the possibility of representatives of the old society foisting upon them the status of outright slaves – such as we all had hitherto. This applies to those comrades who, by virtue of their working for foreign-owned concerns, cannot decide – until such time as the war may be over – upon the wholesale seizure of the same, so as to set them to work for themselves, collectively.

With the local mission of this commission having been completed, it comes under the purview of the regional economic commission, which shall be structured as follows:

THE ZONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION: – This economic commission has a zonal purview and is to require of the unions which constitute it, figures covering both the produce of its soil as well as what it needs but does not produce. Similarly, with the backing of all its affiliated unions, it will stand ready to handle with intelligence the interchange which is needed, so that the unions may see that their interests are properly defended.

(a) The Zonal Economic Commission will undertake, within the parameters of the figures supplied to it by the unions, to improve the economic circumstances of one village, by availing of the surplus produce of another village which, within its circumscription, may be more advantageously appointed.

(b) The Zonal Economic Commission will compile overall production and consumption figures and will forward these, for its information, to the Provincial Federation, availing of that higher agency so as to effect the mutual arrangements necessary for the improved operation of the inter-zonal economy.

PROVINCIAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION: – This provincial economic commission, just like the zonal one does with regard to its unions, will require of the zonal Commissions that they supply it with a detailed breakdown of the deficits or surpluses which each of these may have, in that, once in possession of such information, it will be able to proceed with interchange between one zone and another.

(a) The provincial economic commission is to be in close liaison with the regional economic commission with regard to what we shall set out as the functions of the latter.

REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION: – The regional economic commission is to have access to the necessary reports so that it may at any time know what are the needs of one province and the surpluses of another, for the purposes of effecting exchanges, sale or purchase of produce from one region or another. In keeping with the same federative setup, this regional commission will keep the commission that is to be set up along similar lines within the National Committee briefed as to the manner in which its region's output and produce are proceeding.



NATIONAL ECONOMIC COMMISSION: – The national economic commission will also have access to reports carrying the aforementioned information, so that in every circumstance it may know our organisation's assets and the manner in which the exchanging of produce is to be effected between the Regional Committees which represent us.

(a) This commission will be able to effect such exchange in whatever way it may determine, provided that the operation takes place within the nation's boundaries, something that it will not be able to do when it has to resort to kindred operations across frontiers. For these this national commission must have liquid capital or spare cash with which it can pursue trade between our soil – freed of bourgeois tyranny – and states living under the system of man's exploitation of his fellow man.

All these commissions, as may be deduced from the above, operate inside the CNT organs mentioned, utilising a technical-administrative corps that, with full background knowledge, can accomplish the task entrusted to it.

In proposing this organisational format, we have sought at all costs to avoid the retention of the features of the organisation upon which the bourgeoisie relied for its business purposes; and also to afford full satisfaction to the worker on account of the assurances implicit in this scheme of organisation.

Desirous of being as brief as possible in our proposition, we hope that delegations will give it their utmost enthusiastic endorsement, since the working party stands ready to clarify wherever asked so that the content may be as effective and positive as possible.

On behalf of the working party: – For the Cuenca provincial federation -- Angel Linares; for the Guadalajara provincial federation, Gregorio Eusebio; for the Toledo provincial federation, Aurelio López; for the Madrid provincial federation, Juan Olmos; for the Ciudad Libre provincial federation, Juan Picazo.'

Also in February 1937 a national plenum of the Regional Committees of the FIJL was held in Valencia. At it the FIJL membership, as represented at the plenum, was made known. The breakdown was as follows:

Andalusian Regional 7,400  
Extremaduran Regional 1,907  
Levante Regional 8,200  
Centre Regional 18,469  
Aragón Regional 12,089  
Catalan Regional 34,156

On account of the enormous difficulties created by the war, and of the isolation of those two loyalist zones, delegations from the Basque and Asturian Regional Committees failed to attend.

Among the resolutions agreed by the plenum were: the creation of the Revolutionary Youth Front ; intensification of propaganda nationwide with a uniform and modernised approach; boosting of constructive revolutionary endeavours; halting the advance of the counter-revolution: demanding a more efficient, more energetic address to the pursuit of war.

By way of a conclusion to the plenum, the following ground rules for the creation of the Revolutionary Youth Front were approved:

- ‘1. It is our considered opinion that progress towards the formation of the Revolutionary Youth Front is impossible without recognition of the social and economic transformation the Spanish people have gone through since 19 July. Consequently, all organisms which may enter must undertake to prosecute this social transformation. Our unity will bring us the strength to succeed. The winning of the war, and the making of the revolution – such is the mission of the Revolutionary Youth Front.
2. To bring influence to bear in a decisive and consistent manner so that relations between the trade union organisations may be increasingly close and fraternal, this being of relevance to Spain’s economic life.
3. An intensive campaign will be mounted urging at all times that all anti-fascist tendencies be represented in the political and social leadership of Spain in proportion with the membership they represent in that thus we will succeed in rallying more firmly the wishes of the working class, by its feeling fairly represented, and, so that this propaganda may be effective and uniform, selfish sectarian or party political conduct must end; at meetings, conferences, in the press etc. there is to be no apology for nor paeans sung to any specific doctrine in the name of the Alliance of Revolutionary Anti-fascist Youth, but every action is to be bent to raising the morale of the fighters and to reassuring them that the rearguard will put their yearnings for liberation into effect; the allied agencies have a completely free hand to present their ideas, tactics and objectives to the people, provided that in such campaigns they display every respect and show every consideration for the organisms represented in this front, as also for the organisms allied in the struggle against fascism.
4. With regard to the social side of things, we take the line that since all the anti-fascist currents are of the federalist persuasion, it must be the socio-political line of that system which should prevail among the peoples of Iberia. Beginning now, we must secure the widest autonomy for each region, province or municipality, with the right of all to free experimentation being acknowledged.
5. In our view, if the anti-fascist forces are to be rendered more effective, there is a need to create the Popular Army with a united command (mando único), provided that this command include representation of all anti-fascist organisations and provided that it can depend upon the confidence of the fighters. The military commands of the Popular Army should faithfully reflect the aspirations of the fighters so that in this way there can be the mutual trust needed to win the war. This Revolutionary Youth Front is to campaign to ensure that young fighters are given priority in admissions to the Popular War Academy.
6. The Revolutionary Youth Front is to be represented on all the high commands and bodies directing the war, in order to give cohesion to the majority of the fighting forces.
7. The signatory organisations shall insist that all of the armed forces, guards, carabineers, troops, sailors and people’s militias are supplied with the same equipment. We demand a vigorous purging of the bureaucracy, a reduction in large salaries and abolition of the holding of more than one state-salaried post.

8. The Revolutionary Youth Front shall prevent recruitment being made on the basis of battalions, brigades or other units, none of which are to be raised without prior arrangement with the labour organisations.

9. Incumbent upon the Revolutionary Youth Front is the task of cleansing the rear-guard of parasites and enemies of the revolution and of the anti-fascist cause. Anyone who is, in terms of age and physical state, fit for useful work, will have to possess a document recording his occupation, otherwise he will have to be mobilised for field-work, fortification work or for frontline combat. Similarly, the Revolutionary Youth Front will, at all times, agitate on behalf of socially useful work and selective production. The Revolutionary Youth Front will wage an intensive campaign to have all industries adapted to meet the demands of the war.

10. THE LAND QUESTION: – the Revolutionary Youth Front will struggle alongside peasant youth to secure all of their rights over the land, to have the holdings of the latifundistas and landlords socialised, with peasant collectives being set up and smallholders who have no need of waged labourers to work their land being left a free hand in production. In every regard we shall lay stress upon the necessity of respecting the toil of the peasant, tightening ever more the bonds of solidarity between city and countryside.

11. Persuaded that if order is to be restored to an economy dislocated by the war, an agency to regulate production and consumption is needed, the Revolutionary Youth Front launches the following watchword – ALL ECONOMIC POWER TO THE UNIONS.

12. The Revolutionary Youth Front will put forward as a necessary premise that all young people who belong to the organisations that may join will have to be unionised as members of the CNT or of the UGT, with the exception of students, who are to belong to their professional organisations.

ADDITIONAL CLAUSES: – Admission to the Revolutionary Youth Front is dependent upon acceptance of these two stipulations:

1. All youth organisations – labour, sporting, student and military – which are anti-fascist, are eligible for admission.

2. This Revolutionary Youth Front shall enter into relations with all of the anti-fascist youth fronts worldwide, urging these to render effective aid to proletarian Spain which is fighting against fascism and for social revolution.'

In the latter half of March, a regional plenum of the land workers' unions of Levante met in Valencia. At this plenum approval was given to the creation of an agricultural bank. Resolutions designed to accommodate agriculture and its ancillary industries were also approved. The problem was raised of 'those collectives and individuals who wish to continue working outside of collective control even though they belong to the Confederation'. The resolution passed stated that

'supply of facilities [could be furnished] for all, whether in the union or not, provided that assurances may be given with regard to their supply with the surrender of their

produce, up to the value consumed, with any excess amount surrendered returned to them, a certain percentage being deducted for the use of the agricultural bank.’

The plenum in question also turned its attentions to the aftermath of the tragic events in Vilanosa, which arose as a result of security force intrusion into the economic activities of the collectives.

In chapter 15 of volume 1 we dealt with the foundation in Sueca in October 1936 of the People’s Orange Cooperative. This initiative caught on among the orange-growing villages on that side of the river. The outcome was the creation of a new type of economic organisation – the Consejo Levantino Unificado de la Exportación Agrícola (United Farm Export Council of Levante/CLUEA). An article signed by Miguel Ros and published in the 16 December 1936 issue of *Solidaridad Obrera* explains the aims behind the founding of this body:

**‘First:** To organise exports and avert counter-revolution. To this end the two trade unions, the CNT and UGT, which, economically speaking, embrace the regional economy in its entirety, have joined forces. It is made up on the basis of direct representation (CNT and UGT again) of the maritime and surface transport industry, peasants, administrators, export technicians and agents.

The aim to be pursued by the CLUEA, in accordance with the local councils, is to export fruit produce in a harmonious fashion, so that all involved in it, from the point of growth up to the moment of embarkation, may enjoy a fair share of its value. As far as export goes, membership is open to smallholders, which is to say that, by falling into line with the norms and prices set by the CLUEA and their local council, they can export their fruit produce, the product of which will be handed over to them (Article 10 of the scheme). As for delivery quotas, in that these are a factory creating disunity between villages, none which are not proportionate or equitable should be retained. The precise intent of the CLUEA is to make the delivery without further charges other than for packaging.

**Second:** Procurement of the greatest amount of foreign currency for the war’s sake and to avoid the exportation of capital. In settling upon the price or prices which should govern generally agreed sales, we have avoided competition between the local councils themselves, competition which assuredly would have arisen. This measure has, on the one hand, prevented a fall in the amount of foreign currency earned (result of competition) and on the other avoided villages looking upon themselves as traders or competitors, instead of regarding themselves as brothers at a time when unity is so sorely needed.

As far as the organisation of exportation goes, this averts the smuggling of capital sums which, with each exporter having a free hand, first on the basis of his own money and then that of friends who would throw in their lot with him, to make purchases of oranges by agreement with the purchaser or commission agent, would mean that the money made from sales would wind up abroad. This is the work which the CLUEA has to take care of. The rationale behind this is very clear. And if the CNT and UGT union groupings are the only ones, this is because all political parties are represented, economically speaking, in those, and that being the case, we believe

we should have ended up with double representation had the aforementioned parties been involved in their own right. And one has to concede that, by removing the obstacles that hamper its proceeding smoothly, exportation would proceed as smoothly as silk – something impossible, as I mentioned earlier, under the old free export arrangement which would spell ruination and certain counter-revolution.’

A decree from the Minister of Trade, under which the government proceeded to take charge of all foreign exports, likewise for reasons of exchange controls, aroused the natural suspicions of the collectivists. In consequence, there followed a series of frictions and even a resistance to adherence to the government’s ordinances. And as is de rigueur in such cases, the government chose to bring the recusants to heel by deploying the security forces. The mere presence of these forces resulted in a jitteriness that just had to degenerate into bloody fighting. Even bearing in mind the alleged intervention of provocateur elements, the fact is that there was a bloody attack by the government forces, followed by the investment of the workers’ centre in Vilanesa. The peasants made a worthy reply to the brutality of the Assault Guards by availing of the same weapons by which they had been attacked, and the entire riverside area rose up against the uniformed forces. But for the intervention of the Confederation’s ministers and committees, the conflict might have had grave repercussions in the region and even on the battle fronts. The Iron Column, whose preoccupation with rearguard matters we were able to look at in earlier chapters (see volume 1), issued stern warnings to the security forces and to the government itself. Intervention by the peacemakers was exceedingly difficult if one bears in mind that the decree which had triggered events had been the handiwork of the Confederation’s Minister of Trade, Joan López. One of those ambiguous formulas designed to get everyone out of a fix and to postpone an ultimate solution until happier times was concocted.

Against this backdrop, if we turn again to the land workers’ regional plenum in March, we should now be able to decode the meaning of the speeches:

‘The Minateda union records its protest at the security forces’ interference in the project to make a new beginning. It sends its greetings to the CNT prisoners in Torres de Cuarte and voices a complaint against the government’s repressive behaviour towards the progress of the peasants’ liberation.

The National Committee said that the fostering of tragic incidents could be attributed to possible elements lying in ambush in the unions and in the countryside. It exhorted everyone not to lend any support to such schemes which, together with the blinkered mentality from which the authoritarian element may suffer, furnish the occasion for the perpetuation of outright massacres. It spelled out its version of events, which, in its view, had facilitated the realisation of the enemy’s plans. It added that no one had bothered to brief the Regional and National Committees in advance of what was in the offing, nor yet concerning a mobilisation which took place without their knowledge or authorisation. The National Committee had looked into the matter of the prisoners and in this particular had assurances that they were to suffer no injustice. Similarly, care had to be taken to demand other assurances so to forestall eventualities similar to the one under discussion. It asked everyone to do absolutely nothing without first briefing the committees which have to carry the responsibility for what may happen.

The debate opened, with the following agreed upon:

1. Immediate release of all those held in relation to the recent events and belonging to the UGT and CNT, such release not to cover those openly deemed troublemaking moles, so that these may be brought to trial.
2. It is to be suggested to the government that the entire Assault Guard be moved up to the fronts so that the peasants may set up production properly, confident that they would not face outrages perpetrated by cacique-type elements.
3. Appointment of a commission made up of CNT and UGT personnel, to intervene in and itself find a solution to peasant conflicts of a violent character, and
4. Restoration of the arms seized from persons known to be upstanding militants.'

The regional peasant plenum was attended by 240 delegates, representing a membership of 45,000.

The Vilanosa incidents were exploited worldwide by the Kremlin leadership and by its Iberian spokesmen, for the purposes of bringing the CNT and Spanish anarchism into disrepute. The 31 March edition of *Solidaridad Obrera* carried a translation of a poisonous article that had appeared in Moscow's *Pravda*, and which was a parcel of foulness. Alongside the translated article, the paper printed a reproduction of the original text. One of the subterfuges employed by the press services of the Soviet consulates in Spain was the hoary old cry that objections raised to slanderous articles carried by the Russian press were based upon misunderstandings due to wrongful or inadequate translations. This time the stencil of the clipping from *Pravda* could be set alongside the translation, and the usual subterfuge had been neatly headed off. Beneath the by-line of one N. Oliver, *Pravda* had stated on 22 March 1937:

'THE INTRIGUES OF FRANCO'S TROTSKYIST AGENTS: – On 16 March the anarchists' central organ, *Solidaridad Obrera*, published in Barcelona berates the Soviet press with abusive attacks. And in particular, the author judges the dispatches from Soviet correspondents concerning the counter-revolutionary attitude of the Trotskyist organisation, the POUM, as a damaging tactic, the object of which is to sow discord in the ranks of the 'anti-fascists of Spain'.

This sleazy little article, which rallies to the defence of the Trotskyist traitors, is the work of obscure elements who have wheedled their way into the ranks of the anarcho-syndicalist organisation. These are the erstwhile collaborators of Primo de Rivera, of the 'Fascist (and Trotskyist) Falange'. It is an open secret that outright reactionaries rule the roost in *Solidaridad Obrera* and that its real editor is Cánovas Cervantes, former editor of the fascist periodical *La Tierra*.

These agents of Franco's have ensconced themselves in the anarchist organisation with an eye to shattering from within the unity of the Spanish people, but their designs will not bear fruit. Daily the anarcho-syndicalist masses are taking more to heart the notion that an iron discipline, a strong Popular Army is sorely needed. This is the reason why the enemies of the Spanish people, having infiltrated the ranks of anarchism, now attack the Popular Front with redoubled fury.

It is no coincidence that at the very time when the Italians were beginning their attack on Guadalajara, these accursed Trotskyists organised an armed uprising near Valencia. We also have to note that the Valencia periodical *Nosotros*, in its back page articles, issues daily calls for the release of those detained for their part in the armed uprising, among which number there are self-confessed fascists. These demands are always accompanied by threats to the government.

*Solidaridad Obrera's* anti-Soviet item shows us that the Trotskyists and other agents of the German and Italian secret police want to seize control of the anarchists' main organ. This fact has already alarmed the leaders of the Catalan anarchists, who truly seek to combat the dark forces of international fascism. – N. Oliver.'

As set out in chapter 13 of volume 1, the national representatives of the CNT and of the UGT on 26 November 1936 signed a compact paving the way for trade union unity. There was little forward movement towards making a reality of that unity. One of the reasons for the stagnation of the negotiations must be sought in the divisive policy of the PCE. Intrigue and provocation were its preferred weapons. Although in some respects the National Committees of the CNT and UGT displayed diligence, it was not possible to avert a series of provocations calculated to involve the members of those organisations in confrontations on the streets and in the workplaces. Slandorous attacks were made on the collectives, or rather the relations between the collectivist workers were poisoned. The UGT membership had largely succumbed to the seduction of revolutionary ventures and actively involved themselves in the collectivisations. There were collectives aplenty that displayed the UGT-CNT banner, and there were even specifically UGT collectives.

The PCE, systematically fended off by the confederated unions since the 1931 Conservatorio Congress, and whose essay in setting up a trade union of their own (the CGTU) had proved abortive, had been issued with instructions to storm the UGT. The war worked to their advantage. As the peasant delegates had intimated to the Castilian regional congress, the voracious subjects of Moscow were none too fussy about the abundance of converts which the confusion created after 19 July brought their way. Intimidation and threat, especially in peasant circles, and a brazen connivance with shady elements from cacique-style backgrounds were their preferred methods of trade union and political recruitment. The PCE always sought some excuse, by charging other parties and organisations (especially the CNT) most cynically with the very methods that they themselves employed.

The widening influence of Stalinist infiltration was not confined to the cadres of the UGT's unionists. Next they turned their demolitionist sights on the socialist youth movement, traditionally supporters of Largo Caballero's policies. The foundation of the JSU was a resounding blow against caballerista influence among his party's youth wing. But the offensive was even more far-reaching than that. It aimed at the very heart of the PSOE.

To achieve its ends, the PCE was astute enough to capitalise upon the crack that had opened up in that party during the dismal 'black biennium' and which had been growing more pronounced by reason of the Asturias events. The PSOE had split into three tendencies – the maximalist faction of Largo Caballero, supported by the UGT and the Socialist Youth; the moderate, essentially social-democratic faction of Julián Besteiro, and the pro-communist faction of the Asturian leader González Peña. A fourth strand – more republican than socialist – was represented by Indalecio Prieto. As the war proceeded, the latter current turned into opportunism of questionable political

adroitness. It was the sponsor of Negrinism and one of the most essential factors in the isolation of Largo Caballero.

With the defection of the youth movement, and the loss of important positions inside the party, such as the traditional *caballerista* strongholds in the Madrid Casa del Pueblo and local party apparatus, Largo Caballero's influence was confined to certain provincial federations, such as the one in Valencia which, with its mouthpiece *Adelante*, represented, so to speak, the last bulwarks of *caballerismo*.

At the appropriate time we will look into all of these developments in more detail. For the time being, we will content ourselves with pointing out that the stagnation of plans to contrive unity between UGT and CNT members is explicable in terms of these factors and of Largo Caballero's demise in the political and union contexts. Even so, it is no less certain that Largo Caballero invested more effort in luring the CNT into governmental responsibilities than in the business of mounting a mutual defence side-by-side with it. Realised in time, the CNT-UGT united trade union front might have moved from the defensive onto the attack.

One typically Stalinist ploy is to steal a march on the adversary by falsely accusing him of the very base chicanery which Stalinism alone resorts to. We have seen the PCE concealing their proselytising malpractice by accusing the CNT of absorbing reactionary elements into its ranks. In the case of the CNT-UGT unity, the PCE's response was to portray that agreement in principle as a declaration of war against Stalinism. They themselves had declared war on every other party and organisation from the outset, and they doggedly pursued this in the rearguard for the duration of the war. The torpedoing of the germ of an agreement between the CNT and the UGT was one of their favourite obsessions. The hypocritical melodrama of the Stalinist press's posturings led *Adelante*, the organ of the PSOE in Valencia, to exclaim the following:

'Some vehicles of PCE opinion reiterate the suspicion – in our view groundless – that we and some segments of anti-fascist opinion harbour thoughts of fighting and lack of consideration. This is not so. Nobody struggles against the PCE. Let that be borne in mind and let any discussion be founded upon equally clear statements. It is not loyal nor above board to speak of struggling, nor of intentions of struggling against the PCE, and to argue in a more or less roundabout way that such intentions are harboured by the individuals or groups at which more or less subtle allusions darkly hint. The PSOE and the UGT are not, nor can they ever be, anti-communist. Anyone who asserts or publicly makes insinuations to the contrary will be in error, or misrepresenting the truth so as to find grounds for argument where none exist. In the former case, to nurture such an enormous nonsense amounts to a political blindness that incapacitates those who may consider this an effective tactic calculated to bring about proletarian unity. In the second instance, this is a shabby business which we must repudiate as disloyal.'

On 15 March, a joint communiqué from the CNT National Committee and from the CNT Regional Committee of Levante confronted the manoeuvres of the PCE. Here is a fragment from that communiqué:

'... since it has become known in some circles that at last the CNT and the UGT, in an incontrovertible guarantee of victory, were going to come to some understanding,



then in writing and at public meetings remarks have been repeated which speak of uncompromising opposition to just such a transcendental event. And then, by coincidence or connivance, lamentable incidents arise and things happen which have no reason to happen.

Weighing up the words, writings, incidents, actions and attitudes, we come round to the suspicion that all that is afoot is naked opposition to the alliance between the CNT and the UGT. That what some people are striving after, from positions that are not positions of responsibility, from positions that are not leadership nor command positions, is the torpedoing of and the creation of obstacles to any understanding between the two union groupings . . .’

The communiqué ended with repeated calls for common sense.

The PCE campaign was waged against all and sundry, against anarchist and socialist alike and grafted on to it was the most novel of Stalinist slogans, the one about ‘The Only Party of the Proletariat’, a Machiavellian retort to the plan for the CNT-UGT unity. *A propos* of this, a dispatch from the Febus Agency, dated 5 April, reported the promising first fruits of the new PCE slogan:

‘Albacete, 5 April: – The provincial liaison committee of the PCE and PSOE has agreed, at an important meeting, to see to it that both parties are strengthened, by conducting an intense campaign of Marxist propaganda to educate politically and to attract into those parties the workers who are locked in battle against fascism.

They have likewise agreed to work towards the resolution of the social, economic and political problems by which they are beset, to be scrupulous in the implementation of all of the government’s decisions and ordinances, to work to reinforce the Popular Front, keeping in close touch with the political parties and trade union organisations, and to respect the owners of small property, eschewing attempts at social reform which may jeopardise the triumph of the republican cause by depriving us of sympathy and support within and without Spain. Any who breach these guidelines are to be vigorously punished.’

We are going to close this chapter with the conclusions of a pact of revolutionary unity concluded between the CNT and UGT provincial federations of Zaragoza, Huesca and Teruel. This agreement was made public at the beginning of March 1937 and was subject to repeated elucidation by the CNT National Committee, when the latter was obliged to reply to whimsical constructions placed upon the pact by certain political parties and certain segments of the press, depicting the pact as an ‘amalgamation’ when it was merely another cooperation agreement.

Here is the document the organisations signed:

‘International fascism’s criminal, militaristic venture has confronted the Spanish working class with the need to marshal all of its endeavours into a unity of action which may make it possible to realise the aspirations which it harbours as an organised class.

Understanding that the implementation of the programme of both signatory organisations is momentarily not feasible, especially when we take account of the diversity

of programmes from the various segments of the anti-fascist front, and that any attempt to introduce an economic and political arrangement of a specific variety would be suicidal and have a fatal impact upon the battle we have joined, the CRT and the UGT prescribe the following ground rules for unity of action:

1. We undertake to implement all ordinances emanating from the rightful government of the Republic and those issued by the Council of Aragón, in which agencies our respective organisations are represented, deploying all of our influence and the resources of our organisms to ease the implementation of the same.

2. Before, at most, a period of eight days has elapsed (from the signing of this agreement) a liaison committee of a regional nature is to be formed, to oversee everything relating to unity of action and to resolution of those conflicts which may arise between the two organisations, given that our lamentable separation hitherto made possible infiltration by undesirable elements which must be liquidated. The liaison commission shall itself determine its internal structure, and its membership shall comprise comrades from the union organisations of the three provinces so as to smooth over every difficulty with the resolution of provincial conflicts.

Applications concerning the foundation of new unions affiliated to one or other of the two union organisations shall be processed through the respective organisation to the regional liaison committee, which shall decide on the basis of whatever background reports it may deem appropriate. We repudiate any pressures brought to bear to compel any individual to become a member of one or other union association.

3. The provincial secretaries of the Spanish Federation of Land Workers and of the UGT in Aragón, commit themselves to make the speediest examination of the structure of the CRT's regional federation of collectives, as well as of the resolutions approved at the latter's congress, so as to arrive at the unification of the agrarian problem in Aragón within the confines of one all-embracing organism.

The CRT and the UGT consider it necessary that legal recognition be afforded to the confiscations made from rebel personnel, in terms both of agricultural holdings and of urban properties and industrial holdings, and that these should come under the ownership of the municipal councils, which will make them available to the labour organisations so that these may proceed with their overall collectivisation. Both organisations shall abide by and give their backing to the ordinances of the Council of Aragón in this connection.

Both organisations shall respect the free decision of the peasants to administer themselves as they may see fit, though this does not inhibit a campaign to disseminate collectivism being undertaken through the unions with a view to bringing the advantages of collectivisation to their attention. Both the CNT and the UGT shall assist and encourage freely constituted collectives, which may serve as an example for other workers and peasants.

4. The freedom of the small trader and peasant is to be respected.

5. Our organisations shall strive to supply responsible commanders with everything likely to speed the victory of the army of the people over fascism, most especially through the Council of Aragón.

6. We state clearly our repudiation of all those maverick elements who seek by violence to impose their views upon the rest. The representatives of the CNT and of the UGT declare that the right of workers to choose freely between the two organisations is to be scrupulously respected, with, as is jointly agreed, sanctions being applied to those elements which fail to honour this agreement which has been endorsed by the legitimate representatives of our union centrals.

7. Those representatives state clearly their wish to see daily closer fellowship until the day comes when we may smash everything that keeps us apart and amalgamation may be achieved.

8. Joint meetings shall be organised at which the workers shall be informed of these agreements happily arrived at for the benefit of the working class.

This pact on unity of action is to be printed and disseminated widely for the information of all of the memberships of our organisations and of the anti-fascist people generally.

Signed – Miguel Valejo, Antonio Ejarque and Manuel López (for the CNT) and Melaquíás Gil, José Ruiz Borao, Francisco Vayo (for the UGT).’

We would do well to bear the provisions of this agreement in mind for when we come to tackle the chapter on the political counter-revolution mounted in Aragón a few months later, something which was to demonstrate the emptiness of written undertakings when these are not inspired by an elementary sense of decency, honour and sincerity.

## Chapter Three: The shadow of the Kremlin

Following the thread of events, we shall now glance at developments in the republican zone. A dispatch from the Cosmos news agency datelined 1 January 1937 had this to say:

‘The CNT National Committee has issued the following public statement:

“There have been a number of incidents involving comrades from our organisation and this, together with the need to maintain the bloc of the struggle against fascism, has led to the PCE’s central committee and the CNT’s National Committee establishing contact to work out some formula by which to avoid the repetition of incidents like the one we deplore, from which each of the organisations we represent has emerged damaged. The following conditions have been agreed upon:

First: That no attempt may be made to smash the anti-fascist front on any party-political grounds, by anyone.

Second: If it is to be maintained, then the propaganda conducted by each of us needs to remain within the parameters of cordiality amid which issues should be mooted. This should not prevent us from propagating and defending our respective doctrinal points of view, provided that this is done with the restraint that one expects during a time of collaboration.

Third: That whatever incidents should arise must be speedily addressed from within the organisations themselves. If, in the locality concerned, it should not prove possible to discover common ground, the responsible organisms should be appealed to, so that the organisations, by means of their intervention, may avert any worsening of the situation.

We regard the three points above as sufficiently informative for everyone to know what procedure to follow, and we urge the members of both organisations to use every means to avoid violent incidents and clashes which benefit only our common foe and, lest such be brought about, to shun the adoption of positions or the perpetration of actions likely to breach the unity which ought to govern all our actions.

We trust that the understanding, good judgement and goodwill of all will bring to an end these conflicts which bring about so much havoc and claim so many victims.”

The incidents alluded to in this document are undoubtedly those which occurred in Madrid at the end of December 1936, involving the Stalinist Yagüe, a delegate on the Madrid Defence Junta, and which led to the reprisal killings of several CNT members and to a slander campaign against the CNT, waged by the Stalinist press with occasional help from some within the PSOE.

To get some idea of Stalinist duplicity one need only note that at the time when the seal was being set upon the above undertaking, the Madrid daily newspaper CNT found itself obliged to reply to a manifesto launched by the PCE in the following manner:

‘We have read this manifesto from beginning to end. Even its innuendo failed to break our self-control, and much less were we moved by these false words: “Today more than ever, we say again, unity, unity, unity”. Now then, these words, which fail to move us precisely because we know that they are insincere, shall serve us as the basis for our retort.

Let those who seek the unity of the proletariat desist from churning out their lies and slanders about the Yagüe episode; those who wish a united proletariat do not level false accusations at a revolutionary organisation like the CNT, nor do they capitalise upon the blood that a comrade has shed in order to engage in a campaign with political overtones. Those who desire the workers’ revolutionary alliance have no ambition to see a political party set itself up as the supreme guide and leader of a people.

The PCE’s manifesto strikes us as completely slipshod. We see in it, as we have in many another move, the ambition to raise an unbreachable wall between the CNT and the UGT. There are those who, seeing the deep-rooted independence of our organisation, nurture the ambition of isolating it so as to destroy it anon, and there is no shortage of those who imagine that the UGT whose contact with politics has endowed it with a special character, may, if today it can be separated from our organisation, be used by them tomorrow as a trampoline for all their ambitions.

As against this intent, the workers of both trade union organisations reassert their commitment to alliance and say that no one and nothing will succeed in upsetting the concord that exists between them. We are authentic revolutionaries. There can be only one warning for those who exploit the regrettable incident which threatened the life of Yagüe, whether these be in the CNT or in the UGT — provocations will be cast aside.’

There was thrust and counter-thrust in more vitriolic exchanges lamenting the agreement in principle between the CNT and the UGT, in communiqués and editorials. The CNT press carried glowingly optimistic reports about this aspect of the unity of the proletariat. The ideological concessions made by the CNT went beyond the pale of generosity:

‘At the bottom of the Marxist and the anarcho-syndicalist doctrine,’ said an editorial in the Barcelona edition of *Solidaridad Obrera* of 12 January 1937, ‘there is a common corpus of thought founded upon the unions’ being equipped to manage the economy and the life of the nation.’

The awful onslaught to which Madrid was subjected by the insurgents, reinforced by the ‘blond Moors’ (a nickname which the people of Madrid hung on Hitler’s legionaries) struck anguish into the heart of the true anti-fascist.

The drama in Madrid gave a fillip to the campaign in favour of unity, which waxed extremely lyrical in some statements made by Federica Montseny and which were syndicated by the oft-cited Cosmos agency:

‘She says that the literal meaning of democracy has never been so astutely interpreted as it is now in Spain. Nor had the world ever been shown such an example of

harmonious coexistence of political and trade union forces united by a shared love of liberty and advocacy of fundamental human rights. World fascism has made all of this possible. The finding of a rescue formula which tomorrow may ensure continuity and give shape to Spain's new political and social order is something which preoccupies all republicans, even us anarchists.

Politically it is precisely we militants of the CNT who were the first to speak of what we regard as an unspoken condition of a truly democratic structure for Spain; a federal republic, with autonomy for mutually federated regions making up a Socialist Republican Federation of Iberia. From the economic angle, there must be progress towards the National Federation of Industries, with the creation of economic management organs to devise a national programme designed to sustain the war and Spain's reconstruction in the wake of victory. A programme of national dimensions, to regulate the needs of production and consumption, effected through industrial federations — which the CNT is going to put speedily into practice. In accordance with the decisions taken at the national congress of 1931, we must work tirelessly towards unification of the CNT with the UGT.

Was a period of concord truly beginning?

To show that there was no possibility of a truce with the communists, nor any amending of their ways, but rather that they had an insatiable appetite for hegemony at any price, and setting aside the constant wrangling underway in Catalonia, the Spanish press on 24 February made public a letter from the UGT's general secretariat to the minister of the interior. Here is the text of that communication:

'For some time now here there have been arrests of organisation and party comrades, only for the authorities to deny any knowledge of their whereabouts, even though unofficially the location of the detainees is no secret. We are not aware of other elements being arrested, and before addressing ourselves to you we alerted the appropriate authority — Largo Caballero — to the fact that we deem the continuation of certain forms of behaviour as ill-advised. If the wish is that everyone should act within the law then everyone should begin to do so, and of course — the state, which is the paymaster, has a right to be well served (we volunteer our services) but in this regard is not being so served. That there should be secret services, hot pursuit of the Fifth Column, and intelligence services is all very well, but let all this be done officially by the General Directorate of Security. For now we state that the state is not being served. Apart from which, we need to say something more which prudence commends silence about, but let this not be the practice only where no resistance is offered because of an innate attitude of support for the government. There are too many secret bureaux. One might say, as we Valencians do, that they are an open secret (*que son el secret de les sarries*). There are many of these young people who are useless and would be better employed on trench construction. In short we ask but one thing: in matters of public order, one General Directorate of Security only. Fewer arrests of UGT and socialist personnel.'

This mysterious text introduces our reader to one of the most shadowy of episodes: the episode of the secret Stalinist checas. But before plunging into those murky waters, let us report on the

arbitrary treatment meted out to the CNT commander Francisco Maroto. The instigator of the victimisation was then the governor of the province of Almería, Gabriel Morón, an artful Moscow loyalist posing as a republican. The whole affair can be traced to the Stalinists' proselytising drive among the cadres of the original militias, and, later on, among the officers and NCO's of the Popular Army. Dogged efforts were made to bring disrepute and then disgrace to those officers and commissars who turned a deaf ear to the proselytising and corruptive overtures made by the Kremlin's envoys; this would be followed by their being tried and demoted. Such efforts increased in accordance with the popularity of those they were trying to recruit, or, as the case might be, neutralise. The circumstances surrounding Maroto's arrest and trial are clearly spelled out in his defence plea published as an article on 16 April.

Under the caption 'I demand proof. — Replying to certain slanderous allegations', Maroto wrote in *Solidaridad Obrera*:

'I have read, with outrage naturally, the interview given by Gabriel Morón to an editor of *Nuestra Lucha* and which was included in the editorial for the 7th of this month. I was overcome by loathing and revulsion, such as this insidious and false attack could not but provoke in me, and I read it through, firmly resolving to make due reply and to demand proof, to insist that we find out where each of us stands, and that punishment be meted out wherever due, for there is no way that I am about to put up with a situation where that which has been said about me should go unpunished.

The aim has been to shroud information about me with an atmosphere of histrionics. It is a tale with all the sensation-seeking of the penny dreadful genre. Innuendo is obscured by eye-catching headlines about issues unrelated to us. In some cases, the truth of the claims that are made is far from certain, in others we dispute their authenticity with all of the force of reason and truth.

In the first place, it is said that I was in cahoots with certain rebel elements which met in Gibraltar, for the purpose of disturbing public order in Almería, thereby paving the way for the entry of rebel forces into the city, once they had taken Málaga. This allegation is of such gravity that one cannot simply make it and leave it at that: it has to be followed up with solid and categorical proof. Accusations of such import and seriousness cannot be let slip as asides, but must be substantiated and proven so that not the shadow of a doubt remains. Let me assure you from these pages that this allegation, in so far as it refers to me, is utterly false, and I challenge Gabriel Morón to substantiate it.

Secondly, "that seemingly I enjoyed ready access to Granada". This too is untrue. I have proof aplenty of the falseness of this allegation. If anyone has entered Granada — and not once have I done so — the high command of the relevant sector should know the reason why and be aware of the service rendered by the selfless comrades who rendered such services by gambling and obviously risking their lives. I cannot be any more fulsome on this point, for I have to bear in mind the discretion infringed by one who had a duty to observe it, and heaven forefend that what had been achieved hitherto may become impracticable hereafter. Anyway, had I had such ease of entry into Granada, I would have brought my family with me: others did so, or some

exchange might have been arranged . . . something which, properly handled, I may yet bring off, but which I have not because such dealings have always been repugnant to my conscience as a free man.

As witnesses to what I say, I cite all the men, Confederation members or not, who have fought and are fighting on the Granada front. But, furthermore, my mother, my brother, the Inspector of Provisions, my sister-in-law and my two nephews aged 14 and 11 live in Granada. My brother was murdered by the fascist rabble in the first days of the revolt, my mother suffered torment and daily ill-treatment at the hands of this scum every time that I spoke over the radio or my column attacked. The persecution of my loved ones got worse. My sister-in-law presently works in a foundry where she earns 2.50 pesetas for working around the clock. With that miserable sum she has to support a family of four.

I likewise defy Morón to substantiate his claims and to retract those which I have refuted. The third allegation mooted against me, and false like the other two before it, is that, in the vicinity of Motril, a group of horsemen clashed with some of the Governor of Almería's boys, wounding some of these and stealing a car from them. I have no idea whether or not these facts are correct, but I absolutely deny that these horsemen belonged, as is falsely alleged, to my column. Remember that it — the column — was operating in mountains 2,000 and 1,500 metres in height, where cavalry would have been wholly ineffective and, for this reason, there never was any in the column which carries my name, it being made up exclusively of infantry. Outstanding witnesses to this fact are the military authorities of the Gaudix sector, where the column always operated. Quackery is a poor trade: and it brings no credit on him who follows it. Again, I defy Morón to substantiate his allegations. Talk is cheap, but he who talks without being able to prove his words stands exposed as a liar.

Lastly he says that my column quit the front to go down to Almería. Another lie. Not one single man budged from his combat position. The high command of the Gaudix sector knows this to be so, and I defer to its expert testimony on this particular.

Let us now speak of the reply inserted into the editorial of *Nuestra Lucha* in its issue of the 9th of this month, a reply directed to our own *Confederación* of Murcia. I will be brief. No, you editors of *Nuestra Lucha*. That is not the way you go about it. I am an anarchist, a member of the Confederation and at no time have I ever been a traitor. If we are not to regard it as beneath contempt, this snide form of making comparisons and holding up examples requires necessary proof. You must know, once and for all, that I am the equal in dignity of our late brother Durruti and may be the equal of the most dignified of men. Odious comparisons I do not accept: before these can be drawn, I insist on them being demonstrated. Over to you.

I also have to tell you 'dear comrades', that I do not need you to vouch for me, since my conduct is wholly clean and honourable and that is my guarantee against any slander and so much falsehood. Be that as it may, my thanks to you for your 'kindness'.



In reply to your wily questions and so that your doubts may cease once and for all, let me enlighten you to the fact that my stay in Almería was purely accidental. I was returning from a trip to Barcelona, where I had gone to negotiate the dispatch of 5,000 hand grenades and other war materials and, on passing through Almería, the Andalusian Regional Committee which was in that city, asked me to speak at a rally planned and organised by that committee. I acceded to that request. At the meeting, I spoke some blunt truths, calling a spade a spade. Is this clear?

You state that I am no Napoleon. I have never, so far as I am aware, claimed to be one; I am happy to be what I am. However, I recall and give thanks for certain reports in your newspaper wherein you stated that I performed my duty and — I must confess — such a vote of confidence filled my modesty with pride. I look for no greater reward than the satisfaction of duty done.

Now more than ever it is clear that my confinement was the result of political intrigue: as witness the slanders and phoney allegations directed at me by Gabriel Morón. In consequence, I should like the CNT National Committee and the FAI peninsula committee to appoint a lawyer to issue an appropriate writ against Morón, before the appropriate court so that there, with the reassurance and guarantee of the judgment of my peers, the truth or falsehood of the allegations made against me may be established, and culpability determined.

I appeal to the Minister of Justice in turn to appoint a special judge to take a hand in this affair and shed some light on it, so that a precedent may thus be established to the effect that no one has authority to set his tongue wagging to the detriment of the reputation of his fellows. It is my belief that there will be no need to dwell upon this episode and that the elementary principles of justice, whose observance is ineluctable in these present times, will be satisfied. For today, this is sufficient.

The Machine-Gunner Barracks — Almería, 12 April 1937.’

Francisco Maroto was released on provisional liberty on 1 May — apparently on the instructions of the Ministry of Justice.

In mid-April the CNT National Committee had published the following note by way of a reply to the statements of Morón, the civil governor, who was, as we have seen, the prime instigator of the detention of Maroto:

‘The press startles us with some statements by Morón, the incumbent governor of Almería, wherein, in the most irresponsible and provocative way possible, a heap of insults is spewed out and the CNT labelled as fascist. We are not about to sink to the same depths as someone who, oblivious of his duty, has ventured to produce in public the apple of discord and confusion. But we have an obligation to spell out the real facts, briefly.

We shall gloss over the boastful tones of the words of someone who, in October let himself be taken with a half dozen bombs in his barn. Nor shall we discuss his sublime “heroism” in styling himself “the rescuer from the debacle” and the man who prevented Almería falling into rebel hands: heroism and daring he is willing to share

with “the sole defenders of the situation”, the JSU. Let us move on to what is for us the meatier parts.

1. “Was Málaga sold out?” “By whom?”, we ask. Morón, a civil governor to boot, has an obligation to abide by the decisions of the government, which is what he ought to represent — we say ‘ought’, because we can tell you that he has not done so — and he is perfectly well aware that the government immediately appointed a Commission of Inquiry. And he knows that the Commission has been working and works still to clarify the facts — seeking to apportion the responsibilities, so to proceed unmercifully against anyone who may appear to be implicated in the loss of Málaga. So Morón is in no position to make allegations like he has done, it being the government’s place to do so. And he, as a mere functionary, should have kept his mouth shut.

2. If “there was play at revolution” in Málaga, and if there were “too many committees”, this is something which is not for him to reveal. When the right time comes, he will be able to demonstrate with details aplenty and documents WHO WERE THE COMMITTEES, WHAT ORGANISATION THEY WERE FROM, and WHO WAS PLAYING AT REVOLUTION. We, with a greater sense of responsibility than Morón, have held our tongues and stay silent still, believing that this is not the time to make public what happened in Málaga since 19 July, in that this would only lead to the break-up of the anti-fascist bloc. Above and beyond everything else, we want to maintain unity so as to crush fascism, even though it cost us morsels of our very existence, as has been happening since the historic day of the military revolt.

3. The rally which took place in Almería WAS AUTHORISED BY THE CIVIL GOVERNMENT, AS WE CAN DEMONSTRATE WITH DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE. This is something which the governor in his haste has omitted to mention in creating the impression that it was an act of violence.

4. If Maroto entered Granada it was because he has been more capable than Morón in closing with the enemy and taking him on in battle. And he cannot raise the matter with the churlish intention of fostering the impression that comrade Maroto was in fascism’s service. Morón knows the circumstances in which anyone may have entered Granada, just as there are those who have entered other places which he, “the hero of Almería” would be incapable of gaining entry to.

Finally, let us conclude by affirming that comrade Maroto may have performed thoughtless acts, but what no one can doubt is that he is a revolutionary and an honest anti-fascist. We vouch for that, and so do the thousands of comrades who know him and who have served with him, and so do the authentic people of Alicante who have lived with him. He may have made mistakes since 19 July, but there is no doubt that for anti-fascism he has done more than the “MORÓNS OF THE REARGUARD” WHO ARE CAPABLE ONLY OF SOWING DISCORD.

We say no more because we are leaving it up to the appropriate persons to enforce the immediate sanction which someone as irresponsible as Morón deserves — his irresponsibility made all the worse by the position that he occupies, which should have made him weigh his words more carefully.

We regard the above as enough for everyone to know now whom to heed.'

At the height of Mola's offensive against Bilbao, the CNT newspaper *Castilla Libre* of Madrid was confiscated after it carried details about the murder of six workers in Torres de la Alameda. The confiscation turned into a suspension order that affected the newspaper *CNT* and the Iron Column's Valencia-based publication, *Nosotros*, something which *Soli* condemned on 16 January 1937:

'Yesterday *Castilla Libre* was suspended because it exposed, with proof, the murders of CNT workers in some Castilian villages at the hands of elements which pompously describe themselves as 'controllables' (*controlados*). Yesterday a platoon of guards, surrounding the printing works where CNT is printed, prevented our confederation's organ from making contact with the people of Madrid by suspending it. And yesterday too, the anarchist newspaper *Nosotros* was likewise suspended by government order.'

Two days previously, the newspaper *Nosotros* had written:

'As recently as yesterday our ears were ringing to the welter of objections to the unfairness of censorship in any form. Today, as if it were yesterday and allegedly out of concern about this war, every letter arriving from abroad and those sent abroad from inside this country is subject to censorship. As we said, this is justified by reference to the wartime circumstances; but something of which we were still ignorant is the fact that Catalonia lies beyond the borders of Spain. Eight days ago our entire correspondence with Catalonia reached us after a delay varying between four and six days. This is simply intolerable. Why this censorship of correspondence that does not even come from the battle front? Today as yesterday, arbitrariness has the upper hand. What this is and how to react to it remains to be seen, since we are not disposed to countenance it. Do we need to fall back upon our own resources, by organising a mail service of our very own?'

A *propos* of what had been going on in the villages of Castile, which lay behind the suspension of *Castilla Libre* and *CNT* of Madrid, the latter newspaper on the very eve of its being suspended had published the following:

'What has been going on in Torres de Alameda, in Villanueva de Alcardete, in Pedro Muñoz, in Puebla de Almenara, in Villa de don Fadrique, in Corral de Almaguer, in Villamayor de Santiago and many other villages in Castile? Numerous CNT workers, upstanding workers, have been murdered and in the majority of cases, those murders have been committed by scum bearing the PCE card. The central committee of that party, and not just Mundo Obrero any more, has an obligation to say that which has not been said so far: whether it approves or condemns such crimes. Until such time as it does so pronounce, and until such time as it speaks out definitely about this matter, neither Mundo Obrero nor the PCE's central committee has the authority to bandy words with the editors of the CNT press.'

In late April, the sadly notorious Cazorla affair — which was one of the factors which led the central government to dissolve the Madrid Defence Junta — broke the surface of the stinking lake of politics.

Cazorla was the councillor in charge of public order on that junta. Needless to say, he was a fervent Stalinist. At his instructions the police detained a youth by the name of Ricardo Pintado Fe, who, it transpired was the nephew of the under-secretary for justice, Mariano Sánchez Roca. For seventy days the whereabouts of the youth was unknown and he was assumed dead. Not that he was a fascist; very far from it indeed. The special delegate for prisons, the CNT member Melchor Rodríguez, took it upon himself to investigate this mysterious episode and, by the ruse of passing himself off as a communist, discovered where the kidnap victim was being held. This was in a *checa* that had been set up in the Fernández de la Hoz Street. Now in possession of specific details regarding the place where young Pintado was being detained, Melchor Rodríguez turned to the councillor for public order who, in the face of the evidence, had no option but to acknowledge this and take steps connected with the whole episode.

On 20 April the following exposé, endorsed by Melchor Rodríguez in person, was made public through the CNT press:

‘Lest this piece become interminable through the inclusion of quotations and copies of documents exchanged between Cazorla as delegate for Public Order and myself as special delegate for prisons, a propos of the order issued by the said Cazorla regarding the removal from the government’s prisons of persons absolved by the popular tribunals after their own having been interned by him, only for these to be taken, by means of subterfuge and secret verbal orders issued to agents at his command, to clandestine prisons and to battalions of communist militias, there to be moved up into front lines for deployment in the erection of fortifications . . . (according to him). I hereby declare that I am ready to appear before the responsible authorities and committees to demonstrate by word and document the ‘dismal’ (*funesta*) policy pursued from the office of the councillor for Public Order in Madrid by Santiago Carrillo and Serrano Poncela, first of all, and by José Cazorla latterly. The last-named above all has revived the old methods of the savages Martínez Anido and Arlegui in such a way that, in the estimation of thousands upon thousands of level-headed persons whose attachment to the lawful anti-fascist regime is beyond all question, he is, by his pernicious endeavours bringing dishonour upon the government of the Republic, not to mention the war and the revolution which the people is mounting so as to make a transformation of everything old, unjust and cruel, by means of noble, honourable methods and processes of lofty humane justice which, in the eyes of the nations of the world as a whole, may serve as an indication of how all we Spaniards who have formed a phalanx in support of the republican system which the people has adopted for itself, defend our lawfully won rights with heads held high and with clean hands (once the first days of the fascist uprising are over).

As the enclosed documentation includes evidence of abuses perpetrated by the ‘communist’ and Stalinised hordes displaying police warrant cards and credentials and at the express orders of councillor Cazorla, I must confine my present note to an accompaniment to a affidavit to how, in the communist checas, which have become clandestine prisons, men and women are held sequestered for days, weeks and months

on the basis of simple denunciations, whether phoney or genuine, on which basis all sorts or personal outrages contrary to the most elementary intention of the law, written and human, are committed. The case which I cite, perpetrated against the person of a nephew of the current under-secretary of justice, Mariano Sánchez Roca, thanks to my overtures to Cazorla and to my having passed myself off as a communist — to which end I adopted an assumed name, for the purpose of establishing by telephone that the aforementioned nephew of Sánchez Roca, a young man whom we had given up for dead, was indeed being detained on the premises of Radio Comunista at no. 7, Fernández de la Hoz Street, and the upshot . . . the upshot was, as I say, that the letter I sent to Cazorla did its job and — after 68 days! Ricardo Pintado Fe, for such was the name of the young youth of whom I speak, was set free.

To this I append my signature, assuming responsibility for all that I say and I am ready to expand upon it whenever I may be required to do so.

Here is the letter to which I have alluded:

“Comrade Cazorla, councillor of Public Order. Friend and comrade Cazorla: Some time ago I spoke with you and handed over to you a letter and photograph complete with precise details concerning a 21-year-old young communist, a member of the party since 1 July last year, and who belongs to the 5th Regiment and is nephew to under-secretary of Justice Mariano Sánchez Roca. The lad in question (as I told you and as I tell you again) is detained at no. 7, Fernández de la Hoz Street where he has spent 68 days to date. Sánchez Roca is constantly pressing me to see to it that Ricardo Pintado Fe (such being the youth’s name) is made available to you or to the court authorities. Thus, I made overtures to you, though there has thus far been no reply from you to the wishes of our comrade Sánchez Roca. I have just this minute finished a telephone call to the house in question and the person in charge of that establishment (presently a supply depot) tells me that, in point of fact, Ricardo Pintado Fe is still in detention there, but in the charge of no. 1, Marqués de Riscal Street.

Would you be so kind as to effect a just solution to this burdensome business so that I may accede to the wishes of comrade Sánchez Roca?

I will be much indebted to you.

Your good friend and comrade. — Melchor Rodríguez (sealed).

Palace of Justice, 28 February 1937.”

Cazorla’s response was as follows:

“Comrade Melchor Rodríguez. Dear friend and comrade: citizen Ricardo Pintado Fe, in whom you have repeatedly shown an interest, was yesterday retrieved and returned to his home.

In communicating this welcome news to you, I embrace you cordially — J. Cazorla.”

We have indicated that the Cazorla episode, one of the many that exacerbated the antagonisms between the parties, was the straw that broke the camel’s back as far as the fate of the Madrid Defence Junta was concerned. Here is the decree dissolving the Junta, published on 23 April 1937:

‘THE PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND WAR MINISTER TO THE GENERAL IN COMMAND OF THE FIELD ARMY OF THE CENTRE. —

Most excellent sir, Madrid council being due to constitute itself on the 24th of this month, that council will thereafter assume charge of those functions covered by the needs and resources of the municipality. As far as government authority is concerned, this is to be wielded in every province by agencies answerable to the Ministry of the Interior.

In the light of this, I hereby bring your excellency’s attention to the fact that the orders of 6 November and 6 December 1936, issued by my authority and communicated to your excellency on the same dates, are thus amended in the manner implied by the foregoing clause. Thus the jurisdiction of your command is limited to strictly military organs and consists solely of the leadership of the campaign army of the Centre.

By virtue of all of the foregoing, your excellency’s person is relieved of the exercise of authority in civilian matters and, as such, of the functions delegated by the government to the person of the commander of the Madrid military command. This relief, in turn, will have to imply the dissolution of the Defence Junta of Madrid, whose members have been assisting your excellency in governmental matters through the direct delegation of your authority.

The Madrid military zone is to be that portion of the city which lies to the west of the following north-south line: Bravo Murillo Street, San Bernardo Square, San Bernardo Street, Santo Domingo Square, Campomanes Street, Fermín Galán Square, Espejo Street, Milanese Street, Mayor Street, Ciudad Rodrigo Street, Mayor Square, Toledo Street, Estudios Street, Salmerón Street, Curtidores Bank, Legazpi Street, the Andaluca Bridge and the Manzanares river.

As your excellency surrenders the powers delegated to him by the government, I must convey to you the gratitude of the Council of Ministers and my own personal thanks for the acumen, energy and unselfishness with which you have at all times aided the public authorities — a thanks which I ask you to communicate to your collaborators, the members of the junta sharing your authority

— Valencia, 21 April 1937; the President of the Council of Ministers and Minister of War, **Francisco Largo Caballero**.’

In point of fact, the *Gaceta* that same day published an ordinance from the Interior Ministry ordering that the Madrid city council be formed on the basis of 31 councillors. That ordinance allocated the seats as follows:

- UGT 6 councillors
- CNT 6 councillors
- PSOE 6 councillors
- PCE 5 councillors
- FAI 1 councillor
- Izquierda Republicana 1 councillor
- Unión Republicana 2 councillors

Izquierda Federal 1 councillor  
Partido Sindicalista 1 councillor  
JSU 1 councillor  
FIJL 1 councillor  
Republican Youth 1 councillor

On 23 April, after publication of the above decree and while the councillors were going their separate way, and blaming one another for the downfall of the Defence Junta, a fresh scandal erupted, as some newspapers were to report — among them the Madrid dailies *Castilla Libre* and *El Socialista*. The scandal concerned the discovery of a whole series of outrages perpetrated by the Murcian *checas*.

*Castilla Libre* reported:

‘We have not and will not oppose the shooting of any fascist, whoever he may be. But we will always be against the torturing of anyone prior to the exemplary justice being inflicted upon him which the people requires and cries out for. But in Murcia it emerges that the victims of the torture were not fascists only. Persons belonging to revolutionary organisations and Popular Front parties were sadistically tortured in the notorious clandestine dungeons of Murcia. And even a comrade from the CNT — and not one whose membership dates from after 19 July, but one who was a member from well before the military revolt — endured the ghastly torment of having his eyes gouged out before vanishing, so that no one may know where his poor martyred body could have wound up.’

This is the view of *El Socialista*:

‘Aside from the monstrousness, in terms of the dictates of conscience, of countenancing such justice (if we may so call it), of what use then are the judicial agencies empowered to dispense it? On this matter, we acknowledge no quibbles, no excuses of any sort. Offenders may and must be tried exclusively by the competent courts. And the verdict issued by the courts is the only one which can prevail. The thought that a sentence of death may be passed does not make cowards of us. But what does affront us is that some thugs, whatever they may call themselves, setting themselves up as a Committee of Public Safety, should dedicate themselves, acting upon their own authority, to enforcing punishments which have the endorsement of no official organism. Nor will we countenance the possible existence of police agencies operating beyond the control of the government authorities, on the pretext — for we suppose that this will be the pretext — that it is vitally necessary that the rearguard be cleaned up. Clean it up? Sure: the rearguard needs cleaning up, but clearing it up of these mavericks who award themselves a status that they do not have and which we, at any rate, cannot acknowledge as theirs.’

So what had happened in Murcia? Let us allow *Cartagena Nueva*, the CNT’s own organ in that province, to explain the facts. The report we reproduce below from *Cartagena Nueva* did not reach the public as most of this edition was seized by the police.

Here is the grisly item in its entirety:

‘The *checa* commenced its operations at a time when Luis Cabo Giorla held the position of civil governor in the province. That unlamented Pontious Pilate’s offensive against the technical personnel of CNT obliged us to scrutinise his work more closely. The upshot of this was the discovery of a torture ‘bureau’ in Trinquete Street. The boss of that *checa* was a police commissar whose place was taken later on by Torrecillas, the one-time druggist and amateur torturer. Shortly afterwards, the *checa* began operating in Frenería Street. As the chief of police did not enjoy his full confidence, he sent to Cartagena for Commissar Argimino who placed himself at his direct command. Thus was born the Murcian *checa*.

A TORTURE VICTIM’S STORY: — This we are going to pass on to the courts. In it we shall find statements from several of those tortured by these card-carrying inquisitors. The victims are many, but for today we shall confine ourselves to transcribing the statement of José María García Serrano. That comrade states:

“At 11 a.m. on 12 March, two policemen turned up at the Treasury Department where I was working and told me that I was being arrested TO HELP WITH THEIR INQUIRIES. They took me to the civil government. They led me into an office in the main building, on the left. In that office I was received by one Torrecillas who, with a smile on his lips, asked my name. When I told him my name he put his arms about my throat and said: ‘Hello, my dear friend Serrano! How goes it? How are you?’ He led me into a room adjoining the one I was in. There, there was a chair. Torrecillas gazed at me. All of a sudden he punched me in the chest and forced me into the chair saying:

‘Sit there!’

He said nothing else to me. Then turning to a youth who was seated at a table, between two telephones, he ordered:

‘Listen, treat this lad well: if perchance he should get insolent or annoy you, give him a boot in the privates.’

Off went Torrecillas, leaving me faced with the young man to whom he had issued such amiable instructions. They paraded me before a succession of persons whom I did not know. They all stared at me and hurled the most cutting names in my face. The one who most insulted me was the governor’s secretary, a certain Carpena, who, getting on like a thug and a bully, and after railing most outrageously and foully against my mother exclaimed:

‘You’re going to sing out loud and clear tonight, if you value your life.’

Torrecillas came and went between the office and the room in which I was. Not once did he pass through without regaling me with one of his delightful comments and, especially, without loosing off one of his ‘welcome’ caresses across my face. One time the civil governor came up to me. I remember it well. He put some sharp questions to me. He asked me about the political affiliations of Eusebio Chico de Guzmán, Joaquín Hernández Ros, José Pérez García, Esteban Abad y Sicilia and Basilio Galindo Martín. I remember that at one point he asked me:



‘Why did you go over to the CNT?’

I replied that I did not know the motives they might expect for joining that union grouping. I could set mine out and these were quite simply that I believed, honestly, that that organisation’s approach struck me as the one best suited to achieving the utter emancipation of the working class. To my answers, the governor retorted that I could say whatever I liked. That we believed we had contrived to settle our accounts with the people by carrying the CNT card, but that this would merely delay the people’s justice as embodied by him.

While the governor was speaking, one group of individuals drew their pistols and began to scrutinise the barrels, aiming them at my face. Throughout, I could hear screams coming from a room adjoining the one I was in. Those cries made my blood curdle. I can recall them exactly:

‘Stop, murderers! You’re killing me! I’m bleeding to death! Get me out of here!’

And then a hoarse, commanding voice, shouting:

‘Shut up, dog! Shut up or I’ll have your life!’

At 7.30 p.m., the civil governor again approached the chair I was in and asked me if I had ever been a member of any anti-republican groups. I quickly replied in the negative and he retorted, infuriated:

‘You’re a bunch of . . .! None of you wants to make a statement. We’ll see how you feel about it later on!’

And he ordered me: ‘Proceed’. They led me into a large hall. The governor stepped into earshot and said to me:

‘We’re going to make it hot for you. You could avoid all this if you were to “sing”.’

I was terrified. They were all looking at me in a way that turned my blood to ice. They ordered me once again:

‘Say that you belong to *Socorro Blanco* (White Aid)’.

I refused. That I could not say for it was untrue. In view of my answer, they told me, in tones of anger:

‘Tonight we’ll be taking you for a “stroll”.’

They took me out of the office and bundled me into a police van. From there, I was transferred into a private car that set off at speed. They took me to the cemetery and lined me up against the wall. In that position, I was subjected to an interrogation that I will never forget. To every question, I answered no, that I knew nothing. They tried to get me to accuse the leading personnel of the confederal organisation in Murcia. I refused. I saw the end of my life approaching and I imagined that even were I to try to save

myself by turning informer against some innocent person, these people would kill me just the same. I was strong enough and I spilled the beans about no one, for there was no one I could spill the beans about. From there, they took me to the nearby hill called Cabeza Cortada. They interrogated me again. I don't believe I need go into the torment, the torture, the threats and blows meted out to me between questions and answers.

'We want to know more about the leaders of *Socorro Blanco* and *Falange Española*.'

I replied that I knew nothing. They turned me to face the wall and I could hear them perfectly as they cocked their pistols. Torrecillas said to me:

'You've five minutes left to live. You can still save yourself if you talk. Think about that.'

I said nothing. I was demented by so much torment. I still cannot comprehend how I withstood so much pain. Torrecillas began a countdown:

'One, two, three . . . fifteen . . . twenty . . .'

The seconds were counted away. Suddenly I heard . . . 'Fire!'. And a volley of shots behind me. Terrified, I ran my hands over my body. Abruptly, with a shove, they made me turn my face:

'Won't talk?'

'No', I answered. 'I can't talk about anything or anyone. I cannot accuse anyone, for I know nothing'.

Whereupon they knelt me down facing the car, facing the blazing headlights. There they set about interrogating me again. Again, I said nothing. All of a sudden, they began shooting. I saw bullets ricochet all around me. Eventually, they got back into the car and told me that 'they would dump me on the highway'. We reached the Civil Governor's office. They forced me into the chair. This was the most horrific time that these wretches made me go through. A door opened and there appeared before me a young man hobbling on some crutches. I heard him moan and sob. I raised my eyes and saw that his eye-sockets were empty.

'See that?', Torrecillas said to me. 'You'll end up the same way if you don't talk'.

At midnight, they set me free. A policeman escorted me as far as my house. I was obliged to make daily visits to the home of an agent by the name of Fernández Ruíz. They tortured me again there. One time they twisted my arms until my bones creaked. As a result of so much pain, so

much torment, I signed a written document that they showed me. I do not know what it said. I suppose it will be some unwitting declaration. I swear that if I made any accusations, the one I accused is innocent. I signed that paper, as I would as easily have signed my own death warrant.”

THE CULPRITS IN PRISON: — Yesterday, on the orders of the court, the following surveillance agents and rearguard police were arrested and returned for trial... Ramón Torrecillas Guijarro, one of the bosses of the *checa* and police agent (third class) who entered the force in November last; Domingo Ranchal Garrio, another *chekist* boss, the terror of the detainees in his care and the instigator and organiser of torture...Angel Sánchez Larrosa, Emiliano Alonso Moreno, Mariano Caravaca Botis, all of them implicated. The five persons arrested were lodged in prison yesterday evening, after making statements before investigating magistrate, Amador del Pozo.’

For its part, the CNT National Committee, through its Press and Propaganda Bureau, released a public statement headed ‘Against political terror’, on 22 April. That note was as follows:

‘We have let some days elapse since the discovery in the city of Murcia of a terrorist organisation. From day to day in the capital, which has ever been a playground of reaction and political corruption (*caciquismo*), the disappearance was being remarked of citizens, some of them non-aligned and others supporters of the regime, as well as of workers enrolled in the CNT and others.

Our organisation, the unions affiliated to the Confederation, were daily being dealt hard knocks by persons attached to a certain political sector that calls itself anti-fascist although it employs the same methods as fascism, with an eye to stamping out the revolutionary trade union energy that was starting to show itself in Murcia.

The personal safety of Murcian citizens was at the mercy of a number of contemptible creatures. The criminal vileness of creatures who took to their bosom all the unspeakable blemishes of a barbarous

past was on continual display. Anxiety and nervousness were widespread. No one in Murcia felt safe, because of the terror shown day and night by this band of common bandits and kidnappers. In 'high places', they had collaborators, perhaps even the instigators of the kidnappings and crimes perpetrated. Until one day, when life there had become impossible, there arose a band of valiant men, high-minded sons of the people who took it upon themselves to investigate the cause of this perversion. And they have uncovered it.

Between the 8th and 10th of this month, the main protagonists of the murderous gang were arrested; according to a document endorsed by the Popular Front, the FIJL, the provincial committee and CNT local federation, these "belonged to a certain political faction which bids fair to burst our eardrums with its calls for responsibility and a single command, which it wants others to observe, though it besmirches all those watchwords whenever the chance arises to exterminate its neighbour."

We expected a disavowal through the press from the political party to which the members of the *checa* operating in Murcia with the connivance of the governor belong.

We have seen nothing of the sort and for this reason we are breaking our silence to warn those who seek to import dictatorial political systems and "made in all countries" terror from abroad that they are on the wrong road, for the Spanish people does not possess the soul of a slave, and will never tolerate its fate being determined by stupidity and ineptitude.

We are driving invaders from our sacred soil and we will repel those who, with frightening tales, may seek to saddle us with useless systems that, in any case, are at odds with the temperament of our race.

In Murcia a tribunal was operating that was akin to the Inquisition tribunals installed by Pedro de Arbúes and Tomás de Torquemada.

We suppose that comrade Galarza was in ignorance of such things, for he would otherwise have

put paid to such enormities in time. But he is not in ignorance of it now, and the people of Murcia seeks justice, a justice that it cannot be denied since, were that to happen, one would have to suppose that this talk of the “Fifth column” is a fairy tale like the tales about “Sinbad the Sailor”, and that who they seek to persecute and are persecuting are men who refuse to dance to the tune of the jig being played by those who demand of others a responsibility the meaning of which they themselves are ignorant of, or perhaps know only too well.

This Press and Propaganda Bureau associates itself with the general clamour of the citizens of Murcia and joins with them to demand the implacable punishment of those who have sowed the province with pain and grief.

At the same time, so as not to waste time, we warn comrade Galarza that the *checa* is at work in many parts of Spain, of loyalist Spain, and it seems to us that the time has come to bring this persecution to an end, for unless this is done by the appropriate persons, it will be done by our unions which have an identity of their own and more than enough resources to achieve this.

We conclude. We identify with our brothers in Murcia, with all who find themselves threatened by a handful of mavericks, and we will do all within our power to bring these unacceptable and vile methods to an end.’

Even as the shadow of the Kremlin fell over Spain with the installation of checas managed by Soviet agents and the PCE, the grand inquisitor of those underground prisons, was railing against the popular tribunals.

We might write pages galore about the subject of revolutionary justice. But we shall confine ourselves to setting out a few of the facts. On 12 August 1936, Barcelona’s *Solidaridad Obrera* brought the following news to the attention of its readership . . .

‘Yesterday the celebrated journalist and lawyer Angel Samblancat took over the Palace of Justice with the intention, we suppose, of cleansing the home of bourgeois “justice”.’

Let us hear from Samblancat himself who, without abandoning the humorous style which was peculiarly his, took it upon himself to clear up the enigma in this news item:

‘Upon passing through the left-hand portal of the Palace of Justice in Barcelona on the morning of one day early in August 1936, I came across a militia leader at the head of a small band of armed men, heatedly arguing with the Civil Guard lieutenant in command of the entrance to the Palace. The exchange between the disputants was of the following tenor, more or less:

PATROL LEADER: “This is the biggest fascist hide-out in Barcelona, and I’ve come to clean it up by mounting, as you would put it, a slight policing operation, in it.”

CIVIL GUARD: “You need a warrant from the Minister for Internal Affairs before you can carry out searches in this temple of deliberations.”

PATROL MEMBER: “The biggest traitors are in the Government. I have a commission from the CCMA. I earned my spurs in the fighting on 19 July and have no time for red-tape nonsense. So I’ll be collecting all of the weapons you have hidden here and clapping in irons of all of the rogues who have been harrying the revolution from behind the barricade of their dossiers and indictments.”

I knew the fine fellow — tall and tanned, he was — who was speaking so bluntly and I ventured to intervene in the argument addressing the militiaman in friendly tones.

“Allow me, comrade. Would you suspend the mission entrusted to you for, at most, 20 minutes while I make the trip to Pedralbes and back?”

“Since it’s you, there’s no problem. But hurry it up. What I have to do will not wait.”

I told Abad de Santillán and the CNT representatives what was going on at the Palace of Justice where more than the customary number of the Civil Guard (*tricornios*) were hanging around.

“We know all about it”, they told me. “The lads are carrying out our orders. That bed of reptiles

must be fumigated, whether the Generalitat likes it or not. By the way, why don't you take that place in hand yourself? We'll appoint you to the appropriate office right away. Clear all the rats out of there for us. Take on whatever new personnel may be required. Go to the city centre office and Orts will make 30 rifles available to you. Do you have enough? They'll give you what you want. Take along your credentials and this note for Orts. Patricio Navarro will go along with you."

The people in arms set me up as arbiter of justice in Catalonia: and its will had to be done. In the Parallel, I met up with the old hands and off I set for the Palace of Justice.

"What!", exclaimed my militiaman triumphantly, upon seeing me arrive with considerable reinforcements.

"Carry on with the searches; seize any weapons you may find and arrest the scoundrels named in your list."

The Civil Guard, at the sight of the impatience of the revolution, had turned white and ended up losing the metallic ring to his voice. The litigant lawyers and other parasites who lived from the courts made for the streets, leaping begartered from windows into the square which gave on to the Hall of Saint John the Blessed. In the Recorders' offices they scrambled at a run to take down the Christ figures and portraits of the King which still adorned the offices there.

The CNT National Committee gave its approval to all that its representatives on the CCMA had done. Two delegates from the Confederation joined the Higher Council of Justice of Catalonia, which was set up on the move.

X. . . X. . . and I made up that committee. Some lawyers from the unions assisted us. I have not named them because, with the exception of Pobla-ciones, they are still alive and I have no way of knowing if a mention might cause them distress. The same goes for other venerable persons I do not know if I would displease them by naming them here.

X. . . immediately contacted La Villa who had spent her life playing the fool and who was now redder than a strawberry; and I summoned to our side the great jurist Eduardo Barriobero, who did not delay in presenting himself.

The workers' committees from the Arc del Triomf district — the Gas and Electricity Workers', the Northern Station and Port workers' committees — sent emissaries to us to indicate that their immense resources were at our disposal. Some asked us when we would be putting to the torch the archives of wickedness. When I least expected it, I imagined them burning together with togas, judge's caps, pornographic books and other finery.

The factory committee of the Hispano-Suiza plant supplied us with cars. The controllers of the Born, the central fruit and vegetable market, saw to our provisions.

Half-a-dozen narks from the Generalitat came sniffing around our business, to get the feel of what was afoot and to collect tittle-tattle to carry back to Quero Morales. There was no shortage of sniffing for them to do.

Militants turned up with armfuls of short-, long- and medium-arms collected from the vineyards of the Lord of those of the "I'm here before this court to say" persuasion — Walters, Colts, Parabellums; Belgian guns, guns from Essen, Czechoslovakian guns.

As the flag of the FAI had been unfurled over the highest point of that Bastille of privilege, the workers who passed by that sinister fortress greeted the red-black ensign with applause.

Those functionaries whom we have made situationless, bereft of their nuisance value, had one morsel in their throats that they could not swallow. My attention was drawn to an investigating judge who was watching us at our work from behind a tree in the park. That morning the entire judicial staff of the autonomous Catalonia had been abruptly decreed stood down.

An erstwhile president of the court, by now a non-entity, came to place himself under my protection.



All who entrusted themselves to us were told the same thing: “Anyone who is not an enemy of the people has nothing to fear from the people.” New suns were on the horizon, as if red hot copper were gushing out of the forge.

The government of Catalonia, without batting an eyelid, went along with the blows we dealt the caricature to which it had been reduced. Nonetheless the Generalitat ministers could not take a dim view of the earthquake that was setting the cavern of Themis a-tremble. And the fact that, out of respect for the *Usatjes*, we had not dissolved the fossil-like Court of Cassation — whose Chairman — Gubern — and one of whose stalwarts — Comas — had scarpered to run screaming for the frontier when the balloon had gone up. The other mummified corpses of that exalted Prætorship now, silent as monks, eat Francoist fare.

A new Judicial Office was set up, by order of the Generalitat, and the name of the old Catalan court system was erased, even from the very windows of our cars, something that scandalised the pious souls of the legal pettifoggers.

This absurdity was an organism of hybrid name and single chamber, which we invested with the status of a revolutionary civilian court, empowered to rescind all of the findings of the High Court petty assizes and Industrial Tribunal, wherein the rights of the unsponsored plaintiff, who was now being initiated into the ways of the law, might have been trampled underfoot.

The Generalitat appointed me as president or conductor of this Cádiz street orchestra, endowing me with powers to take on two lawyers to assist me in my rodent-control operations. The outlook was black, or chocolate-coloured when I found that there was not one deputy to assist me. The entire crew of bigwigs from the College of Advocates was hostile towards us. The law, as ever, was warped, coming down on the side of the most ratty thieves.

When I moved over to the Extraordinary Tribunal, which took a firm hand of jurisdictions military,

I was replaced as president of the Judicial Office by Eduardo Barriobero. This eminent jurist broadened the ramifications and jurisdiction of the Judicial Office, surrounding himself with a half dozen magistrates who had little liking for the stooges of scholasticism and who enjoyed the fullest confidence of the head of such an important centre.

I remember one prosecutor who, to rest on Sunday, would travel up to the Aragón front to loose off a few rounds. The rest of the week he hunted down fascists in the capital.

The rebels who were our prisoners in Madrid as well as in Barcelona were in touch with the Fifth Column on the outside and used to threaten our guards from their telephone boxes with the prospect of a general uprising.

In the elegant capital, the provocative attitude on the part of the prisoners led to the storming of the prisons and the execution by the exasperated mobs of many captives; these were to have waited upon the table set up for Mola and Queipo de Llano in the Puerta del Sol and to have done their dirty work for them. Among those shot in the Cellular Prison in Moncloa were the Asturian parrot Melquiades Álvarez, the agrarian scoundrel Martínez de Velasco and Miguel Primo de Rivera's drinking buddy, General Dabán.

The fascist prisoners in Catalonia were especially dangerous. Extraordinarily, the rebel soldiery from the Barcelona garrison who had been captured on 19 July with their still-hot weaponry in their possession were placed for safekeeping aboard the holds of the *Uruguay*, a 14,000 tonne steamship rusting, but still afloat, in one basin in the port.

In view of fears that the daring soldiery, disarming its guards and abetted by accomplices lurking along the wharfs, might escape in some launch and provoke a serious clash in Barcelona, the populace had to warn the authorities that it might sink the prison ship unless the leading lights of the mutiny of 19 July were speedily punished.

Even as those of us who had a duty to do so were considering the public outcry, a patrol of mavericks forced its way aboard the *Uruguay* and carried off General Legorburu, Colonels Moltó and Jiménez Arenas, Lieutenant-Colonel Sanfélix and other big noises from the high command of the 4th division — seven in all, I believe. Nothing more was heard of them.

Within a few days the traitor Generals Goded and Fernández Burriel as well as the military chieftains López Varela, López Belda, López Amor and Lizcano de la Rosa had been tried, condemned to death and dispatched into the very same ditch on Montjuïc that Ferrer had fallen. The famous López's came from the cankerous infantry-artillery of Barcelona while Lizcano had been another bud on that twig.

One week later, in the wake of the example set by a decree of the government of the Republic, the Generalitat set up the Popular Tribunal in Barcelona; it was already operational in Madrid and had sentenced the acrobatic *lerrouxista* ladies' man Salazar Alonso, who had introduced the *estraperlo* into Spain — in spite of which he strutted about as bold as brass like his leader — to be executed.

The Popular Tribunal of Barcelona was established with a special competence, covering military rebellion offences as well, in which instances it was to have a monopoly.

The intention was to appoint me to the office of prosecutor: but I was kept on as main deputy. All of this was done without my opinion's having been sought and without my even having been consulted beforehand, because my unconditional allegiance to the cause of the proletariat in arms was common knowledge.

A month later, when Andreu Nin took charge as the Generalitat's Ministry for Justice, he reformed the Popular Tribunals of Catalonia by pushing them further to the left and he raised me to the position of president of the Special Court, dispensing with the expert assessors and authorising

me to second four comrades (female) from the manufacturing and textile sector to the panel of juror-magistrates.

The Special and Extraordinary Tribunal at first sat aboard the prison ship *Uruguay*: and later in the Castle of Montjuïc – under bombardment; and, finally in the hall of the High Court of Barcelona.

It heard and passed sentence in the cases of the commands of the seven regiments in the capital – that of the 8th artillery regiment of Mataró and of numerous Civil Guard and Assault Guard commanders and officers implicated in the rebellion.

It handed down around 200 death sentences, one hundred of which were implemented in the Camp de la Bota in the presence of thousands of workers of both sexes from the factories of Sant Andreu, Poblenou, Badalona and Sant Martí. No less than another hundred were pardoned or had their sentences commuted by the Generalitat.

Many of those pardoned managed to escape from the prisons and the labour camps with the connivance of suspect elements with whom the upper echelons of the regime were riddled. In a few days, these wall-jumpers reached the frontier, made for Burgos and wasted no time in taking up their places on the fascist fronts where they never tired of keeping us under fire until the end of the war.

The CNT bears the responsibility for none of these escapes. The Extraordinary Tribunal always turned a deaf ear to any sort of canvassing, even when President Companys took a personal interest in the fate of a grandson of Joaquín Costa who took to the streets against us on 19 July at the head of the 4th platoon of the Santiago cavalry regiment. The Tribunal took the view that this sly boots was due a double punishment – first for disloyalty to the Republic, and also because of his disloyalty to the memory of his esteemed grandfather.'

The first Popular Tribunals emerged from the bosom of the revolution. They were made up of representatives from the anti-fascist organisations and parties. The work done by those people's courts may be questioned

to a greater or lesser degree, but what cannot be disputed is the work of disinfection carried out in one of the most soulless, conservative and reactionary institutions of bourgeois society. So much so that the judiciary preferred charges against the coup-makers from the very outset. A memorandum from the Supreme Court issued at the end of July 1936 exhorted its congregation of functionaries to redouble its zeal in view of the whirlwind of revolutionary innovations:

‘The governing body of the Supreme Court held an extraordinary meeting under the provisions of the Prime Ministerial Order dated the 26th of this month and under a special summons agreed by the Court of Vacations availing of the powers granted to it by Article 903 of the organic legislation, has unanimously endorsed the following memorandum:— In view of the serious subversion presently being visited upon the Spanish nation by so many instances of destruction, the governing body trusts that all court officials of whatever standing will set an example of civic spirit, of fealty to republican legality and to the authority by which it is embodied, and that they will never lose sight of the solemn pledge they made upon assuming office. It so exhorts them because neglect of duties assumed, affiliation to the rebel authorities and disloyalty to the regime which is the emanation of the people’s will, and indeed half-hearted service of it, at a time when the people is fighting with admirable heroism for its liberties, would lay a grave responsibility upon the offending functionaries — one which, insofar as its competence allowed, the governing body would pursue with the utmost severity — and a responsibility made all the more colossal by the fact that it is the last hope that, after hours of struggle and passion, lawful sanctions may be imposed also with the necessary severity and that objectivity which is a reassurance of all that goes to make up the existence of a justice administration which retains its prestige unblemished and has learned the utmost popular confidence. And since the current organic law of judicial authority, for the purposes of rectifying circumstances akin

to those which today have the machinery of State organisation in disarray, disposes in Article 21 that the courts in their various categories should at all times fend off possible intrusions which may distort the origin of their mandate by making them seem influenced by unlawful interference which the Spanish judiciary always repulses, and prescribes a form of territorial adaptation which should be put into effect with all the haste that the current circumstances demand. Be it ordered: That the Presidents of the High Courts and Assize Magistrates report, as a matter of the utmost urgency and availing of the speediest means, those territories and localities wherein the High Court and Assizes cannot safely, freely and without impediment exercise their jurisdiction, so that appropriate steps may be taken in accordance with the legal disposition cited above. And, that this circular may be duly implemented, let it be published in the *Gaceta*, communicated to the presidents of the territorial High Courts through the usual methods and brought to the attention of the most excellent Minister of Justice and left to him to decide whether it should also be disseminated through the exceptional resources for communication at his disposal. Which I am pleased to communicate to Your Excellency to follow up as you may deem fitting.

— Madrid, 30 July 1936, **Diego Medina**.’

The minister, García Oliver, strove from his seat in government to make these daring gains of the proletariat’s compatible with the incongruent nature of the state. Let us look at what those gains boiled down to, in the words of the minister of justice himself:

‘A new dawn of justice sheds its light upon the Spanish people. Traditionally, justice has been an unquenched aspiration. “A sun shining equally upon all” — such was justice according to the classical definition. And yet what an eclipsed sun it always was for the humble, for those who possessed nothing, for those who had to strive after and obtain everything by their endeavours!

Laws and judges were always at the service of the ruling caste. Laws and judges were the instruments of the oppression of the labouring class. Laws and judges stood for nothing other than the fostering, protection and cover-up of social injustices, of illicit business with the veneer of legality, of politicians intoxicated by their ruinous, despicable aims.

All of this is at an end. They, the ones who had it all, the ones who lived amid plenty and as drones, the ones who never sampled misery and sacrifice, they wanted it thus. And the injustice of justice has been done away with forever.

We have dismissed from office upwards of three hundred judges heavily laden with guilt and prejudice. We have afforded to every citizen the right to mount his own defence before all courts, including the Supreme Court. We have set up labour camps where the fascists who caused the immense catastrophe into which Spain has been plunged, may contribute by their endeavours to the task of national reconstruction. We have dignified the calling of justice by entrusting it to men accessible to emotion, sensitivity and revolutionary spirit.

We have done away with the court fees that were the grossest of public scandal, abolishing a system of privilege that favoured the secretarial class and an unworthy excuse for the exploitation of modest, hard-working personnel, which system lay at the root of the horrendous expense of litigation and the daylight robbery of those on trial.

We have at all times been concerned to improve the economic situation of modest officials, dispensing with those posts that carried fat emoluments. We have bolstered the authority of the Popular Tribunals, a new institution fated to survive into the future. We have secured — we have only just received this news — the approval of the standing committee of the Cortes for an amnesty law, the most wide-ranging ever granted, for all political and ordinary offences committed prior to 15 July, with the exception of those perpetrated by the thugs of Lerroux—Gil Robles on the occasion of the brutal repression in Asturias in 1934, and those

carried out by their retainers before and after the February elections.

In short, we have endowed Spanish justice with a new and peculiar visage, by investing it with objectivity, equanimity and humanity. Such, in short, is the work achieved in two months' activity. Does it meet with the approval of the CNT militants? Does it please all fervent anti-fascists? Is it consonant with the feelings and aspirations of the Spanish working classes?

I will not venture to answer those three questions. What I will assert is that when we are working at the Ministry of Justice we are absorbed by these two fundamental preoccupations: the war, in which the people of Madrid are writing the most glorious page of self-denial, heroism and sacrifice recorded in the world's history; and a continual zeal to solidify as immediate achievements the deep-seated, transfiguring, momentous and constructive aspirations to justice which may ensure once and for all from now on that should the sun of justice by some freak experience a temporary eclipse it will be in favour of those who long cried for justice without ever achieving it. As far as the CNT is concerned, that is undoubtedly the greatest satisfaction of its ministerial efforts.'

As the state recovered, the old slick functionaries returned to their posts. The Popular Tribunals, though surviving under the same name, were turned into a clumsy caricature of what the people had made them. The very participation of the parties and organisations were confined to jury duty, or what someone correctly described as 'the justice of monosyllables'. The judicial offices were dissolved by the Generalitat minister by a decree dated 17 August 1936. The same Andreu Nin also dictated the new legislation on the legislation of marriages. Here is the text of the decree:

‘DECREE FROM THE MINISTER OF JUSTICE IN THE GENERALITAT CONCERNING MARRIAGES:—

The new judicial arrangement consequent upon the revolutionary events we are experiencing should entail the ordering of family relationships



and this will have to be governed by the principle of the liberty of the partners. Notwithstanding, it is necessary that until such time as the new legal order has been fully elaborated through the pertinent legal formulae, all steps should be taken which, consistent with the principles for which the proletariat is struggling, may channel activities and encapsulate any de facto provisions in such a way that they can be justified at any time. Since 19 July, the people, so far as family relations are concerned, have been espousing those arrangements that it regards as most consonant with its feelings. As a result there have been numerous marital unions entered into under the authority of the responsible organisms of the trade union organisations and the political parties which make up the anti-fascist front in Catalonia. Consequently, taking cognisance of the aspirations of the proletariat and for the purpose and effect of ensuring that the normal action by which married life begins may be reflected in the offices registering the civil status of individuals and to which the State turns for the supervision of the relationships affecting their civil capacity, and on the suggestion of the Minister for Justice and by agreement of the ministry, be it hereby decreed:

**Article 1.** Marriages contracted in the presence of the responsible bodies of the political parties and union organisations active in the battle against fascism, are to entail all civil consequences vis à vis the persons and chattels of the partners and their descendants.

**Article 2.** The popular magistrate of the place of celebration shall be present at the celebration of the marriage alluded to in the foregoing article. The judge shall be empowered to delegate to persons who may take his place in the event of his being on holiday, absent or otherwise unavailable — to the people's prosecutor and his deputy and, basically, any other individual of full civil status who may deserve his confidence.

**Article 3.** For the purpose of putting into effect the stipulations of the preceding article, any person de-

siours of entering into marriage or the responsible body of the political parties or union organisations before which the marriage is due to take place, shall give 24 hours prior notice, at least, to the appropriate Popular Tribunal, specifying the day, time and place where it may be due to take place.

**Article 4.** Should the marriage proceed without the presence of the people's magistrate or his delegate, despite notice having been served by the contracting parties or by the responsible body, that marriage shall take full civil effect from the moment of celebration. Should the absence of the magistrate or of his delegate be due to notice not having been served by the contracting parties or the responsible organism before which the ceremony is performed, the spouses can make this deficiency by applying to have the marriage will not entail civil consequences except from the moment of registration onwards.

**Article 5.** Once the marriage has been performed, the people's magistrate or his delegate shall proceed to issue a certificate to this end and the contracting parties, on their own responsibility alone, shall supply the Generalitat representative with all the information required to have the marriage registered.

**Article 6.** The certificate will have to contain the following information:

- (a) a record of the place, date, month and year of the marriage ceremony;
- (b) the surnames and forenames of the person authorising it;
- (c) the responsible agency before which it takes place;
- (d) the surnames, forenames, status, birthplace and place of residence of the contracting parties;
- (e) the surnames and forenames of their parents;
- (f) should either of the contracting parties be represented by a proxy, there shall be a record of the date, place and individual authorising that proxy,

and of the surname, forename, age, birthplace and place of residence of the proxy;

(g) should the contracting parties admit to having offspring prior to the marriage, this admission shall be recorded along with the names of other particulars of the offspring;

(h) should either of the contracting parties be widowed or divorced, the certificate shall record the forename and surname of the dead or divorced spouse, as well as the date and place of death or divorce and the civil register wherein this may have been recorded;

(i) the surnames, forenames and place of residence of the witnesses. The certificate shall be signed by the contracting parties and the witnesses, and should any of these be unable to sign, another may sign for them at their request, along with the people's magistrate or his delegate.

**Article 7.** The official in attendance shall forward the certificate to the civil register in which the marriage will have to be entered. The entry in the civil register shall proceed in the usual manner and alongside the entry shall be shown the responsible body before which the marriage may take place, and the original certificate, now transcribed, is to be filed away.

**Article 8.** The responsible agencies of the political parties and trade union organisations active in the struggle against fascism, before which marriages may have been celebrated prior to the date of this decree, shall notify the civil register of the Popular Tribunal of the place of residence of the contracting parties, together with the marriage certificate, so that a record may be made.

**Article 9.** The recording of the marriages to which this present decree refers shall carry the same weight as if they were definitive. However, they are to be regarded as conditional until such time as the freedom of the contracting parties prior to the celebration of the ceremony may be reliably accredited. Once the freedom of the contracting parties has been shown, and the other

legal requirements fulfilled, an entry shall be made alongside the record, making it final.

The Minister for Justice: **Andreu Nin.**'

By way of recording a curious fact and also to convey the procedures employed in those days in legal affairs we shall reproduce two specific cases borrowed from the press. The first one alludes to two Marxist-type weddings. The item reads:

'Before the departure for the front of a very important column of anti-fascist militians, two extraordinarily revolutionary and affecting ceremonies were performed in the "Karl Marx Barracks". Comrade Nemesio Gil Lorente technical commander of the 35th centuria, who had been living with comrade Nieves Cuadrado Bosch, married her, but being unable to do so before a magistrate, in view of the premium on time, their situation was legalised by comrades Raimundo Morales, the political delegate in charge of the barracks, representing the PSUC, and Benjamin Gaucedo, the technical commander of the expeditionary column. The certificate was drawn up by comrade Chavelo. Following that emotional ceremony, another was performed whereby comrade Juan Gómez Martín, Commander of No. 5 group of the 34th centuria, and comrade Juliá Caparros Simó, as well as their two and a half month old daughter, had their circumstances legalised. Their union was legalised by the delegate in charge of the barracks, comrade Raimundo Morales, and the appointed delegate, comrade Eloy Jordán, the certificate being drawn up by comrade Chavelo.'

For its part *Solidaridad Obrera* of the 29th of that month reported the following:

'On Sunday morning, with numerous comrades present, a simple yet moving ceremony . . . more on account of its libertarian implications than of its social formula aspect . . . was performed at the Transport Union. Two young people, by their own free and spontaneous decision, became one. He, a militant of our Youth and of the Confederation, she, a delightful little angle whose youthful education is advanced by the step she has taken. Joan

Freixas and Tomasa Costa have entered into a free union. That union has but one bond: love. And, dispensing with lawyers and priests, one voice set the seal upon the free compact: that of our editor Liberto Callejas, when he told them: "In the name of liberty, you are now one!"

To conclude these jottings on the legal aspect of the revolution, let us turn to the decree promulgated on 13 January 1937 by the office of the Minister for Health and Social Services, introducing and regulating abortion. Given the extensive nature of the decree, one of the most daring in terms of social reform, we shall refer to the comment it drew from the editorial writer of *Solidaridad Obrera*, as published in its edition of that day:

'The Decree comprises a brief and pithy preamble and 16 Articles. Under Article 1 — "the artificial termination of pregnancy, performed in hospitals, clinics and health institutes under the jurisdiction of the Generalitat of Catalonia, wherein a special service to this end has been organised, is hereby authorised', grounds of a therapeutic, eugenic, neo-Malthusian or ethical nature are regarded as sufficient justification for the practice of abortion. Instances of abortion being sought on grounds other than therapeutic or eugenics shall be handled exclusively at the request of the woman concerned, without any of her relatives or near ones being able subsequently to present any appeal concerning the outcome of the termination. Termination of pregnancies shall not be performed after the three month stage has been reached, unless there be some therapeutic justification.

For any artificial termination of a pregnancy, the following shall be required at any of the dispensaries to be set up for this purpose, required and obligatory: (a) a psychological, eugenic and social dossier upon the patient in accordance with a formal model; (b) prior medical examination of the applicant to determine her physical state and capacity to survive the termination. Should the view be that fever of examination of the pregnant woman counsels against abortion on medical or

social grounds, she shall be referred to an expert panel for a decision.

Article 14 prescribes that, from the date of publication of the Decree all private individuals who may conduct abortions shall be criminally answerable for their actions before a competent tribunal, forfeiting, should they be diploma-holders of some health-related profession, the right to practice.

The other articles deal with the adaptation of premises and issue the necessary instructions for the implementation of this important and meaningful Decree, filled with anarchist essence and morality and signed by our comrade Pedro Herrera.'

## Chapter Four: The miracle of the war industries

The anarchist youth movement had been founded soon after the birth of the Second Republic. They began to organise themselves in Madrid, doubtless to spread the libertarian message in that citadel of political socialism. Later, they spread throughout the whole of Spain until they came to represent the third branch of the great libertarian family. In 1932 they assumed the name of the FIJL. Having an organisation of their own, they thus had several corresponding youth newspapers. The most important were the FIJL's official organ *Juventud Libre*, published in Madrid, and the mouthpiece of the Catalan JJ.LL, which took the title *Ruta*. The first issue of *Ruta* appeared in mid-October 1936.

The FIJL had agreed upon the following statement of principles:

‘The new entity is formed with the following objective:

The association of young people of both sexes, regardless of race or colour who may have social preoccupations and a wish for improvement such as may make of man a being socially and individually free and the equal of his fellows socially and economically.

To these ends, the FIJL is to campaign against property, the principle of authority, the state, politics and religion.

Against property because it is an inhuman injustice that a man should hold wealth produced by other men, or land which belongs only to mankind and is an attribute of society, as sacred as life is for the individual.

Because it has its origin in a violent and criminal pillaging of the weak by the strong, creating the odious existence of the parasites upon the hive of humanity who have no role in society other than to live by the labour of another through the exploitation and misery of others.

Because it gives birth to capitalism and establishes the law of wage slavery that condemns man to permanent economic subjugation and to the vagaries and consequences of its unbalanced economy.

Because it is the cause of prostitution, the most iniquitous and degrading offence which society may inflict upon human conscience, by condemning woman to make an item of commerce of the purest and most exquisitely sensitive features in the treasury of the ethical and moral feelings of human beings: her maternal sentiments and her womanly love.

Against the principle of authority because this implies erosion of the human personality when some men submit to the will of others, arousing in these instincts which

predispose them to cruelty and indifference in the face of the suffering of their fellows: and because authority is the instrument used to force an individual by violence to submit to the interests of property.

Against the state because it hinders the free development and normal pursuit of ethical, philosophical and scientific activities by peoples and because it is the basic foundation maintaining the principle of authority and defends property by means of its armed forces, police and judiciary.

Because it maintains the army and navy, whose destructive function is inhuman in that pits some peoples against others, destroying the feelings of sociability and solidarity proper to the human being, becoming instead the wherewithal of the domination of the stronger peoples over the weaker ones.

Against politics because it presupposes the abdication of individuality through surrender of one's will to the will of another, misrepresents collective interests by means of a phoney parliamentary majority and is the system whereby the interests of property and laws for the care and defence of the state are legitimised.

Against religions, because they are an affront to man's free thought, by creating a moral hierarchy which predisposes him to accept any tyranny without complaint and they distort social relationships through terror and fanaticism which are the very opposite of reason and scientific progress.

This Association shall strive to invest young people with a libertarian conviction, as to equip them individually to struggle against authority in all its forms, whether in trade union matters or in ideological ones, so as to attain a libertarian social arrangement wherein the individual's role and activities in the sphere of production may not be subject to any economic tyranny, but rather to his professional potential, assuring him of economic equality by means of free cooperation and mutual aid and, in his relationships, free affinity ungoverned except by solidarity and love: investing in the minds of the people generally and particularly of its members with the conviction that until such time as economic equality is a fact, true equality between men will be an impossibility and that economic equality will not be feasible either as long as property and the state exist and that, this being so, property should be held in common so that efforts may be the better utilised: without there being any other bar between the individual and the community than the need to marshal efforts so as to keep up industrial production and coordination of the communes, one with another, for the purposes of exchange and transportation, and, in moral and material terms, through affinity between individuals and solidarity between communes.

To achieve these ends, an active campaign of propaganda is to be pursued by means of talks, lectures, rallies, periodicals, leaflets and whatever other means may be available to us.'

Almost from the outset, two tendencies surfaced in the ranks of the youth movement. At first, the point at issue between them was the necessity or otherwise for a national organisation of youth. The young Catalan libertarians clung to the line that they should organise their members in independent groups or federations, tied to the unions or the anarchist groups, and invested



with the mission merely of engaging in educational and propaganda work. They rejected any idea that a national-type organisation was needed. In CNT and anarchist circles, the division of libertarians along age lines had been a subject of ongoing controversy. Both youth tendencies stuck to their guns for a long time. The disagreement between them was aggravated after 19 July.

During the tragic war months the FIJL, in virtually every region, backed the collaborationist line which its two sister organisations had espoused. As a result, the old issue dividing the youth turned from a question of mere opportunity into one of principle. The bulk of the young libertarians of Catalonia, who had never given their unconditional backing to the FIJL, gradually emerged as a redoubt where libertarian principles were interpreted in the classic style. As for the FIJL, as an organisation it was party to all of the combinations of the anti-fascist front, with, as we have seen, its representatives holding posts in the government administration. This tactical approach was to lead to a series of contacts with other youth organisations, republican and Marxist, and to intense involvement in the burgeoning movement towards pacts of unity with the youth sections of other parties. But while it is true that the FIJL put up scarcely any resistance to the circumstantialist psychosis which affected most libertarians during the war, it was no less true that it was more fortunate than the socialist youth movement in immunising itself against the Stalinist virus. The constant attempts of the communists to absorb all youth organisations into one bloc which they intended to control, the enticements, slogans and flattery deployed to that end, encountered, from the youth of the FIJL, a dignified and stubborn indifference. We offer evidence of this below.

The state of relations between the JJ.LL of Catalonia and the FIJL is evident from one of the resolutions of the congress held by the former on 1 November 1936. One of the themes of this congress was ‘... discussion of the invitation issued to the JJ.LL of Catalonia to the effect that they join the FIJL.’ Congress’s answer was as follows:

‘... Regarding the suggestion from the FIJL, congress unanimously resolved to enter that organisation, but insists upon full autonomy for the Catalan regional committee so that it may retain its association with the FAI.’

Implicit in the resolution once again was the anti-centralistic outlook of the JJ.LL of Catalonia and their determination to go on looking upon themselves as merely the cultural department of the FAI. Later, they were to distance themselves increasingly from the FAI, as the latter organisation was confirmed in its attitude of political compromise. This radicalisation of the JJ.LL of Catalonia began after the bloody events of May 1937. Their relations with the FIJL again became critical. And the pact with the JSU of Catalonia was ignored completely. That pact had come about as a consequence of the one arranged between the CNT and FAI, and the UGT and PSUC (in August 1936). Here is the pact:

‘Minimum basis upon which is created the liaison committee between the JSU and the JJ.LL of Catalonia: Cognisant that the times we are in require maximum coordination of efforts between anti-fascist personnel engaged in fighting, a committee is hereby established to liaise between the JSU and the JJ.LL so that there may immediately be close cohesion between both organisations, necessary if the war is to be won promptly, with the realisation along the way of a social transformation, which weapon is the surest guarantee of the definitive victory of the people’s cause. Also,

this liaison committee is being formed as a first step towards achievement of close collaboration of all anti-fascist and revolutionary youth...its basis being susceptible to amplification whenever both parties may deem this appropriate. Two signatory organisations undertake to implement the following minimum bases:

1. The liaison committee is to comprise two members from the JSU and two from the JJ.LL.

2. An intense propaganda campaign is to be launched to press at all times for representation consistent with their size, of all anti-fascist tendencies in the socio-political leadership of Spain, in that thus will we successfully and more firmly galvanise the wishes of the working class when it feels itself represented fairly.

3. We are supporters of mobilisation, with an eye to placing the maximum number of fighting men on a war footing: and to this end we undertake to ensure that this is done with all speed, to whatever extent the war may require.

4. Our understanding is that, in order to struggle effectively against fascism, youth must acquire a technical-military training which it does not have, and we fully accept the establishment of technical-military training schools in villages and districts; to that end we shall lend our support so that these may be all the more effective.

5. The struggle makes it imperative that each combatant be possessed of a discipline and a morale befitting the circumstances, which does not mean that we go back to the old barrack-style discipline.

6. One of the most urgent requirements in the struggle we are waging is that we proceed immediately to establish a strict war economy which may at all times meet the needs of that struggle: and to that end we adopt the following guidelines:

(a) Adaptation of the metalworking industry for the large-scale manufacture of war materials.

(b) Parallel with what is indicated in the preceding clause, a sweeping fortifications scheme shall be put into effect.

(c) Trade and industry should be converted and adapted to that in various respects they may contribute to the meeting of the requirements of the moment.

(d) Gradual introduction of the standard family wage.

(e) An increase in the number of working hours.

(f) A thoroughgoing solution to the problem of the unemployed and the refugees.

(g) Abolition of wages for the militias, with the needs of the families of fighters being attended to.

(h) Training and rehabilitation of women in jobs hitherto performed by men, so that they may step into the breach in the event of a general call-up.

(i) In view of the scale of the struggle in which we are engaged, we must all, without exception, contribute our effort until victory is secured. And to this end, all who may thus far have remained on the fringes of the struggle, including all those sentenced to fortification and war-connected tasks, should be mobilised.

7. The youth should be directly involved in the mopping-up of fascist agents on our fronts and in our rearguard.

8. The youth organisations making up this liaison committee shall, so far as they may, bring influence to bear to ensure that relations between the CNT, UGT, PSUC and FAI may be ever closer.

9. The two signatory youth organisations undertake to adhere strictly to the prescriptions in this document.

For the executive committee of the JSU of Catalonia: **Martí Salvat, José Pérez and Tomás González.**

For the regional committee of the JJ.LL of Catalonia: **Alfredo Martínez, Fidel Miró and Juan Francisco Aso.** Barcelona, 17 November 1936.'

Three months after the signing of this pact, a huge rally of the revolutionary youth front was held in Barcelona's Catalunya Square. It was organised by the JJ.LL (according to the words of the chairman, Alfredo Martínez), 'in conjunction with all those youth who understand the serious circumstances in which we find ourselves in Spain' (a reference to the Málaga disaster). The passing reference to those absent was directed at the JSU, who did not feature at the rally. Present, however, were representatives of the youth wing of the POUM. Upwards of 50,000 spectators attended the rally.

The JSU's absence can be explained by the fact that speakers from the JCI, the POUM youth movement, attended the rally. As far as Stalinism's young bloods were concerned, the elimination of opposition communism was a priority. By contrast, the JJ.LL argued that there was room for all young revolutionaries in the youth front. This difference of attitude, motivated by petty political concerns on the part of the JSU eventually wrecked the compact signed on 17 November entirely. Relations between the JJ.LL and the young Stalinists went into a nosedive as a result of this rally. We shall see the consequences of this shortly.

At the beginning of April Madrid was the scene for one of those Stalinist-managed congresses designed to lay the foundations for a nationwide alliance of all youth. From the press of 5 April, we offer the following report:

'MADRID, 5 APRIL. — The congress of the Youth Alliance, which took place in the *Ateneo*, was a resounding success. After various speakers from the JSU had had their say, it was the turn of the Libertarian delegates, Sánchez and Bosch Mediano. When Alcalá Castillo announced the first-named the Congress, rising to its feet, gave an ovation to that representative and cheered the anarchist anthem played by a band.

Comrade Sánchez opened by saying that he appreciated the ovation that had greeted the libertarian anthem. But, most of all — he said — I have to tell you something by which you ought not to be surprised. What I have to say will take issue almost entirely with everything that has been said thus far. Here you are squeamish about the word 'revolution'. Yesterday a leading militant of the JSU stated that there was a need to second some men to organise the youth of Catalonia. That there was no fighting on the Aragón front. Well, let me say, and let the JJ.LL state that there is no action on the Aragón front because 75 per cent of the people are anarchists and somebody, high up, is ensuring that those combatants remain paralysed. We seek a

youth alliance on a solid base, which there has been no willingness to consider here; instead it has been brushed aside; a platform of alliance that may serve us today and in the future: but we see no possibility of an agreement being reached; everything must be sacrificed, even as we have sacrificed our most revered principles. On behalf of the JJ.LL let me tell you that the report from the JSU is utterly devoid of social content and we charge it to present some solid bases.

The words of the JJ.LL representative caused a great sensation. Then comrade Bosch Mediano, representing the local federation of the JJ.LL, climbed on to the rostrum.

“I came to this Congress” — he said — “believing that I would find something new in the men who, while not like-minded, work and struggle for aspirations which are the aspirations of revolutionaries. In Valencia the JSU organised a Congress at which they dealt with the situation of Spanish youth, as they viewed it. We JJ.LL also went to Valencia and we brought a firm, clear-cut stance of authentic revolutionary content. Franco and Mola too are making revolution for their fascist purposes. The JJ.LL seeks a revolution with a social ethic. The youth of the JSU have brought to this Congress the same bases that were approved in Valencia. According to the JSU, this alliance was to include the combatants fighting on behalf of the rightful government as well as catholics. And I ask, how can the JSU link arms with catholic youth when the latter always use religion for personal advantage?”

Comment has been passed upon the coolness existing between the government of Euzkadi and the CNT. The harshness of the tone of those comments has caused real surprise among listeners.”

“Yesterday” — he went on — “one comrade said that unity between the CNT and the UGT was needed and he asked — would you be prepared to enter the ranks of the CNT en bloc? No. Would you be able to enter en bloc the ranks of the UGT? No. So amalgamation on that basis is not a viable proposition. It has been said here that the struggle is one for a democratic parliamentary republic. This is fine if the republic is understood in the platonic sense; democratic, if democratic means government of the people by the people. Parliamentary — no way. We cannot agree with parliamentary tactics. It is the unions which should oversee politics and economics in Spain. The unified youth want industry nationalised. The workers alone are the ones who must take control of all production.”

The address of young libertarian Bosch Mediano referred to a coolness existing between the CNT and the government of Euzkadi. This had its origins in the very moment when the Home Rule government of Euzkadi was founded, the CNT personnel from the area being excluded from it. All of the protests and campaigns waged failed to alter the decisions of the Basque nationalists and communists concerning a place for the CNT in that government. Later the northern CNT members were stripped of the workshops in which their daily newspaper *CNT del Norte* had been printed. This deprivation, from which the communists profited (as they began to print their own organ *Euzkadi Roja* there), led to serious incidents, among them the arrest of members of the CNT regional committee that had resolutely opposed the surrender of the printing works in that they regarded it as rightfully the lawfully acquired property of the CNT. These arrests drew a manly reaction from the CNT militants on the northern fronts, whose threat to intervene was

only headed off with great difficulty by the responsible committee members. In statements to the press on 24 April, Segundo Blanco, a leading CNT militant from Asturias, outlined some of the background to this whole episode:

‘He states that the communiqué published in Madrid and Catalonia and issued by the Euzkadi Delegation regarding this squabble, is tendentious and at odds with the truth. The Northern Regional had arranged to establish a periodical entitled *CNT del Norte*, which was to be the confederal organ. To that end, we had talks with the *El Noticiero Bilbaíno* company about having the paper printed there. Despite what has been said, we neither commandeered nor impounded any printing works. We suggested to *El Noticiero* that they sell us their machinery. The operation of that newspaper as a company concern unconnected with any movement was having development difficulties and was in dire financial straits. They agreed and a contract of purchase and sale was signed in the presence of a notary and lawyer, on 15 February. The daily *CNT del Norte* appeared and the takeover proceeded in accordance with all of the dispositions of the law. The legal deed of purchase and sale was published on 23 February. All of the formalities had been completed. The details of the affair were gone into and the regional committee of the North sent the government of Euzkadi a lengthy, well-argued document setting out everything that had taken place, in which it was noted, among other things, that the firm which had published *El Noticiero Bilbaíno* was a limited company and in no way suspected of disloyalty to the regime, as demonstrated by the fact that the Basque government had issued an ordinance under which all periodicals hostile to the regime had been impounded and *El Noticiero Bilbaíno* had not been impounded.

So *El Noticiero* became the property of *CNT del Norte* on 17 March. *Euzkadi Roja*, presently published at the *El Noticiero* works, announced that it was thinking of having its paper printed in those workshops, and showed up on the 28th, only to find themselves frustrated. But later, by order of the Basque government, the order that *Euzkadi Roja* was to be printed there was upheld. The premises were surrounded by police and our comrades placed under arrest. It was said that every consideration had been shown the regional committee that had been arrested. This is untrue. In prison they were lumped with fascists and some people who had been tried for attempting to escape.

An inter-provincial plenum met in Santander, with Asturias attending, and it was resolved to protest to the government of Euzkadi, to Largo Caballero and to the press about what had occurred, a delegation being appointed of which the Asturias region accounted for a part. Comrade Aguirre conceded that we had right on our side, but we found that the Minister of the Interior publicly alleged that there had been an attempt to withdraw the confederal battalions from the front. Nonetheless, comrade Aguirre had occasion to read a copy of the letter issued to our battalions by the regional committee, a letter in which they were instructed to act with prudence, and assured that the regional committee was well able to resolve unaided any problems that might crop up in the rearguard. In the cabinet no less, Aguirre remarked on the comments passed, so contemptibly passed by Minister of the Interior concerning the combatants of the regional committee of the North.’

The congress of the Madrid Youth Alliance had the advantage of throwing into relief one of the most delicate aspects of the political contest that had arisen in the rearguard. We refer to public attacks, by those masterly recipients of orders, directed against Catalonia's war industries. In an editorial of 8 April *Solidaridad Obrera* replied to comments made to that congress by the general secretary of the JSU of Catalonia. He had alleged, among other things, that there were factories in that region that were splendidly appointed for the production of war materials, but which were employed solely for the manufacture of pistol ammunition. To this *Solidaridad Obrera* retorted:

'First, this is a minister alleging something that he knows nothing about and upon being refuted and invited to prove what he says offers only silence by way of a reply. Then again he is a lieutenant colonel operating on the Aragón front who dares assert that ammunition manufactured in Catalonia has claimed more lives than the fascists' bullets. He is invited to prove this, and this man of his word, this responsible figure replied with his silence. Later, in keeping with the same watchword, a batch of material is shipped back from the front; a panel of military experts and civilian personnel was appointed and they signed a certificate stating that the material was returned despite its being in perfect order. Another batch and then another, again from the same source, suffers the same fate. Later comes the celebrated episode with the tanks. Next comes an item in the periodical which is the apostle of unity, talking about honest management in the war industry, and trade union rivalry. And latterly, to cap it all — for the time being, since the PSUC is tenacious in its approach — comes this allegation by the secretary of the JSU of Catalonia.'

Even so, the defeatist campaign, far from abating, continued to escalate so much that it degenerated into a public controversy, and no less a figure than the prime minister of the Generalitat, Josep Tarradellas, was obliged to enter the fray with the following article on 15 April:

**'WATCH OUT. WAR INDUSTRIES A POLITICAL FOOTBALL:**

In normal times it is understandable — up to a point — that political parties should seek to swell their ranks by resorting to propaganda of their ideas and promoting campaigns calculated to discredit their adversaries in the eyes of the public. Whereas such tactics are, in a normal political context, relatively understandable, it is unacceptable, disruptive and contemptible to avail, in time of war, of the necessary silence maintained by some people, in order to combat them.

Of late around here, there has been a considerable increase in the number of idlers who devote themselves to criticising the war industries set up in Catalonia. Such niggling is almost always inspired by envy and spite. On the day when we can assess the achievements of the men who have held government positions in Catalonia since 19 July and up to the present, we will find ourselves with very curious and enlightening results. We shall see how those who constantly brandish systematic criticism of all constructive work done by others as their only weapon and sole pursuit, will have to be swallowed up by their carping and their theory while, in the positions of responsibility that have been given in trust to them, their efforts have very often produced only chaos and disorder.

Only yesterday in the newspaper *Treball* I was able to look over an article that also spoke about the war industries. Regrettably, we are used to reading comment and listening to rallies and talks which give commentators and public speakers their chance to display their absolute ignorance of the subjects upon which they venture to pronounce. Even so, I had never read an article quite like the one I have mentioned. In it, by way of defending the particular political stance of his party, the most arbitrary nonsense was mooted and alleged and the most whimsical comment passed with startling nonchalance.

In view of the continual retractions they are forced to make could those who have never done anything except criticise the work of others not hold their tongues for once? Wouldn't it strike them as more useful, if, instead of prattling about things that they neither know nor grasp nor understand, they were to strive to achieve something in those places where they are in charge? If possible, I would ask that speculation with the subject of the war industries cease. We who make up part of that commission accept all the criticisms and those who may feel like making them, since they are worthwhile and legitimate if their representatives inside the Generalitat government put them to good use. For that is where these affairs should come up for discussion, and not on the street, before the eye of a public that is not wholly accounted for by comrades in the struggle. We are possessed of enough sense of responsibility to realise that a detailed retort from us, a documented reply, might backfire on those whose gratuitous judgements evaporate when it comes down to self-defence. For that reason, our patriotism makes us reluctant to reply and comment upon these glib criticisms as we might like to do. What a boon to our dignity it would be if no more pretexts of this sort were to be exploited for the purposes of politicking!

I know that my words will be of little impact upon some of these curious devotees of the affairs of war: but I wanted to avail of the opportunity afforded me by that deplorable item, to state publicly that if there is a desire to create a war atmosphere, and if we are to implement a plan that may ensure victory, believe me, we need to bear it in mind that we can only do so by working loyally and acting with sincerity, giving a wide berth to the provocation of point-scoring. In short: it is my belief that anyone who does not act thus is incapable of executing any constructive scheme, much less, of obtaining our victory.'

More vehement was the response of Eugenio Vallejo, published in the 24 April issue of *Soli*. As we have seen, Vallejo, a leading CNT militant and a qualified technician, was a member of the War Industry Commission of Catalonia. This was chaired by Tarradellas, as Minister for Finance and Premier, and had been since its establishment under a Generalitat decree of 7 August 1936. The commission was made up of representatives from the ministries of Defence, Economy, Finance and Internal Security. Commission members were directly appointed by the ministers in charge of those departments. Organisations and parties had no direct representation on the commission and the commission could only report back to the Generalitat government through the agency of the aforementioned departments. Nonetheless, the Stalinists in their propaganda peddled the impression that it was a CNT monopoly. Remember that the CNT controlled only two of the four departments concerned — Defence (Isgleas) and Economy (Abad de Santillán):

‘WORKERS OF THE WAR MATERIAL PLANTS DEFAMED.

In the sniping that the leaders of the PSUC have begun against Catalonia’s war industries, two voices were lacking which until now had kept mum . . . Vidiella and Estivill. They have spoken out at last!

In Reus a rally was held and the professionals in slander and chicanery, real revolutionaries in the business of destroying all in their path whenever they are post-holders, have disported themselves. The serious thing is that they spoke in the name of the UGT and the workers from that organisation who from the outset have dedicated their zeal to toiling disinterestedly on behalf of the war effort, will know how to reply to the words of their leaders. Otherwise, the documentary evidence would effectively give the lie to the words of the professional quacks who spoke in Reus.

Picturesquely, Estivill asked why the need in Barcelona for suitcase locks. He might look for his answer to those who need that sort of item to make good their escape over the frontier or to smuggle across the handguns they are stockpiling in the UGT’s centres.

We do not manufacture — yet we could — machine-guns, rifles, and artillery — argues Estivill — as if attempting to connect this worth the machinery that makes luggage locks, transfiguring these into artillery-making machinery. As he does with the hundred-tonne crane! If rifles, tanks, pistols, etc. are being made . . . the workers from his organisation who are involved in their manufacture alongside the CNT comrades can brief him about it.

But of itself, this is of no more significance than one would read into someone who prattles about things of which they know nothing and adheres to a watchword that, trampling over the truth, seeks to forge ahead along a path which they have strewn with obstacles.

Estivill maintains, and his words are reprinted in *Treball*, that what war materials are manufactured, are manufactured with an eye to trade. And he continues: “There are *nouveaux riches* sprung from the ranks of the proletariat who speculate on this. 30 pesetas have been charged for fuses worth only 12 pesetas.” What is the meaning of this? Who are these *nouveaux riches* who speculate on the war? Who is selling material at a price which is, according to Estivill, double what it is worth?

The workers of the plants making fuses or any sort of war materials have, since the outbreak of war, been paid the weekly rate due for their week’s work, not being paid — and this was their own decision — for the hours they work on Sundays. Also, the majority of the plants refused to start receiving their payrolls until all of the funds they had in hand had been used up. If they have received only their wages, where is the speculation and black marketeering in that?

As far as the War Industries may be concerned, TO DATE NO BATCH OF ANY SORT OF FUSES HAS BEEN SHIPPED OUT OF CATALONIA, NOR HAS THIS EVER BEEN CONTEMPLATED. The accusation is worth highlighting and demands a speedy retraction. The factories making fuses and all sorts of war materials, some of them outside Barcelona and represented by leadership elements from the UGT in their



localities, will take it upon themselves to demand of the slanderer Estivill that he explain the words he spoke at the Reus rally.

Those who have striven to their utmost to intensify production and who have been slighted by elements from the PSUC require a speedy explanation, finding it intolerable that the words of this person follow the same course as others pronounced by his predecessors. The workers and the factory committees of the war material plants, in which both trade union associations are represented, have the floor.'

In the campaign against the war industries of Catalonia, the centralising mentality of the central government was matched with the sectarianism of Moscow's underlings.

It is no secret that the miracle of the creation of war industry in Catalonia had the CNT as its prime mover and architect, through the unions. Before and after 19 July, the CNT controlled virtually the entirety of Barcelona's industrial proletariat and the bulk of the region's organised labour. Catalonia and Vizcaya were the great concentrations of industry in Spain. Then again, the CNT's workers were, in view of their intensive revolutionary and constructive education, the best equipped to get to grips with the economic and industrial problems that the revolution was to raise. These preoccupations were evident at every CNT meeting, especially during the republic's critical period. It was natural that this should be so. At rallies, in lectures, conferences and union assemblies, in the weekly and daily press, in pamphlet, magazine and book there was proof aplenty of this preoccupation with the constructive tasks of the revolution. The CNT lived for and through the revolution. Evidence of this is the collectivisations which came about spontaneously out of a revolutionary maturity and without having been ordered by any committee.

The necessity of a war industry was felt just when urgent demands for combat equipment began to pour in from the front. According to Abad de Santillán (*Por qué perdimos la guerra*, p.111), Durruti was one of the most demanding military leaders:

'All of the commanders on the Aragón front drove us crazy with their constant demands for weapons and munitions. More insistently and tenaciously than anyone, Durruti, who had set up his headquarters in Bujaraloz, regaled us with a daily harangue detailing all that he needed to wage war and emerge victorious from the undertaking.'

Contributing to the polemic surrounding the war industries, *Soli* published the following facts at about this time:

'On 21 July, the Metalworkers' Union, by arrangement with García Oliver, selected Vallejo to organise the war material factories. Since 19 July several Barcelona firms had spontaneously distinguished themselves through the manufacture of tanks, with more good intentions than know-how. Vallejo set about touring the *barriadas* and there signing up all suitably qualified comrades. Within six days some tanks had already been handed over to the CCMA. All sorts of personnel and especially of plans were missing, for war materials had never been manufactured in Catalonia. There was production on behalf of the belligerents in the 1914 war, but of railway equipment, not armaments. With the exception of the Barret plant, which made shells, the big metallurgical plants — the Sant Martí steel mills — concerned themselves only

with railway stock. We lacked technicians and plans when the war began. García Oliver introduced Vallejo to two technicians who had worked in the Oviedo plants. At the same time we secured the valuable assistance of Artillery Colonel Jiménez la Veraza who had been director of the Oviedo arms plant at the time of the revolution of October 1934 and who had earned a sentence of death for his role in the events then. On the basis of these personnel we began manufacture. Spain's arms factories were in the hands of the rebels. We seized some plans as well as some special machinery that was concealed in a certain factory in Barcelona. The first thing we did was to centralise production at the Hispano Suiza company because it was among the most important companies in Catalonia and boasted the largest stocks of equipment and workforce. That and seven or eight more firms met our manufacturing needs, our most urgent ones, in the early stages.

Within a few days, the Generalitat War Industries Commission was set up. Our first concern was the situation of the factories. Au fait with what was approaching, the bourgeois had exported much of their capital. The workers agreed to draw pay at a nominal rate of wages provided that raw materials would be supplied, although wear and tear on machinery due to overuse might well be made good through a loan payable after the war ends. All of the Catalan metalworking sector's factories are working for the war effort. The Generalitat has invested 3 million pesetas in wages alone for the metallurgical industries. Except for some small workshops, which will begin to work just as soon as they are provided with the necessary wherewithal, three shifts are being worked in the factories. Our technicians today have no reason to be envious of their foreign colleagues. That claim is based upon the transformation wrought in a few months in an industry that previously turned out the most diverse articles. The plants that once turned out lipstick cartridges are today churning out ammunition cartridges and bullets. Why maintain a hypocritical silence? No. Catalonia has supplied and continues to supply war materials and raw materials for the manufacture of the same to the remainder of our zone: but the assistance forthcoming from the Valencia government has been far from effective. There has even been a degree of tension, for several months past in many instances, and during the eight months we have been at war, there has not been one single day's holiday. Technicians work 16 hours a day on average. Production is constantly increasing. In Catalonia there will shortly not be a single lathe put to this good use. There is a plan to recall all specialist comrades from the front to a man to give a boost to the work.'

The weapons at Catalonia's disposal, which had been captured from the rebel military, were numerically inadequate. Many of these weapons were in the hands of the militias or armed populace in the rear. The call 'All weapons to the front', had it been heeded, would have been no definitive solution to the problem. The most ardent champions of that call were the communists who nonetheless advocated the retention of increasingly numerous armed corps in the rearguard and were the first to show reluctance to surrender their own weapons stocks. The slogan was designed to disarm the people and militia members who did not see eye to eye with the communists' policy.

Meanwhile, from the outset, the CCMA and the Generalitat itself felt the effect of the financial policies of Madrid, which took the shape of an internal embargo on foreign currency, depriving

Catalonia of the capability of solving its arms shortage. Hence the stagnation of the Aragón front, which the Stalinists seized upon to make so much party-political capital.

When the first Russian arms shipments began to arrive the ships carrying them, whether from their own choice or on orders emanating from the central government, did not put in at ports in Catalonia.

‘This attitude’ — adds Abad de Santillán, on page 112 of the book quoted earlier — ‘only made us even more indignant. Even when it had been promised that this or that shipment would be for us, nothing reached us. We were offered material but it had to be paid for and we always ended up rendered impotent by our not having foreign currency to call upon.’

The chief impediment to this help, whether in the form of arms or of foreign currency, was the hegemony of the anarchists on the fronts and in the rearguard, particularly in the east. The stationary nature of the Aragón front was not down to any shortage of men ready to press on towards the key target, namely Zaragoza. It was down to the shortage of weapons. Upwards of 150,000 volunteers had come forward in the early days, but most had to be turned away because of the weapons shortage. And this situation dragged on for months and months. The paralysis of the Aragón front enabled the rebels to fortify their positions there and left them free to manoeuvre at will on other fronts, especially in the north and centre. Had Zaragoza been captured early on, it would have been followed by Teruel and Huesca and that would have frustrated the enemy’s whole strategy. But the short-sightedness of the central government, and its distrust of the good and sincere intent of the dominant faction in Catalonia, squandered the military and industrial potential of that important region, which had a considerable influence upon the fortunes of the war.

To grasp what a miracle Catalonia’s war industry was, one has to remember that many peacetime industrial installations had to be transformed from top to bottom. In this regard, there were achieved feats pregnant with significance for people who had always striven to deny the reality of the wealth of popular initiatives unveiled by revolutions. Anybody with a suggestion to make or a new invention in mind applied to the committees, disinterestedly offering the product of their discoveries, genius or imaginings.

Ordinary workmen and technicians shared a common enthusiasm in the organisation and launching of the war industries. The partisan interests and prejudices separating some celebrities from the world of politics and some CNT representatives were diluted by the zeal this extraordinary undertaking roused in them. We might cite as an example the close collaboration and fellowship between the Esquerra and the CNT where such activities were concerned. Whatever the subsequent lot of some figures in our revolution may have been, their actions during that revolution were imperishable and the value of their example in such momentous times, enduring.

Within the limitations of the hindrances outlined above, the war industry — the people’s idea and the people’s achievement — was, despite everything, a tangible reality, albeit a controversial one misrepresented by the more inept among the politicians. And for that reason, it was imitated in the rest of Spain, before and even after the central government saw fit to take it under its wing. Nonetheless, output, which had been increasing during the period of comparative freedom of initiative, went into a decline upon the government’s intervention, for the central government neglected that industry and abandoned its 80,000 workers to the dictates of a miasma of bureaucrats and Russian agents — the latter posing as eminent experts who, if they knew nothing of

their supposed field of expertise, acquitted themselves perfectly as spies for Stalin, to whom they reported the most minute details and even production plans. Those Russians also operated as irritants, through their brazen proselytising activity among the factory workers, for they behaved just as if they were in a conquered nation.

The conversion of civil industry into war industry was almost total in Catalonia. For the most part our armaments and munitions plants were located in the north and in Andalusia. One of the most important cartridge-making plants had been set up in Toledo. In view of the rebels' threatening progress towards that city Catalan representatives asked that that plant to be moved, in whole or in part, to Catalonia. The central government steadfastly resisted this removal and the plant fell to the enemy on 27 September 1936, on which date Toledo was lost to the Republic.

There are reports aplenty documenting the story of the war industries in Catalonia. The most comprehensive document is the celebrated *Report d'Actuació* from the War Industries Commission itself, dated October 1937. The letter from President Companys, from which we quote at length below, was based on that report. It was addressed to the Minister of National Defence, Indalecio Prieto.

'Barcelona, 13 December 1937.

His Excellency, Indalecio Prieto, Minister of National Defence — your servant.

My dear friend. I received your letter of the 7th and a copy of the one dated the 5th which you addressed to our friend Comorera. I have most scrupulously read its contents which aroused a lively interest in me, in that it chronicles and raises issues which, by virtue of their importance, have to be solved once and for all by the government of the Republic so that the serious predicament in which the war industries find themselves may not continue, not for a day longer.

For the first time I am breaking the silence which I have adopted as my normal code of conduct and maintained for so long despite unfair campaigns, due very often to lack of information and which have often given me the impression that, rather than contriving the more effectively to coordinate the work done in Catalonia, they might undermine it. I depart from that silence and intend to spell out specifically and objectively the principal circumstances in which we have been obliged to pursue our activities from 19 July until now.

It will be no surprise, no novelty for you, who have seen at such close quarters the socio-political upheaval which our country has been experiencing since 19 July, and still is, when I tell you that on 20 July Catalonia faced a transformation so far-reaching that, in this land of ours, it had broken all the moulds of a coordination and collaboration that might have made feasible the speedy introduction of a scheme to satisfy the needs imposed by the war. Every effort had to be made to achieve coordination without delay. In Catalonia, given its industrial and economic circumstances, our labouring masses clung to the necessity of seizing the whole of industry as to an historical demand. But — chiefly as far as the metallurgical industry goes — it has to be recognised that that takeover was prompted not only by the urge to take possession of it, but also by the immediate appreciation of the need to overhaul it for adaptation to the manufacture of war material. Obviously, at those early stages, the goodwill of one and all would not have been enough to achieve things of note, had

not the Generalitat of Catalonia stepped in openly and determinedly. All of the particular initiatives emanating from each individual committee had to be coordinated: these committees had also to be shown that in no sense did requisition or takeover by the Generalitat mean that we were reverting to a work system like that antedating 19 July, but rather that the Generalitat's cooperation had to be interpreted at all times as a monitoring action conducted in a broad spirit of collaboration, needed then more than ever, between the working class and the government, vital if the war was to be won. On these grounds, at the beginning of August the Generalitat set about taking into its control every industry suited to the manufacture of war material as well as those which, while having no direct bearing upon the war, were crucial to the war industry. Now when it is reported to me that takeovers and requisitions are proceeding normally, it naturally gives me satisfaction: but as you, friend Prieto, will appreciate, in the month of August 1936, this ambition and desire on the part of the Generalitat to coordinate our entire industry, met with the — to some extent understandable — opposition of those committees which had, from the outset, seized control of the factories and believed in all good faith that they alone could proceed with the manufacture of war material. Nonetheless, despite all these difficulties — some of them certainly serious — the Generalitat was coordinating all of this great work, these great endeavours on the part of Catalonia, and the work, initially viewed askance, very soon won the confidence of the working class, of our people and its technicians and this made it possible to carry on with an industry which, while it has not yet reached the dimensions we would like, at least makes it possible for us to say with deep satisfaction that we have served Catalonia and the Republic as they deserve, so far as the means and resources at our disposal have allowed.

We have essentially solved the problems that might be caused by the Generalitat's intervention in industry and, with a tentative work plan, we quickly set to work with an eye to the future. On a spontaneous impulse, encouraged by intimations reaching me from the highest levels of the Republic, the milicianos of Catalonia set off for Aragón in a pre-emptive move designed exclusively to counter the Zaragoza garrison and the rebel forces in that area by containing them and hindering any chance of their advancing upon Madrid: those militias had emerged then as a motley crew with no ties other than enthusiasm and improvisation and were bereft of the necessary armaments.

With the enthusiasm that Catalonia always puts into its endeavours, we set about working out a war production programme in the light of the prospect of the war's being protracted and difficult and because we had to prepare for every eventuality. We believed that it was at least necessary to do the impossible so to procure as a matter of urgency three materials: cartridge components, artillery shells and explosives. The Generalitat believed, and acted upon the assumption, that it was also necessary to make all speed in the conversion of small factories, such as, say, those producing office supplies, metal advertising boards and electrical equipment, for production of cartridge cases. Not only did it prove difficult to convert these factories, but our workers had to be given training in this new industry — but while this work was afoot, and having learned that there was a cartridge factory in Toledo, we asked the

then Minister of War if he would be so kind, at least, to remove, if not the entire concern, then a couple of teams from it to Barcelona so to continue to produce the necessary ammunition, given that we could have seen to the smelting and manufacture of war material, something that was also very difficult for us, for, as you are not unaware, the Toledo and Seville plants used mainly gun-metal from the plants in Lugones and Córdoba and, of course, we were, to begin with, short of raw materials. These problems which I have only now outlined broadly amounted to a tremendous conversion undertaken so as to be in a position to go into the rapid production of cartridges. I imagine that you are already au fait with the outcome of our request to the then Minister of War, to the effect that he dispatch a couple of teams from Toledo to Catalonia to man our factory. In a spirit which I leave it to you to deliberate upon, Catalonia was denied resources which subsequently, regrettably, fell into the hands of the rebels. Notwithstanding, this was not enough, for we were told that Catalonia was not to make cartridges, ever, a statement that rather resembles a wish to see us fail in our aspirations. And it is with satisfaction that I acknowledge that it was at this juncture that it was precisely you who, rising above these obstacles placed in the path of our industry and our ambition, sent me some reports and statistics in October, which had been forwarded to you by the director of the Toledo plant, statistics and reports which helped us to find solutions to the problems we faced. Nonetheless, we immediately realised that with the conversion of our civil industry, even that would not be enough in the way of cartridge production. With such a conversion we could doubtless turn out sufficient quantities to meet initial requirements, but no way could we cater for the escalating day to day needs.

With a view to seeking a thoroughgoing solution to the question of cartridge production, during the month of August we contacted leading plants in France and Belgium to obtain the most modern machinery possible. During September — in view of a Belgian firm's closure of two cartridge manufacturing plants — we ordered from France other outfits which are the ones we have installed at this moment, one in Factory No. 7 and another in No. 12. Obviously I am not presuming to say to you that we have resolved the cartridge problem once and for all, but we can say that with our resources and surmounting the difficulties we have encountered in obtaining raw materials from abroad, such as electrolyte copper and zinc for the manufacture of gun-metal, I can tell you today, friend Prieto, that we have turned out 60 million cartridge shells, and that figure does not include the number produced during October and November from factories organised by us, which, at your instruction, have been taken under the direct supervision of the Under-Secretariat for Arms and Munitions. Also, parallel to the output of shells, we have organised production of Mauser ammunition to the figure of 76 millions by 30 September last.

Another problem to be grappled with was the question of artillery shells. It is only fair to concede that this was a much simpler problem, but of course we also faced the difficulties raised by the conversion of our industry for the production of shells of different calibres, for want of plans, given that these latter had vanished from the artillery depot. Nonetheless, we began in September 1936 to turn out shells. Obviously the quantities were small, and insignificant when set alongside the requirements

of our army, but there were these 4,000 shells that, even so, were increasing at a monthly rate so accelerated that, by the month of April of this year, the peak figure of 90,000 was reached, and by September we had already turned out 718,000 artillery shells.

Once the shells had been manufactured and had the mechanisms fitted, a way had to be found to solve the matter of fuse production. And this assuredly was a thorny problem. We lacked raw materials and our workforce had not the necessary expertise to handle work as delicate as the manufacture of fuses. So we also had to adapt our industry on this count and, for example, in Palafrugell and in Figueres, where various machine workshops were based, we witnessed the emergence, thanks to the expert advice and enthusiasm of our workers, of an industry that very quickly solved the problems of fuse manufacture, a significant quantity being turned out between both these towns, so that by 30 September, Catalonia had produced 566,442.

Thus far we had converted our metallurgical industry to the production of two substances essential to the war effort — cartridges and shells; however, a third problem remained to be solved — the manufacture of explosives. From the outset we found we had enough reserves of trilitite, powder, charges, caps and detonators and the whole pyrotechnical range needed to ensure that items leaving our factories might be dispatched in completed form.

Taking precedence over all, there arose the serious problem with gunpowder which, as you will recall, gave serious cause for concern everywhere once the winter had passed, and then, by its unstinting efforts, Catalonia made it possible to convert the Murcia plant for increased output, quickly outfitting it with the machinery needed to increase it, with an eye to meeting the requirements of our army. But the Murcia plant was not enough and we thought we might be able to solve the problem by setting up a powder factory here at some speed. This was a difficult undertaking, first on account of the shortage of technicians with sufficient knowledge of its manufacture, and then on account of the necessity of building the requisite machinery. But for all that, we did not hesitate for an instant in putting our idea into practice, and in July of this year we had the satisfaction of producing — for the first time here in Catalonia — powder for both rifles and artillery use. While the installation of machinery for powder production was underway, the very same factory was turning out explosive materials plus fuse-wire, production of such material to date having reached 330,300 kilograms, or 73,559 and 36,016 charges and 900,000 metres respectively. Unfortunately, we have been able to get very little powder — scarcely 300,000 kilos between August and the present. This meagre, derisory output — derisory if one remembers that our plant had a capacity of about 1,000 kilos daily — is not, by a long shot, any fault of ours, but due mainly to one person who has held important and responsible office alongside you having indicated to us three months ago that there was no need for us to produce powder in that the Under-Secretariat of Arms and Munitions had a more than adequate stock of it, and assuredly as a result of this information that same agency has been continually obstructing us in the procurement of ether, produced by a factory which, up until last September was under the purview of the Generalitat before coming then under the direct supervision of your ministry.

Which is to say that this powder factory, which could double the output of the Murcia plant has, for three months, been turning out small quantities and spending its time very often on drying out and priming various grades of outside rifle and artillery powders manufactured by the Murcia plant and forwarded to us via the No. 4 Artillery Depot.

But just as it was hard for us to be able to manufacture powder with the speed we sought, we are delighted, on the other hand, to note that in the month of September 1936 we had, even then, organised a plant whose output consisted especially of trilitite, tetralite, dinitronaphthalene and picric acid, and today, despite the problems with obtaining some raw materials, for want of the necessary foreign currency, we have thus far produced 752,972 kilos of tetralite and 7,875 kilos of picric acid. The manufacture of these explosives, all of them produced for the first time in Catalonia, and some even for the first time in Spain, entailed a surmounting of countless difficulties and on many occasions helped resolve worrying problems upon which I need not dwell. Be it observed only that as early as 26 August 1936, and for the first time in Spain, aerial bombs were being loaded with trilitite manufactured in Catalonia. With regard to explosive substances, Catalonia also found itself obliged to find a solution to the problem of the manufacture, not just for our industries, but for those of the rest of the Republic, of all manner of wicks, detonators, charges and caps etc., and it was to meet this demand that we set up a factory which is today of great note and which has made possible the manufacture of nearly 42 million Mauser caps (.7 calibre) and charges, wicks and detonators of different varieties to the tune of 3 millions. You, who are familiar with the countless sorts of wicks, detonators, charges, and fuses will appreciate the variety of equipment being turned out by this plant, which also produces fulminate of mercury, lead nitrate and all manner of fulminate powders.

Such were the three essential problems which had to be solved and which I may tell you today stand for the realisation of a desire which had very often seemed to ourselves as impracticable. All of these manufacturing problems went hand in hand with another, namely that of organising the Artillery Depot so as to arrange it in such a way that the priming of artillery shells, aerial bombs and Mauser cartridges might be effected according to the requirements at the time in question. I have to remind you that on 19 July some 30 workers had been employed at the Artillery Depot and, by the time that the Ministry of National Defence took charge again, on your instructions, in August last, around a thousand were employed there. Not merely that, but the Generalitat of Catalonia had outfitted the depot with all of the machinery and equipment needed so that those 1,000 workers might perform the tasks entrusted to them. Following the storming of the Artillery Depot, it was half destroyed and our first concern was to rebuild it, adapt it or commission the erection of special machinery for installing caps, loading powder cartridges, setting machinery, setting up suitable workshops for the loading of artillery shells and fuses, etc., since the Depot was wholly bereft of the former and, as far as the others went, what material there was was in a deteriorated condition. Also we found ourselves with a significant quantity of botched cartridges and a workshop was also set up for dis-



arming these and remaking them so that all of the six millions of them uncovered in the various barracks in Catalonia might be usable.

Also discovered in the Depot were thousands of rifles stripped of their bolts, the latter having disappeared. These weapons had to be put to use, to which end the manufacture of bolts for them was arranged, and by the beginning of September installation of them was able to begin, once the plans and tools required for such a complex component had been worked out.

A propos of the Artillery Depot, since you took it over, or at least have had knowledge of it, you will appreciate what were the difficulties we faced in imposing authority and discipline there. Despite upsets and my having to go in person to the Depot on many occasions in order to resolve my presence the problems that had arisen there, there came a time when the Artillery Depot was operating at the required capacity, turning out 300,000 to 350,000 cartridges a day.

My great ambition would have been to convert our two greatest and most important industries, Hispano-Suiza and the Elizalde firm which largely had specialised in aircraft engines, for exclusive production of such engines. I said that this was our great ambition and there was a point when we believed it might be achieved. It was in the month of October of last year, when, following a broad-ranging feasibility study conducted jointly by technicians from these firms, technicians from the Generalitat and others from a friendly union, a plan was devised. As part of that plan we were promised shipment of the necessary raw materials and, if need be, of machinery for manufacturing the latest engine models. After protracted conversations and discussions, with an eye to finding the means by which the necessary plans and vital materials for construction of the engines might speedily be sent off, this was done. The plans arrived at the end of two or three months, followed later by the raw materials and then, on the direct orders of your ministry, we gave up our majority shareholding in the Elizalde plant which was in charge of producing the engines and which I imagine must have begun since then to make some deliveries.

But the work of those two firms has been limited, to begin with, by difficulties that I imagine you are not unaware of and which we were unable to resolve, in the matter of aircraft engine repairs, but that does not mean that they stopped turning out other war materials, always assuming these were independently selected, and it was surely for this reason that in September of last year your own ministry, adopting this line, placed with the Elizalde plant, through the agency of the Generalitat, a significant order for aircraft bombs. And these facts are at odds with the surprise which you express in your letter at the Elizalde firm's manufacturing material which, in your estimation, it ought not to have done, so that it might have been in a position to devote all of its energies to other pursuits. I also am certain that if you awarded various orders for aircraft bombs to the Elizalde plant, with which we have had little involvement, it was because this did not imply any undermining of the activities of the other precision departments of that firm. Then again, I have to tell you likewise that in the month of April this year your ministry, acting through us, placed an order with the Elizalde plant for the manufacture of 2,000 underwater mines.

And in April the Elizalde plant had an order for 150 aircraft engines as a result of the conversations and studies which I mentioned earlier. This order was communicated to the Elizalde concern through us, but difficulties then arose which we believed had been surmounted thanks to offers made and then, despite the fact that the Generalitat no longer had any role in the Elizalde plant and that the State had direct oversight of it, we, with a view to paving the way for rapid production of engines that had been commissioned from it, granted a substantial amount of foreign currency to that outfit so as to make purchases feasible not only in respect of the necessary raw materials but also in respect of the special machinery that may be needed.

The Generalitat allocated currency for the purchase of raw materials and special machinery in other instances as well, involving Pirelli, Hispano-Suiza, Poldi, Suministros Eléctricos, etc.

With regard to aircraft too, we had a burning desire to take care of one preoccupation, namely manufacture of the lead tetrastylate vital to the dilution of gasoline and so, on the very day when the War Industry Commission was set up, 7 August 1936, we asked the Chemistry Laboratory of Barcelona's School for Industrial Engineers to conduct various trials designed to obtain dibrom-1 - 2-ethane, which was achieved after protracted research. This done, we began to make all haste to set up a plant to extract octanol, a plant which (in addition to this produce) makes ethyl chloride and tetraethyl of pure lead. The establishment of this plant was very difficult, given that it is the only one in Spain, and one of very few in Europe. In addition to turning out the aforementioned products, it also is used to convert amounts of lead tetraethylate purchased abroad by the Fuel Inspectorate of your ministry into ethyl fluid, a production so important for our aircraft.

Parallel to the aircraft engines problem was the problem with haulage and transportation. Here we found ourselves with just one factory capable of producing internal combustion engines for trucks, namely the Hispano-Suiza plant; likewise, we discovered various American firms with depots in Barcelona which we promptly commandeered so as to waste no time in launching chassis construction for trucks and ambulances. But this was not enough and so the Generalitat, using its own foreign currency reserves, purchased abroad a small number of the chassis deemed necessary, anything else being unfeasible, so as to solve the most urgent problems and so it is that we can say today that Catalonia has coach-built and completely assembled 294 ambulances, 385 haulage trucks, 147 armoured trucks, 142 water tank trucks, 30 gasoline tankers and 127 chassis converted into disinfectant trucks, workshop vans, water purifiers, mobile kitchens etc. I appreciate that these are very tiny numbers set alongside the army's needs, but I should like you to bear in mind that these trucks have been acquired by dint of considerable effort and a burning desire to achieve something effective.

Another problem we have resolved and with which you are already familiar, in that you have been able to see your orders filled immediately is the question of gasmasks. In September of this year, we had manufactured 100,000 gasmasks in Catalonia and when we pulled out of that industry a further 100,000 masks were in the production

stage. There is no need to enumerate the many problems to which we had to devise solutions. At least it is not my desire to do so in this letter, especially since it would be somewhat of a departure from the tone of it, and ought instead to be the subject of a 'report', which Catalonia will some day compile to give an account of its stewardship.

As I have already mentioned to you, I do not propose to give you a detailed exposition of all of the effort made by Catalonia in respect of war industry; this is not the time for that, but it is worthwhile stressing, as a simple point of information, that this effort has enabled us to dispatch, for instance, upwards of 2 million hand-grenades to the fronts; 30 million metres of barbed wire; 71,619 aerial bombs; and to repair in our workshops some 3,200 cars and trucks; to supply all of the replacement parts for the innumerable weapons used by our Army, and to lend our duty-bound but most enthusiastic assistance to all of the fronts. And let me emphasise that almost all of the machinery for making this effort has been manufactured in Catalonia; suffice it to say, to choose just one figure out of so many, that under our supervision 119 presses and 214 lathes have been built, many of them never before manufactured in Spain...milling machines, drilling machinery, rectifying machines, polishing machines, a whole host of machinery, large and small, which needed to be built, especially the whole array of machinery complementary to the cartridge-making set-ups bought in France. All made in our workshops, our foundries. These days, in times so hard due to the problems of every sort constantly cropping up, in respect of obtaining raw materials, you will note the difficulties that we had to overcome, say, to set up a powder plant to turn out 1,000 kilos a day, like the one we now have.

We have also manufactured handguns, machine-guns and set up a factory to make Mauser rifles and to produce all replacement parts for these: we have completed an important factory that will be capable of producing 20 tonnes a day of cellulose, etc., etc.

Needless to mention, in addition to the Mauser cartridges we have also manufactured a .9 long cartridge and a .9 short as well as for 7.65 and other calibre weapons. Another thing which, at first glance, appears trivial but is really of the utmost importance, since a complete organisation for it had to be set up, is the production for the first time in Catalonia, of all replacement parts for the Hotchkiss machine-gun. Of these we have manufactured 76 different ones, from the carrying rings down to the very barrel; we have had also to make replacement parts for the Type 2 Hotchkiss automatic rifle, and, also for the first time ever in Catalonia we have made all the parts for the Mauser shotgun and rifle, and also for the Mauser carbine; we have made pistol ammunition for the countless makes which our Army has today, .9 long, .9 short, 7.65, double-loading, special-loading etc. For the first time in Spain we have had to manufacture Hoffman anti-tank grenades, attack and defence bombs etc., as well as all the parts for the Colt machine-guns, Russian rifles and automatic rifles. Nor had grenade-launchers or their grenades ever before been made in Spain, or truck transporting vehicles, aircraft landing gear, inset-mounted fuses for aircraft use and a whole succession of replacement parts for different aircraft engines. And with regard to explosive substances, metal sodium, picric acid, ethyl dibromide,

monochloronophthalene, octanol, bromine etc., substances and products which we manufactured and produced for the first time ever in Spain.

In short, friend Prieto, I have no wish to prolong this letter further lest it might seem that my intention was to offer an apology for an endeavour and undertaking effected with unflagging enthusiasm and which was, in any case, our bounden duty . . .’

Such was the glorious achievement of the war industries, so misunderstood by the central government and by Stalin who commissioned his underlings to misrepresent it by means of defamatory campaigns. The creation of the so-called Armaments Purchasing Commissions is a separate issue.

Even at the risk of diverting the readers’ attention towards certain unedifying aspects of this period, we cannot shirk dwelling upon this dismal conduct, to which end we shall proceed to summarise (given its great length) one of the documents which are most enlightening about the purchasing commissions which were subordinate to the Armaments Under-Secretariat of the Defence Ministry. *A propos* of this question, a lengthy report from the FAI peninsular committee was, in September 1938, presented to a plenum of regional committees of the libertarian movement’s three wings — the CNT, the FAI and the FIJJL.

According to this report, the first purchasing commission was chaired by the ex-minister Fernando de los Ríos who, naturally enough, in view of his utter ignorance of this sort of commercial dealing, was easy prey for the voracious international arms dealers. That commission was replaced by another made up of delegates from every party and organisation, and was under the supervision of Spain’s ambassador in Paris (Luis de Araquistáin). But, quite apart from that official commission, the ministers involved in the war used to dispatch persons whom they trusted on purchasing missions, with money aplenty. Under a prime ministerial decree of 18 December 1936, the previous commissions were dissolved and another set up under the leadership of one Otero. Co-opted onto it were a series of individuals who had been on French soil since the outbreak of the war and who might well have been regarded as deserters.

When Negrín became premier, he mobilised his trusted henchmen so as to secretly monitor these purchases. Here is part of a report from one of his agents:

‘In the early months following the fascist revolt the Purchasing Commission formed in Paris failed to live up to expectations, but it engaged in no stealing either. Its accounts, now totally liquidated by the persons appointed to do so by comrade Prieto, have shown this. There is a satisfactory explanation for every last céntimo spent. When that Commission was beginning to function, despite the obstacles in the way of its operating properly, especially the unwillingness to buy from the experts, an unwillingness that spread through the months we have been at war, and which I am convinced is rooted in the secret expectation of our being beaten, it was disbanded by comrade Prieto, who entrusted all purchases to his personal agents.’

It is common knowledge that among those who deal in the weaponry of war there is no shortage of persons of the worst sort. Rubbing shoulders with them, the republican government’s formal ‘commission agents’ — we shall see anon the reason why these were so called — or officials necessarily were exposed to the worst sort of contagion and temptations. Among the latter

were persons of good faith, whose recommendations were ignored or defaulted upon by the appropriate minister, incredibly, and all the profiteers who hindered or torpedoed any operation if, in their estimation, it was going to deny them the profits upon which they had been reckoning. Let it not be forgotten that a favourite ploy was to inflate payment bills, having previously underestimated for the contracted items, in collusion with the suppliers. This overcharging often amounted to 50 per cent more than the actual cost. Splendid chances of making purchases were missed by the government's agents on the clandestine markets of Europe and America because they presented no opening for profiteering rather than on any grounds concerning the seriousness or quality of the materials on offer. The purchasing agents, then, were with rare exceptions degenerating into outright commission agents who took a sizeable cut for themselves without concerning themselves unduly about the blood spilled in the trenches by the people, blood spilled precisely because of the shortage of offensive and defensive equipment.

The report to which we alluded earlier detailed, among many another, the episode which shines through the letter set out below. It comes from a supplier to the Paris purchasing commission and was addressed to Spain's ambassador in that capital city. It is dated 23 March 1938:

'Señor Ambassador: It is not merely a sensitive matter but also a worrying one that, in the circumstances in which your very lives are at stake at the present time, I should dare to raise with you the issue of the sort as the one I am going to put before you.

Formerly, I, like my company, the AVIO-STAR company, was a supplier of your office, which I served with diligence not for commercial considerations but also by reason of my own feelings and opinions. But, for reasons unknown to me, a campaign of defamation and insult was begun against me a short while ago, one which I am not able to tolerate further. The object of this campaign is, in the first instance, to have me removed from the list of suppliers of this office. So much so that when I put in an interesting offer to the staff of the Trade Office, the office replied by stating that my company was not in the Paris area and that it could offer no sort of commercial guarantee (of itself a contradiction at least). As a consequence, 15 goniometers of a type inferior to my product were ordered from another company at a price per unit of 26,700 francs when I was offering them at only 10,000 francs a piece. I have the proof to make available to you, should you wish, as well as evidence of other deals struck in the same circumstances.

It is my belief that the gentlemen who make up the Trade Office are a caucus especially damaging to the interests they are charged with defending by boycotting shipments of equipment and channelling orders the way of specific companies, caring more for their personal advantage than for the country they represent.

This is beneath the dignity of one of your agencies, Señor Ambassador, especially as it involves a service attached to the Embassy conducting itself by methods and procedures I can tolerate no longer. I hope that before I am obliged to take the safety and hygiene steps which are called for, you will rectify the situation by availing of the means at your disposal, these being more efficacious and direct.'

The shameful episode narrated affords but a glimpse of the widespread immorality of the government's purchasing agents abroad. This means that the most abject speculation occurred in

every branch of supply, whether in the fuel field or arms or foodstuffs. Huge fortunes were amassed by a series of parasites upon the people's sacrifices.

As a postscript to this bleak chapter, we reproduce the resolution of the libertarian movement's plenum of Regional Committees, mentioned earlier, which — with the knowledge of the report we have cited — stated:

'Having examined the conduct of the Commissions of Purchase of arms and raw materials for war production; cognisant of the inept and noxious conduct of the Under-Secretariat for Armaments and its principal stewards; and desirous of making all of the country's industrial, raw material and human resources available for war production, the plenum of regional committees of the libertarian movement hereby resolves:

1. To advocate as a matter of urgency the conversion of the Under-Secretariat of Armaments into the Ministry of Armaments.

2. That ministry shall have oversight of the procurement of arms and munitions, machinery and raw materials, and the manufacture in loyalist Spain of all possible war production.

3. The Armaments Ministry shall be monitored and advised by two mixed bodies made up as follows:

- (a) Supervision of commercial operations: To be formed on the basis of one member from each party making up the Popular Front. Without the endorsement of this agency, the ministry shall not be able to make any acquisition of weapons and war materials.

- (b) Higher Council of War Ministry: — In all matters relating to war production in the republican zone this Council, comprising the trade union and expert representatives of the NIFs of- Light, Power and Fuel, Chemical, Transport and Communications — of the CNT and of the UGT, shall have the power to advise and to determine.

4. The parties and organisations shall be held responsible for and punished on account of the conduct of their delegates on these bodies, and in instances of commission-taking, misappropriation and sabotage of war production.

5. The stewardship of the Purchasing Commissions and Under-Secretariat for Armaments is to be investigated and referred to the courts of justice.

— September 1938.'

## Chapter Five: The tide of counter-revolution

One of the principal preoccupations of CNT militants was propaganda aimed at making converts, and the education of the militant. In that Spanish anarcho-syndicalism was one of the Spanish organisations best endowed with activists, the evolution of events broadened and even altered almost completely the scope and indeed the sense of its traditional activities. The demand for trained personnel to see to the many tasks that arose created a difficult problem. Both the fronts and the collectives gobbled up a high percentage of this manpower. Nonetheless, it was on the fronts that the bulk of militants had been concentrated, perhaps for reasons of education and of temperament. It took a gargantuan effort to persuade these militants that their presence was required in organisational business in the rearguard. Militarisation of the militias, and their conversion into a regular army — something that struck at the very heart of the beliefs of many fighting men — had the effect of producing a welcome about-turn by many of them. Let it be said, that the Stalinists had, on party orders, stolen a march on them by pulling their most active personnel out of frontline service.

To cater for the needs of propaganda appropriate bureaux had been set up right at the beginning of the revolution and these operated in accordance with the directives from the regional committees. The Information and Propaganda Bureaux saw to the organising of public meetings on the basing of itinerant squads. Some such bureaux, like the one ensconced in the Casa CNT-FAI in Barcelona, were endowed with their own radio station and press service: they also saw to the printing and distribution of newspapers and bulletins drawn up in a variety of languages and targeted at the foreign market.

One of the most ambitious ventures of the Information and Propaganda Bureaux of Barcelona was the opening of a School for Militants, to meet the demand for teams of public speakers and editorial staff for newspapers. To take the periodical and magazine field alone, the anarcho-syndicalist publishing movement assumed the dimensions of a veritable deluge. At the very least, every district had its periodical and indeed certain modest districts also indulged themselves in this luxury. The wide circulation press featured the Barcelona dailies *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Catalunya*, the Madrid-based *CNT* and *Castilla Libre*, and Valencia's *Nosotros* and *Fragua Social*. The doyen of them all was *Solidaridad Obrera*, founded in 1907 by Anselmo Lorenzo. *CNT* was first published on the eve of the events of 8 January 1933. In 1938 when the republican zone was split between Catalonia and Levante *CNT* came to replace the Confederation's daily *Catalunya* which was published in Barcelona in the Catalan language. Nonetheless, Madrid's *CNT* continued to appear up until the end of the war — in March 1939. Another pioneering publication was the anarchist weekly *Tierra y Libertad*, which had first appeared as a daily in Madrid in 1904 under the management of Federico Urales.

Given the impossibility of furnishing a complete catalogue of all the CNT and anarchist publications to appear during the war, we shall content ourselves with quoting the titles of some of the dailies, weeklies and magazines — as follows.

In Valls, there was *Acción Social*, in Castelló de la Plana *Agitación*; *Acracia* was a Lleida daily, Reus had *Adelante*, Premià de Mar *Alba Roja*, Badalona *Amanecer*; the *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI* was issued in several daily editions in a number of languages in Barcelona. Igualada had its *Boletín CNT-FAI*; *Campo Libre* was the Madrid-based organ of the Peasant Federation of Castile; ¡*Campo!* was the Barcelona-based organ of the Peasant Federation of Catalonia; Cartagena had *Cartagena Nueva*; Albacete had *CNT de la Mancha*; *Confederación* was a Murcia daily; Amposta had *Ciudad y Campo*; the Bilbao daily was *CNT del Norte*; Gijón had *CNT*, Jaén *Cultura y Pedagogía*, Alcañiz *Cultura y Acción*, Valencia *CNT Marítima*, Seu d'Urgel had *Cultura y Porvenir*; Barcelona issued *CNT-FAI Cataluña*; Tarragona had *Diari de Tarragona*; in Barcelona there was the magazine *Espectáculo*. *El Combate* appeared in Caspe; there was a humorous Barcelona weekly called *El Crítico*; *El Quijote* was published in Barcelona, as was *El Amigo del Pueblo*, organ of the Friends of Durruti; *El Productor* appeared in Onteniente; *Estudios* was a Valencia magazine, *Esfuerzo* was a Barcelona-based one; *El Frente* was the organ of the 26th Division (Durruti column); *Frente Libertario* was the daily mouthpiece, issued free of charge, of the CNT Defence Committee of the Centre; *Frente y Retaguardia* was the organ of the Roja y Negra Column; Girona had its *Fuerza y Cerebro*; Madrid had *FIJL*; Malaga had *Faro*; Barcelona also had its *Faro* (which took the place of *Ruta* when the latter was suspended in 1938); Girona had its daily *Gerona CNT*; Madrid issued *Galicia Libre*; Elche had *Germinal*; there was the Barcelona magazine *Hoy*; Ripoll had *Humanismo*, Gaudix *Hombres Libres*, Baix Llobregat *Ideas*; there was a Barcelona magazine *Iniciales*; *Juventud Libre* was the daily organ of the FIJL, Madrid. *Liberación* was an Alicante daily, *La Revista Blanca* a Barcelona magazine; *Luz y Fuerza* also appeared in Barcelona; *Luchadoras* was the mouthpiece of the 'Mujeres Libres' in Madrid; *Mar y Tierra* appeared in Altea; *Nuevo Aragón* was the daily organ of the Council of Aragón, Caspe; Barbastro had *Orientación Social*, Tortosa Oriente, Granollers *Orientaciones Nuevas*; *Proa* was the organ of the CNT naval servicemen, Barcelona. *Porvenir*, a magazine for children, was the organ of the Rationalist Schools' Federation of Catalonia in Barcelona; *Pueblo Libre* appeared in Sueca; *Ruta* was the Barcelona-based organ of the JJ.LL in Catalonia; Sabadell had a daily in *Superación*; Vic had *Sembrar*; *Semáforo* was a Valencia magazine; *Sembrador* appeared in Puigcerdá, *Solidaridad Humana* in Cardona; *Timón* was a Barcelona magazine, as was *Tiempos Nuevos*; *Umbral* was an illustrated weekly magazine in Valencia; *Vertical* appeared in Sabadell; *Vida* was the Valencia-based organ of the Peasant Federation of Levante; *Via Libre* was issued in Badalona, and *Titán* was the Caspe-based organ of the young anarchists of Aragón.

In addition, groups of foreign anarchists put out several periodicals in their respective languages, such as the Italian-language *Guerra di Classe*, which was managed by Camillo Berneri. *L'Espagne Anti-fasciste* was published by the CNT national committee's Propaganda Service and was aimed at the Francophone world. Station ECN-I (Radio CNT-FAI) had been set up in the Casa CNT-FAI in Barcelona and its microphones broadcast daily programmes and talks by the most gifted militants.

To give some idea of the operation of the Barcelona School for Militants we here reproduce a talk broadcast by ECN-I under the title 'Necessity, Object and Results of this School', which went as follows:

'We should be failing in our most elementary obligations were we who make up this School for Militants today, teachers and students alike, to neglect to give an account of our work and of what it means for the confederal and anarchist militants



of our region, especially in these times of improvement and social sensitivity. Everyone knows that, with its repeated and savage repression, the regime lately brought down always prevented the moulding of labour militant nuclei and thereby the necessary trade union education of the wage labourer (*asalariado*). That regime knew what a danger those nuclei of workers constantly in the throes of creative activity (whose moral intrinsic value was crucial) posed for its existence and for that reason contained and applied the brakes to any expansion.

Notwithstanding the clandestinity into which we have been forced in the past, our organisations always survived and were never short of the personnel they required in order to develop. However, when this putrefaction called fascism rose up against the people, our finest militants took their places in the fray, some perishing never to rise again while others fight on tirelessly on the fronts in the van and in the rear; at the same time, these activists also have to see to the enormous propaganda work required of us by the serious times through which we are passing. Under these exceptional circumstances, we have encountered difficulties in finding personnel suitably equipped to perform such a specific and urgently required task.

Only a tiny band of veteran comrades was available to receive the mission of speaking from the people's platforms and expounding upon what was and is necessary to the idea of social renewal. Against this backdrop, the demands for propagandist and organiser comrades reaching us from the villages snatched from the fascists were overwhelming. And Catalonia, which was and remains the regions in which these demands are greatest, was unable to oblige except to a very limited extent. Out of this dearth of personnel arose the idea of setting up an organism with the sole purpose of cultivating militants and adapting and equipping them for the work and ideas of the organisation in its various aspects.

Thus was born the School for Militants, sponsored, maintained and encouraged by the regional committee of the CNT and the FAI regional committee for Catalonia. Within a few weeks of its foundation, the results achieved by our ongoing work of training and instruction could not have been more gratifying, surpassing our reckoning. Today, when it comes to public speakers we may call upon upwards of thirty comrades of both sexes who have been examined and already placed at the disposal of the CNT and FAI Propaganda Bureaux in Catalonia. To boot, the same number again are engaged in work leading up to the obtaining of qualifications as journalists and writers: and similarly, a like number, not being equipped for oratory or journalism, must devote themselves to the thankless tasks of organising groups, branches, unions, etc.

For the practice of journalism, the School boasts a bulletin in which the comrades can see their output published — corrected, of course, by an editorial panel — and this acts as a spur and an incentive to trainees. Nearly all of our trainees are possessed of an overall elementary education: nonetheless, the most talented comrades from the confederal and anarchist organisation share their knowledge by means of talks on social history, economics and literary appreciation, oratory and other matters contributing to the literary and organisational education of us all. This educational

work with the trainees is carried on every working day by means of courses, lectures, talks etc., followed by debates on the subjects dealt with. On holidays anyone can take the rostrum and this practice also serves as a first assessment with regard to the examination.

Thus the comrade would-be orator takes the floor in the School for a given period of time and expounds upon a topic, as simply, briefly and eloquently as he is able. The person so appointed by the committee's approval automatically joins the propaganda commissions, without thereby ceasing to hold trainee status, for the view is that the orator stands in need of conscientious practice before he can evolve into a public speaker with all of the qualities required of one. The same goes for writers. Some of our trainees in that field, possessed of wide knowledge of literary technique and editing, have already been dispatched to different villages and duties in charge of publications of the CNT.

Our initiative has been very well received, given its importance. At present our School boasts upwards of 300 trainees. And throughout our region, in Aragón and in Levante, numerous teams are being formed which only await our signal to set up other such schools which will, of course, be under the wing of our own, which will act as their guide. Unquestionably one of our organisation's most commendable ideas has been the establishment of this original institution in that its members, while acquiring useful and interesting knowledge in every sphere of human scholarship, also acquire in a methodical way further training in their speciality.

We have high hopes for our School. What is more, we wanted it that way, so that its cultural and moral influence may be steered and channelled towards achieving the optimum possible improvement of the militant in the context of each union, however far-flung that union may be. As we have stated, its fruits and results have been highly beneficial: but they can be much more so if young workers eager for culture come alive to the need to rally to our work and are prepared to struggle staunchly to be capable members of the legion of militants. Their help will stimulate the directors of the School to persist in their designs to perfect and gradually to broaden, in the light of the teachings of experience, the as yet embryonic planning and organisation of the lessons. To qualify as students at our school one requires:

First: a vocation and determination in the individual to achieve the aims pursued by the School.

Second: That one be possessed of a mind of one's own and a general culture, especially where social issues are involved. In the absence of such qualifications, one should be possessed, as we have said, of a determination to attain them, and

Third: The student's attendance at the school is socially guaranteed by the union to which he may belong. Failure to fulfil these requirements would leave him nothing more than a simple listener in an academy of workers whose mission is to ensure that he may stand out and may be useful to the work that has to be done in the bosom of the people.

We appeal to all and chiefly to the unions and to the JJ.LL to send as pupils to our School whatever young people may be remarkable for their competence, talents, cir-

cumstances and resolve, so that they may be turned into men of ability expert in the tasks proper to the organisation. Only in this way, through a continual perfecting of our active militants, will we be able to engage in useful fertile endeavours on behalf of our ideals and of mankind; to overcome the traditional obstacles and secure an advantageous victory in the crusade being waged by our people for justice and for the achievement of a way of life that is just and egalitarian.'

From January 1937 onwards, these same Information and Propaganda Bureaux laid on a series of lectures in the Coliseum Cinema in Barcelona. The rostrum was taken in turns by the libertarian movement's finest public speakers, people like Federica Montseny, García Oliver, Gaston Leval, Higinio Noja Ruiz, León Felipe etc. Federica Montseny delivered the opening talk, on 3 January 1937, in which she expanded upon the theme 'Militant anarchism and the Spanish reality'. This talk, of which we reproduce the resumé published in the contemporary *Boletín de Información*, is remarkable chiefly for the speaker's intention of explaining, in the light of anarchism's basic principles and likewise of the realities, the stand which the CNT and FAI had adopted vis à vis Spain's tragic conflagration.

This is the resumé of her address:

'Comrades and friends: I have accepted the honour of initiating this series of talks with the pleasure of one who must comply with a self-imposed obligation, for anyone who has plotted the position of classical anarchism must today plot also the precise position to which it has been brought by the events through which we are living.

We as anarchists have amended nothing of that which was consubstantial with our very selves. That declaration needed to be made. We are anarchists, we remain such and we pursue the same ideals as ever. Events have nothing to do with what the Spanish anarchist movement is and shall continue to be. But a distinction has to be made between the immobile ideal and the eternal aspiration. An immobile ideal, a stagnant ideal which has no flexibility, no agility and no ability to react (it and its representatives) in accordance with the circumstances — such an ideal is doomed to be overtaken, pushed aside and replaced by other ideals. This is what we Spanish anarchists have been able to take into account. Without the ideal's ceasing to be the same, without the anarchist idea's having been forced to beat a retreat in the face of formidable experience of the historical situation and Spanish circumstances, we have managed to adapt ourselves, been able to find our place and put into practice the physical precept with which Tarrida del Mármol defined the word "authority". "Authority is something from which we keep subtracting and of which some remnant always remains and which we must aim daily to diminish."

Nobody could have foreseen the events which came in the wake of 19 July: we, however, did not lose our grasp of the situation and we went on acting just as we had up to then, for, since the advent of the Republic, no organisation had given so much proof of revolutionary fervour as ours had. A reformist socialism, with an almost universal preference for accommodation, had been a brake upon the revolutionary process. Our steadfastness, the spur (what we might term our craziness) was necessary to whittle away at the forces which opposed the advances of the proletariat; it also successfully shifted reformist socialism as such on to a revolutionary footing.

And so we come to the army revolt resisted by the proletariat, whose heroic resistance shaped events and led to a new dawn. A mass upheaval came to pass in Spain and our people has hurled itself into a revolution that has nothing in common with the Russian Revolution nor with other upheavals. There would have been no revolution had we not prepared the people. This is our triumph and the most cherished prize that we anarchists possess.

Without amendment of the anarchist philosophy we have managed to adapt ourselves to the circumstances. There have been instances when anarchists elsewhere in the world could scarcely understand the Spanish anarchist. I intend no criticism of anarchists. One cannot censure a movement, nor a few individuals. We, like the statist communists or socialists, insist upon the total realisation of our ideals. Once this was agreed, our position boiled down to this: either we remain in opposition, in an opposition incomprehensible in that we all had to marshal our efforts around the bourgeois republic (bourgeois, but it stood for liberalism against fascism) or we made our stand whenever circumstances obliged us to. Had all the comrades from Europe, America and elsewhere, who cannot comprehend what we are doing with Spanish anarchism, been in Spain we would have seen how they would have acted and their mental response to the events which had come to pass, with facts so very different from what we had imagined. The ideals are the same, but sometimes one has no option but to amend even one's own opinion of the facts which supervened in a way other than the manner which had to have been anticipated. Because nobody could have known that we would be making the revolution simultaneously with waging the war. Not a civil war like the civil wars of last century, in which there was a parity of forces, but a modern war with every factor required for the struggle.

Had we proceeded on 19 July to implement the totality of our libertarian ideals, the upshot would have been catastrophe, just as it would have been had the Stalinists or socialists made the attempt. Such an attempt would have smashed a front of struggle. For this reason we were the first to introduce a note of deliberation into our aspirations. The Spanish people's battle against fascism, itself a bold and grandiose effort by an unarmed people, a people that needed several days to stir the conscience of other peoples, found us alone in our will to free beings, as against the authoritarian penchant of international fascism. We stand for a movement opposed to the ever-aggressive imperialisms of Italy and Germany. And already this contest is so great that victory over fascism was well worth the laying down of our lives.

We Spanish anarchists, cognisant of the overwhelming needs imposed by the circumstances of the moment, have espoused a line of conduct designed to avert a repetition of what happened in Russia where anarchism, for all its might, was ousted from the leadership of the revolution by a minority organisation.

On 19 July we were the most important labour movement in Catalonia, if not in the whole of Spain and we could have embarked upon the adventure of wholesale conquest of our ideals. We did not, lest it wreck everything. By our attitude, we have prevented anyone bridling the effervescence of the people by means of a dictatorship.

The CNT's entry into the central government and into the Generalitat ensured that the anarchist movement was not ousted from the leadership of the revolution. What was needed was a genuine united front of the entire proletariat and of all anti-fascist elements so as to erect an impregnable bulwark against international fascism which had turned the peninsula into its field of operations, and now the people which is beating the fascists is making social strides by conjuring into existence a new concept of life, a new society.

Tell me if what we are doing is not great. When we reflect upon the times in which we live we astound ourselves. And we will think on how we have found it possible to overcome such huge obstacles.

Of all the problems posed by the present hour, the problem of the war is the most straightforward, in that here we have been able to achieve and to maintain the unity of all workers, republican, socialist, communist and anarchist who know that fascism represents strangulation, something tougher than the late dictatorship because the fascist movement has been injected with German and Italian fascism.

Hatred of fascism and the urge to defeat it binds us together but now imagine the picture once the war is over, with different ideological forces which will wrestle for dominion over one another. Once the war ends, the problem will crop up again in Spain with the same characteristics as featured in France and in Russia. We must make our stand here and now. We have to spell out points of view so that the other parties may know what is what, and we may all, in a candid, loyal way, arrive at the unity needed for the future. We have to seek out the platform, the common ground that enables us, with the greatest freedom and minimum scheme of economic achievements, to press on along the road upon which we have embarked until we reach our goal.

Already we have spoken of what we want once the war is ended. What we say today we had been saying before the war. And we said that there was something consubstantial with the history of Spain and with the aspirations of the people as manifested in each moment of erupting consciousness, such as the revolt by the comuneros of Castile or of the Catalan segadors, which long ago asserted our people's stand against centralising, all-absorbing authority — this aspiration, a source of wonder to other lands, startled by the climate of liberty and democracy by which it was informed, and which was the assertion of our own individuality over anything that may have spelled tyranny or oppression.

We all have the same racial feeling for liberty against oppression, and again humiliation and for this reason the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, that farce, was unable to prevail in Spain, any more than Mola and Franco will be able to make theirs prevail, for our people prefer death to slavery.

Our concept of organisation is straightforwardly federalist. Of me, in particular, it has been said that I am closer to Pi i Margall than to Bakunin. I can state that all we Spanish anarchists see eye to eye with Pi i Margall's philosophical, economic and political outlook because Pi i Margall was able to discover the very essence of our spirit. Federalism is the guarantee that the outcome of the contest will be prolific in

terms of material benefits for the workers of the cities and countryside, making Spain what hitherto she has not been. We must all be federalists. Despite their centralistic outlook, an inheritance from the centralistic mentality of Marx and one that has to be remedied, the socialists must be federalists. All republicans are federalists and we must be federalists too in accepting the establishment of the Iberian Federation of Socialist Republics which will give each region the right to order its own affairs. To date Spain has been a monstrous head upon a wizened body. All of the country's wealth flows to Madrid.

The economic reconstruction of the country is an impossibility if the bourgeoisie retain their power. Should any move be made to restore power to the bourgeoisie, that would be the greatest of catastrophes. The workers will brave sacrifice for the sake of the revolution and will step up production for the sake of the revolution, but should this be asked of them for anything other than the victory of the revolution, it will be to no avail and indeed the workers will not countenance it. By fighting fascism, the Spanish people is simultaneously fighting social inequality, it is fighting an entire history in which it has been allotted the role of the victim. Although victory in both the war and the revolution will require more sacrifices, the fighting morale of the people will remain and nobody will give up their post in the collective struggle for our future and for that of our children. Let no one lose sight of this fact. A civil war does not come into it. This is the people's war, the war of the workers against the overlords, the military man and parasites.

The bourgeois parties have failed, having been unable to conjure up a moral consciousness or to stand up to the army revolt, leaving the military at liberty to lay the foundations of the current seditious revolt whose failure is down to its lack of a popular base.

Henceforth, if the new Spain is to take shape, it is necessary that every facet of the management of the country be handed over to the workers, and once federalism has been introduced, it is imperative that the workers achieve economic unity through the effective, continuous and trustworthy amalgamation of the two union groupings, the UGT and the CNT.

So lofty a concept of individual and collective liberty do we have that we do not seek the success of a proletarian economic policy at the price of the imposition of a dictatorship of the working class.

In Spain, with the economy in the workers' hands there must be an accentuating of the morality of sacrifice and the sense of individual and collective responsibility. Morality must induce us to brave every hardship, rationing, and longer shifts for the sake of reconstruction, integrity and austerity, and every one of us must feel that he is a soldier of a great cause; and all privilege has to be abolished. A sense of responsibility will help us to set aside our selfishness and personal ambition so to make a contribution to the tasks which are to ensure that all our hopes become reality. This we want and we yield to none in encouraging it in ourselves and in others.

Whereas it has not proved possible to eradicate authority absolutely in Spain, its prerogatives are being whittled away by, first of all, federalism and next by man's being instructed in how to live without anyone's ordering him to perform his duties, instilling within him a feeling of liberty within the anarchist principles which remain the quintessence of liberalism.

This Spanish proletariat, schooled in such principles and with its personality honed by the realities imposed by the struggle it conducts, will be the one to point the way along which all of the workers of the world must follow in order to win the right to liberty and well-being.'

The crisis provoked in the Generalitat government in mid-December 1936 signalled the start of the counter-revolution's fight-back. On 15 December, *Solidaridad Obrera* launched a campaign of insertions alluding to this new situation:

'The war and the revolution cannot be dissevered. To grasp this one needs to be a revolutionary rather than a politician. Regrettably the latter are more abundant than the former!'

*La Batalla*, the POUM's main mouthpiece, announced on the same day:

'The PSUC cannot say as much. From its press organ and from the public platform, it launched a campaign of insult and calumny against our party, a campaign with no aim other than to pave the way for what it has since demanded — our removal from the Generalitat. We have made every effort to ensure that unity of action be not breached in times like these, not because we had any special appetite for position (far from it) but because we consider that such a breakdown could only have profited fascism. Similarly other organisations have striven to avert a breakdown, most especially the CNT. However, the breakdown proved unavoidable thanks to the intransigence of the PSUC which, not content with demanding that we be eliminated, advocates the annihilation pure and simple of all of the working class's revolutionary gains — something that we shall never countenance.'

In its issue of the same date, the PSUC organ *Treball*, the orchestrator of the campaign (which had been inspired by covert instructions from Moscow) spelled out its party's position in a display of sophistry and coat trailing:

'Nor, despite what some seem to think, is our attitude to the POUM a party-political attitude. We struggle against provocateurs with the same tenacity and for the same motives as against fascists. Everyone is familiar with our endeavours on behalf of unity; everyone knows that we were its instigators and that we have been and still are its most steadfast defenders.'

The Stalinist line vis à vis the POUM was not merely a party-political issue and not only in tune with the general policy line of the Comintern, but it was a stance designed to engineer Stalinist control within the Catalan UGT. The POUM wielded a certain influence over the trade union affiliate of the Communist International in Catalonia. The PSUC was the product of an alliance

between pro-Popular Front Stalinist and social-democratic groups in Catalonia. On the eve of the proclamation of the Republic, the UGT in Catalonia had been the Cinderella of the branches of that socialist trade union federation. Its influence extended only to tiny trades redoubts that languished in the shadow of the spreading branches of the CNT. After the proclamation of the Republic, there was an abortive Stalinist offensive directed against the thriving CNT. The failure of this offensive was due to the anarcho-syndicalist grouping's firm foundations among the people and to the zeal and vigilance of its inexhaustible pool of militants. Even the POUM, known in those days as the BOC, was forever trying its luck. The CNT congress of 1931, and the regional congresses held the same year, passed acerbic resolutions against the communist infiltrations of whatever persuasion, which posed a threat to the organisation. The Conservatorio congress, when it came to check the credentials of the representatives attending it, repudiated a series of communists who had had themselves delegated by some unions in which they enjoyed a measure of influence. The passing of a motion under which no member of the CNT who had sought public office or participated in election campaigns or been an active element in any political party could be a representative of the CNT had the effect of putting paid to the designs of those elements who had so striven to plant their flag in the very heart of the confederal labour movement.

As a result, the POUM and the Stalinists made the skeletal Catalan UGT their new fishing grounds. The attempt by Estat Català and the Esquerra to found an authentically Catalan trade union federation — the Federació Obrera Català (FOC) failed to get off the ground. But, come 19 July and the affirmation of the CNT's hegemony, the need to erect a popular force to neutralise it became imperative. The rallying to it of all those elements and parties who were against the Confederation, as well as the CNT's conciliatory attitude to the petty bourgeoisie and the parties which spoke for it helped to lift the Catalan UGT out of its anonymity. The Stalinists who had elevated the defence of the interests of the petty bourgeoisie to the status of a political platform were ousting their despised rivals in the POUM from the offices of the UGT. And next — again building upon the petty bourgeoisie and those parties which were its retainers — Acció Catalana, Estat Català and the ERC itself — they attained their ultimate goal of ousting the POUM from the political leadership of the Generalitat. This and nothing else is what lay behind the December crisis. The CNT itself swallowed the bait by giving its approval to the formation of a new 'trade union' government. The Esquerra's presence in the government was disguised by the pretence that it spoke for the petty bourgeoisie. So the petty bourgeoisie had double representation — in the shape of the UGT, itself represented by prominent figures from the PSUC and the Esquerra. The petty bourgeoisie was also represented by the U. de R. minister Josep Calvet.

When the Generalitat crisis was repaired by means of the aforementioned non-party government, the POUM issued a public manifesto which contained warnings such as this:

'If, despite our efforts and our sacrifices there should be a breakdown in the unity of action, it will not be through any fault of ours. The blame would lie with those who make it take a back seat to their party-political ambitions and we are sure that before too long the facts will prove us right. Unfortunately, we must face the consequences of this manoeuvre which, being performed at this juncture, cannot but give succour to the common enemy. This being so, we find ourselves compelled to denounce it to Catalonia's working class.'



The counter-revolution's offensive was mounted under cover of the artful slogan — 'First and foremost, win the war, which is the guarantee of the revolution.' To this *Solidaridad Obrera* replied (19 December 1936):

'Frankly we have to confess that this watchword 'first win the war' smells of trouble in the wind. What we have here is a desiccated watchword, devoid of substance, lacking in moral fibre and bereft of pith. First win the war and make the revolution simultaneously, because the war and the revolution are consubstantial, like the sun and the light. That is the watchword.'

'The time has come for socialisation', insisted the same newspaper on 24 December. 'The first phase of the current revolution consists of the establishment of the control committees which have been its expression and executive organs, but it is vital that that phase be complemented by a decisive step — wholesale socialisation.'

*La Batalla*, voicing allegations of harassment, wrote:

'The struggle holds no fears for us. Do but try to find us and found we are. We give provocation to none: but we stand ready to make the due reply to provocations. Be careful! Be very careful! We have done and will continue to do everything possible to avert a contest which we hold to be criminal. We have done and will continue to do everything possible to rebuild unity of action against fascism and for the triumph of the revolution. And to this end we expect the assistance of all workers — workers of the CNT and of the FAI, workers of the UGT and workers of the PSUC. But let this be known to all: if, despite our good intentions we are forced into physical contest, let the blame be laid at the door of those who are at fault. That is all we have to say for today.'

Another of the fronts opened up by Stalinists, albeit not the main one, targeted the CNT itself. The scarcity of provisions was beginning to bite. The government's financial policy — consisting of the suppression or the measured release of foreign exchange for the procurement of raw materials — aggravated the situation of industry as far as Catalonia was concerned. This was a measure implemented from the outset by the central government with an eye to keeping a rein on the revolutionary licence of the Catalan proletariat.

Joan Comorera, the Generalitat's new Minister for Supplies, capitalised upon these penurious circumstances in order to implement a well-thought-out plan of political speculation. In his first public statements Comorera publicly denounced the ineptitude of his predecessor (the CNT member Domènech) in the field of supply and simultaneously, with crocodile tears, bewailed the alarming situation that the dearth of foodstuffs was to create. Comorera claimed to have found the warehouses of foodstuffs destined for the populace utterly bare.

On 24 December 1936 *Solidaridad Obrera* picked up the gauntlet and adduced the following arguments:

'Is it or is it not a fact that during Domènech's time in the Ministry of Supply continues to cause so much comment in the press? Is it or is it not a fact that he was

denied the foreign currency aid which he sought, perfectly properly, from the government? Is it or is it not a fact that despite the fact that this foreign currency was not forthcoming, he left the shipment of many of the articles we need all in hand upon stepping down from the ministry? By contrast, we shall always have to say of Comorera that, in the present circumstances, sowing alarm among the public without offering any immediate solution is an imprudence which has succeeded only in exacerbating a situation in which circumstances are most to blame.'

In *Soli* of the same date, one J. Alvarez, former secretary of the Generalitat of Catalonia's General Directorate of Supply and erstwhile delegate in charge of purchases, issued this clarification:

'TWO OPPORTUNE WORDS: My arrival in this city, following a trip to Ubeda as the delegate of the former Minister for Supplies in the Generalitat, with the commission of purchasing wheat and flour in the province of Jaén, happens to have fallen precisely in these moments of alarm for the people of Barcelona as a result of the inaccurate statements made by the new minister in charge of Supply in one of the evening newspapers. Assisted by the comrades from the respected regions, we have arranged, on behalf of the Generalitat, purchase and barter operations as a result of which there will shortly be arriving in our city several hundreds of truckloads of flour and wheat, enough to supply our industries with their basis wherewithal and thereby to buy some time until the aforesaid cereal can be shipped in from other regions where other delegates, like myself, have concluded deals, at home as well as abroad, and this will offer a complete solution to the latent problem with the supply of bread, an item of basic necessity, and the normal performance of all wheat-dependent industries . . .'

At around the same time *La Humanitat*, the mouthpiece of the Esquerra, in a further display of its complacent attitude wrote:

'No matter what the valid reasons for it, in Barcelona there is no bread to be had, and it is bread that is eaten and which gives sustenance.'

When one considers the docking in Barcelona around 20 January 1937 of a new Soviet ship whose bill of lading showed 901 tons of wheat flour, 882 tons of sugar and 568 tons of butter — 'a gift from the workers and peasants of Russia to the Spanish anti-fascists' — one cannot help wondering if the Stalinists' brouhaha about the shortage of foodstuffs was not designed to sensationalise the ship's arrival, i.e. to paint in providential colours these shipments which were, as we know, made against Spain's vast gold reserves, and at the same time to bolster the position of the Stalinists who baulked at no chicanery or speculation.

The first Soviet ship, the *Zirianin*, had put into Barcelona on 13 October of the previous year. To give some idea of this event, we carry below the 'report' from the ship's master himself, a report drafted in the form of a dispatch to his chief, Stalin:

'To the workers of the Soviet Union, to our leader, comrade Stalin — We put in at Barcelona at midnight on the 13th, entering the port in the morning, finding in our path hundreds of boats, launches and tugs borne down with people waving flags and

welcoming placards. We were boarded by the representatives of the parties along with our consul, comrade Antonov-Ovseenko. People filled the entire dockside, the roofs of the houses, the windows and balconies and all of the ships at anchor in the port. There was a continuous wail of sirens from the Spanish ships, factories and workshops. Upon disembarking a splendid rally was laid on, at which all the representatives of all the parties welcomed us and offered thanks. Our Consul Antonov-Ovseenko and Captain Bonisenko and Seaman Filipov replied, declaring that the workers of the Soviet Union are following their struggle hour by hour and are with them with all their hearts. Words cannot convey the formidable vigour of the welcome and the jubilation of the Catalan people. That evening, along with the consul, I visited the president of Catalonia, Companys. After making a "report" of my arrival, I handed to the president a list of the cargo I had brought. The president conveyed the fraternal gratitude of the Catalan people to the workers of the Soviet Union. The ship receives continual visits from members of the government, representatives from organisations, factories and workshops, bearing flowers. The ship's crew has been inundated with invitations. We visited two factories where the workers greeted us with cries of "Long live the Soviet Union! Long live comrade Stalin!" We began off-loading the ship on the 15th of this month and will complete it on 18th and 19th. On the quayside is a mass of thousands of people. The Zirianin crew and the Soviet colony in Barcelona send fraternal greetings to our beloved homeland, to our cherished leader, comrade Stalin, and to all the workers and our families — Captain of the vessel Zirianin, Borisenko.'

To complement this dispatch, published in the press on 18 October, we now reprint the report of *Solidaridad Obrera* of 21 October of the farewell which the people of Barcelona reserved for the *Zirianin*.

'THE BARCELONA PROLETARIAT PAYS FAREWELL HOMAGE TO THE RUSSIAN SEAMEN: —

The *Zirianin*'s eight-day stay in our port culminated last evening in one of the most emotional gatherings of libertarians from proletarian Barcelona. The aspect of the various quays along which the Russian ship had to pass was an eloquent demonstration of a free people's capacity for spontaneous display. Above the heads of this enthusiastic multitude the banners symbolising the various anti-fascist tendencies fluttered in the wind. There were placards on which one phrase was tantamount to an entire social poem. The hundreds of thousands of citizens who had joined in this exquisite farewell gathering had their eyes fixed upon just one object — the *Zirianin*. This was a people overwhelmed by the human meaning of this first visit from another people. Their sensitivity was a tribute to the solidarity. Tons of foodstuffs were borne from Russia to Spain by this messenger from the Russian proletariat, an offering from their women to ours, a heartwarming endearment from the Soviet youngsters to the children of Iberia. The very grandeur of the gesture demanded a spiritual response and this Barcelona workers delivered and certainly delivered well. We are not great ones for dwelling upon spectacle, but we confess that yesterday's solemn display had more of the heart-throb about it than the spectacle. This re-

doubtable mobilisation of masses sprang from a feat of overbrimming humanity. The microphone collected and broadcast the voices and the thoughts of different militants from the organisations of the anti-fascist front. All were able to drink deeply for a moment or two of the climate of fellowship in which the grandiose ceremony took place and all lived up to the lofty tones which needs must have attended it.

Shortly after 3 p.m. — the hour scheduled for the ship's weighing anchor — on deck appeared Miravittles, Valdés, Benejam and Fernández, who, on behalf of their respective union and political tendencies, offered a salute to the seamen and to the Russian people. Comrade Aurelio Fernández's profound yet simple words were etched upon the memories of that enormous and massive sea of people in that they were a reflection of its revolutionary meaning. Afterwards, *Zirianin* crewmember Filipov, Captain Borisenko and the USSR's consul in Barcelona, Antonov-Ovseenko, stepped up to the microphone. Their translated speeches were counterpointed by the enthusiastic reception from the multitude. But the people's emotions reached an especially high spiritual pitch when the *Zirianin* pulled away from the quayside and made for the harbour mouth. Thousands upon thousands of kerchiefs were waved above heads. Flags were unfurled into the wind and the sirens of the ships lying off the port, steamships and launches punctuated the roar of enthusiasm from this mass of humanity as it forced its way into every heart. On the deck and on the flower-bedecked captain's bridge the Russian sailors, fists in the air, drank in the testimony to the solidarity and love of the Barcelona proletariat. The splendid spectacle peaked with the exit from the port, with the Russian ship escorted by tiny vessels weighed down with comrades.

The *Zirianin* had reached the mouth of the harbour. Some dismal notes assuaged the emotion and the siren of the prison ship Uruguay, which hurled one last moaning cry into space — because she was poisoned in her steel body— spoke for a whole people. And amid wreaths of dense smoke, the ship, which had brought us a taste of material and fraternal solidarity slipped from view. The *Zirianin* gives the slip to the watchdogs of who knows what undertaking and the grandeur of the moment is darkened by this note of sadness on an autumnal evening.'

As is evident from this sample, the arrival in the port of Barcelona of the first Soviet ship had the effect of striking an emotional chord in the Catalan people. For a comparable popular demonstration, in terms of the spontaneity of emotion, we should have to hark back to the demonstration of affection at the funeral of Durruti. Few events so stirred the feelings of the people. For all of the justified reservations which the proletariat of Barcelona had always had concerning the Soviet dictatorship, this 'production' by the consummate actors of Stalinism had the effect of arousing one of the most deeply-rooted sentiments in the Spanish soul — the sentiment which springs from the emotion of fellowship. Nonetheless, what a far cry was this people and indeed the individuals who led it from the underlying meaning of this gesture of feigned friendship. Even in the light of subsequent events, it is hard to conceive of what may have lain behind such outward shows of solidarity — the most chilling, most refined treachery.

As will be seen from the course of events, the intrigue was of huge proportions. Around this time one of the most baneful figures of the counter-revolutionary backlash made his appearance

on the political stage in Catalonia. This was the new commissar-general of police, Eusebio Rodríguez Salas. He was invested by the Minister for Internal Security, Artemi Aiguader of the Esquerra, in the presence of the secretary of the Internal Security Council, Aurelio Fernández, representing the CNT. On that occasion (24 December 1936) Fernández delivered an address from which we have taken the following extracts:

‘I welcome comrade Rodríguez Salas, Catalonia’s new Chief of Police, and it gives me a certain satisfaction to do so because he comes from the proletarian camp and from an eminently proletarian organisation. I, of course, am enormously gratified to see positions of responsibility allotted to the proletarian organisations which are to take the place of the regime which has hitherto held sway.

Not that comrade Rodríguez Salas and I are meeting for the first time today. We have a record as militants of the same organisation, because although he is now a militant of the UGT, he was previously a militant of the CNT.

I only hope that one thing may be carried into effect: and that is that Public Order in Catalonia may be utterly transformed; to this end, the collaboration of men from the revolutionary camp must be distinguished by the proper mood.

This being so, I wish to assure you, comrade Rodríguez Salas, that in myself you will find not merely a friend of collaboration, but a comrade ready to work quietly so that the effects of Public Order may be readily visible on the streets.’

Rodríguez Salas had indeed been a member of the CNT in the province of Tarragona back in the dark days of repression after World War One, and he had made his name as an active member of the union’s action groups. During the Republic he defected to the dissident communists only to embrace later, at a critical stage in the revolution, the PSUC, in which he quickly rose to prominence. A few days after he had been raised to the post of Chief of Police, he drew comment from the CNT’s regional mouthpiece, which, on 9 January 1937, carried this sideswipe at him:

‘The new Chief of Police is one of those most prone to shoot off his mouth provided there is a reporter at hand. Few days go by without the press carrying the usual “strong words from Eusebio Rodríguez Salas” in which he lashes out at will without exercising the least discretion.

The remarks published on the 3rd of this month are an excellent sample of the anti-revolutionary propaganda upon which, as was only to be expected, the fascists of San Sebastián, publishers of the daily *Unidad*, as well as the illustrious Quiapo de Llano, have readily seized. Reading them, one is left with the impression that one is living, not in Catalonia, but in hell, a land plagued by murderers, a land where the most ghastly chaos prevails. This is precisely what the fascist newspapers in Paris argue and Rodríguez, unwittingly plays into their hands with his pernicious and unbridled readiness to express himself...’

Some days ago we thought to point this out to our friend, but we let it go in keeping with the saying that one should ‘let sleeping dogs lie’. But in yesterday’s newspapers we read another batch of ‘strong words’ from the same source, which take the biscuit.

Here is one sample: “There must be an end of clandestine jails and unmarked graves”, he says, in a reference to Barcelona. Very well. Does friend Rodríguez Salas weigh up his words whenever he indulges in the pastime of his “declarations”? Does he appreciate how responsible is his position? Now that there is so much talk of controls, why does the Chief of Police not keep his tongue under control?’

Add to all this the insidious work of the Stalinist cells which were greatly active in workplaces, where they resorted to every trick in the book in order to get their message across. An internal bulletin of the PSUC local committee, *El Leninista*, dated 31 December 1936, carried the following confidential information:

‘COMPANY CELL AT THE UNIFIED ELECTRICAL SERVICES OF CATALONIA: —

One of the toughest struggles has been due to the fact that the CNT has always erected every obstacle it has been able to, so as to discredit the UGT and to hold a majority of members. This cell later argued for the creation of a central committee for workers’ control and of a trade union liaison committee in order to replace the existing committee, which was much criticised. The CNT rejected this move.

Through this overhaul, two very essential aims were achieved. First, that men who had conducted themselves from the very outset in a sectarian way were ousted. Secondly, and as a result of the propaganda carried out by the cell, that the comrades appointed by comrade Comorera were recognised as delegates. This was a tremendous victory, for in this way we have total and direct control of the industry.

The present members of the Industry’s Central Control Committee belong to the party, as do all of the executive members of the Catalan Federation of the Industry. Let us stress that we have been able to remove the POUM from this committee. At present, out of more than 700 men in this building not one is a POUM militant. Next let it be emphasised that at union gatherings the policy line is prescribed by the party, so much so that its steering committee comprises 15 members, of whom 12 belong to the party. At two congresses held during a two-month period, the five representatives on the Barcelona delegation were likewise party members.’

Such Machiavellian measures gave rise to continual clashes between workers of both organisations, and casualties resulted. Here the CNT-UGT-FAI-PSUC liaison committee came into its own as a forum for grievances. Here is one of its typical jeremiads which appeared in the press on 21 January 1937:

‘Comrades of the CNT-FAI and of the UGT-PSUC. Another deplorable incident occurred today in Barcelona. One worker fired his pistol at a fellow worker, causing his death. The two trade unions and their liaison committee, along with the FAI and the PSUC, have no desire to go into the motives behind such fratricidal action. Whatever these may have been, attacks on comrades have to be stricken from our methods of struggle because they turn into counter-revolutionary acts in that they are an assault upon the proletariat’s unity of action, especially in these times when all of us, regardless of ideology, are under attack from home-grown and international fascism.

The undersigned organisations strenuously protest at today’s attack and condemn it as symptomatic of the demoralisation of the working class. We remind our affiliates

of the agreement worked out between the four organisations which make up the liaison committee and we demand of everyone that they respect free will in the choice of union and, above all, respect for the lives of militants of the four organisations.

Should any difficulty or dissatisfaction arise among the comrades, reason and cordiality should prevail and there should be recourse to the responsible agencies. But acts such as the one we have condemned should never be perpetrated, for they would bring us to the most crushing defeat and to the historical shame of having betrayed not just our own country's proletariat, but the proletariat of the entire world.

Comrades of the CNT-FAI and of the UGT-PSUC! We condemn violence between workers! Long live the unity of action of the working class! Let us use violence only against our common foe — fascism!

On behalf of the liaison committee: **Castellote, Cortés, Vidiella and Rosell**. For the CNT, **Valerio Mas**. For the FAI, **Juan Gavaldá**. For the UGT, **Antoni Sesé**. For the PSUC, **Pere Ardiaca**.'

Stalinism's offensive against the CNT and the FAI — by this time its chief targets — did not shrink from procedures that had the most prejudicial implications for the revolution. Proselytising zeal induced the UGT and PSUC to become the champions of all who were unhappy with the work of the collectivisations. In Catalonia, Stalinism became the receptacle for all the demands of the petty bourgeoisie, small craftsmen and traders and, in a very special way, of the smallholders in the Catalan countryside. In the countryside it exploited the natural conservatism of these peasants whose hatred of collectivist reform was constantly flaring up, just as it mounted campaigns of base calumny against the champions of collectivisation.

Evidence of this is the first congress of the Catalan UGT's landworkers' union, which was held on 23 January 1937 and attended by about 40 delegates representing (according to official figures) some 30,000 members. The proceedings boiled down to the appointment of working parties prior any debate, which, when it came, dominated by repeated interventions by members of the UGT's regional executive committee. The platform was adorned by a huge placard bearing the following inscription: 'Fewer Collectivist Experiments and More Produce'. At this congress, the Stalinist leader Víctor Colomer had this to say:

'There must be a speedy end of the confused — and in some areas chaotic — situation which exists today in the Catalan countryside, and this is vital if victory over fascism is to be ensured. While you are the ones who must decide whether there should be collectivisation or not, we have to tell you that we do not recommend it in that we do not believe it to be opportune at this time.'

About this same time there were the La Fatarella incidents, sparked by this sowing of hatred on the land. La Fatarella, a tiny village in the province of Tarragona, between Gandesa and the Ebro, numbered 600 inhabitants, most of them smallholders with a backward-looking mentality. Here the collectivisation idea encountered steadfast resistance that would possibly have amounted to nothing more important, had not Stalinism intervened, with its policy of whipping up passions and atavistic prejudices. Given the mentality of the bulk of the residents, the emissaries of the PSUC found it child's play to excite the hostility of this majority against the minority who, egged

on by their like-minded colleagues from other collectivised villages, intended to introduce the economic gains of the revolution in their village. Eventually, nearly all of the residents joined the UGT en bloc, promptly sparking a tension between collectivists and small holders which was soon complicated by the more or less interested pressures brought to bear by the respective lobbies outside the village.

The revolt came on 23 January, when the majority of the residents rose up in arms against a party of CNT members that had come to the village to help settle the problem at the bottom of all the agitation. The outsiders quit the village and dug in on the outskirts, sending to Barcelona and to the largest towns in the area for reinforcements. The news reached almost all of these in the form of a rumour that the Fifth Column had risen up in La Fatarella. Instantly two truckloads of the control patrols and a company of Assault Guards (which opened fire upon reaching the entrance to the village) were dispatched to the scene. During the attack and mopping-up operation which went on for several hours, some of the attackers were killed or wounded and this gave the pretext for a drastic repression directed against the rebels, who left 30 dead upon the ground.

The fact that the attackers included some CNT members, who had come from neighbouring *comarcas*, and the guile deployed by the Stalinists, who similarly accounted for a portion of the Assault Guards and control patrols but who prudently withdrew once the deed was done, left the CNT and the FAI cast in the roles of the chief instigators of the repression. Let it be understood that the so-called control patrols upon which an attempt was made to heap all of the blame were made up of members of every party and organisation in Catalonia and that the Assault Guard took its orders from the Generalitat's Minister for Internal Security and the Commissariat for Public Order (i.e. from Artemi Aiguader and Rodríguez Salas) and not just from the Internal Security Council and the Directorate of the Public Order Services, which featured the CNT members Dionisio Eroles and Aurelio Fernández. So, while this was no excuse for such damnable and bloody repression, there should have been less justification for the making of political points at the expense of the CNT.

But the shockwaves of the La Fatarella incidents had not quite died away when another incident occurred which defies description.

On 5 March 1937, 12 tanks were removed from a combat equipment depot belonging to the war industries. The man who removed them turned out to be the lieutenant-colonel, a Stalinist, from the PSUC-controlled Voroshilov barracks.

Here is the report carried by *Solidaridad Obrera* in its 7 March edition:

‘REMOVAL OF TWELVE TANKS: Last Friday between 4pm and 8pm Barcelona was the scene of an action which has produced an extraordinary sensation on account of its extreme gravity and which we shall recount for the information of every worker.

On that day some persons presented themselves at one of the several depots of combat equipment, whose address we shall omit for reasons of discretion, and produced a document stamped at the bottom with the signature of our comrade Eugenio Vallejo, demanding that 12 of the most recently manufactured tanks be handed over to them. The regulation documentation having been presented, the comrade in charge of the depot acceded fully to their request and handed over the vehicles as requested. But despite this, somebody detected something in their appearance at the last moment which aroused suspicion. For reassurance, and as a prudent precautionary measure, he asked them the number of the car in which they had come. Far from answering



this inquiry, the individuals quickly got into the car and made off without further ado.

Determined that the fraud should not go unpunished, the comrade in charge of the combat equipment depot from which the tanks had been removed followed them in another car and found the tanks garaged in the Voroshilov barracks. The comrade depot chief promptly brought what had happened to the attention of comrade Vallejo, who asked the control patrols to cordon off the aforementioned barracks and prevent anyone from leaving. This done, Vallejo visited the lieutenant-colonel in charge of the Voroshilov barracks to insist that the 12 purloined tanks be returned forthwith, since the papers submitted for the purposes of the withdrawal had been invalid, his signature on them having been forged. The lieutenant-colonel's reaction was roundly to refuse since he knew nothing about the theft nor had he had the slightest thing to do with it.

In view of the ineffectuality of the overtures made by comrade Vallejo, Vallejo asked that Prime Councillor Terradellas come along, and together with Vallejo he made repeated overtures to the said lieutenant-colonel, who replied to their questioning with blank refusals and claims of ignorance. By the time the discussions had moved onto a firmer footing, comrades Valdéz, the UGT-appointed Minister for Labour in the Generalitat, and Almendros, secretary of the PSUC's military committee, arrived at the Voroshilov barracks and showed themselves utterly disgusted by the conduct of their comrades from that barracks, taking them severely to task for what they had done.

Things being as they were, they were left with no option but to confess. The lieutenant-colonel in charge of the barracks then stated that no more than 5 of the purloined tanks were in his possession and that he was ignorant of the whereabouts of the rest. He was pressed to tell the whole story and eventually stated that he was in possession of the 12 tanks purloined in such a sordid manner.

With the facts thus clarified and a mode of behaviour so out of step with times like the present (when proletarian unity is so urgently needed) thus having been exposed, and in view of the attitude adopted by the lieutenant-colonel in command of the Voroshilov barracks, the latter was placed on a charge. We have reports that, when he found the affair 'discovered', the aforementioned commander stated that he had merely been carrying out orders received from the high command of the Karl Marx Column.

What truth is there in this? What is beyond all question is that the stolen tanks were not stolen for the purposes of war operations. The office of the Minister for Defence of the Generalitat, alert to the general interests of the anti-fascist struggle, is not partial in the distribution of combat equipment, but, operating on the basis of fairness, shares the equipment available to it among all of the forces operating on the Aragón front, without the slightest regard for their political or trade union affiliations.

If these tanks were not taken for use on the front, then to what end was such a 'brilliant' operation mounted? In this we discern the outlines of a dictatorial affront

against which everybody knows that we would immediately protest. In this instance, as in every one, we cannot but issue a reminder of the constant peril. Should the unhealthy partisan zeal in someone outweigh the instinct of self-preservation, we have to state yet again our firm and unshakeable determination to defeat fascism above all else. And to defeat it as part of a spearhead of close unity with workers of every political and trade union denomination, which compact of unity we are quite capable of honouring without indulging in double-dealing of any sort against any person.'

After such incidents had been exposed, *Soli* (9 March) published the following telegram from the commander of the (Stalinist) Karl Marx column, which, according to the officer on a charge, had been the instigation of the purloining of the tanks:

'COMMISSAR FOR WAR, KARL MARX COLUMN TO THE DIRECTOR OF **SOLIDARIDAD OBRERA**:

Learning through the press of the matter of the removal of the tanks, I ask you to publicise the fact that the High Command of this Division has absolutely no connection with the incident, and indeed was unaware of the existence of tanks in Catalonia. Consequently, we refute these allegations.

— **Manuel Trueba.**'

We will have to bear this episode in mind when the time comes to analyse the buildup to the provocation of the painful events of May 1937. Be it noted that from this moment forward, the tense political situation inside the Generalitat was magnified. However, the crisis did not come until 26 March, on which date the prime councillor, emerging from a council meeting, announced the fact to newspapermen, indicating that the crisis promised to be a lengthy one. In point of fact the crisis was not resolved until 26 April, exactly a month later.

The crisis was triggered by a decree from the minister for public order, dated 4 March, declaring the control patrols disbanded in favour of a further reshuffle of the various armed corps teeming in the Catalan rearguard. Guards were denied the right to be affiliated to parties and organisations and the control committees of these armed corps were abolished on the argument that the purging was now completed. In addition a plan to 'disarm the rearguard' was put into practice. Any civilian bearing arms without the proper authorisation or permit was to be disarmed and charged. The implications of this decree were as follows: to reduce the people to powerlessness and, consequently, to disarm the revolution. Weapons were to be exclusive to the public authorities and these were to be absolutely subordinate to the Ministry of Public Order which was awarded all of the classic prerogatives proper to government, just as soon as the people's patrols and the control committees in the armed corps had been abolished.

But CNT and anarchist militants, who were the first wrong-footed by these reactionary measures, reacted with great indignation against their representatives in the Catalan government, and the latter were instructed to repudiate the decree. Hence the ensuing crisis. Other fundamental features of this crisis came to light in documents published at the time, one of which we reproduce below. It was issued by the Barcelona local federation of anarchist groups on 27 March on which the newspapers were reporting the crisis. It reads like this:

‘TO PUBLIC OPINION, TO WORKERS AND TO ANARCHISTS GENERALLY: —

Again we have to turn to those who have not lost sight of the war and of the revolution that the Spanish people is experiencing, to ask that they see in our attitude merely the truth and the urge to be useful, as we have always been, to the cause of the working people and to dig in our heels against anything redolent of privileges and violence. For this very reason we have made our position on collaboration with political groups which had previously excelled themselves in their opposition to us. One warning we must issue. The FAI does not collaborate directly in politics. Nonetheless, as our comrades in the CNT are already collaborating, and since we are beholden to its workers, we share the responsibility for its actions.

THE REASONS LEADING UP TO THIS CRISIS: — The strength which the CNT and the FAI enjoy in Catalonia is known to all and yet no one can contend that we have insisted upon representation congruent with this strength. We have allowed organisations of meagre size to obtain the majority on the Generalitat. Representation meant nothing to us, since we had no desire other than to defeat fascism. However, some other representatives were not of the same mind. They held posts so as to serve their political party and when the desire to make politics raises its head in a period such as the one in which Spain presently finds herself the consequences are necessarily catastrophic.

We have done all in our power to avert this crisis. From abjuring many of our watchwords, to arguing with our own comrades to get them to see that we had to be more conciliatory than the rest, since it was the war that was inducing us to do what we did.

But this was not the way that others worked. The unhealthy urge to torpedo our principles has continually led to their mooted issues which, but for the reasons outlined, we would never have tolerated.

There is a limit to patience and tolerance. When it strikes us that, for all our good intentions, the rest remain incorrigible as ever, we are left with no option but stand up for our dignity and say: Enough of indulgence! Collaboration, sure, but let it be honest and sincere. Otherwise it cannot possibly continue a moment longer.

And since we have exhausted all the means at our disposal for achieving this, since the only course now left to us is to forswear or to retreat from our convictions, then, rather this latter course, which would spell the death of a movement with such deep roots, we have opted instead for the surer course of accepting a crisis.

HOW THE CRISIS MUST BE SOLVED: — Our understanding is that, lest there be a reoccurrence of what we mentioned above, we have to spell out clearly the solution which must be arrived at, and availing of the might at our disposal, it will be necessary to insist upon the portfolios which are our due: No entering the Generalitat for the purposes of making politics. Let our actions be marked by clarity and sincerity, and let the Defence Minister be the only one empowered to organise marches and to mobilise, as well as to do everything connected with the business of the war.

The Supply Ministry should not be used to serve party-political interests, but rather those of the people as a whole. And from the Ministry for Internal Security there should not be any attempt to trifle with the essence of the revolution in progress, there should be inflexibility towards all enemies masquerading as “shades and hues”, denying them the chance to abuse our undue goodwill.

Let no one take up an official or social position unless with the staunch determination to defeat criminal fascism, setting aside all personal ambitions!

We have no wish to shove our opinions down anyone’s throat, but neither will we allow anyone to force us through the mills of parties and factions and the intrigues that go with them.

So that there may be a sensible and satisfactory solution to the crisis for everybody, it is vital that the recently published decree be so fundamentally amended that only its title remains.

To sum up: We cannot agree to the noose being put around our necks that is to hang us. Before that happens we must make ready to assume full responsibility so that things may be solved in accordance with the requirements of our times, and so we ask:

**One:** That the Generalitat ministries be shared out in proportion with the strength of each organisation.

**Second:** That the Public Order Decree drafted by the Generalitat be revoked forthwith and replaced by another, representative of the aspirations of both trade union bodies.

**Third:** That all pursuit of selfish interests or anti-revolutionary immorality be punished severely.

**Fourth:** That there be an immediate purge of the armed corps and those of fascist leanings whether involved on the battlefronts or in the official centres and responsible committees in the rearguard.

And, lastly, that we show no indulgence to any who, on whatever pretext, fail to adhere to the watchwords of the war and to the watchwords of the revolution.’

A few days later, on 30 March, the regional committee of the Catalan CNT made public the following guidelines:

‘Given the present circumstances as created by the crisis which has arisen in the Generalitat, this regional committee makes the following declaration and addresses itself in particular to all militants and comrades of the CNT and of the anarchist organisation, so that they may take the following dispositions on board.

**First:** For the duration of the current circumstances, all comrades should remain in constant touch with their respective committees or group delegates.

**Second:** The union committees should remain in constant touch with their respective local or area federations, and the group delegations are to do likewise.

**Third:** All local or district committees should dispatch a delegate to Barcelona so that, by whatever method they may prescribe, he may be in contact with the regional committee.

The sole point of this communiqué is to coordinate our activity in a wholly responsible way with regard to the war and the revolution — problems which some have an interest in portraying as antitheses, but which we regard as mutually complementary.

Today, as ever, our actions must be governed by responsibility and level-headedness. Comrades! Today as never before, a single cry, a single watchword!

For the revolution and for victory over fascism!

### **The regional committee.'**

On 20 March, the Barcelona local federation of anarchist groups had appealed to public opinion with a similar statement, which, to some extent, anticipated the arrival of the crisis:

'With wearisome insistence we demand what is our rightful due and heedful of the resolutions passed by both the CNT and the anarchist organisation, we plump for the implementation of the same.

TO WIN THE WAR: All men serviceable for the defence of our liberties must be at the people's disposal and we must have an end of vacuous excuses and the malingering inculcated in the centres of officialdom and politico-trade union organisations.

All rifles and serviceable weapons must be surrendered immediately for the battlefronts and no honourable person ought to be loath to do his bit for the people's cause. We should not deceive ourselves with the myth of mobilisation if even those who possess weapons and are fit for war service fail to mobilise.

The gold in the possession of the central government and the wealth amassed in the hands of the bourgeois, whose continued existence makes a laughing-stock of the revolutionary movement, ought to be put to a better use than indulgence in luxury and pleasure and no consideration can be shown those who, at the given time, would be capable of adapting to any situation and indeed of shooting us in the backs.

WE SAY THE SAME OF PUBLIC ORDER: Why does the Generalitat persist in having the destinies of the people governed (as hitherto) by the meritorious forces of the Assault Guards and the Mossos d'Esquadra? Only a backward-looking bourgeois instinct could countenance this.

What is the aim behind the elimination of the activities of the real men of the people under the famed Public Order Decree of 4 March, so staunchly defended by comrade Tarradellas, while nearly every one of the "comfort-lovers" in official positions, army and Civil Guard barracks go on as they

did before 19 July, having the best of both worlds with their fantastic rates of pay, eyeing our work of emancipation with distaste and disdain?

Why is no heed paid to the aspirations of the people and of Catalonia as a whole, namely that matters of the most urgent relevance be taken in hand, that their resolutions be put into effect and the rarefied atmosphere be cleared instead of our being surrounded by shadowy wheeling and dealing and intrigues?

We need more honest activity: we need things clearer and more concrete, with no beating about the bush and no wheeling and dealing of any sort, let alone the selfish ambition of personalities and petty personages, but rather the direct pursuit of success in the revolution and in the war, and

**We Demand**

1. That the Public Order Decree be revoked as an affront to the essence of the revolution in progress.
2. That the armed forces be speedily and thoroughly purged.
3. And finally, that the Decree match the aspirations of the people and that it may be put together in tune with the revolutionary rhythm of the anti-fascist organisations.

**The secretariat.'**

The Councils of Workers and Soldiers and other kindred bodies in Catalonia made their opinion heard around this date through the following declaration:

'A NECESSARY REPLY TO THE MINISTER FOR INTERNAL SECURITY:—  
The press having carried, on the 4th of this month, certain statements made by the Minister for Security, in the course of which, referring to the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils, he stated that these had already effected the purge of the forces and thus had accomplished their mission, we have to state publicly, for the information of the people and of all the political and trade union organisations which have collaborated in the anti-fascist struggle that, to date, there has been no resolution of any of the many exposures we have made of pro-Francoist elements to the Ministry for Internal Security, as a result of which said elements are still serving within the corps. That is all we have to say for the good of the cause and we stand ready to substantiate it with details to any responsible bodies who may be interested. On behalf of the Council of Workers and Soldiers and other kindred bodies in Catalonia. The central committee.'

Among the incidents of this crisis we need to indicate an abortive attempt at solution on 3 April. Twelve days into the crisis, at the request of President Companys, the CNT agreed to the formation of a government in which it would have equal representation with the UGT. But the Generalitat president, upon reaching this solution, made public a lengthy communiqué in which 'on his authority alone', he spoke of the constitution of a government on the basis of ministers not designated in advance

by the CNT, though of an 'interim nature'. Taking issue with *Las Noticias*, a paper under the sway of the Stalinists, *Solidaridad Obrera* of 7 April, gave a greater clue as to the underlying reasons for the crisis.

'We are all only too familiar with the ignoble campaign against our comrade Isgleas, the Minister for Defence, upon which persons active in the PSUC and the Catalan UGT embarked not so long ago. The most trifling pretexts are seized upon to justify the torpedoing of our comrade's endeavours. The campaign opened with an insidious question concerning the inactivity of the front lines in Aragón, a question recently repeated by Comorera in statements he made to the press when the Generalitat crisis was at its most critical juncture. This campaign culminated in the setting up of a Committee for the Popular Army, which amounts to a blanket repudiation of the work of the Minister for Defence. As if that were not enough, we have the scandalous incident of the removal of 12 tanks from a war industries depot, carried out by leading members of the PSUC's military organisation. Also, in a further departure from common sense, there was the most blatant scoring of political points with the dumb show of reassigning one of the divisions on the Aragón front, it being volunteered by a Stalinist leader to the central government for reassignment to the Guadalajara front.

By means of this public campaign, alternated with a well-organised undermining operation, comrade Isgleas was successfully confronted with a difficult situation; seeing the turn being taken by events and the increasing obstacles he was encountering in performance of his duties, he offered the Generalitat president his irrevocable resignation from the post.'

With the aborting of the 'presidential solution', the crisis lingered on and, with it, in every guise, the PSUC's dubious campaign.

On April 7, the CNT and FAI held a political rally in the Olímpia Theatre. At the end of the meeting the following conclusions won approval:

'Creation of a Unified Security Corps in the wake of a strict purge of personnel and officers.

Intervention by delegates of the organisations in whatever public order disputes may arise.

The public forces to have the right of politico-social affiliation provided that they do not set up specific organisations.

Defence: whole-hearted collaboration whatever mobilisations may be necessary if fascism is to be crushed utterly.

Elaboration of a morality based on sacrifice for the sake of the war.

Absolute prohibition of whatever organs may have been created around the war and which have a bearing on the Defence Ministry.

Coordination of the economic policy of all of the ministries, whatever the organisations and parties which hold these.

Creation of advisory panels in the offices of the minister on a par with the existing ones on Economy, Public Services and Defence which the CNT controlled, especially in the Ministry of Agriculture, drawn from the U. de R., the CNT and the UGT in equal proportions.

Mobilisation of the rearguard on three fronts:

1. The military front;
2. The cultural front;
3. The economic front.

Mobilisation of all resources, be they privately or collectively owed, for the proper functioning of the economy and the support required by the war front.

A review of official salaries, with pay being adjusted to conform with the economic standard required by the current war situation.'

The Generalitat crisis was resolved on 26 April with the formation of the following government:

Prime Minister and Minister for Defence: Josep Tarradellas (Esquerra)

Internal Security: Artemi Aiguader (Esquerra)

Culture: Antoni M. Sbert (Esquerra)

Agriculture: Josep Calvet (U. de R.)

Defence: Francisco Isgleas (CNT)

Economy: Andreu Capdevila (CNT)

Public Services: Joan Domènech (CNT)

Health and Social Services: Aurelio Fernández (CNT)

Supply: Josep Miret (UGT)

Labour and Public Works: Rafael Vidiela (UGT)

Justice: Joan Comorera (UGT)

The solution to the crisis was only apparent. The problems that had provoked it were still outstanding, awaiting a better, more suitable occasion. What the decree had failed to achieve sinister elements were about to attempt by recourse to provocation and the use of force.



## Chapter Six: The bloody events of May

ON 25 APRIL a leading PSUC militant, Roldán Cortada, was the victim of a fatal attack. Two days later, three anarchist militants were murdered in the vicinity of Puigcerdà, an important Pyrenean border town that had, since 19 July 1936, been under the watchful eye of personnel drawn from the parties and organisations in that town. Among the victims was Antonio Martín, a leading light of the anti-fascist front who, since the local revolutionary committees had been converted into Councils by a Generalitat decree, had served as mayor of that town. The PSUC press and no less a figure than Rafael Vidiella, PSUC party leader and Generalitat minister, was levelling daring accusations at the 'FAI uncontrollables' and linking them with the attack which had cost Cortada his life. This event triggered the arrest of a number of CNT members who included Luis Cano Pérez, a town councillor of l'Hospitalet de Llobregat. The charges against them were never proceeded with, because of a decision by the judge of the Barcelona High Court, Ramón Chorro, who determined on 2 May that:

'In the course of inquiries conducted into the despicable murder of comrade Roldán Cortada, a fresh dossier has been compiled on Luis Cano Pérez. The opening of this further inquiry has been prompted by the fact that the aforementioned Cano, using the name of a town's minister for defence, raised armed forces and issued weapons permits, which is to say, usurped functions peculiar to the minister for public order. In the first instance, a Court, in obedience to the instructions lately issued by the Minister of Justice, comrade García Oliver, and received at the office of the Prosecutor of the Republic on 16 April, declared such actions to be unlawful and the investigating magistrate issued an indictment against Cano, who was freed after a surety was posted. As for inquiries relative to what we might term the chief indictment, neither the aforementioned Cano nor the six detainees who have been released had the slightest involvement, direct or indirect, in Cortada's murder.'

As for the events in Puigcerdà, these had been sparked by security force personnel of separatist loyalties. But following the 4 March decree on public order, the Generalitat Minister of Public Order and the Police Chief (Artemi Aiguader and Rodríguez Salas respectively) sought to occupy the area *manu militari*. The high-handed and violent manner in which this operation was carried out and the fact that it was prompted, not so much by formal duty, as by inadmissible aspirations to political hegemony, aspirations attended by arbitrary actions, triggered the incident in which Antonio Martín and his comrades lost their lives.

Speedy intervention by the CNT Regional Committee for Catalonia was, albeit with difficulty, able to forestall any deterioration of these incidents, for, upon receiving pleas for assistance from the victims who were effectively under siege from uniformed troops politically affiliated to the PSUC and to Estat Català, well-equipped bands of CNT personnel flooded in from the neighbouring areas of Aragón and Lleida. For several days the latter mustered in Seu d'Urgell, threatening

the rear of the police forces deployed around Puigcerdà, as well as cutting these off from all possible communication with the authorities in Lleida. Consequently, the forces actually under siege proved to be the ones concentrated in Bellver, a village located between Puigcerdà and Seu d'Urgell, which was where the incidents occurred. Confederal personnel from Puigcerdà and Seu d'Urgell established radio contact with one another and communicated across the nearby mountains of Andorra. But, as we have mentioned, mediation by the CNT committees in Barcelona brought the strife to an end; Puigcerdà was of course surrendered and occupied by the security forces.

That very day, 27 April, *Solidaridad Obrera* exposed an underhand move by the communists. Many homes throughout Catalonia had been receiving anonymous chain letters written in the appalling Spanish and reading thus:

‘ANTI-FASCIST COMMITTEE FOR CATALONIA AND THE REVOLUTION. —

That the CNT and the FAI have been systematically sabotaging the war, the revolution and Catalonia is an open secret. Everyone has his contribution to make to passive resistance of these agencies’ vexatious activities. The FIRST WATCHWORD which you must ensure is properly implemented is to insist that nobody buys *Soli, Catalunya* or *La Noche*, so that said agencies may be denied an audience. You will be receiving further watchwords by the same route. Make five copies of these flyers and send them to five of your friends (two in your town and three outsiders) by the same method, ensuring that the same instructions are passed on WORD FOR WORD.’

And so along came 1 May, a First of May which, regardless of the revolutionary times that were in it, was the least distinguished, not to say the most dismal, in the entire history of the Spanish proletariat. One of the gravest hints of what was about to befall was the refusal of the authorities to permit May Day to be marked in any way in Catalonia. The festivities were confined to publication of sombre declarations redolent of forebodings of imminent tragedy. The one published by the CNT national committee and the UGT executive commission stated bluntly:

‘On this May Day, the UGT’s executive commission and the CNT’s national committee send joint greetings to the Spanish working class, urging it to carry on strengthening its cordial relations until such time as the trade union unity of the Spanish proletariat is achieved.

To that end, both sets of representatives state that, for the sake of worker unity, they will regard as factious any other organisations which may attempt to establish themselves and expand outside the trade union associations which we represent.

The signatories to this statement, prompted by the staunchest revolutionary spirit, promise to work tirelessly and shrinking from no sacrifice whatever, on behalf of unification of the proletariat and to strive until such time as the high-minded liberatory intent by which we are united is completely realised.’

However, we are obliged at this point to give a mention to the joint rally held by the provincial CNT and UGT organisations in Valencia, held in the Teatro Principal there, under the chairmanship of the under-secretary for war, Carlos Baraibar, and of Minister of Industry Joan Peiró. The

rally was addressed by Mariano R. Vázquez and Federica Montseny on behalf of the CNT; and, on the UGT's behalf, by Guillén and Rubiera. The shorthand record of the last-mentioned's speech reads:

'Workers of Valencia, fighters from the Army of freedom and the revolution, anti-fascists the world over, brother proletarians: on this First day of May 1937, let us open by outlining the laying the groundwork for the success of a revolution, and setting out the fundamental pillars for proletarian achievements in this corner of Europe, here in a Spain which seemed to have been forgotten by the whole world and which, with one glorious feat, is awakening the world's conscience. The entire world watches us with bated breath; the workers in every country in this planet upon which we live have their gaze fixed upon Spain; whenever they come to us, they all ask, as comrade Vázquez said just a few moments ago: "Is it going to be possible for the men of the UGT and of the CNT to come to some agreement?"

Why should it not be possible? What is this rally which we are holding if not the seal set upon a compact between the men affiliated to one or other of our trade union associations? Where have the efforts and endeavour of the men leading the two trade union associations led, if not to the basic foundations and indestructible pillars of the revolution which is in progress? What but that can this First of May — so very different from the other Firsts of May we have commemorated thus far — be and what can it represent? The fact is that we must have unity, not merely in outward trappings but in our consciousness, for it is these which inspire and produce those outward trappings. Not now in the midst of warfare with all its bitterness, but earlier, the workers were already a united body: whenever a militant from one trade union association suffered society's injustices, he could not help feeling in his sensibilities and in the deepest fibres of his being the pain and bitterness that injustice inflicted upon his fellows in the other trade union association. Previously, this was not a possibility, because, standing between us, there was capitalism, the Spanish bourgeoisie, eager to keep us divided the better to rule over us. But once the bourgeoisie, seeing us profoundly at odds with one another, took to the streets, then the men of the UGT and of the CNT, as of one mind, in that they shared the same determination to win, setting aside any rancours and stanching their wounds, joined forces to win for the revolution's sake.

This is nothing new in our nation. It lived in the consciousness of all the workers. I can remember, comrades, when I was a boy, because I am not yet an old man: it was the frantic, fraught times of 1917: I was up in Asturias, where I had the luck to be born, and up there the men of the UGT and of the CNT — many of them — gave their very lives for the success of the revolution which we are now making. Not that that was the only time. In October 1934, when the Asturian workers perished facing the Spanish capitalist hordes, they were not from the UGT alone. The men of the CNT too were showing what they were made of, and that watchword, that rebel yell, "Unite, proletarian brothers!", took root in the consciences of the Spanish workers and trade union unity was born there.

Such is the task facing us today. It is not the fruit of improvisation. Nor is it a matter of circumstance, a conventional move: it is something etched deep in our consciences. It is the goal towards which the sacrifice made by the men who fought to emancipate Spanish workers points. Here at this inspiring rally, this rally where the men of the UGT and of the CNT and of the FAI fraternise with one another, I call to mind another rally, which, at this very hour, one year ago, we held in Betanzos, a little village in Galicia, a rally that was also attended by men from the UGT, the CNT and the FAI. Right now, what will have become of those brothers in Betanzos, most of whom will not have the good luck to be reminding you of it as I am doing? Many of them will be no more and in perishing they will have died with arms aloft, both hands clutched in indestructible solidarity, just as the Asturian workers perished in 1934, setting the seal upon an accommodation and unity between honest workers. And I, with my humble voice, which can never properly represent the whole store of energies, emotions and enthusiasms of the trade union association of which I have been a member for some years now, I will say this: fear not, Spanish workers: the UGT and the CNT will march in close unison, not just in the moment of victory, but also until such time as the revolution is victorious ...

With all of us united, dear comrades, with enthusiasm, with discipline, single-mindedly, let us turn all our minds to the efforts of the men to whose lot it fell to steer this trade union phalanx; let us all turn our thoughts to the man who comrade Baraibar had the good fortune to call to mind here, to your very own Salvador Seguí, the “Noi del Sucre”, who is our very own too, in that he pointed to and strove for unification of the workers. Let us follow in his footsteps, let us follow the example he set us ... Let us press on.

All honest Spaniards, all loyal men of conscience are giving their lives in the trenches. One day, it is the womenfolk like Lina Odena, a flower frozen in the bloom of youth: on another, artists of the calibre of Emiliano Barral: yet another, international soldiers such as Fernando de Rosa who came to Spain to fight alongside his brothers for freedom. Later, it was your brother, your leader, the very symbol of proletarian unity who made the ultimate sacrifice for its sake, in that it was for this that your Durruti died.

The best will perish, the artists, the artisans, the manual workers and the brain-workers will perish and in so doing they will build a better Spain. They die that freedom may triumph, offering up their very lives and passing through the gates of History in order to place their Homeland upon new and indestructible foundations of peace and social justice. That the ideals they cherished so much, so very much, might triumph, they embraced death: but their death, their sacrifice is not futile because it consolidates the advance of the social revolution and they bequeath to us their dreams and their example, to which we all must look.

But let us not delude ourselves: it is not my intention to deceive people. I have nothing to hide, any more than any level-headed, conscious worker has anything to hide. We have had our differences, or disagreements, bitter and heated quarrels. Which of us could deny it? Unity cannot be built upon ignorance. Our unity must be built

upon experience. Let me tell you, comrades from both trade union associations, that had we been able to hold such gatherings in Spain on 18 July, neither Franco nor Mola nor Cabanellas would have dared take to the streets and pit themselves against the people. They did not think that the workers could settle their differences and unite. What a disappointment lay in store for them, and that crassest of errors will be a matter of grave regret for them now ... We will not sell Spain out. We put our lives on the line for the freedom of the Spanish people. We have a very welcome duty to perform, to bequeath to our children a Spain that is far removed from the absurd Spain of 18 July: it is our duty to redeem Spain, lest she remain in the sorry condition she was in when she perished on 18 July. We have a duty to promote her natural resources, to lay the foundations of social justice so that generations coming after us may not have to face the inadequacies of justice that the men of the Spanish bourgeoisie have contrived. To that end, we, the men of the UGT and of the CNT, may not remain divided, and divorced from one another. The ideal of us all is that the war be won and won as soon as possible, so that Spain may be spared this blood-letting which threatens to drain all her life forces. Well, if that be our shared aspiration, there must not be in our practice anything that implies divergence between the men from both trade union associations. The label is of no consequence. What counts is the content of both organisations' programme.

And we must move ahead with such unity that very soon even by our labels we will not be told apart: if need be, let us tear up our flags, and shred our programmes in order to devise a programme and a flag we all can follow and which will cover us all ...

The compact signed between representatives from both trade union organisations is not to be a dead letter; it will be the culmination of a venture by men alive to the burden placed upon them by the historical responsibility of Spain's current time of tragedy and hope, and that compact will be flooded with the abundant spirit of each and every one of the men for whom they speak. No one has the right to say he did not do this and that, in not doing it, he is in no way bound by what our leaders do: we all have an equal obligation and anybody who thinks that he is not under any obligation to obey can clear out, for there is no place for him among us.

And even as the responsible, conscious organisations are doing this, the government of the Republic is striding sure-footedly forward at an unalterable rate — the government that picked up the gauntlet of war to carry us to victory and to press on until the revolution is victorious. A government of the trade union centres, a government that is a union of the CNT and of the UGT, of the communists, the socialists, anarchists, republicans and even of the Basque nationalists. A government of national unity, a government that represents every one of us Spanish fighters and anti-fascists.

And this government which represents every one of us asks us this day not to desist from our labours and not to set out on a demonstration, but to redouble our efforts in the workplace, our day-to-day sacrifices, as an offering to our fighters in the trenches. Beloved comrades: the workers' organisations and the Spanish people are responding to the government's call. For the first time in history, on this, the

worldwide feast day of labour, nothing is being asked of the government other than the above, and I say right here and now to Federica and to Peiró: the people and the army are with you, because they are sure that you represent them and that you are carrying the revolution on to victory. May what the government is asking of us today be what we will deliver tomorrow and every day for as long as the war persists: a redoubling of effort and additional sacrifice. What does it matter if we work that extra hour, and so what if we expend an enormous amount of energy, as long as that hour's exertions, that hour of expended energies, is going to increase the likelihood of success in the war and in the revolution? So what if we in the rearguard should make a slightly increased effort and sacrifice, when those in the front lines are giving their all, even their lives and meeting their end with a rifle in their hands, happy to go to their deaths for a Spain that is being redeemed from the bourgeoisie and from international fascism? Ten months of war we have had and we have reached a point where we can hold this rally. But let this rally not be an isolated instance swallowed up by the vastness of social struggles in Spain. Organisational unity, a unity of concerted effort, so that individual initiative may not be missing from the overall activities of the Spanish people as it fights for success in this war. Blind discipline, military discipline — not the discipline of the soldiery of a bygone day, graduates of Toledo, Valladolid or Segovia — no: but an up-to-date military discipline, like Carrasco's or Mera's, they who were forged in freedom's trenches, fighting, regardless of outlook, for the victory of anti-fascism. What matters to organisations these days is not numbers, but the commitment of their membership to making as great a contribution as they can to success. This is where we come in and this is what I, a man of the UGT, ask here, just as I asked it yesterday in a stadium in Castelló and will ask it tomorrow of the workers of Sagunto. Comrades—in the trenches men become brothers and they die head to head and shoulder to shoulder, bound very close together in intimate unity, so that they may erect an impassable barrier against the fascist invader. So let those of us in the rear form, shoulder to shoulder, heart to heart and head to head, a barrier of our impassable ideal against the Fifth-Column personnel who would wear down the vitality of the rearguard, in the absence of which there can be no efficient vanguard, any more than there can be success in war in the absence of a vanguard and efficient rearguard ...

The workers know that, should we win this war, freedom and democracy will be triumphant in Europe and social revolution in Spain. Should we lose this war, what will be victorious in Spain, and in Europe too, will be fascism. And in the confrontation with fascism we are the greater number and the better and it is because we are the greater number and the better that we must be victorious.

Comrade Vázquez just now highlighted the importance of one watchword: "Proletarians of the world, unite!" What I have to say to you is this: "Proletarians of Spain, already united; where there is a will there is a way and the way right now is to win the war and carry out the work of the social revolution."

I wish to emphasise at this rally one thing that moved my spirit to profound emotion. Just yesterday, the radio brought us some very welcome news. Welcome in terms of what it stands for in terms of its intrinsic worth as a diminution of the naval

resources of the hordes of the felonious Franco. One ship more or less counts for a lot, but is not the essential issue. A battery of guns paid for by the Spanish people, a hulk of steel which the Spanish people put to sea to act as a guarantor of its defence and national independence — all of this took just 45 minutes to disappear beneath the waters of the Bay of Biscay. The loss is a considerable one. The rebel generals, Franco, Cabanellas and Queipo, will have mourned that loss yesterday. We rejoice at this naval success, not on account of the material worth it entails, but on account of the symbolism. The vessel which our red wings, the wings of Spain's freedom, the ones that target international fascism, sent to the bottom of the Bay of Biscay, was more than just a ship, a hulk of steel and a few cannons: the vessel sunk there bore a name, a name which, when she belonged to Spain, she was entitled to bear; but a name that it was a sacrilege should have been emblazoned upon her hatches after 18 July: a name emblematic of our action; Spain did not reside in her but in each and every one of us. What was sent to the bottom was the black Spain, the crippled Spain, the wretched Spain of social injustice, the Spain of canting, uncouth nuns, of mendacious priests, traitors to the Christ whom they purport to represent, the Spain of servicemen who have broken their pledge of loyalty to the Nation: it was that black Spain that sank yesterday. From this day forth, that leaves Spain, the only Spain, the Spain of freedom, the Spain of the UGT and of the CNT..'

May Day, then, was regarded as a normal working day. It may well be that police personnel had also been issued with that watchword, for at about this time they stepped up their work of provocation, engaging in searches on the streets of Barcelona. Confederal personnel discovered by them in possession of weapons were disarmed and placed under arrest. If in the course of a search a CNT membership card was discovered, this was torn up in front of its owner, who was additionally subjected to the foulest abuse. *Solidaridad Obrera* of 2 May tackled this series of provocative actions:

'The guarantee of the revolution is the proletariat in arms. To try to disarm the people is to place oneself on the wrong side of the barricade. Minister or commissar though one may be, an order to disarm the workers fighting against fascism, with greater unselfishness and heroism than all of the politicians in the rearguard, whose speciality and impotence are common knowledge, may not be issued. Workers: let no one attempt to disarm you on any pretext! Such is our watchword! Let no one allow himself to be disarmed!'

The tragic events opened in Barcelona on 2 May at around 3pm. At that time, the police, under the command of the Chief of Police, mounted a surprise raid on the *Telefónica* (Telephone Exchange) located in Catalunya Square, in the city centre. Capitalising upon the initial momentary confusion, the attackers successfully seized control of the ground floor of the building, but a prompt reaction from the workers prevented the police from achieving their aims in full. The attack was confined to the exchange building, because, once the alarm was raised by those under siege there, CNT personnel from the working class neighbourhoods had answered the call and their emphatic intervention had unleashed the bloody strife involving strongpoints and barricades.

The forces attacking the *Telefónica* were equipped with a seizure warrant signed by Aiguader, the Generalitat Minister for Public Order. This warrant had been issued unbeknownst to the Generalitat, or at any rate, without consultation with the CNT ministers. Needless to say, the workers' representatives in charge at the *Telefónica* were operating in accordance with all of the stipulations contained in the decree covering collectivisation, including that the CNT-UGT Steering Committee was chaired by a Generalitat representative. The allegation of illegality was therefore an absurdity and was being used to disguise a different motive: a well-thought-out provocation of mournful events designed to justify a crackdown on the CNT and its being placed outside the law. The CNT's hegemony in Catalonia was a hindrance to Stalinism's totalitarian ambitions. As we shall see anon, the ploy was also designed to lead to the downfall of the Largo Caballero government of which the Russians wished to be rid.

The opposing forces on the streets divided into two camps. On one side, the security forces (Assault Guards, Republican National Guard, Security Guards and *Mossos de Esquadra*) plus the PSUC and Estat Català parties (that is, the Stalinists and the Catalan separatists): on the other side were the popular forces made up of the anarchists (the CNT, the FAI and the Libertarian Youth), the POUM and the Control Patrols. The CNT-FAI Defence Committees, traditionally organised on a ward-by-ward basis, were the great strategists of the popular counter-offensive. The no less traditional barricades mushroomed everywhere and battle was joined for the control of the streets, with a viciousness equal to that of 19 July.

At one point, once the blood had begun to flow, there was an inkling of hope that the conflict might be settled peaceably. Following official overtures of the CNT ministers and committees who were able to demonstrate that the order to seize the *Telefónica* had been issued in an irregular fashion, the besieging forces were instructed to lift the siege. Whereupon the resignations of Artemi Aiguader, the Generalitat Minister for Public Order, and Rodríguez Sales, the commissar, were demanded by way of a sanction upon their having exceeded their functions and abused the trust vested in them. Intransigence by the other parties, and more particularly the opportunistic stance of the Generalitat's president, who steadfastly resisted such sanctions, provoked a general strike followed by an outbreak of hostilities.

Right from the outset, the popular forces secured control of the outlying districts and most of the city centre wards. Government resistance was confined to retaining strategic positions in the security force barracks, in government premises and premises belonging to the belligerent parties, plus a district here and there. It is worth drawing attention to the operations mounted by the popular forces to storm and mop up police stations and security force barracks. This was the case with the Civil Guard posts located in the Exhibition grounds on Montjuïc. There was all manner of automatic-weapon fire coming from PSUC and Estat Català premises in the old quarter: both sides had such weapons in great store. The champions of the watchword 'All weapons to the front', the very people who had attempted on 5 March to remove twelve tanks from the war depots, with, it would appear, this very provocation in mind, were found to be armed to the teeth.

However, the CNT and the FAI were masters of the streets. Only a few *ateneo* and trade union premises, as well as the CNT regional committee's own premises, were cut off, or rather, under fire from the strongholds held by the enemy. The Regional Committee's premises were smack dab in the Via Durruti, right in the middle of the enemy's most important strongholds, such as the Police Headquarters and the Generalitat of Catalonia itself. Not too far from there lay the Karl Marx Barracks from where the operational high command of the counter-revolutionary coalition



was operating. The confederal defence committees deployed several tanks, which were charged with re-establishing lines of communication through areas under enemy gunfire.

The fighting was particularly fierce in the old quarter, the winding streets of which bristled with barricades and fortified posts, and escalated as the confederal forces learned of the torture and murder of hostages in the shadowy communist cheka prisons. And the people would not have been long in bringing all the provocateurs to book but for the dissuasive efforts of the central committees which — their moderation revived by the presence in Barcelona of a number of ministers on a peace-making mission — strove to apply the brakes to the activities of the defence cadres. The compromises and good offices of ministers and committees, along with the pathetic calls for ‘ceasefire!’, ensured that at the moment of truth there was a lack of resolution and an armistice was brokered under conditions that were patently advantageous to the people’s enemies.

4 May saw attempts to restore normality, through the appointing of a special commission. The CNT radio station installed on the Regional Committee premises broadcast the following appeals at short intervals:

‘There must be a resolution once and for all of the trial of strength which has arisen. Street clashes are the consequence of a long and painful process designed to see men and the confederal bodies sacrificed, after their efforts and their blood have been exploited in the defeating of the fascist traitors. Do not let yourselves be misled, for you well know and have proof aplenty of this, that neither the CNT nor the FAI are, personally or collectively, acting against you. You are, as we are, soldiers of the anti-fascist cause. Tender your weapons to the people and side with them, just as you did on 19 July. The FAI and the CNT have no desire and no plans to establish any dictatorship: but, as long as one of their men remains alive, they are not disposed to bow before anyone. If we fought against fascism, it was not out of any simple taste for armed struggle. It was to ensure public freedoms, to prevent the people being massacred and exploited by those who, while not openly professing themselves fascists, nevertheless seek to establish an absolutist regime that flies in the face of our people’s tradition, sentiment and history.’

‘Men and women of the people, workers: What we are placing before public opinion is not an explanation. It is, rather, straight and frank talking which conveys, as is our wont, the plain sincerity of our intentions and our thinking. We are not the ones responsible for what is happening: we are not attacking — we are defending. It was not we who started this, nor we who gave the provocation. We are the ones who are replying, as best we can, to the challenge, to the injustice, the calumny and the force which, instead of their being deployed against the fascists, are being deployed and utilised against the most battle-hardened anti-fascists; against the FAI and the CNT. You know who we are and that we have never hidden what we want. Of our mettle we have provided a thousand proofs. What is behind this drive to eliminate us? Does it not strike you as suspicious that the CNT and FAI are under attack when, in Madrid and Andalucia, in Vizcaya and in Aragón, it is our forces who have displayed the greatest gusto and courage in confronting the enemy? Workers of the CNT and of the UGT: kept in the forefront of your minds the road we have travelled and those

we have lost, drenched in blood, in the middle of the streets, on our barricades! Lay aside your weapons and embrace one another as brothers! We shall have the victory if we do but unite: we will encounter defeat if we fight among ourselves! Think well on this. We offer you our weaponless embrace: do likewise and it will all be over. May there be concord between us! War to the death against fascism!’

Over microphones set up in the Generalitat, spokesmen from the parties and organisations also issued desperate appeals to the fighters on 4 May. Rafael Vidiella, a Generalitat minister and leader of the PSUC, which had organised the provocation, spoke in these terms:

‘It is vital that all workers take a step back. It is essential that they set down their arms and that there be a ceasefire. Let each of them retain his positions but let not a single shot be fired. We are certain that we can find a definitive resolution this very night. Workers: we have more than enough resources to defeat national and international fascism, but we cannot achieve final victory with a fratricidal attitude such as the one that has arisen. There must be a ceasefire. We will search for that resolution this very day. Catalans, workers, anti-fascists all: Long live proletarian unity! Long live the anti-fascist unity if this war is to be won! Long live the unity of all workers so that national and international fascism may be routed once and for all! Long live Catalonia! Long live the Republic!’

García Oliver, a minister in the national government and the first person dispatched by the latter to resolve the conflict, had this to say:

‘Comrades: For the sake of anti-fascist unity, for the sake of proletarian unity, for the sake of those who have perished in the fray, pay no heed to provocations. Do not practise, at this juncture, the cult of the dead. Let it not be the dead, your feeling for the dead, for your fallen brethren that now prevents you from holding your fire. Do not make a cult of the dead. In any civil war like the one we are living through, there are always the dead. All of the dead from the anti-fascist family will have the same glory and will have the same honour. What I am saying to you is what I think. You understand me, and you know me well enough to tell that just now I am prompted solely by my own utterly free will, because you know me well enough to know that never, never before nor now nor in the future, will anyone succeed in wresting from my lips a statement that is not heartfelt. And after all that I have said, I must add this: All of today’s fallen are my brothers: I bow before them and I kiss them. They are victims of the anti-fascist struggle and I cherish each of them equally. Hail, comrades, workers of Catalonia!’

García Oliver’s insistence that his words were prompted by his own utterly free will was a reference to rumours circulating among the confederal fighters to the effect that the CNT spokesmen and the secretary of the CNT’s National Committee, who had turned up at the Generalitat on a mission of peace, were hostages of the communists and of the president of the Generalitat, no less. According to this version of events, whatever watchwords they had issued had been coerced out of them. Not that there was not a grain of truth in this rumour. Even as the fighting was at its most intense, the confederal spokesmen engaged in talks in the Generalitat Palace were under

the impression, if we are to judge by certain attitudes and certain ironic comments, that they had walked into a trap. But their alleged captors had overlooked something that was very important. The artillery in the Montjuïc fort, controlled by the CNT-FAI, were aimed at the Generalitat Palace. Consequently, it required only the merest hint that those batteries were ready to fire to order to freeze the grins on the faces of the PSUC and Catalanist personnel.

In spite of this the negotiations begun on 4 May proved a complete failure. President Companys was insisting upon the armed populace (which is to say, the CNT and the FAI) withdrawing from the streets as a prerequisite to any further decisions. This absurd precondition ensured that fighting would flare up again.

Not only was no resolution not found, but, on 5 May, the Catalan government resigned en bloc. This cabinet crisis automatically implied the resignation of the minister in charge of public order, whose resignation had been demanded, and, in a way, it was a move towards a settlement. But on that very same day the Assault Guards closed down the premises of the CNT Health Union and the Barcelona JJ.LL Federation, whereupon the fighting flared up again. Well into the afternoon on 5 May, the Regional Committee came up with fresh proposals towards a resolution:

‘A cessation of hostilities. Each side to retain its positions. The police and the civilians fighting alongside them are invited to begin a truce. In the event of non-compliance with these accords, the responsible committees are to be advised immediately. No attention will be paid to isolated gunfire. The defenders of the union premises are to remain calm pending further information.’

In spite of the fact that this proposal was verbally acceptable, in fact the government forces carried on with the shooting. The Regional Committee itself, assembled in the Casa CNT-FAI, was obliged to suspend its meeting in order to help in the defence of the building which was under furious attack from government forces. By contrast, CNT personnel were unable to commit themselves to all-out attack, on account of the repeated recommendations for a truce, calm and a ceasefire. Discontent in their ranks was on the increase. A significant tranche of opinion was beginning to make its objections to the performance of their committees plain. This extremist current was spearheaded by the association known as ‘The Friends of Durruti’. This group had been formed around elements hostile to militarisation and many of them had quit the units of the nascent Popular Army once the volunteer militias had been disbanded. ‘The Friends of Durruti’ had their own mouthpiece, the title of which harked back to the romantic days of the French revolution. *El Amigo del Pueblo* — for that was the title of their newspaper — worked to undermine the CNT ministers and committees and agitated for a revolutionary continuance of 19 July:

‘A Revolutionary Junta [it stated] has been formed in Barcelona. All of the elements responsible for the attempted subversion under the aegis of the government must face the firing squad. The POUM must be admitted into the Junta because it stood with the workers.’

The confederal committees immediately disowned the group, which nevertheless persisted.

It was also on 5 May that the well-known Italian anarchists Camillo Berneri and Barbieri were foully murdered. Not until 11 May was *Solidaridad Obrera* in a position to offer its readers details of this double murder, which had been carried out by the communist *chekas*. Note in the

transcribed report below the scandalous mutilations inflicted by the censor, censorship having been introduced in the wake of these events:

‘ON THE MURDER OF COMRADE CAMILLO BERNERI: —

Such secret and maverick activity, which has been a blight upon our anti-fascist zone for some time past, has led to yet another tragedy: the death of our comrade, Professor Berneri. Discounting fascist activities — and in this instance we have a thousand reasons for discounting them — the existence of a spectral agency which is seeking the ruination of anti-fascism’s most distinguished militants, the ones who have come to prominence precisely on account of their revolutionary ardour and their activities on behalf of the proletariat’s cause, is an extremely disquieting matter. And if this be the case, and if, right now, there is among us some authority capable of countering these mysterious influences, what recourse is left for those of us committed ourselves in all good faith, with enthusiasm and good intentions, to this battle against the reaction? Yesterday it was the turn of Marc Rhein, the editor-cum-reporter of the Social Democratic Kraten, who vanished from the Hotel Continental in this city after he received two telephone calls. Now today it is comrade Berneri, whose bullet-riddled corpse was discovered on Thursday in the Clinical Hospital in Barcelona.

WHO WAS PROFESSOR BERNERI? Although elsewhere in this edition we offer some biographical details of the unfortunate comrade Berneri, allow us here to offer a rough sketch of the man, the better to flesh out this report. He was born in Lombardy — in Italy — in 1897 and from a very early age joined the anarchist movement. In Florence he distinguished himself through his activities and his greatly prized writings and later he fought against the war and against fascism. For a long time he was the managing editor of *La Difesa*, the organ of the Tuscan Anarchist Federation and he played an active role in the international anarchist movement. With the advent of fascism, he was expelled from Italy and, later, from France. On the outbreak of the fascist rebellion in Spain, he came to our country along with the Italian column which was attached to the Ascaso Division.

TWO HIGH-RANKING PERSONALITIES TAKING AN INTEREST IN BERNERI’S ARTICLES. Comrade Berneri, who was a professor in the University of Florence, was an assiduous contributor to American reviews and ideologically anarchist newspapers. He was lately working upon an interesting book on the Spanish revolution and penned for *Le Libertaire* articles in which he spelled out his revolutionary differences with other anti-fascist persuasions. Some months ago, according to reports we have had from a reliable source, a high-ranking personage in Barcelona for a time held conversations with another high-ranking personality regarding the articles written by Berneri. It seems that both were unduly uneasy with Berneri’s output and this uneasiness and the manner in which it might be laid to rest were the substance of their conversations.

THE TWO MEN IN RED ARMBANDS. Along with his spouse, with comrade Barbieri and with other comrades, Berneri happened to be at his flat in Plaça del Angel, at 10 a.m., on Tuesday, 4 May. Two men wearing red armbands showed up at the house. (Nearly two lines removed by censorship here.) Both men (half-a-line censored here)

were received by Berneri and Barbieri. On seeing them, the men in the red armbands called upon them not to open fire on them, because they were friends of theirs. Barbieri and Berneri answered: "We are anti-fascists who have come to Spain to defend the revolution and so there is no reason to open fire on anti-fascists." What the errand may have been that brought the two men in the red armbands to that address is not known, any more than the pretext they offered to justify their presence there. What is known is that the two men left the house (a line-and-a-half censored here).

AN UNJUSTIFIED SEARCH AND AN ABSURD THREAT. At approximately 3 p.m., the two men in red armbands showed up again (three lines censored here). The latter readily agreed to (one line censored) following a painstaking search in the (half-a-line censored) of Berneri and Barbieri, they broke down the door of comrade Mastrodicasa's room. At which point, comrade Costa Tantini, who was present in the house, handed over three rifles which had been left in his keeping by three *milicianos* from the Ascaso Column, who had gone off to France on leave. All (word censored here) left, taking away the guns with the exception of those who stayed to search the room occupied by comrade Fantozzi. They seized (word censored) documents, books and other papers from comrade Mastrodicasa's room and, given that the number of documents in the room occupied by comrade Berneri was very great, they resolved to leave without these, after saying that they would return later. (Three lines censored). As they left the (word censored) cautioned the inhabitants of the floor to stay there and not to venture into the streets, and warned that if they were to do that, they would be gunned down in the streets. When Berneri and Barbieri demanded an explanation for such treatment, they received the reply that they had information to the effect that they were dealing with armed Italian anarchists.

ARREST AND DEATH. At 6 p.m. on Wednesday (5 May) 12 men arrived at the house: (one line censored). On entering, they brought out comrades Berneri and Barbieri and told them that they were under arrest. Barbieri asked the reason for the arrests. "It appears that you are counter-revolutionaries" — they were told. Barbieri was indignant. Twenty years of anarchist activism gave him an entitlement to this indignation. (Seven lines censored.) And something confusing occurred at this point: a contradiction which sheds no light, or which sheds too much. During the early morning of 6 May, the police showed up at no. 2, Plaza del Angel and assured Barbieri's spouse that the arrested pair would be released at noon that very day. Well, it was also the very same day that the family of the two missing men learned, from the records at the Clinical Hospital, that their two bodies, riddled with bullets, had been picked up by the Red Cross in the vicinity of the Generalitat on the night of 5-6 May.

A RATHER TELLING AUTOPSY REPORT. The autopsy carried out on the corpse of our comrade Berneri demonstrates the ease with which murderers operated in accomplishing their feat. Let us see how. The body displays a gunshot wound with an entry hole behind the right armpit and exiting through the right breast at a level with the seventh rib, travelling forwards from behind and downwards from above. Similarly, there is another gunshot wound in the right temporal-occipital region, travelling down wards from above and forwards from behind. Judging by the location of the edges of the wounds, they were inflicted at close quarters, from a range

of at least 0.75 metres. The wounds were inflicted while the assailant was behind or slightly to one side of the victim, in the case of the abdominal injury and from above in the case of the head wound. Thus did comrade Berneri meet his end along with Barbieri. These are the methods in use these days, just as other but comparable methods were used in the disappearance of Marc Rhein, son of the Menshevik Abramovitch, editor-in-chief of the Social Democratic *Kraten* newspaper. At the time, the police carried out an investigation in an effort to trace the missing man. To no avail. Precisely as will be the case in this instance when picturesque inquiries are launched into the deaths of these comrades.'

Camillo Berneri was one of the most rounded standard-bearers of contemporary anarchism. He boasted exceptional gifts. He was one of the best-informed writers in the anarchist camp, and this enabled him to write on the most widely varying topics, which he knew how to treat with stunning erudition. He died leaving behind a thoroughly documented (all his books were well documented) volume on the Italian intervention in the Spanish Civil War, *Mussolini a la conquista de los Baleares*. The well-respected review *Estudios* of Valencia numbered him among its most avidly read contributors. He was director of the weekly paper *Guerra di Classe*, published in Barcelona by the Italian anarchists who had flocked to Spanish trenches in defence of the popular revolution. A *miliciano* on the Huesca front, Berneri witnessed the death in battle against the enemy of another great Italian anarchist, and writer to boot, Fosco Falaschi.

Let us resume our uninterrupted narrative of the events of May. On 5 May, a statement endorsed by both the CNT and the UGT in Barcelona was published over the airwaves. That statement read:

'The tragic events which have occurred in our city over the past 48 hours have prevented all of Barcelona's workers from attending their place of work. The conflict which triggered this situation of abnormality, which is injurious to the proletariat's cause, has been satisfactorily resolved by representatives of the anti-fascist parties and organisations, meeting in the Generalitat Palace. Consequently, the Local Federations of the CNT and of the UGT have agreed to address all of their members to instruct them to return forthwith to their customary employments. There must be a return to normality. Continued industrial idleness in these times of anti-fascist war is tantamount to collaboration with the common enemy and to weakening ourselves. Thus, the workers of the CNT and of the UGT, without exception, are hereby instructed to return to work, and workers from both associations are urged to ensure that their conduct in the workplace avoids anything that might give grounds for mutual annoyance and frictions. The CNT and UGT Local Federations say again to their members that they should desist from hostile stances. These are times that call for understanding and solidarity. The membership cards of both trade union associations ought to be sacrosanct to all, and the Control Committees have a duty to ensure respect for all workers, without distinction. Comrades of the CNT and of the UGT, back to work, everyone! The CNT and UGT Barcelona Local Federations.'

Yet again the police forces capitalised upon the impact made by this broadcast to gain new ground. The Navy minister, who had been fiercely criticised over the fleet's inactivity, made

haste to dispatch a number of warships to Barcelona; these included the destroyers *Sánchez Barcáiztegui* and *Lepanto*. Moreover, it was reported that public order had been taken into the control of the central government and that sizeable contingents of Assault Guards were being dispatched from the Jarama front.

Given the failure of the peace-making overtures made by García Oliver and Mariano Vázquez (the minister of justice and secretary of the CNT National Committee respectively), Federica Montseny suggested to the central government that she make a personal intervention ahead of the dispatching of the expeditionary forces. These troops were not to be sent in until such time as the minister of health (Montseny) might deem appropriate. She also declined an escort on her journey to Barcelona by road. On reaching the CNT headquarters in Catalonia, she established immediate telephone contact with the Generalitat and indicated that, as the representative of the central government, she should have guaranteed access to the presidential palace. But en route (it was a route strewn with hostile barricades) and in spite of the many assurances she had been offered, the minister's progress and that of her two companions was interrupted and it was only by a miracle that she was spared from being shot outright.

Once in Companys's presence, Montseny's first step was to divest the latter of his office — for the duration of her stewardship — in the name of the Valencia government. Companys had espoused a stance of questionable neutrality. The Generalitat switchboard, although controlled by him, had carelessly been left at the disposal of the belligerent ministers, who were encouraging the shooting over the telephone and issuing attack orders to the Marxist and Estat Català strong points. The assumption by the minister of control of these communications lines contributed greatly to the pacification. Companys seemed to be looking forward, with ill-concealed impatience, to a prompt resolution of the conflict and of the war itself through British naval intervention. At around this time the radio had carried reports of several British naval vessels having quit their bases bound for Barcelona.

The death of the general secretary of the UGT in Catalonia, Antonio Sesé, had merely added a further complication to the prospects of a solution, even though his death had been followed by the death of the prominent anarchist militant Domingo Ascaso. As for Sesé, although it could be shown that the fatal shot had not been fired, in spite of the story put about, from the premises of the CNT's Public Entertainments Union, but rather from the government barricades located in the Passeig de Gràcia, there was much speculation about the supposed motives behind this equally supposed murder. Later came a fierce attack upon the Estació de França rail depot, involving military forces from the nearby Karl Marx barracks. This military interference occurred, without any question, unbeknownst to the Defence Department, which, being under CNT control, was still keeping out of the fighting, even though it could have proved a decisive factor in that fighting. However, the central government, through General Pozas, took charge that same day of the Captaincy-General of Catalonia. The Defence Department automatically ceased to exist. Simultaneously, the communists mounted an offensive in the region's towns. The idea of foreign intervention left certain sectors very ill at ease and helped deepen the depression in the confederal committees. On 6 May the CNT and the FAI in Catalonia released the following statement:

‘TO THE WORLD’S CONSCIENCE — TO THE WORLDWIDE PROLETARIAT — TO THE DEMOCRACIES: —

In these times of tragedy, the CNT and the FAI address public opinion the whole world over in order to offer clarification of the happenings in Barcelona. Everybody seems to think that the anarchists and trade unionists are to blame for the tragic happenings in Barcelona. That view could not be more mistaken. The CNT and the FAI were always ready, even as they are now, to maintain not just public order but also the requisite unity between the friends of freedom, between the Spanish people's anti-fascist democratic forces.

Comrades, workers and anti-fascist intellectuals: Over the past 10 months since 19 July, we have done everything, not merely to defend the Spanish people's freedom, but likewise our people's peace, and, with it, the peace of Europe. We have repudiated any notion of dictatorship. We have awarded an equal share of public offices to minorities. A resolution of the latest cabinet crisis was also facilitated thanks to the concessions we made to the anti-fascist parties. We have not sought to impose our will upon anybody and we have not stipulated that our postulates be implemented.

We were and are convinced that our objective — libertarian communism, in a Free Iberian Federation and with capitalism annihilated — cannot be realised immediately. We have made up our minds to work in concert with the other parties in the municipalities, in the federal governments and even in central government. It has never occurred to us to break with this anti-fascist collaboration. Even in matters economic, the workers of Catalonia have readily accepted many burdens and we have done everything to persuade the workers that such economic sacrifices are merely temporary and that they are necessary for the fight against fascism. Balking at nothing, we have persuaded the workers as to the necessity of making sacrifices in this struggle for liberation.

But not all anti-fascist parties have done likewise: there are elements whose aim is a party dictatorship. They cannot bear the Catalan people embarking upon a new era of freedom and social peace, of democracy and equality. They themselves yearn to lord it over everything and ache to install their party's dictatorship. The CNT and the FAI are a hindrance to them in their aspirations. As long as those two organisations carry the bulk of the Catalan people with them, the petty politicians cannot weave their snares. Which is why they have tried everything to annihilate the CNT and the FAI.

Quite some time ago they drew up their plans. We have proof aplenty that the events of 3 May were the handiwork of political provocateurs. Little by little they seek to deprive the workers of Barcelona of their rights. Step after step was taken along that prescribed course and the workers were ousted from position after position. In Madrid, in Valencia and in all the cities, the workers oversee all municipal institutions. They also control the Telefónica. In Barcelona the Telefónica was likewise run by a committee made up of both unions — the CNT—UGT — under the chairmanship of a government appointee. On 2 May, a couple of days after the murder of the anarchist mayor of Puigcerdà and three of his colleagues, came the attack on the *Telefónica*. All of the workers of Barcelona interpreted that attack as one of the greatest acts of provocation.



At noon three truckloads of paramilitary police arrived to attack the building which is situated in the city centre and they sought to force the workers to work under their supervision and under the supervision of a special commissioner. Plainly, the working folk of Barcelona refused to countenance this provocation and determined to defend themselves. It was stipulated that the armed forces should withdraw, but this request went unheeded. The workers' organisations were afraid of a further attack upon other ventures under their control and feared that the security forces might attack the trade union premises. To forestall this eventuality, the workers, in and around the capital, took defensive measures while the accountable committees of the CNT and of the FAI made approaches to the government.

The latter did nothing to accommodate the people. Quite the reverse: the police started their attacks on buildings and from that point on barricades were thrown up and the workers took up arms as they had done on 19 July. They took up arms, but not in order to attack, not in order to break with the front against fascism, but rather in defence of threatened freedoms and the rights earned on 19 July of last year. Nowhere did the anarchist and trade union organisation, let alone any of the Defence Committees, attack the armed forces of the State. In no district were the workers the aggressors. The Regional Committees of the CNT and of the FAI have always publicly stated, and reiterated in their watchwords, that the workers are not attacking the security forces nor are they attacking the Generalitat government, because they themselves are part and parcel of it and represent one of its largest majority stakeholders.

Instances could be cited by the dozen that demonstrate only a passive desire to defend. But none of this proved of any use. The negotiations failed; the more that the CNT and the FAI gave, the more aggressive certain provocateurs became. The anarchists and trade unionists have stated yet again that they are ready to cooperate. The new provisional government lineup contains representatives from the two trade union associations, the CNT and the UGT, from ERC and from the U. de R., yet, in spite of all that, peace still does not reign. While the workers were ready to lay aside their arms and dismantle their barricades, preparations for war were advancing on the other side. Arrests have been made and shootings have been carried out. The central headquarters of the anarcho-syndicalist organisation in Catalonia has been encircled and besieged. The would-be dictators are trying to crush the Catalan workers' organisation — with its half century behind it — by force of arms. Such is the real sense of the events currently being played out in Barcelona.

The CNT and the FAI in Catalonia declare that neither previously nor presently have they entertained any desire to take power into their hands, but are rather prepared to collaborate with honesty and loyalty, with all of the Spanish people's anti-fascist forces. We have no wish to direct our guns against the people, nor against the workers, even should they belong to a different ideology or a different party. Our organisation's history demonstrates that we do not crave political power for ourselves. The ten months of loyal collaboration with all of the anti-fascist parties show that we are not the cause of this fratricidal strife.

We issue an appeal to the workers the world over. We send out an appeal to the democracies. We call upon all anti-fascist forces and organisations around the world. We have no fear in standing before the bar of world opinion. We want peace between workers and peasants. We want to work hand in glove with anyone genuinely desirous of fighting fascism, which is the biggest enemy of them all.

Comrades: Do not believe the slanders which may be peddled against us! Anyone truly desirous of fighting against fascism knows that we do not want dictatorship, nor any power over our fellow workers. Anyone conversant with the history of our struggle knows that the only thing we want is freedom and well-being for the entire Spanish people, peace for Europe and for everyone.

Anti-fascists, workers and peasants the world over: Stand by us! Do not allow our ideals to be besmirched! Do not allow the murder of Barcelona's workers! Help us in this heroic struggle against all foes of freedom and well-being for the whole of the Spanish people and peace for Europe! —

The CNT regional committee. The FAI regional committee.

Thursday, 6 May 1937.'

At the eleventh hour on the night of 6 May, the CNT and the FAI made fresh settlement proposals. According to these, all civilians and armed forces were to undertake to withdraw from the barricades. At the same time, all hostages would be freed. Both sides were to discard all thoughts of reprisals. An answer was required within a two-hour period of grace. All night and for much of the early morning there was no sign of any such answer. The government coalition was keen to buy time, perhaps anticipating the arrival of the expeditionary forces promised by Valencia, which were to leave a bloody wake behind them in the Tortosa area, in spite of assurances from the Minister for Health, Montseny, regarding their non-partisanship and make-up. CNT personnel even speculated about the ideological affinities of Lieutenant-Colonel Emilio Torres Iglesias, the officer commanding the expeditionary forces — he having been commander of the 'Tierra y Libertad' Column. No response agreeing to the aforementioned proposals was received until 4.45 a.m. on 7 May, and then only after the CNT camp had indicated its determination to block the troops' access to Barcelona. As a result, the following announcement was made over the airwaves:

'TO ALL CNT WORKERS — Both the political and the trade union representatives having come to an accommodation, be it known to you that you will be receiving appropriate instructions from the committees in charge so that normality may be restored completely. At the same time, you are urged to keep the level head required in the present circumstances and not to react to any provocations which may arise on the part of the trouble-makers in whose interest it is that this state of upheaval should continue.'

Even so, there were fresh skirmishes during the remainder of the early morning as the government side refused to be the first to walk away from their barricades. But as the morning wore on, calm was restored. CNT personnel set an example by being the first to walk away from the fighting, leaving their opposite numbers dug in and on a war footing. The civilians flooding onto

the streets helped with this restoration of normality. Sporadic shooting persisted in spite of everything though, and there was even an attack mounted upon the minister of health's vehicle. That vehicle was emblazoned with the insignia of the ministry and was carrying the secretary of the CNT national committee, Mariano Vázquez, en route to Valencia, plus the minister's own secretary, comrade Baruta, who sustained injuries as a result of the shooting. Vázquez was able to avoid the deadly hail of lead by hurling himself to the floor of the vehicle. The assailants were manning a PSUC barricade that had been erected on the Diagonal, near Pedralbes. The circumstances of the attack suggested that it had been premeditated and that the target had been Federica Montseny herself.

At 8.20 p.m., the expeditionary forces entered the city to cries of 'Unite, proletarian brothers!' They made up a procession of 120 trucks filled with a motley assortment of some 5,000 paramilitary policemen. Evidence of this was the fact that as they paraded past the Regional Committee premises en route to Police Headquarters, shots were fired at the building even as cries of 'Long live the FAI!' were heard. Lieutenant-Colonel Torres arrived by plane and was given responsibility for public order. Earlier we mentioned the appointment of General Pozas to the Captaincy-General as the nominee of the military command in Catalonia and on the Aragón front. The CNT closed the file on the 'incident' with the following appeal:

'THE CNT TO THE CATALAN PEOPLE. With the tragic episode that has filled Barcelona with mourning now concluded, and so that everyone can get his bearings, the CNT Regional Committee and its Local Federation articulate their whole-hearted determination to collaborate with maximum effectiveness and loyalty in the establishment of public order in Catalonia, closing the book upon the era of partisan conduct which was precisely responsible for the unbearable situation which sparked the tragedy.

Consequently, we are delighted to reiterate our support for the Generalitat government and for the incoming Public Order delegate sent by the central government, Lieutenant-Colonel Torres, whose excellent disposition in the assumption of such a delicate responsibility in Catalonia we have gauged for ourselves.

Unity and trust, loyalty and equality of rights and duties for all anti-fascist persuasions in every regard. Such is the watchword of the moment which all must abide by and unanimously endorse. The CNT regional committee. The CNT local federation.'

In the midst of all these high hopes for the peace, *Solidaridad Obrera* of 8 May proved the finest barometer of how things had been left. Here is a telling series of clippings:

'When will there be an end to the collection of CNT membership cards? Wasn't there some talk about a desire for a comprehensive restoration of peace? Well, actions speak louder than words in these matters.'

'The harmonious solution devised by the CNT and the UGT to the events within the city has failed to satisfy the provocateur element, who have yet recover from their shock at finding that calm has been restored without anyone's having been vanquished or victor.'

‘Tear down the barricades! Lay aside your weapons! All workers, back to work tomorrow; and as for the others, the combatants, on to the capture of Huesca, of Teruel, on to the liberation of Zaragoza!’

‘To what end were the tram and bus workers being searched at close of evening yesterday, in the middle of their work hours? By virtue of what orders and from whom did they come?’

‘The Control Patrols are one of the most authentic expressions of the anti-fascist revolution in Catalonia. They sprang from the very vitals of the people in the heat of the revolutionary tide. Their brilliant and courageous performance has earned them widespread commendation. Yesterday the Control Patrols made a worthy gesture indicative of the sense of responsibility by which they are driven, in placing themselves at the orders of the Republican government’s special delegate in charge of public order. *Solidaridad Obrera*, on this memorable day, pays heartfelt and sincere tribute to the Control Patrols, the unmistakable guarantors of revolutionary public order.’

The newspapers of the time carried a breakdown of the numbers killed and wounded during the events. The figure given for those killed was 500 and for the wounded some 1,000.

One of the terms of the armistice was that both sides would free their prisoners. The CNT personnel immediately honoured their commitment: the government side and the *Chekas* not merely hung on to their hostages, but indeed made further arrests. In a report entitled ‘Our Prisoners’, *Solidaridad Obrera* of 11 May registered the following protest:

‘This headline may come as a surprise to many of our readers, but it is a fact. The CNT still has prisoners in the wake of the recent events. Our nobility, the nobility which has ever been our hallmark, ensured that after the ceasefire order went out, some hundreds of persons held captive in our union premises were freed without further ado. And how was this generous and loyal gesture repaid? By our own captives being kept in filthy dungeons, or, which is worse, by an attempt being made to goad the lion by ascribing to our comrades certain offences in relation to the deaths that occurred skirmishing, the responsibility for which is utterly impossible to determine.

In the cells of Police Headquarters [the newspaper added] we have some 300 comrades who must be freed immediately. They have been six days in custody and during this time no one has questioned them and nothing may be imputed to them, just as, by the same token, we may not impute anything to those on the opposing side. We say again, take care lest you are storing up trouble for yourselves!’

In a way, holding onto these captives might be explained in terms of the fact that many of them could not be handed back, for the simple reason that they had been cravenly done to death. In the communist *chekas*, the red inquisitors, confident that the operation was final, had not done things by halves. Not until 11 May was it certain that some of the missing, such as Alfredo Martínez of the Regional Committee of the JJ.LL of Catalonia and secretary of the Revolutionary Youth Front, as well as another prominent member of that committee, the Uruguayan intellectual Juan

Rúa, had been vilely murdered. Also at around this time, a mysterious ambulance had dumped the corpses of a further 12 young libertarians in a field in the nearby township of Cerdanyola-Ripollet. *A propos* of these macabre happenings, *Solidaridad Obrera* commented:

‘Three days of fratricidal strife in Barcelona, of gun-battles. Three days of manhunt, systematic and terrible. Eloquent, are they not, the frightfully mutilated corpses of 12 CNT militants from Sant Andreu, taken from their homes and transported in an ambulance to the graveyard in Cerdanyola? Eloquent, too, are the 5 men from Eroles’s night patrols, likewise murdered. Eloquent also are the 15 CNT militants found dead in the vicinity of Tarragona, plus others, found in various places around Catalonia. Eloquent, too, the lifeless body of Camillo Berneri, a leading light of Italian libertarian communism, a philosopher and writer of world renown, shot at point blank range without a word in the dead of the night. Eloquent too, all of the victims on both sides, pointing to their executioners, to those who hatched this tragedy, the ones who baited the trap, the ones who did nothing to avoid it and all who managed to postpone a resolution of the conflict, by opposing any satisfactory accommodation, so as to bring about the yearned-for foreign intervention, of which six French and British ships off the port of Barcelona on Wednesday and Thursday of last week were merely an advance party (...)’

Not that the happenings in May had been confined to Barcelona alone. They had great repercussions around the region, particularly in Tarragona province. The proximity of the Aragón front and the predominance on that front of the confederal columns prevented Stalinist personnel from moving out of Lleida. Military personnel from the ‘*Roja y Negra*’ Column, as well as from the POUM’s 29th Division were mustered in Barbastro, monitoring the movements of Stalinist personnel from the 27th Division. A few of the latter attempted to enter Binéfar. Pre-emptive action by the CNT and POUM militias later resulted in the disbandment of the 29th Division, to the shooting of a few of its officers and to a monstrous show-trial mounted against the POUM. All of it preceded by the abduction and murder of the most prominent of the POUM leaders, Andreu Nin.

Under the headline — “WHAT BEFELL THE CNT IN TARRAGONA”, *Solidaridad Obrera* of 14 May carried the following report:

‘With the passage of time and as passions cool, fresh reports and facts are bringing to light all of the ramifications which the sweeping provocation mounted against the CNT and FAI had in Catalonia. We use the word “mounted” advisedly, for in fact, everything that happened was, as we have indicated in previous reports, part of a plan hatched at some length by people of questionable commitment to the revolution and to Catalonia ...

THE WELL-KNOWN SEIZURE OF THE *TELEFÓNICA*. At eight o’clock on the morning of Wednesday, 5 May, a large body of police turned up unexpectedly at the Telefónica building, with arms and hand-grenades galore, ready to storm the aforementioned premises by violence. They did in fact seize the building, in that not the slightest resistance was offered by the workers who were on the premises. Once in complete control of the building, they proceeded to commandeer all internal and

external communications, disconnecting the telephones of the confederal and anarchist organisation.

Four hours later, at the Military Command, a telephone conversation took place between comrade Casanovas, representing the comrades from the telephones sector, and the lieutenant-colonel commanding the coastal forces, who was briefed in detail on the irregular events which had come to pass. That conversation over, it was agreed that the police should withdraw from the first floor, where the equipment had been installed, but that they should remain on standby in the hallway. Within fifteen minutes of the reaching of this agreement, which, through mutual accommodation offered an amicable resolution of the conflict, the chief of police informed the exchange that the Public Order delegate for Tarragona was refusing to abide by what had been agreed, all on account of very stringent instructions received from Barcelona.

Even as these telephone interviews and conversations were in progress, our comrades could see a lot of coming and going of people at the ERC premises; numerous individuals could be seen entering without weapons only to emerge with a rifle. The same thing, albeit less brazenly, was going on at the PSUC centre and at the Casa del Pueblo.

AN ATTEMPTED RAID AND A POINTLESS CONVERSATION. On the morning of the day following the events of which we speak, the violent and brazen attack upon our organisation began. With intense rifle fire and throwing of hand-grenades, certain forces launched an unsuccessful attack upon the JJ.LL centre. The attack was beaten off and in view of the seriousness implicit in the attack, we appointed a commission to speak with the Generalitat commissar, to request a meeting of all anti-fascist forces, with an eye to averting the deplorable events which later came to pass. When the Generalitat commissar was contacted, he summoned representatives from all of the political and trade union organisations. The comrades from the UGT and from the PSUC refused his summons, as a result of which the meeting could not proceed. Had it done so, then without a doubt, resumption of the events on a larger scale might have been averted.

FINAL ATTACK ON THE LIBERTARIAN YOUTH CENTRE AND A FURTHER MEETING. For the purpose of gauging what had happened in Tarragona, comrades Castelló and Rueda set out for that capital in the early afternoon. On arrival, these comrades could hear very heavy gunfire and it was immediately established that a fresh attack upon the JJ.LL centre was in progress, mounted by the security forces in conjunction with plain-clothes personnel from other organisations. The tremendous violence of the attack ensured that on this occasion the attackers achieved their aim. In view of this, our comrades arranged with the Public Order delegate that a meeting should be held at Headquarters in the presence of the authorities. On reaching the building, they spoke with the air force captain from Reus, comrade Barbetá, briefing him on their wish to avert all bloodshed and requesting a joint meeting of all the anti-fascist organisations. That meeting was attended by representatives from ERC,

the UGT and the PSUC, as well as a number of military authorities and personages from the Generalitat.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AIRCRAFT DEPLOYED AGAINST THE CONFEDERAL AND ANARCHIST ORGANISATION. Once they had gathered together, the central government's delegate, Captain Barbetá, explained that he was under strict orders from the government to use the full range of weapons, including planes, to bring the confederal and anarchist organisation to heel unless the latter first handed over its arms. Whereupon our representatives highlighted the campaign mounted in Solidaridad Obrera to have all long arms shipped up to the front lines and that, when this happened, they were ready to give up their weapons, as long as everyone was disarmed. Captain Barbetá's response to this comprehensive answer was that he was unable to proceed with the disarming of the other organisations, in that these had sided unconditionally with the government; to which our comrades retorted that the Confederation was not against the government either, in that it too was part of the government line-up.

The discussion continued and in the end our comrades were inveigled into giving up their indisputable rights, with a view to averting any violence that might pose a threat to the workers' unity. Thus they handed over the weapons, assuring the authorities that they would be dumped in the air force camp pending discussion by the confederal representatives in the government of a general disarmament or restoration of the weapons, under the following conditions, of course:

1. That all detainees be freed.
2. That the security forces seconded to Tarragona be withdrawn, along with personnel belonging to the political and trade union organisations, and that these be replaced by air force troops.
3. That the lives and liberties of all of the organisation's comrades and centres be respected.

After every one of the organisations present had accepted these points, Captain Barbetá gave assurances that, under no circumstances, would he allow any sort of abuse of authority, and that he would take very strenuous steps to punish severely any breaches of these accords, no matter which individual or organisation breached them. These words satisfied our comrades, who believed that, through common sense and goodwill, everyone had been spared painful happenings. But that satisfaction was short-lived; they soon realised that they had been deceived.

REPRISALS BREAK OUT. The remainder of the day on which these discussions took place passed without incident, but at daybreak next day, at 3am, without warning, Assault Guard troops and police used violence to seize control of the office of the Minister for Internal Defence, in response, they said, to orders received from above. And as if that swoop was a prearranged signal, the harshest reprisals were then launched against militants of the CNT and FAI, thereby giving the lie to the assurances from the authorities. The outskirts of the town were soon strewn with the corpses of prominent militants of our organisation. Here are a few of those that were found: Mario Berruti, Baltasar Vallejo (from the Marine Transport Union); Mateo Freixas

(Road Transport): José Gallisa (Distribution Union); Julián Martínez, Ramón Alvarez (Republican National Guard); José Castellví (Amalgamated Trades); Francisco Molina and a further four corpses, as yet unidentified. Also murdered during this repression was the prominent militant Rúa, a young Uruguayan anarchist who came to Spain following the rebel uprising in July to fight side by side with the Spanish workers (There followed 22 lines, censored, along with the subsequent heading) ...'

In the 16 May edition of the same paper there were follow-up reports, this time about 'What happened in Tortosa':

'OUR COMRADES' SPIRIT OF BROTHERHOOD. In none of the various comarcas around Catalonia was there any better agreement and goodwill between CNT militants and UGT militants than in Tortosa. Whatever problems of a collective character arose in the area and in the villages were resolved by representatives of both unions with the utmost respect and willingness to reach accommodation, as a result of which the harmony prevailing between the workers was never interrupted by discord or controversy. And so cordial were their relations that, even though joint rallies had been suspended all across Catalonia on May Day last, the comrades from Tortosa did all in their power to ensure that the rallies scheduled in their comarca went ahead. No one was more startled by this than ourselves, but now that we have duly investigated what happened, we are going to set it before public opinion which will have the final say in the matter.

On the Wednesday of this new 'Tragic Week' which witnessed so many painful happenings, and in the early hours of the morning, the officer commanding the Republican National Guard in Tortosa, Lieutenant-Colonel Domenech, who was in charge of 50 members of that corps, stormed the Telefónica building after breaking down the door, and seized all apartments and communications. In the light of these things, a commission made up of comrades from the CNT was dispatched to negotiate with the leader of the troops, while the remainder of the comrades prepared, in the light of this violence (the object of which was a mystery to them), to take up whatever positions they deemed appropriate in order to pre-empt further surprises. After our comrades talked with those who had attacked the Telefónica, they managed to come to an arrangement, by which it was agreed that the troops would pull out of the building and desist from their provocative stance, as indeed they did. After this calm began to return without regrettable incident.

But this calm was to be short-lived, for as night drew on and the first shadows fell, some security force personnel, in concert with other individuals, members of certain parties, started to fire repeatedly upon our comrades, who were patrolling the streets for fear of some coup de main. The gunfire spread on both sides, with the CNT comrades quickly getting the better of the insurgents, as a result of which calm was restored. The police who had spearheaded the conflict found themselves captives, and not only were their lives spared but their every need was catered for. On a provisional basis, the CNT's agencies assumed responsibility for giving leadership and looking to other services until such time as things were clarified.



Once the situation had been brought under control and normality restored, news was received in Tortosa that a few kilometres outside the city there were armed troops belonging to the Valencia government and that the CNT's Regional Committee had issued specific orders that no resistance should obstruct their passage. Our comrades complied, thereby demonstrating their disciplined obedience to the organisation's instructions. But their punctilious conduct was not reciprocated, in that scarcely had the troops arrived than they began to make arrests of people found in possession of a CNT membership card. This spelled the start of the reprisals.

As the Valencia government's troops entered the first streets in the city, and as if their arrival had been expected, numerous persons emerged from the centres of the UGT and from the centres of all the parties. Armed for the purpose, they set about making body searches, arrests and house searches, so that within a matter of a few minutes, there was enormous disorder and confusion. For their part, the recently arrived troops, instead of restoring order, sided once and for all with the rebels and the tranquil and hard-working city of Tortosa was soon at the mercy of a handful of individuals. At this point the searches, the ransacking and the arrests got underway. The homes of CNT members were attacked, with the new invaders seizing whatever cash, clothing or items of foodstuffs they came across.

Among the persons most to the fore in these acts of looting and barbarism there is one by the name of 'Chaparro'. This character, at the head of a sizeable gang, attacked the building where our Local Federation is based, setting our organisation's banner on fire and smashing up the placards from the balconies. Finally, to cap it all, they tore down and destroyed a plaque naming one of the main streets after Durruti. Not content with that, they ventured out into the villages in the area, where they continued their looting and vandalism, particularly against the peasant collectives the CNT has there. In one of the villages in their path, Tivenys, they even issued a proclamation to the effect that all impounded estates had to be handed back to their former owners, immediately. Of course, nobody took this nonsense seriously: but this detail is enough to allow one to gauge the ideology of the rebels. So as to have a freer hand, the provocateurs, posing as the authorities, set about jailing whomsoever they chose. The jails were very soon filled in this way; the killing would come later.

In fact: on the night of Thursday 6 May, the aforementioned 'Chaparro', along with others from his gang and with an Assault Guard, name unknown, showed up at the holding cells at the town hall where some 20 comrades were being held, together with an Assault Guard corporal who was in custody for having refused to open fire on the workers. Once in the cells, they ushered out a number of our comrades— who included the aforementioned Assault Guard by the name of Febrer, plus Antonio Odena and the well-known militant Rogelio Tena — on the pretext that they had to take a statement from them. They were all taken off in the direction of Tarragona, suitably bound and guarded. And that is all we say of this matter, except that it was in fact in Tarragona where they were found: that is, their corpses, dumped like dogs on the city outskirts.'

There were similar incidents in a number of villages in the Vic area. This area is one of the most reactionary in the whole of Catalonia, on account of the traditional hold of clericalism. The CNT was the only liberal organisation with any presence in that Carlist stronghold. Its enemies found that the best way of fighting against the people was to throw in their lot with the Assault Guards and Carabineers arriving in Vic, Manlleu, Bisura de Ter, Montesquiu, La Farga de les Lloses and other villages with the usual instructions to offer provocation. The upshot was a united front of police and Carlist requetés against the CNT and its militants. The organisation's centres were attacked and their furnishings smashed. Caught in the crossfire, the CNT personnel had to desert the area en masse following a hopeless fight in which all of the odds were stacked against them.

There are books aplenty about the anecdotal side to the tragic happenings in May. There are documents galore as well designed to interpret the underlying motives of what was always understood as a sweeping act of provocation. At first glance, events might appear to have been the logical outcome of the political rivalry between the organisations and parties. The existence of the communist chekas, which had already become such a talking point, and other sorts of mysterious interventions, had exposed the presence of a hidden power pulling all the strings. Without doubt, before the true profile of that hidden power was divined — and more because of want of material evidence than on account of any lack of perspicacity — a few *faux pas* were made, or rather, conclusions were arrived at which, although they might have been obvious, were nevertheless one-eyed and incomplete. This is the case with the motives cited in an extensive statement from the CNT national committee, which we have taken from *Solidaridad Obrera* of 13 June 1937. The ravages of strict, not to say partisan, censorship largely mutilated that document. The rigours of the censor's office, together with the campaign to have CNT personnel in the rearguard disarmed, were the most spectacular prizes of the armistice. To these might be added the disbanding of the control patrols following blanket enforcement of the provisions of the Public Order Decree of 4 March. A communiqué from the Generalitat (18 May) brazenly announced: 'Under the new public order provisions, the government of Catalonia's earlier ordinances, now published also by the government of the Republic, are to be put into effect.' According to the note, these ordinances referred among other things to 'the abolition of checkpoints on highways, roads and the disarmament of the rearguard'. In fact, just a few days before, a decree from the Interior ministry (of the central government) ordered 'the surrender of long arms, war machines, explosives, gases' etc.

Here is the national committee statement. The italicised sections were excised by the censors.

'GIVEN THE PERSISTENCE OF THE CAMPAIGN OF DEFAMATION REGARDING THE EVENTS IN BARCELONA, THE CNT TURNS TO ALL OF THE NATION'S HONEST CONSCIENCES. One fine, day large numbers of Guards and police showed up at the *Telefónica* in Catalunya Square, under the command of Rodríguez Salas, the Chief of Police. To what end? Quite simply and plainly this: the PSUC and Estat Català which, being parties, have no connections with the telephone service, needed to have control over them for their own conspiratorial purposes, and the CNT would not play along with this because it realised what was afoot in the *Telefónica*. Ever since the rebellion erupted, there has been a UGT—CNT Control Committee in operation. There was also a delegate from the Generalitat Council who, as government representative, was answerable for telephone communications. In sending in the police, Rodríguez Sales and Aiguader stepped outside the law: evidence of this is the

fact that the Generalitat acknowledged that the commissar and minister in charge of Internal Security had overstepped the mark. Alongside the incident at the Telefónica barricades and fortifications appeared at the Estat Català and PSUC centres. Rifles appeared on the streets and it was in response to such signals of war that some comrades looked to their defences, rightly surmising that the plan was to do battle with the CNT, the seizure of the Telefónica by the PSUC and Estat Català being the first step in this plan.

BACKGROUND. The above scarcely clarifies matters and since everything in life has a first cause, we must look for this one much further back in time, in certain preceding facts. There has been a protracted warfare waged against our movement in Catalonia. The communists, Estat Català and some moles were actively engaged in discrediting us around the regions and abroad. What is not so well known to everyone is the fact that there were curious coincidences accompanying these actions which culminated in the events of May.

For instance, not everyone is aware that as long ago as January, Casanovas, Lluhí Vallesca, Xicota Sancho, Polo and Ventura i Gassol were roaming around France working on behalf of 'Catalonia's independence'. This was a process of preparation akin to the one carried out during the dictatorship, but with this difference, that at that time Italian fascism took a hand as an agent provocateur through Garibaldi, and on this occasion Mussolini was lending a hand through Dencàs, the separatist agent provocateur of Catalonia's October. And in December there was a plot that resulted in the shooting of Reverter, the Public Order commissar, and in the flight of Casanovas, the speaker of the Parliament, whose complicity in the abortive coup d'état had been demonstrated.

The separatists who are, when all is said and done, bourgeois, could not stomach the fascist uprising's having afforded the proletariat the victory that will strip them of their assets. And in search of a turning of the tables they made overtures to Italy to provoke the fighting that will provide the excuse for foreign intervention and hasten some powers' recognition of Catalonia's independence while at the same time undermining the anti-fascist front. Those who wanted things to be left pretty much as they had been before 18 July were able to commit themselves to this.

In France there was a conspiracy afoot to work out a settlement. Some bigwigs were implicated in this. An intelligence agent operating on behalf of Spanish anti-fascism had stumbled upon secret discussions. He was commissioned, and the wherewithal was passed to him, to pursue his inquiries until such time as he might collect irrefutable proof that would leave the traitors exposed. And just as he was about to collect the evidence that would have unmasked many people, that agent was murdered in Barcelona. By whom? He was working for the government of the Republic. So he must have been murdered by the plotters who had somehow got wind of that agent's crucial mission. Remember that Aiguader was minister responsible for public order. That he belongs to Estat Català. And that there were well-founded suspicions that he was involved in the conspiracy.

On 20 April, Comorera, the leader of the PSUC, was in Paris. Among other people, he paid a call on Ventura i Gassol's secretary and to a certain Castañer. And who is Castañer? Our information is that he is a Generalitat police agent.

Enquiries have been carried out that show that he is in contact with one Vintró, secretary to Octavio Saltó, a journalist in the service of the fascists. He has also been spotted with other fascist bigwigs who live in Biarritz and San Juan de Luz. At the same time he kept up a close and assiduous connection with Estat Català personnel, most especially with Dencàs and Casanovas. The former visits Castañer in his home and the latter receives visits from him.

Polo, another Generalitat police agent, who was a confidant of Badia, operates in France under the orders of Vizcaíno, a fascist counter-espionage agent who operates under orders from Beltrán i Musitu. What is the meaning of these connections between Catalanist and fascist personnel? Might we not see in this the source of certain provocations? We are convinced that the answer to that is yes. As must anyone who takes the time to examine things objectively. Let us add to these activities the fact that the fascists were laying the groundwork for a disembarkation operation for late April for the area from Almería up to Roses. This was an operation on a grand scale. It never came off because they could not procure the requisite material.

It was put off until mid-May, and if it failed to come to pass, it is because of a certain incident that occurred which delivered their plans into the hands of the police of a neutral country. Let us say further that in late April Estat Català marshalled its armed men in France along the border. And lo and behold the Republic's *Gaceta* of 12 April carried a list of officers, NCOs and other ranks of the Republican National Guard who had been stood down from the corps, pending the enforcement of sanctions due to intelligence regarding their unhappiness with the provisions of the decree of 21 July.

Well now, 1 captain, 4 subalterns, 19 brigadiers, 4 lieutenants, 18 sergeants, 25 corporals and 58 guards of those covered by this standing-down order were not in fact stood down as the April decree had prescribed, and this with the compliance or consent of the Generalitat's former Minister for Public Order, Artemi Aiguader, on account of their having been active in leading the force during the May events.

Let us mention that at about this time sizeable contingents were posted to the border and, on reaching Figueres, the officer commanding one large unit of these, instead of presenting himself before the town council, went straight to the PSUC, thereby indicating to the public with that simple gesture that his was an armed force at the disposal of the Stalinists, rather than in the service of the people or of the government and therefore obliged to be impartial. All of these details tell us quite plainly that the happenings in Barcelona were merely the contrived incident, the carefully prepared tinder to ignite conflict, and that the incident was not of the CNT's making.

ACTIVITIES WHILE EVENTS WERE IN PROGRESS. From the very outset the CNT stepped in to cut short the street-fighting. A CNT-FAI delegation, together with the UGT National Executive, travelled to Barcelona and made superhuman efforts to bring the conflict to an end. We sought for a solution. This was accepted by every-

body, but the Communists refused to put it into immediate effect and put off a resolution in expectation that the Valencia government, unable to tolerate the situation further, would proceed with a takeover of public order, as indeed occurred ...

And when, on the morning of the Thursday, the CNT and UGT had issued the order for a return to work and the city seemed calm, fighting broke out again, because, while the CNT was not fighting, the separatists and communists were arresting, searching and tearing up membership cards, hemming in the CNT's centres and giving provocation by mounting attacks, forcing the CNT to look to its defences again. And when the first tram serving the Gràcia line was making for the Plaça de Catalunya, it came under fire from the Guards and Estat Català lurking behind barricades, making it necessary that, as a precaution, normal tram and bus services remained suspended. And vehicles venturing out to repair the damaged tramlines came under fire.

When the shooting ceased on the Friday morning at the agreed hour, there was, from the communist and Catalanist centres, sniping designed to trigger further fighting. And on the Friday night, from a police station Estat Català activists and members of the security forces fired some seventy shots at the vehicle in which the National Committee's secretary had travelled up from Valencia, and, to make matters worse, he was travelling in a Health Ministry car, which is to say, a government vehicle, and the likely supposition was that comrade Federica Montseny, the Minister of Health, was on board. This National Committee immediately dispatched delegates to all of the Regional Committees to ensure that the occurrences in Catalonia would not have any repercussions elsewhere. At the same time, it dispatched a delegation to the Aragón front to pre-empt any quitting of the front lines and as far as Confederation personnel were concerned, this was successful. It is a matter of some interest to us to stress that Camillo Berneri, an anarchist revered by all anti-fascists the world over, was murdered, after he had been arrested at his home by supposed officers in the service of Rodríguez Sales. How come? Because, we suspect, rather than just because he was an anarchist, it was known that he was in possession of extensive documentary evidence showing, with proof, and incontrovertibly, how Italy had for some time past been laying the groundwork for a fascist uprising in Spain. This documentation, which was about to be made available to the Republic's government, was highly damaging.

AFTER THE OCCURRENCES. It was after the unrest had been put down that the conduct of the sectors eager to crush the CNT and anarchism in Catalonia was at its most sordid. For one thing, weeks later, any passer-by in Barcelona was able to see for himself how the barricades were provocatively left standing outside PSUC and Estat Català premises, whereas our own had been dismantled on the Friday. A tidal wave of bloodshed and terror has swept through the towns of Catalonia. Murder with impunity has been the order of the day. And our libertarian movement has held its tongue and put up with it all. Not out of cowardice, but rather because of discipline and a sense of responsibility, watching as the lives of our finest militants were cut short. It has stoically stood and watched as the collectives, the proletariat's constructive endeavour, have been attacked.

NOW. And in the wake of that exemplary conduct, those who, had they any sense of shame would have slunk away, unable to show their faces after so much crime, so much barbarism, such treachery towards the anti-fascist struggle, are still prattling on. And still daring to indulge in threats. And, with unprecedented cynicism, still trying to shift the blame on to the CNT. We have already said enough for everybody to come to a judgement, to enable everyone to scrutinise, draw comparisons and decide for themselves. Bearing in mind that in Catalonia there is a conspiracy of overlapping interests against us. Estat Català, the communists, the Esquerra, each with its own party political interests to pursue. But, albeit from differing angles, they are all agreed upon the objective of the CNT's destruction. And Mussolini, through Dencàs, agrees with them and affords them indirect support. And let the record show that we are not making the idiotic mistake of equating the Stalinists with the fascists. Let us therefore state categorically our belief that the Stalinists do not have not the slightest connection with fascism. The same, though, cannot be said of Estat Català personnel. And when they found themselves together on the streets, who was pulling the strings? The import of what we have been saying has not escaped us: but what we have stated reflects the facts, and there is no one who can refute them because he would instantly be crushed by the burden of facts and proofs, in that we are trading in trustworthy intelligence founded upon first-hand knowledge of the matter.

Aiguader, Dencàs, Mussolini, Casanovas, Lluhí Vallescà, Sancho Xicota, Polo, Castañer...and others whom we have not named banded together into a sinister scheme of treachery and conspiracy. These are the people responsible for the happenings in Barcelona!

Let no one say that the CNT is given to provocation or that it is a force that divides or betrays the anti-fascist struggle. The CNT has a cleaner conscience than these runts who, powerless to attract the masses of the population to their colours by dint of honest dealing, are forced to resort to underhand methods, to thuggish intrigues and to out-and-out conspiracy in order to crush us. But THE TRAITORS WILL NOT WIPE OUT THE CNT. The only way to overtake the CNT is to work with greater honesty, high-mindedness and austerity than it does itself. And the figures involved in the Catalan intrigues do not have the capacity for that.

— The National Committee. Valencia, June 1937.

The above explanation of events discloses part of the truth, but only part. The fact is that a significant segment of the Catalanists was embroiled in schemes designed to bring the war to a conclusion by detaching Catalonia from the rest of Spain and placing it under the protection of some foreign power. Certain fugitive and high-and-mighty Catalanists were plotting in France along these lines. Others like Dencàs were doing the same from Rome, and playing up to the Duce's ambitions. These were the extremist, fascist-minded wing of Estat Català. Which may well account for the Catalanists' frantic enmity towards the CNT and the FAI. Their being in cahoots with the Stalinists perhaps implied nothing more than that they were helping to demolish the mighty and mightily despised organisation of the proletariat which had so often thwarted their separatist ambitions. Stalinists and separatists were driven by the same hatred of a common enemy, even if their aims were quite divergent. The CNT was a hindrance, in the case of one of

them, to their separatist intrigues (a Catalonia breaking away from Spain under the protection of some democratic or fascist foreign power); and in the other case, the object was to gnaw at the bones of the CNT, the better to pave the way for another power — the Soviet Union, which cherished ambitions to exercise a monopoly over the whole of Spain.

Let us say again that the motives catalogued in the CNT National Committee's declaration have the ring of truth about them, but are not the last word on the matter. In the case of Russia, the true aims behind the conspiracy had to remain — on account of the absence of evidence and for political reasons — concealed utterly. Stalinists and separatists played along with each other and formed an unspoken comradeship in arms against the most redoubtable hindrance to their appetites; but each of them, separately, operated in obedience to divergent motives and plans.

Our choice is therefore to plump for the hypothesis that considerations of a political nature obliged the CNT's National Committee, in its account of the motives behind the events of May, to pass over the important and capital role played by Stalin's secret police, i.e. to pass over what really prompted the provocation. Let us say again also that there may well be a dearth of irrefutable evidence offering a key to the charges brought. It may even be that the confederal committees never came into possession of trustworthy evidence. It was supplied later by General Krivitsky, the head of the Soviet intelligence services in Western Europe at the time.

In the first volume of this book, we disclosed to our readers some of the revelations of the general with regard to the Stalinist designs upon Spain's gold reserves. Now let us transcribe from Krivitsky's book, *Agent de Staline* (Paris, 1940), the section having to do with the Stalinists provocation of the May events.

According to Krivitsky, the most cogent factor drawing Stalin's attention to Spain was the necessity of breaking out of the diplomatic isolation to which Russia had been subjected by the western powers, democratic and totalitarian alike. Stalin's dearest wish was to establish a pact with Germany, or, failing that, one with France or with Britain. All overtures to this end had foundered by the time that events in Spain came along. After Italy and Germany brazenly intervened alongside the rebels, the Largo Caballero government, which had appealed in vain to every government in Europe in its search of assistance, turned its sights upon the Kremlin. The tempting propositions put by the Spanish government with its offer to make payments in gold, and generous payments at that, in return for arms shipments, sparked a second ambition in Stalin: to get his hands on the strongboxes holding the Republic's gold reserves. The diplomatic strategy was to turn the victorious republican government in Spain into the Kremlin's plaything, the better to compel the European powers to break the asphyxiating cordon sanitaire around Russia. But from the very outset, the intention was to go for broke in Spain while keeping the risks minimal. The upshot of this policy was Stalin's aid, which took the form of the classical Trojan horse stratagem:

'The whole of loyalist Spain saw that tangible aid was now coming from the USSR. The republicans, socialists, anarchists and trade unionists had naught but theories and ideals to offer. The communists were supplying cannons and planes with which to fight Franco. Soviet prestige soared. The triumphant communists reaped the benefits.'

Along with the first guns to reach Spain, guns generously paid for by the Spanish treasury, came the envoys whose assignment it was to organise Stalin's secret police (the OGPU) and the 'volunteers' of the International Brigades.

‘If Stalin wanted to dominate Spain, which he had begun to help by supplying arms, he had to organise and direct this influx of crusaders into a Stalinist bloc...

In every single country abroad, including Great Britain, recruitment for the International Brigades was orchestrated by the local communist parties and their subsidiaries. A few independent far left groupings tried to set up columns of their own. But the majority was enrolled by the communists and was made up of sympathisers, of men who, most often, were oblivious of the watch kept on them by the communists at a distance.’

‘Even as this International Brigade — the Comintern’s army — was taking positions on the front, the purely Russian units from the Red Army were quietly arriving and setting up their barracks in the rearguard. This Soviet military contingent never exceeded two thousand men, and only the pilots and tank crews saw active service. Most of the Russians were technicians: staff officers, military instructors, engineers, war industry experts, chemists, aircraft mechanics, radio technicians and artillery experts. These Red Army personnel were kept from all contact with Spanish civilians, if at all possible. They were billeted apart and forbidden to join any of the Spanish political groupings. The Soviet Secret Services constantly monitored them, for the object was to keep their presence in Spain a secret and to prevent them from being corrupted by heretics.’

But this battery of practices and precautions proved insufficient. Influence had to be brought to bear to win the hearts and minds of a few Spanish political figures and to dispose of the vexatious presence of the incorruptibles:

‘In my November talks with Stashevsky in Barcelona, Stalin’s plans for Spain had already been broached. Stashevsky had not made any secret to me of Juan Negrín being the future leader of the government in Madrid. At the time, Caballero was universally regarded as the Kremlin’s favourite. But Stashevsky had already picked out Negrín as his successor. Caballero was a radical, an idealistic revolutionary. However, he had not been in favour of OGPU activity which, under the guidance of Orlov, had embarked in Spain, as in Russia, upon a great purge of all dissidents, independents and anti-Stalinists, whom the Party lumped together as “Trotskyists”.’

‘The OGPU had done well. From December 1936 on, terror reigned in Madrid, in Barcelona and in Valencia. The OGPU had its private prisons. Its units were carrying out murders and abductions. Its dungeons were kept filled and airborne raids were carried out. This, plainly, was all done behind the loyalist government’s back. The Justice ministry had no authority over the OGPU, which constituted a State within a State. It was a power before which even certain high-ranking officers of the Caballero government trembled. The USSR seemed to be treating Spain as if she was some Soviet colony.’

According to Krivitsky, on 19 July 1936 Comintern influence in Spain had been negligible, in that the membership of the Spanish Communist Party was no more than 3,000. However, the psychological impact of Soviet aid and the much-trumpeted successes of the International Brigades were starting to bear fruit:



‘The splendid successes of the International Brigades and the material assistance received from the Soviet Union so swelled the ranks of the Spanish Communist Party that by January 1937, its membership figures stood higher than 200,000. The defence of Madrid had added enormously to the USSR’s prestige. Phase one of Stalin’s intervention had come to its conclusion.’

Another of Stalinism’s favourite tactics was to sow discord in the ranks of parties and organisations. The PSOE itself was one of the preferred targets for this sowing of discord and for infiltration.

‘The OGPU’s work on Spanish soil triggered a split among the Republic’s anti-fascists. Caballero and his cronies were starting to appreciate the consequences of their alliance with the PCE in the “United Front”. Caballero felt repugnance at the Soviet terror which was breaking up its own camp and bringing its allies to ruination. Catalonia’s home rule government, which vigorously resisted the OGPU purges, enjoyed the sympathy of the prime minister. A domestic crisis was being hatched for Spain. From Moscow, from where Spain’s domestic affairs were being handled, I could see the crisis looming as well as where it would lead.’

And this is how Krivitsky explains the warp and weft of the great provocation which triggered the bloodshed in May:

‘In April 1937, Stashevsky arrived in Moscow to report to Stalin on the situation in Spain. Although a dyed-in-the-wool Stalinist and rigorously orthodox, his reckoning was that the OGPU’s behaviour in republican territory was wrong-headed. Stashevsky, like General Berzin, disapproved of the brutal, colonial methods employed in Spain by the Russians. He endorsed the OGPU’s practices vis-à-vis dissidents or ‘Trotskyists’ in the USSR, but his view was that the OGPU had to respect the regular political parties in Spain. He prudently persuaded Stalin of the necessity for a change in OGPU policy in Spain. The “great helmsman” pretended to share his outlook and Stashevsky left the Kremlin greatly pleased.

Later, in the course of a conversation with Marshal Tukhachevsky, the latter drew my attention to the disgraceful performance of the Soviet agents in Spain. That conversation was something of a sensation in our circles, but Tukhachevsky’s position was by then greatly weakened. The marshal was in agreement with restraining those who were behaving in Spain as if they were on conquered territory, but he did not have sufficient authority to enforce compliance. At the time I had quite a number of exchanges with Tukhachevsky. He expected Largo Caballero’s downfall and the accession to power of Negrín, a man he himself had singled out. The marshal would frequently say: “We are on the eve of great battles in Spain.”

His meaning was plain to those of us who understood Stalin’s policy. The latter had consolidated his successes in the hope of bringing Spain under the sway of the Kremlin, and was now ready for a further assault. The Comintern vanished completely from the scene. Berzin now had the direction of the republican army in his hands. Stashevsky had seen to it that most of the Bank of Spain’s gold had been

transferred to Moscow. The OGPU machinery was operating flat-out. The venture had proceeded in accordance with Stalin's instructions: 'Keep out of artillery range.' We, for our part, had managed the risks of an international war and Stalin seemed to be close to achieving his aims. The only obstacle of any consequence was Catalonia. The Catalans were anti-Stalinists and at the same time were Largo Caballero's chief supporters. To get on top of the situation, Stalin had to bring Catalonia to heel and topple Caballero. This was what was plain from a report from one of the leaders of the Paris anarchist group, who was an OGPU secret agent. He had been dispatched to Barcelona where, as a prominent anarchist, he enjoyed the trust of the anarcho-syndicalists in the home rule government. His mission was to act as provocateur and to incite the Catalans to ill-advised activities which might excuse the army's intervening in order to crush the revolt.

His report ran to at least 30 pages. Like all our secret reports it had been passed on in the form of rolls of microfilm. In Moscow, there was a special agency equipped with the most up-to-date American machinery for reading such microfilm. The agent gave details of his talks with various party leaders whose trust he enjoyed, and also about the steps he had taken to incite them to act along the lines desired by the OGPU. The agent was greatly convinced that there would very soon be incidents in Barcelona. I also read another report emanating from José Díaz, leader of the PCE and addressed to Dimitrov, the Comintern president. Dimitrov immediately passed it to the OGPU headquarters, for he had long known who his real master was. Díaz portrayed Caballero as a dreamer with a fondness for verbiage, who would never make a genuine ally for the Stalinists. He sang the praises of Negrín. He described the work that the Stalinists were doing in socialist and anarcho-syndicalist ranks to undermine them from within. These reports gave one to understand completely that the OGPU was plotting to crush the 'diehards' in Barcelona, so as to impose Stalin's authority.

On 2 May 1937, Sloutsky telephoned me at the Savoy Hotel, ordering me to meet with an important Spanish communist by the name of García. He was head of the republican secret service whose headquarters just then were in Valencia. He had been sent to Moscow to attend the May Day celebrations. On account of the heavy workload created by the purges, the telegram announcing his arrival had been overlooked. No one showed up to welcome him and he was alone in the 'New Moscow' hotel. Sloutsky asked me to make good the oversight as best I could. Along with another comrade, I called to see García. He was a sturdy fellow in his thirties. He told me that his friend Orlov, head of the OGPU in Spain, had arranged a short vacation for him in the Soviet capital.

"I enjoyed the journey", he told me "but there was no one to meet me and I have not been able to secure a pass to Red Square. The only thing I have been able to see of the parade was the reflection upon the water from this window."

We offered our apologies to comrade García and invited him for a meal at the 'Savoy'. He noticed how the Soviet workers in the street seemed shabbier than Spanish workers, even with the civil war raging. He also found that food rations were inadequate

and he asked me why the Soviet government had not managed to better the masses' standard of living. When I met with Sloutsky again, I told him:

"What were you thinking of when you sent us that Spaniard!"

"Orlov was keen to get him out from under his feet" Sloutsky replied.

I had read the reports. There was, therefore, no need to ask what Orlov was planning to do in May.

The news from Barcelona caused a sensation around the world. Newspapers appeared with banner headlines such as "Anarchist uprising in Barcelona!" Correspondents talked of a conspiracy against Stalin in the Catalan capital, a battle for control of the Telefónica, street-fighting, barricades, executions. Up until then, the May events in Barcelona had seemed more like a fratricidal struggle between anti-fascists exploited by Franco in order to launch his attack. According to the authorised version, the Catalan revolutionaries had treacherously attempted to seize power just when every effort should have been committed to resisting the fascists. Another version of the tragedy in Barcelona, peddled to the press and spread around the globe, had it that this was a 'revolt' by die-hard elements in cahoots with extremist elements from the anarchist movement, a revolt designed to create disorder for the benefit of the Republic's enemies.

The fact is that in Catalonia the vast bulk of the workers were determined anti-Stalinists. Stalin knew that conflict was inevitable, but he knew, too, that the opposition forces were divided and could be crushed by a vigorous lightning strike. Stalin's agents set the fire and set the trade unionists, anarchists and socialists against one another. After five days of carnage, during which five hundred people perished and a thousand were wounded, Catalonia turned into a gambling den with the fate of Largo Caballero at stake. The Spanish communists, led by Díaz, had been calling for the suppression of all of Catalonia's anti-Stalinist parties and organisations, for OGPU control of the airwaves, of meeting-halls, and for the utter suppression of all anti-Stalinists groupings on the soil of the Republic. Largo Caballero resisted these demands and on 15 May was compelled to tender his resignation. Dr Juan Negrín became the leader of the new government, just as Stashevsky had decided in advance. This government was hailed as the government of 'victory'. Negrín held on to power until the collapse of republican resistance in March 1939.

The CNT stumbled into the first and gravest of its crises for want of political acumen and, indeed, for want of a policy at all. Which was extremely disconcerting, given its decision to take up its share of government responsibility and take a hand in the rough-and-tumble of politics. Even so, there was an urge among the leadership of the CNT and in the FAI to see a policy through and damn the consequences. The devising of a realistic policy found its highest expression in a conference of the whole of the confederal and anarchist press which was held under the aegis of the CNT National Committee on 28 March 1937 at the 'Casa CNT-FAI' in Barcelona. The essential aim was to make every one of anarcho-syndicalism's mouthpieces subservient to the control of the national committees. Certain discordant voices had to be silenced and the freedom to criticise enjoyed by certain newspapers that had set themselves up as the sacred guardians of

principle and sniped at the shortcomings of the CNT's committees and its ministers needed to be curtailed. The results of the conference proved to be the best indication of the unrealistic dreams of a chimerical confederal discipline. Although the conference largely gave in to the propositions put to it, the central control formula had to be passed by a majority vote — a slender victory if one considers that at the end of the proceedings the minorities reiterated their intention of persisting with their dissidence. The violent response of the confederation's personnel to the provocations that sparked the May events also amounted to a failure to abide by the instructions issuing from the committees. The latter would never have embarked upon violent confrontation. And if in the end they managed to impose their will, it was only through buckets of their sweat.

At every step in the Spanish struggle the CNT was the scapegoat for politicians manoeuvring for advantage. There was not a single party that did not hatch schemes designed to undermine its influence and bring about its destruction. However, had the CNT had the *nous* to make full use of all of the political opportunities that came its way, then, given the talents of its membership, given its impregnable situation, given the solid power lurking in its organisations, which by no means existed only on paper as was the case with most of the parties, it might well have set its sights upon the extraordinary role of arbiter in the situation in Catalonia. The support that the communists — a party with no history and already discredited in the people's eyes — were astute enough to attract to themselves by means of playing up to the conservatism of the bourgeois parties, was entirely accessible to the CNT without the need to woo. All it would have taken was effective pressure from its unions in the economic sphere, in conjunction with an intelligent political performance designed to isolate the Stalinist party. It has to be acknowledged that that party had shown itself able to build a formidable position by fanning the lackadaisical instincts of the petty bourgeoisie, but the party was vulnerable to criticism from its adversaries on many counts. The Confederation, though, failed, or refused, to batten upon these, owing to its attachment to the direst of political opportunisms. The PCE, by virtue of its being a party in the service of a foreign power, and on account of the scandalous, terroristic and totalitarian methods which it employed, allowed the CNT first to articulate and then to mobilise politically decisive opinion and party political action. That, of course, was tantamount to taking on the one power which was regarded as crucial to the victory of the loyalist forces. But, bearing in mind that this was a life-and-death issue and that while in point of fact it was not done nor permitted to happen, a determined approach along these lines would have been the best policy, while keeping within the parameters of opportunism.

But for that to happen — it meant outmanoeuvring Moscow's satellites in the alliance game and would have led to the isolation of that particular adversary — politicking of the old sort would have been called for and the CNT was unprepared for that morally or psychologically. One does not change the mentality of an entire movement with a simple decision to take a hand in politics. The CNT's very powerlessness to adapt its policy throughout the war is proof of that. And the most tragic thing for the CNT was the confusion of not being able to politick nor yet being able to walk away from it. The upshot was at all times a lack of agility in its resolutions, which almost always came too late. In most instances bewilderment and doubt prevailed. The constant invocation of anti-fascist loyalty, sacrifice and compromise was the finest expression of its political impotence.

With those options discounted therefore, in that they still hinged upon agility of manoeuvre, which was impossible given the mind-set of the Confederation's personnel, there was nothing for it but to turn away from politics and draw the counter-revolutionary enemy onto the Confed-

eration's very own tried and tested arena. The CNT's powerful influence over the people, over industry, over the economy, in trade union and indeed in military matters might have made up more than generously for the drawbacks deriving from its political inadequacies. Sprightly action along these lines, followed up by a realignment in the opposition, might have made the CNT an organisation to be respected and feared. The diplomatic scene, the disastrous course of the war, the absence of the CNT from governmental office and a return to its own tactical and strategic home ground could scarcely have done other than bolster anarcho-syndicalism's positions. Let us state it again: by doing neither one thing nor the other, the CNT was transplanted onto strange and slippery ground where it was forever at the mercy of the enemy's blows. Either politicking with all that it implies, or immediate reversion to its original stance, that was the choice. And we have already seen that the first option was an impossibility. There was no heart for recourse to the second. And the worst possible decision is not to make any decision at all. This confused and suicidal stance did not spare the CNT from being caught between the fire from the Confederation's own opposition, in the shape of certain groups and newspapers, the collectives, the unions and the municipalities, and the heavy gunfire from all the adversary parties. This fraught situation made a nonsense of most of its options and its efforts. And we owe it to the parties' and governments' own circumstantial conveniences — mirrored in the catastrophic situation on the front lines — that certain positions in the economic sphere were preserved, itself a miracle which, when all is said and done, must be credited to the unions. The proud attitude of the unions in not peaceably submitting to the wresting away of certain gains which had become their very reason to exist was a constant brake upon government appetites. However, we ought not to underestimate the fact that diplomatic and military developments always worked in favour of certain government indulgences. Any blind determination to attack such gains would have amounted to accepting the implications of a civil war in the rearguard, in which case neither the union memberships nor the confederal milicianos serving in the front lines would have stood idly by. At worst, any such venture would have led to a collapse of the front lines.

## Chapter Seven: The crisis of the Largo Caballero government

With 'Republican legality' restored in Barcelona a solution was found to the Generalitat crisis by forming a government on the basis of one representative from the CNT (Valerio Mas), one from the UGT (Vidiella) and one from the ERC. Each of these ministers took charge of several departments or portfolios. Dionisio Eroles, dismissed from the command of the Public Order Services, came to take up the post of general secretary of the CNT in Catalonia vacated by Valerio Mas. On 11 May the Gaceta carried notice of the official appointment of José Echevarría Novoa as the central government's delegate for public order in Catalonia: Emilio Torres Iglesias was to be supreme commander of police and J. M. Díaz Ceballos would become commissar general for security in Barcelona. Inter-city telephone connections were still suspended and the press censorship was rigorous. The courts were busy trying to determine where the responsibility lay for the recent events. As a result, a large number of confederal militants were interned without trial (*presos gubernativos*). The Esquerra and the Stalinists launched an intense campaign in favour of the municipalisation of urban transport. That is, they were demanding the break-up of the Tram, Metro and Bus Collective. The campaign to disarm the rearguard was also in full swing. On 13 May, the following ordinance from the Ministry of the Interior had been made public:

'I, Angel Galarza, Minister of the Interior of the Spanish Republic, hereby make known that, in compliance with the Decree of 17 October 1936 made public in the Gaceta of the 18th of that month and year and presently elevated to the status of law by the Decree of 19 December 1936, and availing of the powers thus conferred upon me, in connection with the Code of Military Justice and other dispositions of pertinence, THE ENTIRETY OF THE NATIONAL TERRITORY WHICH REMAINS LOYAL TO THE LAWFUL GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND WHATSOEVER MAY BE RECAPTURED BY THE FORCES OF THE POPULAR ARMY ARE BOUND BY THE CONTENTS OF THIS PROCLAMATION. It being intolerable that weapons and war machinery needed by and indispensable to the military should be in the possession of citizens who do not belong to the Popular Army of the Republic and in the possession of organisations which may not be under the jurisdiction of the Minister of War, and that said items may be used or could be used to further disturbances and public disorder in the rearguard, in attacks upon the lawful institutions of the Republic and in attempts to seek a brutal solution to the ideological differences which exist between political parties and union organisations, it is fitting that all weapons of this sort be surrendered forthwith, so that they may be exclusively used by the regular forces of the War Ministry in the front line of the struggle against those who mutinied against the lawful authority of the Republic and the order is hereby given that all long arms, war machinery and explosives be

collected by the Interior Minister in that part of the territory in which he had jurisdiction. It goes without saying that this measure should be implemented forthwith in that region in which the aforementioned ministry now bears the responsibility for the maintenance of public order: but as not every citizen complied with the orders of the governing authorities, thereby favouring the plans of the enemy who is powerless to secure victory in battle but artful in his attempts to provoke disturbances in the rearguard, the time has come for those who persist in retaining the weapons of which our Army has need, to be regarded as direct collaborators with the rebel personnel fighting against the lawful government of the Republic. Consequently,

I HEREBY ORDER AND DECREE:

**Article 1.** Possession of long arms, war machinery, explosives, incendiary materials, tear-inducing or asphyxiating gases or other means and contrivances capable of inflicting grave harm shall be punishable as signifying support for the military rebellion and punished by the penalties laid down in the Code of Military Justice.

**Article 2.** The following shall be held to have committed the offence indicated in the foregoing article:

1. Those who, while not army personnel nor personnel of the remaining armed corps of the state, bear one or several long arms, one or more explosive devices, incendiary materials, tear-inducing or asphyxiating gases, war machines or who may be driving any vehicle, armoured or otherwise, in which machine-guns or cannon have been installed; or, should they be armoured, whose occupants carry one or more long arms.
2. Those who may possess in their place of residence or in some of its apartments directly connected with it, such as courtyards, enclosures, gardens, etc. one or more of the weapons and machinery of war indicated in Article 1.
3. Those who are shown to be the owners, owners through attachment, tenants or sharecroppers of any premises or rural holding on which one or more of the aforementioned weapons may be discovered.
4. The leadership councils, committees or officers of those political or trade union organisations in whose official residence weapons of the categories indicated may be found and ownership of which cannot be attributed to any of their members or any of the inhabitants of the premises.

**Article 3.** The following shall be construed as offences of aiding and abetting the rebellion and punished with the penalties prescribed for this by the Code of Military Justice:

1. Acts of omission by public officials, corporations and agents of the authorities in failing to execute with due diligence and enthusiasm the disarmament orders emanating from this ministry in accordance with the instructions made public on the same day as a ministerial order in the *Gaceta* of the Republic.
2. Actions of public officials or agents of the authorities in surrendering one or more of the weapons collected to individuals or bodies of a particular nature, or the act of

stockpiling the weapons collected in any place other than that indicated under the aforementioned ordinances.

**Article 4.** Perpetrators of the offences listed in this ordinance shall be made amenable to the remand courts where such may have been established or to the emergency or other courts upon which the powers may have been conferred to sit in judgement of this sort of offence and, brought before these, they shall be subjected to summary procedure as prescribed under the Code of Military Justice.

**Codicil:** Once the twenty-four-hour period of grace granted in the aforementioned orders for the voluntary surrender of weapons will have elapsed, the penalties prescribed in the Code of Military Justice may be applied where appropriate. **Valencia, 13 May 1937.**

As if the above ordinance were not proof enough of the resuscitation of the finest, most quintessential military documents, look at the order issued alongside it on the same date:

‘MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR – ORDER – As of this date and under the powers granted to the Minister of the Interior by the law of 19 December 1936, there is hereby issued a proclamation giving a definition of the offence of possession of a certain category of weapon in breach of specific articles of the Code of Military Justice and guidelines are offered for the procedure under which offenders are to be brought to book. The overriding need to disarm the entire rearguard makes it advisable that the instructions which the Minister of the Interior may issue to the Directors-General of Security, to the civil governors and government delegates in different regions be made public so that neither the authorities nor the citizenry may claim ignorance of the same. To this end, I hereby issue the following order:

**ARTICLE 1.** A period of grace of seventy-two hours from the date of the publication of this ministerial order in the *Gaceta* of the Republic is hereby granted so that all citizens, political or trade union groups, committees, Municipal Councils and any sort of association or body which may be in possession of long arms, may surrender the same – in Valencia, at the General Inspectorate of Security; in Barcelona, at the premises, in which the central government’s Public Order delegation has been installed; and in the other regions, at the premises appointed by the civil governor or at the national delegate.

**ARTICLE 2.** For these purposes rifles, muskets, carbines and all other weapons with rifled barrels that do not come under the heading of short guns shall be construed as long arms. Machine-guns, flame-throwing rifles or pistols, mortars and cannon shall also be regarded as long arms.

**ARTICLE 3.** Also subject to surrender in the manner indicated in Article 1 are all categories of explosives, gunpowder, hand-grenades, armoured cars or carriers, armoured motorcycles, inflammable liquids, tear-inducing or asphyxiating gases, and, broadly, any other device or contrivance capable of inflicting injury.

**ARTICLE 4.** Within the space of the twenty-four hours following the publication of these instructions in the *Gaceta* of the Republic, the authorities named in Article



1 shall make arrangements with the supreme military authority which may exist in the capital where the civil authority is in control so that the said military authorities may set aside premises under their jurisdiction where all of the arms which may be surrendered in this way during the seventy-two-hour period of grace and whose which may be confiscated thereafter may be deposited. The aforementioned civil authorities shall each day and with the formalities to be indicated later, order the removal of the surrendered or confiscated weapons from the premises in which they will have been stored, to another premises set aside by the military authorities, said surrender not to be delayed for any pretext or reason.

**ARTICLE 5.** Upon surrender of weapons, every citizen will be able to insist upon a document bearing the seal of the centre where he has deposited them and it should state the name and surname of the person making the surrender as well as the nature of the weapon complete with registration number, make and calibre. This document will not be issued except at the request of the individual concerned; but each day a duplicated list (complete with notes about the nature of the weapons, their number and calibre) of all surrendered or confiscated weapons shall be drawn up. One copy shall go with the weapons when they are being handed over to the civilian authorities as proof of this handover having been made, with the other copy of the report being retained by the military authorities.

**ARTICLE 6.** Upon expiry of the seventy-two-hour period of grace for the voluntary surrender of arms, the competent authorities of the Interior Ministry and the agents of authority shall order the carrying out of such searches as they may deem necessary for the discovery and retrieval of weapons. For the purposes of these searches, the agents charged with conducting them shall be issued with a document specifying the object of the search, the premises where it is to be carried out and the date on which it is to be carried out. A duplicate copy of this document is to be retained by the person in charge of the premises in question, whether these be the local of some party, union, or other agency or association. Should weapons be discovered in the course of the search, all who may be on the premises and who may be held to be in possession of those weapons are to be detained on the spot and, within the space of twelve hours, brought before the competent judicial authorities so that they may be tried in accordance with the ordinance issued this day. Should no one be present on the premises or in the place where the search is effected, detailed inquiries shall be carried out to discover who it may have been who stored the weapons there and once this fact is known, they shall be tracked down, captured and handed over to the court authorities so that the latter may take the necessary steps.

**ARTICLE 7.** Any individual caught in transit with long arms or explosives or with any of the war machinery listed in the decree and in these ordinances is to be arrested forthwith and made amenable to the competent tribunal. Note shall be made of the weapon or war machine discovered in his possession (which shall be handed over to the aforementioned military authorities) and a copy of the document is to be forwarded to the appropriate tribunal so that, should the tribunal request that the weapon or war machine, as the case may be, be produced in evidence, it may be made available by the agents of the authorities. The document recording the weapon

that the detainee had been carrying is to bear the signature of the same and, should he refuse to sign it, he shall be taken to the remand court together with the weapon concerned so that a record may be made in the office of the secretary and endorsed by the secretary.

**ARTICLE 8.** Should the bearer of any weapon claim membership of some armed corps among those answerable to the state, but be unable to furnish proof of this on the spot, either through his not wearing uniform or through lack of papers to endorse his claims, the weapon shall be taken from him and he shall be issued with a receipt for the same, and the weapon shall be surrendered to the military authorities together with a written note of the claim made by its bearer. Should the latter transpire not to be a member of the official armed forces as claimed, he shall be placed under arrest and made amenable to the pertinent tribunal.

**ARTICLE 9.** A period of grace up until 22 May shall be granted for all those in possession of permits for use of a short arm as issued by the political parties or trade unions and dated prior to 1 April 1937 to exchange this permit for a free permit granted by the appropriate government authorities. This free permit shall be of three months' duration from 13 May 1937. To qualify for the exchange of permits, together with the permit extended by the political party or trade union, it will be necessary for any individual to demonstrate that they were a member of an anti-fascist party or union prior to the military uprising.

**ARTICLE 10.** Persons bearing permits issued by a political party or union shall not be liable to confiscation of their short arm until 22 May. From that date on, a permit issued by the competent authorities will be required and all short arms shall be seized from those who cannot produce said permit and the owners of the weapons shall be brought before the court so that they may be brought to book as required.

**ARTICLE 11.** The authorities and agents of the authorities are strictly forbidden to seize short arms from those in possession of the appropriate permit, except where an offence is involved, in which case the permit shall also be seized from them. Likewise, it shall constitute a very grave offence for agents of authority to keep for themselves or to fail to hand over at the official centre where they are on duty the short arms which they may lawfully confiscate.

**ARTICLE 12.** An appropriate permit is vital for possession of hunting weapons and those who may have been deprived of their hunting guns can apply for permits in accordance with the legal provisions.

**ARTICLE 13.** Those in possession of long arms in the categories indicated in these ordinances, and who are not resident in the provincial capitals, shall surrender them to their respective Municipal Councils but shall require a receipt acknowledging that surrender, bearing the signatures of the mayor and secretary or of the person acting in their place. The mayors shall telegraph the Director-General of Security of Valencia province or the pertinent governors or delegates directly to inform them about the weapons surrendered. The arms thus stockpiled shall be surrendered to the delegate or delegates of the General Directorate of Security or to the civil governors

and delegations which these may appoint periodically to collect the weapons from the municipal councils.

**ARTICLE 14.** The political parties, unions or any other sort of associations shall apply to the General Directorate of Security, civil governors or delegates for the mounting of whatever watch they deem necessary upon their residences or premises; such guard shall be mounted by Security or Assault Guards. If a guard is reckoned necessary inside the building, it shall be mounted with short arms only, to which end there may be granted a number of permits that may not exceed five per premises. These weapons may not be removed from the premises by anyone, but will have to remain within.

**ARTICLE 15.** The authorities answerable to the Interior Ministry shall not countenance any breach of any of these ordinances and shall strictly enforce the provisions of the above articles. Those authorities or agents of authority who fail to do so, in addition to being criminally answerable under the decree published this day, shall be suspended from duty and have their wages withheld forthwith.

Valencia, 13 May 1937 – **Angel Galarza.**

The draconian nature of the texts transcribed are the finest index to the state's psychology. The text contains all of the details of language, style and intent that characterised the historical face of the political authorities. The make-up of the government, the names, persons and political tendencies which rubbed shoulders in it, were incapable of effecting the slightest amendment to the enduring quintessence of the state organism. Since 19 July, without a single exception, all of the politicians who had followed one another in government positions had cherished but one intention – to disarm the people and to concentrate the power of repression in the classical institutions which are themselves the blind tools of the machinery of constituted government. The CNT's entry into the cabinet was unable to make the slightest difference to this inner essence, this historical circumstance of revolutions commanded by red or not-so-red governments. On the contrary: as the facts demonstrate more convincingly than any of the theses and theories devised, this sharing in government by virgin forces of proven popularity among the masses not merely failed to adulterate the constant output but proved a contribution (not to say a crucial contribution) towards the reinforcement of centralism's dithering and weakened institutions. And the price of strengthening the state is always unfailingly paid in the currency of a weakening of the forces offering it their assistance. For every reinforcement of state power, there is always, by dint of the empirical law of compensation, a corresponding debilitation of grassroots elements. Men may come and go, but the state remains. Scarcely had the barricades come down in Barcelona than the parade of individuals across the alluring platform of government followed hot on its heels. The Stalinist counter-revolutionary offensive – in grand style – was too methodical to appear spontaneous. That party's incitements to vicious repression of those it portrayed as the 'perpetrators' of the disturbances in Catalonia were issued to the accompaniment of the peddling of the most contemptible slanders. *Solidaridad Obrera*, in its 11 May issue, had to give the lie to a Muscovite allegation according to which the erstwhile Generalitat Defence Minister, Isgleas, had crossed the border 'with hundreds of thousands of millions of pesetas'. Shortly after, the slanderers would single out another target in the shape of Eugenio Vallejo, head of Catalonia's war industries. On 10 May *Mundo Obrero* carried the following notice on every page:

‘Is the victory of the Republic and the triumph of our popular revolution to be jeopardised for want of energy or whatever? Loud and clear, the PCE says: No. The people are with us. The rebels of Catalonia who erected barricades against the lawful government must be ruthlessly chastised. All of the parties and organisations of the Popular Front must publicly condemn the criminal uprising in Catalonia. Those who fail to do so cannot be worthily represented in the government.’

The most rapid note in this campaign came at a rally held by the PCE in Madrid. The gushing cant there prompted the intuitive *CNT* of Madrid to ask:

‘What is the PCE after? Judging by the words of José Díaz and the declarations published by its press organ, it aims to contrive a crisis so that the CNT may be deprived of its representation in the government. The government already has before it, for its consideration, the reaction of one of the forces that make it up. If now it can manage to marry what is said in public with what is sought in private it will have a more illuminating basis on which to assess and discover the origins of the events in Catalonia and their consequences.’

For its part, *Solidaridad Obrera* of 15 May was also on the trail of the designs of the Muscovites. Here are some excerpts from the paper’s editorial of that date:

‘Against the Premier and Minister of War, comrade Largo Caballero, a low-key campaign of discredit, aimed at ousting him from the political and military leadership of the country, has been unleashed. The leaders of the PCE, more heedful of the guidelines prescribed for them abroad than of the lofty interests of the war and the Iberian revolution, have set themselves the task of hindering the normal business of the government of the Republic, a faithful expression of the anti-fascist bloc, placing obstacle after obstacle in the path towards victory. We have said on previous occasions that the PCE – the Spanish section of the Communist International – does not act off its own bat: it operates according to dictates and receives inspiration from beyond our boundaries. If we want to nip this manoeuvre in the bud and if we aim to eradicate the differences between workers, we must immediately achieve an alliance between the two great trade union bodies. All over Spain, workers are coming together and transcending all differences of trade union affiliation, except in Catalonia. How come? Because in Catalonia the Stalinist comrades – the PSUC is affiliated to the Communist International – bureaucratically monopolise the leadership of the UGT and ensure that its membership dances at the whim of gentlemen alien to us and to our affairs, even though they issue watchwords and publish periodicals in the vernacular...’

This turbulent campaign knew neither limit nor measure. It lashed out on every side and made capital out of the basest calumnies. The manufactured anomalies on the Aragón front and the alleged sabotage of the war industries were constantly harped upon. *Mundo Obrero* left the *militianos* of the 25th Division no option but to reply to the misrepresentations peddled by the paper in its 9 May edition. The cause of their complaint was the following item:

‘We demand the immediate reorganisation of the Aragón front on the basis of the Popular Army so as to have an end of these so-called militias which when it comes to fighting against fascism have neither enough ammunition nor enough weapons but do have enough of them to slay their brothers of the rearguard and to rob and plunder the peasants who work for their living and help the Republic to triumph.’

On 15 May the Largo Caballero government broke down. At a historic cabinet meeting, the communist representatives Vicente Uribe and Jesús Hernández contrived the collapse of the government. The details are as follows. From the very outset of the meeting, which had been called to examine the outcome of the situation in Catalonia, the Comintern’s mouthpieces roundly insisted upon the implementation of exemplary punishment of those ‘responsible for the uprising’ in Barcelona. Caballero said that punishment was fine by him, provided that the real culprits were discovered beforehand. Thus, there was no agreement on the allocation of culpability. The CNT, FAI and POUM were the candidates for sacrifice suggested by the Stalinists. Caballero refused to countenance blind repression. Given this stand by the prime minister, Vicente Uribe and Jesús Hernández walked out. Caballero’s reaction was to comment: ‘The Cabinet meeting continues.’

It was at this point that the unheard-of occurred. Gradually most of the ministers, including Prieto, Negrín, Alvarez del Vayo, Giral and Irujo, got up and left. The premier, Anastasio de Gracia, Angel Galarza and the four CNT ministers kept their seats.

‘In view of the situation,’ said Largo Caballero, ‘we are in the throes of a crisis.’

The CNT ministers suggested that the meeting proceed. To which Caballero replied:

‘That would be dictatorship. And I have no wish to be a dictator.’

So a crisis had been contrived by the PCE, backed by the PSOE, no less, whose executive was headed by the quasi-Stalinist Lamóneda. Prieto availed of this opportunity to further his political ambition, tipping the scales with his enormous weight. After the necessary consultations, the president of the Republic called upon Largo Caballero to form a new government. During the consultation sessions the UGT and CNT alike had suggested this solution – ‘A government presided over by Largo Caballero and made up of all the factions and parties featuring in the present one, with none being displaced’ (Pascual Tomás). ‘A government with a trade union base and necessarily headed by Largo Caballero’ (M. R. Vázquez). ‘A government headed by a Socialist and embracing all Popular Front forces, not excluding the trade union organisations’ (José Díaz). The last option was more fully explained in *Mundo Obrero*:

‘A crisis has arisen which was a necessary thing because there were errors galore in the policy pursued by the Largo Caballero cabinet, errors that have resulted in the deplorable and bloody events in Catalonia. Errors reflected in the inactivity on the fronts: errors reflected in the chaotic circumstances of industries. The outcome of all this was, necessarily, that one of the forces represented in the government should raise the question of confidence. That force had to be the PCE. Tomás has said that the UGT would give its backing only to a cabinet in which Largo Caballero is Premier and Minister of War. Tomás ought to have spoken purely for himself, for hundreds of thousands of UGT workers are of a different mind.’

*Claridad* of Madrid (soon to change its tune) was still speaking out in favour of a 'Popular Front government headed by Caballero,' and Valencia's *Adelante* announced: 'Long live Largo Caballero, the undisputed premier of the people's government and the war minister who created and shaped the army of victory.' *Fragua Social*, the CNT's Valencia daily, wrote beneath a photograph of the ex-premier – 'Largo Caballero, flag bearer of the Iberian revolution, with whose conduct as government leader and Minister of War the CNT identifies itself'

In accordance with consultations begun on the evening of 15 May, Largo Caballero drew up a programme of government, which he made known to all political and trade union bodies. Under this arrangement the UGT got three ministries – Premiership and National Defence (embracing the portfolios for War, the Navy, the Air Force, Munitions and Armaments), State and Interior; the PCE got two, Public Education and Labour; the PSOE got Finance and Agriculture and Industry and Trade; Unión Republicana got the ministries of Communications and Merchant Marine; Izquierda Republicana, Public Works and Propaganda; while the CNT got Justice and Health.

Izquierda Republicana's response to the proposal was ambiguous. Unión Republicana and the UGT welcomed it. The PCE, the PSOE and the CNT roundly refused any part of it.

In an effort to thrash things out, the president of the Republic called a meeting of leaders of the various parties in the presidential palace. Prieto, arguing that he was not his party's best-qualified spokesman, brought along Lamóneda. Republicans and socialists alike agreed that the new government had to include the PCE, for only thus could it be regarded as a government of the Popular Front. Whereupon the Stalinists raised another problem: assuming that Largo Caballero would be premier, that position should not carry the responsibility for war. Largo Caballero steadfastly opposed this intention. As a result, the PCE repeated its refusal to collaborate in any way. Negrín was charged with forming a government, which was eventually made up as follows:

Premier, portfolios of Finance and Economics: Juan Negrín (PSOE)

National Defence: Indalecio Prieto (PSOE)

Interior: Julián Zugazagoitia (PSOE)

State: José Giral (Izquierda Republicana)

Justice: Manuel Irujo (Basque Nationalist)

Public Education and Health: Jesús Hernández (PCE)

Agriculture: Vicente Uribe (PCE)

Public Works and Communications: Giner de los Ríos (Republican Union)

Labour and Social Services: Jaume Aiguader (ERC)

Once the composition of the new government – promptly christened the 'Government of Victory' by the Stalinists – became known the CNT issued a terse note stating that its cooperation would not be forthcoming (18 May):

'The Negrín government having been constituted without participation on our part, we shall not collaborate with it in any way. At this juncture, it only behoves us to bring to the attention of the proletariat marshalled within the CNT that now more than ever it should be heedful of the guidelines emanating from the responsible committees. Only through concerted action will we achieve the rout of the counter-revolution and successfully thwart the 'Vergara embrace.' Comrades, heed the instructions from your responsible committees! Let no one play into the hands

of the provocateurs! Keep calm! Stand firm and united! Long live the alliance of the unions!’

As may be deduced, the ousting of the CNT from government circles was tantamount to a thoroughgoing expulsion. Also noteworthy is the far from welcome situation in which the CNT was left as a result of its unconditional commitment to the figure of Largo Caballero and the latter’s thoughtless response during the hatching of the crisis. Elbowed out of the central government and on the brink of removal from the government of Catalonia, the CNT was obliged, by virtue of its declaration that it would not assist the Negrín government, to prove its worth in the realm of opposition. This was its traditional home ground. If it could manoeuvre decisively and with intelligence, the prospects ahead of it were enormous. These might be summed up under three basic headings – opposition proper, with all that this implied and an intelligent campaign of obstruction of the government; a boosting of the role of unions as against the political parties; greater vigour in pursuing the union alliance within the UGT.

In this latter respect, the indications could not have been more encouraging. The expulsion of the CNT ministers and of Largo Caballero himself also implied the expulsions of the UGT and the CNT. Of necessity the upshot of this had to be a greater rapprochement between both union organisations, and a Trade Union Alliance as an alternative to the Popular Front’s political bloc. The communists had long been toying with this formula. Their watchword of ‘Popular Front to the death’ had two concrete aims: a reversion to the political status quo before 19 July and frustration of the Workers’ Alliance. The Popular Front, created at the time of the 16 February 1936 elections, had been completely overtaken by the anti-fascist front created on 19 July. The former embraced the political parties, the second the organisations which had triumphed over the rebels. The reversion to the Popular Front recommended by Stalinists revealed a guileful ploy to eliminate the CNT and the FAI from the anti-fascist bloc.

Let us now look at how the CNT acquitted itself in its new opposition role.

On 21 May the CNT national committee made public the following report on the contrivance of the crisis, in the Barcelona-based *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*:

‘We must make available to the militants of the organisation and to the sympathisers of the Spanish revolution, so that they may be duly informed, anything which may serve to brief them concisely on the course adopted up until the formation of the present government.

When the national committee of the CNT was called in by His Excellency the President of the Republic for consultations regarding the political crisis which had arisen, it spelled out its views which boiled down to the following points:

1. The CNT wishes it made clear that it is not responsible for the crisis which has been caused, regarding it as wholly inappropriate and unsuited to the interests of the war and of the anti-fascist front, and abjures any responsibility for the consequences which it may entail.
2. That it will not lend its cooperation to any government in which comrade Largo Caballero does not feature as Prime Minister and Minister of War.
3. That this government should be based upon representation of the workers, with the collaboration of anti-fascist groups being maintained. This position we hold to

be highly beneficial so that internationally no breach may be perceived in the front of struggle against fascism, and, domestically, that there may be no shortage of confidence in the proletariat so that with enthusiasm and loyal support from all we may forge ahead, united towards victory. Valencia, 15 May 1937.'

As we shall see, this attitude was shared by the UGT executive:

'The executive commission of the UGT, summoned by His Excellency, the President of the Republic, to consultations concerning the political crisis which has arisen, informed His Excellency that it denied any responsibility for the problems which this may have produced, stating that there will be no cooperation of any sort with a government that is not made up of the same representation as the outgoing one, featuring comrade Largo Caballero as Minister of War and as Premier, in that the needs of the war imperiously require it and by way of the most fervent response to the trust which the Spanish people has managed to gain by dint of its heroism. Valencia, 15 May 1937.'

On the morning of the 16th we received the communiqué from Largo Caballero, to which we replied. Largo Caballero had sent this document out to every sector. The replies that he received induced him to step down on the Sunday night. But Azaña again gave him a mandate. It was impossible for him to form a government. And at dawn on the Monday he stepped down once and for all. Negrín was charged with forming a government that very day. Consulted by him, we explained what is contained in the formal statement above. Comrade Largo Caballero having been thwarted in his endeavours, the President of the Republic entrusted the formation of a government to the PSOE's comrade Negrín. The CNT stands by its attitude of refusing direct or indirect collaboration with any government in which comrade Francisco Largo Caballero is not Premier or Minister of War, which attitude was spelled out in the following note:

'Comrade Negrín has been charged by H. E. the President of the Republic with forming a cabinet. Invited to collaborate in a government made up of one representative from each organisation and party (nine in all) [the CNT] has spelled out its unshakeable position, already expounded in detail in consultations with H. E. The CNT is not collaborating directly nor indirectly with the government which may be formed by comrade Negrín. Opposition to the outgoing Minister of Finance does not come into it. It is a question of the line of conduct laid down. It was not we who provoked the misbegotten, inopportune crisis which is detrimental to the war and to the anti-fascist bloc. Content with the loyal conduct of the Premier and War Minister Largo Caballero, we cannot align ourselves with partisan attitudes that display a lack of nobility and a stinting of collaboration. Powerful and disciplined, the CNT trusts that deliberation may avert a repetition of errors which may exacerbate still further the difficult situation provoked by insensitivity.

By dawn on the Tuesday, 18 May, Negrín had formed his government. We strove immediately to reach an agreement with the UGT's executive on the issuance of a joint declaration. It was not possible for it to meet and so we decided upon nothing.

A government without trade union representation has been formed. We have nothing to add to the account of the crisis, save to note that on the Sunday night Azaña



invited the parties to a meeting and at this said “that his problems would be over if a man was found whom the trade unions would accept as Minister of War.” What induced Azaña the other day to accept the Negrín cabinet without a trade union presence? This National Committee will soon know. The truth is that, basically, the Communists, Moscow’s policy, have scored a victory in Spain. It depends upon our capability whether we may speedily and effectively have our revenge without recourse to outright violence on the streets. Let us say it again: What does the government want? Does it want violence because it can call upon the means to stifle it and thereby can pave the way for immediate foreign intervention “so as to forestall civil war”?

#### DOCUMENTS EXCHANGED BETWEEN THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE AND LARGO CABALLERO

“To the national committee of the CNT – Esteemed comrades: In the wake of the swapping of impressions which took place – following my receipt from H. E. the Chief of State of the commission to reorganise the cabinet – with representatives from all of the political and trade union forces involved in the battle against fascism, some differences of outlook have arisen on the part of those consulted. Nonetheless, for my own part I am endeavouring to find an immediate solution to the crisis. To this end, I venture to enclose for you a draft composition of the new cabinet asking that, if it be possible, you send me before 4 p.m. today your response so that I, in turn, may report the outcome of my efforts to His Excellency the President of the Republic. In expectation of your most prompt reply I remain your and the cause’s – **F. L. Caballero.**”

There is a letterhead which reads:

“President of the Council of Ministers – Valencia, 16 May 1937.”

“The format of the new cabinet which Largo Caballero sought to form:

UGT – three ministers: Premiership and National Defence (the Ministry of War will have four Under-Secretaryships – War, Naval, Air Force, and Munitions and Armaments), State and Interior.

PSOE – two ministers: Finance and Agriculture, Industry and Trade.

PCE – two ministers: Public Education and Labour.

Izquierda Republicana – two ministers: Public Works and Propaganda.

Unión Republicana – one minister: Communications and Merchant Marine.

CNT – two ministers: Justice and Health.

Ministers without portfolio: one representative from the ERC and another from the PNV.

SUPREME COUNCIL OF WAR: It shall comprise – Chairmanship: The Premier and Minister of National Defence – Members: One minister of the UGT, one from the PSOE, one from the PCE, a Republican, one from the CNT, one representative from the government of Euzkadi, another from the Generalitat, four technical consultants from the High Command (Air Force, Navy, War and Munitions, and Armaments).

The Supreme Council of War shall deal with all fundamental campaign issues and ultimately the Minister of National Defence will decide. The Supreme Council of War shall meet at least once each week. War issues are to be dealt with solely in this context, in which all forces participating in government are to have representation. The Minister of Finance will propose a decree setting up an Economic Council on which the ministerial departments affected by economic and trade matters are to have representation. The Council of Ministers which will assemble at least once per week is to handle matters of general policy.”

“To comrade Largo Caballero – Be it known. We have made a careful study of your thoughtful communication and the draft outline of the structure of the new cabinet which you enclosed for us. We regret that we have to take issue with the scheme and state clearly that the CNT, for all its good intentions, cannot agree to be placed in the position of inferiority allotted to it. But having declared most honestly that we are prepared to afford you our collaboration our attitude in rejecting your proposal might be interpreted as a blatant contradiction. And this is not the case, in that we still intend to collaborate with you and grant you every possible facility in forming a government, so it behoves us to offer a reasoned explanation of our position.

1. It is not possible that the CNT, which did not provoke the crisis, should be robbed of 70 per cent of its presence in the government.
2. The CNT, which works towards and has as its primary objective unity with the UGT, cannot be less well represented in government than the UGT in that this would be to create a margin for mistrust, suspicion and competition that we have to avoid for unity’s sake.
3. On no pretext may the CNT be placed on a level footing with the PCE in the draft presented (a) because the PCE provoked the crisis; (b) because the PCE has not shown the same loyalty as the CNT in cooperating in the work of government; (c) Because the PCE does not, by a long shot, carry the same weight as the CNT in the eyes of the people nor in those of the Spanish proletariat.
4. The UGT reserves for itself all of the armed might in the vanguard and in the rear-guard (which we accept) and yet the CNT is ousted from the constructive, creative work which it holds most dear to its heart.
5. We regard it as utterly unacceptable that Spain’s economy should be concentrated in a single hand. And the awarding to the PSOE of Finance, Agriculture, Industry and Trade is nothing short of this. The establishment of the Economic Council would be pointless, for this Economic Council loses all of its efficacy if directed and guided by a single voice and a single mind. Then again, the first-hand experience of seven months of collaboration during which time the Ministries of Industry and Trade have had to put up with a systematic and well-directed boycott waged from the Ministry of Finance is too chastening. Also the policy of conservatism and specifically anti-proletarian line which was to guide the new government would conflict violently with the aspirations of the Spanish proletariat which since 19 July has incontrovertibly not given of its blood and exertions on the fronts and in the rearguard so as to

reconstruct the past, but rather for the sake of a present and a future overhaul of Spain's old economic, political and social arrangement.

To sum up: the CNT, clinging to the policy of compromise and sacrifice with an eye to preserving the bloc of collaboration, does not seek, for all its incontrovertible right to do so, to improve its position in the government. But nor may that standing be reduced. Indeed, either the CNT retains the four ministries which it held or, seeking parity with the UGT, it wants three for itself – Justice, Health and Social Services, and Industry and Trade. The PSOE might have Finance and Agriculture.

We have no desire to reason at any greater length. Being reasonable and just, our stance needs no argument. Nonetheless, let us say again that we did not provoke the crisis. And that the CNT cannot lose out on account of a situation it did not contrive, especially when today it is indisputably better placed than it was when it first entered government. And if four portfolios were awarded then to a newcomer organisation, then today in the light of our first-hand experience and demonstrated responsibility in the work of government, we are perfectly entitled to seek an improvement of its position. This we do not seek, but its standing may not be diminished either.

This is our final word, crude perhaps but honourable. We seek to link to the work of government a movement whose importance in every respect no one may call into question. But if this link-up is to be effective it must be based upon certain conditions. We do not wish to tread the byways of duplicity and hypocrisy – to say one thing and to do what we will. We do collaborate honourably, we do this and we assume the responsibility for it. But we shall never pursue one course in politics, in government work and another, contrary one in the streets.

We trust, and it is our fervent wish, that these lines may give you pause for thought, confident that upon reflection you will conclude that right is on our side, acknowledging that yet again the CNT makes its stand, not on the terrain of demands and ambition, but of justice and fairness. So, I send you fraternal greetings on behalf of the national committee.

**Mariano R. Vázquez** (Secretary)."

COPY OF THE LETTER FROM THE PCE OF SPAIN ON 16 MAY 1937

"Comrade Largo Caballero. Be it known. Having received your communication of today, 16 May, in which you inform us of your intention of forming the new government, it pleases us to bring the following to your attention:

Having spelled out in our note of yesterday the minimum indispensable conditions that our party reckons can be accepted by any government that aims to govern as an agency of the Popular Front, we are startled by your proposal today which not only does not indicate the slightest inclination on your part to take these wishes into consideration, wishes which are the wishes of the whole Spanish people, but also implies a deterioration as compared with the division of labour of the previous cabinet. For which reason we hereby inform you of our most utter disagreement with this course of action and repeat to you our position that in these circumstances you cannot rely upon our party in forming your government

– Respectful greetings: **José Díaz.**”

COPY OF THE LETTER FROM THE PSOE

“Valencia 16 May 1937 – Most excellent Señor Don Francisco Largo Caballero – President of the Council of Ministers – Esteemed comrade: In reply to your letter of today in which you remitted an outline of the new government which you intend to form, we regret that the opinion which this Executive Committee set before you has not been taken into account. Knowing also of the negative attitude adopted by the PCE it is our reckoning that the PSOE cannot be represented in this government.

Yours and socialism’s

– On behalf of the executive commission – **R. Lamóneda.**”

COPY OF THE LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE NATIONAL REPUBLICAN UNION OF 16 MAY 1937

“Most excellent Señor Don Francisco Caballero – Esteemed friend: The National Committee of Unión Republicana has familiarised itself with and scrutinised the broad outlines of the government which you aim to form, acting upon the injunction of H. E. the President of the Republic. Consistent with Unión Republicana’s repeated desire to lend its support and cooperation to any Popular Front government, we have resolved to convey to you our agreement, accepting with gratitude the place which you offer us.

Having said that, allow us to point out to you, in accordance with your own opinion, that it is a matter of urgent necessity that the crisis be solved immediately so to calm the understandable anxiety in the country and lest protracted delays hinder the course of war operations. This conviction, which needs no further illustration, compels us to note that, should any problem by some misadventure confront the Popular Front, we hope that it may be resolved through due and reciprocal compromises, as required by the interests of the regime and the interests of a rapid and total victory over the common foe.

The Chairman: **Diego Martínez Barrio.**”

COPY OF THE LETTER FROM THE IZQUIERDA REPUBLICANA PARTY

“Valencia, 16 May 1937 – Most excellent Señor Don Francisco Largo Caballero – Valencia. Esteemed friend: With reference to the letter which you addressed to us to inform us of the possible composition of the new government that you have been charged with forming on the basis of representation for all anti-fascist forces and of the work which it might carry out, we believe it is incumbent upon us to bring the following to your notice.

The national council of Izquierda Republicana regards it as vital that in the present circumstances the ultimate leadership of the policy of a government which has to stand up to tremendous responsibilities of an historic character should be the sole and exclusive concern of its premier. On the other hand, the problems raised by a war such as the one by which we are beset, should be studied and resolved with the assistance and advice which may be deemed apt by the person who may be appointed

to the post of Minister of National Defence which, as we understand it, is what is quite properly proposed in your draft.

Furthermore we feel obliged to point to the absolute necessity of the broad lines of the war policy being dealt with and discussed in the Council of Ministers, this being the basis and justification of a government as heterogeneous as the previous one and the one now being proposed, formed for the purpose of tackling the contingencies emanating from the fascist uprising in our country. Finally, we wish to point to the desirability of the government maintaining the closest and liveliest relations with parliament in that the latter is a basic element of the democratic regime we are defending.

For these reasons it pleases us to send you most cordial greetings, remaining yours and the anti-fascist cause's – **Salvador Quemades.**"

COPY OF THE LETTER FROM THE UGT EXECUTIVE COMMISSION

"UGT. Comrade Largo Caballero, President of the Council of Ministers – Be it known – Dear and esteemed comrade: The executive commission of the UGT, assembled in extraordinary session to examine the contents of your letter dated the 16th of the present month, accompanied by a note in which there is a sketch of the format which the line-up of the new government is to adhere to, agreed unanimously to accept everything set out by you in respect of the share-out of ministries and the functions to be performed by the same.

Respectful greetings to you, on behalf of the executive commission from your comrade and friend – **P. Tomás.**"

Comrades, on the basis of the information contained in the notes above you can judge what the attitude and position of the National Committee have been and how the situation stands in Spain, politically speaking. It remains only to counsel the outmost calm at this time as well as to contrive by every means the establishment of a genuine understanding between all of the producers who are active in the CNT or in the UGT. Only thus will we succeed in ousting the enemies of the proletariat, which is to say the enemies of the constructive revolution which the producers have been carrying out since the fascist uprising.'

On 21 May, the FAI intervened in the campaign by means of a lengthy manifesto dissecting the chicanery of the political parties and the petty bourgeoisie and their counter-revolutionary designs. The anti-fascist front had been blown to smithereens. The May incidents were a trap, a provocation designed to ensnare the revolutionary organisations. The CNT and the FAI parried the thrust at the cost of much bloodshed, aborting the attempt to annihilate them. The crisis in the central government was round two: its aim was to remove the anarchists, the CNT and the UGT from their government responsibilities and positions. The grand architect of the ploy was the PCE. Its targets were the workers' revolutionary gains, the collectives and the incipient socialisation.

On 22 May, the CNT national committee issued a further appeal to public opinion. It laid stress on the exclusion of the unions from the new government, 'a government under the influence of foreign powers,' a counter-revolutionary government which had shrugged off those

encumbrances, the unions and Largo Caballero so to have a free hand and which was now laying the groundwork for the 'Vergara embrace'. This new government could not depend upon the trust of the workers, and government was not possible in the face of opposition from the CNT and the UGT 'to counter the counter-revolution, the revolutionary alliance of the masses.'

This offensive culminated in the public declarations of the CNT's four ex-ministers. Beginning on 27 May, Joan López, García Oliver, Joan Peiró and Federica Montseny embarked upon a series of public addresses in Valencia. The aim was to expound, with all of the hindrances and encumbrances placed in their way, the work they had accomplished in their respective ministries. Here in essence – with much of the length sacrificed for reasons of space – are those public addresses:

JOAN LÓPEZ: – 'On this specific count, an explanation of our work in the Ministry of Trade, which ministry, by its very nature had an obligation to engage in constructive work in the realm of the economy, is perfectly in order.

Clearly, it was not possible, although the intention was not there, to sabotage or resist progress achieved from that ministry, because of the division of the economy into a variety of activities. Trade is only one of these; I will not say the most important, but assuredly of great importance. But it is not possible to achieve progress, much less a revolution in the sphere of the economy unless these changes are governed by a common criterion, a unity of thought and action. Of course, the preconditions for engaging in activity that is ... not revolutionary but involved with unification in the sphere of the economy in accordance with the circumstances of the war and the circumstances of the Spanish revolution, cannot be created if the Ministry of Trade and the Ministry of Industry, created out of one single ministry by the political event of our entry into the government, were in the hands of the representatives of the CNT, while another ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture, embracing the whole area of agricultural production was in the hands of a communist. And the Finance Ministry, the key to the development of an economic policy, whether revolutionary or not, was in the hands of a right-wing Socialist; of necessity, faced with a situation like this, we had to get to grips with the question of feasibility of a solution: and the first thing we said inside the government was that if the economy was to be organised along lines beneficial for the Spanish people then it was absolutely vital that all of the agencies directing the Spanish economy were duly coordinated in a body from which might emanate a policy that would have to govern all economic activity in the realms of agriculture, of industry, of trade and of finance. And as there was a favourable climate, the government agreed to this suggestion of ours and resolved to proceed with the establishment of just such a body. The government several times agreed that it was crucial for the winning of the war and for the proper ordering of the economy and making due provision for the supplying of Spain that every ministry of an economic nature should set themselves up as a commission to examine the problems raised by the economic situation and to arrive at a constructive solution to each of these problems.

Of necessity, economic problems have to be tackled in that commission by encapsulating the revolutionary reality of the streets. It had to be determined which production activities of our economy could be nationalised, impounded or socialised: we had to arrive at a conclusion, a firm decision with regard to the policy that we had to adhere to in our trade plan...We needed to work out what policy, what political and financial arrangements had to be adopted so to make possible a coherent revolutionary orientation of the Spanish economy. All of this had to be resolved. We had a duty and a mandate to provide anti-fascist Spain with constructive solutions that might awaken the confidence of the masses of producers, just as the zeal and confidence of all parties and organisations had been aroused for the purpose of achieving unification of the army.

Faithfully, we lived up to our commitment to establish in Spain a single command in matters military, political and economic. But here comes the account of our work at the head of the department, which is as follows: nothing constructive has been achieved in economic terms, not for reasons of a technical nature, nor for reasons of trust in the individuals, but rather for reasons of a political nature.

When 7 individuals assemble for discussions and to thrash out an agreement concerning some problem, and 5 out of the 7 are of one view and 2 of a different mind, the outcome of their meeting cannot be productive if there is no determination to respect the minority view, if there is no determination to reconcile the minority view with the views held by the rest.

On that commission, there were two of us who represented a lobby for co-ordinated revolutionism in the economic policy which the government of the republic had to implement, whereas those who argued the line that there was no necessity for any fundamental change, who do and always did defend capitalism's economic status quo, who take this approach which in these circumstances is a conservative approach, were in the majority and, in addition to being in the majority, were disinclined to resolve anything. And disposed to oppose everything, to hinder the slightest advances economically speaking. Naturally, we very amiably and very politely argued our case and deployed all our powers of eloquence on behalf of our points of view. Persistently I argued the absolute desirability of a monopoly over the Republic's foreign trade. This being the view of our organisation I argued the line that there had to be a monopoly on trade for practical revolutionary considerations. And we even went out on a limb in our advocacy of this viewpoint, making too many compromises because we, we who argued the positive line that the entire economy had to be run by the unions, by the workers through their unions, we who argued on behalf of this theory ventured to compromise (in our keenness to see an economic unity organised in Spain) with the statist, capitalist outlook of those who opposed our viewpoint.

Articulating the spirit of the Spanish revolution, interpreting the rallying of forces to which the whole of Spanish anti-fascism amounts, we sought to arrive at a monopoly of foreign trade by establishing, through the statist organisation, through the state, the due supervision needed to ensure that this policy of monopoly on foreign trade would not be implemented in such a way as to benefit only one segment of the working class. But simultaneously we took the line that whereas the state ought to have the oversight of this whole organisation, the monopoly had to be exercised by the workers' unions and had to be in the hands of those who had all of the facilities and the direction of the whole apparatus of production under their purview: despite our readiness to compromise, it has been impossible to push through our point of view in the government as regards the laying of the foundations for unification in the Spanish economy. Consequently we have to confess the futility of our endeavours in the economic sphere and thus are in no position to stand before anti-fascist opinion in Spain and point to achievements in the organisation of the Spanish economy, of a properly organised Spanish economy. Why such futility? It is down to what I said at the outset. Whereas there were 7 of us on the commission and we were outnumbered by 5 of those 7, there were 18 of us in the Council of Ministers and we were overwhelmingly and absolutely outnumbered by the majority of those 18.

What motives prompted the action of the political groups which made a stand against our target in the economic setting? Let us briefly review them.

At the onset I said that the reason why all we can place before the public is mountains of paper with draft schemes for the unification and marshalling of the Spanish economy is attributable to a problem of a political nature. It is the problem posed by the revolution, the one underlying the

conflict of interests of those who represent the Spanish revolution because they represent the working class and the interests of those who represent interests contrary to those of our class and who seek to maintain the status quo of the capitalist arrangement, because the revolution bears no fruit, nor is it a real revolution unless it makes itself felt in the economic sphere, unless it ousts capitalist power, unless it snatches the monopoly of wealth away from a few hands so as to entrust it to the producer population: unless the working class takes possession of all of the means of production and unless it governs the economy of the country, no revolution is possible. Consequently, the opposition to all of the projects and all of the advances which might be introduced into the economy, has been a steadfast and systematic on the part of those elements which stand for interests contrary to those of the working class and who place themselves in the service of the lofty interests of capitalism.

A prospect of disorder must be the upshot of a policy of neglect, of dereliction or revolt on the part of those political groups which have resisted every advance in the economic aspect of the Spanish revolution.

The attitude of these political elements, calculated with forethought and erected into a concerted plan of action against the Spanish revolution, was that everything should be left disorganised, that there should be nothing organised and that those who sought to bring organisation to it should be resisted: because in opposing this organisation they were following an impractical and illogical position... because in so far as it is possible to implement an economic programme, to orchestrate matters related to working-class interests through the unions, these were gaining prestige and winning over the whole anti-fascist people to their side and also creating the potential for future progress as they swept aside all of the obstacles placed in our path by the war and the problems of the rearguard: this was a deliberate attitude on the part of those political elements which, representing the high interests of capitalism and certain machinations at international level, hindered the men of the CNT from engaging in constructive work in those representative functions which had fallen to their lot in the government of the Spanish Republic...

The first projects submitted by the CNT's representatives in the government, designed to achieve those aims that we regarded as crucial to setting things in order, raised a question of principle, which was a consequence of our participation in the government. If the unions had representation in it, then of necessity they had to have representation on all of the official agencies which that government was to create. If the union participated in the shaping of a new state or of an organisation born under the auspices of the state, they had to be represented on its secondary agencies. This being so, when a municipal council, provincial council or people's tribunal, or any agency answerable to the state was formed, there necessarily had to be acceptance of representation of the union organisations; and the men of the CNT, taking this to be the understanding of the working class, argued whenever the government planned an agency, that the unions, the CNT and the UGT had to be represented on those bodies.

And there is more. As the labouring masses, all the workers, are marshalled in the UGT and in the CNT and as, taken together, all of the workers of the UGT and CNT constitute an absolute majority of the Spanish people, we argued the theory that on such bodies the majority representation had to be awarded to the two trade union associations. There was systematic opposition to this viewpoint from the personnel from other parties, and not only with regard to the proportionality proposed and our contention that the majority representation should go to the two union associations; there was also an absolute insistence that when it came to the ordering of government action none might be involved except the parties, that it was the parties which



represented the organised mass and that they had the mandate to oversee and direct affairs and that the unions had to be mere auxiliaries of the political parties. The power had to lie absolutely with the political parties, in which case the representation of the working class through the CNT and the UGT had to stand by in order to obey but not to issue orders, as befits the majority in the shape of the working class...'

GARCIA OLIVER: – '... And so we found ourselves with a ministry where, as I told you before, justice was virtually non-existent, where there were no organs of justice. Everyone enforced his own: everybody administered his own justice. Some called it a "ride" (paseo). Let me say that justice was administered directly by the country, by the people, in the absence, the absolute absence, of the organs of traditional justice, this having failed. And until such time as the government set up new organs of justice, incorporating the popular tribunals into a rounded normal jurisdiction, then inevitably this vacuum had to be filled by the people and fill it they did.

The Ministry was in Madrid and we had to remove it to Valencia. Notwithstanding the transfer, the Justice Ministry had to set up the respective tribunals in each province. Let me tell you that while we joined the government on 5 November with our country's judicial life in calamitous chaotic circumstances within a month and half of that date, by 1 January 1937, the whole of Spain had been provided with organised popular justice and an end had been made of the paseos and the proper administration of justice in each area was a reality...

The first decree of importance from the Ministry of Justice appeared on 24 November. This first decree of note sets down that every citizen shall be able to appear in person, representing and defending himself, before any tribunal in the land. Is this important? It is a right and a right is more than a gracious boon granted by kings and governors, because the citizenry which possesses a positive entitlement can avail of it whenever it suits them, when it is convenient for them and not just when favours are granted by kings and governors. It is the most logical, most natural thing in the world that in a country like ours, of such low juridical repute, where even the people never had any faith in justice in their representatives and defence counsels, there should be granted at least the right of self-defence in civil and in criminal proceedings. When a trial comes about it is always better that the accused may look to his own defence for good or for ill, and can of his own volition forswear that defence, than that he should be obliged to submit to the obligatory defence put up by a lawyer whom he does not trust and that, at best, as in the old days, it should be always believed and stated that lawyers sell out to the opposition if the opposition can offer more money than the person in need of their services can afford to pay them. And by means of this decree the dignity of the lawyer and the rights of the citizen are protected.

We issued a decree-law on 12 December. In this instance, the Minister of Justice did not award a right: on the contrary, it prescribes terms of imprisonment against those who, capitalising upon the circumstances in which we find ourselves, iniquitously exploit the working class and the Spanish people, by selling them foodstuffs at arbitrary prices. We prescribed terms of imprisonment for this. In this instance, the curtailment of rights was directed against the rogue, the enemy of anti-fascism who was giving underhand assistance to fascism, by astronomically inflating the prices of foodstuffs with the aim of ensuring loss of enthusiasm and morale by the toiling masses and the contrivance of disasters in our rearguard.

On 22 December, we issued a decree erasing all penal antecedents relating to offences committed prior to 15 July 1936. Was this a small or a big thing? What I can say to you is that it is more practical and positive than Jesus's coming to earth to purge us of the original sin committed by our first parents, Adam and Eve; because original sin did not weigh as a stigma upon the

proletarian masses; but having a penal record in this and in every country of the world was an oppressive stigma, as demonstrated by Victor Hugo's work when he depicts the tragedy of all ex-jailbirds, all who have penal antecedents through the protagonist of his book *Les Misérables*.

On 31 December, by way of an intimation of work to follow, I gave my talk upon what I believed justice had to be in Spain. Three days earlier the decree setting up the Labour Camps had been issued. I spoke then of the reasons for these labour camps and of the utilitarian logic behind availing of the energy of condemned fascists and likewise behind doing them the favour of not taking their lives nor passing sentence of death upon them. This was said at the time but today there is a profound disquiet among the authentically proletarian masses that the labour camps set up so that fascists may make good with their labour the damage they have done to Spain might later on serve to pen the masses of workers themselves.

I do not renege upon my actions nor upon my thinking and never have. The labour camps were set up with an end in mind. If they fail to meet this, it is not the fault of the one who set them up, for had I not set them up, someone else would have set them up. In any event, these camps cannot be used against workers. But I have to say that when one is in government, at work, one has to take a broad view, a collective outlook that may prevent us from evading the tackling of great issues and seeking solutions to these, even though those solutions can be turned against us. But has the knife-maker never thought that the knife upon which he is working and which will be sold later, may serve the better to finish off him, his spouse or their children? Has the worker who manufactures weapons never spared a thought for the possibility – and this for his product is a certain and sure thing – that the weapons he turned out might be used to gun down him, his family, his class?

To this end and lest it remain merely a naive aspiration approval was granted to the internal regulations of the labour camps. And besides it being strictly forbidden in the context of the labour camps (and constituting an offence for a functionary to do so) to strike a prisoner, we introduced into the internal workings of these labour camps the latest advances from the world over and went further than what is provided for in certain states in America, further than the provisions of the Soviet legislation even. Our work is based on ... what? On a single preoccupation: on ensuring that the fascists sentenced to the labour camps may work, not in any extravagant fashion but just normally. But this, as anyone who has sampled jail and imprisonment will know, is very hard to sustain, for quite the most tragic feature of a life of incarceration and loss of liberty is the loss of the hope of recovering that liberty. When a convicted man pays the penalty of ten, twenty or thirty years of incarceration, the years drag by. And by the entrance to the first labour camp at Totana we come across a motto which is not an abstraction, not the sort of thing that was to be found in our jails and prisons before, that epigram from Concepción Arenal about "Hate the offence and pity the offender", which is an abstraction from classical English liberalism and a meaningless declaration. No, in the labour camp we find this motto, "Work and do not lose hope." But one this is asked of them there: that they work and do not lose hope; but we do not say this to them only to burst thereafter into sarcastic laughter as bourgeois regimes do with their fondness for having enunciated abstract announcements.

To fend off the despair in the individual one needs to work on the individual's own conscience, for he who enters a labour camp or prison has his passions and his vices and there are two ways to manage a man: by speculating with and working on his passions and vices, or by beating him. One of these two methods necessarily must be followed and my conscience as an anarchist prevents my being able to opt for the system of blows, as if this were any help in keeping the

prisoner's spirits high in the labour camp. And being sentenced to labour and in receipt of no pay and since the individual at the time of entry has a family, a sweetheart, a child with whom he would like to keep in touch in writing or means of speech, and has a passion or vice which is enduring and, above all, which grows during incarceration ... namely, tobacco ... I kept up the individual's spirits through our draft, and now legal government, quite simply: in the labour camp each second of the individual's existence represents an upheaval of his unselfish or evil passions or vices and I strove to ensure that his daily life was one of normal work and not of brutalising toil; no more than what you yourselves do, and maybe less. Normal work for which he was awarded a weekly bonus of 50 céntimos a day with which he might buy a paper and stamps and write to his family, should he so desire, and thereby assuage that very human and laudable urge. And he could also buy tobacco, if he was in the grip of that habit which so upsets man's life. On this basis, it is possible to keep a man behaving perfectly and working normally for twenty-four hours. Twenty-four hours lived out minute by minute, but a week is more than one day, it is seven and he had to be kept under control for the week, for someone who may earn no more than three or four credits a week and already has his six reales or two pesetas for stamps, paper and tobacco could indulge himself in the luxury of bad behaviour and of working badly the rest of the week and force us into having to mistreat him. He had to be provided with some incentive for the work and when Sunday came along, the inmate who had won his six weekly credits for good work application and behaviour was given an extra reward, a day's freedom to be availed of at a later date: to be laid to his credit at the moment of his release. This kept him going from day to day and also kept up his spirits for the whole week.

But a year is longer still as we know who have been through the jails and prisons. So, just as it is easy to keep the prisoner in hand for three days by means of credits and fail when it comes to the whole week, unless there is some extra incentive to keep him going over Sunday, the same thing might happen when it came to the year. How many weeks that includes! So a way also had to be found to lend support on a proportional basis to him who, say, facing thirty years' imprisonment or in a labour camp had, at the end of one year, amassed fifty-two credits against his sentence, meaning fifty-two weeks of good behaviour and normal working and in addition to the fifty-two days' remission, he was awarded a year's remission of sentence. This, added to his parole, which was not denied, even though no amnesty was granted him, means that everyone sentenced to a thirty-year term in the labour camp, protected from brutalisation, working normally and living in a dignified way might work out that thirty-year sentence in six, seven, eight, nine or ten years depending on his behaviour. Nowhere in the world can they show anything so advanced, not even where there is a history of this sort of thing. The people can always be more merciful than the man in the seat of government, but the Minister of Justice did what he had to do. If tomorrow, in the wake of victory and only then, it should seem to the people that nine years in a labour camp is excessive and it should seek to award an amnesty, well, the people are sovereign, the people are the supreme lawmakers and may well display greater generosity than this minister, even when this minister has been the most generous Minister of Justice in the world.

And this takes us into that new phase of the year when the promises made in the address of 31 December had to be turned into realities, and we made a start by doing away with judicial fees. For the bulk of the Spanish masses this is a matter of very little importance, but all in all the judicial fee system boils down to the following: all officers of the Ministry of Justice, from the secretary down to the last employee of the secretariats, did not have a fixed salary but received, by way of fees, whatsoever the secretary deemed fit to give them ... the secretary being, in the

last analysis, the head waiter of the show, who held on to the lion's share of everything charged in respect of court matters. And it was right that legal fees should have been done away with. Were we not making a revolution and a proletarian revolution at that? What could we do but proletarianise the officers of justice? But the fact is that this had other implications; hitherto justice was different, justice was a protracted affair, immoral in its operation, because it suited and was in the interest of the clerk of the court to prolong citations, amass heaps upon heaps of papers, because every citation, each will and testament had to have a very substantial portion of the individual award deducted to cover legal fees. And this was outright looting and pillaging of the citizen, the man of the people who, instead of approaching the courts to obtain and achieve justice approached instead the anteroom of immorality, the antechamber of prevarication. So improvements had to be sought for the worker and for the people in general.

You will not argue that this is an irrelevancy. Time after time, the ministers of justice set their caps at the abolition of legal charges, but time after time they failed. They could not succeed with parliament, nor without Parliament: because so enormous was the income of the clerks of court that they amounted to thousands and thousands of pesetas per year and to hold onto this huge revenue they bribed the upper echelons of the Home Affairs Ministry and so this health-giving and fair-minded scheme, to award a wage to the proletariat of justice paid at a fixed rate during their working life and a pension for when they gave up work, never prospered.

On 19 January approval was granted to a decree authorising me to submit a bill for total amnesty for the consideration of the Cortes. And on 25 January 1937 the decree on total amnesty was promulgated. All we did was to legalise merely a tiny portion of Spanish anti-fascist territory which held common offenders in the prisons.

Elsewhere in anti-fascist Spain, common offenders had been set free by the spontaneous action of the people. In the Basque Country, despite their repentance and their application and pleas to be allowed to serve in the front lines, all common offenders still languished in their prisons. And justice needed to be done to one and all. Either all those who had been released onto the street through the people's action were to be flung into prison again, or those who had been denied this release had to be set free. For integrity required the governor to be single-minded and even-handed and, especially where justice is concerned, one cannot countenance there being two classes of prisoner to whom differing treatment is doled out. And so an amnesty was granted, freeing those prisoners up in the Basque Country. At the same time, legal sanction was given to the situation of all the citizens of anti-fascist Spain who, through some misfortune in their lives, had had to go into prison.

4 February 1937 saw the appearance of a decree awarding woman status under the law. All done very quietly. A new legality was being called into existence. How many women in Spain have realised that since 4 February they are free women? How many are aware of it? Nonetheless, in the Ministry of Justice an effort was made to meet the needs of woman, and whether she knows it or not, she has been granted a civil status which is in point of fact a political status. Because just think of the paradox and absurdity implicit in there being a married woman who may have been elected mayoress, deputy or minister, who may make laws but yet was not her own mistress under the civil law nor mistress of her own possessions. She could not even set foot outside her home without her husband's permission. If she wanted to travel, she could not. If she wanted to take out a passport, she could not. She was in fact a slave even though the Republic had awarded her the right to vote and to be elected; something of no importance in man and in woman, for what counts in both is something more positive than rights of a political nature

which are abstractions to be exercised once every four years or once every five. But a woman's civil activity has to be exercised every moment, every minute, every day, from birth to death.

On the same date, we issued a decree legalising the free unions of milicianos who have perished in the struggle against fascism. This does not require much explanation. Here too the family consideration is a factor, as is the incontrovertible right of everyone in love to live freely together unburdened by material concerns, with the man at war and the women in the city in the rear-guard, the man knowing that he may well perish. But we pass the starveling by and do not stop to wonder if he is the child of a miliciano killed in the unmarried state. We pass by an abandoned *compañera* and do not ask if she is the *compañera* of a fallen, unmarried militiaman. We do not bother about this. And the law only granted the right to dignity and material assistance to the *compañera* and children of those who perished at the front and were legally married.

And let us conclude this account of the constructive endeavours of the Ministry of Justice by saying that on 13 May a decree was issued which widened the purview of the Popular Tribunals. That decree was worked out broadly. That is to say that even when all my personal sympathies lay with the Prime Minister and War Minister, comrade Largo Caballero, even when it was being said that the CNT ministers and Largo Caballero made up a caucus, a conspiracy within the government, and none such existed – here is the proof of it – comrade Largo Caballero put forward a decree supporting and harking back to (most mistakenly in the view of many) the old law of Jurisdictions, placing all servicemen, and civilians also, under a special, martial jurisdiction in respect of all offences. And while each of us, in his capacity as member of the government, and conscientiously argued his point of view as ever inside the cabinet, then, for all my sympathy and respect for him, we wrestled toe to toe for nearly three months, he sticking to his viewpoint while I advocated a single jurisdiction.

I did not yield. I argued then and hold now that there should be but one law, just one jurisdiction. True, there are different spheres of work in society which are useful and not useful, but the nature of the work cannot in any circumstances award rights to a court and a law which are the sole preserve of each of the several forms of work.

Yes there are servicemen, but to me they are not military people: to me they are workers with the weapons of war, just as others are workers with the weapons of peace, and civilians and military are as one because while a serviceman works with the weapons of war at the front, the steelworker who makes those weapons works with weapons in the rearguard. Why make distinctions, why acknowledge privileges? There was always something of a slight against civilian status in the fact that certain offences were governed by courts martial. This was something that was unknown up until the Germanic influences within Christianity came along to upset Europe's political and social evolution.

This contest was won and only what we might describe as disciplinary measures for offences committed solely and exclusively by military while on active service are within the competence of courts martial. Everything else comes under the one jurisdiction, the jurisdiction of the civil courts. And the popular tribunals set up to crack down on and punish the fascist rebellion are transformed and should henceforth deal with all offences which may be committed in Spain. That is to say that the popular tribunal which was to have held jurisdiction only over the crushing of the rebellion and consequently was a venture destined to fade away as soon as that rebellion ends, that popular tribunal is definitively and forever absorbed into our court administration. Even with regard to common offences properly considered, in this decree too, which is confirmation of another, earlier one, we put something which is very advanced into practice ... because,

as we said at the time of the address on 31 December, with regard to common offences, ideas had been current which merely aggravated the situation of the prisoners with infamous procedures and excessive punishments. In this new decree we prescribe that the maximum penalty for ordinary offences shall not be thirty years as it was before the revolution: the maximum penalty is thirty years with parole, sentence being served as prescribed in workfarms and workhouses and penitential settlements, making it possible with deeds and realities to effect a true transformation of him who, through misfortune, has been obliged to deviate from the straight path and to fall into the hands of the law.

Maybe comrade López was right when he said that inside the government little progress could be made in material terms with affairs of value. It may be true that all the other advances made here are of an abstract and theoretical nature which do not rob Peter to pay Paul. They are rights awarded with good intentions, which do not erode anyone's assets, not the state's and not the individual's. The time may come when this impoundment of the state may cease and ownership return to those who formerly held it, but that will not be feasible if the transfer of ownership is entered in the register of the Ministry of Justice in the name of municipalities and for the usufruct of the citizens, who make up that municipality. That is the difference between the lofty concept of impoundment and the legal notion of the transference of the right of ownership.

We did something else as well. I as Minister of Justice shared the responsibility for the supreme Council of War with the Premier and Minister of War, comrade Largo Caballero and the other ministers belonging to it.

We on the Supreme War Council all shared the responsibility or glory of the pursuit and functioning of the war generally, because now there is an army where formerly there was none. Now there's a factor capable of containment, which is what mattered, for when we joined the government we had nothing and we were always run ragged. So the thing crucial to victory was, first of all, to contain so as to forge thereafter the machinery of an army for victory and for attack. This is the achievement of the Minister of War and of all who may have supported or sought to support him among the members of the Supreme War Council.

For my part, I have to give an account of my term. It is not for me to speak of my loyalty towards the Minister of War. In any event, it is up to the Minister of War to do that and to pass judgement upon the work of those of us who were at his side, up to him to say who was or was not loyal.

I took it upon myself to set up the People's War Academies. I took it upon myself because the first People's War Academy to exist in Spain, the one in Catalonia, was my handiwork, my creation.

We set up the War Academy in Catalonia and so I took it upon myself to organise Spain's War Academies. Two months later, we had five People's War Academies able to offer, as offer they did, a graduation class of 3,000 officers every two months. Undoubtedly more can be set up, but I have to tell you that there was a shortage of premises, and a shortage of instructors and I have experienced real tragedy in asking for competent and honourable military to act as instructors, for this was not possible, in that the War Academies were set up for the purpose of turning out military commanders because we had none, because the loyalist officers were very few in number. And the important thing is to be able to get by with a few in staffing the fronts. Not to depopulate the fronts until they could be supplied with new officers after a period of three months.

Now then; spare a thought for the importance of these War Academies ... the revolutionary and popular importance, because before the revolution such establishments were accessible to all of the sons of the nobility, all of the sons of the bourgeoisie as well as to children of the proletariat, a gracious indication of how bourgeois society had to grant certain rights, rights which, it was said, were rights for all. But how was one to avail of these rights? To enter a Military Academy, one needed to pay a matriculation fee and one had to pay out for clothing, tuition, and keep ... money which only bourgeois, capitalists and nobles could afford to spend on their children.

I set up some War Academies and called upon the people, the peasants, metalworkers, seamen and any member of the working class who may believe that he has sufficient entitlement and expertise to join the Spanish popular army's officer cadres. And I required but one thing of them: the endorsements of organisations and parties of the Popular Front. That and that alone. And the wherewithal to pass a small examination which they have to undergo, because, as you might expect, one cannot turn an illiterate into an artillery officer who, to aim his guns, needs mathematical tables without which he will kill his comrades instead of his enemies.

I admitted them to the Academy without having to pay matriculation fees, or for clothing or for tuition. And we gave them, to boot, 12.50 pesetas a day so that, if married, they could see to the upkeep of their compañeras and their children. Is that or is that not revolutionary work?

JOAN PEIRÓ: 'What was the Ministry of Industry like in November last? Put simply, comrades, in November of last year, the Ministry of Industry when I took over was a sort of agency which was solely concerned with supplying raw materials to those with the money to buy them. And as if this was scarce justification for the existence of a ministry, this Ministry of Industry concerned itself with a business that it has been conducting, I believe, up to the present time. This was the business of securing raw materials for the war industries, and not just that, but – at least during my time there – it also concerned itself with helping to organise and to create war industries.

But nothing more, comrades. Nonetheless in Spain our industry, all of our industries were teetering upon the brink. Something that might be described as a natural phenomenon, if you like. There had come about a mutinous revolt which, being unexpected, could not have been more surprising in terms of the magnitude which it was to assume. The great capitalist undertakings, most of which were implicated in the fascist conspiracy, vanished from Spain or at any rate from the loyalist zone leaving their industries abandoned. The bourgeois and the property-owners who were likewise implicated in this mutinous uprising all deserted their posts and left everything abandoned.

When and how had the government of the Republic set about galvanising the mobilisation of those industries which had been left paralysed? One thing I have to say to you: on 2 August, the Ministry of Industry and Trade issued a decree whereby those industries which had been abandoned by their firms or owners – owners and firms which in so abandoning their interests could not have done so for any reason other than simply being implicated in the rising – were to be impounded. This seizure, which bore fruit on some occasions but had a totally negative effect on others, at the same time made it imperative that that decree be rescinded. And the industries abandoned by their firms and employers – industries cast aside by firms and employers who had not the capital to keep them operating – about these industries no one bothered. And what was going on in those industries, comrades? Well very great things were afoot there, to which nobody attached any importance.

For a start, there were controlled industries where the control showed itself as a hindrance in every aspect of their running. Then again, there were impounded industries which, by virtue

of their having been impounded in a makeshift way, had, instead of remaining economically viable, foundered almost immediately. There were, furthermore, collectivised industries which found themselves in the same circumstances, but there was an even more telling instance and this is that there were impounded industries and controlled industries still headed by their former owners who, very far from doing nothing to help those industries to prosper economically, as was their duty, instead siphoned off part of the profits made by these industries and skipped the country with it. No one, absolutely no-one, bothered to stem this siphoning away of capital. And this led to dire straits which had to be remedied.

In the month of January upwards of 11,000 applications were received at the Ministry of Industry, requesting it take over or at least take a part share in the industries concerned in those 11,000 applications. And do you know what was implied by the request for takeover or partial takeover contained in those 11,000 applications? Well, they implied 11,000-odd applications for economic assistance from the Ministry of Industry and the latter had not one single peseta with which to reply.

But it also transpired that there were industries which, upon being abandoned to the mercy of the workers, and with the latter proving incapable of improvising everything that is needed to manage and administer and industry, went bankrupt. And it was not permissible, proper nor tolerable that a handful of men who had destroyed one economy in experiments, in equipping themselves with the capacity to manage and administer their own industry, should be abandoned to their own devices once they had acquired this degree of competence nor that those industries should be allowed to founder for want of a measure of capital with which to get those industries operational once again.

How to go about extricating ourselves from this situation? What was needed, simply, was to work out a plan for collectivisation of the industries, not a scheme that would be blighted by the bane of centralisation, like another collectivisation scheme you all know about: I was working on another scheme for collectivisation of the industries based upon the federalist concept and even as I was putting the finishing touches to this I had occasion to have an interview with Largo Caballero, at which the three remaining CNT ministers were present. And a propos of the acute, grave and very serious question of the economic viability of the industries, I hinted that a scheme for collectivisation had to be introduced because I knew of no other way, no other method of putting industry in order and of ensuring that the government of the Republic would have a legitimate jurisdiction over the economics of the industries.

And when I touched upon this proposition, Largo Caballero, a man who on this occasion displayed the revolutionary outlook which governed his conduct at the head of the Republic, had this to say to me:

“Look, Peiró. I am not one of those who believe that once the war has ended Spain must stay as she was before 18 July. It is my conviction that the Spanish people, that the Spanish proletariat is making one of the most enormous sacrifices and, this being so, there can be only one recompense for these sacrifices – that Spain should not revert to 18 July. I do not believe that it is possible for an outright socialist regime to be installed in Spain but I do believe that industries must be collectivised and thus, that the worker, in exchange for the sacrifice of the present, will have to have an entitlement to contribute to the management and administration of his industry. But bear one fact in mind and that fact is this: you talk to me of collectivising national industries and taking foreign-owned ones under supervision, but you may rest assured that if there are foreign-owned firms, their workers are nonetheless Spaniards and they also will be keen to collectivise



the industry in which they work. And since neither you nor we will be able to oppose this, which we have laid down as a standard of fairness, what is going to happen? Britain, France, Belgium and other countries would deny us everything for you can see already how they refuse us that to which a lawful government is entitled: to be supplied with arms, to be assisted in standing up to and stamping out a mutinous revolt. This we do not have; this they refuse us. We virtually have to defend ourselves with our own resources. You know what circumstances our war industry is in every bit as well as I do. Well, now: if we accept what you propose, collectivisation of the industries, we shall find ourselves in a position where, for all that the democracies may grant us as charity, we shall have to trespass against their interests whereupon aid would dry up completely. And where will we be then?"

I do not know what your opinion is going to be, comrades, but this reasoning by comrade Largo Caballero struck me as a logical argument, as an argument that was at odds with the circumstances in which Spain found herself and I was forced to tell him.

"I acknowledge the truth of what you are telling me and so I am going to drop my proposals to collectivise industry. But, comrade Largo Caballero, the problems remains and it is a problem to which a solution must be found. How are you going to resolve it?"

To which he replied:

"Things are in such disarray and everything is so liable to fail that I do not even know what is feasible. You who are familiar with these things can see the way ahead."

And as something had to be done I availed of something which had already been done by the Ministry of Industry and drew up the decree of 22 February which relates to the seizure of industries and the taking of them into control.

In all good faith, without letting myself be carried away by passion and by what has been my life-long feeling, I tried, with the same sincerity with which we entered the government of the Republic to draw up something which the republicans themselves had to acknowledge was profoundly conservative in sentiment. And how could it be otherwise, comrades, if what was at stake was the rescue of the national economy and this is something which does not belong to the CNT, nor to the UGT nor to the PCE, nor to anybody in that it belongs to all?

Once having drawn up a draft of the decree, I brought it along to the cabinet and there, comrades, is where the *via dolorosa* begins. It was acknowledged that it was a draft decree and of course profoundly conservative but there was an unwillingness to give it the go-ahead unless it had first been submitted to an inter-ministerial commission comprising the ministers of Finance, Communications, Labour, Public Works, Agriculture, and Trade and Industry. I submitted it to this inter-ministerial commission and we spent an entire sitting trying to win acceptance of the aforementioned "seizure" (*incautación*). The republicans, as representatives of the petit bourgeoisie could quite legitimately oppose the use of the word "seizure" but such an attitude on the part of others who did not and should not represent the petty bourgeoisie is inexplicable. But since the word *incautación* was so apt and so logical an encapsulation of the state of affairs, in that the state was about to seize nothing but was if anything conducting a takeover of something already taken over, the opponents of the word *incautación* had to be persuaded, after reference to the dictionaries, that there was no word other than *incautación* because it expressed to perfection the thinking enshrined in the draft decree.

Some weeks elapsed before the second session and the problem remained there and was growing more acute by the day; the tragedy was daily more thoroughgoing and profound and the

economy was floundering. And this had no message for the comrades who appear today as the greatest defenders of Spain's interests.

I have to say that the draft decree pursued a clear-cut collectivist objective. It embraced all industries and tried to ensure that the surpluses of prosperous industries would meet the deficits of the needy industries. Clearly this required and would have made obligatory the establishment of an Industrial Bank, not an Industrial Credit Bank such as now exists and of which I shall speak anon, but rather an Industrial Bank that would perform those functions demanded and imposed by the tragic economic, industrial, political and social circumstances which Spain has to contend with. And for this reason, so to knock this down, we spent another session but by then victory had been achieved. Then the draft decree was left as a bare skeleton without feet or head, which I had to rectify in prescribing the rules for its implementation. Anyone who has read the regulations on the implementation of the decree of 22 February and who turns to the seizure and taking into control of industries will see that its spirit is redolent of something profoundly revolutionary, something which managed to encapsulate the present moment and which left the way free and wide open for all the economic, industrial, political and social eventualities which might come after.

But comrades, ah! I had a chance to remedy the shortcomings by means of the rules on implementation, but I could avail nothing through a decree and regulations on enactment unless all of this was followed up by a decree that would award it some credit. That credit was set aside for me – a credit of 30 million pesetas, so that I might help out the industries which might need help, but I quit the Ministry of Industry without having been able to put those 30 millions to use, because, of course, just as I worked out a way of amending the written decision of the inter-ministerial commission, so Negrín, the Minister of Finance, also discovered a way of hindering me from allocating a portion of those millions to the needy industries.

How, you shall see. At the end of the decree under which I was awarded the 30 millions with which to help the industry, there was one article that stated:

“With regard to the use of those 30 million pesetas, the Minister of Finance together with the Minister of Industry shall, in concert, prescribe certain rules.” And some days, quite a few days, passed and throughout, the Ministry of Industry was subjected to pressure from an endless stream of commissions which arrived to seek aid from the Ministry and I was unable to grant them a single peseta, for the simple reason that I did not have it. I asked for a specific appointment with the Minister of Finance so as to put the finishing touches to the draft concerning the rules governing the use of the 30 millions. I was told that I would be informed. And a few days later I received the rules issued, by whom? By the Industrial Credit Bank which allocated only 24 of the 30 million pesetas in coin. This means that, from the word go the Bank pocketed 6 millions and also that the 24 remaining millions had to be paid back at a 6 per cent rate of interest.

I am a modest man, an understanding sort, a man incapable of uttering a word which might slight anyone but I am a man who understands that when there is something which I cannot nor should not countenance then countenance it I do not. Let me say that I abided by no rules other than those which we, the Minister of Finance and myself, were to devise. Furthermore, I told the Minister of Finance that I wanted not 24 millions, but 30 millions and that it was a matter of complete indifference to me whether these came from the Industrial Credit Bank or not, but that these 30 millions had to be managed on the basis of a mutuality of interest, which is to say that if the bank earned interest from administering these 30 millions then I, who had to withdraw pesetas and then had to pay part of the 30 millions back into the bank, I wanted interest also. Not

that I wanted this interest for myself; I did not want it for the Industry Ministry; I simply wanted it to accrue to the state. And yet this sparked off a debate in the cabinet in which a crisis erupted because the Minister of Finance, for no particular reason, railed against certain ministers, myself among them, and when it was flung in my face that if the rules were not drafted and put into effect then the fault lay with the Minister of Industry, I had to leap to my own defence and tell him:

“No, comrade Negrín. The fault does not lie with the Minister of Industry. What was agreed was that the rules had to be drawn up by you and by myself in concert. And along came these rules which you yourself had to admit had been drawn up by the Industrial Credit Bank, of whose legitimacy I shall say nothing, but while I awaited notice from you of the day and hour when we should meet for the purpose of working out those rules, you told me just a few hours ago ‘Do it yourself, draw up a draft of these rules and later I will look them over and, if I agree with them, will endorse them.’”

And the crisis came along at the precise moment when the rules governing the use of the 30 million pesetas that I wanted and that I would not have handled except on the basis of honest, loyal management as money belonging to the state ought to be handled, were being drawn up.

Also, we may have to rue being or having been too honest. We might well have cause to rue our having engaged in unduly patriotic endeavours in consideration of Spain’s interests, because the decree on the seizure and take-over of the industries had no aim, aside from salvaging the economy, other than drawing the control committees and factory committees to our side so that they may be directed along efficient lines down a path which will create the feeling of competence.

I have had suspicions, and have some still, that there was concern lest the workers, having become the managers of their industries, might some day display sufficient competency as to place them in a position in the future to say to anyone at all that the bourgeois and capitalists were not necessary to the running and uplifting of the economy.

In that Spain is short of foreign currency and is possessed of natural sources of raw materials for products that could earn such foreign currency, which it needs to buy war materials, for the Spanish government, it is understandable that I should have so striven to ensure that the lead mines and lead smelters should have maximised their production so far as was possible. I visited the mines and visited the smelters and came away with the deep-seated conviction and sure belief that the mining ventures, and the firms which had smelters that cater for lead, were sabotaging the government of the Republic. From that first impression I drew more than enough motives and reasons to take over those mines immediately and to place them in the hands of the workers, under State supervision. But beating in mind that a number of these mines are in the hands of foreign firms, I saw fit to reflect, weighed things up and issued the warnings which I deemed necessary. I summoned to Valencia the mineworkers and metalworkers who work in smelters which cater for lead ores, and I sent for the firms and set before them the reasons why the Spanish government needed to have maximum output from the mines and why the smelters had to mobilise all the resources at their disposal.

I visited smelters and the best-off one of these had only a third of its furnaces in operation. In the yards, in the warehouses, there were hundreds upon hundreds of tons of lead ore. At the exits from the mines hundreds of tons of lead ores were piled. So much so that there were firms that could not pay their workers’ wages. I visited one smelter which, quite apart from the fact that it was operating at less than a third of full capacity, had had its furnaces lying idle for many

a long month. I had to say that the state, that the Spanish government needed to have the lead mined, in addition to the lead ore put to use, because this was vital to the government. And after I had spent three months issuing request after request, I found that the firms just laughed at the Minister of Industry, and in laughing at the Minister of Industry they were making a laughing stock of the government of the Republic.

And being as I am a modest fellow, incapable of slighting anyone, incapable of showing the slightest rudeness to anyone, I was not prepared to countenance anyone having a laugh at my expense and at that of the Spanish government, of the Republic and of the people which is shedding its blood in the defence of freedom. And I made up my mind not to seize the mines but to take them into control because really that was the only way to ensure the intensification of production and to furnish the Minister of Finance with a portion of the foreign currency which was often refused him because it was not there. And there came into my hands a letter which is but one of the many pieces of evidence showing that the Peñarroya Mining-Metallurgical Company or Society is in touch with the rebels. And, having this piece of evidence, and despite the firm being a foreign one, the government of the Republic had the legal resources not merely to seize the smelters but also to expropriate them absolutely once and for all.

In view of this and in view of an infinity of information supplied by the miners and metalworkers of the industry themselves, there was no solution but to seize the mines of Peñarroya Mining-Metallurgical Society and likewise to seize its smelters. And clearly I did just that. I ask you ... when one comes across a downright, blatantly rebel firm as is shown by the letter I have just read out ... I ask you yourselves whether such a firm deserves any consideration or if, instead, it deserves to have imposed on it the minimal sanction of seizure of what has, after all, been built upon the endeavours of the workers and which is chiefly used to work against the interests of the workers. I did this, or was in the throes of doing it when the crisis came up.

I have reported to you, comrades, that once that crisis had erupted, Doctor Negrín hastened to repeal the ordinances under which that seizure was carried out.

When we CNT ministers went to take up our posts we promptly came up against the problem of the potassium salts deposits in Catalonia. At the time of the rebel uprising, the mining concerns of Sallent, Cardona and other mining areas abandoned those deposits because they were implicated in that uprising. No one bothered about the potassium salt mines in that area and as the workers needed to make a living they set about working them for themselves. But unless the extracted potash is sold, extraction of it is a completely futile exercise and so what was needed was an outlet for the potash. The miners, through the Generalitat, looked for a way of marketing the potash, but as soon as they were outside territorial waters, the ships carrying it were stopped, the salts impounded, and, of course, the international tribunal sided with the ones who had seized the salts.

This means that the miners of Figols, Sallent and Cardona were able to work, but could not export, nor could the Generalitat government export because the only agency empowered to engage in the export trade was the government of the Republic. I do not know why we have spent endless months trying to resolve this matter in a humane fashion. But in the end, a way was found and I am going to explain to you with all sincerity how a solution was discovered.

By the time that the miners of Catalonia had been convinced that it was impossible to engage in the export trade, they presented themselves in Valencia, offering to work out a solution to the dispute that would suit all parties. As I had no option but to proceed to seize the potassium salt mines, and as I faced opposition from the government of Catalonia and opposition from the

very workers who had been abandoned to their own devices when the rebel uprising broke out – and it was they who had had to organise the work, and they alone who were extracting the potassium salts from those mines – I could think of no course except to pay a visit, along with a commission of comrades from the UGT and from the CNT, to comrade Largo Caballero and put the case to him as bluntly and honestly as could be. To Largo Caballero I said:

“The miners who have had the mines in their grasp up to now, with no one bothering about their lot, are reluctant to surrender those mines. Consequently, we have to find some way in which the mines may remain in the workers’ hands and in which the export of these potassium salts may be effected, this being of such common concern to the miners, to the government of Catalonia and to the government of the Republic.”

Whereupon comrade Largo Caballero, recalling his life as a revolutionary said to me:

“Have you a solution?”

“Yes, I have one”, I answered, “and it is that the state seize the potassium salt mines of Catalonia and hand them over to the miners so that the miners can go on working them as they have been doing hitherto: that the miners be authorised to conduct the domestic trade in those salts; and, so far as the export trade in them goes, which should bring us in huge amounts of foreign currency which we need so desperately, we must set up an agency on which the Generalitat government, the government of the Republic and the mine workers must be represented.”

Largo Caballero said to me:

“If, to resolve this state of affairs, you introduce a decree, it will get nowhere: it will be headed off and this problem, to which a solution is so urgently needed, will remain as insoluble as it has so far. Make so bold as to do this by means of an order and then we shall speak.”

And I did just that. Now the problem of the potassium salts of Catalonia has been resolved, but here are the mineworkers from that area now in Valencia, and, despite all the time which has elapsed, the area is brimming with millions of pesetas’ worth of potassium salts: the miners also are overwhelmed by orders and the salts which, shipped abroad, ought to return to this country as foreign currency, are lying completely idle there and I fear that the mining basins of Alt Llobregat will suffer the same fate as has befallen other mines.

Everything that specifically amounted to the galvanisation of a state of affairs which was designed to make a notable contribution to the national economy – all this is to be spurned. And in its place is there to be nothing built upon what is destroyed? That I do not know. I am afraid that what is in the making will encounter the full resistance of some workers who, for a ten-month period, have not abandoned the mines but have improved them and who, upon being unable to export the potassium salts, have at least concerned themselves with improving the area by equipping it with the roads that the companies never bothered to introduce.

There is something else that I wanted to do but was unable to, and it has to do with the electrical industries. From the outset, these were taken under control by the Ministry of Industry but in a fashion so platonic that we could be sure that the take-over has resolved nothing. The management and administration of this national resource has always been in the keeping of the trade union organisations, but as these industries are one of the few prosperous industries left in Spain, it was precisely this prosperity that attracted the attention not only of the municipalities, but also of the civil governors themselves – and the CNT has no civil government – who have sought to provincialise and sought to municipalise industries which, if they need anything done to them, need to be nationalised. So, to head off a conflict that was already in the hatching, between these trade union bodies and the municipal councils and the civil governors, I was

obliged, during the final days of my term in the ministry, to issue an order which provided that these electrical industries should remain in the keeping of the union organisations since, to date, these have displayed adequate expertise in the administration and management of the industries. What I was going to do now was to nationalise the electrical industry and nationalise it in a manner which I believe is the only one acceptable to the workers.

It may be to digress slightly, but I have to recall here that I had to put up a determined struggle against certain sectors because daily they would try to coerce me into nationalising industries. I could not nationalise industries because, after all, in the government I was merely the agent of an organisation which is against nationalisation in the old sense. But as facts are always facts and as there are industries here which it is imperative should in some cases be nationalised and in others municipalised, I proposed to nationalise the electricity industry in, let me say again, the only way that I believe the workers can accept; by nationalising the industry while leaving the administration and management of it in the hands of the trade union organisations and not in the hands of the state. The only right which I do grant, have granted and always will grant to the state is the right to wield over this nationalised industry, administered and managed by the workers, a mode of control designed to oversee the manner in which what is, after all, a national resource, is to be administered.

For example, we have here a lead consortium made up of some gentlemen who spend nearly a whole month asleep and then, one fine day during the month, come together to fix the price of lead. Gentlemen who earn substantial salaries and make no contribution to lead prices. I was going to abolish this agency by setting up a National Lead Commission on which all of the interests of the lead-mining industry would be represented and in which the workers too would be involved. This decree has been approved by a council of ministers, but it has not been possible to put it into effect because the Minister of Industry had to have the agreement of the Minister of Finance to amend one article, Article 9 of its regulations, which deals with the means of equipping this National Lead Commission with working capital for domestic and foreign trading.

But things having followed what course they have, and things having gone as they must, three weeks elapsed before the crisis came about and the ministers of Industry and of Finance have not been able to meet with each other. The Minister of Industry has had to quit the Ministry and this proposal, designed to repair a tremendous injustice, and which benefits the workers in that it gives them a direct share in the profits from the working of the Spanish mines, has remained a dead letter and, despite approval having been granted to it in a decree will not be put into effect yet.

And so, were it not for fear of droning on, I could set before you an infinity of endless examples of tremendous import. I could tell you that every suggestion submitted by the Ministry of Industry had run up against sabotage – a very cordial, very amiable sabotage, but still sabotage for all that. Many things have been left undone after having been approved, because we have not had the wherewithal to make a reality of them. This is history written. I am going to finish off.

The interesting point, as if it had come to that, is that it was necessary to erase the taste which someone might have had in his mouth. The CNT shouldered the responsibility of government and assumed it with every sincerity, forswearing nearly all of its postulates and conforming to the reality of the historic hour in which Spain lives. So true is that that I can say that, so sincere have we been that we have behaved like thorough ingenues and those who were maybe not so concerned with scoring points have sought to capitalise upon our ingenuousness.

The naivety, sincerity and good faith of the CNT's ministers have been abused. But there stand the ones who have sought to indulge in such disloyalty. At most, we can admit that they behaved perhaps in the only way they were capable of behaving and that the CNT also conducted itself in the only way it could.

The word round here is still that the CNT does not renounce its postulates, that the CNT attempts to pursue a thorough-going policy that it even strives to arrive at libertarian communism. And this is as untrue as it is true that nobody could adduce one single item of proof nor cite one single fact liable to endorse the accuracy of this intent with which the men of the CNT are being credited.

Braving even the wrath of our own comrades, braving the wrath of the toiling masses who are the ones who feel in the depths of their souls the sting of the tragedy which capitalism and the treacherous military have contrived, we have said that we had to think less about revolution so as to think more about the war, although we have to concede that the war and the revolution cannot be dis severed one from another.

But not very far from everything that is ascribed to us, we have made explicit declarations. We have declared, even before we ever joined the republic's government – I could quote you texts – that we, the men of the CNT believed that the ending of the war had to crystallise, had to take shape in the installation of a federal republic of the socialist variety, a republic that will embody what we know as economic federalism ...'

FEDERICA MONTSENY: 'The chair at this rally has introduced me by making a great play of the significance of my involvement in the activity of government, not merely on account of the novelty of my being a woman but also by virtue of my personal standing in the Spanish anarchist and labour movement. Daughter of a family of anarchists of long standing, scion of a whole dynasty, so to speak, of anarchists, with a record of action and a lifetime of ongoing struggle in defence of ideas which I inherited from my own parent, my entry into the government and acceptance of the post which the CNT wished me to fill had to mean something more than the simple appointment of a minister. Other parties, other organisations, other denominations cannot understand the inner turmoil in the movement and in the very consciences of its militants which the incorporation of the CNT into the government necessarily had to represent and did represent for us all. They cannot grasp it, but the people understands it, and, if not, it should. It ought to know that for us, who had always fought against the state, who had always contended that absolutely nothing could be achieved from the state, that the words government and authority automatically spelled the negation of all of the libertarian potential of men and peoples, our involvement as an organisation and as individuals in the work of government had to mean either an act of historic daring of fundamental significance or a theoretical and tactical revision of an entire undertaking, a whole history.

When I was appointed by the CNT to represent it in government, I was on its Catalan regional committee. I had lived unblemished through the whole phase, the entire epic from 19 July up to November. Months of absolute revolutionary intoxication. Had we chosen to proceed with the realisation of our beliefs in Catalonia, nothing and nobody could have stood in our way. Production was in our hands, distribution was in our hands; the Generalitat government was not in our hands because, impelled by I know not what measure of prudence or scruple, we had not wished to seize it. That is the truth pure and simple. If there is any responsibility even in this, it lies in having steadfastly opposed dictatorial solutions of every shade, in the realm of economic

solutions as in the realm of political conduct when power was taken in a determined, resolute way and, indeed, over our own heads, a goodly portion of the responsibility is mine to bear.

Above our very selves, above our ideals, our view of things and the solutions we had for problems, one thing alone faced us starkly – the need at all costs to maintain the unity of a front of struggle that could not be breached.

And for our part, with a sense of responsibility which other sectors of the struggle of Spain would do well to imitate and to learn from [we decided] that the cause bruited here, the routing of fascism which was spreading across Europe and America and everywhere, took priority over the attainment of our own ideals, for those ideals of ours satisfied only a partisan need, a partisan aspiration. We could not jeopardise the fate of the whole world by seeking to satisfy, once and for all or temporarily, a partisan aspiration of ours.

That is how we conduct ourselves. That is how we operate, but experience of what befell anarchists in other countries also had to confront us with another fundamental question of form. We could not remain on the fringes of Spanish affairs. We could not be content with a platonic collaboration, in as much as what meagre legality there was in Spain was built largely upon our forces. This being so, as far as we were concerned as anarchists and as a labour movement, there was, taking precedence over our own ideals and our own objectives, a further consideration of a general nature but one related also to our own organisation; while we could not and should not jeopardise the unity of the front of struggle against fascism by embarking upon attempts to put our ideals into libertarian practice, we could not remain aloof from the leadership of the Spanish revolution and the management of Spain's destinies either. Either one thing or the other. And in a determined, conscientious way, without reneging upon what our credo did and does stand for, the CNT agreed to intervene in the government: a government which as far as we are concerned could not be a government like all the rest, but rather a government that had to marshal all the anti-fascist forces and had to be the sum of all of the resolution mobilised to defeat fascism. And so we joined the government – with an immense baggage of illusions and goodwill.

Accustomed as we were to quite other activities, to working in the unions, to activity, propaganda and the quiet, ongoing work of a movement which is shaped and moulded in opposition and which operates in opposition; with a measure of goodwill, enthusiasm, respect and unselfishness that other movements cannot boast, our entry into the government had to signify also the painful trading of byways that were to prove a chastening experience. How many reservations, how many doubts, how much more inner turmoil I personally had to overcome before accepting this position! To others it might represent their goal, the satisfaction of overweening ambitions. To me it represented no more than a rupture with a whole endeavour and a whole lifetime and with an entire past linked to the lives of my own parents. For me it necessarily represented a tremendous effort made at the cost of many tears. And I consented, stifling my own objections; and I agreed, prepared to wash my hands of what I considered a breach with all that I had been, provided that I could remain at all times loyal, even upright and honest, ever faithful to the ideals of my parents and of my whole life. And so I entered the government and thus we set off for Madrid. And thus we arrived in Madrid.

My whole life I will remember – I believe it will remain indelibly etched upon my soul – the departure from Madrid. When, overruling all our misgivings, and defeating the opposition by the four of us, the government decided to quit the place, we all abided by that decision. We had undertaken to quit. Quitting was necessary. What we found ghastly and painful was that it was necessary to slip away silently and to say nothing to anyone.



I spent two days in Valencia before I went back to Madrid. I went back to Madrid because, in order to work and to act, in order to put enthusiasm and determination into what I do, I must first and above all else have a feeling of self-respect. I felt disgraced in my own eyes. It seemed to me that I had lost a lot of myself and needed to win it back again: I needed to rediscover my bearings. Only we ourselves can comprehend all these, slightly silly crises of conscience. Only we. We who are still young enough in our souls to believe in things great, unselfish and high-minded, to believe that man, that the human race is something more than a creature which is carried away by and pursues only material aims: we who every night examine our consciences and wonder how much we are worthy of ourselves and of the ideas to which we have hitched our very lives – only we can comprehend these states of mind.

During the time I was in Madrid, my term in government had not yet begun. The ministry was set up on 4 November: it was a ministry which had not been in existence so one was cobbled together. A Ministry of Health and Services which had not existed was put together. This was probably done so that the CNT might enter government and, once inside the government, might achieve as little as possible. However, I am not dissatisfied with the work done either by us or by others, in spite of everything. Nor with the work I myself did. Nothing had been done in the Ministry. It was all to do.

I spent ten, twelve, I know not how many days in Madrid. Tough days, maybe the most difficult. Days when my personal activity was confined to being in the Ministry of War to share the anguish of those early days when Madrid looked to its defences without as yet anything having been organised. Days when I turned my hand to all sorts of things: even going down to Albacete in search of artillery, travelling through the night alone in a car with Miaja's nephew. I did all sorts of things. In this way I served the cause, a cause that by then was not mine, a cause that overlapped with the instinct for survival of a people right there in Madrid where party and organisation differences had faded away so as to boost and impose the unity of the species against this common foe who stood for everything that the people of Madrid knew that the fascists did when they came in to loot and pillage, and entered the villages dealing out death and cutting throats.

García Oliver said in his address that the most arduous and toughest work, the true construction of victory was done by this government, the only genuine government of victory. And this is true. And it is true because the hardest, most arduous work is not exactly the winning of military laurels by having an organised army and a more or less powerful airforce and navy. Gaining laurels, achieving victories, are not the same when one has to organise our forces.

To set up a ministry in these circumstances - a ministry that mobilises personnel that can be moved around like pieces on a chessboard, while anyone who fails to carry out orders is regarded as a deserter and liable to all the penalties that this incurs - to do this meant a lot of headaches and innumerable difficulties for myself and all who helped me. And as a general rule the little problems were a lot harder to surmount than the big ones. Against the big difficulties and large obstacles one can oppose, and one must always oppose, great determination and great efforts. But against slow and dogged opposition one has to mobilise an immense amount of patience and the guile of the cat that waits for the mouse to show itself.

Afterwards, I brought a series of schemes into my ministry. Not for me what many did, what nearly every minister who takes over from another does. The sole concern of my office and the only, the sole motive behind my work was not the destruction of the achievements of my predecessor. I believed that new things needed doing: that to tear down is not to build up, that

one needs to build and, while building, to prepare the ground for those who will come after. I also had certain aims in mind: and the first of these was to translate into reality, within the compass of the area where I was to work, all of the essence of the accords and intentions of the organisation to which they appertained. These were experiments, daring experiments of course and they could have borne good fruit.

A lot more might be said: a lot more. One essential point is that in politics we were absolute greenhorns. We had seriously intended to make use of power and to utilise our time in government for constructive and revolutionary purposes. From morning to night, we laboured over all sorts of tasks. We had no time to squander on travelling nor on holding meetings, let alone intrigues or political cabals nor on contriving crises.

When the Barcelona incidents occurred we were so absorbed by our activities that the news came as more of a surprise to us than to anyone. We knew absolutely nothing. We were summoned to the office of the president and it was resolved to settle things without violence and decided that two main delegations should make the journey to Catalonia to seek a resolution to the conflict. Those two union delegations made the trip and things were patched up in theory. However, there was a desire to see the situation prolong itself and for a violent, armed intervention to become necessary, a desire that blood should flow in Catalonia and perhaps that the conflict should have national or international complications. Unable to stand idly by and to hold aloof I also headed for Catalonia. I spent eight days in Catalonia, eight days of incessant work looking for a solution to all the problems, briefed by the comrades from my organisation.

Fortune smiled on our efforts. The issue was properly resolved. It was a lesson, an experience for everyone. Or rather, it should have been. And when I went back to Valencia, content and convinced that we might claim credit nationally and internationally for the labour organisations and the governments having demonstrated their absolute sway over the masses and that the government was equipped, as never before, to help resolve a conflict of formidable importance without the spilling of blood, when I returned sure in my heart that I was bringing back victory along a road strewn with laurels, we discovered that a crisis had been contrived on the very day on which we returned.

That is to say, mysterious things had occurred, things unbeknownst to us four unhappy ministers who occupied the Ministries of Trade, Industry, Justice and Health.

We came here. I came here: I attended the first cabinet meeting that was held and the crisis was served up in the most absurd and oddest manner, for it arose, not over some issue of public order, but rather over a thousand unconnected matters completely extraneous to the events in Barcelona. The fact is that it did arise, it did crop up and the government resigned. And the rest you know.

The new government was set up. The CNT wanted no part of it, because representation of the union organisations was not accepted and we took the view that the involvement of the union organisations in the work of government was of fundamental importance and of international import. We were left excluded from the government and I personally was left with all of my schemes, aims and aspirations to have achieved great things which had not proved possible to achieve and with an urge to press on with them and realise them as far as possible.

I, an anarchist who repudiated the state, afforded it a measure of credit and confidence so to make a revolution from above. A moral revolution, a social revolution, a revolution in conduct and morals. And those who had cause to be grateful to us because we were quitting the streets and giving up violence and because we assumed the responsibility of government by conforming

to the laws that others made, did not rest until they ensured that we, the street revolutionaries, took to the streets again.

And yet this is the problem. The CNT is on the streets. The other political forces do not understand the awful responsibility incurred by going back on to the streets without the responsibility of government, especially when the power of our organisation and movement have lost none of there vigour and effectiveness; in fact, when both of these have been bolstered by the acquisition of a discipline and a coordination that hitherto were unknown to them.

Deep down the other republican forces know us. They know what lies at the bottom of our soul and they have learned to understand us throughout activities and our steadfast loyalty. They know that we never have and never will place in jeopardy the outcome of the war and they have been toying with impunity with this loyalty and sense of responsibility of ours. Because they provoked the conflict and when we reacted, wearying of patient endurance, then we became the provocateurs and yet, as in the case of Barcelona and in every instance, we have been swept up into the conflict which has been the culmination of an ongoing process of provocation.

They knew that we would not lose our heads, that we too wanted to fight fascism because we knew that the contest underway in Spain is of capital historical significance. And they abused our tolerance. And tried an experiment, one last-ditch endeavour to prevent the social revolution from being made in Spain. It was done legally, it was done psychologically, it was done organisationally at the very moment when the CNT took a hand in the governance of Spain. Because this is the underlying, the fundamental problem: the masses. What have the masses been to date? In the struggle between capital and labour - in the historical crucible in which both proletarian and political sectors have fought to make their ideals a reality - only recently did the masses acknowledge personal conclusions of a political and economic nature; until now, the masses have remained, as they were, politically and legally, aloof from the functions of government.

This is a fact which conjures up a historical outlook, even in our organisation. And hence what we may have done to ensure intervention by the CNT and not by the FAI, but by the CNT, which is the masses, the proletariat which makes up the unions, which makes up the organisation of authentic workers, the producers among the people who assume responsibility for and governance of themselves, of the political and economic institutions of the new Spain.

This was all done on our instigation, and we look upon it as the most fundamental revolution which has been carried into effect in political and economic matters. From that moment on, from the CNT's responsible-minded venture into government, with its useful work and tasks carried out without equivocation, a new future has opened up to the world, to all of the world's labour organisations, because the French CGT has declared that trade union representation in the government, the participation in government of the UGT and the CNT was something fundamental, something which spelled out to the world the involvement of the toiling masses in the tasks of government.

The fact is this: whenever a revolution comes about, when a people is in the streets, when the foundations of a society are destroyed, when a new society needs to be built, who builds it? It is built by the workers, the producers, those who extract the ore from the mine face, those who operate the machinery in the factories, who shape the steel in the workshops, who drag the machinery through the streets. It is the workers, those who work by hand or brain, with a constructive outlook and a sense of responsibility, committed as a class to the task of government.

No longer are they the masses, no longer the slaves who hauled the stones and erected the pyramids in Egypt. They are toilers, workers confronted with a new outlook on life and a new

concept of rights, who rebel against the antiquated style of capitalism's politics and who say: ready and willing. I am the worker, the builder, and it must be I who administer and manage my creation.

Now then: do you think it possible, feasible, likely to be able to be in a position to govern as political parties without government responsibility, and a share in government – for the time being – tomorrow we shall see – without relying upon the organisations, without relying upon the unions? That is impossible these days. Nothing can be done against our will or in our absence. Let those who have sought to make so bold and who have believed that they can still call upon sufficient resources, sufficient control to pursue this last-ditch effort reflect upon this and mull it over.

We stand here, with our achievement behind us, an experience under our belt, with an honour that no one has besmirched and with an example of competence that gives the masses self-respect. Because the facts are these also. We are all workers and upon leaving the ministry we have gone back to work as usual, because we never give up working, we who are the children of toilers and who have lived by our labour.'

What was going on meanwhile inside the UGT? The offensive against Largo Caballero, which had culminated in his removal from the government and that of the UGT itself from the responsibilities of government – an offensive mounted with the connivance of leading socialist celebrities of the right and centre – was an omen of the existence of an acute crisis within the ranks of the PSOE and of the UGT. It was not enough, indeed it was downright dangerous, to oust Largo Caballero from the government, unless one also managed to remove him from the leadership of the UGT. As we have seen, Largo Caballero had already been ousted from two of his main positions – from the Socialist Youth and from the Party's executive, no less. It was now a matter of urgency that he be ousted from the UGT. This undertaking had to be initiated by means of a progressive capture of the management of the UGT press. By mid-May this task was well underway. The organ of the party's executive commission, *El Socialismo*, was in the hands of Lamonedá. *Claridad* had a change of management at about this point and although it continued to display a masthead claiming to be an organ of the UGT its approach underwent an abrupt *volte face*. That left only *Adelante*, the organ of the Valencia Provincial Socialist Federation. *A propos of Claridad*, the latter newspaper wrote on 15 May, no less than the following words:

According to our information Carlos Hernández no longer manages the paper. Does the new director speak for the executive? Whom does he represent? It would be a good thing if we were told once and for all, for as one may appreciate, it is not to our taste to waste time on dialogue with those who defend their own private outlook. We prefer frank contenders who say what they are. If communists, then communists; if trade unionists, then trade unionists; and if socialists, then as such. We want no-one to try to mislead the proletariat by claiming to be affiliated to one party while serving quite another.'

On 18 May the press carried this dispatch from the Febus Agency:

'The executive commission of the Madrid Provincial Socialist Federation has issued a communiqué recommending all branches and affiliated members to remain calm, and to ignore any guidelines, recommendations and statements which may be issued by persons unconnected with the PSOE executive and the liaison committee of the PSOE and PCE, but to await instructions which may be issued as the need arises through the anti-fascist press.'

The communiqué bore the signatures of Manuel Cuevas and Rafael Henche. This subterranean crisis erupted onto the surface at the end of May 1937. A significant number of UGT federations had voted against a communiqué which the UGT's executive commission had issued a propos of the crisis. As a result, the executive commission, of which Largo Caballero was general secretary, offered its resignation. This gesture by the executive made a tremendous impression upon the membership and triggered a welcome backlash. The resignation was rejected and the resigning members retained their posts.

As we shall have occasion to see anon, the true implications of this crisis had merely been postponed.

## Chapter Eight: The political demise of the CNT

The beginning of June in Catalonia saw a series of changes inside the public order services as a reshuffle of those services got underway. Barcelona's police chief, Torres Iglesias, who, had been dispatched to head the expeditionary police forces so to reassure the CNT, was replaced by Ricardo Burillo, a man of proven communist orthodoxy.

At the Public Order Delegation, Echevarría Novoa was also replaced, by Paulino Gómez Saez. On 9 June the celebrated 'control patrols' were disbanded by a Generalitat decree.

In Chapter 14 of Volume 1, we dwelt at length upon the planned Unified Security Corps. The amalgamation into one single body of all of the armed agencies of the rearguard was a ploy designed to do away with the people's militia, including the 'control patrols' of Catalonia who exercised their vigilance in the rearguard in the name of the people armed. Such militias and vigilantes were abolished under the aforementioned decree, but when the time came to do away with the 'control patrols', the last redoubt of the armed might of the populace, the various repressive services and agencies of the state were still extant and the ranks of the carabineros had swollen out of all proportion. From mere servitors of the Ministry of Finance, as they had been hitherto, they became a mighty armed corps of 'bodyguards' for Premier Negrin. The scurrilous nickname 'Sons of Negrin', coined by the people, stuck to them throughout the duration of the war.

In the first interview given by the new delegate-general for public order to reporters, he was exultant that the collection of weapons throughout Catalonia was proceeding satisfactorily: at the same time he went on to say:

'The Delegate is quite prepared to grant permission to the unions which may wish to hold meetings, provided that prior notice is given as prescribed in the law on associations, and no peremptory notice such as has been the case up to now. On the other hand, meetings of a political nature will be permitted only if the holding of them can redound to the benefit of public order.'

On 15 June, following protracted talks between Burillo and the minister for home affairs, a formula was devised that would make it possible to reduce the congestion in Barcelona's Cellular Prison which was crammed with CNT members detained at the pleasure of the government. A series of public premises were to be pressed into service as jails. On the same day, the radio stations of the parties and organisations were closed down. But the PSUC's station continued to operate for some time yet. On 25 May, the incoming Minister of Justice, the Basque catholic Irujo, marked his assumption of his duties by excluding the FAI from the popular tribunals, which had been created at the start of the revolution, on the pretext that the organisation was not a lawfully constituted one. The peninsular committee of the organisation which the Basque minister was

labelling as clandestine and non-existent published an important statement on 7 June (in the *Boletín de Información*), from which we have lifted the following paragraphs:

‘We have before us the “confidential political report” issued by the central committee of a certain political party [i.e. the PSUC] — which we need not concern ourselves about — to its radio channel, laying down the short-term policy of the party. It reads as follows:

“PUBLIC ORDER: — Talks with the Valencia Government. Dismissal of the Public Order delegates as compromised and inept. Reference to the removal of parties from the commission of inquiry for the sake of restoring peace and order in the provinces. To date great progress has been achieved regarding the withdrawal of the militias on the coast.”

This part of the scheme has been carried out with the dismissal of the previous delegate for Public Order, Echevarria Novoa, who it seems failed to comply with the instructions to persecute our movement.

“CRISIS: — Provocation of the same. Motives: to be based upon the interim nature of the present government. Our party will seek the premiership. The new government is to have the same features as the Valencia one: a strong, Popular Front government whose chief mission is to bring calm and to bring the perpetrator of the recent attempted counter-revolution to book. A place will be found in this government for the CNT but in such a way that the CNT will find itself obliged to refuse partnership and in this way we shall appear before public opinion as the only ones eager to collaborate with all sectors. Should there be any intransigence on this point, it will not be from us but from the people who clung to that approach on other occasions also.”

Could one ask for greater provocation? In all honesty, is it possible to dispense with the confederal organisation in forming an anti-fascist government? Only the henchmen of reaction can plan such a state of affairs:

“WAR: — ” For reasons of prudence we omit details of this segment of the plan, but we will reproduce one concluding phrase: “To this end, it will be necessary that the next government be exclusively political.”

As can be seen, the intention is clear: to wrest control of Public Order from impartial hands so to entrust it to one who will comply with instructions to harass. Eliminate the CNT from the Generalitat, by foisting humiliating conditions upon it and by depicting it as sectarian and intransigent. This done, implement repressive measures as demanded in the PSUC press, especially in the realm of the economy and with regard to the constructive endeavours of the CNT unions. In short, a wholly reactionary plan.

We challenge the central committee of the party concerned to disown or to amend this plan. For the rest, time will tell.

For our part we wash our hands of any responsibility for the possible consequences of such provocations. Now as ever we stand ready to make the greatest sacrifices for the common anti-fascist cause; we also stand ready, though, to defend the gains of the revolution against all who would trample them underfoot.

Nor do setbacks dismay us. We are used to an unequal struggle and the more obstacles we encounter along our way the more our ardour grows. Pessimism has yet to enter our heads: for so confident are we of our strength that we believe, like the FAI comrades who, in the environs of Derlo, took on an army ten times their equal in manpower and equipment, that nothing and no one will make us bend the knee.

We cannot regard with indifference the campaign of harassment waged against anti-fascist personnel of the most proven valour, nor can we tolerate for one day more that the jails be filled with internees (*presos gubernativos*), among them comrades of mettle, while dangerous elements from the *requeté* and the *fascio*, who blatantly and openly scheme against the present regime, strut through the streets.

Any more than we can silence the widespread protest provoked by the detention of the esteemed anarchist journalist Gonzalo de Repáraz, who has been denied even the respect due his great age and the gallantry with which he defends positions we should like to see less readily abandoned by those in government.

The aim, seemingly, is to act like heroes in the rearguard. These formidably armed men who are not needed to put down any insurrection should leave with all haste for the front lines where they may be assured of covering themselves with greater glory than in the streets of the towns and cities.'

In the realm of politics, the newspapers of 1 June carried a dispatch from the from the Stalinist-controlled Febus Agency, according to which the CNT National Committee had offered, in the course of a visit to Negrín, and in terms of great affection, to lend their moral and material support to the government for the sake of 'defending the dignity of the Republic and the integrity of its territory'. The following day, the same agency carried a clarification. This is the explanatory note from the CNT National Committee:

'We are taken aback by an item which has appeared in the press in which it is alleged that the CNT visited comrade Negrín, the leader of the government, so as to offer him material and moral aid in defending the dignity of the Republic. We are concerned to specify that, in visiting comrade Negrín, the National Committee of the CNT was merely engaging in consultations regarding possible collaboration in government by the CNT, consultations to which we were invited by the leader of the government himself. That is all. The CNT cannot do otherwise, since it has, to date, held to the same position which it spelled out in a public statement at the appropriate time.'

Also on 1 June, that same National Committee, through a lengthy statement, made public property the accords of a national plenum of Regional Committees of the CNT, which had been held from 23 May onwards, which is to say in the immediate aftermath of the formation of the Negrín government. Here is that statement as published in no. 272 of the *Boletín de Información*.

**Item One:** Examination of the crisis created.

IT IS AGREED: To give complete approval to the conduct and to the stance adopted by the National Committee.

**Item Two:** The movement's attitude vis-à-vis the new government.



It is agreed:

1. Not to collaborate directly nor indirectly with the new government.
2. To sponsor propaganda critical of the work being done by the government, indicating further that it is the government of the counter-revolution. This propaganda should reach the front lines and be introduced extensively among the armed corps.
3. To seek an understanding with the UGT so to undertake jointly the task of offering opposition to the government.
4. To do everything possible to arrive at decisions in the workplace, in the unions and wherever possible, in concert with the UGT or with the workers enrolled in it. Let propaganda in favour of the CNT-UGT alliance be the goal of our campaigns.
5. That comrades are to remain in the positions they occupy, most especially on the regional, provincial and local economic councils, the view being that these are agencies sprouted from the revolution, from which the economy is partly preserved and they are, so far as this may be feasible, to lay down the revolutionary path to follow, from those agencies.
6. That in those councils where it may be possible to reach agreement with the republicans and the UGT in order to oust the communists, this should be done.
7. To engage in intense propaganda geared to *rapprochement* with the armed forces, demonstrating to them how the baseness of politics has contrived to pit them against us and making them believe us to be their enemies. Be it stated clearly that the CNT looks upon them as its siblings in the struggle against fascism.
8. On no account to pick up the gauntlet of violence which may be thrown down everywhere, since they are trying to provoke us into doing battle on the streets and this we must avoid.
9. To retain, by removing to places of safety, all potential for warfare.
10. That should the UGT back down and determine to collaborate, directly or indirectly, with the present government, the National Committee may immediately summon a plenum of Regional Committees to establish our movement's position.

**Item Three:** Report from the Regional Committees.

IT IS AGREED: That the Regional Committees immediately forward their reports in writing to the National Committee so that the latter may pass these around to the Regional Committees. These reports should encompass the circumstances of the union as well as economic, war and political business.

**Item Four:** The Political Situation.

(a) Our position with regard to the political parties and organisations which make up the anti-fascist front of struggle.

IT IS AGREED: To attack the PCE at state level. At local level, attack those who are deserving of attack on account of their conduct in the locality, province or region.

(b) Means of lending cohesion to the socio-political outlook of the libertarian movement.

IT IS AGREED:

1. That the Regional Committees are free to set up or not to set up the liaison committees suggested for Catalonia on the basis of the CNT, the FAI and the FIJL, acting at all times with the agreement of the committees of the THREE organisations.
2. To accept the plan of organisation of the INFORMATION AND CO-ORDINATION service, as submitted by the National Committee and in which the THREE organisations are involved.

On general business:

IT IS AGREED:

As proposed by the Central Regional Committee. To appoint a delegation from the plenum to have talks with the Minister of Communications with a view to seeking an end to the arbitrary treatment which the latter is meting out to the Communications Union in the matter of seizures, transfers, dismissals, etc.

As proposed by Aragón. A working party is appointed to draft a resolution on the economic and trade union defence of revolutionary gains, with the following findings being approved:

The working party appointed to draft a resolution on the item relative to the legal and revolutionary defence of the gains made, in economic, trade union and revolutionary terms, recommends:

**First:** Immediate solution to the problem with relation to fiscal charges.

All trade union locals in the workers' hands, as well as those locals held by the parties and organisms actively participating in the war against fascism, are exempt from any sort of fiscal charges in so far as these bodies are used for trade union purposes.

**Second:** The CNT will be accountable for all of the fiscal charges to which industries and farming collectives may be liable, with the sole exception of those which operate and produce exclusively for the war, and since the legal registration of take-over amounts to acknowledgement of the take-overs made by the responsible bodies, the latter shall be the ones held collectively accountable because they represent common rather than private interests.

**Third:** Should the national government or the regional ones refuse to acknowledge the rights of the responsible bodies, the CNT National Committee shall, acting through the Economic Co-ordination Commission, take charge of the sums represented by the general charges and levies upon the collectives and industry, so as to ensure, as forcefully as possible and employing current methods, that the integrity of the economic heritage of the entire organisation is respected.

**Fourth:** Those fiscal charges which are not established in accordance with the dispositions of the law shall not be applicable to industries which are lying idle, or shall be in proportion with the current turnover of those industries, and shall begin to come into effect from the second semester of the current year onwards. The contributions shall be prescribed in the schedule laid down before 19 July.

ECONOMIC DEFENCE PLAN: Until such time as the dispositions indicated in the paragraphs above are legally arranged and resolved, the CNT, through a special purpose-appointed commission, and through its National Committee in liaison with its Regional Committees, shall lay down a programmed plan of action in the unions, specifying which, how many and in what fashion these would enter the fray in order to repulse, by available means, any attempt which may be mounted to the detriment of the gains made by the proletariat, with an eye to having recourse to violence, into which we may be led by the conduct of the state, only as a last resort ... On behalf of the working party — Centre, Aragón and the FAI peninsular committee.

Andalucia raises the matter of its imprisoned members before the National Committee, and on the proposal of Centre it is agreed:

That, before ratification, the National Committee shall brief the Andalucian Regional Committee.

Andalucia regards as inaccurate Circular no. 7 from the National Committee in which the Maroto case is reported. On Aragón's suggestion, the Regional Committees are asked to consider the matter and these endorse the National Committee's circular.

Catalonia reports the decision taken with regard to the 'Friends of Durruti' and the plenum unanimously decides that the leading lights of the 'Friends of Durruti' group be removed from the organisation and that, by one means or another, the encouragement of a breakaway movement as a consequence of this be averted.

On the suggestion of Catalonia, it is agreed:

That the IWMA Secretariat be resident in Spain and that Paris have a secretariat answerable to this one.

Once again, the National Committee raises its precarious situation and the regional's failure to enact the accords of the plenum of Regional Committees which determined:

1. That debts to the National Committee are to be paid off.
2. That sums be voted to the National Committee.
3. That a once-only payment be made to the National Committee of one peseta per member, and
4. That the confederal stamps due each individual be issued.

The plenum endorses this agreement and the Regional Committees undertake to put it into practice.

Witnessed: On behalf of the National Committee

— **Mariano R. Vázquez**, secretary, Valencia 29 May 1937.

Note should be taken of the accord taken by this plenum, which alludes to the establishment of liaison committees made up of all three branches, the CNT, the FAI and the FIJL. One of the propositions, the one relating to defence of revolutionary gains, bears the signature of the FAI peninsular committee, from which it may be inferred that the anarchist organisation was present at a meeting designed to deliberate on an issue that was of consummate concern to the entire

movement. This was the starting point for the formation of what later came to be called the Movimiento Libertario Español (MLE - Spanish Libertarian Movement), a sort of amalgam of the trade union, anarchist and youth wings, which was to survive the finale of the war and into clandestine life and exile.

Another agreement passed by the plenum was a ratification of the refusal to collaborate with the Negrín government. This stance appears to have been amended by a subsequent national plenum of Regional Committees, as shown by the joint circular from the CNT and FAI Regional Committees of Catalonia, as published on 11 June. The text of that circular is as follows:

‘To all unions and groups:

Following the last plenum of local and district committees held on the 1st of this month, at which it was agreed to continue political collaboration, provided it be pursued in a form worthy of our confederal organisation, and at which it was also agreed to invite all comrades belonging to the “Friends of Durruti” to substantiate the charges made in their manifestos and in their newspaper, granting them a specific period of grace to do so, we found ourselves obliged — that period having expired and the substantiation not having been forthcoming — to make public the statement known to you all, as empowered by the last plenum so to do.

At the national plenum of Regional Committees at which it was agreed to pursue and to accept political collaboration, provided that it be in a dignified form and justly proportionate as far as our organisation goes, there was drafted and approved a programmatic plan of a minimal nature which the CNT then put before the government, the political parties and the trade union organisations. This programme was and is the necessary fundamental basis for an intensive, active campaign that should be mounted in every regional. We take it for granted that you will have read this plan, it having been published by the entire confederal press and even in the press organs of the other political parties. At the aforementioned national plenum of Regional Committees it was also agreed to keep a weather eye out for all acts of provocation, for it was specified that no sporadic move of an isolated nature should be made locally or at regional level, because, in the eventuality of our having to confront the government, we should do so on a general scale, throughout Spain.

Of late, there has been an escalation in the persecution, attacks upon the collectives and expulsion of our representatives from the town councils. All of this has forced us to dispatch a delegation from this committee to have talks with the Minister of Home Affairs with a view to putting an end to all these affronts, vexations and injustices. The commission is to report back to us on the outcome of the talks.

As we long ago feared, adversary and inimical parties and organisations have successfully induced the government to dismantle the ‘control patrols’. This committee, confronted by a fait accompli, and anticipating that an opportunity was being sought to make our organisation lose its head and let itself be carried away by the paranoia which such arbitrary acts lead to, and to embark upon a sporadic revolt, was left with no option, given the circumstances (which were more adverse for us), but to agree to the disbandment of the ‘control patrols’. Nonetheless, even at the time of the last Generalitat we stressed the overriding necessity of pressing on with the setting up

of the Internal Security Council as a means of arriving at the creation of a Unified Security Corps and to proceed with every urgency with the purging of the armed services.

Then again, given the continual intrigues of the leading personnel of the PSUC, designed to oust the CNT from the Generalitat government, intrigues which, according to our information, will culminate very soon in a crisis in the present government, we have deemed it necessary and urgent that the regional plenum of unions and groups be convened for the purpose of discussing the following agenda:

1. Reports from the Regional Committees and discussion thereof.
2. Appointment of the acting secretary of the CNT Regional Committee.
3. What should be our stance vis-à-vis the current socio-political situation?
4. Definitive organisation of the CNT by districts.

This plenum will meet next Sunday the 13th of this month at 10am in our school premises, Casa CNT-FAI, Via Durruti 32.

Given the ramifications and importance of the business to be dealt with, we look forward to your presence at this assembly.

Fraternal greetings,

On behalf of the CNT Regional Committee Acting Secretary, **Dionisio Eroles**.

On behalf of the FAI Regional Committee, Secretary, **Severino Campos**.'

The minimum programme mentioned in the above circular was made public on 8 June. It said:

'The CNT, which, since 19 July, has demonstrated with deeds its profound interest in, verging on obsession with, the winning of the war, has examined the situation and acknowledged that in the absence of the implementation of a war and revitalisation policy pursued equally by all of the departments of the government of the Republic, there is no way of extricating ourselves from the quagmire in which we have been bogged down for months past.

Considerable efforts have been made by the men and organisations that have assumed the direction of the war and of the nation's destinies, but their endeavours have not always been crowned by success.

In the view of the CNT, this is due to the fact that, for all the talk that there has been about "everything for victory in the war", the problems have not been tackled in a manner congruent with that non-negotiable premise. So it is not a case of the programme which we are submitting to the government and to public opinion being a partisan programme: we repudiate any such allegation. The CNT states that the contents of its programme are merely the practical and crucial steps needed if a comprehensive war policy is to be put into practice.

If we all want to work honourably and zealously in order to hasten success in this war, then our findings simply must be put into practical effect. Above all else, the

CNT wants to work towards winning the war. Here you have its honest opinion. All that we ask is that no one interprets it in a warped manner.

IN NATIONAL DEFENCE: Effective and unified leadership and command without weaknesses, with severe punishment for those who fail to carry out what the command disposes, regardless of whether they belong to the land forces, navy or air force. The severest penalties also for those high-ranking officers who, on some lame pretext, fail to implement the decisions made by their superiors, The unified command emanates from the National Defence Ministry down to the miliciano: as a guarantee of this, each section of the High Command shall have seconded to it a competent civilian complement, appointed equally from among the three anti-fascist denominations: Marxists, libertarians and republicans.

Establishment of an Organising Council alongside each Under-Secretaryship of National Defence, whose sole concern will be to forestall partisan decisions.

In every aspect of the war and with regard to whatever may need doing, there shall be equal shares for all, working at all times from the basic precept that there are three blocs: the Marxist, the republican and the libertarian.

A policy of genuine sea-borne defence, availing of all resources existing in this respect and which have thus far not been availed of.

Creation of the Under-Secretaryship of War Industries, responsible to the Ministry of Defence and made up of representatives from the government and from the unions. This body will take over the unified management of the war industries and have a duty to work intensely for the creation of a powerful war industry that might end our dependency on foreign arms supplies.

Formulation of a fortification plan that encompasses the rearguard of all battlefronts, rendering widespread advances by the enemy impossible.

IN HOME AFFAIRS: Prompt implementation of the decrees concerning the establishment of the Unified Security Corps. While the Unified Security Corps is in the process of being organised, the provincial and national security councils shall assume the functions allotted to them under the decree founding the unified corps, with the same powers as the existing armed corps.

Establishment of a Council of Order in the rearguard, made up of representatives of the three sectors, Marxist, republican and libertarian, which will send delegates to those localities where any conflict may arise or where the security forces may have to step in against some organisation or party; these delegates shall forestall partisan conduct and pave the way for fair implementation of warrants issued by the authorities.

A reshuffle of governors, leading to the formation of a team of governors composed equally of numbers from each of the sectors — republican, Marxist and libertarian — who make up the front of the struggle against fascism.

IN ECONOMICS: Creation of an Economic Council composed of representatives from the union groupings and attachés from the ministries concerned. This Economic Council, made up of competent, hand-picked personnel, shall immediately

proceed to draw up a plan of economic reconstruction, a plan which — once devised and accepted by all sides — shall be carried into effect without delay, its prompt realisation being supervised by the Economic Council, which will oppose any hindrance from any quarter which may crop up to impede the implementation of the plan of economic reconstruction.

Efficient organisation of a monopoly on foreign trade is a measure crucial to the pursuance of a policy of economic capacity in the absence of which success in war becomes difficult. This monopoly has to be organised by the government through the producer agencies set up for this exclusive purpose.

A review of levies, with these being lifted from all materials and produce necessary to the war industries. A considerable slashing of the levies upon foodstuffs.

Municipalisation of accommodation, with the establishment alongside the municipality of an agency to take charge of the administration of housing.

Municipalisation of the land, with the establishment alongside the municipality of an agency to regulate the working of the land and through which to conduct all operations of sale, exchange and procurement of produce and the usage of these for the benefit of the peasantry. This agency is to be made up of UGT and CNT rural union representatives, it being understood that the peasant retains complete freedom to work his land individually or collectively.

Legal recognition of the collectivised industries taken under the supervision of the state or controlled by the unions, a means being sought to intensify useful production, with secondary or useless production being ceased for the duration of the war.

Creation, by the UGT and CNT trade union organisations, of a work inspectorate agency which is to assume responsibility for achieving maximum productivity in the places of production, thereby preventing any fall in production.

IN FOREIGN POLICY: Pursuit of an energetic foreign policy which works at all times from the unbreachable notion of repudiating the equality of treatment granted to the rebel Junta.

A blunt refusal to countenance any intervention from abroad whether in the form of mediation or of decision-making, in the course of our battle against fascism.

Implementation of an intense propaganda campaign abroad, designed not only to show the democracies the barbarity of international fascism and its interference in Spain, but also to rouse the international proletariat from its lethargy and to rally it to our side.

A speedy reshuffle of our consular and embassy personnel with equal shares for all anti-fascist sectors in the aforementioned posts, to which the militant organisations will have to appoint activists whose record of anti-fascism is beyond reproach and possessed of the requisite capabilities.

IN JUSTICE: A review of all legislation antedating 19 July and its overhaul in accordance with the people's aspirations, founded upon the new approach to living which is implicit in 19 July.

IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: Establishment of a National Education Council to draw up a national education programme, with sectarianism being removed utterly from children's education.

IN PUBLIC WORKS: Drafting and prompt implementation of a national programme for an intensive network of roads designed to facilitate the servicing of the war.

Examination and implementation of a sweeping electrification and hydraulic policy for enactment in the communications industry.

INVOLVEMENT IN MINISTRIES: Under the auspices of the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Education, Labour, Social Services, Public Works and Communications shall be established advisory councils made up of an equal number of representatives from the UGT and the CNT, which shall bear upon whatever problems may arise in those ministries as they affect the trade union organisations.

On behalf of the National Committee: **Mariano R. Vázquez**, Secretary.'

The promised CNT regional plenum and the FAI's Federation of Groups was held on 14 June. Here is the proposition approved on the third and most important item on the agenda:

'Vis à vis the present socio-political situation, what stance should we adopt?'

'1. The working party's view is that participation in the Generalitat government ought to be accepted on the basis of the proper ratio due to the CNT, i.e. in the same proportion as in the previous government, provided that a minimum programme of economic aims and aims relative to the war and to the revolution is agreed.

2. In the event of the CNT's not having a share in the Generalitat government, the view of this working party is that collaboration may be possible, as it was up to 27 September last (on which date the CNT became part of the first Generalitat government), on the basis of the following conditions:

(a) An immediate end to all repression against the agricultural collectives and the restoration of those damaged as a result of the current repression.

(b) Absolute assurances of the lives and liberty of our militants and affiliates in pursuit of their anti-fascist activities.

(c) Immediate implementation of our programme of economic reconstruction on the basis of mobilisation of the rearguard and a build-up of the economic front, for the purpose of stabilising the nation's economic life and ensuring the potency of our fighting fronts.

(d) Honouring of the extant Decree on the Constitution of Municipalities, bearing in mind that the corporations are administrative economic organs and not political ones.

3. It is the view of this working party is that collaboration may be possible, as it was up to 27 September last (on which date the CNT became part of the first Generalitat government), on the basis of the following conditions:



(a) An immediate end to all repression against the agricultural collectives and the restoration of those damaged as a result of the current repression.

(b) Absolute assurances of the lives and liberty of our militants and affiliates in pursuit of their anti-fascist activities.

(c) Immediate implementation of our programme of economic reconstruction on the basis of mobilisation of the rearguard and a build-up of the economic front, for the purpose of stabilising the nation's economic life and ensuring the potency of our fighting fronts.

(d) Honouring of the extant Decree on the Constitution of Municipalities, bearing in mind that the corporations are administrative economic organs and not political ones.

3. It is the view of this working party that, throughout the region of Catalonia, an intense press and public-speaking campaign ought to be begun without delay on the basis of district rallies and culminating in a rally in the capital, to press the constituted authorities to mobilise the rearguard.

Once a favourable climate has been created and public opinion won over by the organisation, it will, in the estimation of this working party, be the right time to ask the President of the Generalitat to reshuffle the Generalitat government so as to put an end to the current provisionality, which is hugely prejudicial to the development of the region's political, social and economic life.

4. The working party's view is that out of the plenum which is being held should come a commission which, properly briefed, may, in the presence of the National Committee, have talks with the Minister of the Interior in Valencia with an eye to calling for an end to the policy of repression implemented in Catalonia against the CNT.

5. For the purpose of rendering the CNT more agile and elastic, the better to seek a solution to every aspect of the political issues at stake, there shall be set up inside the Regional Committee, by way of an organ auxiliary to the same, a Political Advisory Council, to be composed of the following members, appointed by the organisations names — CNT, 2; FAI, 1; JJ.LL, 1; Peasants, 1.

This Political Affairs Advisory Council shall be empowered to recruit all of the auxiliary technical personnel it may deem necessary the better to perform the tasks allotted to it.

It shall be the task of this Advisory Council to examine and to prepare motions upon all of the political issues which may confront the confederal organisation and it shall likewise have a hand in the solution of all governmental problems.

Signed:

On behalf of the Construction and Wood Union: **C. Flores.**

For the Sant Feliú de Guixols local federation: **Francesc Esgleas.**

For the l'Hospitalet local federation: **Manuel Collado.**

For the Peasants' Regional Committee: **Juan Arans.**

On behalf of the FAI Regional Committee: **Severino Campos.**

For the Education and Liberal Professions Union: **Juan R. Fábregas.**

On 18 June the Velodrome d'Hiver in Paris played host to a rally of solidarity with the Spanish revolution. It had been organised by the French anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists. The specially invited speakers at the rally were Benito Pavón, David Antona and the erstwhile ministers García Oliver and Federica Montseny. The rally is of interest on two counts. On the one count, it brought French labour and the French liberal intelligentsia into contact with the most outstanding leaders of the Spanish revolution; on the other, Spanish anarchism, severely criticised in international anarchist circles on account of its collaborationist posture, was symbolically appearing before its judges. The tone of the speeches was redolent of an eagerness to argue the case.

Although we dwelt earlier (Chapter 12) upon the veteran French anarchist Sébastien Faure's response to these speeches, we shall here reprint, albeit only fragmentarily, the most interesting passages from the addresses by García Oliver and Federica Montseny:

GARCIA OLIVER: '... What is more: we could have gone on directing the war and the revolution without needing to join the government of Catalonia or the Spanish government, had the international proletariat not abandoned us, as abandon us it did. Because, really, its abandonment of us has been tragic: we who lived out those times of anguish are well aware of it. In little over two months all of our reserves in rifles and cartridges were used up on the battlefields. And the moment of tragedy arrived, when continuation of the fight was no longer possible.

When the stock of smokeless gunpowder, the only sort which is any use in charging cartridges, ran out, I, as the person then in charge of war preparations, ordered that cartridges be charged with black, smoking gunpowder — a powder that does not burn out completely and which can lead to an explosion inside the rifle which in turn may even cause the death of the comrade using it. And representatives of the comrades on the Aragón front came to see me and said to me: "If you send us any more cartridges with black powder, we will come back here and kill you." And I told them: "Well, black powder is all there is and you must fire with black powder. And when that black powder runs out, you will have to throw stones, because we are in a fight with fascism and you must fight to the death."

Nonetheless, there was white powder in France, in Belgium and in England: in every country there are white powder factories, just as there were in our country, too, but ours were in fascist hands. And we could not get access to powder.

So we were left with the dilemma of whether to face up once and for all to Spain's political problem either by introducing libertarian communism or by accepting governmental collaboration.

And we joined the government of Catalonia and the Madrid government. The time had come for us to do this, because during this time we had fought against the fascists on the battlefronts with severely flawed military organisations: columns without military commanders, devoid of military expertise — they nonetheless had to face real enemies led by foreign experts.

And so we took a hand in the government: not for nothing were we the majority organisation in the country. Shortly afterwards, the army — the revolutionary army, officered by personnel drawn from among the workers themselves — was set up.

This is all that our contribution to the work of the government amounts to — consolidation of the armed struggle; the re-establishment, along with the rest of Spain, of a social order and a revolutionary justice, areas in which very important progress has been made through the CNT's acceptance of the portfolio for Justice.'

FEDERICA MONTSENY: 'Comrades, friends. I was deluded in coming to Paris. I expected to find assembled at this rally all of the liberal conscience of France, the whole of the anti-fascist spirit of the French masses, as well as the sympathy which the Spanish tragedy deserves and needs.

The international proletariat, the European democracies have refused to grasp this elementary and simple fact — that the fate of the world is being worked out in Spain. The democracies have failed as state entities and the proletariat has failed as a revolutionary force against fascism. The internationals — the Third, the Trade Union, the Second and Third — and even our own included — have failed through their inability to organise the proletariat's worldwide protest, compelling the governments to take a stand on the invasion of Spain by Italy and Germany. When we asked desperately for weapons, the sum total of international solidarity boiled down to giving us chocolate and condensed milk for our children. There has not even been the wit to organise sabotage or boycotts to ensure that, since we could get no weapons, the rebels would get none either. What awesome responsibility the proletariats of France, England, Belgium and Switzerland bear! As for democracy, it has set the most shameful example of cowardice in the face of fascist bully-boy tactics that one could conceive of, by countenancing this non-intervention farce of monitoring carried out by the belligerent states themselves which are threatened by the revolution which had erupted in Spain.

It is the CNT which has constantly put the Spanish proletariat through its revolutionary paces, training it for this resistance to fascism which is the example, the model offered to the world by the Spanish people.

Because this in fact has been, as we see it, the most important, the most fundamental aspect of what the CNT and the Spanish proletariat have proved capable of — showing all of the workers of this planet that resistance to fascism is possible and that the organised violence of fascism, world capitalism's last resort in the defence of its privileges and its interests, must be confronted with the organised violence of the working class. The class unity of the oppressed and the deprived and the exploited versus the oppressors, the exploiters, the privileged.

Had our unity in struggle drawn forth the reply of resolute action from the workers of every country, fascism would already be routed in Spain and would have been mortally wounded in Italy and Germany.

Unless human dignity is a myth, then all enemies of fascism — which spells the destruction of the human spirit and the reduction of humanity to the condition of an obedient machine, and which erases all of the gains of human intellect — should, every one of us, unite around a common objective: the prevention of the consolidation of the totalitarian states and the thwarting of world domination by the dark beast of crazed and overblown authority.

The CNT has proved capable of performing this lofty and useful mission in Spain. For this, we are put in the dock. For this, there are comrades who take the view that we have forsworn our ideals and embarked upon a course of dangerous revisions. No. We have found ourselves confronted by living, pulsating issues in the face of which one cannot bury one's head in the sand, but for which one has to seek an immediate solution since success or failure hangs by it.

For example, *a propos* of the war, Durruti — who can hardly be suspected of being short of anarchist content — was the first to grasp that we had to make war just as our enemy did. That our disorderly militias, ineffective for all their heroism, had to be turned into an army with military expertise, and with an effective, united command which might fight to advantage and spare the maximum number of lives. And a military command was organised, and the officers we lacked were improvised and the army, which did not exist, has become a fact. An army with officers like Mera, a CNT bricklayer who has publicly stated: “When this war is over, Mera the bricklayer will take up the trowel which is the mark of his trade and will lay the General Mera of today to rest.”

The CNT has understood that, for every problem, it had to have its point of view, its concrete scheme. Today it does. It has one in regard to economics, laying down the guidelines for an entire scheme for the reconstruction of Spain, for revolutionary achievements by stages, beginning with the immediate municipalisation of all collectivisations, which has been put into effect so far as the countryside goes. It has one in Justice, Education, Public Works, Internal Security, Foreign Policy and Defence. With a constructive approach, confronting realities and not side-stepping them or taking refuge in the intangibility of dead principles.

This, it would appear, is our great fault, our great crime — of which we stand accused by quite a few anarchists who have not known how nor had the capability to rise above themselves. Mistakes! Sure, we have made them. Who does not? Only those who do not do anything make no mistakes.

Ah, comrades! French brothers! What a difference separates the life you live, carefree and peaceful, persistently warding off preoccupations so as to derive the maximum amount of enjoyment from life, and the one we live in Spain. We have learned to prize life, having seen how men die. And we have learned to hold it in low esteem when, in order to hold on to it, we might have to foist upon ourselves an existence of spiritual poverty and heartfelt shame. All of these are the feelings, the thoughts of our whole people. They are the thoughts and feelings of the men who die on the fronts and of the multitudes who perish beneath the air-raids in the rearguard.

Since October the whole of Spain has lived amid a heroic tension, a tension which has grown with increasing stridency until it takes us to the heroism of the populace of Madrid, daily defying death in the shape of shells, and of the people of Bilbao defending each and every house and fighting as best they can against the fascists without and within. You French workers, with your calm lives and your knowledge that the metro awaits you when you leave this rally, and your idyllic homes where air raids are not a threat, cannot know what this means. But you may, you should know insofar as you have lived through the European war, and listened to screaming down upon Paris the same shells which today are devastating Madrid, murdering Bilbao, and which have sown death in Málaga and Almería.

Well now: you need to get used to thinking a single thought — the same bombs, released by the same hands that murder our womenfolk, our old folk and our children, and which pursue them along the road from Malaga and Almería, and from Bilbao to Santander, will shower down upon your old folk, your children, and your womenfolk. Such is fascism. It is war, it is a threatening imperialism, it spells the destruction of all the values of our civilisation.

Let me conclude, comrades, by reiterating this ghastly thought which I should like to see you learn by heart so that, spurred by it, you will bestir your bodies and your consciences and will all understand how redoubtable is your responsibility and how great your danger — if fascism is victorious in Spain, war will necessarily and inevitably ensue — the war you seek to avert at the price of so many sacrifices and so many acts of cowardice. If fascism is beaten in Spain, fascism

goes under in Italy and in Germany, and the world will be able to breathe a sigh at being relieved for a lengthy period of the sinister spectres of war and slavery. That is it.'

The CNT's peasants were very busy between the end of May and the dying days of June. First, there was a regional plenum of Peasants of Catalonia, held in Barcelona. This plenum lasted for five sessions. It can be regarded as a spin-off from the Catalan CNT regional congress held on 26 February. One of its main aims was to bring the peasant unions into line with the new accords on the Industrial Federations. At this plenum it was agreed that a Regional Federation of Agricultural Industries be set up to embrace not only the farming unions and collectives but also the branches covering the irrigation workers, the central market, the utilisation of waste products, farm machinery repair, agronomists, veterinarians, etc. The secretariat was made up of six secretaries — one for information and oral propaganda, one for economic relations, one for collectives, one for the poultry industries, one for technical advice and one general secretary. Nine delegates representing the various economic zones of the region were attached to the secretariat. Alongside this, district secretariats were to be set up in a form congruent with the needs of the areas concerned. Another of the plenum's accords was on the creation of a Federation of Agricultural Collectives of the region. On this point the proposition stated:

'Similarly, there should be progress towards the introduction of mutual aid with the peculiar and particular features of each collective being respected so far as possible, but the inspiration being a broad and UNITED constructive socio-economic, trade and exchange outlook, covering the credit and mutual aid areas, without prejudice or burden to any needy collective, as well as progress towards the establishment of sanitarium and cultural centres accessible, free of charge, to all collective members — in respect of the development of which amenities in the working party believes all collectives will have to agree contribute to the Regional Farming Collectives' Liaison Secretariat 1 per cent of the total sum of their productive output, which contribution shall be dispatched, beginning from the date of this agreement, to the aforementioned Secretariat on an honest and voluntary basis until such time as the Secretariat may work out the statistical schedule for the dispensing and collection of these mutual contributions.'

Likewise, in early June the CNT National Committee issued a summons to a national plenum of Peasant Regional Committees scheduled to be held in Valencia on June 12. Its main objective was to found the National Peasant Federation. This plenum implied the prior meeting of the appropriate regional plenums for the purpose of debating the agenda.

The importance of this plenum is faithfully reflected by the hard-and-fast agreement to found the planned National Peasant Federation, to which end the appropriate statutes were approved. In addition to laying down strict regulations, these outlined a plan for the coordinating of the confederal agricultural economy with view to its socialisation. Here is the text of those statutes as devised by a working party, which included one member of the CNT National Committee and a delegate from each of the Regional Committees represented at the plenum:

**'Foundation, aims and domicile:**

**Article 1.** Hereby founded in Spain under the name of National Peasant Federation is an association which aims to encompass within its component organisms all peasant landworkers affiliated to unions attached to the CNT.

**Article 2.** The National Peasant Federation shall be domiciled wherever its general secretary may freely determine: until such time as a congress may determine otherwise, it is to be based in the capital, in the residence of the National Committee of the CNT.

**Article 3.** The National Peasant Federation is affiliated to the CNT, being the trade union and economic organ of the peasants affiliated to the same and, in consequence, obliged to abide by the accords of the CNT.

**Article 4.** The primary objective of the National Peasant Federation is to orchestrate, on a nationwide scale, the agrarian economy of the farming areas, lands, etc. occupied by the landworkers or collectives or groups of the latter affiliated to the CNT or mixed CNT–UGT organisms wherein, there being workers from both union bodies, it is agreed by a majority to enrol in the National Peasant Federation for the purposes of economic and agricultural development.

#### CONCERNING THE ORGANISMS OF THE FEDERATION:

**Article 5.** The National Peasant Federation shall be made up of the Regional Peasant Federations of the various CNT Regional Committees. The territorial jurisdiction of each Regional Federation shall be the same as the corresponding CNT Regional Committee and, this being the case, it shall be subject to the expansion or contraction which the latter may undergo.

**Article 6.** The Regional Peasant Federations shall be freely structured in the manner which they may have agreed or may determine in a plenum or regional congress, but of necessity, they will have to be based on Peasant Unions or peasant branches of unions affiliated to the CNT and they will have to accept federation of such local unions or branches at district levels.

**Article 7.** The local or district peasant unions/branches and the District and Regional Federations alike shall establish sub-sections for each speciality or agricultural industry or crop — but shall at all times subdivide as necessary to pursue the autonomous and coordinated development of the two aspects — trade union and — economic which are the reasons for the existence of the National Peasant Federation.

**Article 8.** Each Regional Peasant Federation shall freely nominate two of its affiliates, whether members of its Regional Committee or not, to join the national secretariat of the National Peasant Federation, the nominees being required to establish residence in the capital wherever the federation may be officially domiciled.

**Article 9.** The official representation of the National Peasant Federation and the implementation of its national accords, as well as the enforcement of the present statutes, are incumbent upon its national secretariat, which has the functions befitting any National Committee or council of a National Industrial Federation.

**Article 10.** The national secretariat of the National Peasant Federation shall comprise a secretary and as many spokesmen as may add up to double the number of Regional Peasant Federations in existence at a given time, with each affiliated regional federation having two spokesmen.

**Article 11.** The national secretariat meeting in plenary session, with a quorum of more than three-quarters of its membership, inclusive of the secretary, shall determine the duties to be performed by its members and the intervals at which ordinary plenary sessions must convene. Such sessions, as well as extraordinary plenary sessions, are to have recorded minutes which shall be endorsed by the secretary and two spokesmen.

**Article 12.** The secretary is to be elected at a national plenum or congress. It falls to him to use the association's signature on all manner of mutually binding documents and of general correspondence, though such signatory powers may be delegated to one or several spokesmen by agreement with the national secretariat, reached at a plenary meeting of said secretariat.

**Article 13.** The mandate of the secretary shall be deemed ended each time a national plenum or congress of the National Peasant Federation may be held, be it ordinary or extraordinary, it being up to that plenum or congress to ratify or to replace the serving secretary. Failing agreement to the contrary, he shall be understood to be confirmed in his office.

The spokesmen nominated by the regional federations shall complete their mandate as the federations they represent may determine — it being incumbent upon those federations, in that event, to appoint their replacements without delay.

#### NATIONAL PLENUMS OR CONGRESSES:

**Article 14.** The national plenum or congress of the National Peasant Federation, be it ordinary or extraordinary, represents the will of the National Peasant Federation and its accords shall be binding upon all its components and affiliates.

**Article 15.** The plenum or congress shall be made up of delegations freely appointed in assembly by the unions of other denomination affiliated to the CNT, said assemblies to be convened for the express purpose of dealing with the appropriate national plenum or congress.

The Regional Peasant Federations affiliated to the National Peasant Federation shall be under an obligation to attend the plenums or congresses so to report to it, while attendance by collectives or peasant bodies comprised entirely or in part of workers affiliated to the CNT shall be optional.

**Article 16.** Ordinary plenums or congresses shall be summoned annually by the national secretariat of the National Peasant Federation and extraordinary ones as the secretariat may see fit or as may be requested of the secretariat by two regional federations or the National Committee of the CNT.

**Article 17.** Until such time as a decision to the contrary may be made at a national plenum or congress, the regional federations shall be authorised to determine for themselves the territorial extent or jurisdiction of their district or district federations.

#### ADVISORY, CONSULTATIVE, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL ORGANS OF THE FEDERATION.

**Article 18.** The National Peasant Federation shall set up as many agencies by way of auxiliary commissions attached to its national secretariat as it may deem necessary

to further, encourage, oversee and direct any of the agricultural or livestock activities of the peasant belonging to the federation, whether in the areas of crops, industries auxiliary to farming, experimental farms and laboratories, livestock breeding, etc., etc., as well as in any other matters which the national secretariat of the National Peasant Federation may assess as useful to the ends of this association.

**Article 19.** The commissions described in the preceding article shall be understood to be merely advisory, consultative, technical and cultural organs in the service of the National Peasant Federation. which shall be able to select freely the technical, administrative and professional personnel needed to ensure their operation.

**Article 20.** Of necessity, any organ of the nature set out in the two preceding articles will have ramifications in each of the regional federations making up the National Peasant Federation and may, on the instigation of the appropriate regional federation or of the national secretariat, extend these into the district federations which these embrace. Should the extension into the districts be made solely on the decision of the national secretariat, it shall be incumbent upon it to provide the necessary where-withal and to subsidise the expenditure incurred to the required amount which the resources of the regional federation concerned cannot meet.

**Article 21.** For the purposes of propagating technical expertise and industrialisation of agriculture, as well as eradicating illiteracy in the countryside, the National Peasant Federation shall establish the necessary liaisons and agreements with the CNT National Technicians' Association and the CNT National Federation of Teaching Unions, and the regional branches of both of these entities.

#### ECONOMIC RESOURCES OF THE FEDERATION.

**Article 22.** The economic resources of the National Peasant Federation shall be of the two following types:

- (a) Assets deriving from the sharing of the federation in the union dues collected from their members by the component unions of the regional federations.
- (b) Assets derived from the agrarian economy linked with the organisms affiliated to the National Peasant Federation as provided for in Article 4.

**Article 23.** The share of the National Peasant Federation mentioned in clause (a) of the foregoing article shall be freely determined by the national secretariat of the National Peasant Federation on the prompting of the regional federations which make up the national federation, but at no time shall it ever exceed one-third of the income derived from the dues paid by the membership to their respective unions.

**Article 24.** The assets derived from the incomes obtained by the National Peasant Federation under the prescription given in clause (b) of Article 22 shall be of a size and nature congruent with what is determined in the articles which deal with economic coordination.

**Article 25.** The National Peasant Federation shall also be able to obtain economic resources by means of donations, subventions or contributions such as may be made over to it by confederal or other organisms provided, in this latter instance, that these are accepted or invited by the national secretariat or with its express permission.



ECONOMIC COORDINATION OF THE PEASANTS AND COLLECTIVES AND THE COORDINATION OF THESE WITH THE FEDERATION.

**Article 26.** Peasants belonging to collectives which have affiliated to this federation for the purposes outlined in Article 4, and peasants who do not belong to collectives but are organised in peasant unions affiliated to the CNT, are to be coordinated, economically speaking, with the National Peasant Federation in the following manner:

(a) The peasant collective, smallholder or individual cultivator alike belonging to the National Peasant Federation shall enjoy complete freedom of initiative and execution for the purposes of the agricultural development of the lands they occupy: but they shall abide by the national agreements of the National Peasant Federation and of its national secretariat in respect of the improvement of productivity, the avoidance of the propagation and outbreak of farm blights and the conversion or replacement of such crops as it may be appropriate to discontinue growing on account of poor profitability, so as to ensure the farm workers of an improved standard of living.

(b) The aforementioned collectives, smallholders or individual cultivators shall all, without exception, be obliged to supply the National Peasant Federation with whatever statistical data it may seek with regard to current or projected production, as well as figures of any other sort which the said federation may have need of, apropos of the progress of the individually and collectively worked holdings.

(c) The aforementioned collective and individual agencies shall acknowledge the National Peasant Federation as the sole agent for the distribution of produce and its exportation in those instances in which exportation may be necessary.

(d) In order to put the prescription of the foregoing clause into effect all of the collectives and individual holdings which exist in a given district shall liaise with one another by means of a corresponding liaison committee, which is to do whatever is needed to carry out its task to the letter, as well as any other tasks which may be assigned it by the National Peasant Federation.

(e) Although initially the collectives and individual holdings may be regarded as empowered to deduct from their own output the amount they reckon they need for their own consumption, be it understood nonetheless that collectives and individual farmers alike claim to aspire to a just distribution of the produce obtained from the farming economy, so as to ensure thereby equal rights for all of society's consumers in the broadest sense of the term. In keeping with this aspiration, it is understood that they accept the restrictions which may become necessary at any given moment so as to guarantee the peasant equal consumer rights with the rest of the nation. Of course, these restrictions will at no time be obligatory upon the peasants affiliated to the National Peasant Federation under Articles 1 and 4 of these statutes, except in those instances where this is expressly agreed by the secretariat of the National Peasant Federation, for no other agency is acknowledged as having sufficient power to prescribe such limitations.

(f) Surplus output not directly consumed, or the totality of production achieved as alluded to in the two instances anticipated in the above clause, shall, it is understood,

be placed in the hands of the National Peasant Federation which will pay the corresponding price — this price being the one current in the producer district or the one set by a single national agency for price regulation, an agency comprised totally of the National Peasant Federation, or one on which it has substantial representation and which is accepted by the national secretariat.

(g) The collectives and individual holdings shall obtain through the National Peasant Federation whatever articles of any sort they may need for the pursuance of their agricultural activities and also for the provisioning of consumer cooperatives, communal distribution depots and other centres catering for the storage of items required for the consumption of the organised peasants. The term “items” covers each and every piece of equipment to assist production, agricultural machinery, etc. which may be needed to ensure the better exploitation of agricultural livestock holdings and the upkeep of the landworkers. The National Peasant Federation shall supply all of this at cost prices; that is, at the same prices as those for which it came by them, making an addition only for transport and general administrative expenses incurred in supplying the peasant consumer with the item sought.

(h) Be it expressly understood that all dealings between the collectives and individual holdings and the National Peasant Federation, and of the latter with the former, shall be channelled through the corresponding Regional Peasant Federation belonging to this national federation.

**Article 27.** The component regional federations of the National Peasant Federation shall set up whatever statistical bureaux dealing with crops, manpower etc. may be required to ensure precise coordination with the district and local unions or branches, and the collective or individual holdings located in the various localities.

The National Peasant Federation shall have the same organs at national level so to collate and marshal the statistics of all its component Regional Committees.

**Article 28.** The National Peasant Federation shall so gear its activities as to obtain a just distribution of the land, so that all peasants may have land to cultivate and that all of the arable surface of the nation may serve the nation collectively through the labour of the organised peasants.

While pursuing the aim outlined in the above paragraph, the National Peasant Federation shall seek to smooth the transfer of peasant worker from areas where arable land is in short supply to areas where there is a recognisable shortage of manpower to cultivate the plentiful land on hand.

RELATIONS OF THE FEDERATION WITH CONFEDERAL ECONOMIC OR OTHER ORGANISMS.

**Article 29.** The National Peasant Federation, through the agency of its national secretariat or of CNT militants freely chosen by that secretariat, but not necessarily union members of the National Peasant Federation, shall establish the necessary liaison with any confederal economic or other organisms with which it would do well to cooperate or collaborate for purposes peculiar to the National Peasant Federation.

**Article 30.** The National Peasant Federation shall directly and compulsorily participate in those institutions or agencies of a national or international economic nature which may already exist or may in the future emerge and be affiliated to the CNT and, this being so, the view shall be that the economy linked to the National Peasant Federation is but part of the whole national economy which comes under the purview of the national economic institutions or agencies set up by our trade union.

**Article 31.** Until such time as there exist national confederal agencies or institutions which perform this function, the National Peasant Federation shall organise throughout the territories under its jurisdiction an auxiliary service of compensation funds designed to act as savings, payments and exchange bureaux in the various localities affected by its transactions, at home and abroad. Be it understood that just as soon as national confederal institutions catering for these aims come into operation, the National Peasant Federation shall hand over to them the functions it has provisionally assumed, whereupon the aforementioned compensation fund service will cease to operate.

Article 32. In the manner indicated in the preceding article, and in the same circumstances, the National Peasant Federation shall be able to take what steps it deems necessary in accordance with the regional federations concerned, to make provision for compensation for damage and loss caused by accidents, fires, rural blights, etc., and also to orchestrate solidarity and mutual aid schemes to cover the risks of instances of illness, retirement, loss of parents, etc. for individual peasant workers and their families who are not members of the collectives, given that such provisions are unnecessary in the collectives in that provision exists. Should there be any CNT body for this purpose, the National Peasant Federation will hand over these functions to it and take a direct share in the leadership or steering organism of that institution.

#### GENERAL DISPOSITIONS:

**Article 33.** It shall be incumbent upon the National Peasant Federation's national secretariat to clarify any areas of ambiguity which may arise in the implementation of the present statutes.

**Article 34.** Instances not provided for in these statutes shall be resolved by one of the two following procedures:

(a) By means of a national congress or plenum or an extraordinary nature and called for this very purpose.

(b) By agreement of the national secretariat of the National Peasant Federation, as adopted in plenary session and submitted for review and approval to the National Committee of the CNT just as soon as formal approval has been secured, the case would be regarded as resolved.

**Article 35.** The National Peasant Federation shall not be able to dissolve itself unless there is agreement to that effect by a national congress of the CNT.

From 11 to 13 June 1937, Paris was the scene for an extraordinary plenum of the IWMA at which, after examination of reports concerning the recent bloody incidents in Barcelona, a motion

was drafted denouncing the acts which sparked those incidents as a provocation calculated to snatch away from the CNT its control of the factories and shift it from its revolutionary positions, as well as interpreting them as an attempt to exterminate CNT militants. The motion names the PCE as the prime culprit, charging that it was the faithful executor of the grim designs of the Soviet state.

The motion also alluded to the political crises triggered by those incidents and, following a brief review of their consequences, stated:

‘That the oversight of the revolutionary war, simultaneously with the transformation of society should rule out, so far as the CNT is concerned, any direct participation and any indirect connivance with the governments of Barcelona and Valencia and would require the CNT to drop all the political, economic and doctrinal concessions made to those governments for the sake of preserving intact a so-called anti-fascist front made up of sectors which negotiate with the class enemy with an eye to liquidating the war and strangling the revolution; the view is that the official withdrawal of the CNT from the anti-fascist front is becoming increasingly necessary, provided however that it reserves the right to initiate or to accept circumstantial agreements with the genuinely anti-fascist elements within the front, who are eager to see the war concluded by means of a liberating revolution of the Spanish proletariat directed not merely against fascism but also against so-called democracy.

Without wishing to foist upon the CNT a line of conduct which it might find momentarily unacceptable, this extraordinary plenum is convinced that the CNT will keep faith with the principles and doctrine proclaimed by the IWMA and will, as soon as circumstances permit, make the correction which events require. Such a reaction is intimately bound up with the very existence of the CNT and the salvation of the social revolution in Spain and elsewhere.

For its part, the IWMA gives an undertaking to continue to support more forcefully and consistently than ever, in material terms and through action, the revolution in Spain.

Consequently, the plenum charges the IWMA secretariat to examine, with every urgency and in concert with its affiliated and sympathising unions, ways and means of intensifying the propaganda of the Spanish revolution, increasing and escalating the aid to our CNT comrades and laying the groundwork in every nation for the possibility of general strikes in solidarity with the Spanish proletariat in revolution, these being the most immediate duties of the IWMA.’

This declaration was endorsed by the delegates from Sweden, Holland, France, Italy, Poland, Belgium and Chile. The delegation from the Spanish CNT signified that it was abstaining. This was understandable, when we recall that the CNT was very shortly about to stake a claim to a place in the Valencia government.

On 17 June, the executive commission of the PSOE met in Valencia under the chairmanship of Jiménez de Asúa. Present at the gathering were Fernando de los Ríos, Vidarte, Bujeda, Cordero, de Gracia and Lamonedá. Albar and Prieto were unable to attend. González Peña and Cruz Salido had asked permission to remain in Bilbao so to help in the defence of the city.

Bilbao fell to the Italian legions four days later. Declarations by Federica Montseny in which she deplored the fact that the city had been evacuated without any attempt to destroy even its industrial and port installations drew a retort from President Aguirre who argued that such destruction would have amounted to the most blatant abandonment of hopes of retaking the city and a loss of faith in the just conclusion of the war. With the fall of Bilbao, Mola's most sought-after target next to Madrid itself, the loyalists' Northern zone, was in serious jeopardy. Mola did not get the chance to relish the fruits of his much-advocated offensive. He had perished in a mysterious flying accident at the beginning of that very month.

The PSOE executive's meeting looked into the matter of the party's relations with the PCE and the decision to retain relations through the established liaison organs was endorsed.

On 17 June the CNT's secretary refuted allegations by Doctor Negrín to the effect that his government was widely representative in that, whereas the union organisations were not included in the cabinet, the political parties, who were their ideological representatives, were. The communiqué from the CNT stated:

'The present government includes no political tendency which is representative of us, and the workers enrolled in the CNT — the two and a half millions of which the parties must dream — and the CNT milicianos, upwards of 100,000 of them, who offer their lives on the battlefronts, are not represented by any of the parties which make up the present moderate government.'

This CNT communiqué amounted to more than just a protest note. On 28 June, organised by the CNT National Committee no less, there was a rally in the Teatro Apolo in Valencia at which the speakers were Lunazzi, Galo Díez and the secretary of the National Committee himself. The last blatantly sought a place for the CNT in government — 'for reasons of responsibility and not of opportunism'. In the chair was Domingo Torres, Valencia's mayor, and he summed up the speeches with the following conclusions:

- '1. Formation of a government with proportional representation of all anti-fascist forces, which implies an authentic war policy.
2. An end to censorship as it applies to criticisms and political issues.
3. Repeal of the decree establishing the Special Tribunal, the latter being a dictatorial weapon unacceptable in the hands of a minority.
4. Release of detainees held without trial (*detenidos gubernativos*) and a speedy public hearing of charges pending without prejudice to the rights of the accused.'

The demands of the CNT could not have come at a worse moment. A fresh crisis had just arisen in the Generalitat and it was to have decision political implications for the CNT. The crisis erupted on 26 June and, to begin with, had all the appearances of a straightforward reshuffle. The outgoing government line-up had been arranged during the dramatic events in May and had been operating as the executive council of the Generalitat. The crisis came about by common consent of all of the parties and organisations represented on this council. It was a question of resolving the interim status of the government and affording it the necessary breadth, for each minister was overseeing several departments. And although it was anticipated that a solution would not be long in coming, the editorial in the 27 June edition of *Solidaridad Obrera* gave voice to certain misgivings:

‘The Generalitat must be constituted speedily but without trespass against what amounts to a legitimate right for any party. The CNT is not oblivious to the fact that the intention is to slight it by reducing the number of its representatives, and it issues a frank and timely warning that this is not the most apt way to consolidate the foundations upon which the new government line of mutual respect, crucial if there truly is a desire to win the war, must rest.’

President Companys, in announcing the outbreak of the crisis in the early hours of the evening of 26 June, told reporters that he would be making a radio address that evening at 8.30pm. Here is an excerpt from his address:

‘The gains of the proletarian classes which are the driving force of victory must be preserved with the firmness of a thoroughgoing competent, constructive reality, for that responds to the underlying meaning of the struggle and it is only just and legitimate. But one cannot operate upon the living flesh of our people nor deform its characteristics through coercion or threat. There must be respect for freedom to work, and legitimate activities must be guaranteed; and it is necessary that our peasants who cherish and sweat over the land which they work and the middle classes generally, in city and in country, meet with the respect, aid and encouragement to which they are entitled through their endeavours and their contribution to the war which we are waging against the international front of all of the barbarian elements huddled around the emblem of the fasces.’

Availing of the wide vote of confidence awarded him by the parties and organisations in the government, President Companys announced the following cabinet line-up on 28 June:

Presidency: Lluís Companys (ERC)

Internal Affairs: Antoni Maria Sbert (ERC)

Finance: Josep Tarradellas (ERC)

Culture: Carles Pi i Sunyer (ERC)

Health and Social Services: Roberto Alfonso Vidal (CNT)

Public Services: Juan García Oliver (CNT)

Economy: Germinal Esgleas (CNT)

Supply: Miquel Serra Pàmies (PSUC)

Justice: Rafael Vidiella (PSUC)

Labour and Public Works: Joan Comorera (PSUC)

Agriculture: Josep Calvet Soler (U. de R.)

Without Portfolio: Dr Pere Bosch Gimpera (Independent Catalanist)

The CNT had given in over parity of representation for the Esquerra and the PSUC, as well as over the inclusion of a U. de R. representative. Included in the line-up were the three names put forward by the Regional Committee, but at the end of the list Companys had, without prior consultation, added the name of a minister without portfolio. Thus, the CNT found itself in a position where, as the *Boletín de Información* sarcastically put it, the agreed 3-3-3-1 formula had turned into a full dozen. The CNT’s reaction to this is reflected in a communiqué released on 30 June 1937:

‘Since 19 July 1936, when it gallantly stood up to fascism, the Catalan CNT has, with the utmost dignity, shared the responsibilities of participation in the governments of the Generalitat of Catalonia.

The activity and achievement of its personnel in positions of responsibility and the accommodating line of political conduct and serenity in the face of squabbles in the rearguard, as well as its steadfast righteous opposition to fascism and its affirmation of popular liberties and the advances of social justice — these are common knowledge, as is the conduct adopted at all times by the Catalan CNT.

The Catalan CNT, for all its ability to boast of a majority and preponderant living force rooted in the toiling masses and in the soul of the people, has never sought to capitalise upon it in order to secure privileged positions, precisely for the sake of the moral unity of all anti-fascist denominations, and it has stood by this attitude despite the continuous disloyal attacks to which it has been prey.

After the May events, in which the CNT set the world the most magnificent example of sang-froid and sanity in the face of a premeditated provocation, and also displayed a laudable discipline in bringing to an end the shooting which they had not initiated and which the provocateurs who had hatched this manoeuvre had an interest in prolonging, a provisional government of the Generalitat was formed of which one CNT representative was part.

From May up to the present, the provocations offered the CNT in Catalonia have not ceased. Militants have been hunted down, tried and murdered: centres have been shut down and collectives smashed, injustices have been taken to extraordinary lengths so as to force the Catalan CNT into desperate defence. And still, in the face of this avalanche of repression and provocation, the same sensation of sang-froid has been forthcoming from us. We have not been willing to spark a fratricidal war. We have been unwilling to wreck the anti-fascist bloc, strained by the ignoble chicanery of certain elements. We have borne the war in mind and the necessity of winning it at any price and we have considered the difficult and serious times in which we live and, cognisant of our responsibility, we have not departed from the straight course we have outlined.

The Generalitat Crisis: A fresh crisis having arisen in the Generalitat, we have, ever since the first talks we have had with its president, in an effort to seek a solution to the political problem, offered him every sort of facility.

The attitude of the Catalan CNT on the issue is public knowledge, thanks to the note which we handed to the president and which he made available to the press. Reproduced below, it states:

“The Catalan CNT, summoned for talks by the President of the Generalitat, has handed him the following note:

President: The view of the Catalan CNT is that, in the face of the grave times facing us and of the intensifying cruelty of the struggle, the Generalitat government must, now more than ever before, take as its principle the unity of all anti-fascist denominations and the collaboration of them all in the government represented by the two

union bodies, the UGT and CNT, and by the U. de R. and the ERC and must seek to maintain a consistent policy in respect of the struggle against fascism, to consolidate the people's freedoms and to affirm the advances in social justice which may be most consistent with the people's aspirations and needs and with the very sacrifices which the war imposes.

The Catalan CNT understands that the Generalitat ought to be constituted in the same proportionality as its predecessor, without any tendency being weakened; also, bearing in mind the war and ready for the utmost sacrifice so as to provide an example for everyone, it recommends as a solution that its representation be reduced to the three ministries of which it had the oversight in the provisional government.

We recommend that in each ministry there be mixed panels responsible for acting in a consultant capacity.

The government must have as its programme:

Reinforcement of the unity of all anti-fascist denominations.

Winning the war.

Avoiding any policy of harassment and repression within the anti-fascist coalition and the sectors that support the republican government.

Raising the people's fighting morale.

Regularisation and re-evaluation of economic life.

A work plan attuned to the requirements of the war and to putting an end to unemployment.

Forestalling the rising costs of living and of basic necessities.

Crackdown on hoarders and speculators.

Protection of and respect for the collectives.

Purging of dubious elements from the rearguard.

Combat bureaucracy.

Effective and speedy armament of the whole of Catalonia.

Establishment of a Single Security Corps.

Purging of the officer class of the Armed Forces.

Ongoing pursuance of popular culture."

We do not believe that, in any of the consultations held with any political party or trade union organisation, any such note, wherein the stance of a vital sector in Catalonia was spelled out so concretely, deliberately, and impartially or in a manner so apt to the requirements of the time, has been forthcoming.

In it the Catalan CNT makes it very clear that, above all else, it was concerned for the unity of all anti-fascist sectors and with the winning of the war and in this note it was made crystal clear that the Catalan CNT was the only one making sacrifices and ready to give up ground so as to give an example to everybody, and not because it may have felt itself weakened as some may have sought to suggest.



A manoeuvre: Well now. At a time when it was already apparent that the political problem had been solved and that the Catalan CNT had put forward the names of the men who were to represent it on the Generalitat, the Catalan CNT found itself confronted by the fait accompli of the line-up of a government in which was featured a minister without portfolio, something to which our organisation had not given its consent, having indeed impugned such a would-be solution from the very start of the negotiations about the crisis, and not on account of the minister himself, but rather because of the anomaly of appointing a minister not representative of a sector or party.

As this could be interpreted as more than a manoeuvre, as an act of disloyalty, the Catalan CNT conveyed its absolute opposition to this appointment to the President of the Generalitat and the Generalitat President expressed his view that it should stand. With the aim of forming a new government, dispensing with the Catalan CNT? The passage of time will clarify this enigma.

The Catalan CNT had agreed with President Companys that the Generalitat government to be formed would comprise the Generalitat president as chairman of the new council of the Generalitat, plus three PSUC ministers, three ministers from the Catalan CNT, three ministers from the ERC and one from the U. de R.

The understanding of the Catalan CNT was that the government which was to be formed to tackle the war had to enjoy maximum authority and for this reason had to be represented by men who would enjoy the backing of living authentic and responsible organisations and that no one might feature in the council which was to be set up in a personal capacity, however prestigious his home, precisely because of the prestige of that council and of the dignity of the very organisations and parties which it was to comprise.

Spelling out positions: Given the clear-cut position of the Catalan CNT and the sacrifices which it has been making, the attitude of President Companys in choosing this government line up, and the stance of the other sectors which support it, is inexplicable unless understood as a deliberate plan to exclude, for purposes unknown to us, though we might easily guess them, the Catalan CNT from the responsibilities of government.

In the face of this, the Catalan CNT, which has not lost its self-esteem and is cognisant of the value of its strength and of the fact that it need not beg for that to which it is entitled, has made it very clear to President Companys that it cannot resign itself to the role to which it is intended to reduce it. The Catalan CNT must act with complete authority, confident that it is not to be the plaything nor the appendage of anyone if it is made morally impossible for it to form part of the government.

Since it is not the Catalan CNT which has been the instigator of this thoroughgoing problem which splits the anti-fascist bloc asunder, it abjures any responsibility for an act of such consummate seriousness, but it behoves it to proclaim loud and clear that, on the terrain of the struggle against fascism and with an eye to winning the war, it knows its duty and will be capable of performing it, as it has always done, with the utmost dignity.

And should anyone seek to drive the Catalan CNT onto the worst of terrains and to turn it into the whipping-boy of certain manoeuvres which are in the air, it will also know how to adopt the appropriate stance of self-defence, since it could not silently countenance its being affronted with impunity.

Let it be made very clear that the Catalan CNT has done the impossible in terms of compromising in an effort to arrive at consensual solutions; similarly, let it be said loud and clear that the Catalan CNT has done everything possible to ensure the establishment of a government with responsibilities vis-à-vis the war, and that if realisation of these intentions has proved impossible it is not through its fault.

Let public opinion judge and the working class of Catalonia, Spain and the world as a whole will be able to judge us all through our actions of today and tomorrow.

Down with fascism and all fascisms, disguised and covert!

On behalf of the Catalan CNT.

The Committee. Barcelona, 29 June 1937.'

Company's replied to this manifesto, and to a letter addressed by the Catalan CNT to President Company's, wherein it was stated that the CNT ministers would not take charge of the departments assigned them nor collaborate in the council until such time as the appointment of a minister without portfolio was dropped, by announcing the formation of a government which included no CNT representation. This is the new cabinet's line-up, a cabinet from which the CNT had been excluded:

Presidency: Lluís Company's

Interior and Social Services: Antoni Maria Sbert (ERC)

Finance: Josep Tarradellas (ERC)

Culture: Carles Pi i Sunyer (ERC)

Labour and Public Works: Rafael Vidiella (PSUC)

Economy: Joan Comorera (PSUC)

Supply: Miquel Serra Pàmies (PSUC)

Justice: Pere Bosch Gimpera (Acció Catalana Republicana)

Agriculture: Josep Calvet (U. de R.)

Almost at the same time some of the personalities of Catalan politics who had decamped to France — people like Joan Casanovas and Josep Escofet — returned to Barcelona. Their example would shortly be followed by other political personages driven into France on 19 July 1936 by their hatred of the people and fear of the revolution. In Valencia political celebrations were being hatched and the Stalinists' watchword looked forward to the orchestration of the political carnival.

The birds of ill omen were returning ...

## Chapter Nine: Ironies of a first anniversary

On 4, 5, 6 and 7 July 1937 in Valencia the FAI held a peninsular plenum of quite exceptional importance. It has already been noted elsewhere in this work that the FAI was set up in 1927 on the occasion of a conference held right there in the capital of Levante. Its mission was to coordinate the activities of the groups and federations that operated with a certain autonomy, and to watch over the purity of libertarian principles in the bosom of the CNT. The basic unit of the FAI was the so-called 'affinity group', a tiny coterie of unlimited dimensions. Groups federated with one another by means of local, district and regional federations. All of the regional federations together (including the Portuguese Federation) made up the FAI, whose ultimate representation was the peninsular committee.

Although the FAI published several periodicals in Spain and had taken part in public rallies, it had always pursued its activities oblivious of official legislation. While the FAI was a clandestine organisation, it was, when compared with say organisations such as those of freemasonry, hardly a secret one.

Although the so-called 'specific organisation' held great sway over the CNT and its committees, for nearly every one of the FAI's members belonged to the Confederation, its numbers were quite limited by comparison with the magnitude of the CNT. The size of the FAI prior to the army revolt may be reckoned at around 30,000.

Relations between the FAI and the CNT went beyond mere fellow feeling or ideological affinity. The FAI had always laid claim to a direct role in certain shared aspects of the struggle and had arrived at the so-called '*trabazón*', an arrangement whereby it was officially represented on certain committees such as the prisoners' aid committees and in the defence cadres. The prisoners' aid committees had the oversight of solidarity with and legal assistance from the many members of both organisations who were subject to internment without trial (*prisión gubernativa*) or sentenced. The defence cadres, represented by the defence committees, were organised district by district and in the villages and operated clandestinely in the shadow of the unions. They represented a network of shock groups and went into action in times of danger or of repression. Nonetheless, the defence cadres on several occasions switched to offensive operations, as the revolutionary revolts of January and December 1933 showed.

From 19 July onwards, the FAI stepped up its public activities. We have seen it from that day on signing compacts, together with the CNT, with the anti-fascist parties and organisations, taking up seats on town councils and posts in the popular tribunals and other organisms. The FAI indirectly participated in the collaborationist process and in the appointment of the militants who joined the Largo Caballero government in the name of the CNT. In that government two of the anarchist ministers formally represented the FAI.

In the aftermath of the revolt in July 1936 the FAI's organisational ties, nationally or with regard to the peninsula, suffered a protracted collapse. Even so, the specific groups and committees were intensely caught up in the struggle, in the anti-fascist coalition and in the restructuring of the economy in close association with the confederation's unions and committees. Anarchists of the

FAI and of the CNT had amalgamated their initials and the new title of 'CNT-FAI' said much about the utter fusion of both movements. Not until well into the month of September 1936 did the FAI begin to recover its traditional autonomy – at which point, the peninsular committee having been reorganised, it determined to re-establish organisational ties with the regional federations of groups, as is evident from Circular no. 1 from that committee, which we now reproduce:

**'FAI peninsular committee – Circular no. 1 –** To the regional committees and groups:

Esteemed comrades, Salud!:

Much time has elapsed since the last circular from this committee was issued to the organisation. The events which have come to pass during this interval have been manifold, all of the utmost importance and relevance for our movement in particular and for the proletarian revolution in general.

The reasons behind the lack of organisational communication can readily be surmised by all and this being so, we believe you will understand them. As a result of the circumstances, multifarious and pressing activities cropped up which had to be attended to, to the detriment of organisation business. Now that minds are somewhat more at ease and concerned with attending efficiently to proliferating revolutionary activities, we have completely reorganised the peninsular committee, ensuring that it may function normally.

Whereas we for our part must report as frequently and extensively as possible, let it not be forgotten that our reports must be a digest of reports forwarded to us by the Regional Committees and so we make a special recommendation to everyone to keep us briefed concerning their activities and the activities of other sectors in their areas so that we may perform our function as a liaison committee.

We on this committee have seen to it that in all of its activities the specific movement has been linked with the CNT, establishing a single front which has kept the ideal which we champion enjoying immeasurably high prestige. The feverish activity of the early moments of the struggle, and the no less intense activity which followed it, in terms both of the war and of the reconstruction of the economy, was wholly shared with the CNT, the letters which stand for the union and anarchist movements blending into one anagram.

We have seen to the establishment of agencies to cater for the needs of the movement and commissions have been set up to handle oral and written propaganda at home and abroad. It is, of course, to be regretted that the effects of this propaganda do not reach every corner of Spain as we should wish.

We have at all times sought to bring our opinion to bear within the CNT in the taking of decisions of enormous import which implied amendments to conduct so that they might produce favourable results as far as our aims and beliefs are concerned. And we have shared part of the burden of responsibility in new organisms created to meet the demands of the revolutionary upheaval, together with anti-fascist denominations not sympathetic towards our ideas. So complex and far-ranging are the minutiae and

ramifications of such interventions that they cannot be set out in detail within the restricted confines of a circular.

Let us be content to allude to them; there will be time enough to set them out in detail, since you will have a general familiarity with them through our own and other newspapers.

We have appealed for international solidarity and this appeal has been heeded by our brethren everywhere who are helping the Spanish movement as far as their resources permit. From some places money has been received and comrades have arrived from other countries to shed their blood unselfishly on behalf of our cause.

We have set out guidelines so that the aforementioned aid may assume the most effective form and to this end we issued recommendations to the effect that monies should be remitted to a place where they would not be prey to damaging monetary fluctuations. We gave hints regarding personal aid, recommending that the comrades who teemed into Spain remain instead in their places of origin: indicating to them that their presence would be more effective in their countries of origin than among us in that, luckily, there have thus far been men aplenty to man the fronts. In short we have sought to offer what guidance we have been able to offer.

The battle joined against fascism remains a furious one and our primary concern has been and remains to mobilise the wherewithal for its prosecution. Now then, we must bear it in mind that the greater the organised and cohesive force we may have, the better our chances of this will be. Likewise the organisation of our comrades and the expansion of our numbers are matters of urgency. The ethos which the heroism of our militants has aroused to favourable effect among the people has to be capitalised upon so as to broaden the scope of our action. The FAI's influence must reach into every nook and cranny and to this end it needs numerous and well-prepared groups. The example of the Regional Committees, which are engaged in overhauling their organisms, must be taken on board as the model to be imitated and in this way we will ensure that the tremendous aura which surrounds our movement may faithfully reflect our membership. The gaps torn in our ranks by the shrapnel of murderous fascism have to be speedily filled by means of honourable replacements for our fallen comrades, whom we emotionally and proudly recall at this point.

So sweeping are the problems to be grappled with that we prefer to conclude for today, leaving it for ensuing circulars to deal in detail with the enormous array of problems urgently in need of solution. We shall not weary you any longer for the time being.

Fraternally yours and always anarchy's – **the peninsular committee.**

Due to an oversight no doubt, this circular bore no date but its date may be deduced from its text and also from Circular no. 3 (no. 2 being missing from our archives). Circular no. 3 dates from 25 October 1936 and represents a foretaste of the reforms which were to be put into serious effect by the peninsular plenum of July 1937, with which we are concerned in this chapter. Here is the text of Circular no. 3:

'FAI PENINSULAR COMMITTEE – BARCELONA – Circular no. 3.

TO ALL REGIONAL COMMITTEES, LOCAL FEDERATIONS AND GROUPS.

**Motives for intervention.** Due to the imperative nature of the circumstances in which the fascist revolt and the struggle we have joined to crush it have placed us, and being unable to speedily and fully realise our ideal aspirations, due to our having to accept collaboration with other sectors to the purpose and effect of winning the war, so as to contribute for the duration of that war to the maintenance of the liaison and collaboration of antagonistic political parties and because the people's frame of mind called for this, we have come out in favour of intervention in organisms of an official nature which we first seek to modify by infusing them with the revolutionary tenor which our inclusion within them demanded.

We shall go into greater detail and offer more thorough justification for this intervention on some other occasions; for the time being we record it solely because one has to acknowledge this necessity if one is to grasp the arguments we shall set out below.

Neglect of the political function extant in the union. The popular organisms whose creation we have seen fit to espouse and which we have helped to set up, and in which we have a presence as a component part of the anti-fascist bloc, must absorb, as a matter of necessity, functions which we have always entrusted to the union, and although the union apparatus must be retained, its retention being crucial in view of its power for good, it is no longer to have the political mission that once was entrusted to it as the representative of one tendency.

In the countryside, the multifarious activities demanded by the pursuit of agriculture cannot in the future be vouchsafed to various union organisms simultaneously but separately performing the same function, with each organism hindering performance, nor will one be able to trust in just one sector which, by virtue of its not representing everyone, may engage in partisan work, or at least appear to do so, and arouse damaging suspicions; one must trust to a single organism which may marshal the common interests and which may, in a concerted way, pursue and defend those interests. This organism may very well be either an exclusively professional trade union or the municipality acting through special commissions; the important thing is that there should be no fragmentation, which is injurious to economy and suicidal.

In the city and the centres of industry, for the sake of the proper running of the economy we will have to assign the orchestration of the industry to a single union which may perform its professional duty independent of any tendency, concerning itself solely with the proper functioning of the industry of branch of the industry of which it has charge. All of this is because if we introduce discord into the sphere of the economy and fragment the efforts put into its development then we will bring about a situation of chaos.

On all of these grounds, in anticipation of the events which may come to pass, we have to give notice of the disappearance of the union as it presently stands on some occasions, and of the amalgamation of our organism of struggle with kindred organisms belonging to other tendencies, so as to form new ones.

Our pressing and crucial mission. Unless we want our ideas about the ordering of society to be erased, and if, as is the case, we aim to have our say in the life of the collectivity, we need to have an organism encapsulating those concepts which are the condensation of a splendid corpus of teaching and which we have so steadfastly clung to and enriched for the realisation of them.

The unions, having become hybrid agencies from the political viewpoint, as a result of the circumstances noted earlier, cannot stamp upon their activities anything except the professional function allotted to them; and there necessarily must be a driving force producing the fabulous amount of energy required to shift them in the direction which best suits the preoccupations of mankind with renewal and emancipation. The driving force to which we refer cannot but be the FAI.

The FAI, an organism whose popular status has grown immeasurably has, as necessarily it must have, an obligation to encompass the membership in keeping with this status and this favourable standing which the Spanish people has awarded it.

The expansion of the membership of our organisation must be immediate. Our activity in respect of the training of recruits must be so boosted that this is achieved in the minimum time. As the acceleration of this recruiting drive may raise serious drawbacks owing to the infiltration of persons who would previously not have been granted admission, we can, for the purposes of their adoption, employ the procedure that enables us to make our choice of them once we have them under supervision. This procedure may consist of recruiting them in such a way that, until such time as we are assured of their purity, they are kept in the dark concerning the full activities of the organisation.

We will have to overhaul the current format of our organisation. Our organisation on the basis of small affinity groups had produced splendid results in the heroic days of clandestinity and during those times when, without their being clandestine, it was denied all recognition of its value and its influence was reduced.

The present moment, which ushers in a new era for our movement, an era when our activities will expand considerably, compels a broad expansion of the base and the mobilisation of a large number of militants who may deploy their organising abilities in order to effect the transformation which we have for so long sought. We must seek out the unknown comrades with ability who live amid anonymity so that they may work alongside those already distinguished in the tasks which have been but outlines. The trade union organisation, our beloved CNT, may be an inexhaustible quarry of militants from which we our anarchist movement can draw.

Let us act with enthusiasm and determination, so to reap the fruits we have earned by our activity in the revolutionary movement.

That is all for the moment. We remain committed to you and to anarchy.

ON BEHALF OF THE PENINSULAR COMMITTEE,

THE SECRETARY. Barcelona, 25 October 1936.'

In eliminating its representation on the popular tribunals, Minister of Justice Irujo was the first to bring out the juridical incongruousness of the FAI being an organisation not subject to legis-

lation yet having a share in agencies of the state. The measure adopted by the Minister of Justice was one of capital significance for the FAI and for the libertarian movement over all. Aside from officially participating in the government, the FAI had a foothold in nearly all of the organisms of collaboration. Libertarians' influence in these agencies depended upon the number of posts they were able to insist upon. Now the other sectors, particularly the Marxist, put themselves forward in the dual capacity of party and of affiliated organisation. The FAI's presence alongside the CNT on the other hand was a *fait accompli* first of all imposed and subsequently tolerated. But with events taking the turn that they were and if the minister of justice's view, which was undoubtedly the view of the government, were to prevail, the FAI might all of a sudden find itself vetoed off representative bodies and declared a 'clandestine or non-existent organisation' according to the lights of the minister of justice. And things were such that we were unwilling to surrender ground over a formality.

So the FAI was driven along by circumstance, faced with the prospect of accepting with all of its consequences conversion into a sort of political party or of making ready to surrender part of the ground it had gained through its revolutionary merits. The import of such merits had been in open decline since the latest government crisis and because of the exhumation of the legalities of the Republic, the Popular Front and parliament. In the absence of others, these were grounds enough to justify the summoning of the plenum of Regional Committees with which we are concerned.

Here is the most important of the plenum's findings:

'GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS: The grave and serious shortcomings that have made impossible its full development in accordance with the demands of a practical nature made by the current socio-economic transformation have been noted by all of the Regional Committees of the FAI. The groups which serve as its building blocks, while they were well suited to times of clandestine operation and have performed an important historical mission, are not appropriate in times such as the present when what is required is to operate in broad daylight in such a way that everybody may be able to know us and, with us, to know also the thorough sense of creativity and responsibility which is ours.

Then again, that format did not have the necessary flexibility to act by marshalling our agreements and decisions, matching them to the requirements of the moment. Even we comrades were oblivious of the faculties and powers allotted to us, to the grave detriment of the organisation and of the revolution itself.

In point of fact the FAI represents the best guarantee of the success of the revolution: for the sake of that success it is absolutely vital to adapt to the imperious necessities of the hour, tackling the basic issues with a practical mentality.

While not setting aside the needs of the revolution proper and without implying any injury to our goal, we are obliged, owing to the imperative of circumstances stronger than the individual and collective will of anarchists, to grasp those necessities: to grapple with the problems of libertarian reconstruction in the form in which they arise; to resolve situations with the motley elements which the general climate offers as a useful contribution to the revolutionary transformation.



Broadening the meaning which we have always given to the consubstantial practices, spirit and ethical as well as philosophical values of our ideals, we have to look beyond a mode of conduct which demanded as priority strength, energy and perseverance in the struggle, bearing in mind that in Spain what we have on our hands is nothing short of a revolution of the social type. The only social revolution to have come to pass since the early days of the Russia of 1917 and one which we cannot sacrifice – not as revolutionaries, nor much less as anarchists.

Were the war to be lost the FAI would not be able to thoroughly carry out its mission. To win the war is to keep the precept of revolution firm and victorious, and revolution will be the immediate upshot of victory. To turn and transform that victory into the most complete possible triumph of the spirit, ideas and practice of anarchism is, as we say, not so much a duty as an imperative, not merely upon anarchism and the CNT in Spain but upon the entire working class. Upon the producers of the whole world who will follow our example if it marks out precise courses and guidelines, laying down new formulas of coexistence attuned to the psychological, political and social conditions of the world of labour.

Affirming our libertarian principles more than ever, we can be more efficient in our action and in the implementation of revolutionary methods. Unless our organisation brings its influence to bear upon the course of events with all of the force of libertarian opinion and libertarian solutions, we shall have to grapple in disadvantageous conditions with violent situations which the essentially bourgeois and dictatorial factions and parties (which struggle to displace anarchism so as to restore in Spain a situation akin to the one which obtained prior to 19 July) will try to foist upon us.

For the FAI this is what is vital and urgent.

A restructuring of its organisational movement, embracing those practices commended by the need to succeed as required by the very special conditions with which we must contend owing to the war and the revolution. Individually and collectively subordinated to our supreme goal, we must be consistent, disciplined and dauntless in action and, so that that action may coagulate and crystalise into actual achievements, the FAI must have a uniform line which embraces every single facet of political and social life which may enable it to know how to act in any moment and circumstance.

If we aspire to have the masses by our side, assisting us in the transformation that we advocate, it is similarly vital that we offer solutions accessible to the average intelligence, solutions at one with its innermost aspiration to economic emancipation and political liberation.

The revolution has to be guided and directed and, for the sake of the security and reassurance of all, such guidance and direction ought to be placed in the workers' hands and in the hands of those agencies which genuinely represent them.

Setting to work, the FAI has its hands on the powerful levers of a revolution.

The adroit and honest utilisation of all of society's energies whether organisational or otherwise, which exist and beat within the common breast of the people, should also

be a preferred occupation of the FAI. Lots of nuclei which drift without leadership of their own can and must be absorbed into the current of which the FAI is the driving force. Individuals and fractions can join their endeavours to ours and the FAI, uncompromising in its revolutionary work, must bring harmony to their activities by carving out a single channel and stamping a single direction upon events.

All who do not harbour designs on partisan or factional hegemony can and may act alongside and parallel to the FAI. All absolutism is noxious and in politics it translates into tyranny and dictatorship and – in the wake of events of such dramatic import – the Iberian people cannot slip into the old error of spawning or sustaining either.

Freedom, coordination and revolution – this must be the theme of our brotherhood with all who aspire to see society transformed to the advantage of the people and not to the profit of one party or one faction.

The results obtained will be in accordance with the sureness of the actions carried out by the FAI. For this reason, in the provisions set out under the headings below, the FAI guarantees the efficacy of its operations and the future good fortune of the Spanish proletariat.

PREMISES. Considering that the natural tendencies of the individual and the exigencies of social life conduct humanity in the direction of a free society without classes or interests likely to hinder its development, the FAI declares:

That its prime objective is to encompass this end, to which all of its actions and thus all of the actions of its members shall be bent, so as to so transfigure social relations that the full pursuit of all of the activities of the individual and of the collectivity may guarantee and ensure their economic, political and social emancipation.

STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE MOMENT. The current circumstances dictate that the organised anarchist movement must intervene in public life so as to furnish the proletariat with an instrument through which it can orchestrate its revolutionary objectives. While not neglecting the necessities of the war, the FAI cannot abjure its ultimate objectives and thus grants the utmost importance to advancing the revolution.

ANARCHIST INTERPRETATION OF THE SPANISH REVOLUTION. In the sphere of economics, the FAI notes that Spain is in the throes of a period of thoroughgoing transformation. Quasi-feudal ownership of the land, a survival from time immemorial, is speedily tending to be transformed into collective ownership, thus destroying the premier historical bulwark of Spanish capitalism. The workers, with their creative instinct, the revolutionary intuition cultivated by anarchism and the many years of libertarian education, are conjuring new institutions into existence. On the other hand, the great industrial enterprises are also tending to assume a collective nature, thereby bringing about the fundamental changes to the physiognomy of the nation's economy. With the creation of the new collective interests, the relations of anarchists with the environment about us have been modified. Those who, up until yesterday, conducted a no-quarter struggle against the inhuman form of a state of injustice and tyranny now find ourselves, in the new set-up, alongside the new institutions sprouted during the revolution as the expression of the profoundest wish of

the masses. We advocate the utter elimination of what bourgeois vestiges still linger and we seek to bolster all agencies that make a contribution to this end. As a result, we reckon that, in contrast to our inhibited stance of the past, it is the duty of all anarchists to take a place in whatever public institutions may serve to consolidate and to bolster the new state of affairs.'

Consequently it will be the immediate task of the FAI to secure for the labour unions the role of organising work on a grand scale and keeping the strictest surveillance on all of the means and forms of production.

**POLITICAL SCOPE OF THE FAI'S REVOLUTIONARY POSITION.** If the FAI seeks fundamental transformations in the economic realm, in the realm of politics it is alive to the need to affirm the federalism that is consubstantial with Iberian history and Iberian geography. As such, it aspires to see the peninsula restored to its specific basis, advocating that its political development be made up of the peninsula's particular and special natural features – federation, having as its basis the geographical region, developing independently to the extent that it does not jeopardise the full development of the whole, as well as being based upon the district and the municipality, the natural building blocks of the peninsular architecture, amalgamated into the federation of regions with their varying languages and customs.

**THE FAI AT HOME AND ABROAD.** At the same time as it proceeds with its reorganisation, the FAI reaffirms its internationalist tenets. It will struggle to uproot the caste prejudices and violence which seek to make one people subject to another. On the same grounds it expressly comes out in favour of respect for and exaltation of all of the moral values embraced by the libertarian traditions and artistic, cultural and scientific wealth of the Iberian Peninsula, without these being lumped together and without any lapse into any sort of nationalistic speculation.

**RULES OF COEXISTENCE.** Without prejudice to its right to bring its influence to bear upon Spanish life, the FAI declares that our revolution cannot be the expression of any totalitarian creed, but must rather be the handiwork of all popular sectors wielding influence in political and social life. As anarchists, we are the foes of dictatorships whether they be the dictatorships of caste or of party: we are the foes of the totalitarian form of government and we believe that the future of our people will be the product of the concerted action of those sectors contributing together to the creation of a society free of class privileges wherein the organisms of labour, administration and intercourse may be the main factor in supplying Spain, by means of federal practices, with the channel that may meet the needs of its various regions.

**RULES GOVERNING ENTRY INTO THE FAI.** Membership of the FAI shall be open to any manual or intellectual worker who, wholly embracing the general guidelines set forth, stands ready to collaborate in their implementation, respecting the resolutions which the Organisation may take to this effect at its regular gatherings. Every affiliate to the FAI shall be obliged to give an account of the performance of the tasks which may be assigned to him as requested by its respective committees, provided that these have previously been so empowered by the assemblies and congresses.

**ON THE AFFINITY GROUPS.** For upwards of 50 years the affinity group has been the most efficient organ of propaganda, liaison and anarchist practice.

Under the new organisational set-up with which the FAI is endowed, the organisational mission of the affinity group is hereby abolished.

The understanding of the plenum is that the affinity groups must be respected even if, by reason of the formulas adopted by the FAI, they will not be able as groups to play an organisational part in the same.

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE FAI. The FAI, upon adoption of its new organisational format, shall be made up as follows:

(a) Local groupings (*agrupaciones*) in places of low population density and as dictated by the measure of expansion of the organisation.

(b) Groupings by ward and district for larger urban conglomerations.

(c) Local federations of the ward groupings.

(d) Every local ward or district grouping or local federation is to have under its control an admissions panel for the purposes set out below.

(e) District federations, made up of all the local groupings or federations organised within its boundaries.

(f) Provincial federations, in so far as the current political division may subsist, made up for purely political purposes of all of the groupings and federations of each province.

(g) Regional federations, made up of all the district and local federations within the region's boundaries.

(h) FAI, to which all of the geographically natural regions of the Iberian Peninsula shall be affiliated.

ON ADMISSION TO THE FAI. Any applicant seeking admission to the FAI shall submit his application to the local ward or district grouping, seconded by two serving members. A report shall be compiled on each individual, after inspection of which the general assembly shall determine whether admission is to be granted or not. In the case of the ward groupings (*agrupaciones de barriada*), these shall forward the reports and the application for admission to the local federation so that, the report having been expanded if required, the general assembly may give its endorsement.

FULL ADMISSION. Affiliation with full rights may be granted to:

(a) Those militants who currently are FAI members of normal standing.

(b) Admission with full rights is to be available to those who, upon examination of the appropriate report, are proved to have conducted themselves as militants of the trade union, cultural, etc. organisations akin to anarchism prior to 1 January 1936.

CONDITIONAL ADMISSION. Those who do not fulfil these conditions and yet are favourably reported upon shall not be able to either obtain or hold positions or representations until six months after the date of admission.

In those instances where the conduct and personal circumstances of the applicant may be of interest to the FAI in the judgement of a given number of militants of long standing, a fresh report shall be opened in which these comrades will set out the reasons why they support his application; this report shall be submitted for scrutiny and approval of the local federation, and if it is a case of a rural area or small population centres, to the district federation. The local groupings, as well as the ward ones, are to be governed by committees appointed at their general assemblies in which all members shall be entitled to speak and all paid members (*efectivos*) shall have the right to vote.

The accords of the ward assemblies shall have effect only when they deal with matters relating to that circumscription.

The local federation's committees are to be appointed in assemblies of the members from all the wards and their accords shall be equally binding upon all the membership.

The district, provincial, regional and peninsular committees are to be appointed at congresses or plenums summoned for the purpose with an agenda worked out in concert with all of the groupings and issued sufficiently in advance for security.

CONCERNING POSTS. The committees of the local and ward groupings and local federations are to comprise a general secretary, a vice-secretary, a treasurer, a book-keeper and as many others as circumstances may require assuming prior consent of the general assembly. Each one of them is to perform the functions proper to his office. Likewise there is also to be an admissions panel which shall be in touch with the committee but accountable directly to the general assembly by which it has been appointed. The committee shall have charge of the task of appointing as many special technical commissions as it may deem necessary for its smooth operation, reporting back on this to the first assembly which may be held.

Posts are to be refilled at intervals, half of them each year under whatever conditions the assemblies may prescribe, a report being given in the general assemblies of the record of achievement.

FAI personnel delegated to public offices are obliged to report on their task and their work to the committees, keeping closely in touch with these so as to monitor at any moment the guidelines the committees may issue in each specific instance.

Any affiliate who may be assigned to take up any public office – regardless of the nature of that office – shall be liable to be disowned or dismissed from that office just as soon as the organisation's appropriate organs may so determine, and the committees shall have an obligation to report back on such instances also.

The supreme power of the FAI is to reside in its general assemblies in the case of the local groupings, and in the plenums and congresses in the case of the district, provincial, regional and peninsular federations.

Between one congress and the next, the peninsular committee shall be empowered to oversee the overall progress of the organisation giving an account of its work before the plenums.

The district, provincial, regional and peninsular committees shall be appointed at the congresses convened for this purpose. They shall comprise of secretary, treasurer and book-keeper – all directly appointed – and the remainder, who shall be as numerous and hold whatever posts as may be deemed appropriate.

The ward or district groupings shall, for general purposes, be administratively subordinate to the local federation.

AUXILIARY AGENCIES. For the purposes of recruitment and propaganda, groups shall be set up in the centres of production and wherever else may be deemed opportune. All such groups are to be in close contact with the corresponding commissions, implementing the general line of policy prescribed at each given moment, with all FAI affiliates who operate or work in the aforementioned places being obliged to belong to them.

ADDENDUM. In view of the ties of strict ideological affinity which unite it to the CNT and to the FIJL, the FAI shall reinforce its relations with these bodies – maintaining joint delegations with them and encouraging concerted action by the whole of the great anarchist family. Valencia, 7 July 1937. On behalf of the working party: the delegations from the Regional Committees of the Centre, the Levante, Catalonia, Aragón and Andalusia.

NOTE: Be it placed on record that the Regional Committees of Extremadura, the North and Asturias failed to attend the plenum, prevented from doing so by the urgent demands imposed by the war.

Submitted to a referendum of the regional plenums, this proposition triggered a lively backlash from the delegates from the anarchist groups. This backlash was especially intense in Catalonia. At a regional plenum of groups held in Barcelona from 5 to 7 August 1937 there were furious clashes between the champions of the new structure and those groups who looked upon it as a dangerous political turn in which the FAI was placing in jeopardy the principles and tactics of anarchism. Lots of delegates from the opposition camp walked out of the plenum to cries of 'Long live anarchy!' The opposition had focused attention upon the extremes of the resolution wherein it was stated – 'in contrast to our inhibitionist stance of the past, it is the duty of all anarchists to take a place in whatever public institutions may serve to consolidate and bolster the new state of affairs'. This clause was interpreted as a decision by the FAI to intervene directly, like just another political party, in governmental institutions. This suspicion was reinforced by the section of the motion stating that 'FAI personnel delegated to public offices are obliged to report on their task and their work to the committees'. The resolution added:

'Any [FAI] affiliate who may be assigned to take up any public office – regardless of the nature of that office – shall be liable to be disowned or dismissed that office just as soon as the organisation's appropriate organs may so determine, and the committees shall have an obligation to report back on such instances also.'

On the other hand, the conditions of entry into the FAI were so broad that militants from the union and cultural organisations sympathetic to anarchism could be admitted as full members, provided that their membership of those organisations antedated 1 January 1936. If one bears in mind that the resolution nowhere contains a clear-cut anarchist statement of principle, it followed that admission to the FAI was open to all who were merely like-minded or militants, subject to a favourable report upon these. As for the statement of principles, the resolution confined itself to the declaration:

'As anarchists we are the foes of dictatorship whether they be the dictatorship of caste or of the party; we are the foes of the totalitarian form of government and we believe that the future of our people will be the result of the concerted action of all those sectors which collaborate in the creation of a society without class privileges, wherein the organisms of labour, administration and intercourse may be principal factor in furnishing Spain, by means of federal practices, with the channel that will meet the needs of her different regions.'

So, there was no round declaration against the state under any shape or colour, but instead one 'against the totalitarian form of government'. This, together with the organisational jettisoning of the affinity group and replacement of the old groups by ward or local groupings, and in the light of the generous rules governing entry that had been set out, furnished grounds for the impression that the FAI was sloughing its traditional character as a specific organisation.

Certain statements by Gilabert, secretary of the Barcelona local federation of anarchist groups, as published in *Solidaridad Obrera* of 10 August 1937, bear out the above conclusions:

‘How was the FAI structured before 19 July?’ we asked comrade Gilabert.

‘The FAI was constituted once and for all at the Valencia Conference held in 1927, adopting the same organisational format as the old Spanish National Federation of Anarchist Groups had had – being based upon small affinity groups, federated with one another at local, district, regional and national level.’

‘What results did the affinity group produce?’

‘The affinity group produced excellent results when anarchism was a movement engaged almost wholly in clandestine activity on the fringes of the established law. The affinity group weathered every era of repression and was a highly effective weapon of struggle against governments.’

‘In what circumstances does the anarchist movement stand at present?’

‘At present Iberian anarchism finds itself in a position to wield and to lay claim to the leadership of the revolution being lived and acted out by our people: for this reason the FAI has agreed to equip itself with a new organisational structure, admitting all persons of libertarian inclinations into its ranks.’

‘What are the implications of the FAI’s new structure?’

‘In political terms it will produce a real revolution for, before a month is out, the FAI will be the most powerful revolutionary movement in Spain, not to mention its thousands of members in Portugal, France and the USA. For, as you must be aware, the Portuguese Anarchist Union, the Federation of Spanish Language Anarchist Groups in France and the Federation of Spanish Language Anarchist Groups in the USA are also affiliated to the FAI.’

‘How many members has the FAI in Barcelona?’

‘With the new format, the FAI will have upwards of 30,000 members in Barcelona alone, for it now turns out that a huge mass of anarchists were not hitherto affiliated to the FAI, even though they spoke on its behalf from time to time.’

‘Does the new format it has adopted imply that the FAI has turned itself into a new political party?’

‘It will be a revolutionary party, or a specific organisation that will suffuse public life so as to equip the proletariat with an instrument to orchestrate its revolutionary feats, driving the revolution forward from all of the popular organisms.’

‘How will the FAI operate in the light of its new format?’

‘According to the new approach, the FAI will do everything possible to ensure that our revolution may not be the expression of any totalitarian creed, but rather the creature of all of the popular anti-fascist sectors with any influence upon political and social life. As anarchists we are the foes of any totalitarian form of government and the FAI in its new phase of political activity will deploy all of its resources to avert the disfigurement or strangulation of the Iberian revolution by any party dictatorship.’

‘Is the FAI giving up on the introduction of libertarian communism?’

‘We, the anarchists within the discipline of the FAI, want the future of Iberia to be the product of the concerted action of all those sectors who are at one on the creation of a society without class privileges, wherein the organisms of labour, administration and intercourse may be the principal factor in furnishing our country, by means of federal practices, with the channel that will meet the needs of her different regions, for this is the political, social and revolutionary import of the FAI’s new structure according to the agreements reached at the peninsular plenum which our organisation held in Valencia during the first days of last July.’

On 27 July the press featured prominently a declaration from the FAI’s peninsular committee. A number of rallies had previously been held in the main cities of the loyalist zone, such as Madrid, Cartagena and Castelló, calculated to familiarise the people with the new approach of organised anarchism. At these rallies Angel Rodríguez, Salvador Cano Carrillo, Clara Sendón, M. González Inestal and Federica Montseny spoke.

The communiqué from the peninsular committee was as follows:

‘Workers of Spain: The FAI which has at all times battled for your emancipation, which has been at the forefront of the struggle for your revolution, which has as its motto in this war against fascism and the international bourgeoisie the winning of the effective freedom of the proletarian class, opens its doors to you.

Every revolutionary who fights for freedom against a past of exploitation and calumny, against any attempt at repression and dictatorship, has an honoured place. The FAI – an organisation which resolved at its latest, historic plenum held in Valencia to broaden its ranks so as to make our well-tried Federation the instrument of the revolutionary libertarian proletariat – the FAI is not becoming yet another political party and does not abjure its goals nor forswear its methods; it only makes its stand vis-à-vis the reality of the Spain which shapes the new world, which sheds her finest sons’ unselfish blood, which seeks to make a reality of a system of intercourse apt to its libertarian existence and calls upon all true revolutionaries to carry forward this liberating enterprise.

Our FAI seeks the victory of the people, of the proletariat and not the victory of any faction. It seeks the revolution with and for the proletariat.



Let those who are with the Spanish revolution, which is the revolution for freedom, swell our ranks. Together, in a mighty iron bloc, we shall march on to victory and, together with the FAI, we shall crush the reaction. For our proletarian Spain!’

In spite of all endeavours, the plan to create a mass anarchist organisation failed to deliver the results that had been hoped for. A considerable number of the groups in Catalonia, siding with the ones who had walked out of the regional plenum in August, clung to the steadfast attitude of blatant opposition. A stalemate ensued, as revealed in another article by Gilabert carried in the 12 October edition of *Solidaridad Obrera* under the title of ‘Comrades, the FAI!’:

‘It is not out of place to dwell upon the matter. No anarchist should cease to think of the FAI as his own organisation. I have said and reiterated on many occasions that a large number of anarchists are not organised in the FAI, oblivious of the enormous harm they do the libertarian movement by this attitude. It is not enough to be a militant of the CNT – the anarchist must pursue specifically libertarian activities under the aegis and discipline of his own organisation.

Those comrades who do not believe that the CNT represents anarchism are sorely mistaken. The CNT is a mass organisation which defends the moral and economic interests of the workers but it is not a specifically anarchist organisation, though its objective is libertarian communism. Let it be said once and for all: it is the FAI that represents anarchism. It is true there have been innumerable circumstances which forced many anarchists to hold back somewhat from the FAI. But it is no less true that those circumstances have been overcome and beaten. Today there is a place in the FAI for all libertarian elements. The new organisational format with which the FAI has endowed itself offers the movement greater breadth and affords each militant somewhere to be active to some effect.

I am aware of the resistance to the new format that has been forthcoming from some groups and comrades. Such resistance springs from a deplorable error, in that basically, there is no dispute about criteria. Let us reflect upon the accords reached at various plenums and it will be seen how the anarchists of Barcelona and of Catalonia are obliged to give their backing to the approach and the practices embraced by the comrades from the rest of the peninsula. Here is a digest of the accords reached:

PENINSULAR PLENUM OF VALENCIA. On 4, 5, 6 and 7 July of this year a plenum of FAI Regional Committees was held in Valencia. In advance of it the peninsular committee issued a circular to all groups complete with the agenda for debate at this plenum, and this reached the Barcelona groups through the agency of their secretariat. All of the groups of the peninsula discussed the items on the agenda of the plenum of Regional Committees and the delegates who went to it bore concrete accords concerning the new structure of the FAI, with the exception of the Regional

Committees of Catalonia and Aragón. When the Valencia plenum got underway, the delegates agreed to amalgamate items 4 and 5 on the agenda and they collated the various propositions and reports from the Regional Committees by means of a working party appointed to do just that; this working party was made up of one delegation from each Regional and it submitted a motion on the organisational restructuring of the FAI in a programmatic way and this was approved unanimously.

LOCAL PLENUM OF THE BARCELONA GROUPS. During 22 and 25 July a plenum of groups was held to which all of the comrades from the Barcelona groups were summoned. At this local plenum the Valencia accords were discussed and after lengthy and impassioned debates it was agreed by a majority vote to accept the FAI's new format, with some groups voting against.

REGIONAL PLENUM OF THE GROUPS OF CATALONIA. Also in Barcelona a regional plenum of the groups of Catalonia was held on 5, 6 and 7 August; at it the restructuring of the FAI agreed at Valencia came up for discussion once more. The majority feeling at the plenum was to accept the new format in its entirety, but there was a considerable minority opposed. Differences were so acute that some of the dissenting groups threatened a split. Given the seriousness of the problem which had arisen and careful, above all else, of the unity of anarchists, a working party was appointed to seek a compromise formula that might reconcile the opposing views. That working party drafted a proposition which won the approval of all the groups from Catalonia attending the plenum and which went like this: "This working party having met and having reviewed at length all of the points from which the differing opinions of the various delegates have arisen, and being persuaded that cordiality between members of the anarchist communion is inescapably necessary, we hereby state: That with regard to the result of the deliberations held on whether to grant or withhold approval from the proposition drawn up at the peninsular plenum, and given that a majority pronounced in favour of it, said proposition is taken as approved; but as it is recognised that there has also been great opposition to that proposition, so much so as to degenerate into a blatant threat of splitting, it is to be left up to the groups who do not accept it to go on as they have hitherto, but bearing in mind that their decisions of an organisational nature will carry the numerical weight appropriate to the size of their membership. This decision is taken at the same time as an obligation is laid upon the peninsular committee to convene a peninsular congress as soon as possible, the belief being that a peninsular congress is the only body with the sovereignty to alter models of organisational structure and of ideological character.

PLENUM OF DELEGATES FROM THE BARCELONA GROUPS. On 14 August the delegates from the Barcelona groups gathered to appoint the reor-

ganising commissions of the ward anarchist groupings. This plenum also saw discussion of the import of the FAI's new format in that there were several contending interpretations. After much debate it was agreed that the local federation's secretariat will call upon each ward separately to appoint the reorganising commissions of the groupings. It was likewise agreed to respect those affinity groups that were not in agreement with the new structure; but without any member of those groups' being able to apply for admission into the ward grouping. Those groups which remain outside the new structure are also to have organisational representation at the plenums and congresses which the FAI may hold.

I have sought to summarise the decisions taken by the FAI so that every militant may shoulder his responsibility in the anarchist movement. And let us have no more indulgence in literature nor in articles. Let us only bear this cry in mind – Comrades, the FAI!

On 1 July a circular from the CNT National Committee asked that telegrams be sent in the name of the committees and workers' councils (preferably designated as CNT-UGT committees and councils) and unions to the leader of the government, to the UGT executive commission, to the PCE central committee and to the CNT National Committee itself. The text of those telegrams had to be specific in expressing disagreement with the government and in asking that a new government with union participation be formed, in protesting against press censorship, demanding the release of prisoners, the rescinding of the Decree on Special Tribunals and the speedy processing of cases ending against tried and tested anti-fascist personnel.

A plenum of CNT locals and district committees in Catalonia which met at about this time in Barcelona drew up a proposition which examined the consequences of the latest Generalitat crisis and in which it was stated that the CNT was not abdicating its right to participate directly in the functions of government, provided that such participation took place on a dignified basis.

We know that one of the decrees from Minister Irujo amounted to a substantial amendment to the decree by the previous minister of justice concerning the establishment of popular tribunals. Those organisations or parties which were not registered under the law in advance of 16 February 1936 were disbarred from participating in the popular tribunals. This measure specifically affected the FAI.

The decree on the creation of special tribunals was apparently designed to clamp down on offences involving espionage and high treason. This court would sit in camera and all offences against the government would be covered by the decree.

The special tribunals seemed especially tailored to the case that had been prepared against the POUM. In his speech delivered in the Apolo Theatre in Valencia to which referred in an earlier chapter, Mariano R. Vázquez had declared:

'For instance we find ourselves faced with a situation whereby a man like Nin is arrested and vanishes in that he is promptly removed to a place of concealment lest he be sighted. He has and has had nothing in common

with us. Many years ago he marched in our ranks. He quit them because of his belief that other teachings were more correct, that it was other paths and not the path of libertarian ideas that he had to follow. And off he went to another organisation. Ah! but what no one can comprehend, what the people fails to comprehend is how Nin can be said to be in contact with Franco and how Nin can be said to be a fascist. This allegation has to be brought before the courts and substantiated in the people's eyes, for, as far as the people is concerned, Nin is a revolutionary.'

On 28 June the CNT National Committee had dispatched a lengthy document to the president of the Republic, to the speaker of the Cortes, to the prime minister, to the ministers of justice and of the interior, and to the central committees of every party and organisation. That document contained a swingeing protest against the police and court procedures deployed against the POUM and its leading militants; here are a few excerpts from it:

'We are concerned above all to state that the CNT, by virtue of its organised strength and powerful discipline, has no misgiving that this process of incremental repression might envelope it tomorrow. Positioned above this internal contest, it behoves it only to raise one specific aspect of the matter and to affirm an attitude that it deems necessary and just. It is not about to discuss whether the POUM included or not did not include *agents provocateurs*, spies in the pay of fascism, persons in cahoots with the enemy. Of these there probably are some, just as some lurk in every other party and organisation. Not a word would be said, had court or police proceedings been initiated against specific individuals and cases brought which may offer the assurance of charges being put to the test before the law. But the elimination of the POUM, which began in Catalonia in December 1936 and which has been pursued in a systematic way since, has nothing to do with persecuting fascist agents. On the contrary, this trial has followed an adroitly engineered pretext, as confirmed by the suspicious timing of events, and has been motivated by a desire to exclude the POUM from all anti-fascist activities, ejecting the party from the Generalitat government and the Defence Commissariat as well as from the Department of Health in Catalonia. This elimination was not begun in May but rather began in December of last year. Later, following the events of May, the persecution broke the surface and became public knowledge. Not against the individuals, but against the party. What is needed at this time is a trial of individuals, when we need to flesh out the face and features of the offence.

Let note also be taken of the fact that, in Catalonia as in the rest of Spain, persecution of the POUM is not a need upon which all parties and organisations are agreed. One party alone seeks and insists upon it, labouring the point with the tenacity and implacability that characterise it. The rest are spectators at this unequal contest, this somewhat sordid contest be-

tween one weak party and one stronger party that wields over loyalist Spain the moral sway which it derives from Russia's aid to our cause.

The decree from the ministry of justice establishing Special Tribunals with an eye to in-camera hearings seems like yet another concession to the needs or intentions to eliminate the PSUC, the misnamed 'party of unification', intentions conceived and activated by the communist parties of Spain and Russia. And our reckoning is that Spanish liberal opinion cannot countenance this.

Let them resolve their problems in the USSR how they may and as circumstances may commend to them. But it is not possible to export this struggle to Spain, pursuing an opposition party or dissident faction across frontiers and relying on undignified press campaigns and judicial repression.

So there are Francoist agents, spies and provocateurs lurking inside the POUM? Let them be placed under arrest, let them be brought to trial with the assurance that it is not a question of artifice and let them be shot. But let this be done to agents, spies and provocateurs. And not to the members of a party one would like to see destroyed and which is eliminated first by being outlawed and then by exterminating its leading representatives, the men who by dint of their lengthy history have earned prestige in the eyes of the masses. We cannot be convinced that Nin, Andrade, Gorkin or David Rey are traitors, agents of the fascists, spies, etc., etc., unless we have seen all of this demonstrated. We require proof before we believe it, just as we should require proof before believing, say, that Gordón Ordás or Albornoz are in the hire of fascism or that General Miaja is. And such proof has to be supplied in clear and categorical fashion and not behind closed doors, which are too suspiciously reminiscent of proceedings imported from abroad.

For all of these reasons and for many another that we might enumerate, we believe we have an obligation to forward this document to the presidents of the Republic and of the Cortes, to the Ministers of Justice and of the Interior, to the Prime Minister and to the National Committees of all parties and organisations. A warning bell, an appeal to Spanish fair-mindedness and a warning to the weak who may be gobbled up tomorrow as well as one to the mighty who may think themselves free to gobble them up with undue impunity.'

A few days after publication of this document, leaflets appeared on the streets endorsed by a so-called 'Bolshevik-Leninist Section of Spain, affiliated to the Fourth International'. They contained exhortations to general strikes and spoke of the need to form a united action front embracing the CNT, the FAI and the POUM. Clearly they betrayed yet another provocative ploy by the PCE.

In the run-up to 19 July 1937 several rallies were being prepared to mark the anniversary in the principal cities of the Republic. In Catalonia the libertarian organisations

suggested to the other denominations that a joint demonstration be held. An agreement was worked out and on 16 July the order in which the several groups of demonstrators were to muster in the centre of Barcelona was carried by the press. It was planned that the demonstration would march along the Rambles, starting off from the Plaça de Catalunya. The obligatory speechifying would take place in Atarazanas and plaques commemorating those who had fallen on 19 July 1936 at the spot would be unveiled. All commemorative rallies were suspended by order of the central government on 18 July. The CNT National Committee issued the following statement:

‘OUR FIRST THOUGHTS. For those who fell: Obregón, secretary of the Barcelona local federation of Anarchist Groups, slain on 19 July; Francisco Ascaso, gunned down on 20 July in the capture of the Atarazanas; Fausto Falaschi, the anarchist of immense learning; José Ramos, member of the Catalan CNT Regional Committee of Catalonia who perished at the head of the “Tierra y Libertad” column; Alcodori, of the Regional Defence Committee of Catalonia; Durruti, cut down by a bullet in the defence of Madrid, on 20 November. These belonged to the Catalan CNT.

Teodoro Mora, fallen in Casa Vieja (Avila) in September; Senderos of the J.J.LL who perished in the attack upon the fortress in Toledo; Tomás de la Llave, in the Sierra; Arenas and Dominguez in the Casa del Campo, defending Madrid; Manuel Vergara, murdered in Majorca, being treasurer to the CNT’s National Committee. These belonged to the Centre CNT where the Builders’ Union alone has lost 2,400 comrades in the defence of Madrid.

Juan Méndez, Francisco Arín, Antonio Carrero, Juan Arcas, Arturo Parera, María Durán in Andalusia along with Vicente Ballester, and, alongside Sánchez Rosa, that veteran anarchist and his daughter Paca; Antonio Calle, José Chicón and Elías García, the anarchist poet; these fell in Pozoblanco.

Bayón, Cipriano Alvite, Enrique Castro, Jacinto Méndez, Ramón Ponte, Joaquín de la Torre and Villaverde, our outstanding militants from Galicia.

Manuel Zubalca, Baldomero del Val, José Arias and the son of our unforgettable José María Martínez, Acracio Martínez, in Asturias.

Liquiniano, Pablo Sanz and Gallurralde, from the North.

Vera, in Ceuta. Aureliano Delgado in Algeciras. And our comrade Isaac Puente, the theoretical driving force of anarcho-syndicalism in recent times.

All of them vanguard militants of our libertarian movement. Fallen with hundreds more in the events of July and on the fronts, murdered by fascism triumphant.

And, along with them, thousands upon thousands of nameless comrades, revolutionary militants and heartfelt anti-fascists. Women, children, old people, their lives mown down by the shrapnel of traitors who have

brought a prosperous Spain to ruination. The disabled and martyrs of a war waged unflinchingly for freedom and independence.

To all of them we dedicate our first respectful thoughts ... a minute's silence. They are the craftsmen of Freedom!

And a thought of profound contempt goes to those who, instead of fighting to win freedom have, regardless of who and where they may be, conspired to intrigue and work steadfastly solely for their party.

Roundly we pronounce anathema on those who have not worked on behalf of open, high-minded, heartfelt unity and who, by their activities have fomented, rather than unity of action, only discord, division and mistrust.

It is they who have betrayed the fallen. It is they who have forgotten that the people has not spilled its blood heroically for the sake of factionalism but rather to encompass the crushing of traitors, to do battle once and for all with international fascism and to win the freedom and independence to which we are individually and collectively entitled.

Our contempt is reserved for these spawn who are incapable of fully grasping the magnificent action of the people who it was that in those July events gave their lives and smashed the scum who tried to drag them down into grief, misery and slavery.

19 JULY 1936. The CNT did its duty frankly and openly. It took to the streets. Its militants, with the pistols and what few long arms they managed to come by despite harassment from those who had been in government since '31, black and white alike, hurled themselves into the fray. Their breasts formed an impregnable bulwark against the troops of treachery, the lurking clergy, the avarice of capitalism. Days before in every provincial capital the CNT approached the leftist governors and sought weapons from them, weapons with which to fight the impending reaction. The governors denied them. They feared the rising but even more they feared the anarchists. That of itself was reason enough for us to leave them to their own devices. But, acting responsibly, we sallied forth on to the streets. The tremendous implications of victory for fascism in Spain did not elude us. So, when the Popular Front sought the people's votes, the CNT said: "It matters not whether you vote or do not vote. Voting or not, if you want to stand up to fascism and to the reaction, you will have to take to the streets and win the day on the barricades." Yet again the CNT displayed its perspicacity. And where fascism did win out, it was through the fault of the governors of February – how dearly they paid for it! – who, on account of their terror of the CNT, the living embodiment of the people, denied it the wherewithal to counter the rebel attack. And so bold Zaragoza, confederal Zaragoza, was subjugated by the fascist traitors thanks to the ineptitude of the non-fascist authorities. And thus did Galicia and part of Andalusia and the Old Castile fall to them ... In this

neither anarchism nor the CNT were at fault. Their militants gave their lives, fighting powerlessly.

JUST ONE DREAM. 19 July. No one asked his fellow on the barricade what faction he belonged to, what his beliefs were, what his hopes were. Everybody knew it: to beat the fascists and capture their positions. That alone. The rest would come later, once these traitors had been swept aside. If we were together on the barricades and if our blood mingled there, how come we could not see eye to eye when we abandoned the barricades?

If we marched together to the war to brave death, how come we were not to march together in peace, to brave life?

Unity was ready-made. Bullets and blood, the screams of pain from the wounded and the delight of him who captures an enemy position or cuts down an enemy – these set the seal upon it. The events of July promised the proletariat a future of splendour ...

AND THAT STEP. The fighting in the cities drew to a close. The people ruled in the townships. The first enthusiastic, joyous columns were organised: with a boundless faith in victory, they sallied forth to meet the victorious foe.

Months passed. The war dragged on. Indifference in some, proselytising zeal in others. Dubious types waxed confident and appeared once again at the hub of social life, speculating, stealing, enriching themselves off the efforts of the people. The cowards who had been in hiding while the people did the fighting surfaced in time to claim their booty. The sempiternal eunuchs. The wheelers and dealers embarked upon their uninterrupted task of intrigue.

And thus the sacred union sealed with the blood spilled on 19 July was disintegrating. The picture today is one of disunity, mutual suspicion, mistrust; the appetite for domination and ambition prevails and, mockingly in contrast, there is more talk than ever of unity! On 19 July there was no talk of unity, but unity was honestly and unselfishly put into practice against the enemy.

THE CNT CAN REST EASY THAT IT HAS DONE ITS DUTY. We sallied forth onto the streets. We collaborated intensely and definitively in the fighting. We offered the cream of our membership. We organised production without delay. We set in motion those workplaces abandoned by the fascists. And we left the politicians to run the country at a time when only a slight effort on our part would have ousted them and left us masters of the situation. Who could have withstood our overwhelming and dominant power?

Some months slipped by. We saw that the politicians were not capable of steering the people towards victory and by the month of September the CNT had made up its mind to take a hand in the management of the war.



We forgot our principles, our history, our past as a permanent opposition. We sacrificed everything for the sake of the ultimate objective of winning the war.

It was not interpreted thus. Every party had taken us to task for not being collaborationists and when the CNT made up its mind to collaborate, a thousand impediments and hindrances were raised to prevent its exercising a right enjoyed by every organisation.

Finally when things were in such a sorry state that a debacle was imminent, we were admitted to the government. That was in November.

Six months sharing in the oversight of the war. Upright and honest behaviour. Tough and violent times on account of partisan chicanery and intrigues and financial interest. That was the government which organised the army. It was that government which gave the people confidence even in moments of the greatest peril, in the direst straits. It was that government which listened to the workers, insofar as opposition interests would permit, so as to ensure that the production sites did not stand idle. It was it which organised the evacuations efficiently. It was it which launched the overhaul of legal procedures. And awarded equal rights and duties to women and men alike. Lastly it was that government which did whatever it could, whatever circumstances would permit it to do.

But we were spurned. An untimely crisis. An even more untimely solution.

And the CNT, which was by no means an organisation without direction, but one which had traced out a line for itself, and worked out a discipline, allowed the government to be formed.

It has allowed it to act. At the front, our men were the ones who gave the best account of themselves. The ones who achieved something.

Without delay we drew up a plan of collaboration, the content of which was based upon facilitating our victory in the war. And we submitted it to the head of the government. No heed was paid to it. Some parties even failed to take it into consideration. And still we work on, obsessed by the idea of victory which we do not, and never shall, give up upon.

FOR UNITY AND ONLY FOR UNITY. A year's hard experience can be more than enough for everybody to amend his attitudes and stances. For it to be understood that without close unity, without formal collaboration, loyal and honest, it is not possible to attain the desired victory, much less achieve it with the necessary speed.

And this collaboration, this unity must be founded upon two principles:

1. Implicit acknowledgement that 19 July represents a de facto transformation of the country's social and political structure.
2. That the people fights not only to defeat fascism but also to improve its circumstances in economic terms and in the matter of independence.

Working from these inescapable principles, the basis for the unity of all anti-fascist denominations has to be worked out. So as to win the war. So as to rebuild the shattered economy.

We have to work towards that without delay, without shortcuts, without reservations. And, as well as the unity of anti-fascists, the alliance of the union organisations also.

Such are our adamant conclusions on this bloody yet glorious anniversary.

Conclusions from which the CNT does not shirk. But which it adopts as its flag. For which it will labour intensely with all in its power.

And let everyone acknowledge this and do likewise. Spare us a repetition of the cant about a Popular Front. It was futile. It had its day and its day is past. And let us have no more about the unity of anti-fascists, for no one from that quarter has given more nor fought more than we have. Indeed, let us cast our minds back to 19 July 1936. What could the Popular Front have availed on its own? Let us answer that query with all honesty and sincerity. Would it have emerged victorious where it did so, without the CNT, without the UGT, without the FAI?

These were the ones who gave most and who defeated the enemy. Let no one make his career upon the bloodshed and sacrifice of others!

The people judges and will crush anyone who sets their face against a speedy anti-fascist unity.

Let us give vent to our unbreakable determination to achieve it.

Long live the anti-fascist front! Long live the CNT-UGT alliance!

Up with the people! Stand tall, proletarians!

For victory! Valencia, 18 July 1937. **The National Committee.**

In Catalonia the rally to mark the revolution's first anniversary was at last able to proceed on 21 July. It took place in the Olympia Theatre in Barcelona and the speakers included Federica Montseny. Montseny publicly damned the State for responsibility for the murder of Andreu Nin. As we shall see shortly, not until 4 August would the minister of justice make up his mind to offer a timid explanation of the Nin episode.

To begin with, Montseny's presence on the rostrum in the Olympia drew rapturous applause from the crowd. It was the first time that she had appeared before a large body of people in Catalonia since the events in May. A portion of the audience made obvious its displeasure with the erstwhile minister's peace-seeking role during those bloody events. When at last passions had cooled, Montseny delivered a speech from which we have excerpted the most substantial portion.

'Comrades and friends, people of Barcelona:

One year has elapsed since 19 July. A year of struggle. A year of warfare. A year of revolution. And it is deeply wounding that at the end of this

year, assembled here to recall and invoke the memory of those who fell and gave of their blood for a revolution that stands for the fight against fascism, that, after a year of such feats the people still must cry out – The prisoners! The prisoners! It is right that we should speak of the fact that, in the midst of the struggle against fascism, anti-fascists are imprisoned in the jails of Spain. You need to appreciate what it would mean, were not the revolutionary spirit so deep-rooted in Catalonia and in Spain, and if the war were at an end. The revolution has only begun. We are in one of the many stages which every revolutionary upheaval features. The revolution pursues the ascendant path and will follow it in a redoubled way when fascism has been routed from all of the regions which today lie prostrate beneath its boot.

... The Russian revolution forged ahead, leaving behind the period of the Kerensky government; the people destroyed the tyranny of the tsars but created the tyranny of Stalin. The shootings go on. Others follow that of Tukachevsky. Peoples need to be on their guard against the tendency which, albeit at loggerheads with fascism, represents an authoritarian conception of life.

... We here in Spain have always had a morsel of decorum and decency. We always fight out in the open; some of our organisations clashed with others, but we fought shy of recourse to crime – recourse to infamy – recourse to calumny. The monarchy went in for these but neither the republicans, the socialists, the communists nor the anarchists had resorted to it. An attempt is under way to import procedures from abroad so that the membership of an entire party may be accused of being spies and thrown into jail and a trial be hatched against them in the shadows. When representatives from the socialist countries come to Spain, a handful are set free for appearances' sake. We have just been told that the corpses of Nin and two other comrades have been discovered in Madrid. This news has yet to be confirmed but until such time as the government issues a denial, telling us where Nin is, we have to believe in its authenticity. One cannot with impunity ride roughshod over the wishes and dignity of a people and round up a bunch of men, accuse them of something which has not been substantiated, lodge them in a private house equipped for the purpose, haul them out by night and do them to death.

This cannot be done, because Spain is a country which has not yet lost its dignity and manliness. Here there are no ignorant or gullible masses. They may tell us that Nin is an agent of fascism, but we will say: Very well then, prove all of this and then have him shot in the middle of the most public square in Spain! When they are able to demonstrate to us that Nin, Gorkin and Andrade are spies, we shall agree that they be shot, but murder, assassination in the shadows cannot be countenanced. Let them assassinate Franco, Queipo de Llano or Cabanellas, but murder may not be done in the name of a government which stands for the struggle

against fascism and in which all anti-fascist denominations, saving the CNT and FAI, are represented.

Just now we feel pleased not to feature in it, because had such an act of treachery been done, bypassing the Ministry of Justice, and had an act such as has been perpetrated been carried out, we should have been embroiled in the same awesome historical responsibility. The CNT and the FAI are entitled to put this dilemma to the Spanish people – Spain is a people which has shown how to die for its freedom. Neither Rome, nor Berlin, nor Moscow!

At this point I recall that I am an ex-minister. I have no desire to wax strident, because he who screeches most does not have most right on his side, but I can speak with authority and I can also be brought to book. In Spain everyone is going to be brought to book. But before I can be tried it will take a meeting of the Court of Constitutional Guarantees and the order must come from the government and from the prosecutor-general of the Republic and this would be an onerous undertaking. Having spent some time in government still has some advantage.

I am keen to speak today comrades – because I have not spoken in Barcelona for a long time. Here I am back in the genuinely revolutionary Barcelona which the CNT will never lose regardless of the slander generated by the agents of the PSUC in the food queues and however many dead may be dug up by the people.

... Truly I regret having ceased to be Minister of Health, because for many a person around here I would make available the finest health facilities. There are things which only overheated imaginations can conceive.

All of the gentlemen who are devotees of vampirish work I regard as, at best, people assailed by a neurosis requiring speedy treatment. I do not want to place the worst construction upon them. I do not want to think how any of the gentlemen I have mentioned, all of those who are moved by such pronounced urges, can have any interest in playing along with the enemy, creating in the rearguard a moral collapse that can only redound to the benefit of Franco's hordes. I cannot quite comprehend how, when the war is not yet won, the war in which we are expected to make daily sacrifices, anyone could be so complacent as to breach the unity which is vital to the pursuance of the war.

What intentions lie behind the talk that in Catalonia the men of the CNT are murderers, since only the CNT people killed the fascists executed on 19 July?

... The CNT's prisoners are not behind bars because of the May events; some are, but very few. The guilt is heaped exclusively upon the POUM because it was the minority element and because there are men who only show daring towards the weak but are far from daring when they deal with the strong! The May events will be cleared up some day and we shall

see who are the real Gestapo agents. The bulk of the prisoners in Catalonia and Barcelona were not imprisoned as a result of the events in May. The procedure is a lot more decorous. Some gentleman or lady pens a letter to the President of the High Court and in that letter this “gentleman” or “lady”, a party member, complains that “in Puigcerdà on 19 July they killed the priest and they were this one, that one and the other one”. As a result of this denunciation a hunt begins for the body of the priest and a criminal investigation is launched. Already we have a sizeable number of CNT and FAI militants behind bars.

Another example: in Molins del Rei some CNT militants killed some priests who had escaped from Montserrat; so the bodies are to be disinterred and, if found, paraded through the town.

Another instance: in such and such a village collectivisation was carried out. And why not! Some CNT militants are hauled off to jail for having forced people at gunpoint to carry out this collectivisation.

But comrades! In Tarragona several PSUC members murdered 36 CNT comrades. So far as I am aware, no criminal investigation has been launched. In the cemetery in Cerdanyola they discovered 12 corpses of members of the JJ.LL, horribly mutilated with eyes gouged out and tongues cut out. An ambulance had brought them to the place and dumped them in the cemetery. I demanded that a criminal investigation be launched but this has not been done.

The problem which arises is as follows: we are law-abiding, we are favoured by democratic rights. Quite apart from the fact that a revolution exists here, one cannot murder without first bringing to trial, nor incarcerate in the absence of proof. We do not want to lose the war. And they are losing the war. They are losing us the war!

I address myself to all who conduct themselves thus, creating malaise in the rearguard, breaking morale on the fronts and opening Spain’s doors to the enemy.

... We need to view things in their proper perspective and tackle the two enemies head on, dispensing with go-betweens. On one side we have the champions of authority and the totalitarian state. Of the state-run economy, of a social organisation which militarises everybody and makes the State into the great master, into the great procurer, and into the God of a country. On the other should be the operation of the mines, fields, factories and workshops by the working class organised in Industrial Federations.

But to collectivise a workshop, placing it in the hands of all its operatives so that today there are more owners than on 19 July is to make the social revolution: it is to swallow the primitive view of socialism. The puerile formulation which the facts have to look beyond. And today one builds upon socialist foundations by establishing the great Industrial Federations as a

matter of necessity. The bourgeois democrats oppose this. They oppose the coming together of all workers training themselves and coming to arrangements so as to take charge of production; such is the problem posed by fascism in Spain in political terms.

And it poses another problem, namely the need to move beyond the fatal occurrence which all revolutions have featured. We in Spain must be alive to the shaping of a new society without the need for dictatorship. On this issue the CNT has stood most firm. We oppose the minority elements who aspire to dictatorship. Had we so desired we could have set up an anarchist dictatorship in Barcelona and Catalonia, since we were absolute masters of the situation there. We were the majority force and we had won our majority by risking our lives as a result of which we were looked upon as the arbiters of the people's destinies.

I chuckle to myself sometimes whenever I think of the guard that we posted to watch over many people lest they might flee Spain. A myth of terror had been conjured up and we were keen to be seen as good guys. But there was something else: we wanted to maintain anti-fascist unity and we wanted to show that in union lies strength and that that was the only way to beat fascism. Though the chance to be the bosses was there, we abdicated it. But what we shall never countenance is that anyone should be the dictator at our expense. This we shall not allow on account of the very spirit, the very universal implications of the Spanish revolution.

... Above all else the war must be won and the revolution must be made by the working class. Above all else, because unity is the guarantee of this. When others resist and unfurl their banners against the UGT-CNT alliance, it is because they appreciate the redoubtable threat which such unity means for them. Basically they are big and petty bourgeois, every one of them. The only people cognisant of what is at stake in this struggle are we. The men who set their cap at revolution before 19 July and whose cap is set at it today also.

Then comes the conscious, healthy portion of the UGT. Do not forget that in Spain there are two UGTs. There is the UGT of the small businessmen, shopkeepers, proprietors and industrialists. The UGT of small shopkeepers which once belonged to the bourgeois-catalanist Lliga but are now in the UGT, because they had to unionise either in the UGT or in the CNT. And – obviously! – the shopkeeper mentality of the classical Catalan bourgeois tells him: I must join the union; otherwise I won't be able to do business. So I'll join the UGT, which understands me better – And so we have the Catalan UGT.

We have to make our stand against the conservative mentality of the small proprietors and small shopkeepers who are in the UGT.

Then there is the other UGT. The UGT, which is part and parcel of the revolutionary movement of Spain, the authentically socialist UGT with a sense of class, which has carried out collectivisations and set the great socialisation ventures in motion. The UGT of the workers who know that the proletariat's hour has come and that this hour must be put to good use and that it must unite with its fellow union organisation. This one we can count upon: this is the one that does not whisper in the queues, factories and workshops, "Take no heed of the watchwords of the CNT." This is the one which will join with us in giving flesh to federalism: the one which constitutes a remedy against fascism. Enthusiasm and a fighting spirit bring the war to an end! Without counting the hours! Without counting the costs! Giving its all for the production process. With those two fortifications, with the union that brings strength and with the faith that moves mountains, success will be ours and Spain will have opened up a new era for the world and Spain will trace out for all the world the path of true progress, true culture and the real right to life which all men and all peoples possess.'

As mentioned earlier, no official explanation regarding the fate of Nin was forthcoming until 4 August. And the explanation offered on that date by the justice minister failed to clear up the mystery. The dispatch below is redolent of a barely contained shame. It states:

'Valencia, 4 – This morning at the Ministry of Justice a communiqué was issued which states. "When this authority took charge of several dossiers compiled by the police, acting on the orders of the General Security Directorate regarding the subversive events which took place in Catalonia last May, on the basis of the denunciations, information and espionage documents amassed in Madrid (and about which a public statement had previously been issued) it was found that Andreu Nin, erstwhile Generalitat Minister for Justice and leader of the POUM, was not numbered among the detainees made amenable to the courts of justice. The requisite enquiries having been made, it emerged that Nin, together with other leading elements of the POUM, was arrested by police from the General Security Directorate, removed to Madrid and incarcerated in a holding centre from which he vanished and, to date, all inquiries conducted by the police with a view to locating the prisoner and his guard have proved fruitless. The incident has been brought to the attention of the Prosecutor-General of the Republic and instructions have been issued that, as a matter of the utmost urgency, the Espionage Tribunal handling the case should take whatever steps it deems suitable to establish the whereabouts of Nin and the conduct of those persons who have had a hand in the episode, as evidenced by documents in which the figure of Nin is concerned, regarding which documents, their contents and authenticity the tribunal is even now conducting inquiries. All of this without prejudice to the action of the police, who continue to effect searches designed to locate the prisoner

in question, so that he may be made amenable to the Republic's courts of Justice in the prisons of the state.'

The better to understand this text, let us add that on 30 July the minister of justice in person had stated in another communiqué that two police dossiers, one of which concerned Javier Fernández and 102 others described as belonging to Falange Española and the other concerned with Miguel Borjas Lloret and 17 others placed under arrest in Madrid and belonging to the POUM, had been presented to the Special Espionage and High Treason Tribunal.

That bulletin and the statement from 4 August reprinted above were followed by sensational statements made by the justice minister, no less, in which he demonstrated that negligence in his ministry was not entirely to blame. Alluding to statements made in the French periodical *Le Temps* regarding the possible licensing of religious worship in Spain, señor Irujo told the press on 16 August:

'My thesis at this time is that the aim of winning the war presupposes jettisoning everything that may hinder the victory. Within that approach to government, I am a liberal, a republican and a defender of the rights of the individual which guarantee the security of the individual and the right to a trial in accordance with the law and before the competent courts. Freedom of thought and of conscience is another of my postulates and as for the practice and propagation of religious worship, that, quite apart from being a constitutional precept and prescribed by law, is a doctrinal and political aspiration. That, in principal, is what I have to say a propos of these claims. The government, with which I have raised the question of freedom of conscience and freedom of worship, has shown itself wholly in agreement on the need to authorise the practice of religious worship by the various religions that have followers in Spain. Private worship is permitted and to this end the appropriate censuses shall be carried out, of authorised chapels as well as of their respective priests and ministers, with the opening of public churches being left until later ...'

Among the champions of the reopening of the churches, the vicars of the Spanish communist church, the most zealous disciples of the man who said that 'religion is the opium of the people', had long been numbered.

As for the CNT's prisoners and the FAI's prisoners, the courts were not idle. On 2 July one of the stages of the investigation into the events in Tortosa concluded in the High Court in Tarragona. We have already given a detailed account of the repression carried out in Tortosa on the occasion of the passage through the town of the expeditionary forces dispatched to Catalonia. Those who, by some miracle, managed to escape the cowardly executions carried out by the Tortosa communists, abetted by their colleagues of the security forces, were named in the indictment. The court action was intended to compound those crimes with further crimes so as to give the appearance of legality.

Some 91 accused were produced before the court. A further 12 were on the run. As prescribed by the government, the accused were tried under the Code of Military



Justice. The counsels for the defence included the celebrated lawyer Eduardo Barriobero. Barriobero had earned a reputation as a great jurist by his conduct over a period of more than twenty years in the most sensational trials mounted against the CNT's militants. It was ironic that Barriobero was now to be seen in action in the midst of a revolution, again defending CNT personnel.

During the hearing of the case and despite the magnificent arguments of the lawyers and the favourable nature of witnesses' testimony, the prosecution presented its conclusions, asking for sentences of death against the 12 runaway accused and the same penalty against 3 army lieutenants and for 3 civilians present in the courtroom. It also asked for terms of between 9 and 15 years for the remainder. The response of the jury was somewhat unfavourable for the accused and, in view of the fact of the verdict, the court confirmed the requested death sentences. But given the severity of the sentences and in obedience to the prescriptions of the law, the jury amended its decision by secret vote. The court had to apply to have the case retried by a new jury. During the hearing, 85 of the accused were released, having been found not guilty by the jury; in their cases the prosecution dropped the charges. That left the charges against the 3 servicemen, the 3 civilians and the 12 fugitives still to be reviewed.

The review of this case took place on 4 September in the same High Court. After cross-examination, the prosecutor reiterated his request for sentences of death for those present and for the ones still on the run. But after the defence had made its submissions, the court withdrew to deliberate and produced a verdict clearing the accused who were in court and sentences of 15 years for those sentenced *in absentia*. The court of review confirmed this sentence.

On 19 July 1937 the CNT's National Committee publicly deplored the fact that the minimum programme of government, which it had put forward, had been ignored by the political parties. The PSOE had based its response upon the argument that it could not be party to the discussion of that programme outside the government. No categorical response was forthcoming from the republican parties. The PCE produced a dismissive reply. Only the UGT declared its readiness to enter discussions. By way of a compensatory factor, relations between the CNT and the UGT were thriving. Meanwhile, the sniping between the UGT proper and the PSOE (the latter under the influence of the pro-Stalinist sector) was growing worse by the moment. The UGT was slowly succumbing to the pressure from the adversaries of Largo Caballero. A provincial plenum of the Valencian Socialist Federation held in mid-July declared disbanded the committees of liaison with the PCE until such time as Jesús Hernández and La Pasionaria retracted their calumnious remarks about Largo Caballero in their recent speeches. The 10 July issue of *Adelante*, taking to task the PSUC, had written the following:

'Let us cite one instance as an example. Under the auspices of the aforementioned party a trade union section entitled "*Gremi d'Entitats de Petits Comerciants i Industrials*" (GEPCI — Guild of Small Businessmen's and Industrialists' Associations) and affiliated to the UGT. Workers unionised in the UGT since before last 19 July now found themselves within the ranks

of the same union organisation as the people who were their bosses and who denied them very fair demands in strikes which we all of us can recall.'

From its firing position, *El Socialista*, run by Manuel Albar, took aim on 15 July at the CNT's *milicianos* in Aragón:

'There has been no shortage of arms on the Aragón front. The only problem is that the arms which he had been expecting to see used on the front, in that they had been deployed for that very purpose, lined up one day, not against the present government, the government that is repudiated by the CNT, but rather against its predecessor which was, according to the CNT, the government of victory.'

Such snide remarks at the expense of the fighting men amounted to more than simply snide comment if we remember that the battle of Brunete, which some described as the biggest battle in any war, had begun around this time. First reports were that the enemy had launched his attack via that sector, deploying masses of aircraft, artillery and tanks in the hope of being able to mark the first anniversary of his mutiny with a resounding victory.

Something very similar to a mutiny occurred on 26 July. On the instructions of the PSOE's executive commission, the Valencia Association seized control of the premises of the provincial federation, which, as we have seen, championed the Largo Caballero line. Whereupon a commission headed by the celebrated socialist Molina Conejero, Valencia's civil governor, attempted to do likewise with the daily paper *Adelante*. Here they ran up against some resistance, for the management of the newspaper expressed a readiness to see *Adelante* cease to function as the organ of the federation and indeed as a socialist mouthpiece but was unable to surrender it because it did not feature on the register as an asset of the provincial federation. But capitulation was not long delayed. An extraordinary plenum of the PSOE, urgently summoned for that very evening, gave its endorsement to whatever take-over measures had been put into effect. Under new management the paper *Adelante* made this decision publicly known in its 27 July issue. Cruz Salido was appointed as the new director of *Adelante*.

In response to these arbitrary actions, the UGT executive commission, as yet in Largo Caballero's hands, made it publicly known on 29 July that the newspapers *Las Noticias* (Barcelona) and *Claridad* (Madrid) had ceased to function as spokesmen for the UGT. That very day the UGT's executive reported agreement upon the groundwork of an alliance with the CNT, such agreement being provisional until such time as a national congress of the UGT could meet. The same agreement was simultaneously announced by the CNT in the press.

Here is the text of the new agreement:

'Representatives of the National Committee of the CNT and of the executive commission of the UGT having sat down together jointly to determine what ought to be their approach to the various issues facing the

working class and at the same time to prescribe the formulas which they regard as vital to prompt solution of the same, have in the first instance agreed the following conclusions:

**First:** The CNT and the UGT in their press propaganda, public addresses, etc. forswear any sort of criticisms and violent attacks upon the postulates that furnish their inspiration. The doctrinal differences separating both organisations shall at all times be examined in objective fashion, in cordial language, employing a logic founded upon the same trade union doctrine which both defend.

**Second:** The CNT and UGT shall not recognise nor award belligerent status to those trade union labour organisations which operate outside the discipline of the CNT and of the UGT.

**Third:** The CNT and the UGT undertake to show absolute respect for the freedom of workers to affiliate to either of the two organisations, the CNT or the UGT, in the workplaces, fields, factories, workshops, mines, etc., etc. Regardless of whether it be of the UGT or of the CNT, the card produced by the comrades shall be regarded as sufficient accreditation of trade union membership.

**Fourth:** Both organisations undertake not to admit into their bosom any member who may be expelled for immorality or for infringement of the agreements of the other sister union.

**Fifth:** Similarly, they undertake to refuse admission to those unions which may have defected from the UGT or the CNT whenever these seek admittance to one of the two organisations without prior consultation with the organisation to which they were previously affiliated.

**Sixth:** Coercion brought to bear for the purpose of forcing comrades or unions to affiliate to either of the organisations with which they do not identify shall be construed as a breach of faith with the pact described and shall be punished forthwith.

**Seventh:** The UGT and the CNT undertake to impose trade union sanctions against those members and unions which systematically refuse to comply with the agreements adopted by both trade union bodies.

**Eighth:** So as to make viable this principle of mutual respect, the indispensable basis for the articulation and pursuance of subsequent resolutions, the UGT and the CNT agree to set up a national liaison committee comprised of three representatives from each of the unions. It shall be the function of this national liaison committee:

(a) To meet at least once weekly.

(b) To faithfully execute the prescriptions of the preceding points.

(c) To set up liaison committees in every district between the local organisations, said committees to have no function other than to comply with

the dispositions handed down by the National Committee and to forward to that committee any suggestions they may have to make in respect of the various problems outstanding.

(d) To discuss problems created by circumstance and for which no provision exists in the action programme nor in the decisions jointly adopted by the two trade union bodies.

**Ninth:** Such quarrels as may crop up in a locality shall be resolved by the national liaison committee.

**Tenth:** The national liaison committee shall suggest to the CNT and UGT executives the sanctions to be imposed upon those unions failing to comply with the agreement the committee may lay down.

**Eleventh:** To be valid, any accords which may be adopted shall bear the endorsements of the national agencies of the two trade union bodies.

**Twelfth:** The national liaison committee shall suggest to the National Committee of the CNT and to the executive commission of the UGT those resolutions which ought, it reckons, to be adopted in the solution of whatever problems reality may confront us with, it being the duty of the UGT's executive commission and of the CNT's National Committee to implement those accords in compliance with the decisions adopted by the national liaison committee. The UGT executive and the CNT National Committee.'

## Chapter Ten: Destruction of the Council of Aragón

At the end of July a political offensive was mounted in the grand style. *Frente Rojo*, the PCE's daily newspaper in Valencia, initiated it with the publication of an article complaining that 'some extremists sheltered by certain organisations in intimate association with the Fifth Column are planning disturbances and criminal acts in the rearguard.'<sup>1</sup> Two days later, on 2 August, the CNT National Committee challenged the Central Committee of the PCE to substantiate the charge. 'Unless proof is forthcoming, the damning anathema of traitor will fall upon the slanderer.' Along with other union committees, the FAI's Peninsular Committee and the Libertarian Youth associated themselves with the challenge issued by the CNT National Committee.

Emerging from a cabinet meeting on 2 August, Jesús Hernández told reporters:

'Basically the cabinet has been concerned with examining what measures needed to be taken, from the public order viewpoint, in order to forestall and curtail with the utmost vigour any attempted disturbance or upset which certain extremist elements, who are the instruments of fascism, may seek to provoke.'

As we have said, the affront was offered on 31 July and, by some rare coincidence on 1 August there was an attempt upon the life of the president of the Barcelona High Court who was fired upon by persons unknown posted in the environs of the Palace of Justice. The victim emerged unscathed, but the coincidence of this event with the 'far-sighted' denunciations by *Frente Rojo* is nonetheless telling. The Confederation's National Committee hit the target in another communiqué on 5 August, in which is stated: 'This situation could lead to the belief that the so-called "provocateurs" were deliberately provoked.'

The doors had not quite closed on that episode when the very same *Frente Rojo* made ready to open up another front. Belatedly raising certain comments by Federica Montseny that were certainly not flattering towards Russia, the PCE's mouthpiece posed, most melodramatically, a sort of question of confidence in the 'country of the proletariat'.

'I never believed', retorted Montseny, 'that my words could have such an effect upon the communist comrades. I did indeed speak the words attributed to me; but it is in poor taste and a shocking vulgarity to seize upon them so as to create the impression that in so speaking the intention was to attack the Soviet Union and to place Russia on a par with Germany and Italy'.<sup>2</sup>

That same day's issue of *Solidaridad Obrera* in Barcelona was more specific:

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<sup>1</sup> *Frente Rojo*, 31 July 1937

<sup>2</sup> *Castilla Libre*, 4 August 1937

‘We are infinitely indebted to the USSR for assistance which it has lent Spain. But that does not mean that the representatives in Spain of the party which is in power in Russia should believe that they have unlimited rights by virtue of what the USSR has done on Spain’s behalf. Were they to do so, even the Soviet Union would forfeit its right to our thankfulness. For one is thankful for what one receives and what is unselfishly given and not for that which is sold or purchased.’<sup>3</sup>

The squabble persisted for several days and just when it seemed that things had begun to settle down there came a fresh attack from a new quarter. On 8 August a PCE rally was held in the Capitol Theatre in Valencia. Among the speakers was the PSUC leader and general-secretary, Joan Comorera. Here is the resume of his address as given out by the news agencies:

Comorera began by saying that Catalonia had undergone a complete change of situation and that this ought to serve as an example for everyone. This thoroughgoing transformation was owed to the sole party of the proletariat in that, without it, the region would be dead weight as far as the Republic was concerned and a decisive factor for defeat.

He compared the current situation with the situation last year. Then, he said, the Marxist influence had been minimal. The proletariat had been under the sway of anarchism, of the parties of the left. With the unification of Catalonia’s four Marxist parties this had begun to change and battle was joined against the almost absolute dominion of anarchism and against the influence of the leftist parties. Today we were victorious, as we have put paid to the provocations and to the fascists.

To begin with, Catalonia had clung to her age-old vices. She began the war with a motley array of tribes<sup>4</sup> that robbed trucks, saying that they were going to take Zaragoza. Today we boast a great army that takes its example from the glorious Karl Marx Division. We have surmounted the difficulties and eliminated those who displayed bravado on the highways but cowardice on the front lines.

Thanks to the unification of the Marxist parties an end had been put to the hegemony of anarchism in Catalonia, which had sought to spread its influence to the whole of Spain.

In this you will find the socialist and communist parties united. We raise no difficulties of any sort. We offer every sort of facility, most especially to comrade Negrín, to whom we will some day know how much the Catalan proletariat is in his debt.

Pain-filled days still lie ahead of us on the front and in the rearguard. So as to overcome these difficulties we must maintain the unity of the proletariat so as to be in a position to maintain the Popular Front. Only nitwits and enemies can set their faces against unity for it is inexplicable that unity should today be opposed by the man who touted it all over Spain, earning himself the title of the “Spanish Lenin” when he was the idol of the socialist youth, just as today he is the idol of the anarchist youth.

He recalled that a gentleman by the name of Hernández Zancajo had gone to Barcelona to declare war upon the Transport Union, one of the unions with the finest record of struggle. In that struggle we have lost upwards of 200 comrades...murdered.

He attacked the UGT leadership that he said had been in Barcelona in May to hatch a plot that we could not swallow. They sought to have the Generalitat government constituted on the

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<sup>3</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 4 August 1937

<sup>4</sup> A scandalous and derogatory reference to the first anarchist columns, including the Durrutti Column, that left Catalonia to confront the insurgent army.

basis of an entente between the national committees of the CNT and the UGT, side-stepping us completely.

He concluded by saying that now the enemy within aims to resort to personal attempts. I have knowledge — he said — of a list of more than 60 names of persons belonging to the socialist and communist parties whom they intend to assassinate: for every drop of our comrades' blood that may be spilled, one of our enemies' heads will roll — Cosmos'.

In the light of the events that were to follow, it was now apparent that all of these attacks were but a smoke screen designed to soften the impact of future deeds. Let it be said once and for all that the big push was directed against the Aragón Defence Council.

At the start of August 1937, the so-called Popular Front, comprising the communists, the UGT and the republicans, had met in Barbastro. Those assembled there were in agreement that: 'the policy of the Council of Aragón is mistaken and contrary to the interests of the region's economy', and they determined to propose to the government that it appoint a 'federal governor' to oversee the region. It needs to be borne in mind that the Council of Aragón embraced every political and trade union persuasion from the PCE and the republicans, through to the CNT and the UGT.

At a rally to mark the anniversary of 19 July, held in Caspe, the president of the Council of Aragón, Joaquín Ascaso y Budría, had delivered a radio address from which we have borrowed the most interesting extracts:

'People of Aragón! I have today accepted an invitation from the Department of Information and Propaganda to address you over the airwaves. This is timely, given our region's social and political circumstances and necessities today.

At present the Council of Aragón and all of the work done upon its instigation by the people of Aragón, are causing sleepless nights for its enemies who wish to see the worker of field and factory relinquish their independence...

Let it be known in all political circles, both high and low, that the Council of Aragón was created by and for the people, that it was introduced for the common good and that it emerged in a democratic way, brimming with social significance: its birth was attended by the valiant milicianos who smiled at death and by the heroic peasant who, bent over the soil, extracted the fruits needed by him, his brother, who was crushing fascism only metres away.

Its first cries were greeted by the din of cannon fire and the uproar of battle which stained mother earth ruddy, but it was a child of the revolution and strong and sturdy: it was born with the caress of a great and kindred idea, one bereft of an exclusivist mentality. Guided by that preoccupation it sought, contrived and ensured that all ideas desirous of a new era embraced one another in the same spirit between its strong arms. It was a child of the revolution and, being such, it embraced and defended all of its facets in equal measure, but it would be deplorable were anyone to seek to toy with it as with some limp doll, for it should be obliged to show its iron claws and steely teeth, which would put paid to those who seek to eliminate it, which is akin to doing away with its mother — the revolution itself.

In the painful course of one year, wrestling with the lack of understanding and apathy of those in positions of the highest responsibility, Aragón has had to shift for herself: today her regional wealth stands higher thanks to her sober-mindedness and

because preventive action was taken against the speculation that has laid other, sister regions low, as the Departments of Transport and Public Works can demonstrate. Countless roads have been built. With the assistance of the *milicianos*, highways have been constructed and a series of lines of transportation and travel routes are operating on a normal basis. The same goes for the telephone network. And a start has been made to the construction of a rail network that had been stalled for upwards of 16 years. The municipalities, elevated to their due status, have successfully achieved that which was, prior to 19 July 1936, a distant dream kicked about like a ball from party to party, attracting supporters that were disappointed time and time again. On the agricultural side, the Collectives sprouted like some blessed conflagration. Without fear of error, I can state that no feat is without blemish. One always has to watch over what one creates, so as to amend the slightest imperfections, which may be undetectable, perhaps, but which are imperfections for all that. And if to all this we add the urge which moves every human being to extend, renew, in short, beautify that which makes life more agreeable for us, we shall still discover more imperfections in that work in which we place all our hopes.

It is, then, logical and natural that the work of the Collectives, created out of a healthy understanding, albeit a rudimentary one on the part of the Aragonese peasantry, was not thoroughly delightful, nor thoroughly just. If we add that the Collectives came into existence at a time of vague fear on the one hand and, on the other, an urge to give shape to a great, humane notion, we will still discover a normal justification at the bottom of that abnormality which made it possible to wound feelings and interests that were compelled to yield before the majority interest ... though this does not rule out amendment in the future — such as is even now being effected.

But despite the shortcomings or the mishandled launching of the Collectives, there can be no toleration of the unworthy attacks heaped upon them, for, like it or not, they are the shape of things to come. It is time to point out flaws and errors and to suggest amendments that may make them even better. Campaigning against them in the meeting or in the press, in a shameless endeavour to recruit malcontents, clearly shows up the moral calibre and ideological staunchness of those who do so. To launch campaigns using rabble-rousing language, and manipulation for political ends, out of ignorance, indeed, of Aragón's development, is to deserve no reply other than our silence, which best expresses our contempt.

And so it falls to me to tell the people of Aragón that today, like yesterday, they are still on their own. Their selfless offerings to the anti-fascist cause have been accepted as if this were a special boon granted us, and the minimal support we have been seeking for the past year, with a well-tried patience, has always been denied us, with most courteous smiles, maybe, but smiles that disguised the intention, only too plain today, of doing away with the gains won (the luminaries of the revolution label them "unproductive and dangerous experiments") through the endeavour of a people bereft of all support. And when, in Aragón, the aspirations of all anti-fascist organisations had been successfully united, with partisan ideas being jettisoned, and those aspirations spelled out in a written agreement signed and endorsed by all, a



squalid and counter-revolutionary intrigue was launched that led to the break up, first of the Popular Front, and quickly of the anti-fascist bloc.

All organisations which devised, signed and undertook to implement the compact — which later I will spell out for you in detail — with the weight of the authority of the rest falling upon the one that might seek to evade and shirk it, have an historic responsibility which the world will sit in judgment of, and, before the world at large, their people, who will call them to account for the dishonesty of their signature.

I have before me, people of Aragón, the compact that the anti-fascist bloc undertook to carry out, so that the revolutionary situation in Aragón might become extended and secure.

The first point of the compact prescribes that the Council of Aragón can and should retain the same line-up as that which presently comprises it.

The second says that the Council president is to be the government's delegate for the three provinces, exercising full authority and ensuring that the decisions of the government of the Republic and of the Council itself are carried into effect.

The third point is the one stating that all the anti-fascist organisations, cognisant of the fact that the civilian population has need of an impartial guarantee to protect its rights and see to the performance of its duties, acknowledged the necessity of reinforcing the principle of revolutionary authority.

The fourth spells out the wish that these organisations, which, on account of the revolutionary upheaval, lost their self-control and which it was not possible to have present at the appropriate moment, should have a guarantee in the municipal councils and that this hereinafter be ensured.

Point five of the agreement deals with the agrarian question: "The Council is to ensure that the desire of the peasant to work the land individually or collectively, is respected, so as to avoid the discontent that might be created, perhaps, by the rapid conversions of the initial moments, but although the Council of Aragón shall be the defender of smallholders, the agreements of the two union groupings, UGT and CNT, shall have to be respected so as to avert a return to the contemptible system existing prior to 19 July."

Item six deals with support for the government, support offered to it for the war and for the national economy in all its ramifications, notwithstanding the coolness that the central government has shown this region of ours, although we trust that this splendid gesture on the part of the Aragonese shall be duly reciprocated as far as our just needs are concerned.

Point seven says that there shall be no other organs of public administration than the Council of Aragón and the municipal councils and, of course, the functions which the government may determine to devolve to the relevant departments (*consejerías*).

Point eight is as follows: "The Council of Aragón, which must be an enthusiastic collaborator of the lawful government of the Republic, shall intensify production in the rear, mobilise every resource in the region the better to prosecute the war, fan the anti-fascist spirit of the masses so that they may constantly work and struggle with

the war in mind; to this end, it shall thoroughly purge the liberated areas, imposing an implacable order and pursuing undercover fascists, defeatists, speculators and all who cannot provide due explanation of their activities and who constitute a threat to the attainment of our triumph.”

That pact carries the following signatures: for the PCE, J. Acero Laguna; PSOE, Arsenio Gimeno; Unión Republicana, illegible; CNT, J. Morlás; UGT, Alberto Pérez; JSU, Manuel Soler; Izquierda Republicana, A. Roig Estrada; for the Council of Aragón (Chairman) Joaquín Ascaso y Budría.

I had no hesitation in espousing this undertaking as my own in the firm intention of implementing it in every particular, with the requisite authority, but let it be said also that I will be unbending towards those who seek to make a mockery of it or turn it to their particular interests or momentary convenience.

All of the signatory organisations have laid their partisan aspirations to one side, prompted by their staunch desire to win the war with the optimum measure of normality and conviviality in the rearguard. I hope and trust that the government of the Republic will fully appreciate the sacrifice presently being made by Aragonese anti-fascism, and that, turning a deaf ear to the discordant voices of the “glorious fix-it-alls” will lend its endorsement to the path which the people of Aragón has traced for itself through its representative bodies, as the basis for the future peace of its rearguard. Should we be mistaken in this, our trust in our government figures, we will not bear the responsibility for the tragedy which ... have no doubt about it ... would fasten upon our region and thus upon Spanish anti-fascism as a whole.’

A plenum of the CNT district committees had gathered in Alcañiz on 2 August to agree upon a stance *vis à vis* the delicate situation created by the political elements who had assembled in Barbastro. From the plenum emerged the following resolution:

‘The CNT, having calmly discussed and thought through the situation which has been created, states its conviction that the anti-fascist bloc must be maintained for the sake of the war and of the revolution.

Should this wish be trampled underfoot or broken by those other organisations with greater or less representation in Aragón, then never again may the CNT be charged with being irresponsible, uncontrollable or provocative.

The CNT states that it will not play along with the sordid game that bolstered a certain other party in certain regions. In Aragón, the CNT, cognisant and sure of its responsibility, says:

That just as it has no wish to see the anti-fascist front destroyed by political ambition, nor the clauses of a signed pact on which the ink is not yet dry betrayed, it is not disposed either to let the gains it has made politically, socially and economically be snatched away from it — and so it states without bombast of any sort.

This is not a challenge, but a friendly warning. Should this be the goal of all, the CNT congratulates itself upon the fact, for such is its wish. This it has demonstrated

to date and continues to do so. But should the attitude be that there are many contending interests and that each party is free to pursue its own without regard for the general interest, the CNT, with the same deliberation with which it has faced up to the shower of attacks calculated to provoke it, shall defend what rightly belongs to it to the very end, and with all of its energies.

– The Regional Committee.’

On 7 August, there was a CNT meeting in Alcañiz. Among the speakers was Federica Montseny. This was the last of a series of rallies in Aragón that had the obvious intention of countering the bad atmosphere created there by the PCE press campaign. The speaker made a thoroughgoing diatribe against the so-called Popular Front, blaming it for being responsible for the catastrophe of 18 July 1936 on account of its ineffectuality and political blindness. Now that the Popular Front had been reborn to the detriment of revolutionary gains and also was damaging to relations between the parties and organisations heretofore allied in the anti-fascist front and in the Defence Council. She dealt in particular with the grave political situation confronting the council, whose federalist outlook she praised. The circumstances probably made it advisable for Montseny to show great consideration and tact in her remarks about Russia.

The thunderclap came at last on 10 August, followed immediately by the storm. That storm was the Decree ordering the dissolution of the Council of Aragón. It read as follows:

‘The moral and material demands of the war make it an overwhelming necessity that the authority of the state be concentrated in such a way that it may be exercised with uniformity of approach and intent. On more than one occasion the division and subdivision of power and its prerogatives have eroded efficacy of action which, albeit purely administrative in origin, inevitably has far-reaching repercussions for war business.

The Aragonese region, capable ... by virtue of the mettle of its people ... of the loftiest human and economic contributions to the cause of the Republic, suffers to a higher degree than any other from the blemishes of dispersion of authority, from which it follows that harm is done to general ideological interests.

Whatever its endeavours, the Council of Aragón has not succeeded in making good this shortcoming. Even as the rest of Spain is accommodating itself to a new discipline characterised by responsibility and efficiency, from which sacrifice is in many instances not absent, Aragón holds aloof from this centralising trend to which we are largely indebted for the victory that awaits us.

In making provision for the remedy of the crisis of authority discernible in Aragón, the government reckons that it shall encompass its aims only if it concentrates power into its own hands. And to this end, by arrangement with the Council of Ministers and on the instigation of its chairman, I hereby decree:

**Article One:** That the Council of Aragón is hereby dissolved and the position of Government Delegate held by the president of said Council abolished. Consequently, Don Joaquín Ascaso y Budría and the other councillors making up the aforementioned body, shall be dismissed from the post of Government Delegate in Aragón.

**Article Two:** The territories of the provinces of Aragón as yet under the authority of the Republic, come under the jurisdiction of a governor-general of Aragón appointed by the government and enjoying those powers which current legislation affords to civil governors.'

Under another Decree issued that same day José Ignacio Mantecón was named as Aragón's governor-general.

Such was the thunderclap. Now let us examine the ensuing storm. The dissolution of the Council of Aragón came at a time when the Popular Front in Aragón had, as we have seen, undertaken to stand by it. But as soon as the Decree was made public, the Minister of Defence dispatched the 11th Division, a spearhead army, under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel Lister, to Caspe. This manoeuvre was abetted by the 27th (Karl Marx) and 30th Divisions, likewise under the command of communists and catalanists. These forces unleashed a terror in the Aragonese rearguard, not far distant from the fronts where the CNT's 25th, 26th and 28th Divisions were pinning down the enemy. They proceeded to occupy villages militarily and to storm the centres of the CNT, FAI and Libertarian Youth, as well as to destroy the collectives and town councils. The Council of Aragón president, Joaquín Ascaso y Budría, was arrested, as were other CNT Council members and the members of the CNT Regional Committee.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, the PCE press provided an accompaniment to the crackdown by peddling the most contemptible lies.

Here is an article lifted from *Frente Rojo*:

'We have alluded in our newspaper to the situation which the now dissolved body had created in republican Aragón. Rising from the depths of the peasantry a scream of outrage aghast at the violence and coercion deployed in the implementation of systems with no supporters other than the bayonets which imposed them was assailing our ears on a daily basis.

Economically and administratively, the chaos could not have been more complete: one of those maverick petty governors of whom Uribe was to speak manipulated the destinies of loyalist Aragón at his whim. The depth of the malaise of the anti-fascist populace became patent at the recent gathering of the Aragonese Popular Front. The people's representatives discovered the dimensions of the outrageousness and the muffled objections from the masses of the people. From the outset, the government got to grips with the problem and has resolved it in the only way possible: by dissolving the body, putting paid to the charade.

Taking a deep breath as if they were emerging from a prison, the Aragonese peasants and the people of this loyalist region tremble as if awaking from a nightmare. The government's writ now runs in Aragón. On what pretext could this sort of cantonalism have existed, embedded like some cyst, hampering the progress of the war and the expansion of the nation's economy? For what popular feeling, what desire of the masses did this Council, formed spontaneously and on the whim of one organisation, speak and represent?

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<sup>5</sup> Joaquín Ascaso y Budría was freed after about one month.

There is a very clear and very sad symptom of what the now dissolved Council of Aragón stood for and what it served: the charge brought against its president, Joaquín Ascaso y Budría, of smuggling jewels.

What does this mean? It means that we were right in our exposés of pillage and terror in Aragón. Of the robbing of peasants, and the infringements constantly perpetrated in the shadow of the rifles which the government had given them, not for the spoliation of the rearguard but for fighting the fascists in the firing lines.’<sup>6</sup>

The communist troops entered Aragón as conquerors. Many of the troops had glibly been led to believe that they would be advancing across enemy-held territory. The invaders reached Caspe and burst into the centres of the CNT and the FAI. In one such establishment, one of their officers smashed up a portrait of Durruti amid expletives, saying that he would dole out the same treatment to all Confederation personnel. To the arrests of officials must be added the arrests of the editors of the Council’s press organ *Nuevo Aragón*. The paper was simply shut down, or rather replaced by the communist newspaper *El Día*. Other troops from the 11th Division made a triumphal entrance into Alcañiz, the base of the Aragonese Regional Committee of the CNT. Committee members Francisco Muñoz (secretary), and Miguel Vallejo and Manuel López were held for several days and their place of detention kept a secret. Here are the particulars concerning their detention.

In the early morning of 12 August, by agreement of a majority of the Regional Committee, the aforementioned trio had journeyed to Caspe for talks with the governor-general. En route from Alcañiz to Caspe they noticed great activity by troops from the 11th Division. Their talks with the governor-general were cordial. The governor-general was informed of the need to set minds at rest in the outraged villages and of the intention to proceed with a plenum of local and district committees in Alcañiz, to which end the proper assurances for the delegations that had promised to attend were sought from him. The governor-general was most obliging. He was also asked for assurances that they would be free to leave Caspe and the governor-general issued them with a safe conduct, fully in order. In spite of all this, these envoys were stopped at military checkpoints and locked up the next morning, in clandestine fashion, in the so-called ‘*Torre del Basque*’ on the banks of the Ebro, nine kilometres from Caspe. For the space of five days they languished in a dank cellar, supplied with no food other than the soldiers’ leavings. The statements did not begin to flow until day six. The first to issue one was Francisco Muñoz. The military judge began by threatening him with death unless he pleaded guilty to every one of the charges. This judge was a captain by the name of Torres, who was assisted by a lieutenant. Amid imprecations in poor taste directed against Antonio Ortiz — the commander of the 25th Division — the judge insistently asked Muñoz why he had escaped from the rebel-held Zaragoza, urging him to furnish specific details about his escape.

A forceful response from the CNT National Committee prevented the carrying out of the promised executions. The detainees were released on the order of the governor and were handed over amid insults and threats against their lives.

The premises of the Regional Committee were stormed on 12 August. The attacking troops were commanded by Royo and a commissar from the 10th Mixed Brigade (11th Division). A countermanding order issued over the telephone by the governor-general was most irreverently

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<sup>6</sup> *Frente Rojo*, 12 August 1937

disobeyed. Public order troops joined the initial uniformed forces. The discovery of some weapons on the premises furnished the excuse for making arrests. The members of the town council were arrested in the evening, with the council in full session. A search carried out in the town hall revealed some silver coinage, and although the council argued that it had several times consulted the Department of Finance as to the implications of the Decree banning such caches, those arrested were marched off to jail. The next day, the now deposed mayor appeared before a so-called Steering Commission (Comisión Gestora) appointed by the local military commander to formalise the surrender of the town's funds. That commission was made up of Angel Sanz Navarro (Izquierda Republicana), Pascual Noguero Gómez and Angel Sánchez (UGT) and Ramón and Gil Barberán (PCE). Except for one of those named, all were residents of other towns. Together with the councillors, municipal office employees were also detained.

Those who stormed the Regional Committee's premises made much public fuss about the discovery of 200 hams which were in storage there, having been brought from an evacuated village (Segura de Baños) near the front. A copy of the receipt that has been issued for them was in the possession of the town council. Nonetheless, the troops stacked the hams in the courtyard of the premises and invited the populace to witness this curious spectacle. Arrests were carried out among the evacuees from Segura de Baños, and among their relations.

The same troops wrecked and looted the premises, and private quarters, making off with personal clothing, 10 typewriters and other equipment belonging to the secretariat. They also rifled the committee's correspondence and archives. Two motorcycles and seven cars, plus the entire wool stock sheared by the Shepherds' Collective were added to the booty of the 11th Division. Detainees were mistreated in the very presence of Lister, who also ordered the requisitioning of all vehicles possessed by the Transport Collective (the Alcañiz-Caspe-Binéfar bus service) and its repair workshops were taken over. Troops from other communist divisions committed outrages in a large number of villages. Here are just some of the details:

**Esplus:** Troops from the 27th (Karl Marx) Division entered the village with guns blazing away at the peasants out working in the market garden. Arrests were made, among them the arrest of a *miliciano* from the 127th Mixed Brigade who was on leave.

**Alcolea de Cinca:** The same troops arrested the members of the town council and commandeered much of the town's food stocks. There was a home there for old people and invalids from evacuated villages, which was commandeered by the intruders, who cast the destitute into the streets. Similarly the locals of the CNT and FAI were seized. Office equipment was wrecked and the communist flag hoisted in triumph.

**Barbastro:** On 13 August, communist activists and members of the security forces stormed the village's 'Casa CNT-FAI', taking possession of it. They made 70 arrests.

**Angües:** On the night of 12 August, the village was entered by troops from the 133rd Mixed Brigade (30th Division). The headlights of the trucks carrying them were extinguished as they approached the village and they advanced in military formation, as if attacking an enemy-held position. They burst into the CNT centre and confiscated a radio set and a typewriter. They wrecked a library and what pictures were hanging on the walls. The five CNT members who made up the town council were placed under arrest and four machine-guns were set up, trained on the church, which had been converted into a food store for the 28th Division. The soldiers who manned the store bravely resisted the attackers. Whereupon the latter demolished the general store of the District Collectives' Committee, carrying away sacks of sugar and coffee and large amount of poultry.

**Mas de las Matas:** Two public order guards of the old Council of Aragón were arrested in this area. They escaped being shot by flinging themselves from the moving cars in which they were being taken away for execution. Another two guards from the same corps were detained. Nothing more was heard of them.

**Valderrobres:** Peasants Jacinto Pérez, Manuel Cardona and Sebastián Boltaina were arrested by the cossacks of the 11th Division and taken to Lister's headquarters. Later they were released along with the members of the Regional Committee.

**Montalban:** 30th Division troops carried out searches in confederation premises and in the town council. Union leaders and officials wound up in the prison in Utrillas. There were similar outrages in **Palomar de Arroyos**. Among those arrested here was the mayor.

**Muniesa:** Troops from the 27th Division wrecked the Collective. Later they organised a rally, which had to be called off when people failed to attend. These same troops attacked the Blesa Collective and indulged in all manner of hooliganism.

*Frente Rojo* made a great to-do about these feats:

‘The Popular Front government has made a truly triumphal entry into Aragón. The jubilant peasants, filled with expectation, welcomed it. Aragón is beginning to heave a sigh of relief and to feel the benefits of the new administration. An era of hateful tragedy has assuredly ended.

Under the rule of the late Council of Aragón neither citizens nor property enjoyed the slightest guarantee. The whimsy and arbitrariness of a handful of new autocrats had been raised to the status of a system government. And that system had been imposed through the exercise of terror, the dimensions of which were to become known in all their extent as the purge being carried out by the government of the Republic proceeded.

Aragón is one huge arsenal. In Aragón the government has uncovered enormous dumps of arms and ammunition and stocks of thousands of bombs and hundreds of the latest model of machine-gun, not to mention artillery and tanks. And all of this equipment was being held back, not in fact for the fighting on the battlefronts, but as the property of those who sought to make of Aragón a bulwark for their struggles against the government of the Republic.

The finest proof lies in the fact that the best trenches in Aragón did not face the trenches of the traitor Cabanellas, but rather in the opposite direction. To what end was Aragón fortified along her Catalan flank? Was the rebel menace advancing up the Mediterranean coast? All secret arms caches must be resolutely ferreted out. Our army of the East has need of all this abundant weaponry. Let not one rifle, not one bullet be left in Aragón that is not in the hands which they should be ... those of the People's Army.

As far as the Collectives are concerned, let us say that there is not one Aragonese peasant who was not forced to join them. He who ventured to resist felt the lash of terror on his person and upon his smallholding. Thousands of peasants have quit the region, preferring desertion to putting up with the thousand assorted tortuous measures imposed by the Council of Aragón. Their lands were confiscated, they were obliged to work from sun up to sun down, an exhausting day, on their lands, for a

wage of 95 *céntimos*. Anyone who objected was denied bread, soap and the basic necessities of life. All foodstuffs for private consumption were impounded. Known and prominent fascists were installed in the municipal councils. Falange squad leaders, card holders, officiated as mayors, councillors, agents or dignitaries of public order under the Council of Aragón ... bandits by origin, they made of banditry a profession and a system of government.

A change has been wrought upon the scene in Aragón: the entry of the People's Army and the inauguration of the government has amounted to an event of national significance. Thousands of complaints and denunciations flood in daily from every corner of the region. The discovery of arsenals and their recovery on a large scale has begun. The heroes of the Fifth Column are being brought to book by the government of the Republic. The explanations have finished forever. A new era has truly begun in Aragón.

Joyously the peasants welcome what they call regimen. To be sure, they are not mistaken. So far as may be feasible, the injustices perpetrated will have to be made good. There must be an end to the crime of forced collectivisation. Expropriated landowners must have their holdings restored to them. Freedom for the peasants of Aragón must be established. The spies and fascists must be flushed out of all the dens in which they lived in peace in Aragón. Thus will our government build a steely rearguard such as the people's army needs to ensure the success of our arms. Very soon, the Eastern Front will emulate the glorious Central Front and that will be no small victory for the government.<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, such loudly trumpeted falsehoods could not be substantiated. Despite repeated challenges from the CNT, the PCE newspapers were unable to furnish figures for the supposed arsenals they claimed had been discovered on the Aragonese rearguard. This led to a sustained polemic between the CNT's National Committee and the PCE's Central Committee. The former had announced that it was severing relations with the latter until such time as its requests were met or a public apology for such crackpot accusations was issued. The communists' responses were always evasive ... such as shifting the argument to the political plane and the need for collaboration with the 'Popular Front government'. In reply the CNT charged that they had espoused a policy of open confrontation and pointed to the attitudes and discipline of the Confederation's officers, men and commissars serving on the fronts, despite the fact that the recent events had been a grave provocation to them. 'Thus', said Mariano Vázquez in one of his open letters to the PCE, 'our opposition has never been more than platonic, and this nobody can dispute with us, least of all this party which, while part of the government, has on many occasions resisted government ordinances.' In the same document, the door was left open for future negotiations:

'Nonetheless, we stand ready to enter into full-blooded discussion, at a meeting attended by responsible delegates from all organisations and parties, of the military course of events and likewise of the conduct of each in the rearguard since the formation of Dr. Negrín's cabinet. At that meeting, the performance of each will be able to be established thoroughly, something that may not be done in public, precisely on

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<sup>7</sup> *Frente Rojo*, 14 August 1937



account of consideration for the progress of the war, for which we all have an obligation to look out, so that it may conclude with the indisputable victory of Spanish anti-fascism.'

By way of a postscript to this whole controversy we may quote the communiqué published in *Mundo Obrero*, which read thus:

'On Saturday morning, as suggested by the CNT National Committee, a full range of views took place in Valencia between representatives of that committee, including comrades Vázquez and Antona, and a delegation from the Central Committee of our party, concerning ways and means of strengthening anti-fascist unity with a view to making order and discipline in the rear more effective and resolving, by means of a schedule of practical measures, the great political problems raised, so as to win the war and expand upon the gains of the people's revolution.

The CNT comrades set out in full their stance with regard to current problems, voicing certain complaints about the treatment, which, they say, has been meted out to their organisations. Replying to the declarations of the CNT comrades, our own comrades once again endorsed the policy of the Popular Front, consistently espoused by our party, which supports the Popular Front government, and expressed the wish that, in the current circumstances, close collaboration may be achieved between all anti-fascist forces, with an effort being made to eliminate all bitterness and friction that may hamper attempts to achieve this aim.

After mutual clarifications, those assembled there agreed upon working out the conditions upon which to arrive at common action by the PCE, the CNT and all anti-fascist organisations, and upon the advisability of beginning that rapprochement by means of greater reciprocal cordiality in the press and in the general dealings of both organisations. A further meeting is to be held very shortly to complete the examination of the issues raised.'<sup>8</sup>

On 20 August the 'Febus' agency reprinted what David Antona, the now general-secretary of the CNT of the Centre, had told one of the editorial staff of *La Libertad*. Antona had been appointed to the office by a plenum of local and district committees of Castile, held on 28 July. He was a replacement for Isabelo Romero who died around that time.

'The CNT', said David Antona, 'held a gathering of its Regional Committees in Valencia and at it the military and political situation of Spain vis à vis the rebels and foreign invaders was examined. Out of that gathering came a unanimous agreement to reiterate the CNT's unbreakable commitment to the cause of loyalist Spain and to offer its organisations and also its production and labour assets to the government of the Republic, the view being that in these times everyone has an ineluctable duty to lend their support to what the government represents and to exercise the right to share in the responsibilities of power, by means of the minimum programme for winning the war and pursuing the revolution along the lines required by the nation's economy.

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<sup>8</sup> *Mundo Obrero*, 16 August 1937

The President of the Republic emerged from our talks highly pleased. He thanked us for our offer, assuring us that, within the compass of the very limited scope afforded him by the nature of his position, he would urge the government to put our intentions into effect.

We also received a fraternal reception from the leaders of the PCE who accepted our stance and suggested that we both lay to rest our previous grievances and that they would join us in pursuing the struggle against fascism until final victory.

The Partido Sindicalista, as well as the various republican groupings, expressed similar sentiments.

“And the government?”

At the full and cordial interview we had with him, Dr. Negrín received our views and our wishes most sympathetically. Then, when things had set out along this harmonious path, a Valencia newspaper, the organ of *Agrupación* with which all are familiar, vented its spleen against our organisation and thwarted such fine and disinterested intentions. Outcome? At the second set of talks with Dr. Negrín, he told us that the government believed it was wholly on the right track and so he could not broach the political question so as to accommodate our aspirations until the government might adjudge that a suitable moment had arrived.’

But let us bring down a merciful curtain upon the political wheeling and dealing and turn again to Aragón.

A delegation from the CNT National Committee had travelled to Caspe to intercede on behalf of the victims of the crackdown. Those held still numbered more than 300 and their defence was commended to the lawyers and Cortes deputies Cordero Bell and Suárez Picayo. When they met the governor-general, he promised to see to the release of those detainees not formally charged and to take safety measures on behalf of the Collectives. He also granted permission for a projected Regional plenum of Unions.

A pilot meeting took place in Caspe, with some 200 militants attending. The plenum sat from 6 to 11 September, under the shadow of the 11th Division’s bayonets. This plenum was intended to be of an informative nature and to reorganise the unions. When the reports from the Regional Committee and delegates from the villages had been given a hearing, the following motion was endorsed:

- ‘1. Immediate release of all detainees interned without trial.
2. Indictments to be made quickly.
3. Absolute guarantee for the victims of persecution and for the normal functioning of the unions.
4. Absolute respect for those Collectives that may wish to continue, and restoration to these of all taken for them.
5. Demand for the exact implementation of the Decree awarding legal status to the municipal councils, on which representation will be available for those parties or union organisations formed since 19 July, with administrative posts accessible only to persons with more than two years’ residence in the municipalities.

6. With an eye to avoiding partiality, the government delegates who are to take a hand in affairs of a political or trade union character, will have to be accompanied by two representatives from the antifascist sectors, in keeping with the arrangement agreed with the Minister of the Interior.'

Another of the plenum's resolutions concerned the reorganisation and control of the Collectives. It can be said that the plenum automatically turned into an assembly of collectivists, given that the bulk of the delegates represented unions and Collectives alike. We reprint the proposition framed by the working party:

'The working party, having come together to deliberate upon Item 6 in the agenda, and having duly swapped opinions, frames the following proposition:

Encapsulating the sentiments expressed by the bulk of the delegations that have taken part in the plenum, to the effect that the Collectives have to be better controlled by the CNT, the working party offers the following suggestions for the improved format of this new system of organisation:

1. Persuaded that our life in association, whether in trade union or in economic matters, should tend towards simplification, we deem it suitable that alongside the CNT Regional Committee there should be a commission, attached to it, of collectivist relations, that would perform the same functions as the present Regional Committee of Collectives.

2. Along the lines set out in the preceding article, all of the CNT's District Committees shall set up similar commissions at their own level, keeping in constant liaison with the Regional Committee.

3. The unions, in turn, shall also set up such commissions inside their respective Committees, to keep constantly in liaison with the District Committee.

Upon these Collective Committees amalgamating with the CNT committees, perfect provision will have been made for the supervision that the CNT's unions must maintain in the Collectives through this organisational arrangement.

Now then, so that these Collectives may function as they should, they shall surround themselves with the required complement of competent technical personnel, in the transactions that the Collectives necessarily must perform so as to organise the collectivist economy with the optimal possible smoothness.

4. In those places where the Collectives are constituted on the basis of the UGT and CNT, the unions shall espouse the same approach as they have adopted in the supervision maintained by our representatives in the municipalities and other formal bodies, which is to say that the unions shall ensure that our representatives in those Collectives shall be in receipt of constant guidance.

5. In the light of this new structure for the better control of the Collectives, the Regional Federation of Collectives becomes an integral part of the corresponding committees of the organisation, at the local, district and regional levels.

6. All local co-operatives are obliged to supply with whatever items they may need those individualist workers who are organised in the CNT, provided that these deposit their surplus produce with the co-operatives.

In these six points, we believe we have encapsulated the views expressed by the plenum through the contributions of the different delegates who have participated in this discussion. The working party.'

The CNT's new Regional Committee line-up was as follows: secretary, Francisco Muñoz (re-elected); for Teruel province, Miguel Cheuca, I. Miralles, H. Ferrer and J. Aldemonde; for Zaragoza, Feliciano Subero, Florencio Galbán and Ricardo Madrigales; for Huesca, Ramón Yallo, Manuel Segura, Francisco Casas and J. A. Prados.

The Regional Committee was to reside in Caspe.

An untoward incident disturbed the business of the plenum; a handful of communist soldiers unexpectedly entered the premises, bearing a message of greetings from the 11th Division's Commissariat to the plenum.

To publicise the resolutions passed, rallies were held in Caspe and Barbastro and both were well attended.

But the most important event of the turbulent month of August was, unquestionably, the loyalist drive against Zaragoza. Bilbao had fallen on 19 July and, with it, all of Vizcaya. Santander suffered the same fate on 25 August. Months elapsed between the loss of the two cities, but in fact the offensive against the highlands did not begin until 14 August. So the operation lasted just 12 days, a sure sign that there was scarcely any resistance. Santander is blessed with natural defences that are little short of impregnable. The rebels carried off 70,000 prisoners, 20 tanks and 200 machine-guns as trophies of that battle.

The Basque government, which had sought refuge in Bayonne following the loss of Bilbao, published a defeatist document about the fall of Santander in the French newspapers: in it doubts were raised by mention of an alleged and deliberate trap laid for the Basque troops operating on that front. No less tendentious seems the titbit about an alleged defection of the Basque battalions as a result of the general collapse of the Vizcaya front. The hypothesis that there was a general deflation of fighting morale in the wake of Bilbao's loss strikes us as a more reasonable one.

When the battle for Santander began, the army of the Centre wanted to counter the attack by mounting the celebrated Brunete operation. The aim behind that operation was to breach the enemy front, press towards Avila and force the collapse of the enemy's solid positions in the Guadarrama. The attack came in the environs of El Escorial with artillery being deployed on a grand scale, along with tanks, and huge numbers of infantry and, to begin with, it managed to penetrate 20 kilometres deep into enemy territory. There followed an uninterrupted series of counter-attacks, with both sides having no regard for the cost of human lives, and these culminated in the repairing of the breach in the front. In September 1938 a plenum of Regional Committees of the Libertarian Movement described the whole affair as a 'political, not a military' operation.

'We sustained 25,000 losses in that operation which had no strategic purpose and was designed solely to rescue the government which had ousted the union groupings from its ranks. A manifesto has come to light which prematurely attributes the

problematic success of Brunete to a specific faction<sup>9</sup>, Spain's salvation. The same party political motives underpinned the operation on the Aragón front in mid-1937, in anticipation of which a mayor from reconquered Zaragoza had even been designated.<sup>10</sup>

The final stage of the battle for the North was begun in earnest by the rebels at the start of September, with intrusions into the eastern segment of Asturias, with simultaneous pressure and advances along the rest of the fronts in the Cantabrian highlands and through the coastal strip. This was the most tragic fighting of the entire war. The Asturian defenders had no hope of escape except by sea, but the rebel fleet dominated the sea. That maritime escape route was cut off once and for all when Gijón was captured on 21 October. The last dispatches from the enemy's army of the North bear that date:

'The Asturian front has been overrun by our troops. The enemy, routed and abandoned by his leaders, surrenders his weapons to the nationalist columns. On the fronts of Oviedo and El Nalón, on the Villaviciosa and Infiesto fronts, the Red forces surrender to the victors. From Pravia and Escamplero, nationalist columns pushed on towards Avilés. This evening both cities were in the hands of the nationalist army. In a noisy demonstration, the people took to the streets unfurling the nationalist flag. Nationalist arms bring with them order, peace and justice. The Northern front is no more. Salamanca, 21 October 1937.'

The push against Zaragoza began on 25 August with an initial combined attack on two fronts, on the South-Ebro front and in the Huesca sector, with the CNT's 25th and 28th Divisions located on these respective fronts distinguishing themselves as shock-troops. In the centre of the deployment, the 26th Division (ex-Durruti Column) impatiently awaited the moment when it would go into action.

Loyalist and rebel strategists alike have described this operation as a counter to the critical situation the enemy had created in the North. In the Ebro sector the push ground to a halt due to an artillery barrage from Zaragoza, after Belchite had been passed on 3 September. Troops from the 28th Division who had penetrated along the Gállego were ordered to retreat to their original positions.

Even accepting the validity of the strategic argument, the contrary view that credited these operations to strictly political designs to some extent, holds up. According to this thesis, the attack on Zaragoza would have been prepared in advance so as to divert public opinion away from the lamentable effect of the abuses perpetrated by communist military units in the Aragonese rearguard. Well in advance of the offensive itself, communist newspapers had given notice of it. The article from *Frente Rojo* from which we quoted earlier closed with these words: 'Very soon the Eastern front will emulate the glorious Central front and that will be no small victory for the government.' Which at least goes to show that as far as the PCE was concerned, there were no war secrets, and indeed the communists were even allowed to make political capital out of them. Another hypothesis concerning the origin of this same event was that the concern was to keep CNT *milicianos* busy so as to distract their attention from the political events being played

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<sup>9</sup> A reference to the PCE.

<sup>10</sup> Abad de Santillán, *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, pp.251-252

out only a few kilometres from their front-line positions. The PCE press persisted in announcing that the successful advance was due to the removal of the Council of Aragón and to the consequent channelling towards front-line service of the secret arms caches uncovered in the rearguard. The truth of the matter was that the CNT *milicianos* of Aragón had been effectively armed and supported in their thrust for the first time ever and thus were in a position to join battle seriously for the first time. It can be deduced from all of the foregoing that these operations were exploited by the communists for their ends of political hegemony, with these ulterior motives taking precedence over any other considerations. Indeed, proof of this is the fact that, when it came to handing out plaudits, the 11th Division, still largely busy in the rearguard, perhaps because it is unimaginable that the CNT fighters could have taken its role seriously in front line service, hastened to arrogate to itself the laurels of such an unexpected victory. Here is a telegram from Lister, addressed on 4 October to General Miaja and subsequently released to the whole of the press:

‘In this historic moment when our glorious army is advancing on Aragón, thereby countering the invader’s brutal offensive in the North, I send affectionate greetings on behalf of all the fighters of the 11th Division who have invested this fight with the same ardour and enthusiasm that they displayed on the Madrid front and which you succeeded in inculcating into us.’

In any event, the combatants whose role in the fighting great care was taken to avoid mentioning here, were able to demonstrate by actions that, furnished with sufficient supplies of weapons and ammunition, they were able to take on the enemy and beat him. After this, all of the calumnies crowed from the speaker’s rostrums and newspapers about the combatants of the Aragón front evaporated.

## Chapter Eleven: The Crisis of the Socialist Movement

Already in the preceding chapters we have set out some aspects of the crisis that was gnawing at the PSOE and the UGT. Now we shall turn to one of the most acute phases of that crisis, which fitted in with the Comintern's secret designs, which were in fact an open secret: it sought to take over the leadership of the PSOE. The means resorted to were the classical Stalinist ones. Let us lend an ear to the opinion of Luis de Araquistain, the prominent *caballerista*:

'The Russians' plan, zealously pursued throughout the war, was to amalgamate the two parties. In Catalonia, the new party would be called the Unified Socialist Party, the PSUC, but would in fact be a communist party controlled and directed by the Communist International and the Soviet authorities. The name would pull the wool over the eyes of the Spanish workers and, it was expected, would not alarm the Western powers. Stalin wanted Largo Caballero, to force through the PCE's absorption of the PSOE from a position of authority and availing of his enormous prestige in the latter party.<sup>1</sup>

Stalin, who had taken the ambassador in Moscow, Marcelino Pascua, under his spell, sent Pascua to Valencia with the task of persuading Largo Caballero of the necessity of such an amalgamation. A letter from Stalin to Largo Caballero served as an introduction:

'Moscow, 4 February 1937.

To comrade Largo Caballero, President of the Council of Ministers of the Spanish Republic – Valencia.

Dear comrade: Comrade Pascua has passed your letter to us. We had a lengthy discussion with him concerning the issues that were, as far as we were concerned, absolutely clear. We write nothing as to the nature and outcome of this exchange because comrade Pascua has offered to go to Valencia to brief you on these in person.

We wish you and the Spanish people the most complete victory over the external and internal enemies of the Spanish Republic. We reckon it our duty to continue to assist you in the future as fully as we can.

We send you our greetings as your friends.

**Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov.'**

Concerning Pascua's negotiations, Araquistain continues:

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<sup>1</sup> From *El comunismo y la guerra de España*.

‘Such was the message borne by Pascua (and this was probably another of the prices placed upon the ‘Russian aid’), Largo Caballero replied that he did not believe that the time was ripe for the unification of the two movements owing to the proselytising activity of the communists, which so irritated socialists. Pascua carried this categorical response back to Moscow. It was yet further proof that Largo Caballero did not fit in with Moscow’s designs.

The failure to amalgamate the two parties made it impossible for the PCE to achieve complete domination in Spain and was the reason why the Spanish people were able to rise up against the Negrín government in the dying days of the war, thanks to the decisive part played by the Madrid PSOE in that independence revolt.

Pascua, an obscure medical practitioner who had hitherto concerned himself only with health matters, had been appointed as ambassador in Moscow by a result of pressure by Negrín, who perhaps anticipated that it suited his personal policy to have him in such a post, ... a man who enjoyed his complete confidence, an erstwhile protégé of his, bound to him by a well-nigh domestic loyalty...where Spain’s fate would be determined. I imagine that the ambassador must have been an effective confederate of the Russian policy of having Largo Caballero replaced by Negrín. After hearing of his talks with Largo Caballero about the union of the two parties I imagine that the Russians would have settled upon the decision to oust from power a man so inflexible where communist policy was concerned.

There were no more letters from then on.’

Though Largo Caballero had been stripped of his influence inside the PSOE and likewise deprived of the favours of its main press organs, he remained head of the UGT executive commission, and, availing of *La Correspondencia de Valencia*, fought against the baying communists and quasi-communists around him. We have already referred to the defection of Madrid’s *El Socialista* and *Claridad*. The assault upon Valencia’s *Adelante* was mounted with the connivance of the security forces, placed at the disposal of the dissidents by the Minister of the Interior (Julián Zugazagoitia). The loss of *Claridad* was also down to an act of theft. The paper was registered as belonging to Carlos Baraibar and Luis Araquistain.

On 19 August, the following article appeared in the pages of *La Correspondencia de Valencia*:

‘The Liquidation of the Socialist Party: A new autonomous socialist party has been created in Jaén. Were there not already abundant proof of the future which the “amalgamation” so loudly advocated by the PCE holds in store for the PSOE, what has happened in Jaén would be more than sufficient to demonstrate how right Spanish socialism’s men of the left were in alerting all their comrades against the real designs being pursued.

Indeed, in breach of previous agreements between their respective national bodies and with an ethical dereliction of the duties incumbent upon the comrades of that Provincial Federation as leaders of the PSOE, the socialist and communist provincial agencies of Jaén have founded the unified party within their jurisdiction, by amalgamating their respective memberships.



*Verdad*, the only communist daily in Valencia — a most telling fact — which dares to trumpet this monstrosity speaks of the “huge sacrifices” which the communists of Jaén have made so as to achieve this so happy goal, namely: the new party will, on the suggestion of the socialists, go by the name of the Unified Socialist Party, and its committee is to be chaired by a socialist.

Comrades all over Spain would do well to take note of the hero and of his companions in victory. These are Alejandro Peris Fernández, López Quero and López Vizcaino.’

The PSOE Executive thwarted this daring venture, no less, which this time had the decency to damn publicly the indiscipline of the Jaén Provincial Executive and to order that its representatives be dismissed.

In mid-September, the PCE’s Political Bureau took us unawares with a welter of anti-fascist cordiality. According to what it put out, the main aim of the PCE was to be a Popular Front. The PCE Provincial Committee in Madrid explained this watchword to its co-religionists by saying (on 17 September):

‘And we shall struggle with all of our might so that Madrid and its province and its parties may, setting to one side any sort of difficulty, bind all anti-fascist forces into the tightest unity, accelerating the process of fusion between the PCE and the PSOE, and establishing effective collaboration and unity of action with the anarchist comrades and comrades of the CNT.’

In a report fêting this development, *Solidaridad Obrera* of 18 September stated:

‘The PCE’s Political Bureau has made public a document which we regard as being of crucial significance.’

For its part, *La Correspondencia* on the same date spelled out its misgivings as follows:

‘We guessed right when, having seen the document from the PCE’s Political Bureau we said that no one would be taken in and that all it was after was to string the CNT along with sham protests in favour of unity and the re-establishment of the Popular Front. Yet again the PCE has pulled the wool over the eyes of those who wanted to see in the declarations of its Political Bureau a tactical about-turn. The PCE does not pursue anti-fascist unity. It smashed and dismantled it one day and now, insistent upon a suicidal tack which even it has declared incompatible with the interests of the war and of the revolution, it places obstacles in the way of a solution and aims to contrive a climate of hostility along the oldest, most repugnant lines between the two great Spanish union groupings. Such are the laurels of the PCE.’

Let it be said, by the by, that a few days later on 21 September in Barcelona the security forces ‘acting on the orders from above’ stormed the CNT’s premises known as *Los Escolapios*, the headquarters of the Defence Committee of the Centre. For all the well-tried bravado of the attackers, who deployed all sorts of military equipment, including artillery and tanks, the cenetista personnel fought them off for several hours. Fourteen arrests were made. Those arrested were brought before the courts.

On 25 September, the dissident faction of the UGT asked the Executive Commission to convene a plenum of the National Committee. The Executive replied to this request on 27 September, saying that it had not opposed, nor would it ever, summoning a plenum in accordance with the provisions of the statutes of the UGT. On 28 September, the dissidents replied by demanding that plenum be convened within 48 hours. According to them, it was to discuss the Executive's expulsion of 'one third of the federations of which the UGT is comprised.'<sup>2</sup> Almost simultaneously, the newspaper *Adelante* published the summons to this plenum, announced for 1 October, in the offices of the Executive. To which the Executive replied in the following letter:

'Comrades Antonio Pérez and Rodríguez Vega: We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 25th inst., and having noted the contents thereof, we hereby make the following reply: The tone of your letter and the menacing way in which you address the Executive Commission, we find more than curious, in the light of your earlier communication's text, in which you asked the Executive Commission if, were the documentation we requested for the summoning of a National plenum to be produced, that gathering might proceed. The Executive Commission immediately replied to your letter by stating that it is not against, nor will it ever be so, the holding of the National plenum of the UGT, provided that its statutes are adhered to. You again replied to that communication by warning the Executive to convene the National Committee within a period of 48 hours. It is incumbent upon us to remind you that the National Committee may not assemble unless the Executive Commission first summons it together. Should the meeting you announce proceed, we look upon it as mischievous: and you alone would bear the true responsibility for any consequences that this act may give rise to, within and without. Without further ado, we remain yours and in the cause of labour. The general secretary.'

The UGT Executive Commission met on 30 September and in a statement to the press pointed out, among other things, that:

'Despite insisting upon proceeding with the meeting of the National Committee behind the backs of the Executive Commission, at its meeting today the Executive resolved to point out that its Secretariat had not received one single document from the Industrial Federations wherein these say that they have empowered their delegates to address the Executive with a request for a meeting of the plenum. And we look upon the way in which the National Committee was convened behind the backs of the Executive as an undisciplined act of provocation that we are not prepared to tolerate, and finally let it be said that the Executive will suspend the rights of those Federations which, without first having offered their resignations, dared append their signatures to the summons or may attend said gathering.'

On the morning of 1 October, the representatives from the dissident Industrial Federations arrived at the Executive's quarters, in accordance with the summons published behind the backs of

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<sup>2</sup> *La Correspondencia de Valencia*, 1 October 1937, justified these expulsions by saying: 'Article 9 of the Statutes of the UGT states: "All bodies which may be two quarters behind with their dues shall be expelled"' Who dares to say that the Executive failed to do its duty and trespassed against the Statutes

the official decision-makers. Upon knocking at the door of the premises, they became embroiled in a violent exchange through its spy-hole. The visitors announced themselves as members of the National Committee, come to attend a plenum. Those inside the premises informed them that the Executive had convened no such gathering. Seeing that they were being denied entrance, the dissidents resolved to bring in the security forces. One of these policemen told Largo Caballero, who had showed up to fend off police intervention, that since it was a case of a gathering previously sought and authorised by the authorities, he had to open the doors. The UGT General Secretary said that the Executive Commission had not convened the National Committee and that there was not need to open the doors to its members, nor to the police. And when Largo Caballero added that there were several deputies inside the building, the police reckoned that the most prudent course was to drop the whole thing.

Nonetheless, the dissidents, who claimed to represent 30 Industrial Federations, agreed to consider their meeting in session on the steps. The gathering, chaired by Felipe Pretel, Treasurer of the Executive, went over bag and baggage to the breakaways and was short-lived. It confined itself to announcing that the National Committee was in session, and after that, those assembled there agreed to transfer business to the premises of the Graphical Federation. There, the following decisions were taken:

‘First: We hold that what was until today the Executive Commission of the UGT was not empowered, under its regulations, to stand down certain Federations in the manner in which it has done.

Second: We repeal the decision to expel 14 Federations on grounds of withholding payments.

Third: We appoint an Executive Commission of the UGT, constituted as follows:

Chairman, Ramón González Peña; Vice-Chairman, Edmundo Rodríguez; General Secretary, Rodríguez Vega; Assistant Secretary, Amaro del Rosal Díaz; Treasurer, Felipe Pretel; Commissioners: Ezequiel Ureña, Claudina García, Antonio Pérez, Antonia Génova, Cesar Lombardía and Daniel Anguiano.’

Other resolutions expressed the UGT’s unconditional loyalty to the government, and greetings were sent to the Regional Secretary of Catalonia and to the CNT.

This meeting amounted to a split inside the ranks of the UGT. On 2 October, the dissident Executive issued its first manifesto, in which it gave its account of events on the day before and stressed the necessity of a strict policy of trade union unity with the CNT, and with the other republican and communist parties. It read:

‘In Spain, the UGT will have no other voice, no other representatives than this Executive Commission, lawfully appointed by the National Committee, on which 31 Federations and one Executive member<sup>3</sup> were present, the latter having refused to associate himself with the personal stance of those who deprived the gathering of the presence of the representatives from nine Federations, among which some failures to pay, and, in any case, four of them are represented on the now-dismissed Executive.’

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<sup>3</sup> A reference to the defection of Felipe Pretel, Treasurer to the official Executive, who defected during the split along with the union funds in his possession.

For its part, the *caballerista* faction sought to explain its position through the columns of *La Correspondencia de Valencia*. The highly partisan intervention by the Minister of the Interior ensured that this periodical had its publication suspended for several days, giving rise to street demonstrations by workers aligned with Largo Caballero's tendency.

Around this time parliament resumed its sittings in Valencia. Largo Caballero's absence was explained as a protest against the conduct of the Minister of the Interior. Concerning which, *Solidaridad Obrera* wrote:

'It is believed that the deputies from the Largo Caballero faction asked Zugazagoitia if he knew anything about the attack upon the headquarters of the Executive Commission. The minister replied that he had no part in this affair: and that if he intervened before with the newspaper *Adelante*, it was because, in his view, the *Adelante* people had been in the right.

This did not prove any hindrance to the subsequent suspension of the UGT organ, *La Correspondencia de Valencia*.

Then there was yesterday's demonstration in favour of Largo Caballero. How did that suit the dissidents? Let them say! Let them tell! The cries of "Long live Largo Caballero!" were heard throughout the whole of Valencia.

The Commission formed at the instigation of the land workers for the purpose of establishing relations with the expelled Federations has made public a communiqué stating that it has not abandoned hope of achieving harmony among all members of the UGT. But it is our belief that this is going to be impossible if we consider that *La Correspondencia de Valencia*, which was the official organ of our sister association, has been suspended indefinitely. Earlier there was an attempt to storm it, which met with resistance. Then it occurred that it would be better to suspend its publication, and on Monday, say, for the new executives to turn up to take charge of it.

Espousing the same policy as the National Federations, the Provincial Federations of Valencia have summoned a meeting of Secretariat councillors for the 4th, again, as was their practice, in the office of the UGT's provincial body.

The PCE is triumphant. Its slogans are faithfully observed by those whom it does not suit that the workers should be able to speak.<sup>4</sup>

With regard to the gathering scheduled for 4 October by the dissident elements at provincial level, the Provincial Executive issued the following public statement:

'In view of the communiqué published in the press, wherein a meeting is convened for Monday on the premises of this Provincial Secretariat, we have to point out the following: That the situation of this Secretariat vis à vis those organisations suspended by order of the UGT National Executive and of this Secretariat has been clarified in an earlier circular. That following, and by reason of the attitude of those who had stood up against this National Executive, the latter was obliged to expel those rebels and, thus, it being part of the regulations that one has to belong to the UGT

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<sup>4</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 3 October 1937

before one can belong to the Secretariat, the signatories to the aforementioned communiqué have absolutely no right to convene, much less to summons this Provincial Executive. This Executive has called no one to a meeting on Monday and absolutely rejects any attempt at mischief-making.'

Even so, the scheduled meeting went ahead on the prescribed date. At it a new Provincial Executive was appointed and awarded far-reaching powers. Also on 4 October, *La Correspondencia de Valencia* resumed publication. On 7 October the press carried references to a meeting of Largo Caballero's Executive and reported the agreement to: 'mount an extensive propaganda campaign throughout loyalist Spain to inform the workers of the split provoked in UGT ranks by certain elements.' It was likewise agreed that a National Congress of the UGT would be held. At the same time, the Executive registered its objections to the fact that correspondence addressed to it was being held back and also to the abuse implicit in the Bank of Spain's director refusal to honour cheques for more than 11 months even though they carried a registered signature.

That very day, the Liaison Committee of the socialist and communist Parties issued a statement. It read:

'Upon learning of the resolutions adopted by the UGT's National Committee, prominent among them the one concerning the re-incorporation into the UGT, with full privileges, of the Federations unjustly expelled by the previous Executive Commission, the disavowal of the schismatic and dictatorial conduct of the latter and the work of the same Executive, this Liaison Committee is pleased to send its greetings to the National Committee of the UGT which is bringing to an end the situation of violence and malaise existing in that great organisation and among the working class, by establishing the internal unity of our glorious trade union: and the National Liaison Committee salutes the new UGT leadership which embodies the feelings and the wishes of the UGT membership, and it recommends to its organisations and militants and to all workers that they afford the staunchest support and co-operation to the legitimate authority of our trade union, so as to help it find a solution to all of the problems confronting the working class and every anti-fascist with regard to production, in the economic sphere, wages, provisions, worker control, etc., so that, by intensifying concerted efforts along with the CNT and making even tighter the ties uniting the two great parties of the proletariat and of the Popular Front, they may, alongside the government, contribute to the task of wiping out the difficulties of the present hour and set out along the road to a prompt victory in the war, crushing Franco and the fascist invader, and guaranteeing the advances made by the people.'

Finally, on 17 October, Largo Caballero held his long-awaited and anticipated conference. His intention had been to give a series of such talks, but the long arm of the government thwarted him in this. Even the text of what he said was scandalously mutilated by government censorship when it came to be reported in the press.

His talk was delivered in the Pardiñas cinema in Madrid and was broadcast to the Ideal, Fuenarral and Monumental cinemas as well. All were packed with people. On the platform alongside the speaker were Pascual Tomás, Angel Galarza, Luis de Araquistain, Roberto Solano, Wenceslao Carrillo, Hernández Zancajo, De Francisco, Carlos Baraibar and other socialist personalities who

supported Largo Caballero's policies. The premises were bedecked with placards and the flags of the CNT and UGT unions.

The speaker began by reviewing the record of the government headed by him. Here are the most essential portions of his address:

'I am not going to relate to you now what that government did: that I reserve for subsequent talks; instead I shall reply to the campaign of insult and calumny which the man who is today the Minister of Public Education still has the effrontery to wage and to voice at a public assembly. Many might say and have said: "How come Largo Caballero makes no reply to these slanderous remarks?" Well let me tell you now absolutely freely and candidly: not because he had no reply to make, but because, as far as I am concerned, the winning of the war took precedence over such trifles, and it was a question of not appearing on the public platform, by which act I might, unwillingly, have contributed to something that might have had a detrimental effect upon the war. From time to time when we faced this or that international situation, I always used to say, despite the prompting from every side: "No, I will not speak out", even though Spain needed to be rescued from the litigation under way at the League of Nations; but let it never be said that any of us contributed through our words to Spain's failing to achieve in Geneva that which she has a right to expect. On other occasions there was this or that operation under way on some front or another to be considered and we had to ensure that no hint of what had been ventilated reached those fronts, lest it might demoralise the combatants and work to their detriment. Let me assure you that one of the biggest sacrifices I have ever made in my life was the sacrifice implicit in my holding my tongue for five months; but that silence is not something I regret, for although the slanderers and defamers have made my person a target for their claws and their teeth, I have an easy conscience in that my silence contributed to the welfare of Spain and to the progress of the war.

...Ah! Why, then, was that campaign mounted? Well, do you know why that campaign was waged? Because Largo Caballero reused to be the agent of certain elements abroad in this country, and Largo Caballero defended this nation's sovereignty in relation to military matters, public order, political matters and social matters.

And when certain elements came to realise, belatedly to be sure, that Largo Caballero was not the agent for them...well! Then began the campaign with a new slogan, directed against me. But let me state here and now that up until just before that campaign was launched, I was offered everything that might be offered a man with ambition and vanity: I might be the leader of a "Unified Socialist Party" made up of communists and socialists, I might be Spain's leading politician; there would be no shortage of support from all of these persons who were talking to me, but there would be one condition upon it...that I would pursue the policy that they wanted; and I told them: "No way"!

I said that later they came to understand me. They should have been able to grasp from the outset that Largo Caballero had not the temperament and was not made of the stuff of which anybody's traitor is made. I refused point-blank, so bluntly indeed that on occasions, in my prime ministerial office, I had very violent confrontations

with representatives<sup>5</sup> who ought to have shown the discretion demanded by their position, but who had none. And in the presence of their lackey<sup>6</sup>, who at that time held a ministerial portfolio, that Largo Caballero would brook no interference of any sort in our nation's internal political affairs. And those very heated scenes, witnessed, as I say, by one who will not be able to deny it, were the start of the campaign against me. And so they turned against Largo Caballero, but these people saw that the campaign was all in vain, because there were many workers who would not understand how such a personal campaign could be directed against one man, and so they changed tack and turned against the Executive of the UGT. But in targeting it, they were chiefly targeting Largo Caballero.

...Furthermore, comrades, I have come here to speak because I see that our PSOE and our UGT are in danger, and I come here to help rescue that party and to rescue the union, but what the aim is here is to contrive dissent in the movement so as to suit certain political interests, and it is being contrived every single day. But as I have already said, and let me say it again now: they are making a mistake; Largo Caballero is not the cause of dissent, not inside the party nor within the UGT; let those who wish to see dissent, provoke it; in fact, they've already provoked it and achieved it. But not Largo Caballero.

What has been going on in the UGT? Let me spell it out to you as succinctly as possible. The origins of this campaign against the UGT go right the way back to the time of the May crisis, the political crisis: a crisis which I regard — and I have to say this here — as the most shameful crisis ever in the history of Spain. Even under the monarchy I never knew of a crisis that might so readily bring a blush to the cheeks of any good Spaniard, as this one did. And although I will not go into fulsome detail here, though in the future I shall, I have to tell you that crisis was provoked by the PCE's representatives in the government. The day before the provocation of the crisis some Madrid newspapers were already speaking of political changes in the Council of Ministers. And at that Council of Ministers, the PCE representatives gave substance — so to speak — to the rumour, by seeking a change of policy on the war and a change of policy in public order. This was the pretext, because as far as the war went, the PCE knew, as I did, what was afoot in that it was represented on the Supreme War Council and was thus not in the dark, and as far as public order in Catalonia was concerned, we, as the central government had no jurisdiction in that region. It was just a pretext.

And at that meeting I was asked, it was asked that the government disband a certain political organisation<sup>7</sup> that did not see eye to eye with the PCE. Largo Caballero, who has suffered persecution along with the organisations to which he has belonged and does belong, at the hands of the reactionary elements in this country of ours, stated that, no political nor trade union organisation can be disbanded by government order; that he had not gone into government to serve the political interests of any of the factions there present; that anyone who had information to report concerning

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<sup>5</sup> A reference to Marcel Rosenberg, Soviet ambassador to Spain.

<sup>6</sup> A reference to Julio Álvarez del Vayo, a prominent socialist politician.

<sup>7</sup> A reference to the dissident communist and anti-Stalinist POUM.

criminal or mischievous acts, however one might choose to describe them, should go ahead and do so and it would be for the courts to step in and for the courts to disband the organisation or not; but that Largo Caballero, as Prime Minister, would disband none of those organisations. And before that Council of Ministers ended, and since the plaintiffs had not received any satisfaction, the PCE ministers stood up and walked out of the Council of Ministers, as if they were on some rural village committee, or in some club, some utterly irrelevant context, as if that were merely a gathering of friends having no work to do for, and no responsibilities toward, the country.

...In this context, the crisis erupted. Afterwards they charged me, or rather I was again charged by the one who was so authorised to charge me, after some consultations, with forming a government again, and I had talks with everybody, absolutely everybody and, as ever — because we all adapted readily to these dodges of bourgeois politicking — they said nice things and everybody was all for it, but as soon as they stepped out of the office of the Prime Minister they arranged to raise all sorts of hitches. I well recall that one of the conditions that the PCE insisted upon before it would join the cabinet was that I would not have the office of Minister of War, whereupon I said to them: “What is the basis for this argument?” And they replied: “But there is an awful lot of work involved in being War Minister and Premier as well, and one shouldn’t have such a heavy workload.” I told them that this did not strike me as a solid argument, because it was up to me and not to them to worry about the likes of that. I thanked them deep down for the good wishes and goodwill that moved them to try to lighten my workload. But it was not benevolence: it was something more like what I mentioned to you earlier...something concerning which, though I cannot go into details today, I will do sometime.

In the War Ministry, I now had to set about keeping, as the vulgar saying goes, “on my toes” so as to prevent many abuses that were being perpetrated. For instance, I discovered one day that the socialists in whom I had placed my confidence and who were in the War Commissariat<sup>8</sup>, had allowed over 1,000 commissars to be appointed unbeknownst to me and with papers signed by someone not empowered to sign them. They had appointed over 1,000 commissars and had done so by having the appointments endorsed by someone who was not legally entitled to do so, in that I alone was so entitled. And when I sent for these people, or trusted co-religionists, and told them I wanted to know how this had been done, they replied that they had believed they might do it, and it just happened to turn out that the vast majority of the war commissars who had been appointed thus were communists. I discovered also that behind my back in the War Commissariat, a neat little “racket” had been set up. I discovered that they had seconded some co-religionists as Brigadier Generals and Generals of Division, at 22,000 and 16,000 pesetas. When I sent for them to ask how this had been done behind my back, they replied that it had been done in their belief that I was aware of it. But how could I have been aware of it — I told them — this business of your appointing divisional and brigadier generals so as to line your pockets? (FIVE LINES MISSING HERE DUE TO CENSORSHIP)

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<sup>8</sup> The most prominent here was the aforementioned Álvarez del Vayo, a leading socialist figure.



That is the reason why I published an ordinance nullifying all the commissar appointments, ordering that any who wished to be commissars submit a request to me, so that I might revalidate their appointment. You'll all remember the campaign that was mounted against me over this, and the allegation that I wanted to dismantle the War Commissariat.

Oh no! It was always my understanding, when I founded it, when I issued that disposition, it has always been my view that it would have been an institution that would render great service and do great work if it fulfilled its obligations in the army. Ah, but what I did not believe nor suspect was that it might be employed to build up an army loyal to the party. And of course all of this was poisoning the atmosphere. A crisis erupted, and just when I had approached the Executive Commission of the UGT to nominate a minister, it imposed conditions.

Speaking as a friend and as a brother. I have to say that, in my belief, a mistake was made in the stipulation of those conditions: an error of detail. I know the fine intentions that induced the Executive Commission to do so. The Executive Commission saw that a somewhat obscure crisis had come about through intrigue. It was not fully informed. In saying "We will put up no ministers unless Largo Caballero is head of the government", the Executive had in mind that I would not merely be the Prime Minister, because the communists also wanted me as Prime Minister but did not want me as War Minister, so I said: Do you want to use me as a foil against them, and leave them to do whatever they may choose in the War Ministry? No, no way. As a socialist and Internationalist, I love my country; I love my home town Madrid: being a Spaniard, I love Spain, which is not incompatible with being an Internationalist, indeed far from it, and at a meeting, in the presence of him who ought to have said it, I said: I cannot give up the Ministry of War for several reasons: first, because I have done nothing to deserve being ousted from the War Ministry, and second, because it is my belief that, as a Spaniard, I have a duty to defend the Spanish army and to run it in such a way as to make victory accessible to it. Now do not believe for one moment that such soaring displays of Spanishness went unpunished at certain times: on this occasion it did not. You all know what happened. Well now, the Executive said: No, but it said that for this reason – not because it was Largo Caballero, because, ultimately that went without saying; because, had he so desired, Largo Caballero would have been Prime Minister and would have continued as leader of the government. But I was not putting myself forward to be leader of the government; I was just doing a duty. I believed I was doing my duty in the War Ministry: what happened is that I was a hindrance in the War Ministry. That was the point. And of course, from that moment on the campaign against the Executive began: and the campaign requesting that the National Committee be called together began also. And, sure enough, I had not yet resumed the post of secretary. The National Committee came together, and the vast majority of the Federations that participated in the meeting of that National Committee were in breach of the Statutes. They were all very much enamoured of the UGT and all very enamoured of discipline and of the slogan "Unite, proletarian brothers!" and all that, but they could not see their way clear to meeting their obligations to the UGT in the matter of their subscriptions, not the dues-payers, the

workers, the branch membership who did pay; no. The committees who did not pay and who did — we know not what — with the money, because, ultimately, whenever there is a Federation that does not collect subscriptions, this has only to be reported, and as it has no membership then it has no one, or very few people who pay them. But no: there were Federations that have not paid any subscriptions in since the first quarter of 1933: some for the past four and five years, three years, two quarters, etc. This sort of thing has always been very broadly tolerated in the UGT and these friends, abusing that tolerance, not merely took certain decisions, but promptly embarked upon a campaign in the press against the Executive, saying: “See? We have disowned the Executive, and such and such.” It had been disowned by some comrades who claimed to represent organisations that were in those circumstances. But the fact is that the committee came together, and the campaigns against the Executive persist.

...In view of the progress of the war, the UGT understood that an intensive effort was needed on behalf of Spain and on behalf of our war. Who more than the UGT has mobilised the internationals, political and trade union alike? To whom, if not the UGT do we owe all of the meetings that have been held, all of the international support that has been forthcoming from the organised working class? Because other political agencies which also claim to be labour bodies have sallied forth, but nobody has paid them any heed. The UGT alone has been listened to, because it was able to build up an international prestige that not many have and not many will be able to equal. And the UGT caused the London gathering to be held, in support of the government, etc., etc., and later, the Paris meeting. And we all know that there was a groundswell among the working class abroad favourable to us, a groundswell which, true, later diminished and not through any fault of ours, but rather because of the political mistakes made in Spain. This campaign in our favour abroad was obscured at a point subsequent to the crisis, because rumours trickled abroad to the effect that here a policy was being pursued involving the persecution of dissenting elements, and you all know that there have been truly shameful cases, which have yet to be cleared up, of people being “disappeared” by persons not acting for the government, persons who have set up a state within a state. And, comrades, this has reached such extremes that representatives of the Internationals have come to Spain expressly to investigate how much truth there was in such claims.

And we ourselves have been told that, since that happened, they have been unable to raise any enthusiasm abroad again, because of the suspicion that — and they spelled it out clearly for us — it is the communist element that dominates and holds sway here. And everybody wonders if they are going to help Spain just so that later it may be the communists who determine the destinies of our country. That is what those representatives came to ask. And I am not trying to shock you, for one of the things I condemned was these excesses which, in my view, were being perpetrated and the fact that military commanders of great note were present at communist congresses and processions in honour of communists for instance. This was photographed, and published in the press and that press went out to London and Paris and elsewhere and, of course, when they saw highly influential army commanders attending such

rallies, they said to themselves: "Well, it's true that it is the communists who dominate and hold sway and give the orders down there." And this worked greatly to our disadvantage.

...Another of the campaigns that have been mounted, comrades, was the — if I may employ the language of diplomacy — non-aggression pact which the UGT has made with the CNT. Undoubtedly bad faith has always attended all of these campaigns, for you will recall that when the pact was made public, the first thing that was said was that this pact was of no importance, that there was no mention in it of the assistance that had to be rendered to the government in respect of the war, and, consequently, that another pact of quite another nature should have been agreed. When they came to believe that this was an error of judgement, in that, in addition to making this pact we were in touch with the Confederation for the purpose of devising a programme for submission to its National Committee — we said as much to the CNT comrades — for its approval and then for dissemination from the public platform. When they saw this, they said: "No: the fact is, that although this pact is a non-aggression pact, it should not have been made by the Executive, but by the National Committee." What grounds were there for saying this? Let me set out some small antecedents of this matter. In the first place, in our statutes, Article No. 1, Item No. 8, the following is prescribed: "Among the duties incumbent upon the union is that of seeking to unite the action of the proletariat with a view to creating a force for the utter emancipation of the labouring class, making preparations so that, in accordance with the principle that the instrument of labour is the rightful property of the worker, it may assume charge of the production, transportation, distribution and exchange of the wealth of society."

For a start, the statutes already imposed an obligation to unite the action of the proletariat. But I have here the pact we made with the CNT in 1920, a pact made by the Executive, not by the National Committee, and which bears the signatures of the following people:

On behalf of the UGT, Francisco Largo Caballero, Francisco Núñez, Tomás, Manuel Cordero, Luis Fernández, Juan de los Toyos and Lucio Martínez Gil.

On behalf of the CNT, Salvador Seguí, Salvador Quemades and Evelio Boal.

Subsequently, a commission was appointed, comprising of comrades Besteiro, Saborit and Largo Caballero, who travelled to Catalonia to publicise and argue on behalf of that pact. So we have a precedent there for an Executive Commission entering into a pact and its having been endorsed by the UGT.

But there is more to it than that: the fact is that, before I took up my post again as Secretary, the UGT's Executive Commission made another pact with the CNT, signed on 26 November 1936 and endorsed by several comrades, Manuel Cordero among them.

What did the pact say? Well, the same as the one we ourselves made, except that ours was more explicit.

Which is to say that as early as November the Executive had made a pact and later we entered into another one, along the lines of the first, but which, instead of being a simple manifesto, was more explicit.

Nobody brought up the Statutes apropos of the November pact. But as soon as another pact is agreed, with Largo Caballero occupying the position of Secretary in the UGT, that rankles and it is argued that the pact is a blunder, and that it ought to have been referred to the CNT National Committee etc., etc. This is unfair.

And as if that were not enough, one of the first decisions taken by the dissident elements in the UGT, one has to remember, was to make overtures to the Confederation so as to arrange a pact with it: that is, that they can enter into pacts, whereas we may not. That is the issue.

We will have grounds enough for suspecting what they intend to do with the UGT when an attempt is made to do with it what has been done with the organisation in Catalonia! You all know that in Catalonia there is what they describe as a “Unified Socialist Party”, which is no “Unified Socialist Party” at all, but rather in point of fact the Catalan Communist Party, because the fact is that it joined the Third International from the very first (SEVEN LINES MISSING HERE DUE TO CENSORSHIP)...

And that we cannot permit; we want the UGT to be free and to be left it itself to determine its political and social options, and to be placed in the service of no one, absolutely no one.

Instead we are accused of being anarcho-syndicalists because we are in touch with the CNT — the very CNT that they seek to liase with also. The joke here, comrades, is that they do so in the intention of offending us. Offend us because we may be in touch with the CNT? They are barking up the wrong tree entirely. What is needed is fair play, and I must recall — as I said before — the campaigns of an electoral nature in which we issued appeals to the CNT and to the anarchists, saying: “Spain’s liberties are in jeopardy: lend a hand, and we shall rout fascism and the enemy.”

We — and here let me digress a little — mounted campaigns against the apoliticism of the CNT many years ago, when Pablo Iglesias was still alive. We regarded its stance as a mistaken one. They took the opposite view: but our line was that the CNT ought to have engaged in political action. That is the aspiration of us all, of every last one of us — that the workers may act politically as a class against the bourgeois class. We had always said so.

And along come the elections and when we saw left-wing candidates in jeopardy, then we had no scruples about calling upon the CNT and the anarchists and telling them: “Come out and cast your vote for us.” But when they did vote for us and we had been returned to parliament, and when the government had been formed, we told them: “You may no longer take a hand in political life: you have done your bit.”

Hadn’t all we socialists, all we members of the UGT agreed that there should have been no sector in Spain indifferent towards political action? We had agreed upon that, that in embarking upon political action one did so with full, undiluted rights; not merely as electoral agents to swing victory our way, but as more, because were

it for that only, I would have to say to the comrades from the CNT that they should turn a deaf ear to such appeals. No: this is a lot more important than some believe. This campaign that is underway against the unions on account of allegations that the unions wish to supplant the political parties, is but one of very many swindles being perpetrated around here.

...Naturally some comrades from the CNT have displayed an urge like any neophyte in public life. Let me say in all brotherhood to these comrades that in matters political they are somewhat innocent. They still believe that we are all good fellows. They believe that in politics reason is enough and that one need only have right on one's side. Bah! Now they are waking up: they are coming alive to the fact that it is not like that, regrettably, politics has a lot of ins and outs and that very often it is not enough to have good intentions, indeed very far from it. A time came when they wanted representation in the government to be proportional with the strength of each faction: the political parties, in that party capacity, and the trade union organisations as such organisations. Of course, were a government to be formed on a basis of representation proportionate with the size of each component part, the unions would be in the majority; but they have no wish, far from it, to exclude the political parties. What they say is that it is the unions who should govern in that it is they who produce, they who handle the exchange of produce, etc. Such was their theory and, faced with it, the political parties as a body all said: "There is danger here. They have decided to unseat us from power and, of course, we must defend ourselves." And they mounted a crusade against us: but that is unfair, comrades, utterly unfair. And above all let me draw the attention of every worker to the danger that would be implicit in any organisation such as the CNT, which has joined the government and worked in a wholly loyal way — and that I will debate with anyone who likes in public — finding its cooperation dispensed with. In government it is possible that these men may have displayed a touch too much ambition because they did not quite know what politics was all about; but they have also displayed good faith, good will and loyalty — Ah! Much more so than some people who were always droning on about loyalty, much more than many ...

To that end, I remember when the CNT people waged a campaign against the Navy Minister, whereupon I spoke to them about the inadvisability of this and they agreed to desist from the campaign, something that others have not done. Because you will have noted how government ordinances are ignored, or if they do not say that such and such an ordinance is not being adhered to, they evasively raise other issues like the one they confronted me with. You will have noted for instance, that there is an ordinance from the Ministry of National Defence which places a blanket ban on propaganda, and military displays, etc., etc. They lie quiet for a time, then they say: "Fine, we agree." As if citizens had to say as much: we citizens all must accept it, from the outset. But we are not doing the government any favour by accepting. They, on the other hand, seem to be saying: "To show you what good fellows we are, we now recommend compliance." No, no. But right away they embark upon a campaign: they say, for instance, that we need to have reserves, that what reserves we have are inadequate. They do not attack by the other flank, but they do via the question of

reserves. And, as you know, they are calling for all sorts of call-ups. Even supposing that there were no reserves at all, it is their patriotic duty to say nothing, for to do otherwise is to give away our situation to the enemy: it is a giveaway to the enemy, it is like telling him — there are no reserves, you can do whatever you like. Another campaign concerned war materials and the war industries. This had to be done and the other had to be done. Having ministers in the government as they do, this cannot be done outside of the government. Someone from outside the government may do it, but anyone represented in the government and who does so and says so in the press, is, as it were, telling Franco: we have no munitions, we have no war industries.

On these grounds I say that the comrades from the CNT are, in this instance, more loyal than the rest. All that can be said of them is that they are a touch naive. As yet they do not have the familiarity with politics that others have. But that is a fact.

I remember one incident that happened to me and let me mention it here in passing, since I will go more fully into it some other time, apropos of a campaign that is still being mounted. In Spain we have manpower. But sometimes they call for reserves and at other times they said that we had men aplenty. They said: we have men, we have arms, we have munitions, we have planes, and we have tanks; what we must do is apply them properly; they must be issued to the fighting men, because, if they are not, the fighting men will suffer the consequences. I had to send for some of these people and showed them the figures in my possession, for I had up to date figures for all the munitions, rifles and machine-guns, together with a current statement of what was received and what was issued. And when these people said in the newspapers that we had all these things and that they were not being properly applied because the War Minister was not issuing them, I had fully 27 rifles at my disposal in Spain. I mention that because that was in the past: but I sent for one of the agents they had inside the government and told him: “Look. What am I to do? Come out publicly and say that this is a lie and that these are all the rifles that I have? That would be like my telling the enemy how we are situated. Shall I hold my tongue? If I say nothing, Spanish public opinion will say that our fighting men are not winning because the Minister of War is not giving them the equipment he has.”

...Once upon a time I spoke about the unification, say, of the socialist, communist and anarchist youth movements, of all revolutionary youth, that they needed to be amalgamated organisationally, but in a loyal manner. Ah! Since then, not I, but others who also talked about unification of the youth in those days have taken this to mean that the true unification of youth is achieved on the basis of ages, not of ideologies. Which is to say that it is not just socialists, communists and anarchists who are included, but also Catholics, enemies of the regime we seek to introduce, and this I cannot go along with!

As regards the unification of the PSOE and the PCE, I have not yielded one inch. All that I ask is that those who once sought to achieve that amalgamation stick to arranging the fusion of the two parties with a revolutionary programme.

I well remember that when we spoke about this, the PCE laid down as a condition — an agreement to that effect having been made in Moscow — that we break with

all the bourgeois parties. Do they insist upon that now? Do they now insist that we break with the bourgeois parties as they used to? No, quite the contrary: their watchword now is that we should revert to how things were prior to 18 July.

...Fusion with the CNT is more difficult. We should not deceive folk nor mislead comrades by talking to them of fusion of the CNT and the UGT. Who can say if but — with time. But for the moment, no.

If the CNT has entered the political arena then — forgive me this hint of vanity — my having contributed to those comrades' fully entering our country's political life is something I shall regard as a prize achievement of my political career, and I acknowledge responsibility before history for all that it may imply. With these comrades who have acknowledged our honesty, our good intentions, our determination to bring about a new regime better than the one in which we live, on those points on which we may see eye to eye. We must press forward together, we must co-operate with each other, for I am confident that, with time, these comrades will know that the ideals they cherish — ideals that are in my judgement, I shall not say fantastic, but somewhat innocent, surely — of creating a society wherein we all may be good and upright, as the Constitution of 1812 had it, will come around to the belief that that is how humanity is, and in order to achieve this we have to pass through many stages of socialism, communism and onwards even to anarchism. When the word anarchism is used — the bourgeois used it thus and political enemies borrowed it — it seems it means chaos, and nobody agrees with that. No, it is not that, anarchism is an ideal cherished by people who seek to introduce a utopian arrangement this very day, because they seek the perfection of humanity and this is impossible. But does that mean that we have to be against them? And, also, when they come to be persuaded of the imperfections of human beings, must they not concede that we must all proceed in concert if we are to surmount obstacles and attain what they themselves seek? Who is going to set his face against that? No one. Thus it seems to me that if we cannot amalgamate with the CNT, what we can do is to build up ties of unity, understanding, and liaison, and refrain from attacking each other, and respect our organisations, and to go on, all of us, loving around to the conviction that we must all be as one and I believe that this is feasible.

Doesn't that serve the working class? Is that the reason why I am an anarchist, as some elements say? Anyway, that would be no disgrace for me; what would be a disgrace is that having been a Marxist I should turn Catholic. What would disgrace me would be that, having been in this party and enjoyed a modest public career, it should some day transpire, say, that I had entered a bourgeois republican party so as to get my hands on certain posts or certain "bribes" that may be on offer at a ministry. That surely would disgrace me. But were I some day to conclude that theoretically anarchism is possible, and to come to understand as a result of study and development that it was easy, I would say so publicly and would feel no dishonour in doing so. How much better it would be if the description "anarchist" applied to someone were not taken as a term of abuse! That is a hangover from bourgeois theories, because, as there have been — in Spain as everywhere else — what were known as anarchists of action, who were then labelled criminals, the belief now is that all

anarchists do likewise. But those days are gone and, unfortunately, I do not know whether they will ever have to return.’<sup>9</sup>

Let us now relate to the events that followed upon the Pardiñas cinema rally, as they related to the split.

On 21 October, the Executive Commission of the UGT met under the chairmanship of Largo Caballero and Díaz Alor. It resolved to summon its federations to an extraordinary session of the National Committee that was to discuss the advisability of holding an extraordinary National Congress with a view to healing the organisation’s internal problems. All branches that were administratively in conformity with UGT regulations would be free to attend this congress.

But on 30 November, several elements from the (breakaway) Valencian Provincial Federation proceeded to seize the newspaper *La Correspondencia de Valencia*.

On 12 December, *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona carried the following report:

‘The UGT United: On the basis of direct reports reaching us, and which we consider trustworthy, all the indications are that the squabble which had arisen within the UGT is on the verge of being healed on a basis of proletarian and anti-fascist unity, with an agreement speedily to rebuild the class of unity of our sister national organisation. The gathering convened in Paris by the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Trade Unions may, if its aims are achieved, be described as fruitful in every respect. We do not doubt but that the whole or part of the accumulated causes which sparked off the squabbling and led to the internal collapse of the UGT, will inspire a laudable response in the proletariat of this country, and in the European working class as a whole.’

*La Correspondencia de Valencia*, by then under the control of the breakaways, reiterated on 25 December:

‘Bearing in mind that every day we remain disunited much blood is spilled on the fronts, then as a matter of urgency the International Federation of Trade Unions may rely upon the staunchest collaboration of the UGT Executive in resolving the problem which has come to be described as the internal problem of our union grouping, but which really affects the whole of the proletariat and every anti-fascist. That, in the final analysis, will be the finest homage we may pay, on this the anniversary of his death, to the founder of the PSOE and of the UGT.’

Despite all this, the endeavours of the International Federation of Trade Unions to ensure reunification were obstinately hampered by the campaigns of the communist press. Not until January 1938 was there any serious contact between the rival Executives. Then contact was established in the presence of the French union leader Léon Jouhaux, who had travelled to Spain especially to arbitrate a solution to the dispute.

On 2 January 1938, an extended plenum gathered in Valencia under Jouhaux’s chairmanship. The members of both Executives were present, and they included Largo Caballero and González

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<sup>9</sup> *Largo Caballero denuncia la traición del Partido Comunista español* (sic!), Buenos Aires: Servicio de Propaganda Española, 1937



Peña. As business got underway, a working party was appointed: chaired by Jouhaux, it was made up of Amaro del Rosal, Ricardo Zabalza and Rodríguez Vega. Jouhaux proposed a compromise solution that consisted of expanding the dissident Executive by the addition of four members of the official Executive. The plenum endorsed this solution. The next day, the official Executive met to give its endorsement to the solution approved by the plenum. As a result, the Executive Commission's final line-up was as follows:

Chairman, González Peña; Vice-Chairman, Edmundo Domínguez; General Secretary, Rodríguez Vega; Vice-Secretary, Amaro del Rosal; Treasurer, Felipe Pretel; Delegates: Pascual Tomás, Antonio Pérez, Carlos Hernández Zancajo, Daniel Anguiano, Antonio Giménez, Ricardo Zabalza, Claudina García, César Lombardía, Ezequiel Ureña and Díaz Alor.

It is easy to see what this solution amounted to. The main posts on the Executive were retained in the hands of the dissident faction. The *caballeristas* — Pascual Tomás, Carlos Hernández Zancajo, Ricardo Zabalza and Díaz Alor — featured as mere delegates. The omission of Largo Caballero from the new Executive was the most eloquent indication of the nature of this solution.

The pro-communist elements had won the day.

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