

Slippery Slopes

The Anarchists in Spain

Manuel Azaretto

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Introduction by José A. Barrionuevo

In our view, none of the great social-political events of the last twenty-five years has given rise to as much hope or caused as much disappointment as the Spanish conflict. And we also believe that no single event that has taken place in this same quarter century has given rise to such profound or such opposed and passionate opinions as this conflict, whose sorrowful conclusion, unfortunately, still inflicts such pain in the hearts of those of us who, despite our distance from the events, have suffered from the defeat and the pain of the Iberian people.

But if the hopes and opinions that arose as a result of the events in Spain have been amply justified in all the so-called popular sectors, this awakening of hopes and clash of opinions has encountered no greater echo or more logical justification than on the terrain of the anarchist workers movement. For it must not be forgotten that while it is true that in the struggle against fascism other numerically strong fractions with significant influence over the multitudes also played a role, it is no less true that one of the forces with the greatest influence among the Spanish proletariat, was precisely the one that was represented in the institutions that in Spain advocated the same principles and aspirations as the anarchist workers movement. And it was precisely this community of principles and final goals that existed among all the organizations that were enrolled in the ranks of the International Workingmen's Association, which explains the profound impact that the Spanish conflict has had on the international movement and especially on the *Federaciones Obreras Regionales Uruguay y Argentina*.¹ And we say especially on the *Federaciones Obreras Regionales Uruguay y Argentina* because these two Federations—both with deep roots in the proletariat on both banks of the Río Plata—have been the most outstanding organizations on the international plane due to the zeal with which they pursued the historical continuity of their daily struggles and activities, which were always oriented towards anarchist ideals and principles, and it was logical that the Spanish events would produce in every sense a greater reaction among the militants of these two movements. This was to be expected because the anarchists of Spain on more than one occasion spoke to us of the social revolution, meaning to say that they not only fought to defeat fascism but also to establish a new order of things in harmony with the ideals they claimed to uphold.

However, this reaction that has been expressed on the basis of the unqualified support for all the actions and positions of Spanish anarchism, including spirited but sincere criticism of the orientation and conduct of the FAI and CNT during the conflict, has led to unfortunate results among our ranks. For under the pretext that it was not a question of criticizing but rather of giving immediate and complete solidarity to the anarchists who were fighting fascism in Spain with arms in hand, the exercise of criticism was set aside until after the struggle and the voices of those who, as the events unfolded and when it was necessary, dared to break the code of silence imposed by those who only wanted to hear applause and praise—even for the most humiliating attitudes of the anarchism of that country—were treated as expressions of unmitigated heresy.

¹ The FOR, Regional Workers Federation; FORU= Regional Workers Federation of Uruguay; FORA=Regional Workers Federation of Argentina [Translator's Note].

But if the circumstances mentioned above justified the fact that the clash of opinions, as a result of the events in Spain, resulted in serious friction between the militants of the revolutionary workers movement, the attempts by enemies of all stripes and without any revolutionary morality, on the other hand, who have tried to subject anarchism to judgment by presenting it as having failed, are not at all justified. And even less justification can be adduced for those anarchists who, deaf and blind to all experience, are now attempting to teach lessons based on all the errors of Spanish anarchism, a schooling that is currently taking place at this moment in Argentina, Uruguay and other neighboring countries.

It is certainly true that many things happened in Spain, for which the anarchists of that country were responsible in whole or in part, which have cast a great deal of discredit on the idea of anarchism held by many people, who considered anarchism to be the only movement that was incapable of deviating from its old and committed position against the state, refusing all collaboration with its traditional enemies. This circumstance, however, which already constitutes a serious blow against anarchism, is much more serious still if we take account of the fact that our enemies, by pointing to the conversion of Spanish anarchism in practical terms on all terrains, also proclaim the failure of this movement. Of course, it is clear that this latter claim is absolutely untrue and even contrary to common sense. But the falsifications of our adversaries do not prevent confusion among the workers, nor do they lessen the danger of our movement being entangled in the web of discredit that threatens to have serious consequences for us in the future.

The lie is always a dangerous weapon, but if it is deployed at the right time and with intelligence it can yield results, even if transitory ones, that are favorable for those who wield it. But if the lie and the distortion of the truth provide easy although ephemeral victories, the greater and more noble task, so fruitful despite the frequent ingratitude of those who are at the receiving end of it, is to speak the truth, even if it injures us; the noble and fruitful task for our ideals is to clear away the confusion to which the defeat of a people gave rise, a confusion which entails the concealment of the history of a movement whose moral grandeur is based on ideals that cannot be tarnished by the calumny of its adversaries nor by defeatist desertion on the part of its defenders. And it is precisely this kind of task that is served by the work that is carried out by comrade Azaretto in this book.

For anarchism did not fail in Spain. The men who represented it, those who spoke and worked in its name, may have made mistakes; the Spanish anarchists may have delivered over to wrack and ruin all that up until now has constituted the best and most precious moral patrimony of the international anarchist movement, but we must ask whether all the mistakes they made, or might have made, authorize and justify the malevolence of the detractors of anarchism when they seek to present our movement as having failed and its ideals as plainly finished? And to attempt to transplant to America, or to the rest of Europe, invoking all kinds of reasons, practical modes of action and tactics that are clearly inspired by the Spanish events and by the practical experience of the anarchism of the Iberian Peninsula, does this not mean to justify, without any valid reasons, since the serious errors of Spanish anarchism are easily demonstrated, the arguments of our enemies with regard to this alleged failure? No. Neither the one nor the other is justified. Our enemies do not have the moral authority to attack us; nor do we have to tolerate, in the name of ideas, or other reasons, the introduction into the anarchist workers movement of practices and vices that, over a short period of time, would destroy it as a living and active expression of militant anarchism. It is instead a question of putting everything in its proper place, attempting

to shed light on the intervention of Spanish anarchism in the recent unfortunate events of that country, and to do good work for anarchists ideas and the institutions that represent them on the terrain of the everyday struggle for freedom and a more comprehensive and effective social justice.

But just what is it that comrade M. Azaretto intends to accomplish with the publication of his book, *Slippery Slopes*? Precisely what we have just described: to point out the errors and the serious deviations brought to light by the events and the observed conduct of Iberian anarchism; to show that there was no general failure of anarchism but a pure and simple failure of men, and that the institutions that many people considered to be the most representative institutions of the anarchist revolution were too weak to realize the ideas they claimed to represent.

It remains to be said that in this book there is no over-abundance of eloquence. Its author knows nothing of the literary nuances and the sensationalist phraseology that are so fashionable these days. *Slippery Slopes* is thus not a book that one can read for pleasure, nor is it a book aimed at a broad public audience. This is a book meant for independent minds, for minds open to study and the serene analysis of the deeds and ideas that, it must be admitted, have burdened the history of international anarchism with disagreeable pages. A man of the people, a worker who is also a militant of the anarchist workers movement, Azaretto has sacrificed his leisure time to write this book and his goal, as he expressed it in a letter, is “to make a modest contribution to clearing the air of the international environment of an entire propaganda plagued with inconsistencies and denials and which has made a cult of the heroism of a people who were used as cannon fodder and who fought like lions but for a cause that was not their own.” As a result, in these pages you will not find meticulous and orderly arguments of the experiences of leaders. The book has been written for the purpose of “confronting those ruinous currents of the emancipatory movements”. And that is already a great deal.

In *Slippery Slopes* there are not many pages devoted to exposing the actions undertaken in Spain by the traditional enemies of anarchism. The book tends to defend our movement from the Bolshevizing inroads that threaten it as a consequence of the forgetting of many of their ideas by many anarchists, and for this and no other reason the basic thrust of its critique is directed not so much at our enemies as at the men and institutions of the movement who followed the CNT and FAI and who participated so actively in the Spanish conflict. Nor does the author spend much time discussing the causes of and who was responsible for the military defeats that culminated in the total defeat of the Spanish proletariat. For it must be admitted that it is not exactly these aspects of the question that are of the greatest interest to anarchist militants.

Azaretto, largely ignoring these aspects of the Spanish events, or only mentioning them in passing, has selected a series of excerpts from texts published by the CNT-FAI that, transcribed in the book in the order he has chosen, document the transgressions and serious errors committed by the responsible officials of these organizations to the prejudice of the revolution that the Spanish people launched with so much valor during the memorable days of July and which those same officials later suppressed. It is, of course, inevitable that deficiencies will be noted in this book. There are chapters, for example, that could easily be enriched with the insertion of more extensive or more carefully selected documentation. As we said above, Azaretto, who must divide his time between the factory where he works and the daily activities of propaganda, has written his book by robbing himself of his hours of rest. And it is only the urgent need to contribute to the clarification of the intellectual environment of the movement that led him to write *Slippery Slopes*. However, the defects that we have alluded to and which the reader will no doubt discover for

himself, do not at all serve to discredit the work that he has done or the goal that Azaretto seeks to achieve with the publication of this book. Beyond all these factors, however, there is something that nothing can change and no one can deny: the sincerity of the author and the nobility of his intentions. This sincerity and these intentions that the reader will no doubt discern in the pages of this book are confirmed by the lack of interest in personal profit that characterizes comrade Azaretto. For he has announced that the small profit that the sale of the book might yield, if such a profit is realized, will be devoted entirely to the newspapers *Organización Obrera* and *Solidaridad*, the press organs of the FORA and the FORU, respectively. This, it seems to us, speaks eloquently enough about the noble purpose that motivates comrade Azaretto, and spares us from having to say anything more about this matter. It is nonetheless to be desired, and this is our hope, that other works of this same nature will be added to this modest contribution and help to further clarify the tumultuous anarchist milieu.

The return to the tactics and healthy norms inspired by the anarchist ideas that we call our own, is what must interest and be of concern to men who really want to retain unsullied the limpid course of a movement that cannot and must not silence those views that, even if the overriding necessities of the struggle are invoked, as was argued in order to justify the aberrations of the Spanish anarchists, degrade it and discredit it at home and throughout the world.

Given the current situation of the proletariat, confused and corrupted by a thousand currents that are opposed to freedom and progress, the very future of humanity, which today faces the most terrible crossroads of its history, obliges us to raise with the greatest determination the banner of Anarchy that not even the defeatist defection of some of its defenders or the calumnies of its enemies has succeeded, nor will they ever succeed, in distorting or besmirching, since everything that happened in Spain has only confirmed all that anarchism has proclaimed and recommended. This is our conviction and that is why, because we look forward to better days for the movement that counts us among its militants, we have happily accepted associating our name with that of comrade Azaretto. That the comrades and workers who read this book should reflect on its contents, and especially those who yesterday did not even want to delve into these problems, is what we desire and is the very best praise that we can give to *Slippery Slopes*.

José A. Barrionuevo
Buenos Aires, August 1939

To the militants of the FOR

At this uncertain juncture in the history of the world, in which we witness with shock the total collapse of moral and spiritual values; in which brute force prevails over reason and justice and an underground current of apostasy easily fractures the narrow layer of ideological varnish of certain people whose consciences are for sale, I consider it dignifying and beautiful, although it has been accumulated with the bitterness of self-abnegation and sacrifice, to be able to exhibit a clean trajectory, an exemplary activity and an ethical integrity worthy of the noble and great ideal that we advocate and defend.

That is why I admire and encourage those men who—although they are undergoing ferocious police persecution; unjust imprisonment in jails and prisons; the spite of the resentful and the apostates enrolled in the multicolored ranks of opportunism and the calumny and hatred of politicians and capitalists—stand firm, upright and honest, voicing the imperishable postulates of Anarchy and defending in the domain of labor the long revolutionary history of the FORs of Argentina and Uruguay, their tactics of struggle and the ultimate longing for anarchist communism that is the emancipatory goal of both working class organizations.

To them, to the committed and brave FORist militants, this book is dedicated which, without either reticence or euphemisms, its pages overflowing with the sincerity of my convictions, focuses decisively and straightforwardly on the urgent problem posed for international anarchism by the CNT and the FAI, with their errors and their defeats, and seeks to contribute to their clarification.

Manuel Azaretto

Preface

The bloody conflict that unfolded for almost three years in the countryside of Spain has concluded with the victory of Spanish militarism, the clergy and the landowners, cynically supported and backed by international capitalism and the forces of reaction. A woeful and unjust result, because of the efforts, the sacrifices and the lives that it cost the Spanish people, but a result that was expected by the material interests that were in play and by the core groups of conspirators that turned the political, diplomatic and financial gears of this war.

For us anarchists, this dramatic event will always be remembered as a cruel episode in the long Calvary of the peoples enslaved and humiliated by the authoritarian regimes, even if it had only been restricted to the bitter clash of political factions for predominance and the assault on state power. However, because, in this cruel episode, specific working class organizations and institutions directed by anarchists played a role, it is justifiably incumbent on us to consider the conflict from its very beginning—when the people and the anarchists surged into the streets, with arms in hand, to thwart and to crush the military revolt—as a historical event of a social character, due to the emancipatory aspect it acquired in some Iberian regions, only in order to subsequently degenerate into a civil war with the foreign intervention of military personnel and materiel.

As may logically be assumed, the intervention in this armed struggle on the part of the workers who were members of the CNT and of the anarchists organized in the FAI produced great expectations and profound concerns within the ranks of the militants of the working class organizations on both banks of the Río Plata, the FORU and the FORA, because of the repercussions that could be expected from their active participation and due to the lessons that the constructive efforts of these numerous proletarian forces would contribute to the World of Labor.

How could the intervention of our Spanish brothers in that vast insurrectionary movement not produce such expectations, how could it not cause us to be concerned and plunge us into profound meditations, if with their action our emancipatory ideal was put to the test—Anarchy—considered as a utopia by tyros and false friends? How could our hearts not swell with joy and satisfaction if the brave and tenacious conduct of the comrades of the CNT and the FAI, with the generous contributions of the Spanish people, would depend on us being spectators of this felicitous dawning, in one corner of the globe, of a new social, just, fraternal and solidarity-based dispensation, presented by a suffering and oppressed people, and propagated and defended by the anarchists? How could we not be interested in confirming the faithful interpretation of our ideological concepts, which reject the principle of authority and of all forms of exploitation, if our comrades in Spain—even if they did so with major errors—carried out a beautiful anarchist final judgment that was conquered at the cost of enormous sacrifices, of bloody state persecutions, of epic revolutionary events and the heroic deaths of so many people?

This is why the enthusiasm that filled the FORist workers with such passion is so understandable and so logical, as well as the emergence, everywhere, of numerous initiatives, all of which were oriented towards contributing moral and economic support to the militants of the CNT

and the FAI. Material solidarity was impossible, due to the dismantling of our organizational cadres, as a result of the dissolving action of opportunism [chameleonism] and the state repression that afflicted all the South American countries, and especially Argentina, for such a long time. Nonetheless, we paid very close attention to all the diverse changes of fortune of this great event.

What we could not have imagined, however, was that we would soon perceive the first signs of deviations. Then, documentary proof. Later, deceptive sophisticated arguments. The social revolution had been held in check and thwarted.

Those who had confirmed their history of anarchist militancy with sublime acts of heroism, generosity and a willingness to risk their lives in the front ranks of the assault squads in the attacks on the barracks in Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, Oviedo, Gijón, etc., did not find imitators, in other aspects of the struggle, among the majority of the responsible officials in the directive bodies of the CNT and the FAI, who felt incapable of or afraid to give direction to and channel the redemptive impulses and the overwhelming passion of an oppressed population who had found the outlet for their just hatreds, and who chose instead to divert them and confuse them, recommending “novel” practices of “direct action”, “novel” formulas of social coexistence and “novel” ideological conceptions. And what is even worse, they devoted themselves to discrediting and “pacifying”, seeking to neutralize them, those comrades who, understanding that they faced a confirmed case of betrayal of principles,¹ had the courage to call attention to it and to fight this betrayal with the healthy intention of rectifying it. They were too late; the Marxist inclinations that had been previously kept under wraps and which, on the other hand, had been revealed on several occasions in their previous activities and expressed views, came out into the open.

This made an enormous impression on the anarchist militants of South America.

The same psychological phenomenon observed as a rebound effect of the Russian Revolution, was now to be observed among us, although in a less concentrated form. Those who in the past were obstinate panegyrists of the “dictatorship of the proletariat”—everyone makes mistakes now and then—now see their position justified by the about-face executed and advised by the Spanish comrades and in order not to deny their past they devote themselves, with a blind passion, to sowing confusion in the ranks of the FORist movement.

Fortunately, because the comrades of the FOR have learned their lessons from previous events, this did not result in the hoped-for effects, and the calm judgment and sensible understanding of the events that had taken place prevented passion and bitterness from getting the upper hand and instead the comrades discerned with precision the serious problems that were posed to the anarchist movement in South America by the sell-outs and “novel” theories that the CNT and FAI militants had discovered and implemented.

Time passes. Calm has returned to the FORist milieu. Minds are beginning to reflect without prejudice on the raw data we receive from impartial and sincere sources.

The time has come, in our view, to analyze the causes that forced the comrades of the CNT and the FAI to intervene in the civil war that bled and continues to bleed the Spanish people; to comment on the activities of these comrades and their changing policies; to indicate the serious errors and betrayals for which they were responsible and to thoroughly analyze the concepts

¹ The Spanish word used in the original, “*claudicación*”, is translated in this text as “betrayal” or “betrayal of principles”, and occasionally as “sell-out[s]” or “backsliding”, depending on the context [Translator’s Note].

they offered to justify their actions and the methods they practiced, advised and attempted to bequeath as a legacy to the international anarchist movement.

Someone said that, “the truth is the only Venus de Milo that men do not want to see naked”, but this is not possible, in homage to the ideal of redemption: Anarchy, which we propagate and defend, overcomes this truth and we provide it without fig leaves, even if we close our eyes to the bitterness of its reality.

Let us therefore undertake this task, without any claim to having carried out a meticulous documentary review and without any concern for the judgment that the sell-outs, those who have succumbed to the disease of revisionism and the authoritarians, will think that this work deserves.

Chapter 1: The characteristics of the Spanish anarchists

The anarchist ideal has had, for many years, intelligent and diligent champions in the regions of Spain. The First International was courageously supported by its Spanish Section, which later became the Spanish Regional Federation of Workers, in 1881.

We have often taken pleasure in reading the beautiful pages of the books of Prat, Mella, Anselmo Lorenzo, Tarrida del Marmol. We recall the restless and exemplary actions of Salvochea. In 1906 we knew, in Argentina and Uruguay, Antonio Loredo and others whose names we cannot recall.

And we also know that since the Spanish anarchists appeared on the stage of the social struggle, they have suffered persecution and many were shot.

Manuel Buenacasa, in his book, *El movimiento obrero espanol*, cites the famous uprising of Jerez, in January 1892, in which four thousand men, shouting “*Viva la Anarqua*”, entered the city and held it for several hours.

But we do not want to stray too far from our subject. It is the National Confederation of Labor that we are concerned with here.

We would not be honest if we did not say that the characteristics of the anarchist militants of the CNT in Spain deserve our closest scrutiny. Moreover, we can say that the enormous amount of propaganda sent to the Iberian peninsula from South America and the exchange of militants with the FORist movement of Argentina and Uruguay—an exchange made necessary by the persecutions and deportations that we have undergone and which were implemented by “republican” and “democratic” governments on both sides of the Rıo Plata—did not exercise the influence that we would have desired, since we have noted that activities within the CNT have seldom manifested the intransigence, courage and convictions that we have ourselves displayed against all political fractions and the state.

Since the founding of the CNT, in September 1911, up until today, the CNT has undergone many fluctuations in its ideological orientation and its practical tactics of struggle, and we are not the only ones who think so. As Buenacasa, in the book cited above, says:

“I have said and written on more than one occasion, that the CNT of Spain has experienced periods whose exemplary nature has almost overshadowed the best moments of the old Spanish Section of the first International Workingmen’s Association. It cannot be doubted, however, that this institution, during the period between 1919 and today [1926], has suffered from the most lamentable mistakes and the most disastrous deviations.”

While relations between the CNT and political elements were never very cordial, the CNT did remain in contact with them and even tried to attract them by means of objective alliances. The lessons of the struggles that had taken place all over the world had no influence on the minds

of the Spanish militants. It would appear that they sought to reestablish the sincerity, or rather the ingenuousness, that their anarchist predecessors had displayed for so many years, in their attempt to maintain the unity of the two tendencies into which the European proletariat was divided: anarchists and authoritarians, a fact that was conscientiously described and studied by López Arango in his book, *El anarquismo en el movimiento obrero*.

So stubborn were our comrades in Spain, in their attempt to attract the working class multitudes who had been influenced by the Marxists, that it was not enough to convince them of their error by referring to the many betrayals for which the Marxists were responsible in all the conflicts in which the CNT had to confront the capitalists and the state. And as for the authoritarian mentality that dominated the Marxists, this is demonstrated, as plain as day, by a very recent historical fact: the October rebellion in Asturias, where the impracticality of merging the Marxists with the anarchists was revealed, to such a degree that the enormous difference of practical orientations and policies that distinguish both proletarian fractions became clearly evident, a difference that could have been distinctly appreciated in Sama and La Felguera, neighboring towns, in which attempts were made to implement new forms of social existence, which only highlighted the differences between them; for while in Sama a committee modeled on the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was organized, whose “*cheka*” arrested the anarchists in order to put them on trial, in La Felguera the comrades conducted themselves in a framework of full freedom and solidarity among its inhabitants.

Let us look back, however, and examine the alliance accepted by the CNT with the UGT and the “leftist” politicians like Combó and Lerro, that was implemented as a prelude to the great strike of August 1917, which, although it had a real revolutionary character, was betrayed by the socialists and republicans, and this unfortunate experimental alliance resulted in countless victims among the members of the CNT.

A little later—as a result of the elation caused in the anarchist ranks by the events that were taking place in Russia—we observed a process of Bolshevization in the CNT, which led to a great deal of confusion.

Pestaña, who was a prestigious member of the CNT organization, went to Moscow to attend the Second Congress of the Communist International. According to subsequent reports, this same Pestaña was also a signatory of the founding constitution of the Red Trade Union International.

On the Iberian peninsula, meanwhile, the “*conversos*”¹ who had acknowledged the need for a transitional institution—“the dictatorship of the proletariat”—continued to sow the new seed, and were so successful that at the famous Congress of the CNT held at the *Teatro de la Comedia* in Madrid in 1919, they obtained the approval of the delegates for the following shocking resolution:

*“That the National Confederation of Labor of Spain declares that it is a firm supporter of the principles of the First International as advocated by Bakunin. It declares its provisional adherence to the Communist International, because of the revolutionary character with which it is imbued, and in the meantime the National Confederation of Labor will organize and convoke the worldwide workers congress that will agree upon and determine the bases upon which the real Workers International must be founded.”*²

¹ A historical term referring to Jewish or Moslem inhabitants of Spain who converted to Catholicism during the conquest of Spain by the Christian monarchy, especially during the 14th and 15th centuries [Translator’s Note].

² These resolutions were translated into English and published in the IWW’s *Industrial Pioneer*, March 1921, p. 53, as follows: “FIRST: That the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo declares itself the firm defender of the princi-

In the interests of full disclosure and to highlight its contradictions, we shall point out that at the same congress a motion proposing a merger with the UGT was rejected and we read the following declaration of principles:

“Taking into account the fact that the tendency that is most powerfully manifested in the workers organizations of all countries is the one that leads towards the complete, total and absolute liberation of humanity on the moral, economic and political planes, and considering that this goal cannot be achieved as long as the land and the instruments of production and exchange have not been socialized and as long as the all-encompassing power of the state has not disappeared, the proposal is submitted to the Congress, that in accordance with the essence of the postulates of the First International, that the Congress should declare that the goal that is pursued by the National Confederation of Labor of Spain is Anarchist Communism.”

We have provided these details concerning the way the CNT went about proposing alliances with politicians—which fully justify Buenacasa’s statement that the CNT “has suffered from the most lamentable mistakes and the most disastrous deviations”—in order to provide the reader with some background information concerning the later attitudes adopted by the Spanish labor confederation.

Despite the mistakes committed and the discouraging results obtained in the various efforts by the CNT to attempt to put its unificationist slogans into practice, the CNT persisted in its erroneous ways, for at the Zaragoza Congress of May 1936, it approved a resolution that called upon the UGT, an avowedly political labor union, to enter a revolutionary alliance whose purpose would be “the destruction of the political regime”. This alliance was achieved, with great fanfare among the members of the CNT, in the year of the outbreak of the military revolt, and was bitterly criticized by the Uruguayan FOR—a critique that was published in the fifth issue of the International Journal of the IWA—a critique that we shall subject to further examination, insofar as it relates to this alliance, since its sensible comments were to be completely vindicated by the events with which we are now so familiar.

ples which gave form to the First International, sustained by Bakounine; SECOND: That it declares its provisional adherence to the Third International, because of the revolutionary character of its present directorate, and until the organization and holding of the International Congress in Spain, which is to lay the basis upon which will be founded the real International of the workers.” [Translator’s Note.]

Chapter 2: The anti-emancipatory position of the CNT

The pro-political tendency in the CNT in this emergency stands opposed to the brilliant history of the Spanish and international workers movement, whose passion for the cause of human liberation was transmitted to it by the first internationalists. The CNT does not act in accordance with its “revolutionary experiences” from the vantage point of its positions in the institutions of the state, but rather advises the international proletariat to follow its example, urging it to abandon its revolutionary positions, and to set aside the principled anarchist intransigence against authoritarian currents, in order to thus embrace the politicians of “antifascism”, who, as far as the cause of the workers is concerned, are no better or worse than the politicians of fascism, since if there is indeed any difference between them, this would not be a reason for the anarchist-oriented international revolutionary movement to abandon its revolutionary positions, which are characterized by direct action, anti-statism and the anarchist goal, in order to submit to the bourgeoisie represented by “antifascism”.

The improvement of the lives and the working conditions of the proletariat and its liberation, can only be obtained by way of the means of struggle and propaganda that distinguish anarchism, which are solidly and resolutely opposed to all political, statist and authoritarian ideas. Any other practice would amount to cooperating with the enemy, consciously or unconsciously, in order to merely prolong our miserable existence, to which we are reduced by the iniquitous exploitation of the employers and the oppression of the state.

Everyone knows the position of the CNT, but, in order to reveal the pernicious effect that it would have on the world proletariat, especially on the Spanish proletariat, if the IWA Congress were to approve of its governmentalist policies, we shall transcribe some of the points of the “UGT-CNT United Action Program” which, as we shall see, contradicts anarchist principles, and which stands in absolute contrast to the program approved 65 years ago at the Congress of Cordoba that approved the resolutions of Saint-Imier and rejected those approved at The Hague and which demonstrate that now the CNT is practicing the statist theories that were rejected by the Spanish proletariat at that Congress.

“THE UGT-CNT UNITED ACTION PROGRAM¹

“NATIONAL DEFENSE.

“The UGT and the CNT recognize the great progress achieved in the creation of the Popular Army with regard to its combat effectiveness and the technical improvement of its command structure and are determined to reinforce all the resources that will facilitate the formation of a regular efficient Army, that will guarantee victory in the war and in any foreign military contingencies that might result from that victory.

¹ Excerpts from the text of the March 1938 UGT-CNT Unity Pact [Translator’s Note].

“The guiding idea of the UGT and the CNT in their collaboration in seeking to implement these immediate reforms is that of a rapid and overwhelming victory over fascism, to implement a positive democracy in all the aspects of organization and action of the war, to reinforce the Commissariat as a means of purging and strengthening the Popular Army and TO MAKE A PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION WITH THEIR EXPERIENCE AND THEIR FORCES, IN THE WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT BODIES, ASSUMING A LARGE PART OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.

“WAR INDUSTRIES.

“4. Transport, which is by its very nature of the greatest necessity for the purposes of conducting the war, will be placed at the disposal of the Government, CENTRALIZED AND MILITARIZED, with the provision that it should be required by unavoidable necessity and that production and commerce in the rearguard should not be subject to extortion.

“COLLECTIVES.

“1. The UGT and the CNT agree that the juridical legalization of the Collectives is necessary and therefore consider that legislation concerning the Collectives is also needed that will determine WHICH COLLECTIVES WILL CONTINUE TO EXIST, rules for their constitution and operations, and state intervention in their affairs. COLLECTIVES THAT DO NOT ABIDE BY THIS LEGISLATION MUST DISAPPEAR.

“2. The state will assist the Collectives that comply with this legislation and whose economic utility is acknowledged.

“3. The legislation concerning the Collectives must be studied and proposed to the Government by the National Council of the Economy.

“WAGES, PRICES AND PROVISIONS.

“2. The creation of strong Consumers’ Cooperatives at the retail level and the establishment of Producers’ Cooperatives must be encouraged, with very restrictive legislation applying to the latter and the establishment of large wholesale sales outlets for export purposes UNDER THE RIGOROUS CONTROL OF THE STATE in accordance with the resolutions of the Council of the Economy.

“3. The UGT and the CNT agree that a minimum wage must be established, one that is pegged to the cost of living, and that takes into account, on the one hand, the professional categories, and on the other, the output of each. In this sense the principle of ‘for more and higher quality production, more pay’ will be defended, without any distinction with regard to gender, or age, as long as the circumstances related to the needs for national reconstruction should prevail.

“WORKERS CONTROL.

“10. The Government must promulgate a workers control law in which the responsibilities of the workers with regard to the control of production and the surveillance of their output, their role in the administration and determining the distribution of profits, working conditions and the defense of social legislation, will be established.

“AGRICULTURE.

“The UGT and the CNT announce their support for the NATIONALIZATION OF THE LAND, which must be conveyed in usufruct preferentially to the agricultural Collectives and Cooperatives and, among the latter, especially to those formed by the UGT and the CNT, respecting the will of the peasants who prefer to cultivate their land individually, and also entailing the implementation by the state of a policy of assistance for the existing Collectives, with preference for the UGT and the CNT and those which shall be voluntarily constituted, IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LAW, by the workers in the countryside.

“The rights of the small-scale landowner, as a direct cultivator of the soil, will be respected as long as he can prove that his land WAS LEGALLY ACQUIRED AND AS LONG AS HE ABIDES BY THE RELEVANT LEGISLATION.

“SOCIAL WELFARE.

“The Government will undertake to study formulas for family compensation, to be legally implemented.

“The two Organizations proclaim their commitment to ensure that at the end of the conflict against fascism the right of the Spanish people and especially the working class TO ENDOW THEMSELVES WITH THAT FORM OF GOVERNMENT that responds to the sacrifice that they are now making and to maintain a true democracy in our country will be guaranteed.”

These passages clearly demonstrate just how deeply implicated the CNT was in the statist principle. They represent a distinct contrast to the Congress of Saint-Imier, whose resolutions were approved by the Spanish proletariat at the Congress of Cordoba 65 years ago and liberated the international proletariat from falling in chains between the hammers of politics and the state, thus pointing out to the workers of the world the revolutionary path that will lead them to their total emancipation. The CNT practically rejected the intellectual patrimony and efforts of the most valiant figures of anarchism, represented in the brilliant history of anarchism in the workers movement, which allowed it to assume an extremely elevated place among revolutionary positions, acquired in bloody struggles and from precious lessons.

These passages also show how the Spanish proletariat was forbidden all independence of action, of free organization and propaganda, of revolutionary experimentation and any aspiration for a future free from the oppressor state. And how all its activity, as producer and in terms of propaganda, was to be controlled and authorized by the state. With these practices the CNT handcuffed the workers, subjecting them to the yoke of wage labor, so that they would continue to be victims of exploitation by private or state capitalism, and rendered all freedom of action on their part for the defense of their interests and their liberty impossible.

“The reign of injustice is thereby perpetuated, by allowing for the continued existence of the privileges of the drones of the human hive and an existence full of privation and suffering for the workers, who are the real producers of social wealth and progress.” (The Federal Council of the First International)

From what we have seen, it would appear that the anarchist militants of Spain, due to a lack of coherence in their activity, a confused focus on social problems and the unstable nature of their

anti-state and anti-political convictions, have allowed certain Marxist methods and conceptions to take root and flourish among them that openly contradict the terms that they use in their propaganda.

We shall not follow the Pestañas and the Peirós in their confused adventures that led to the formation of the “syndicalist” political party, for which the former was to serve as a deputy in the representative bodies of the “Popular Front”. Many others among the CNT “elite” acted and thought in accordance with authoritarian perspectives. Nothing is more illuminating at this juncture for the purpose of explaining the deviations that took place during the civil war and that were endorsed by the leaders of the CNT and the FAI, than the following article published in May 1936 in *Tierra y Libertad*, entitled “Slippery Slopes”, in which the authoritarian current is identified and which features the following observations:

“All the slopes are slippery, and one false step will cause us to fall, and lead us to tumble headlong into the abyss. If on flat and familiar terrain one can advance without any concern, without noticing insignificant obstacles, without paying any attention to the occasional difficulties, when we have to climb mountains, with high peaks and dangerous summits, all our senses must be alert in order not to make a disastrous misstep, in order not to go astray without any way out.

“The road of the revolution is not flat; it is riddled with dangers, with difficulties, with well equipped enemies. We have to go forward calmly, avoiding the obstacles that we are not in a position to destroy, overcoming difficulties and skirting not a few deadly abysses. Nonetheless, our friendly hand is always open for those who, aware of all these dangers, undertake the risk when they can and when they dare, so that humanity can take a step forward. The revolution implies sacrifices, energetic struggle, but also a calm and clear view of what we want and the means that must be employed to achieve our goal.

“Over the course of several decades of existence as an idea and movement, anarchism has established its trajectory, its ideas and its methods. By the time that almost all of us were born, anarchism had already existed, delineated in its aspirations and tactics. This does not mean that it is complete and perfect, that it will not admit any more enrichment, or more conclusions derived from experience, and that we have to bind ourselves in dedication to what our predecessors have said. We have proven that we are iconoclasts, that we are always ready to embrace any idea, any initiative and to subject them freely to evaluation, in order to derive from them the maximum benefit for our great cause. We are not unalloyed and petrified doctrinaires, enemies of all innovation, of all bold thinking, of all initiative for action that disturbs the stagnant and the immobilized. And that is why we are tolerant; that is why we always oppose everything that cuts off the freedom of thought in our own camp and everywhere.

“We cannot, however, cease to be what we want to be; we cannot deny ourselves in our social meaning, precisely at the moment when all social and political values have failed and our libertarian solution is the only remaining hope for human redemption.

“A thesis has often been repeated in public confederal proceedings, by some of our comrades, one that anarchists no longer discuss, just as we do not discuss many other matters that have been definitively addressed. I am speaking of the conquest

of Power, of the seizure of Power, of the creation of revolutionary armies, etc., which amounts to a confession that anarchism has no reason to exist and that we must return to the methods of authority, the systematic and reasoned critique of which distinguishes the position that we have taken.

“This is not the first time that these attempts to rehabilitate the authoritarian methods of revolution have taken place. Rebellious passion causes some to believe that the anarchists are moving too slowly, that the solution is to take the shortcut of the coup d’état, the road to the conquest of Power. There is talk now of demanding that the current Government hand over Power to the workers organizations. All of this is not just a misstep; it is a headlong plunge down a slippery slope! The fact that these things have always been advocated in the enemy camp, and that the possibility of carrying out the revolution by decree has been proposed by these people, is to be expected; but that these things should be said in the name of anarchism, by anarchist comrades, cannot be allowed to go unnoticed. Cordially, with all the cordiality of which we are capable, we invite these comrades to reflect, to stop for a moment to contemplate the abyss into which they are falling from the slope on which they find themselves and to return to the good road of freedom, which is not just an ideal aspiration, but a tactical instrument, a method of struggle, an interpretation of action.

“This advocacy of the seizure of Power, regardless of the intentions of its partisans, can only benefit the parties that pin the hopes of their revolutionary doctrine on the Conquest of Power. We do not want to seize Power, we want to destroy it, and not just destroy it, but to prevent it from ever being reconstructed, and we are not too fastidious about the means required to achieve this end!; there is only one road that has proven to be impractical for the destruction of Power: its conquest. Apart from this means, all roads and all weapons seem to be good as far as we are concerned.

“We believe that a brief pause for reflection, outside the impassioned arena of propaganda, will make these comrades understand, whom we do not want to lose, and of whose association we do not want to be deprived, that they have departed from the libertarian channel, from the good road accepted by the anarchists, to which they should return, avoiding dangerous confusion. For now that is all.”

Our inclusion of this article here does not mean that we accept all of its propositions. We have included it for the sole purpose of demonstrating the existence of a powerful Marxist current—which it denounces—that was undermining and destroying the structure, the practices and the ideological concepts that up until then had been the predominant essence of the CNT.

The authoritarian theory that was identified and (ineffectively) combated by the editorialist of *Tierra y Libertad* was already a cancer on the Iberian peninsula and a virulent epidemic that also made itself felt in our circles, against which, more than once, we have gone on the offensive, advising the workers to immunize themselves against these pestilential bacilli.

Nor were we the only ones. With regard to this question it seems most pertinent to recall the critical concepts advanced, in June 1936, by the old master Max Nettlau—I beg your pardon, iconoclasts against the venerable bearded ones—who was logically alarmed by the rapid propagation of the confusionist virus, which appeared in various countries under different names.

Here is the passage from Nettlau:

“For forty years anarchism has been subjected to infiltration, so-called pure syndicalism, nationalism, dictatorship, transitional period, platformism, etc., and the current fashion, which is not in itself anything new, electoral anti-abstentionism, belongs in the same series. The very distinction between ‘questions of principles’ and ‘simple tactical questions’, which implies that, for ‘tactical’ reasons, one should be prepared to trample all over one’s principles, does not possess the least resemblance to the anarchist view. The anarchist principle knows only ‘one’ formula, rather than ‘two’: either one professes its ideas, or one abandons them ‘by overcoming one’s scruples’. These infiltrations inevitably destroy within their victims any trace of a libertarian sentiment and sooner or later, but generally quite rapidly, transform them into nationalists, fascists, Bolsheviks, politicians, or workerists.

“This unavoidable debris is the result of a kind of auto-purgation of weak and inconsistent elements, who think they are anarchists without ever really having been anarchists at all. And just as a big river cannot be polluted by the harmful substances dumped into it, so, too, does the long-lived and worldwide current of anarchism automatically purify itself and continue on its way.

“It is becoming clearer with each passing day that the final struggle will be neither economic, nor political, between classes and parties, but intellectual and ethical, and will take place, under multiple forms, between the progressive individuals of an ethical bent who possess some intellectual capacity, and the underdeveloped stragglers. It is necessary to openly say this: complete Anarchy must issue as the outcome of this struggle, integral, healthy and robust, and not that miserable abortion that is engendered by the tireless efforts of the ‘infiltrators’ whenever they get the chance.”

Max Nettlau (from *Solidaridad*)

Chapter 3: The insurrectionary climate

We do not need too many arguments to prove that the environment in which the Spanish people lived during the period leading up to June 19, 1936, was one of open insurrection. A population that had endured so many years of the Bourbon monarchic regime, Alfonso XIII being the last representative of this centuries-long rule; that had to suffer under the disastrous influence of the legions of monks and friars, with their obscurantist and superstitious preaching; that had been the plaything of the local *caciques* and political bosses, with their promises and deceitfulness, and which shed its blood so abundantly in the desolate regions of Morocco, led by the ambitions and intrigues of the thugs who staff the highest levels of the royalist military, logically had to wake up to reality and make themselves capable of conquering their well-being.

The oppression that they were subjected to under the republican as well as the monarchical regimes instinctively led them to rebel against those who were oppressing them. They have often proved that within their ranks hope and a promising new dawn are being cultivated.

The Spanish people have a glorious history of epic revolutionary attempts. Few are the cities, towns or villages whose streets are not stained with the blood of the workers and anarchists. Along the roads in Spain, like battle flags of rebellion and vengeance, one sees, one after another, crosses of wood or simple signs indicating that on that spot an anarchist fighter had fallen, murdered during the merciless implementation of the “law of flight”.

In July 1909, after an energetic protest campaign against the war in Morocco, a huge general strike broke out in Barcelona, in which the general population of the city also took an active part, and the population surged into the streets and even burned churches and monasteries. This episode has been given the name of the “Tragic Week” because of the enormous number of workers lives that were sacrificed due to the violent measures of repression adopted by the despotic government of the clericalist Antonio Maura.

A short time afterwards, the founder of the Modern School, Francisco Ferrer Guardia, was shot in the dungeons of the ghastly fortress of Montjuich, by order of the same Maura, and this reprehensible deed caused not only the people of Spain, but also the people of the whole world, to pour into the streets in protest against the Spanish government, considering this crime to be a shameless maneuver of the Iberian clerical party.

In the regions and the cities of the North—Asturias, Vizcaya, Bilbao, Santander, Oviedo, etc.—the campaign against the war found fertile soil and when the government wanted to send the young soldiers of Spain to the slaughterhouse of the Riff, the mothers, sisters and girlfriends of the boys rebelled against the military caste, even taking their protest to the docks where the troops were to embark for Morocco, temporarily preventing their departure.

In 1911, a bloody incident took place in a town in the vicinity of Valencia and the Civil Guard immediately carried out vicious repression against its inhabitants, in the prelude to the famous trial known as the “*Cullera*”, in which the prosecuting attorney called for three consecutive life sentences for one worker and life imprisonment for every one of the other 17 workers who were

his co-defendants. This trial had a major impact, for in Buenos Aires and Montevideo a protest campaign was organized against this judicial outrage.

These incidents, and those that followed during the reign of Alfonso XIII, led to major massacres of workers and a tenacious and cruel persecution of anarchists and revolutionary workers.

During the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, which lasted seven years, the men of the CNT were bitterly persecuted, and many of them were subjected to the dictates of the sadly famous law of flight; the workers were shot under the pretext that they had attempted to escape. The bloodstained general Martínez Anido, organizer of the free trade unions, sowed death throughout the streets of Barcelona.

Then came April 14, 1931. The Spanish people, tired of supporting such despotism and exploitation, turned their attention towards the politicians who loudly proclaimed their republican views and, hoping for a radical change, helped these politicians win the municipal elections on that date. King Alfonso, responsible for so many crimes and persecutions, was overcome with fear and fled, leaving the government in the hands of the republicans.

All of this changed nothing with regard to the methods of oppression. The republic, too, imprisoned, persecuted and shot rebels. During period of the Azaña government, who presided over a cabinet that included Largo Caballero, Quiroga, Maura (junior), Prieto and others—some of whom were to later play a prominent role during the civil war—the crimes continued to be committed, but now in the name of the republic, and the total number of dead and prisoners reached into the thousands, many of whom were militants of the CNT and the FAI.

In the period of the cabinet presided over by Casares Quiroga, bloody incidents took place and the state reacted with great violence, culminating in the ignominious event of the tragedy of Casas Viejas, which had worldwide repercussions, where, under orders to take “neither wounded nor prisoners”, a large number of peasants were massacred for the crime of yearning for more bread and freedom. Then the tragic Lerroux rose to power, who, determined not to fall short of the efforts of his predecessors, continued to carry out a ferocious repression against the most insignificant instances of protest and rebellion, filling the jails with anarchist militants.

Now we come to the revolution of Asturias, led by the Asturian miners, in which the affiliates of the CNT and the FAI played an active role. The bloody repression carried out by General Ochoa is a bitter memory.

Chapter 4: The “Popular Front”

It cannot be denied that the Spanish people continued to pay a very high price for their yearning to be free and to enjoy the fruits of liberty. The tragedy of the Asturian insurrection devastated their spirits and the voices that echoed from the prisons would tell a tale of shock and suffering. More than a thousand dead and many thousands imprisoned was the result that the Lerrox government could boast of having achieved.

The ambitious so-called leftist politicians, exploiting this sad situation, used as a rallying point, in the electoral campaign to reform the representative branch of government, freedom for the prisoners, and united under the Bolshevik slogan of “popular front”.

The bait they offered was persuasive; the prisoners demanded to be freed and the sentimental, sincere and always naive workers contributed to the victory of the leftist electoral slate. The CNT, which was anti-political due to its trade union structure, and which had led beautiful campaigns in favor of electoral abstentionism, on this occasion suspiciously changed its attitude.

Santillán, who, even though he “had not set aside certain scruples”, explained this fact—without the least trace of irony—in the following delectable paragraphs:

“With regard to the elections of February 16, 1936, we were confronted in Spain with one of the most serious moments of our existence as a movement. We had the key to the future in our hand. But anti-electoral propaganda had become a routine that was hard to overcome. Principles and tactics were capriciously invoked. And everyone remembered the anti-electoral campaign of November 1933, the most intense such campaign ever. They were insistently demanding a repetition, almost a carbon copy. The situation, however, was clear. If we opted for electoral abstention, as we had always done before, the victory of the right would have been inevitable. The victory of the right would be fascism with a legal and popular sanction.”

“There were many militants who did not want to understand this and raised a clamor against our view. Several extremely tense weeks followed. If the responsibility was not so great, we would have left the field open to the demagogues who suddenly transformed themselves into the fierce guardians of principles and sought to teach us lessons about Revolution and Anarchy. We resisted. Under no circumstances could we hand over power to the right, to the forces of Gil Robles, by abstaining. Nor was it possible, because the lack of understanding would be even greater, to openly advocate participation in the elections. It would have been interpreted as a defection from our principles. Fortunately, the good instincts of the broad masses came to our aid. We focused on the liberation of the prisoners and, in our press, we set forth the choices, and carried out a reasonable propaganda campaign that prevented abstention on the scale of 1933 and consequently made the victory of the republican left possible.”

No commentaries are necessary with regard to this point, for Santillán has spoken quite clearly. He does not understand what he does not want.

Disappointment did not take long to arrive. While some prisoners were released, other people were imprisoned, because the social problem continued to become more explosive as the workers organized for the conquest of economic improvements that Spanish capitalism refused to concede.

The slogan of the “Popular Front” government was: “First reinforce the republic; then concessions.” This slogan was taken so seriously that strikes were declared to be crimes of *lèse majesté* and the leftists sought to settle strikes led by the CNT in courts of arbitration. The terrible ordeal of the members of the CNT and the FAI continued. The reaction was fierce and bloody.

While the revolutionary workers were being persecuted with ferocious rage, the landowners, the clergy and the disgruntled military officers were allowed, logically, in the environment of conspiracy in which they lived, to work in the open light of day in preparation for the moment when they would attempt to seize power. So visible were the maneuvers of the reactionaries that the CNT made them public in an announcement distributed on February 14, 1936, whose crucial paragraphs we reproduce below:

“... With each passing day the suspicion that right-wing elements are prepared to launch a military uprising becomes more widespread. It is even a matter of public knowledge, now that left wing newspapers are constantly publishing articles warning about machinations that are ostensibly secret, but are in reality shameless and open, carried out by the reactionary officers in the barracks and in the civil and ecclesiastical circles of the counterrevolution.

“Morocco appears to be the main focal point and epicenter of the conspiracy. Whether or not an insurrection takes place is contingent on the results of the elections. The planned preventive action will be implemented if the left wins the elections.”

“We, who do not defend the republic, but who relentlessly fight against fascism, will contribute all the forces at our disposal in order to defeat the historical executioners of the Spanish proletariat.”

“In addition, we do not hesitate to recommend that, wherever the legions of tyranny may appear, that you unhesitatingly reach an agreement with the antifascist sectors by energetically attempting to ensure that the defensive preparations of the masses should follow the paths of the real social revolution, under the auspices of libertarian communism.

“Once more: Keep your eyes open, comrades! It is better to take courageous measures to be safe, even if they are mistaken, than to be sorry due to negligence.—The National Committee.”

“Everyone must be vigilant. If the conspirators light the fire we must pursue the acts of opposition to their maximum consequences without allowing the liberal bourgeoisie and their Marxist allies to stop the course of events should the fascist revolt be utterly suppressed in its very beginnings. If, to the contrary, the struggle is a hard one, such a recommendation would be superfluous, because no one would stop until one of the contending powers is eliminated, and over the course of the people’s victory their democratic illusions would be dispelled; if, on the other hand, the people are defeated, the dictatorial nightmare will annihilate us. Once someone seriously

opens up hostilities, democracy will perish between two fires, because it is irrelevant and has no place on the field of battle: either fascism or social revolution. Defeat of the former is a duty incumbent upon the whole proletariat and all freedom-lovers, weapons in hand: that the revolution should be social and libertarian ought to be the most profound preoccupation of members of the Confederation. It depends upon our intelligence, and the unity of our thought and our action, whether or not we will be the most authoritative inspiration for the masses and that they will put into practice modes of sociability that conform to the spirit of libertarian ideas, and whether these ideas will be the impregnable defensive shield against the authoritarian instincts of the whites and the reds.

“Once more: Keep your eyes open, comrades! It is better to take courageous measures to be safe, even if they are mistaken, than to be sorry due to negligence.”

The National Committee.

The politicians of the “Popular Front” were not interested in the activities of the reactionaries. Out of cowardice they would not dare even to order violent measures against the military conspirators; the latter, increasingly more arrogant, made use of criminal elements to provoke disorders, attacks and premeditated crimes. The Spanish public lived in a state of fear and shock.

The workers of the CNT continued to plan valiant strike movements and the leftist ministers continued to attempt to destroy the organization.

It was possible to observe, in the prelude to the military uprising, spectacles such as the one a confederal newspaper described, which took place in Madrid, during the course of a construction workers strike: while the workers enrolled in the UGT were trying to return to work, in accordance with orders issued by the socialist ministers, the workers who were members of the CNT stood with crossed arms in front of the construction sites, in protest against this betrayal.

Chapter 5: July 19

The assassination of the right wing politician Calvo Sotelo hastened the pace of events. The conspirators gave the order to revolt and on the dawn of July 19, 1936 there was fighting on the streets of all the cities in Spain. The great majority of the units of the Spanish army joined the revolt.

It seems unnecessary for us to describe the harrowing episodes, the bloody clashes, and the heroic deeds of the Spanish people and the anarchists that took place during the morning of that hallowed day; we also lack the skill to depict them in a realistic way that would immortalize them. The spirit of struggle, sacrifice and heroism was once again in evidence, recalling the events of past eras. Sublime epics by acclaimed authors. Another Numantia and another Saguntum.

Once again, the suffering and valiant people took to the streets, constructed barricades, assaulted the barracks, burned churches and monasteries and public offices, without any other weapons, in many cases, than their ideal of redemption and in other cases with antiquated or useless arms. Bared breasts confronted the machine guns. Men, women and the elderly, gasping for breath and full of enthusiasm and holy hatreds, defied death without second thoughts or cowardice.

What was certain was, with the end of the day, news had already arrived from many cities on the Peninsula. In some, the people had been massacred and defeated, with countless victims. In others, the people had overcome the rebel military forces.

Everywhere, the comrades of the CNT and the FAI displayed prodigies of valor and audacity and risked their precious lives.

We shall allow their leaders to speak for themselves, and describe a few scenes of the struggle:

“Madrid was like an inferno. The bravery of its children during those dramatic hours deserves to be inscribed in lines of gold; down the Gran Vía came some cavalry troopers towards the barracks at La Montaña. They are sons of the people who come from Vicálvaro, with a few artillery pieces. The people do not allow them to pass. They surround them, embracing them. Many cried for joy. Automobiles, numerous automobiles were racing down the streets, with people clinging to them on their running boards!

“Large columns of smoke rose above the buildings of Madrid into the sky...

“Around all the churches and monasteries a beautiful ‘buzz’ was heard. There is not a moment for rest. The people seem to be motivated as if by a single will. The fever has embraced all of them. One could say that all of Madrid is out on the streets. As the seriousness of the situation becomes more apparent, the revolutionary ardor of the people grows. It is as if they had a single brain and a single will. No power, one thinks, can defeat this tempest. Those who revolted will have to taste the dust of defeat.

“La Montaña barracks has fallen. The CNT fighters in the lead, scornful of death, with some assault guards and young socialists, entered like a hurricane and swept

away all resistance. It was the power of the people who were ready to take justice into their own hands. The only creative and fruitful justice.

“At that solemn hour (12 a.m. on July 20, 1936), an entire regiment died at the hands of the people in arms. The bullets that ended the lives of the officers and commanders of the army in the barracks of La Montaña, did not just kill a handful of men, but killed a whole society....

“A group of comrades arrived in a troop at the headquarters of the National Committee on Calle de Silva. They came armed with rifles and machine guns. We took them with our own two hands, they said, crazed with joy, and they are for the Organization. They were soon mounted on cars and sent to other locations in search of new rebel strongholds.

“After the barracks of La Montaña, the other fascist strongholds in Madrid fell one after another. The people of Madrid, with an exemplary heroism, joined the assault on the barracks with their breasts bared, which made great historical deeds possible.

“Once the rebellion was defeated in Madrid, reinforcements were dispatched to the Sierra del Guadarrama, where the troops of the bloody general Mola were cornered. On the next day, July 21, our forces took Alcalá de Henares, breaking the siege of Madrid and forcing the fascists to flee towards Guadalajara.”

(David Antona)

“... things were getting organized. While the struggle continued and the military uprising was being liquidated, the people in arms, the absolute masters of Barcelona, the CNT and the FAI; every sector fought against the rebels, but it was the impulse of our men, it was the unequalled example of the bravery of our militants, which galvanized the multitudes, it is necessary to say this loud and clear—they began to prepare for the dawning of a new day, now that Barcelona, now that Catalonia were in the hands of the victorious revolution. The Committee of Antifascist Militias, formed on the 20th and on which all the sectors that had joined the fight against fascism were represented, was, in fact and legally, the real government of Catalonia. The Generalitat disappeared in the face of the force and the majesty of the new revolutionary institution that had arisen from the popular will....

“In the outlying counties of Catalonia the same thing happened. The fascist uprising was immediately suppressed; the municipal governments were in the hands of the workers; Local Committees of Antifascist Militias were formed, the revolution was now a fait accompli, unstoppable, imposing and formidable. And if affairs had proceeded in the rest of the Peninsula as they had in Catalonia, if in the other parts of Spain the people’s victory had been as definitive and as overwhelming, how soon we would have embarked upon the road to socialism!

“In Barcelona, Catalonia, July 19 came to a glorious end amidst the splendor of the fires, in the revolutionary euphoria of a day of popular victory. The horns of the cars that were racing all over Barcelona loaded with workers with rifles in their hands, played the marvelous symphony—FAI-CNT!—that would resound five days later in

the chorus of the ragged yet heroic militias, drunk on illusions and enthusiasm, who left for Zaragoza with Durruti.

“The letters ‘CNT-FAI’ were written on every wall, on every building, on every door on every house, on cars, and on everything! The red and black flag flew in the wind, triumphant and fantastic, a marvelous image, that we contemplated with an enchanted soul and shining eyes, asking ourselves if we were only dreaming or if this was real! No, we were not sleeping. We were wide-awake. As we recall the harsh victorious reality, the great fruitful and tragic reality, then the widows and the orphans would come. How much noble blood was spilled. How many men fell in battle, in the heat of the struggle, mixed together in holy anonymity!”

(Federica Montseny)

As we can see, and as we honestly recall, in all the encounters in which the anarchist militants participated they verified with their dignity and brave conduct their past as gladiators of an ideal of love, justice and freedom, and faced death with their usual nobility and heroism.

Furthermore: thanks to their audacity, forged in countless social conflicts, they led the people, in the principal Iberian cities, to a resounding victory. Concerning the results obtained and the conduct of the anarchists, the following paragraphs from an interview conducted with the President of the Generalitat, the Catalan politician Companys, are most informative, as recounted by Juan García Oliver, later the Minister of “Justice”:

*“First of all I must say that the CNT and the FAI have never been treated as they deserve in view of their real importance. They have always been harshly persecuted; and I, most regretfully, but forced to do so by political realities, who was once on your side, was later forced to persecute you. Today you are the masters of the city and Catalonia, because you alone have defeated the fascist military and I hope that you will not think it offensive on my part to remind you that you have not lacked the help of the few or many loyal men from my party and from the guards and the **mozos**....”*

“But the truth is that, although harshly persecuted up until just yesterday, today you have defeated the military and the fascists. I therefore cannot, knowing you and the kind of people you are, use any but the most sincere language. You have won and everything is in your power, if you do not need me or do not want me to continue to serve as the President of Catalonia, tell me now so that I can join the ranks as one more soldier in the struggle against fascism. If, on the other hand, you believe that in this post that only death could have caused me to yield to victorious fascism, I can, with the men of my party, with my name and my prestige, be useful in this struggle, which, if it has turned out so well today in the city, we do not know when or how it will end in the rest of Spain, you can count on me and on my loyalty as a man and as a politician, a man who is convinced that today an entire disgraceful past has perished, and that I sincerely desire that Catalonia should march at the head of the most advanced countries with regard to social questions.”

García Oliver comments on this interview as follows:

“At that time, Companys was speaking with an obvious sincerity. A malleable, more than malleable and realistic man, who profoundly experienced the tragedy of his people saved from age-long slavery by the efforts of the anarchists, he used the language demanded by the circumstances, and rose to the very difficult task of measuring up to them, in a unique gesture of dignity and understanding, qualities that have been so sorely lacking among Spanish politicians. Companys, without yielding to fear of the revolution, logically thinking that the revolution itself would come to understand what was possible and what was impossible under the circumstances, made an effort to assume a dignified position, as a Catalan who understood that the moment of truth has arrived for his country, and as a man of advanced liberal opinions, who did not fear the boldest programs in the social domain, as long as the latter are based on the living reality of what is possible.”

And Santillán, in his book, *The Revolution and the War in Spain*, discussing the same interview, says:

“Once the revolt was liquidated in Catalonia, the President of the Generalitat, Luis Companys, called upon us to attend a conference in order to hear our proposals on how to facilitate victory. We came to the Generalitat armed with the weapons of victory, accompanied by a numerous group that served us as a bodyguard. We could have gone it alone, imposed our absolute dictatorship, declared the Generalitat to be abolished and instituted, in its place, the real power of the people; but we did not believe in dictatorship when it was exercised against us, nor can we desire it when we can ourselves exercise it to the detriment of others. The Generalitat continued to function with President Companys at its head and the popular forces were organized in militias to continue the struggle for the liberation of Spain, after having liberated Catalonia from the claws of the military.”

With the bloody scenes that unfolded on July 19, 1936, which are described in a summary form in the above passages, the shocking tragedy that the Spanish people endured for more than thirty months began, with the disastrous results that are now so well known, which I recounted in my “Introduction” above—endorsed by the militants who occupied posts of responsibility in the CNT and the FAI, who vied with each other with respect to the errors, backroom deals and sellouts they committed—the tragedy of one of the most disappointing chapters of the emancipatory history of the working class masses of Spain.

Chapter 6: The first contradictions

From the brief descriptions related above, we see that the day-by-day expectation of the social revolution was a reality imposed by the circumstances. The oral and written propaganda that had been carried out; the bloody strikes waged against Iberian capitalism; the imprisonment and trials and shootings inflicted on the militants of the CNT and the FAI, over decades throughout Spain, had born their long awaited fruit.

The people in arms had destroyed a regime of opprobrium, tyranny and exploitation and had decided to build a new society where everyone would enjoy liberty and wellbeing.

The anarchist militants, who were the first to man the most dangerous positions, would also be the first to orient the people towards their emancipation, taking care that they would not have to experience what the Russian people had to go through, after November 7, 1919 [*sic*: should be 1917], when the politicians took advantage of all the enormous efforts and so many lives lost: so that now the Russian people live under the rule of a bloody dictatorship.

We were sure that it could not happen in any other way. That was when we received a communiqué, which had been sent by the CNT to the members of the confederation and the Spanish people in general, issuing a warning with regard to the ongoing events, in the following terms:

“Comrades: Compelled by the events and understanding that every hour that passes requires a different approach, because the great counterrevolutionary offensive is basically different both in form and substance, we are issuing this manifesto today, ready as always to provide orientation and assistance to those who are accessible to our message, the Spanish revolutionary masses.

“This is a dangerous time for the interests of the proletarian community. On the horizon we can observe, with increasingly well-defined outlines, the implacable unfolding of the bloody maneuvers of the Spanish bourgeoisie.

“Those who, like us, do not participate in the political leadership of the country, although with our attitude we have on more than one occasion caused a change of course in the governmental sphere, must now set forth, as we have on so many other similar occasions, our position on the nation’s government.

“Everyone knows about our aversion to participating, we repeat, in the political fate of the population. Politics is the infectious dunghill that pollutes the entire body with its miasmas. That is what we have always thought and now each passing hour reinforces our convictions about this matter, that the roads of the revolution cannot be squeezed into the narrow and constraining lanes offered by the despicable everyday politics. The latter are full of blind alleys and deceptive crossroads that cause individuals and collectives to lose their proper features. That is why the National Confederation of Labor, in accordance with the orientations of the First International, once again says to the insurrectionary masses: do not trust anyone else to do something

for you; the leaders, in the great turning points of history, always advise calm and discipline. This is why we now seek, in order to impel the revolution towards its final goal, to convince the masses to disregard the appeals of those who turn their backs on the crude and sharply defined reality, and who prefer a democracy draped in the shroud of hunger and persecutions, rather than a profound and transformative revolution. As for fascism, the criminality of the powerful castes elevated into a system, you can only abolish it by destroying capitalist society at its roots.”

What a difference there is between the actual positions these organizations were to adopt and the beautiful concepts proclaimed above! The breeze of reality left quite a pile of dead leaves behind it!

Those who controlled the fate of an enormous population and an immense territory, such as is represented by Barcelona and Aragon, within a few hours of having become aware of their victory committed their first mistakes and publicized their first acts of betrayal with regard to matters of principle. They joined a Committee of Militias, in shameful association with the politicians, and the CNT and the FAI proclaimed that their organizations were “in favor of collaboration and democracy, renouncing the revolutionary totalitarianism that would necessarily lead to the suffocation of the republic by a confederal and anarchist dictatorship”, in the words of García Oliver; they “recognized the priority of collective responsibility”, adding that “not allowing ourselves to be swept away by the excitement, nor to be intoxicated by the rapid, definitive and overwhelming victory that we had won”, they issued the order to “conquer the towns controlled by fascism”. “There is no libertarian communism.” “First we have to fight the enemy wherever he may be found”, according to Mariano Vázquez.

They had forgotten, a few days after signing them with their own hands and publishing them, those lapidary phrases of the CNT’s communiqué: “Do not trust anyone else to do anything for you; the leaders, at the turning points of history, always advise calm and discipline...”

The Spanish people, who had been the eternal victims of the priests, the village *caciques* and political *caudillos*, were now the victims of the confederal “*caudillos*”.

The concepts disseminated by the CNT and the FAI in their newspapers and magazines, which were numerous in Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, etc., in order to justify these first retreats with respect to principle, do not merit comment, even if they are in their own way emotionally compelling. They sought to put the brakes on the people’s innate yearning for redemption, the social revolution, so that the Marxist politicians of Spain and the bourgeois and “proletarian” democracies—France, England and Russia—would help the Spanish people in their battle against fascism!!

From then on, everything was disconcerting and shameful. In order to drive home the nail of their inconsistencies, of their betrayal of their own ideas, they initiated a spirited campaign in favor of “unified command”, “control and discipline”, “all arms to the front”, and “win the war”.

They had ceased to be anarchists and instead became plain “anti-fascists” and sought, indeed begged anxiously, for “unity” with all the politicians, and positions of “responsibility” in Spain’s central government.

Chapter 7: The gentlemen “ministers”

It is somewhat difficult to piece together in detail the attitudes adopted and the resolutions approved by the “majority” of the representatives of the CNT and the FAI in the wake of the revolt. But it is worth mentioning that—because of their subsequent deleterious effects on our aspirations—that the agreements signed at that “famous” session where the above-mentioned institutions, demonstrating their “revolutionary maturity”, and after the declarations of “comrade” Companys—“You have defeated the military and the fascists and everything is in your hands; if you do not want me to be the President of Catalonia, tell me now, so that I may be one more soldier”—were of an immense “historical significance” and also entailed defeatist and suicidal consequences.

The fact that they decided “for collaboration, for democracy, and against any dictatorial revolutionary solution”, had the immediate result of leaving things as they were before the military uprising. The bourgeois State had suffered a setback, from which it would soon recover with the cooperation of the “majority” *cenetistas* and *faístas*. “They put their trust in the word of a Catalanian ‘democrat’ and maintained and supported Companys as the President of the Generalitat.” And because they were “the majority force upon which the attempt to constitute a real democracy must fall, and because we do not want to imitate the big and arrogant fish, who never allow their zeal to devour the little fish to flag”—most of these phrases that we are transcribing come from García Oliver—they agreed to join a Committee of Militias together with the representatives of the political parties.

What we said above, about the militarist slogans proclaimed by the press and propaganda organs of the CNT and the FAI, is fully justified. Many “prestigious” members of the CNT and the FAI were high-ranking military officers and managerial office staff—later—connected with the war.

But why were they so enthusiastic about accepting these slogans that bore such an authoritarian and dictatorial stamp?

At the time, the explanation offered was that many “good boys” made use of deception to reject the taking up of arms. That due to the lack of military knowledge more lives were sacrificed than necessary and that actions were not undertaken at the right time and place, and ... we have cultivated many more conjectures. It is, however, undeniable, due to the events that took place at the time, that these slogans had a different purpose.

The assurance of the CNT and the FAI, in their conformance to the “transcendental” resolution of postponing the social revolution, that it was the “majority”, means that a minority disagreed with this first deviation. And what about this minority? Did its members quietly accept this serious error? Did they obey the orders of the “leaders” of the militias?

The events that took place at the time inform us that they did not and that it was not unlikely that the “anti-fascists” felt infringed upon in their hierarchical delusions and in their Marxist and ultimately authoritarian maneuvers and sought to enclose within the rigid grip of discipline

those who would never accept, as anarchists, such an overwhelming betrayal of their redemptive ideas.

But the resounding fall of the *cenetista* and *faísta* theoreticians did not stop there.

When Franco's hosts reached the gates of Madrid and the "Popular Front" government had fled to Valencia, an appeal to defend the Capital—with the preconceived purpose of further weakening the Aragon Front, in order to advantageously pursue reactionary maneuvers that were later successfully concluded by the authoritarian fractions—was made to the men of the CNT and the FAI; this call was answered by Durruti with a column of militiamen who performed glorious feats in the trenches of the Ciudad Universitaria. At the same time—after much plaintive begging—representatives of the CNT and the FAI were allowed to enter that government that had fled in such a cowardly manner from Madrid. These representatives then became "ministers", alongside the politicians who, before the uprising, had ordered merciless persecutions of anarchist militants.

But ... it was an "imperious necessity". "We joined the government," Santillán said, "because we had a single dominant concern: to place all resources, all energies, all possibilities of the country at the service of the war, which we considered sacred, because it was a war of the people against those who had revolted in order to reduce it to a slavery worse than the one they already suffered."

Nevertheless, all the dialectics poured out by those who undertook to implement the new ways cannot possibly cobble together a convincing, honest and sincere explanation that would justify the sluggishness, the docility and the indifference demonstrated by the "responsible" members of the CNT and the FAI in all the shameful and disreputable episodes that later took place.... Nor do they explain the tacit collaboration granted to all the governments that succeeded one another in the period of the civil war, for they conformed to all the political changes that took place and were therefore *Caballeristas*, *Prietistas*, *Negrinistas*, *Miajistas*, and finally *Casadistas*; in one word, *governmentalists*.

It is clear that one does not need to be an especially astute observer to deduce—without any intention to judge what was on their minds—that, besides the satisfactions that they will have enjoyed by breaking into the circle of the preeminent men of state, especially during such a cruel period, history must attest that the status of collaborators with any government grants them certain advantages and prerogatives that were not enjoyed by those who fought on the battlefields; advantages and prerogatives that—perhaps they never entered into their "alliancist" calculations—they very well availed themselves of in their retreat from Barcelona to France, escaping in airplanes or other convenient means of transport and from the central front—Madrid, Valencia and Andalusia—in airplanes and merchant ships and even in English warships while the militiamen remained in Spain at the mercy of Franco's mercenaries. Even in exile they obtained advantages with their high status as "ministers", for while the latter were able to find refuge in all the most important cities of Europe, the tragedy of the "anti-fascist" soldiers continued in the unsanitary concentration camps constructed in France.

Let us return to the main trail. It would be a sign of unpardonable disrespect if we were to refrain from mentioning the names of the gentlemen "ministers" and some of their revealing initiatives, whose purpose was to get the state car, which had at the time suffered a serious "*panne*" [breakdown], back on the road.

We are not interested in the performance of Federica Montseny as Minister of Health, although it did have some humanitarian aspects; she had the reward of a great deal of personal satisfaction, since she is remembered for her meritorious labor as Minister of Health, and the fact that a wing of the Vélez Rubio Maternity Hospital has been named after her.

We had originally intended not to mention the Minister of Commerce, Juan López, out of respect for his “learned reputation” in Politics and Sociology, but, quite opportunely, an article of his came into our hands that had been published in *Cultura Proletaria*, in which, “soliloquizing in favor of the ‘family’”, he shows his true colors and makes a few declarations that we just cannot resist quoting.

After telling us about the “narrow horizon” of the “ideological” family; “of the demagoguery that parades boldly in the streets”; of the fact that his entry into the government “was the conquest of a revolutionary stronghold”; that they were not going “to establish Libertarian Communism, or realize the integral program of Socialism, but to uphold the world of the republic”—he then proceeds to a lengthy discussion of the revolt of May 1937 in Barcelona—repudiated by the CNT ministers—against which he displays his utmost indignation because it forced him to resign from his government position, from which he intended “to ensure the conquests of the working class” and because “in a few hours the efforts of so many months of work collapsed and magnificent positions of all kinds were lost”.

He concludes his article by saying:

“The events of May 3 ultimately mean the following:

“The absence of real discipline in the libertarian movement, which, due to its irresponsible actions in Catalonia, facilitated the political maneuver that put an end to the government of Largo Caballero.

“Removing us from the revolutionary positions we had conquered and the loss of any chance to consolidate them IS WHAT OUR RESIGNATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT IMPLIES.”

Juan Peiró, in the Ministry of Industry, must have displayed a great deal of cleverness to deserve the praise of his “subordinates” in that governmental department when he attended—regretfully, perhaps—the ceremony where he officially stepped down from such an “honorable” position, since, according to Peiró himself, upon his departure, they told him:

“You may depart with the assurance that the Ministry of Industry has never been so productive as it was during your incumbency.”

This adulatory praise of these office parasites is explainable and justified, since they could confirm the enthusiasm and assiduousness Juan Peiró displayed in his “reconstructive” labors in order to ingratiate himself with the bourgeoisie and the politicians and in order to buttress the power of the State. Further proof of what we said above can be found in the transcript of a speech Peiró delivered at the *Gran Teatro* in Valencia, a few days after resigning from his high office, in order to explain his conduct in the Ministry, from which we shall quote the following passage:

“No one can deny the collaboration provided by the CNT and the FAI with respect to public order. The men of the CNT, the men of the FAI, have done everything within their power to reestablish order wherever, due to circumstances that I shall not analyze here, disorder had arisen. No one will be able to deny this, because of the recent events in Catalonia, more precisely the events in Barcelona, and the comrades of the UGT themselves have had an opportunity to see how the elements of the Confederation behave who have been assigned the job of establishing order and reestablishing discipline in Barcelona.

“When the CNT joined the government of Catalonia and the government of the Republic, all of us took up our posts having renounced any and all totalitarian intentions. We knew that we were going to collaborate, and in collaborating we did so in a sincere, honorable and disinterested manner.”

Having read the above paragraphs, the reader will be convinced—by Peiró’s tone—of the statist mentality that prevailed among these bureaucrats and the dubious mission that they were performing. They assumed responsibility—we do not discover by whose orders—for reestablishing “order” and “discipline” where they were lacking.

Now all that remains is to discuss Juan García Oliver who, representing the CNT, was to become the Minister of Justice.

We are not in any position to uncover the Machiavellian intentions that guided the politician Largo Caballero when, yielding to the insistent petitions of the CNT and the FAI, he gave them four bureaucratic positions in the government that had fled to Valencia; but we do know that the fact that a militant who called himself an anarchist occupied the post of Minister of Justice was most inconceivable and ridiculous and gives an idea of the statist delirium from which these “leaders” suffered.

What is certain is that García Oliver, brandishing his action program—“Now there will be justice”—assumed the magistrate’s gown and with smug satisfaction, “cheerful and content”, he decided to represent the goddess Themis.

In just what manner he performed what appeared to be the most grotesque acts in the execution, by decrees, of “justice”, is exemplified by the zeal he displayed in drafting legislation on judicial sentencing (!) and on the organization of prison life.

García Oliver plunged with such unexpected diligence into a “regenerative” labor of such pettifogging magnitude that he did not allow himself to reflect on his ideological position prior to the conflict that was taking place, to such an extent that he, in plainly boastful terms, wrote a meticulous description of the draft legislation he proposed, the decrees he issued, and the “justice” measures that he had implemented, especially emphasizing the ones that granted legal rights to women, that cancelled criminal records for crimes committed before the uprising, that stipulated the organization of Labor Camps (i.e., “Concentration Camps”) and a multitude of other initiatives that he authorized, expressing himself as follows: “If the work was hard, the fruits were magnificent”. And he fulfilled his obsession: “To perfect the justice system.”

But this intensive judicial activity does not exhaust the dynamism of García Oliver.

Having attracted the attention of the Ministry of War because of the impressive “constructive” qualities he displayed, he was ordered by that Ministry to create and organize the People’s Military Academies, which would later graduate thousands of officers who—we assume—would be the “proletarian” officer corps upon which the governmentalist *cenetistas* would rely to carry

out the “social revolution” when the civil war ended. However, in a speech that García Oliver delivered to the officers who graduated from one of these People’s Academies, that of Barcelona, we may deduce that such an assumption would be a crass error.

This is what he said in this speech:

*“You, the officers of the popular army, must observe an IRON DISCIPLINE and impose it on your men, who, once they are incorporated in the ranks, must CEASE TO BE YOUR COMRADES in order to become cogs in the military machine of our army. Your mission is to assure victory over the invading fascist forces and maintain, at the moment of victory, a powerful popular army upon which we can rely to respond to any fascist provocation, whether open or concealed, of a foreign power, and that will know how to make the name of Spain respected, which has for so long been **disregarded in international affairs.**”*

The Minister of Justice, besides being a “Minister”, was a rabid militarist and a fanatical patriot.

One fact of the greatest importance, however, tells us that García Oliver was seriously deranged by his position in the sphere of the government, that his eyesight and his hearing were severely damaged, leaving him completely myopic and deaf, for while His Excellency the Honorable Minister of Justice was legislating about judicial sentencing standards and was issuing decrees that cancelled punishments, in all the towns and cities of “loyalist” Spain the “*cheka*” organized by the communists, with “experts” sent from Russia, was assassinating anarchists or imprisoning them in torture chambers, without García Oliver ever intervening on their behalf or making use of his exalted position, which indisputably proves that Juan García Oliver, just like his three comrades in the cabinet, representing the CNT, were playing a despicable and regrettable role. They were ridiculous puppets disguised as Ministers and adorned with shining gold braid, giving the impression that rather than puppets they instead resembled the disreputable clowns and street performers who travelled the roads of Spain in other times.

In the meantime—despite such unfortunate and miserable evidence of their activities—the CNT Ministers, complying with their statist slogan of “disinterest, spirit of sacrifice and love of work”, were still distinctly ensconced within the hybrid bloc of the “anti-fascists”.

Chapter 8: Feeding the crows...

Our bare assertion that there was a “minority” that opposed the first “transcendental” resolutions of the CNT majority and the FAI and subsequent such proclamations, can be demonstrated by the alarming news that reached us and recently provided us with an accurate account of certain arbitrary facts that, in their own fashion, were depicted for us by the correspondents of the news agencies.

On the basis of these news reports we drew the conclusion that the authoritarian elements had increased in number and in power, with the condescension of the “Ministerialists”. Censorship was strict. All the committees of an anarchist origin were dissolved. Marxist nuclei were increasingly being inserted into the CNT militias and the State extended its tentacles all the way to the border with France.

The Secretary of the IWA, Besnard, tells us a great deal about these developments in his report to the IWA:

“1. That the militias were condemned and militarization accepted by the CNT.

“2. That the free municipalities that emerged from the revolution had been replaced by state institutions.

“3. That the Council of the Economy passed from the hands of the CNT into those of the Generalitat.

*“I have on many occasions insisted with regard to Santillán; that he was responsible for the preservation of the militias. I have explained to him the dangers that an army in the hands of a government would represent and the security that workers militias organized by the CNT would offer to the revolution. Although Santillán assured me that he would maintain this instrument of defense of the revolution under his jurisdiction, on behalf of the CNT, he nonetheless accepted its disappearance along with all the consequences. From that moment, however, as he had to write later in **Tierra y Libertad**, he believed in the need for a transitional State to represent Spain in foreign affairs, and in the need for a ‘disciplined’ government army to defeat fascism. It is of no use emphasizing how foreign this concept is to our doctrine, and how much it resembles authoritarian communism. It cannot but favor the development of the latter, marking a considerable retreat of the CNT and an increasing abandonment of our methods and ideas.”*

In the meantime, calamitous events have taken place in Spain, events that have justified the warning that comrade Besnard expressed in his report.

The Communist Party, with a tiny membership before the military uprising, has grown as a result of the affiliation of thousands of petty bourgeoisie and by the infiltration of “technicians”

who came to Spain from all over the world, especially from Russia, which was the price of the sale of the arms needed by the “anti-fascist” soldiers. The dominance of the Bolsheviks was apparent not only in the army, but also in the police forces. And the means utilized by the latter to assert their power involved the commission of certain crimes.

Although the comrades of the CNT and the FAI have not decided to openly claim this, nonetheless, it is certain that Durruti was killed by the communists. The press correspondent in Spain for the Buenos Aires newspaper *Crítica*, José Gabriel, accuses the Bolsheviks of being responsible for his death.

Today this testimony is no longer necessary. After the (all-too belated) publication of the important “revelations” made by certain governmental elements affiliated with the CNT, concerning the despicable proceedings of the authoritarians, it cannot be denied that this dubious assassination and many others that took place in Spain were the sinister work of the “anti-fascist” *cheka*.

There was the case of Yagüe, a communist member of the Madrid Defense Council, who was wounded by a guard posted on a highway in Aragon. The Bolsheviks, who by that time were distinguished by their predominance, used this incident as an excuse to unleash with even more violence their animosity towards their “allies”, and this campaign was waged on such a large scale that the CNT and the FAI, alarmed by the direction that these demonstrations of “friendship” had taken, issued this communiqué:

“Faced with the situation of violence that they want to impose on us, we properly respond that we shall not allow, once again, after comrade Yagüe was wounded, that the comrades of our Organization should be murdered in the streets of Madrid, thus igniting a bonfire of uncontainable passions. Three militants of the CNT have been found dead in the last few days in the vicinity of the Capital.”

The Anarchist Youth, of Madrid, also added the following:

“We shall not consent for even one more minute to allow the authorities to beat, insult and arrest our militants and to refuse to recognize the membership cards of the CNT, the FAI and the Libertarian Youth. We are prepared to shoot without mercy all those traitors and the new-style police who try to arrest and beat us.”

Yet the “Ministerialists” of the CNT and the FAI continued to serve in their eminent positions. The maneuvers of the Bolsheviks did not cause them any grief or concerns. Such was the spirit of “unity” that prevailed among these comrades, and the admiration and adulation that they displayed towards the Stalinist authoritarians—out of expediency or out of fear—that comrade A. Schapiro was led to make the following observations:

“THE USSR AND THE CNT

“An unacceptable position—It is with growing sadness and a feeling of acute pain that one now reads, and this has been the case for some time now, **Solidaridad Obrera**, the organ of the CNT. We are compelled to come to this conclusion, that this daily newspaper with a print run of a quarter million copies a day, has become a semi-official daily newspaper of the USSR.

“You need only leaf through the pages of our anti-Bolshevik **Soli** to see that it is full of articles that support the USSR and Stalin’s foreign policy, without the least discordant note that would mitigate this impression.

“We need only look through a dozen issues of **Soli** over the last few weeks with regard to the attitude of the USSR in Geneva and Nyon.

“‘The world proletariat must definitively support the position of the USSR,’ one article states, dated September 9, while the editorial in the same issue declares that ‘all the free people of the world must support the demands of the USSR’ and to drive home this opinion, another article proclaims that there is ‘only one way to reinforce the decisive position of the USSR: that is international working class action together with the Soviet proletariat’. On the next day **Soli** claims that ‘the attention of the proletariat is eagerly awaiting a gesture from Russia’. By a coincidence that can only make one laugh, a headline on the same page says, ‘Machiavelli, the Inspiration of Italy and Germany’ ... forgetting, by an oversight, no doubt, to add the USSR, the most accomplished disciple of the Italian philosopher.

“A day later, on September 11, **Soli** announced that the National Committee of the CNT had selected its representative to serve on the Commission (created by The Friends of the USSR) to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the USSR. A few days later we read that ‘the CNT of Madrid participated in the tribute to the Soviet Union’. In the **Soli** of September 12, we are pleased to discover that ‘Spain, kept away from Nyon by European diplomacy, will have its place there thanks to the voice of the USSR’ and on September 18, **Soli** contains a portrait of ‘comrade’ (spare us!) Ovseenko, on the occasion of his appointment to the post of Minister of Justice of the USSR.

“But while **Soli** and the CNT pile up so many proofs of their support for the USSR, its government and its representatives in Nyon and Barcelona, neither refrained from engaging in abundant criticism, often quite bitter, of the PSUC, which is the Communist Party of Catalonia, Section of the Third International, and entirely subject to the orders of that same government of the USSR. This is a paradox that shows the whole tragedy of a situation that obliges the CNT to play this double game: to simultaneously support Moscow and to attack Moscow’s Spanish organism, the PSUC.”

“One is forced to ask: with regard to these positions, in which case are the CNT and **Soli** sincere and in which case are they not? Certainly, the USSR sells its military supplies to republican Spain. We say sell, because it has been demonstrated that not one kilo of weaponry has ever been sent by Stalin without receiving payment in money ... or in gold. Concerning this question we shall transcribe the following passages written by L.V. in **Le Réveil**, of Geneva:

“Our friends have invoked the aid provided by Russia. It is impossible to attack the representatives of Moscow, because the material support of Moscow, as opposed to the shameful defection of the democratic-capitalist states and especially the cowardice of the proletarians of those states who have been deceived by their leaders, was absolutely indispensable to maintain any chance to defeat the fascist troops! However, why not come right out and say it: Russia has sent us arms of such and

such a quality and in such and such amounts. Spain, on the other hand, has given Russia so much ... and furthermore, the Soviet leaders have proposed, in the arena of domestic politics, such and such conditions and such and such demands. Why, then, should we acknowledge the aid provided by the Soviets but not admit the price that Moscow has imposed and that has been accepted by Valencia? The anarchist organizations have been made fools of, they have been victims and accomplices of this unacceptable hypocrisy!

“For this unacceptable hypocrisy that continues to be displayed each and every day in **Soli** and which is manifested in the attitude of the CNT, so that the USSR can make them direct accomplices of the political calamities that are afflicting so-called ‘republican’ Spain, and especially Catalonia. We ask once again: which of the CNT’s attitudes are sincere? The justified critique of the PSUC or the so much less justified admiration for the government of the USSR and its foreign representatives, Litvinov and Ovseenko? Is the CNT sincere in both cases? Is it sincere in either one?

“Regardless of how the CNT might respond to these questions, two facts remain: the government of Moscow is taking marvelous advantage of the silence of the CNT in order to undermine the CNT’s position, transforming the latter, willy-nilly, into the accomplice of the anti-revolutionary and democratic-capitalist policy that Moscow is constantly pursuing. The CNT, up to its neck in kneejerk support for a government of assassins, support for which it is paying with its blood in order to obtain arms deliveries that are used in a war that has nothing anti-fascist about it, will some day be forced to desist from its criticism of the Spanish communists.

“For it is illogical to support a government without also supporting its political representatives.

“The Spanish comrades might respond that their support is not for the government of the USSR, but for the Russian proletariat; that its participation in the celebrations of the 20th anniversary of the founding of the USSR implies no more than its expression of appreciation for the October Revolution. Such a response would be insincere. It has been a long time since we have heard any news from the Russian proletariat (which possesses no means of expression). The appreciation of the October Revolution that all of us have never ceased to celebrate since 1917, by no means requires—quite the contrary—any collaboration with precisely those who strangled that Revolution.

“This unacceptable hypocrisy must cease. Moscow is in the process of selling to England, and at a bargain price, what little remains of the Spanish Revolution of July 19, 1936.

“We shall not become accomplices in this betrayal, in this moral support provided by **Soli** and the CNT to the Stalinist politicians. The PSUC only carries out the orders of Moscow. Our attitude towards Moscow must be consistent with this fact. We must publicly condemn those who, one as much as the other, and under the same aegis, are strangling the Spanish Revolution.”

(Alexander Schapiro—reproduced by *Solidaridad*, the journal of the FORU, second half of December 1937.¹)

¹ Another English translation of this letter may be consulted online at the website of the Kate Sharpley Library: <http://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/pk0q0r> [Translator's Note].

Chapter 9: A fatal slope

We are using the title of a pamphlet by Sebastián Faure as the title for this section, just as we could have used the title, “Tortuous Paths”, which is the title of an article by comrade Juan C. Romero that was published in the Rosario newspaper, *La Fora*, or the title, “Slippery Slopes”, which is the title of an article published in the Barcelona journal *Tierra y Libertad* in May 1936, because it most accurately summarizes the topic we shall address below.

Once the decision that the militants of the CNT and the FAI should participate in the government had been made with such great fanfare, they and their admirers not only did not take into account the counter-arguments offered in opposition to this treacherous position by many anarchist comrades from all over the world, but they initiated an offensive against all those who did not accept the captious arguments they employed to justify this acclaimed reversal in practice.

The obfuscation and the passion they marshaled in their ineffective defense, once their Marxist inclinations had become clear, reached such a point that they copied the style and the very terminology of the Bolsheviks had used in South America to discredit us. They furiously rallied around the principle of authority, which had been so severely maligned by the CNT and the FAI up until recently and they continued to attack us for considering it to be the basis of the State.

We have read one of these attempts at justification, with a degree of shock and bitterness, in the Buenos Aires newspaper *La Protesta* no less, and we say “no less”, because we did not expect that newspaper to publish such a tactless and insolent piece in a journal that has defended the anarchist ideal for more than forty years, and which has paid the price of so many sacrifices and persecutions to give that ideal life and passion on the part of the committed militants of anarchism in Argentina and which has today lost its way by carrying out a negative and confusionist propaganda.

Let’s take a look at a few paragraphs from “The Hour of Anarchism”, by A. Gilabert, published in *La Protesta*:

“Some of the enemies of anarchism, disguised as comrades, are now attempting to speak to us about principles, tactics and ideas. They think that anarchism has gone astray from its normal course, and has compromised with the bourgeoisie and repudiated its anti-state principles.

“This critique is not inspired by very healthy intentions. Its intentions are two-fold, and must be unmasked. Of course, anarchism in Spain has undergone a change of course. It has rectified everything that was negative about it. When anarchism was a movement of permanent opposition, it explained that it rejected the entire established order. In Spain, however, we are in the midst of special circumstances. Here, we have ceased to be an opposition in order to become a determining force. Anarchism, rather than denying, must make a new reality. Those who make a new reality will be: those who are victorious.

“We cannot demand of the Spanish people that they maintain the negative position that was that of classical international anarchism. The times are too grave to entertain ourselves by looking to the past. Is there a positive example, an effective precedent from outside of Spain that can help guide our conduct? International anarchism is of too little significance to dictate orders to Spanish anarchism. We must proudly say that Spain must serve as an example for the anarchists of the entire world.

“... As anarchists we have the obligation and the duty to criticize and to wage the war against fascism and the revolution against capitalism, not only from below, from the base, but also by assuming positions of responsibility in the institutions that rule the destiny of the country.

“Those who criticize the position of the anarchists are enemies in disguise, agents of the bourgeoisie, individuals who are not very satisfied by the libertarian influence that radiates from the Spanish people. This is the hour of anarchism, and we must accept the struggle in all of its consequences, assuming full responsibility in these decisive moments!

“Barcelona, November 5, 1936.”

Even more explicit and decisive, displaying just how intoxicated the *cenetistas* and *faistas* are with authoritarianism, is the article published in the Puigcerdá newspaper, *Sembrador*, on December 6, 1936. This article is full of slander and threats. It reads as follows:

“*CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM.*

“We anarchists are advocates of serene, noble and well-documented criticism, but we only grant this right to those who are doing everything in their power to defeat fascism. But we have to be very careful with this criticism. Now is the time for deeds, for positive realization, rather than criticism. As a general rule, the latter is a weapon that is skillfully utilized in the ambushes carried out by the ‘fifth column’, by those whom we must silence, those whom we must eliminate.”

This article insinuates that the comrades they are criticizing could very well be “fascists”.

It cannot be denied that a “majority” of the “leaders” of the CNT and the FAI have thrown overboard the imperishable anarchist principles, tactics of direct action and emancipatory concepts, and have striven to bring the hotspots of the social revolution that have emerged in various regions to a dead halt, in order to devote themselves, from their posts in the government, to channeling the activities of the people towards the sole purpose of “winning the war”.

We do not have to follow in detail the course of the many arguments that have been offered in defense of this serious error.

We cannot understand people who are well-grounded in anarchist theory, yet who, overnight, change course so suddenly, when they know that this change of course signifies a betrayal of the postulates that they had defended, in order to become instead props of the state, and therefore ridiculous bosses of the Spanish people and of their own comrades in the cause, until just recently. The definitive proof of this is provided by Article 15 of the Unity Pact between the CNT and the UGT:

“We agree to undertake joint action to liquidate the harmful activity of the groups of uncontrollables, because, due to either a lack of understanding or bad faith, they are endangering the realization of this program.”

And not only in the text of this Pact, but in practice, as well, the passion to give orders and make them obeyed is revealed, since those who rebelled against these authoritarian policies were punished and imprisoned.

We must also add that the converts to “ministerialism” conducted their oral and written propaganda in a distinctly authoritarian tone. What is regrettable is the fact that they should use our concepts, which are clearly in opposition to the new ways they have adopted, since it is surprising that, after having sacrificed their entire glorious past they should nonetheless speak in a language that does not suit them.

It is logical that some of the comrades who went to Spain to contribute their efforts to help the social revolution to be victorious, and many comrades from all parts of Europe and America, should issue warnings and protests about the precipice upon which the “majoritarians” of the CNT and the FAI are poised.

We believe that it is appropriate to convey some of these opinions. Sebastián Faure, in the pamphlet entitled, *The Fatal Slope*, sets forth his disagreement with the statist position assumed by the *cenetistas* and *faístas*, which is summarized in the following paragraphs:

“... The fact that a politician who belongs to a political group should accept a ministerial post in a government cabinet, that he should have such an ambition, that he should solicit this honor and its advantages, is very natural; this man plays his cards, he takes his ‘chance’, he follows the paths that he has embarked upon and takes good care not to miss his opportunity. But that an anarchosyndicalist, that an anarchist, should accept a post in a government cabinet, that is altogether a different matter.

“The anarchosyndicalist has inscribed on his flag in giant letters: ‘Death to the State’.

“The anarchist has inscribed, in letters of fire, on his flag: ‘Death to Authority’.

“Both are connected by a clear and precise program, based on clear and precise principles. Nothing and no one forces them to support these principles. It is with complete independence and full awareness of the reasons, deliberately, that he has subscribed to these principles. That he has upheld, propagated and defended this program.

“This being so, I maintain that the anarchosyndicalist must prohibit himself from joining those who have the mission to pilot THE SHIP OF STATE, since he is convinced that this ship, ‘this famous ship’, must be absolutely destroyed.

“And I say that the anarchist has the duty to reject all authoritarian positions, since he is fully convinced that all authority must be destroyed.

“There will be no lack of those who will object that, by reasoning in this manner, I am only taking principles into account and that it often happens that the course of events, the circumstances, the facts, that is, what is commonly called REALITY, contradicts our principles and causes those who make a cult of love and respect for principles to necessarily distance themselves provisionally from their principles, and

that they soon return to their old positions when the new REALITIES make such a return possible.

“I understand this objection and here is my response:

“First: either our principles are false, or THE REALITY THAT CONTRADICTS THEM is false. In this case we must immediately abandon these principles. In this case we must have the honesty to publicly confess the falsehood of these principles and we must have the courage to fight them with as much passion and activity as we once used to defend them; we must immediately engage in the search for more solid principles and this time they must be correct, precise, infallible.

“Or, to the contrary, the principles upon which our ideology and our tactics is based retain, regardless of the what happens, all its consistency and are just as valid today as they were yesterday and in this case we must remain faithful to them. To depart—even in exceptional circumstances and briefly—from the line of conduct that our principles have traced for us, to renounce the method of struggle that is in conformance with these principles, this means committing a mistake and a dangerous and reckless act. To persist in this error would mean committing a mistake whose consequences gradually lead to the provisional abandonment of our principles and from one concession to another until the definitive abandonment of our principles.

“Once again: it is the machinery, it is the fatal slope that can lead us very far.

“Second: But I think that the experiment undertaken by our comrades in Catalonia, far from compromising the strength of our principles and weakening or destroying justice, can and must have as a result, if we know how to learn the precious lessons that it contains and to avail ourselves of these lessons, that our principles and their power are proven to be correct.

“... The anarchists have resolutely waged, AGAINST EVERYTHING AND EVERYBODY, a merciless struggle; they are determined to prosecute this struggle relentlessly until they achieve victory. This struggle entails, on the one hand, DOING WHAT IS NECESSARY, REGARDLESS OF THE PRICE, and on the other, NOT DOING WHAT IS NOT NECESSARY REGARDLESS OF THE CONDITIONS. I am not unaware of the fact that it is not always possible to do what it is necessary to do; but I do know that there are things that it is rigorously necessary to prohibit, and as a result to never do them.

“The Spanish experiment can and must serve us as a lesson. This experiment must serve as a warning against the danger of concessions and alliances, even under particular conditions and for a limited period of time. To say that all concessions weaken those who make them and strengthen those who are their beneficiaries is to merely utter an indisputable truth. To say that any agreement, even a temporary one, consented to by the anarchists with a political party that, theoretically and practically, is anti-anarchist, is a deceit and that it is always the anarchists who are the victims, is a truth that is proven by Experience, by History and by simple Reason. Over the course of the road taken alongside the authoritarians, the loyalty and the sincerity of the anarchists are always entangled in the perfidy and cleverness of their provisional and circumstantial allies...”

Even more forceful and precise, however, are the arguments set forth by the French General Confederation of Labor-Revolutionary Syndicalists [CGT-SR], in an article entitled, “The Decisive Moment”, published in the newspaper, *Le Combat Sindicaliste*, an article that produced a sensation among the international circles of anarchist militants and a great deal of anger among the government collaborators of the CNT and the FAI. The article contains the following observations:

“WHERE THE CNT IS BEING LED BY ITS LEADERS.

“The workers of the world want to know. The emotions aroused by the bombing of the ‘Deutschland’ and by the atrocious repression inflicted on the population of Almería have spent their fury. After some Platonic protests whose purpose was to silence the cries of horror that arose from all sides (keeping in mind that we are only talking about the common people) the curtain slowly descends on the tragedy, smothering the moans of the innocent victims.

“Diplomacy has remained impassive, and has now returned to its traditional ‘activity’. Everyone knows what that means. The foreign offices of London and Paris, backed by Washington, have not lost all hope of imposing their peace on Spain. Their plan has not changed and it is expected, both in London and in Paris, that the last German resistance will be overcome and that the Russian plan, whose essential point is a preventive war, will definitely be torpedoed.

“After a period of eclipse, mediation is once again the order of the day.

“This obliges our international movement to examine as meticulously as possible the Spanish situation as a whole, both on the domestic as well as the international arena, to study the position and tactics of the CNT, the Trade Union Central representing the IWA in Spain, with regard to the war and the Revolution.

“Such an examination was already undertaken in November 1936; it demonstrated that there is total and general disagreement between the CNT and all the other affiliated trade unions of the IWA in regard to their points of view. For, whereas the CNT considers it to be its duty to accept the militarization of the militias, the suppression of the free municipalities, the replacement of the Trade Union Economic Council by a Governmental Economic Council, participation in the Barcelona and Valencia Governments, it also agrees to grant priority to the war, and thus situates the Revolution on a secondary level, all the other affiliated Trade Union Central Organizations are of a totally different opinion.

“Nonetheless, in order to preserve intact the unity of our international movement and having received assurances that the CNT will undertake the indispensable rectification of this situation when circumstances allow, the Plenum of the IWA declared that it ‘understood’, without endorsing, the position adopted by the CNT.

“Six months have passed since that time and, unfortunately, all the fears expressed by the Plenum of the IWA have been realized. The suppression of the militias has placed a regular army in the hands of the Central Government, an army that poses a constant danger to the Revolution. The disappearance of the free municipalities returned all the country’s administrative machinery to the hands of the Central Power.

The liquidation of the Trade Union Economic Council has deprived the workers organizations of their direction and control over the economy. The CNT's participation in Power has allowed the Valencia and Barcelona governments to share their responsibilities with the CNT without the latter having practically any opportunity to impose its points of view.

"The fact that the putsch of May 6 could take place in Barcelona, after so many other events of the same kind had already taken place in Cerdaña and Catalonia, demonstrates the nullity of the CNT Ministers in their government positions.

"For we must admit that they were completely in the dark, that everything was prepared and executed without them knowing anything. So what kind of anti-fascist governments are these, in which some of their ministers are unaware of what the other ones are plotting, preparing and executing? What kind of governments are these in which a handful of people run everything and the others do nothing? And what is the role of those who are kept in the dark, except that of fools and hostages, responsible officials upon whom the conspirators pass the buck, when the time comes, of the weight of their faults and their crimes against the country and the Revolution?

"Such a policy is utterly reprehensible. It is precisely what the Plenum of the IWA declared in November 1936 to be radically false. It has ended up causing the CNT to lose all the positions conquered in major battles, with arms in hand.

"It has permitted the politicians whose power was liquidated on the day after July 19, to return to take the helm of the destiny of the country. It has definitively compromised the triumph of the Social Revolution, subordinating it to a war that can only benefit international capitalism and its representatives. This policy of the CNT has allowed the Spanish Communist Party, which was non-existent only recently, to show the claws of its dictatorship which will do nothing but favor the restoration of the 'Democratic Republic'.

"In short, this policy has ended up facilitating the greatest revolutionary collapse in History.

"And it is at the very moment when all of this is confirmed, when the corpses of the comrades of the CNT who were assassinated by the communists, by the Valencia and Barcelona police, are still warm, that thousands of anarchists have been imprisoned, that the press of the CNT has been muzzled, that no one can go to Spain or leave it as they please, that the CNT, once again offers to participate in the Government, in this Government of capitulation presided over by Negrín, the same Negrín who hunted them like animals (**Solidaridad Obrera**, June 2, 1937). It is at this very moment that the CNT bows down at the feet of Largo Caballero, that crafty old politician, whose life is nothing but one long betrayal; at the feet of that Largo Caballero who was, successively, the right-hand man of Primo de Rivera, of Azaña and of Stalin; that Largo Caballero who is the author of the laws for the defense of the 'Republic', of Casas Viejas and Villa Cisneros.

"You might think that you were dreaming as you read so many such things in the press of the CNT, but it is unfortunately nothing but the truth. One asks oneself just how far the aberration of the 'leaders' of the Spanish labor federation will go.

“It is necessary for this to come to an end. It is necessary for the General Staff of the CNT to understand its mistake or for the workers to make it understand.

“One thing is for sure, in any event. Such a position has given rise to the indignation of all the sister affiliates of the CNT, those that will not allow themselves to be dragged into a collapse such as the CNT is leading the Spanish Revolution.

“It is indispensable for this to be said, that the whole world should know it; that judgment should be passed and positions defined.

“However sure of themselves these leaders might be—we will wait for a moment, but just for one moment!—they will not be able to uphold their position on this terrain, in the face of all the workers of the world, who have supported and assisted the Spanish Revolution. They must be warned that this Revolution will be defended against them, against their errors and against their faults.

“It is necessary for them to understand that there are currents they cannot resist, however strong they think they are. A great wave has brought them to where they are, and another, even bigger wave, can drown them and save the Revolution. It is likely, after all, that this wave will break with the same power within as it did from without.

“In any case, one can be sure that we shall not allow them to crush it, without saying or doing anything in favor of the Spanish Revolution. It is twice ours. We shall know how to defend it, and how to defend it against all those who would betray it or abandon it.

“More than ever: Long live the Spanish Revolution!”

(CGT-SR) [General Confederation of Labor – Revolutionary Syndicalists]

Chapter 10: The “anti-fascist” bureaucracy

The participation of the representatives of the CNT and the FAI in the Committee of Militias, in Barcelona, first, and then in the central government and other government posts, errors, deviations—betrayals of principle, we would call them—which come to mind and do not admit of any justifications, entails, inevitably, besides the resurgence of the authority principle in those who had rejected and combated it, the contamination of the microbe of the bureaucracy, inherent in every state system.

The trade union bureaucracy was among the operational modalities that the CNT militants were familiar with, but which they scarcely practiced. Unlike our trade union federations, which fought against and never allowed the development of a bureaucracy, in Spain the bureaucracy made headway, but not without a certain amount of resistance.

Thus, they had hardly even been established in their luxurious office suites when the “ministerialists” were besieged and surrounded by many elements who were quite ready to cooperate, from the vantage point of public offices, not for the triumph of the social revolution, since the latter had already been stifled, but for the prosecution of the war and we are sure that we are not mistaken when we claim that these people had been the most fervent advocates of the new theory of “direct action”, of the “collaboration imposed by the supreme and unavoidable necessity of defeating fascism”. And like every human being that has any education and authoritarian sentiments, the brand new bureaucrats would behave just like bureaucrats, as their positions required, leaving at the door of the government buildings the disguise that they had worn for so long.

Concerning the question of how these bureaucrats behaved we can get a vague idea from a few fragmentary concepts that appeared in “anti-fascist” newspapers. As we may read in *Ruta*, the organ of the Libertarian Youth in Barcelona, of May 18, 1937:

“There are some ‘responsible’ comrades who, due to the fact that they have occupied official posts, forget their origins and purpose. We shall remind them that in the exercise of a temporary function, they should not renege on the principles that are the heart of our organizations. In order to remind them we are ready to show them before they imprudently revalorize the state.”

In support of these concepts we shall recall that Santillán, when he was serving as Minister of the Economy in the Generalitat, felt alarmed by the “passion displayed in the battle for more portfolios, for more extensive intervention in government affairs” and what seemed “strange” to him was “the spectacle of our comrades fighting with all the passions of the politicians of the past to obtain high positions, to be invested with power ...” as well as “the passion with which they debated and minutely analyzed the laws and decrees, and even engaged in the most detailed exegeses”.

These paragraphs will give us some idea of the grave problem posed by the new bureaucrats who, besides representing a heavy dead weight for the Spanish people that was shedding its blood in the struggle, was a pernicious outcome of the “circumstantial” operational methods engaged in by the *cenetista* and *faísta* strategists, and offered an opportunity for a multitude of individuals who did not possess even a shred of revolutionary commitment, to assume positions as petty little desk jockey bosses, with all the prerogatives inherent to such an elevated hierarchy, who, once they were entrenched in these positions, could give free rein to their most pathological impulses and committed despicable and unscrupulous deeds.

And what is even more lamentable, many of these elements who came from such a background—who were quite well known in the specificist camp and its derivatives—in order to “orient” the achievements of the Spanish people, found a suitable environment to exhibit their acrobatic qualities, their temperamental interpretations and tranquilly fit right into the machinery of the bureaucracy. And once they returned from their experimental laboratory, with no other trophy of war than their typewriters, they have to continue, without either hard work or glory, sowing confusionism and justifying their actions to their hierarchical superiors, since for them the hustle and bustle and the cruelty of life in the trenches and the clamor of combat were only rumors, painful and sad, which reached them by indirect routes.

Chapter 11: First the war ... then the revolution

If we were to take account of the abundant rhetoric emitted in the propaganda written by the CNT and the FAI, in order to keep the foreign countries in a state of expectant nervousness and impressionism, it would be very hard for us to discover the tactical reasons that led our Spanish comrades to shape this rhetoric in accordance with the raw reality, which deranged their eyesight. Because it is reasonable to assume that the authors of this propaganda expected it to be read with eagerness, and that it would then be analyzed and compared with the facts.

It is true enough that they exercised their rhetorical skills not in order to conceal their betrayals of their principles, even though they taxed their ingenuity to find arguments to justify their actions. But it is inconceivable that they could have striven to distort their phrases and their concepts to avoid posing the fundamental problem: the rejection of anarchist principles and tactics of struggle that they had propagated and practiced up until then.

“We could have gone it alone, imposed our absolute dictatorship, declared the Generalitat to be abolished and instituted, in its place, the real power of the people; but we did not believe in dictatorship when it was exercised against us, nor can we desire it when we can ourselves exercise it to the detriment of others”, says Santillán in his book, *The Revolution and the War in Spain*. “The CNT and the FAI decided in favor of collaboration and democracy by renouncing the revolutionary totalitarianism that would have led to the strangulation of the Revolution by a confederal and anarchist dictatorship”, García Oliver says in one of his articles.

And if this is how these men justified their actions, with the support of many others we could name, why did they insist on using, in so many communiqués, newspaper articles and radical speeches, the phrase, “social revolution”? The social revolution had been suppressed by these very same men; indeed, it had been terminated a few days after July 19.

The honest and sensible response was reflected in the slogan: “First the war; then ... the revolution”. The latter should be categorized as bait.

If, in the heat of combat; in the spirited assaults led by the anarchists, together with the people, against the military rebels; if in these battles no one considered or sought to completely destroy the very foundations of capitalist society—to do away with the State; and these same “champions” of the social revolution acted, during these events, as “thugs”, upholding and defending the “high” governmental authorities—Companys and Largo Caballero—it was logically, the civil war that had been unleashed. And thus they should have declared this to be so, tacitly, burying, as they had buried anarchist communism, all the terms that signified a deception of the workers.

Because it must be acknowledged, now that they are not in their cabinet offices, in their government departments, in the hustle and bustle of their desk jobs, that they had lived by daily contradicting themselves.

It is true, however, that not all the “responsible” officials demonstrated their reluctance to engage in rational arguments and explanations.

In issue no. 224 of the *Information Bulletin* of the CNT and FAI, we read the following editorial statement:

“We have, in our collaboration, torn our ideological conception to shreds, we have performed the highest sacrifice, by leaving part of our ideology behind us in our trade union offices.” So why did they become so angry and respond with so many obfuscations, when many of us criticized them for having betrayed their doctrines?

Not even the second part of the slogan, “First the war; then the revolution”, conformed with reality. Because the documents that recount the history of the events prove that we can harbor no illusions that the *cenetistas* and *faístas* would have carried out the revolution after the end of the civil war.

They had been “impartial” with regard to the Generalitat. They let the fighters die at the Aragon front and other fronts without weapons because these militiamen rejected the State—the central government of Largo Caballero. These same confederal leaders had allowed the replacement of the militias by a single unified military force. The confederal divisions were merged with international brigades, composed almost exclusively of Marxist elements. The latter advocated and succeeded in obtaining the establishment of rigid discipline and unified military command. The anarchists were expelled from the Council of Defense of Aragon. They were shot throughout “loyalist” Spain and in the streets of Barcelona this crime became the norm. The people were deprived of arms; the *cenetistas* themselves recommended harsh penalties for those who concealed weapons. The army was Bolshevized in all its branches. The prisons were full of “uncontrollable” anarchists, who were accused of being spies or of belonging to the “fifth column”; but this entire panorama of setbacks and denials was pursued with the refrain: “First the war; then the revolution”.

It cannot be assumed that these geniuses of anti-fascist thought were the victims of their own ingenuousness. If we cannot make this assumption, it is because there is copious proof of the enormous attraction that bureaucratic posts and so many other prerogatives of bourgeois society exercised on certain minds, we believe that the intoxication with comfortable jobs in offices was the cause of so much foolish chatter, so many sophisms, so many contradictions and such grave betrayals that we had to endure and attest to, that were committed by the “responsible” leaders of the CNT and the FAI.

“Arms to the front!” “Gold for the war!” “Unity and discipline!” “Unified Command!” “Win the war to be free!” And ... why go on? They shredded themselves with slogans.

And if these same individuals—the direct authors of the powerful resurgence of the authoritarian system—from within, since they had proceeded to reinforce the State, “faced with the overwhelming necessity of directly intervening in the direction of the war, of politics and of the economy, with the object of preventing the continuous sabotage waged against the CNT, the collectives and the militia columns by the central government ...” demonstrated the predominance and power of the Bolsheviks in every facet of military affairs and politics; if the “*cheka*”, organized by the communists, assassinated and imprisoned many anarchists; if, day after day, the

CNT lost positions and influence; why did the members of the CNT and the FAI remain in their posts as ministers and government bureaucrats, or continue to seek appointment to these posts? Had they become accustomed to this environment?

The documents we interspersed throughout the previous chapters prove, profusely, that the claims that the “ministerials” offered—once the civil war was over, with the victory of the “anti-fascists”—implied that they would reinforce the state with “very progressive” and wonderful initiatives and with the creation of new government departments, led and controlled by the *cenetistas*, in order to thereby prepare, from above, for the next revolution....

Chapter 12: The capers of a fool

Perhaps the following biographical sketch of one of the most outstanding representatives of the CNT, responsible for and advocate of all the mistakes, deviations and betrayals recounted in this same book, will be interpreted as irreverent. We are referring to Diego Abad de Santillán.

We shall not deny that he is an excellent writer and we may also say in his favor that, besides his intellectual training, he is physically quite photogenic; but all his beautiful qualities do not obviate the disappointing impression that his life as an anarchist militant has made on us, a life that is so full of capriciousness, and his sociological production that is plagued with disturbing contradictions.

It would seem that he possesses a mind that is very susceptible to suggestion; adaptable to the influences of the environment, the climate and the men with whom he associates; shaped by an exaggerated impressionism that makes him lose control over his reflective faculties, to the point where he denies today what he asserted yesterday, and to once again say tomorrow what he denied yesterday.

Back in 1925, Santillán co-wrote—together with Emilio López Arango—the book, *Anarchism in the Workers Movement*, in which, relating the history of the social struggles that took place in Argentina, he valiantly attacks the Marxist sectors and the opportunist elements that brandished the banner of “innovations” and “united fronts”. Even though Santillán was only the co-author of the book, this does not make the concepts set forth in the book any less his responsibility. In this book, on page 179, Santillán, combating neutralism and amorphous syndicalism in the working class organizations, proclaims:

“Are we anarchists or not? If we are, we must be anarchists all the time, and everywhere; if we are not, it would be wrong of us to simulate, on certain festival days or among certain drinking companions, ideas and sentiments that we do not really uphold.”

“We are told that the trade union is for the wage workers who want to fight against capitalism. Another trite expression! There is the Russian example of the first order, to demonstrate to those who do not want to be blind, that capitalism is less fundamental as an enemy than statism, than the principle of authority. The Russian Revolution destroyed the old capitalist forms, it plunged private capital into ruin, but it left the state machine standing and the capitalism that had been thrown out the window returned two years later, by the door, along with the honors and obeisance of its alleged enemies of the past, welcomed as the savior of the country. It is not enough to be an enemy of capitalism to be a revolutionary, especially after the experience of the Russian Revolution. And those who exert themselves to suggest to the working class masses that their main enemy is capitalism are simultaneously striving to divert the proletariat from its instinctive war against the State. Furthermore, our everyday struggles do not just cause us to confront capitalism only once, as if we did not have to reckon with the host: the intervention of the State in the form of the

police, the soldier, the judge, etc. The interests of the State, even in the countries that claim to be ruled by ‘workers’ governments, are identified with those of capitalism. Everyone knows this. And all we need now is for some sophists to come along, and in the name of syndicalism separate the two things and organize the workers for the struggle against capitalism, leaving the state, its institutions and the ideas upon which it is based intact, in praise of an alleged class unity that is shattered when the anarchists, enemies of the principle of authority, attack the state and statism.”

Because of the outrageous assassination of comrade López Arango, who during his time was the most faithful interpreter of the finalist conception of anarchist communism among the trade union organizations and a valiant defender of the FORA, Santillán was able to take control of the anarchist daily newspaper *La Protesta* and immediately demonstrated a sudden change in his appreciation of social reality. In the weekly supplement that he edited, this newspaper, for the most part, published articles by writers who rejected the polemical and positive work done by Arango in the columns of this publication for so many years.

In Argentina, Uriburu staged his military coup. Santillán became an enthusiastic propagandist in favor of an alliance between the radical syndicalists, the Marxist political parties and the specificist anarchist groups, with the FORA.

In 1932 Santillán published the pamphlet, *The Bankruptcy of the Economic and Political System of Capitalism*, from which we transcribe the following paragraphs:

“Paraphrasing Proudhon and Bakunin we say that any authority principle, in any form, is incompatible with the dignity and liberty of man and it is necessary to choose: either the continuation of political authority, of notions and laws that are above man, and thus the slavery, indignity and degradation of the individual, or else liberty, dignity, human affirmation and consequently the suppression in the minds of the people of all political, divine, economic or moral fantasies that are placed above man.

“All political and economic class regimes, all tyrannies are always based on the annihilation of man.

“... we must replace the domination of man by the administration of things; we must undertake to make the governmental State disappear, the supreme expression in our time of the authority of man over man, the most powerful instrument of slavery of the peoples for their fleecing by a privileged minority. As long as the governmental state exists there will be rich and poor, masters and slaves, oppressors and oppressed, and as long as this inequality reigns there can be no peace, solidarity or agreement among men.

“Without the suppression of the State and generally of every principle of politically organized and imposed authority, there will be privileged and dispossessed, because a government cannot be conceived except as the expression of the defense of the privileges of a particular category of men against the demands of the others.”

As a result of some measures taken by the Uriburista police, which promised retribution against those who used violent language in order to appear to be revolutionaries, Santillán had

to make his escape to Montevideo and here we see him in the café circles among the exiled politicians.

The president of Uruguay, Terra, declared himself to be dictator and discharged the *Blancos*, *Battlistas*, and *Colorados* from their government posts. Santillán insinuated himself into the social circles of those who passed themselves off as the “opposition” and in a shameful amalgam of *Blancos*, *Battlistas*, socialists, Bolsheviks and anarcho-dictatorialists created the “Committee for Agitation Against the Dictatorships”, attempting to drag the FORU onto this confused terrain, which gave it a reason to openly distance itself from the anarchists of Uruguay.

After his “brilliant” activity in Montevideo and after his display of alliancist concepts—completely at odds with the ideas he advocated in his writings—he made his exit, “happy and confident”, from this environment, in which it was no longer possible for him to propagandize successfully on behalf of his “novel” “circumstantial” theory.

A short time later he made his triumphant appearance on the Iberian Peninsula. And you can imagine how a man of such intellectual prestige and such a background of experience in his dealings with the “democratic” politicians would have been given the welcome he deserved by the Spanish workers, giving him the chance to test his sociological “discoveries”. The environment should have been propitious for him.

He arrived in Spain on July 19, 1936. The military revolt led by Franco had just broken out.

Santillán made his dramatic entry—armed and with an escort—at the palace of the Generalitat, in order to have an interview with President Companys, a “sincere democrat”, and at this moment he placed the official seal of the CNT on the “first” betrayal.

Of his activities, of his flashy ideas and his conduct with regard to the choices posed by the civil war, we have already provided some details in the passages transcribed in this book from the report presented by comrade Besnard to the Extraordinary Congress of the IWA, and in other chapters.

And in *Tiempos Nuevos*, a magazine published in Barcelona, in June 1937, Santillán, in the article entitled, “Anarchists in the Government or Governmental Anarchists?”, he ardently bangs on the drum of his apostasy in order to offer us this discordant musical score:

“Regardless of the correlation and the dependence; regardless of the harmony that must always reign between what one says and what one does, between one’s ideas and the facts recited in their support, between doctrines and the practical conduct of those who uphold those doctrines, they do not always go hand in hand, together, general principles, which are the essence, with the tactical means, which depend on circumstances and are influenced by them.”

“Principles, the ideal, are like the compass that guides one’s steps towards the goal. They are the straight line traced in our abstractions. Tactics are the application of these principles, of that course, to the twisting and changing contingencies and obstacles of the road. It often happens that it is not the straight line that leads us as rapidly as possible and most surely to our goal; sometimes one gets there first by way of zigzags. Sometimes it even happens that one gets there faster by retracing one’s steps.

“In all of this what is important is not to lose sight, even when the attainment of our ideal becomes less likely for the time being, of the true north indicated by the

compass of our reason for existence. But a thousand roads lead to Rome and the choice of the best one depends on a multitude of circumstances and factors of the precise moment when the choice is made.”

This theory is a faithful copy of the Bolshevik slogan: “Any means is good, as long as it leads to the end.” And the end that is proposed by the obsequious servants of Stalin is the State.

The most felicitous aspect of this Santillanist inconsistency is the fact that, in order to make his pompous litany seem less arrogant, he claims that to get to Rome—to the Ministry of the Economy—he had to “set aside certain scruples”, as if he had not already abandoned these scruples a long time before, with his adventures among the politicians of our little part of the world.

But that is not all. The worst is yet to come.

Almost at the end of the tragedy experienced by the Spanish people, Santillán published his retrospective book, *The Revolution and the War in Spain*, in which, while describing the most important events of the civil war and a lot of quite ignominious backroom goings-on, he asks himself whether all the betrayals of principles that he endorsed and implemented with the other leaders of the CNT were beneficial or detrimental, and he concludes each chapter with a whining commentary about the insincerity demonstrated by the politicians in the “anti-fascist” bloc!

And it is thanks to this book that we have become acquainted with the last “discoveries” made by Santillán. He understands that the social revolution is a “dictatorship to the detriment of others” and for that reason he preferred to accept the dictatorship of the politicians. Of course, if he acted as an anarchist, he would not have had the satisfaction of sitting in a soft easy chair at the Ministry of the Economy.

He furthermore discovered that the petty bourgeoisie “must not be deprived of that minimum of comfort and security of life to which they have become accustomed ... as an essential condition of any victory”.

Poor Santillán! He wasted so many years of his life as a propagandist for methods of struggle and ideas of a better social way of life for humanity and suddenly the scales fell from his eyes, and he beheld the crude reality: the beautiful awakening, the heroic deeds of the Spanish people, their overwhelming victory, all to understand that the social revolution that he witnessed was “a dictatorship” to the detriment of the bourgeoisie and the authoritarians.

This brings us back to the acrobatics of a “revolutionary” poet who was active in our circles in 1906: Ángel Falco. Having revealed that his colleague Santos Chocano had performed as a clown for the royal palaces of Europe, he dedicated the famous sonnet “From Fighter to Courtier” to Chocano. A short time later, Ángel Falco accepted a position in the diplomatic corps and did not write any more revolutionary verses.

Santillán, on the other hand, in his retrospective work—plagued by sophistry, inconsistencies and denials—seems to clench his fist and, striking himself in his chest, like the catechumens, reciting “*Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa*”.¹

¹ The refrain of the confessional prayer of the Roman Catholic Mass, “My fault, my fault, my most grievous fault”, which is supposed to be recited while striking one’s chest with one’s fist three times [Translator’s Note].

Chapter 13: The tragic events of May in Barcelona

Despite the appeals for sanity, sense and rectification of their conduct that were directed from every corner of the world at the *cenetistas* and *faístas*, the latter remained unperturbed, implementing their new doctrines and operational methods and exercising great care not to hurt “the feelings of their ‘anti-fascist’ allies”. The term “social revolution” was expunged from the Spanish vocabulary. It was replaced by the phrase “we must win the war”, a phrase that was very flattering to the Marxist politicians, while they publicly declared that they were fighting for a democratic republic.

In the meantime, there was a hand, invisible only to those who suffered from an equally “circumstantial” myopia, that pulled the strings of the plan that was hatched by the central government of Largo Caballero—in connivance with the diplomacy of the “democratic” nations—whose purpose was to completely eliminate the now greatly diminished influence of the anarchists in Catalonia and Aragon. The same plan that was later carried out by Negrín, Prieto, etc.

One month before the events that we shall describe below, the Generalitat had undergone a government “crisis”, which was “resolved” by the “democrat” Companys in a most capricious way—according to Souchy—because he was seeking to reduce the number of CNT “ministers”. Since these CNT ministers, however, demonstrated their complacency and a great capacity for patience, “in order not to break the anti-fascist front, they also swallowed this bitter pill” (Souchy).

At the end of April 1937, Antonio Martín, an anarchist militant from Puigcerdá, along with several of his comrades in that locality, were assassinated.

The CNT, however, made overtures towards the UGT regarding a joint celebration of May Day by the two trade union centrals, but its “unionist” proposals did not meet with success.

During the first few days of May, comrade Camillo Berneri—along with his comrade Giovanni Barbieri—was found dead, who, already in November 1936, had engaged in a violent critique of the deviations whose existence he had confirmed, and said “that it was a matter for regret, that a certain process of Bolshevization was underway within the CNT” and in the newspaper *Guerra di Classe*, during the same month, he published a prophetic article, from which we shall reproduce a few paragraphs full of evidence that is relevant for our time and for all those who observe things with the eyes of reality and not with the smoke-tinted lenses of “special circumstances”. Berneri said:

“The republicans, the socialist leadership and the communists are now united on the ‘constitutionalist’ basis. The Executive Committee of the Spanish Communist Party declared recently that in today’s struggle, it called for the defense of democracy and of private property. This is beginning to smell like Noske. Were Madrid not in flames we would be forced to think of Kronstadt. But the policy of Madrid will be victorious. It will not arm or finance revolutionary Catalonia.”

“Perhaps this was done only as a message to the USSR that it should send arms and cadres for the purpose of controlling the revolutionary struggle and stopping the development of the social revolution, forcing it into the channel of the armed struggle against fascism? The blackmail: Madrid or Franco, this is what has paralyzed Spanish anarchism. Today Barcelona is between Burgos, Rome, Berlin, Madrid and Moscow. A siege.

“Black clouds are gathering on the horizon; the haze blinds us.

“We concentrate our gaze and hold the rudder in a grip of steel. We are on the high seas and there is a storm. But we know how to perform miracles. Between the Prussians and Versailles, the Commune set alight a beacon that illuminated the entire world.

“Between Burgos and Madrid, lies Barcelona.

“Keep that in mind, Gaudets of Moscow.”¹

(C. Berneri)

Berneri had signed his own death sentence, which was to be carried out by the mercenaries working under the orders of the “anti-fascist front”, or more accurately, the emissaries of Stalin.

In order to find out what took place during the May Days and during the subsequent period in Barcelona, there is no better place to look than the archives of the CNT and the FAI. We shall read some fragments from the long report published in the “Information Bulletin” of the CNT and FAI, which we obtained from an issue of *Solidaridad* of Montevideo published during the civil war, along with commentary by the editors of the latter newspaper, in which the editors accurately outline an explanation of the causes that led to the events of May:

“We shall take from the ‘Information Bulletin’ of the CNT and FAI, of Barcelona, the communiqué dated May 17, published by the National Committee of the CNT, relating an account of the events in Catalonia and their causes. We think this report is interesting because it is the official statement of the National Committee of the CNT, which provides the comrades with evidence upon the basis of which they can interpret the meaning of the events and understand the motives that guided those who did everything in their power to provoke them.

“We must, however, emphasize once again, that they are the natural consequence of that ‘alliancist’ tendency that sometimes arises in our movement, enticed by the illusion of numerical growth, without understanding that from the moment that we make an alliance with an enemy, we no longer treat him as an enemy, and consequently the workers who are members of an institution that we are fighting and who have begun to feel the effect of our preaching, instead of abandoning that institution because they feel a sense of brotherhood with our principles, once again feel at peace with their consciences, because our action has valorized the enemy institution to which they belong, and much worse, from the moment that, inevitably and

¹ Another English translation of this passage may be consulted at online at the Website of the Kate Sharpley Library: <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/camillo-berneri-war-and-revolution> [Translator’s Note].

by virtue of this alliance, we no longer say that that institution is bad, they are the ones who will make sure that we are silent, to preserve UNITY.

“This is more or less what has happened to our Spanish comrades, with their alliance in an ‘anti-fascist front’, with the worse, and unjustifiable aggravating factor of their intervention in the institutions of the government.

“THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE:

“Esteemed comrades: the events that have taken place in the Catalonian region oblige us to provide to the organization a report on the events, and most especially, concerning the way those who compose this National Committee have intervened in these events.

“On Monday we heard the news that something serious had taken place in Barcelona. We did not decide to intervene, because for several days abnormal conditions had prevailed there, and we were convinced that it would not be easy to act in such a way that our intervention would bring the events to a halt. Aware of the fact that the Organization in Catalonia was undergoing a stage of experimentation, which consisted in applying under existing circumstances the same methods that confer life and consistency to the CNT, without the comrades recalling that today, in a plan of government interventionism and obligatory collaboration, these methods require a change, one that coincides with the change from opposition to intervention. On the other hand, the political adversary acted in a provocative manner, for the obstinately pursued purpose of making the Confederal Organization return to its old street fighting ways. The process was a long one, and we could have intervened but we saw that our efforts were useless, since the discussions at the plenums and meetings framed the question in an INOPPORTUNE MANNER.

“On Tuesday, the 4th, the comrades who participated in the Valencia Government were summoned by the President of the Government, who informed them that the situation in Barcelona was serious, that decisive intervention was required, in order to bring a halt to the civil war that had broken out with such great violence. Largo Caballero explained that the Councilor of Internal Security of Catalonia had sent a request to the Minister representing the Central Government for the urgent dispatch of 1,500 assault guards, a force that was indispensable to suppress the movement. The Government could not do this because this would mean sending forces to operate at the service of elements that may have had something to do with provoking the conflict. Rather than agreeing to send the assault guards, he proceeded to institute an emergency draft of the Services of Public Order, as stipulated in the Constitution. It was necessary for the National Committees of the CNT and the UGT to immediately proceed to Barcelona in order to attempt to persuade the fighters to disarm, with assurances that, afterwards, the causes of the events would be discussed and solutions would be sought. The National Committee met and decided to go to Barcelona in order to fulfill its primary mission of bringing about a cease-fire, in order to prevent the emergency draft of the Services of Public Order by the Central Government and to carry out as much damage control as possible, to mitigate the disaster the civil war that had broken out implied with regard to international and domestic affairs.

“We appointed comrades Juan García Oliver and Mariano Vázquez, directing them to proceed to Barcelona. On behalf of the Executive Committee of the UGT, comrades Hernández Zancajo and Muñoz were appointed. The journey was made by airplane.

“... The constant PROVOCATIONS had led to the clashes in the streets. The last provocation was the dispatch of public forces to the Telephone Building, in order to seize it and thus strike a blow at the UGT-CNT Control Committee. At the most recent meeting of the Council of the Generalitat, everyone agreed in acknowledging that Ayguadé had exceeded his authority as the commander of the public forces. But no one wanted to accept responsibility for replacing or punishing the responsible parties, Ayguadé and Rodríguez Salas.

“At the Generalitat a meeting was convened that was attended by representatives of all sectors. Once this meeting had begun, we immediately proposed, as the first issue on the agenda, the benefits that would come from the representatives of the organizations broadcasting via radio an address calling for a cease-fire. It was necessary to gain time, to prevent more victims. And foreseeing that the discussion could be a long one, we cut our presentation short, and also made it clear to the attendees that all of us were united and ready to find a solution to the very serious problem posed in the streets. Our proposal was accepted by the other representatives. The meeting was adjourned. We spoke over the radio. And we met once again. After a comprehensive debate, we proposed the formula that a Provisional Council should be constituted, with four representatives, to which no individual who had participated in previous Councils would be admitted.... This Council would have a provisional character and would be presided over by Companys. Its mission would last 10 to 15 days, during which time the organizations would engage in discussions of their points of view and elaborate action programs that would oblige each organization, in a responsible way, to fulfill the terms of their action programs and not to repeat what had been the usual case up to that time, i.e., the fact that pacts and agreements were a dead letter. This proposal was also accepted, after extensive debate. We defended the view that this Council should be constituted immediately in order to make public the fact that the conflict has been resolved, and to impose the condition that everyone should go home. The representatives of the UGT—the Communists in Catalonia—expressed their opposition to this proposal, claiming that it was first necessary to immediately achieve a cease-fire in the streets; it was better, according to them, to allow some time for the situation to normalize.... We exhausted all the arguments in defense of our position. We thought it was necessary to gain time, in order to prevent the Government from being obliged to draft the Services of Public Order. But there was no way to make them understand. The Ezquerra and the Rabassaires, although they did not participate in the debate, supported the Communist position. Finally, at two in the morning, the meeting concluded with the decision to make another speech on the radio, emphasizing the fact that we had to make ourselves understood and that it was necessary to bring about a total cease fire, and to normalize the situation. The next morning Companys announced the constitution of the new Council of the Generalitat, a provisional Council for pacification. At the end of the meeting, we notified the Government that things were going well. The Government had been meeting in

permanent session, addressing the problem of Catalonia and debating whether or not to issue a Decree to draft the Services of Public Order. Comrade Federica Montseny led the opposition for four hours against the Communists and Republicans who advocated the drafting of the Services of Public Order and Defense. This was a heated debate; when it came up for a vote, we lost, the draft was ordered with the stipulation that the Government would wait until the last possible moment to dispatch the troops. The Council remained in session until two in the morning when we were informed that the situation was returning to normal.

“... In Barcelona, early in the morning, we observed that the situation had gotten worse. Our first radio address had an impact. But in a few hours the fighting resumed. And at dawn on Wednesday, the situation in Barcelona presented a very grim panorama.

“... We could clearly observe the concealed satisfaction with which everyone had welcomed the decision of the Government. The news soon reached the Generalitat that several French and English warships had anchored in the port of Barcelona. In spite of everything we were still trying to put out the fire.

“... On Wednesday night, in agreement with all the comrades who were at the Generalitat, we decided to speak over the radio together with Vidiella from the UGT in order to issue one last appeal making it clear that the CNT was ready to expel from its ranks any persons who continued to bear arms in the streets after the passage of one more hour.

“The Federation of Trade Unions, in agreement with the Local Federation of the UGT, drafted the order to return to work. We agreed that the directors of the daily newspapers of the CNT and the UGT would order that the Thursday editions of their papers would issue an appeal for concord. Thursday dawned relatively peacefully on the streets; people began to go about their daily business. The transport union issued the order to return to work; but since the transit lines were not operational, it was necessary to dispatch repair teams. These teams departed in train cars from the repair shops, but as the morning progressed they had to return to their shops because snipers were shooting at them. Any trolley car that tried to depart from the stations was shot at. The metro had to suspend operations because at some entrances the Communist police and police from the Estat Catalá assailed the passengers. At the checkpoints and barricades manned by the other sectors that were members of the front arrayed against us, people were detained and searched, and membership cards of the CNT were torn up. At some locations, large quantities of destroyed Confederal membership cards were found. In other places, our comrades were attacked. Our offices were attacked. Our enemies seized strong points, taking advantage of the truce voluntarily complied with by our comrades, who were anxious to put an end to the fratricidal struggle. This situation had the result that by mid-day the situation had gotten worse and the fighting had once again become generalized. That evening, the Secretary of the National Committee arrived at the headquarters of the Regional Committee, where a meeting was held. We were immediately informed that the situation had become worse than ever. The comrades were ready for anything...

“Regardless of how many provocations were aimed at us, and no matter what we did, it was not possible for us to close our eyes and decide to wage the final battle.... We could not forget that a glance at the facts proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that we would thus be playing the enemy’s game. They wanted us to surge into the streets, they wanted responsibility for Public Order to pass into the hands of the Government, convinced that the latter, in the interest of prosecuting the war, and of domestic and international necessities, would have to crush the movement. In this way, the Central Government would fight against us and afterwards they would appear, once the CNT had been eliminated and if foreign intervention did not take place first, washing their hands and masters of the situation in Catalonia, since no one would be able to say that they were responsible for the repression.... We understand perfectly well the tragedy of the comrades who felt they had been driven into a corner and provoked. The fact is that they contemplated the downfall of their friends and comrades. But ABOVE ALL ELSE there is the need to prevent the resounding collapse of everything that the Spanish proletariat had achieved since July 19, handing victory to Franco on a platter, on the one hand, and playing the enemy’s game on the other....

“The National Committee immediately departed, together with a Commission, for the Generalitat, in order to contact the Government by telephone. Upon speaking with the Minister, we explained as clearly as possible just how serious the situation was. We denounced the attitude of the commanders of the Service of Public Order. We pointed out that Rodríguez Salas was still the chief of the Commissariat of Public Order, which justified the provocations of the public forces, since they were still under his command. We clearly suggested that the problem of Barcelona was not a problem to be resolved with public force, but with tact. In order to put an end to the fighting, the establishment of a truce was indispensable. Three hours would be enough. It was of urgent importance that during this period of time the public forces must not intervene at all; that they must not conduct searches; that they must not arrest anyone; that they must do absolutely nothing. Then those who are armed can abandon the barricades, the buildings they seized and any other places they have occupied. Galarza accepted our suggestion. It was agreed that from six to nine in the morning on Thursday the public forces would not interfere with anyone. And that as of that moment final orders would be issued for a cease-fire. As for the commanders, we were told that the next day the new officers would arrive by airplane with written orders that would be issued ... so that we would be assured that they were engaging in a plan of pacification rather than repression. As for the Commissariat of Public Order, it was ordered that Rodríguez Salas should be IMMEDIATELY discharged. It was necessary, according to Galarza, that the public forces that were coming from Valencia must be allowed to pass unhindered to Barcelona. Their presence in Barcelona was essential, since the guards that were on duty were a partisan, biased force, and represented a danger for pacification. Under these conditions we came to an agreement with the Minister of the Government. But we specified, because it was of such importance, that the public forces should not enter Barcelona until after nine in the morning, in order to avoid incidents. Galarza accepted this idea and promised to see to it that it was observed.

“We informed the Catalan organization of the conclusions we had reached, ordering the comrades to be prepared to withdraw from their positions at six in the morning.

“The Local Federation of Trade Unions, together with the Local Committee of the UGT, drafted another notice ordering a return to work. Furthermore, we spoke with Arrando, in order to iron out the details concerning the orders issued by the Minister of the Government. At the same time we suggested, and Arrando concurred, that the control patrols, a public force that had been placed under the orders of the Delegate of Public Order, and which had not been involved in the events, should leave their barracks at six in the morning in order to patrol the streets of Barcelona, in order to prevent any incidents.

“This was a hard blow to their calculations. The whole plan collapsed, at the very moment we reached an agreement with the central government.

“That morning, the comrades, having read the orders, immediately withdrew to their homes. Long before the expiration of the three hour truce, none of our comrades remained armed at barricades. However, the other contending parties took advantage of every opportunity to carry out provocations. In some cases it was difficult to contain the outrage of the comrades who were the targets of machine gun fire, despite the orders that were issued. This constituted yet more evidence that our enemies did not want a truce. They sought to continue the fighting at any price. That was their premeditated plan. But they failed because good sense was inculcated into our comrades and they did not respond to the provocations. In this way a serious problem was liquidated in Barcelona.

“In the outlying towns, the comrades allowed the forces coming from Valencia to have free passage; in some places, however, our enemies, always acting according to their plan of provocation and revenge, took advantage of the withdrawal of our armed comrades as soon as the problem of Barcelona was resolved. In other places they engaged in repression. This was due to the fact that the commanders of the public forces acted in the towns under the orders of the Party that had brought the war to Barcelona, against the CNT. No provocations were enough to overcome the sense of responsibility and the good sense that our movement exhibited.

“... This is the situation. Now all that is necessary is for the Organization to engage in profound reflection on what has taken place. It is one more experience that clearly indicates that good will is not enough. It specifies the need for us to never situate ourselves on the plane of playing our enemy’s game. The political situation is increasingly more complex. Only a careful analysis, carried out by those of us who know the complications and hidden characteristics of these situations, can help guide us by the road that is in the interest of the movement, to progress and victory in the war. Above all, so that we must never proceed unconsciously to the place that we want to reach, a place that we have to reach and which is to our benefit.

“We restrained our impulses. And now we can attend to what really matters.

“And now they are all acting like idiots; the parties have lost their sense of direction, especially the communist party, amidst the overwhelming failure of their maneuver.

We shall orient the offensive on the plane of good sense and an orderly explanation of the facts, abandoning an aggressive tone and letting them all shout and cry as much as they want. Give them enough rope. And the libertarian movement will clear the way with its ability and great sense of objective reality.”

With carefully chosen words and without any kind of precautions, this report of the National Committee of the CNT expresses as clearly as possible the most absolute negation of its anarchist roots and the suicidal proposals of surrender that the governmental *cenetistas* and *faístas* cherished and continued to implement in a cowardly and incompetent manner, going so far as not only to disavow the armed resistance of the anarchist comrades, which was so bravely displayed on the barricades built on the streets of Barcelona, but even, availing themselves of the unjustified prestige and influence they had among our comrades, undertook by means of underhanded maneuvers, to cause them to desist from their dignified attitude and surrender themselves to the mercy of the authoritarian bloc that, with its outrages had provoked the indignation of the anarchists and the people of Barcelona.

“... the comrades were ready for anything...” “Regardless of how many provocations were aimed at us, and no matter what we did, it was not possible for us to close our eyes and decide to wage the final battle...” “We restrained our impulses. And now we can attend to what really matters.” This is what the “ministerialists” have the nerve to say. “The barricades must be torn down.... One stone for each citizen, and down with the barricades, which are memorials to a tragic time, memories that must disappear, that it is necessary for them to disappear as a sacrifice to the unity and fraternity that we have to preserve, arm in arm...” That is what they broadcast over Radio CNT-FAI.

And in this way, with speeches on the radio and leaflets saturated with words of the same kind, once again, the redemptive impulses and the just indignation of the anarchists and a sensible part of the Spanish people were suppressed, who, reacting most energetically against the deception by which they had been victimized by the *cenetistas* and *faístas*, and seeking to prevent their own comrades from being murdered and wanting to resist the authoritarian arrogance of all the politicians, had poured into the streets to risk their lives for freedom. And even more importantly: if it were possible for us to devote more space to recounting other unfortunate and disagreeable episodes that occurred during this short period, we could fully expose the treasonous cancer that had undermined the morale, the courage and the goodness of the Spanish people. And if you have the opportunity to read the pamphlet by the fence-sitter A. Souchy, *The Tragic Week in May: The May Days, Barcelona, 1937*,² you will be able to appreciate just how cowardly the behavior of the “ministerialists” really was; how shamelessly they concluded their adventures and flirtations with the “anti-fascist” politicians and to what extent they betrayed the noble cause of human emancipation.

² An English translation of Souchy’s pamphlet may be consulted online at: http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/souchy_may.html [Translator’s Note].

Chapter 14: The opportunism of the admirers

International opportunism was never offered such ideal opportunities amidst the thick undergrowth of labels—anarcho-dictators, *faquistas*, syndicalists, *aliancistas*, “anti-fascists” and other “isms”—than those that were afforded, by the handful, to the men who held positions of responsibility in the CNT and the FAI.

And not only did they provide evidence of their obsequiousness with the example of their activities during the entire period of the civil war in Spain, but, with stubbornness worthy of a better cause, initiated a radio, journalistic and telegraphic offensive with the suicidal goal of spreading the contagion of their “circumstantial” operational strategies and concepts to those environments of the international workers movement that were yet uncontaminated by the confusionist virus and promising their solidarity and association for those who are always ready to imitate their capriciousness with words or a gestures.

Let us take a look at some of the concepts they transmitted, the fruit of their circumstantial offensive:

“We must achieve, regardless of the cost, unity of opinion in anti-fascist struggles, and the coordination of all efforts. We must achieve these goals, circumventing, if necessary, any number of blind, obstinate, unconscious or criminal elements, who are opposed to these goals and place obstacles in our path,” we are told by Federica Montseny.

“The former enemies of the fatherland have now become its defenders.... We accept militarization and with it we set aside, we demote to a secondary matter, our struggle against military discipline. We have recognized the authority of the State, temporarily suspending our old struggle against all state institutions. We have participated in the government and we are collaborating with it, in the tasks related to winning the war against fascism,” writes A. Souchy.

“We are getting closer to reality. And we are moving away a little, although only a little, from the venerable beards.... They have already fulfilled their mission. We now have to fulfill ours. And if they were to return, they would accuse us of incompetence, sectarianism, stupidity, if we were to have remained rigidly stuck in the past, regardless of how much circumstances have changed,” proclaimed, in his capacity as Secretary General of the CNT, Mariano R. Vázquez.

“The CNT did not want to become separated from reality. Without renouncing its final goals, it adapted its tactics to the demands of the time,” Manuel Villar tells us.

“For the first time in the history of the social movement, we, the anarchists, have joined a government with all the responsibilities inherent to that function. But this is not because we have forgotten our fundamental postulates,” Diego Abad de Santillán expostulated.

*“Therefore, welcome to the *cenetista* ministers!”*, Luis Heredia told them, in the journal *La Protesta* of Chile. “Our fatherland, the fatherland of all the workers, is the patrimony that we hold in our hands today.” “The fatherland is in danger,” the Minister of “Justice”, Juan García Oliver said in one of his public addresses. “Fortunately, the action of the Spanish anarchists has had a profound influence on the people of this country.... The fact that Largo Caballero has adopted a revolutionary position by acknowledging the desires of the vast multitudes, who are tired of,

and disappointed with, parliamentarism, and with bourgeois legality, signifies one of the greatest victories for the position of the CNT and the FAI”, as one of the *faquistas* of Argentina put it in *Acción Libertaria*.

“*The anarchists have changed nothing, absolutely nothing; neither with regard to theory nor with regard to practice.... The CNT joined the government under the compulsion of a special situation and circumstances created by a revolution that was not entirely in its hands....*”, stated the Uruguayan opportunists via their organ, the journal *Esfuerzo*.

“*Anarchism—not the old masters, but contemporary anarchism—lacks a historical vision and cultivates an abstract ideology that must always be sterile. The solemn declamation of eternal principles which cannot be altered at all, does not make the world change.... We have to study the possibility of escaping, in many countries, sectarian isolation....*”, H. Rudiger blurted out.

“*I have both faith and hope in the CNT and the FAI and their militants when I say that once the war is over, Spain, despite the fact that the confederal organization intervened in the official management of the government, in order to save the country from the invasion of world fascism, will continue to be the cradle of anarchism and anarchosyndicalism*”, said Mascarell.

“*We, the anarchists, still have our representatives in this provisional government, in order to diplomatically represent outside of Spain the right of self-defense, of independence and freedom....*”, argues *Cultura Proletaria* of New York.

Many other messages and proclamations of the same or similar kind were scattered to the four winds and the opportunists applauded loudly. And that was not all.

The incompetent and treasonous activity of the *cenetistas* and *faístas* in the various bureaucratic positions in the Spanish government caused them to grow up; their entire “innovative”, capricious, confusionist and whimsical past was officially vindicated. They can go on with their hobnobbing and associating, more openly, “incorporating valuable revolutionary tactics”, even without the presence of the “special circumstance”, with all the right wing or left wing politicians. In Spain, with republicans, socialists, communists. In Argentina, with the radicals, conservatives, etc. And here, in Uruguay, with *battlistas*, *blancos*, *frugonianos* and Bolsheviks. With all those who will speak of “democracy”. To extend the “anti-fascist” front across every ocean.

This explains the unanimity of the applause, in defense and justification, that arose from the opportunist ranks, for the *cenetistas* and the *faístas*. This was the voice of their consciousness that broke out in joyful celebration upon confirming that one more “ism” can be added to long list of “isms”: “anarcho-governmentalism”.

It was the realization of their prophetic ideas. The cracking of the old “principlist” eggshell, which opened up new horizons for the overwhelming “unionist” unrest.

With the reinforcement of such variegated and plentiful “circumstantial” conceptions, opportunism was rejuvenated in body and soul to attempt to carry out new incursions into the camp of the working class, in the meantime hoping to reincorporate those who had gone to Spain and to prove the goodness and the efficacy of their “tactics” and their ideological interpretations.

Fortunately, after some initial outbreaks of confusion, the working class and anarchist milieus have witnessed a rapid and salutary reaction which has made it very difficult for the new tactics and new operational methods transmitted from the Iberian Peninsula to prosper, after the setback they experienced.

Chapter 15: CNT pressure on the IWA

It is undeniable that the Secretariat of the International Workingmen's Association, the institution to which the FORU and the FORA belong, underwent some anxious and difficult moments as it attempted to defend the ideological orientation and the practices of struggle approved at the IWA's founding congress.

In the interests of fairness, we must declare that comrade Pierre Besnard, who was the Secretary of the IWA since the period before the war until quite recently, tried to maintain a line of conduct that accords with the IWA's declaration of principles and tirelessly fought to prevent any deviations from arising and to attempt to convince the *cenetistas* to rectify their treasonous governmental policies.

This statement, which actually represents a sincere eulogy for the work of comrade Besnard in that emergency, does not mean that we agree with his way of thinking with respect to the workers movement, since we accept neither the term anarchosyndicalism nor the final goal that he attributes to the trade unions.

It would be of interest to the workers to become fully acquainted with the terribly difficult task of the Secretariat of the IWA, but since this would mean making this text even longer than it already is, we shall limit ourselves to describing in what may be referred to as a summary form some of his interventions with regard to the Spanish CNT.

Most of the quotations in this section are taken from the report presented by comrade Besnard at the Extraordinary Congress of the IWA held in Paris in December 1937.

In his first visit to Spain he was able to observe the animosity and the malicious intentions exhibited by the central government of Largo Caballero towards the *cenetista* militia columns, going so far as to deny them weapons for the defense of the Aragon front, which they were responsible for defending. The Secretariat informed the responsible officials of the CNT and the FAI of this serious anomaly and encouraged them to attempt to obtain the necessary arms. This was why the CNT and the FAI began negotiations with an arms dealer, but the deal fell through and Besnard said:

“Therefore, Spain did not receive the arms it immediately needed, and Russia supplied to the Madrid government, for cash, arms of a debatable quality, and only a little at a time, with the promise that they would not be distributed to the CNT columns and that the communist party would be able to carry out its activities and expand in particularly favorable conditions. I noted how Russian influence was gaining ground. García Oliver and Santillán, and especially the former, only saw everything through the eyes of Antonov Ovseenko, the Consul General of Russia in Barcelona.... Faced with such submission to Russia, the Secretariat of the IWA could do nothing but return without further discussions to Paris.”

In the meantime, the CNT, “embarking” on the tortuous path of betrayals, convened a Plenum of Regional Federations on October 23, 1936, and passed the following resolutions:

“1. The appointment of a Plenum Committee, composed of the Levant, the Center and Catalonia, to conduct an interview in Barcelona with the President of the Republic, Azaña, in order to explain to him the need to precipitate a government crisis so that the CNT can join the government for the purposes and under the conditions approved at the Plenum of Regional Federations held on September 15. This Committee must require an answer from Azaña within 48 hours.

“2. Should the proposal be rejected, we shall take measures of a military kind to ensure communications between Madrid, Levant, Aragon, Andalusia and Catalonia and to control the passage of men and supplies from these regions towards Madrid. In order to implement this resolution the National Committee will appoint a National War Committee. By means of this Committee, the fronts of Catalonia, Aragon, Levant and Andalusia will be unified.

“3. The CNT must proceed to mobilize 100,000 men from its confederal forces. This mobilization will be carried out in conjunction with the Regional Committees and the National War Committee.

“4. Organize joint action with all our regional forces in order to achieve control over the economy and to coordinate reserves.

“5. Expedite the negotiations that are currently underway with the diplomatic representatives of Russia, in order to achieve the measures necessary for the implementation of the resolutions adopted by our Plenum.

“6. Revise any prior resolutions and intensify the public campaign in favor of the resolutions approved at the Plenum of September 15.”

The most important resolution of September 15, mentioned in the text quoted above, reads as follows:

“The constitution in Madrid of a National Defense Council composed of elements from all the political forces that are fighting fascism, in the following proportions: five delegates from the UGT, five from the CNT and four republicans. Presidency of the National Council: Largo Caballero. The constitution of this National Defense Council proposes that the current president should continue to hold office and that he should govern the republic in the same manner as he has done up until this date.”

It must be noted that, concerning the request made to the central government for the formation of the National Defense Council and the resolutions approved at the Plenum of October 23, 1936, that it was all nothing but cheap pyrotechnics, and that none of the resolutions were implemented, but, despite the fact that the wonderful effect that was expected from these “fearsome” positions did not materialize, a little later they entered the central government anyway, and the CNT and the FAI explained this fact in the following terms:

“The National Plenum of Regional Federations held in Madrid on September 28, 1936, informed of the negotiations carried out by the National Committee in order to obtain the

formation of the National Defense Council, in view of the many obstacles encountered in these negotiations, and faced with the imperious necessity of directly intervening in the direction of the war, politics and the economy, for the purpose of preventing the continuous sabotage that has been directed against our Organization, our collectives and our militia columns, gave an overwhelming vote of confidence to the National Committee so that, faced with the impossibility of forming the National Defense Council as resolved at the Plenum of this past September 15, the participation of the CNT in the government may be obtained.”

It must be emphasized that—with regard to the question of the militias—a few days after July 19, the CNT and the FAI committed their first obvious “blunder”, by joining the Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias, which soon disappeared in order to be reorganized as the Council of the Generalitat, justifying their participation in the following manner:

“It was considered that, in order to avoid the duplication of powers that would be implied by the existence of both the Committee of Anti-fascist Militias and the Government of the Generalitat, the former would have to disappear and that the Council of the Generalitat of Catalonia must be formed, carrying out more positive activities, without the impediments of a clash of powers and in order nullify the pretext of the democracies that they will not help us because the anarchists are in control.”

The Secretariat criticized this doubletalk and said in his report that: “The Spanish comrades of the CNT became very angry, and would accept neither advice nor criticism from anyone.”

Alarmed by the direction that the dreadful conduct of the CNT was taking, the Secretariat convoked a Plenum of the member organizations of the IWA, which was held from September 15 to 17, 1936.

The resolution adopted at this meeting, with respect to the deviations of the CNT, was quite frivolous and confused, indicating, at this stage of the events, the influence of the *cenetistas* in the IWA.

Later in his report, comrade Besnard continued as follows:

“Despite the assurance displayed by the CNT delegation and the confidence manifested by the vote of the conciliatory resolution adopted by the Plenum, the Spanish Confederation did not modify its line of conduct at all. To the contrary, its policy of conciliation and collaboration with the government became a little more accentuated with each passing day. I had an opportunity to become acquainted with the fact that the retreat from revolutionary positions had been considerably accelerated. During the course of my visit to Spain, which lasted 26 days, I traveled through Catalonia, Cerdaña and Aragon.

“Everywhere I noted that the action of the masses on the economic and social terrain tended to maintain and develop the revolutionary conquests, despite the increasingly more dangerous concessions made to the political parties in order to preserve intact an anti-fascist front that was never anything but a ruse ... whose victim was the CNT. It was clear that despite the fact that the CNT was represented in the governments of Valencia and Barcelona, it was losing influence and this had an immediate impact on the political plane.

“At that time, the foreign comrades were already, in December 1936, being persecuted and arrested, and Ovseenko was imposing his censorship.”

In June 1937, another Plenum of the member organizations of the IWA was held, whose essential resolution was the following:

“That the conduct of the revolutionary war, as well as the implementation of social policies, are tending to be carried out without any direct participation of the CNT as well as without any indirect intelligence in conjunction with the governments of Valencia and Barcelona, and that it will be necessary for the CNT to abandon all concessions of a political, economic or doctrinal kind made to these governments that were made in order to preserve intact an alleged anti-fascist front composed of sectors that are working for the class enemy to liquidate the war and crush the revolution. It is considered that the official withdrawal of the CNT from the anti-fascist front is becoming more and more imperative, but that it should nonetheless reserve the right to accept or initiate circumstantial agreements with truly anti-fascist elements of that front, which want the war to be ended by an emancipatory revolution of the Spanish proletariat, a revolution directed against fascism and also against the so-called republican democracy.”¹

Another resolution of fundamental importance was approved at this Plenum, which called for the containment of the “revolutionary Leninists”, the same ones who brought us Kronstadt and the Ukraine, who by this time were flirting with elements of the CNT. The resolution reads as follows:

“That the opposition of the revolutionary proletariat of all countries, united within the IWA, to Marxism in all its forms, should be as firm as before, in view of the fact that social democracy, as well as the dictatorial Bolshevism of the school of Stalin or Trotsky, with all their ramifications and subdivisions, whether the PSUC or the POUM, are equally harmful and dangerous for the realization of the revolution.”

These resolutions would exacerbate yet more the differences and disputes between the IWA and the CNT, which were further aggravated when the CNT was informed of the resolution of the Plenum with respect to the International Solidarity Fund of the IWA, which earmarked 80% of its proceeds for support for the Spanish Revolution and 20% to assist the comrades in other countries.

The CNT did not accept this perspective and, now in open rebellion and breaking with the organic rules and solidarity agreements of the International, founded another institution with goals that appeared to be similar to those of the International Solidarity Fund, but one that was independent of the IWA, or, which amounts to the same thing, one that was not under the authority of the international institution.... It was heterogeneous, since it was run by individual

¹ The reader may wish to consult a substantially different translation of this resolution that may be found in José Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution*, Volume 2, edited and revised by Chris Ealham, translated by Paul Sharkey and Chris Ealham, ChristieBooks, Hastings, 2005, pp. 196–197; the book is also available online at: <http://books.google.com/books?id=vcauoD75eBMC&pg=PA196&lpg=PA196&dq=June+1937+regional+plenum+cnt&source=bl&ots=VZwFVKrI7P&sig=BP9TfZor> [Translator's Note].

“personalities” and specific committees and institutions, some of which acted to sabotage the regional workers federations that were members of our International. But rather than attempt to explain this ourselves, it is better to let the following letter speak for itself:

“Valencia, July 3, 1937.

“To the Secretariat of the IWA, Paris.

“Esteemed comrades:

“In response to your letters dated June 15 and 17, I am conveying the following accords which, as you will be able to see, do not emanate from this Committee, but from our entire Organization. During the course of the National Plenum of Regional Federations held on April 15 and the following days, it was resolved that there was a need to create an institution to compete with International Red Aid, which is nothing but a vehicle not only for funds subsequently utilized by the communist party for its own propaganda, but also a method of recruitment, of proselytism and propaganda.

“It was stipulated that this institution should not have a partisan and closed nature, but that it would have to have as much room for maneuver as possible, that it should contain some prestigious national and international figures, it being understood that it must always be oriented by the libertarian movement. In short, this was the genesis of ‘International Anti-fascist Solidarity’ (IAS). You will therefore understand that the IAS cannot be a part of the IWA, in order not to cut off the immense possibilities for expansion that are open to it. You will have to admit that the CNT is recognized in places where no one has ever heard of the IWA. And this will be even more true of the IAS since the latter is, or at least will appear to be, an institution outside of any working class party or organization, displaying the character of an organization for anti-fascist solidarity.

“As a result, we must inform you that we cannot accept the agreement of the Plenum of the IWA. We shall therefore pursue, with the IAS and its General Committee based in Spain, the creation of sections in every country, and in order to do this we will rely on individual comrades rather than on organizations, since this is the only way to carry out a serious project of this kind and to achieve the sought-after objective. Nor do we doubt that it will also be a field that is open to our propaganda and a means for us to create certain favorable positions among certain sectors of the proletariat that could be of benefit to the IWA in its further development.

“It is very important to point out that the IAS will have the duty of assisting the refugee comrades and others; this is the purpose of the IAS and solidarity of this kind requires substantial funds. This is why we consider that the IWA should not undermine our decision but quite the contrary: the IWA has the obligation to request that its member federations support the progress of the IAS on the one hand and also assist in its creation.

“This is, in our view, what must be done. Beyond all of this, when the IWA needs funds, it will have to come to us, and depending on its possibilities we shall contribute the necessary funds.

“To summarize: it is essential that the funds in the control of the Secretariat of the IWA that are earmarked for the CNT and the FAI should be sent to our comrade Nemesio Galve, our delegate in Paris. That is all for now.

“With fraternal greetings, On behalf of the National Committee of the CNT,

“MARIANO VÁZQUEZ, secretary.”

The IAS central committee was legally registered, and its statutes were approved and signed by the governor of Valencia. As for how this institution operated in Spain, and still does in other countries, we can offer few comments. We shall only say that the Uruguayan Section, acting strictly in accordance with Article 2 of its statutes—“In the pursuit of the aforementioned objectives, the IAS will carry out its activity on the purest terrain of human solidarity, renouncing all political and religious interference”—possessed, in June 1938, a General Council composed of conceited intellectuals who were active in the *blanco* and *colorado* parties, various socialists and an assortment of many other elements of variable or colorless affiliations.

Furthermore, a few months ago a fundraiser organized by the IAS-Uruguayan Section was held in Montevideo, and we could observe, as if it was the result of some kind of oversight, that in the vicinity of the building where the fundraiser was held there were two long lines of parked automobiles. They were not “proletarian” automobiles. We will let the readers draw their own conclusions from this observation.

And, to top it all off, and to demonstrate the arrogance and the real intentions of the CNT, read the following communiqué from the CNT that signals its complete separation from the IWA and exposes its attempt to divert the funds earmarked for the International in order to seize them for its own purposes:

“We are advising all the organizations, committees, social centers, cultural societies and individuals in foreign countries who want to help the anarchosyndicalist movement that they must not send any more funds to the address of A.G. in Paris, as they have done up until now. The funds sent to that address are not remitted to the CNT. We request that, until further notice, you send funds to the following address: N. Galve, 30 Rue St. Augustine, Paris.” (From the *Information Bulletin* of the CNT, dated August 13.)

This incident was followed by a campaign of slander and intrigue directed against the Secretariat, and when the latter asked for an explanation he was answered with silence.

With regard to the serious and shameful events of May 1937 in Barcelona, Besnard said:

“The events in Barcelona, the rise to power of the Negrín government, the agent of Anglo-French, and consequently Russian, will, entailed a radical change in the attitude towards the confederal masses, the militants of the CNT-FAI and the foreigners. The predominance of the central power in Catalonia caused one to note the extreme degree to which all security was abolished for our comrades, especially those who had come from other countries to help the Spanish revolution. It could soon be observed that the Negrín government was acting completely under the orders of the communists and their elements were taking control, quietly but surely, of all the leading positions of the State: police, army, public administration. The police of the Cheka carried out its investigations of

our comrades, alongside the Spanish police who were only there in order to preserve appearances. In a few weeks, 60 militants of the CNT disappeared, 2,000 were arrested and hundreds of foreigners were imprisoned or expelled from Spain.

“The expulsion of the Italian comrades from Barcelona was carried out with the collaboration of the Argentine consul, who was responsible for the defense of the interests of the fascist governments of Rome and Berlin. This consul had the audacity to recommend to Italian and German anti-fascists that they should present themselves to his colleagues, the representatives of Hitler and Mussolini in France, so that they could be repatriated to their countries of origin.

“To me it seems impossible to go any lower than the Negrín government.”

(Paris, July 19, 1937.)

Immediately afterwards he sent a note to the member organizations of the IWA, informing them of these events and attaching a copy of a letter from various prisoners, advising that the organizations request that the CNT should resolve the situation. The prisoners said:

“Valencia, January 21, 1937 [sic: this should read June 21, 1937].

“Esteemed H.

“I am writing to you in the name of seven comrades who have been illegally imprisoned in the Convent of Saint Ursula.... Here, in the dungeon, are H.K., E.I., F.H., H.L., M. and G., all in the same cell. L. and G. are currently being held in the provincial hospital of Valencia. H. is very ill. I have pneumonia. The jail is very filthy and unhealthy. We need soap, towels, and clothing and they will not give us our money. They have refused to allow us to contact our organization (DAS) and our families. They have interrogated us. Some have been interrogated twice.

“They have accused of being spies, of having been in contact with the Gestapo during the May events in Barcelona. This is absurd and it is not surprising that they needed months in order to fabricate this abominable accusation.

“In the Convent of Saint Ursula there are 150 prisoners, 60% of them foreigners, mostly Germans. This jail is a real concentration camp. If we do not get help from outside, we will be buried alive for a very long time. Do everything possible to help us. You have to think of coming to see us, or else getting a Spanish comrade to work energetically for our release. On July 29 we are going to begin a hunger strike. We are interrogated by Spaniards, but the Commissars are always Russians and Germans....

“Dear comrades, do not forget us. Health to all.

X.X.”

The Secretariat informed the CNT of the contents of the letter from these prisoners and the text of an urgent telegram sent by the Regional Committee of Catalonia, in which it is requested that negotiations be undertaken to prevent the German anarchists from being deported to Marseilles by the Negrín government and handed over to the Nazi consuls, since the latter possessed documents supplied to them by the Argentine consul who was responsible for German and Italian affairs in Spain.

Keeping all these facts in mind, the following two notes from the CNT will be of interest:

“National Confederation of Labor.

“National Committee. Valencia, September 22, 1937.

“To the Secretariat of the IWA, Paris.

“In response to your note dated August 23 with reference to the negotiations in connection with the telegram sent by the Regional Committee of Catalonia regarding the deportations of foreign anti-fascist comrades, we are quite satisfied with the negotiations carried out with L.J. and the League for the Rights of Man. As for the two specific demands you made, we shall also inform you that the CNT has since July 19, 1936 looked after the interests of the foreign comrades who have come to Spain and continues to do so whenever possible. But you will understand that this is a problem that also involves the political situation and that this compels us to conclude that any more or less efficacious action that the CNT might be able to undertake in defense of the foreign comrades depends on the greater or lesser effectiveness of the CNT’s participation in the Spanish government. It is of great importance to request the right of asylum for the foreign comrades, but it is also much more important—you will understand this—to work to resolve the domestic problem, to put an end to the repression and to undertake joint, solidarity-based action to win the war and defend the conquests of the people.

“The problem of the foreigners is very important, but compared to the continued prosecution of this bloody and terrible war that we are waging against fascism it is a VERY INSIGNIFICANT DETAIL.

“We will also tell you that the problem of the foreigners is very complex because fascism has been very diligent and has its agents in Spain. We shall draft specific requests to obtain the release of the foreign comrades who are really anti-fascists, and who are worthy of the confidence of the libertarian movement, as a result of their long history of activity as militants.

“As for your second question, our answer is that we acknowledge the good intentions of the IWA to help defend us against counterrevolutionary attacks, but the truth is that as long as the IWA is not properly organized, and until it puts an end to its internal disagreements and resolves to work actively to support the anti-fascist and revolutionary war in Spain, it can accomplish little despite its good intentions. The decisive support that we desire and need for now to fight against the counterrevolution in Spain, is the support that the world proletariat can give us by engaging in effective action against the fascist invader. If our war goes well this will change and our situation will improve, and the attacks and the predominance of the counterrevolution will be diminished. You have to take all of this into account.

“With revolutionary greetings.

“M.R. Vázquez, Sec.”

“National Confederation of Labor.

“National Committee. Valencia, September 22, 1937.

“To the Secretariat of the IWA, Paris.

“Respected comrade:

“We receive your circular No. 8 dated August 23. We regret that the Secretariat of the IWA, upon receiving a telegram from a Regional Federation of our Section and noting its content, would brandish it as a red flag, giving the member Sections of the IWA the impression that the CNT is neglectful of the affair of the foreign comrades. We think that the Secretariat of the IWA, in accordance with federative norms, is obliged to recognize that he cannot attend to any report from Spain that does not proceed from the National Committee of the CNT, as it is the mission of the latter to maintain relations with the Secretariat of the IWA.

“After expressing our position on this conduct, we shall proceed to formulate our protest against the heedless decision to orient the Sections towards the formation of Committees of Aid and Assistance for the Victims of the Counterrevolution in Spain. This gives us the impression that the Secretariat of the IWA is using an incident to undermine the creation and operations of the groups of International Anti-fascist Solidarity, which were created by the Spanish libertarian movement.

“We cannot accept the last paragraph of your circular which says: ‘And, finally, to intervene with the CNT in order to combine your protest and your activities with ours.’ This implies a reproach directed against this National Committee that we energetically reject, because we have always attended to the foreign comrades who have been persecuted in Spain and because we do not need to be pressured to do our duty. But also because the National Committee cannot intervene against the outrages that have been inflicted on the foreign comrades IF IT IS NOT INFORMED of the facts. The National Committee has always devoted due attention to all the affairs of which it has been informed and has addressed them directly.

“We do not doubt that in the future the Secretariat of the IWA will conform to the norms of our movement and that he will only pay due attention to the official reports from our National Committee.

“Once again we must protest against your circular and the insinuations that it contains because they are insults to the REVOLUTIONARY VIEWS and solidarity of the CNT that at all times is vigilant and pays proper attention to the foreign comrades who have come to Spain to fight.

“With anarchosyndicalist greetings.

“For the National Committee,

“Mariano R. Vázquez, secretary.”

We must notify the reader that we have transcribed some phrases from these notes in ALL CAPITAL LETTERS, because they reveal the passionate concern of the CNT to once again occupy the ministerial posts that it lost and the minor importance it concedes to the miserable situation of those who are persecuted by the communist reaction, presided over by the figurehead, Negrín.

In view of the serious problem the IWA faced because of its intention to help the anarchists who fled from the bloody repression that was unleashed in Barcelona after the May events, and those anarchists who were deported by the Negrín government, via Perpignan, to Marseilles, the Secretariat—taking account of the fact that the representatives of the CNT in Paris had reneged on their commitment to help the wounded militiamen and the families of the combatants, despite having received 1,400,000 francs from the IWA treasurer—logically appealed to the member organizations of the IWA to send more money and at the same time he also suggested that they should organize “Committees for Aid and Assistance to the Victims of the Spanish Counterrevolution” in their respective regions.

We know that the IWA affiliates in Argentina and Uruguay formed such a Committee. Here, in Montevideo, the FORU publicized the formation of this Committee with a notice in *Solidaridad*, but did not take its guest into consideration. The *cenetista* plenipotentiary in Uruguay—the CNT had them in many countries—attempted to discredit the Committee by claiming that it was not authorized by the CNT, and also expressed contemptuous and offensive views with regard to the anarchists who were persecuted, imprisoned or shot by Negrín’s thugs. We cannot state with certainty whether or not he had received official reports to that effect, but it is almost certain that his manner of speaking about this issue was based on his personal impressions from life in the rearguard, since he had lived for a few months in Spain, as a member of several delegations.

To conclude this chapter, we will say that the *cenetistas*, not satisfied with their clearly demonstrated betrayals and backroom machinations, dedicated themselves to preparing the international working class to obtain its support for a Motion to be proposed at the Ordinary Congress of the IWA that would modify the principles and practices of that institution, adapting them to the practical modalities and concepts advocated by the “ministerialists” of the CNT and the FAI.

At this Congress, held in November 1938—without the presence of the delegations of the FORA and the FORU, due to insurmountable obstacles—the “circumstantial” theory of the *cenetistas*, which had already been elaborated prior to the Congress, was overwhelmingly approved.

In the journal of the IWA, No. 6, a *cenetista*—now deceased—said:

“... we have to operate in every country, in accordance with the circumstances, psychology, possibilities and characteristics”. “In the declaration of principles, we cannot continue to uphold the thesis of rabid apoliticism. We do not have to include support for politics in our declaration. But we must not close and seal off the door, and excommunicate any Section that in particular circumstances works politically, with the clear understanding that politics means for us collaboration with other sectors in the political-social-economic leadership of a country.”

Unfortunately, in the modifications introduced in the Declaration of Principles of the IWA, we must point out—we do not have the complete text at our disposal—that they leave the door open to working in accordance to the “circumstances”, even in politics. Thus, the new Secretariat of the IWA said, in a somewhat vague way, in his report to the member organizations, that it was established that, “the goal and tendency of anarchosyndicalism remains faithful to federalism”, and that, as a result, “the IWA concedes to its Sections the greatest possible freedom of action in the struggle for the final goal”.

The anxious moments now being experienced by the world proletariat do not allow one to expect that the IWA can continue to develop in a normal way. It is therefore to be hoped that when circumstances allow the exchange of opinions, the FORA and the FORU must attack these collaborationist reforms and will work to see to it that these “innovations” are not included in

the Declaration of Principles, but rather that the anarchist concept that is proudly upheld by both organizations is reaffirmed.

Chapter 16: Fascism and anti-fascism

Given the jargon that has infected some political and working class sectors, entirely contrary to the views of the FORist movement in Argentina and Uruguay, and in view of the persistent use of the word, “anti-fascist” by the Spanish and international “ministerialists”, we believe that it is necessary to offer a few reflections on what we understand by the term, “fascism”, and by its negation by its seeming antithesis, “anti-fascism”.

Fascism, or more precisely, its essence, is nothing new in the history of the peoples. It is the maximum, the most refined, cruel and brutal manifestation of the authoritarian system; oppressive and domineering from top to bottom. All the coercive means have been employed in order to give the State the power of domination that is necessary; to fully centralize brute force in the governmental mechanism. All the means of “persuasion” have been regimented in order to silence the public conscience and slogans are recited with an absolute “unanimity”, “molding” the most diverse opinions according to the political needs of the State.

The same procedures used to silence the voices of the heretics that were put into practice by the executioners at the orders of the inquisitors Arbués and Torquemada, adapted to the “progress” of our century, have been utilized by the totalitarian regimes imposed in Italy, Russia, Germany, and now in Spain.

The saying of the Uruguayan politician they call “Rasputin”—“Calm down and live, or rebel and die”—is the norm of the way of life imposed on the peoples so that they will silently endure the state monstrosity. I am the State, I give the orders and you must obey me, say the dictators, and the peoples obey, smiling, with applause and tranquility in order to avoid the consequences of the anger or the suspicion of the henchmen of authority.

Human consciousness is becoming mechanized. Speech has been standardized. Gestures, stereotyped. People fall silent when they are not mouthing words of conformity and servility. The inhabitants of the world have been regimented, and they know when, where and how to work or refrain from working, what to think, etc.; where they can gather together and relate to one another. The State knows everything due to its legions of spies or informers and has its “solution” for everything. Shootings, the gibbet, decapitations, the despicable garrote, the guillotine and the electric chair, are the final, “quite convincing” arguments that its “devotees” engage in and that become more frequent with each passing day....

In Germany, they cut off heads. In Russia, they “purge” the opposition and the people. In Italy, they prescribe castor oil; then the garrote or the firing squad. In Spain, at the present time, they are setting a rather high standard; without any trial, they shoot “convicts” at the rate of up to “800 murdered ...” at a time.

And this only refers to the totalitarian regimes; regarding which one could say that fascism is becoming generalized.

Now let us take a look at the “democracies”. In France they use the guillotine. In the United States human beings are eliminated by means of electrocution or hanging. In the other countries,

the same or similar procedures are utilized “for setting an example”. Torture is also employed by means of rubber truncheons or cattle prods, with which we are familiar in our part of the world.

In some countries there has been an attenuation in the suffering, an attractive label, a disguise with plebian gilding, but always based on violence, audacity, inhumanity and crime: the shell of the state.

Fascism, Nazism, state communism, nationalism, democracy, socialism, are all different names but all are based on one thing: the authority principle; and one goal: the state.

The goal does not change, then, whether you call it dictatorship, empire, kingdom, parliamentary republic, or even if you give it the pompous title of: republic of the “workers” or of the soviets—“proletarian” dictatorship—or any other “transitional bridge”, as is insinuated by the “anti-fascists” of the CNT-FAI.

Now that we have expressed these very simple deductions concerning what is often called—because of snobbism—a fascist regime, we should point out that the word “anti-fascism” has an identical origin, because the powers that, calling themselves democratic, claim to fight the fascist regime cannot be differentiated from the latter, nor can the political fractions that are its opponents, using demagogy, deny their authoritarian essence.

Who presents themselves to the workers as anti-fascists?

The socialists, who adore, uphold and advocate the statist structure! In France, the socialist Briand was in power, and the army and the police at his orders liquidated the French railroad workers strike, persecuting, imprisoning and massacring the striking workers. In Germany, a socialist cabinet presided over by Noske ordered the massacre of the people of Bavaria, murdering, in addition, outstanding anarchist militants, among other people, comrade Landauer. In Spain, before the military revolt, the socialists dominated republican cabinets, and Casas Viejas is still fresh in our memories: Arnedo, the shack of Seisdedos where a peasant family of eight was burned alive and the members of the CNT and the FAI and the Spanish people were persecuted and murdered.

The communists! In Russia—whose mystical and stoic people know the rigors and the omnipotence of the dictatorship imposed by the ruling party: Lenin yesterday, and now Stalin—the “red” army at the orders of the “generalissimo” Trotsky—today a “voluntary” exile from the country of his “great deeds”—mercilessly massacred the sailors of Kronstadt, which had been, during the period of Czarism, a beacon of freedom and rebellion, and whose garrison had been the spearhead of the revolution during that disastrous regime. The brave Maknovist guerrillas were exterminated, who had expelled the mercenary armies from the Ukraine. The anarchists and opponents of the dictatorship were shot or hidden away in the prisons of inhospitable regions, and more recently there have been repeated “purges” of the members of the ruling party, shooting as “traitors and Nazi spies” some of the intellectual figures who were comrades of Lenin.

The radicals of Argentina! We recall the strike in the metallurgical plant of Vasena, where violent clashes with the *Irigoyenista* police took place, in which many comrades died, an episode that led to what we call the “Week of January” and which the bourgeois journalist Juan J. de Soiza Reilly—without going into the distinctly proletarian aspect, which was anxious and cruel—described, vaguely reflecting some scenes, in these paragraphs:

“I just came back from an sorrowful journey. I visited some of the homes of the Israelites where they shed tears of blood. I have seen innocent old people being dragged by their

beards. I have seen a pale and smiling little old man who lifted up his shirt to show us two of his ribs. They stuck out of his skin like sticks, bleeding.... I have seen hard-working and humble laborers—like all the Jewish workers—with both legs broken, in casts. Piled up like firewood on the sidewalks. I have seen scientific libraries burned.... I have seen a heroic woman who was forced to eat her own excrement. I have seen houses looted and pockets emptied by robbers. I have seen poor little girls of 14 and 15 years of age crying on the street corners. They covered their faces with their hands. They were ashamed. They had lost the holy treasure of their innocence among the claws of the beasts.... One of them showed me her right hand, cut by an axe, “because I tried to defend myself from the brute”.... I have seen, in addition.... But, why reproduce the horrors that I have seen, the revulsion that I felt?

“If I dip my pen into this revulsion, I would write this chronicle with rage....”

And the sorrowful episodes of Patagonia, where the soldiers under the command of colonel Varela made the strikers dig their own graves before shooting them? And the massacres of the Chaco, the persecutions and deportations of FORist militants?

The *battlistas*, government *colorados* and the *blancos*! The streets of Montevideo and some of the towns of the interior have been drenched in the blood of the workers; those who went on strike were beaten and the jails swallowed many anarchists.

Why do the political fractions that formed the “Popular Front” in Spain call themselves “anti-fascists”, when, prior to July 19 and during the civil war, they murdered the anarchists who refused to obey the authoritarians?

All of this is villainy, arrogance, violence and criminality, even if the perpetrators call themselves socialists, communists, radicals, *blancos*, *colorados* or anti-fascists, and they cannot by any means be distinguished from the ways of the fascists. It is always the State.

Therefore, the alliance made by the “responsible” leaders of the CNT and the FAI with the authoritarian elements of Spain is entirely illogical, and cannot be justified by any valid, convincing argument, any more than such an alliance with the Marxists of our part of the world would have.

A recent political event, which caused a “sensation” in certain statist spheres and among some simple-minded people will reinforce our argument: the embrace of Hitler and Stalin. They have brought together, in one solid bundle, rabid anti-communism and cynical anti-nazism.

This event will not have been surprising to sensible people, because while they are political ideologies that seemingly repel each other, with regard to their methods, the regimes and their interests are identical and cannot remain separated.

The embrace of Stalin with Hitler might impress those who, concealing their authoritarian inclinations and ways, had taken up as a rallying banner a meaningless, deceitful and puerile label, but this has no importance for those who, like us anarchists, do not allow ourselves to differentiate between the regimes and consider the actions, the maneuvers and the falsehoods of those who rule over the peoples to be a logical consequence of the corruption that engulfs the capitalist system. One thing is certain: anti-nazism and anti-communism signed a military pact and then gorged themselves on the bloody spoils of the Polish people, sharing out, in addition, the land, the wealth and the inhabitants living in the framework of the borders that the map assigned to Poland, just as previously—the same or other States—had divided up the lands of

Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Ethiopia, The Transvaal, India, Morocco, etc., and are still assailing these peoples.

Chapter 17: Upheaval in the FAI

This acronym stands for the Iberian Anarchist Federation, a specifically anarchist institution of Spain, which played an outstanding role in the guerrilla activities that took place in Spain, but a negative one with regard to the valorization of the ideological postulates that correspond with its name.

It was first active in 1927, with a definite program—according to declarations published to justify its existence as a specifically anarchist organization—of working in the CNT in order to reinforce the anarchist orientation that was instilled in the workers who were members of this working class trade union confederation and to win support for the cause of emancipation.

It is undeniable that the work of training and expression of our ideas that was undertaken by the FAI was beneficial and that its members had to endure the harsh persecution directed at them by the right and left wing governments that succeeded each other in Spain, over the last few years. But this acknowledgement does not prevent us from explaining, with all frankness, our opinion of opposition to the contagious way of operating that has appeared over the last few years among the anarchists, in that they organize a specifically [separate] anarchist organization, because this brings in its wake a dual focus of activity, a groundless pride in appearing to be “guides” and a dangerous “innovative” tendency for the workers movement with an anarchist goal.

In South America we are very familiar with the “restless spirits” and the activities of some similar institutions: the Argentine Libertarian Alliance, now reborn as the FACA, in Argentina, and the Anarchist Federation of Uruguay, in this country—now defunct—institutions that have been a breeding ground for deviations and more than one split among anarchist militants. Instead of helping to develop the FORist working class federations, they have impeded their normal federalist development and have sowed confusion within many working class organizations, facilitating their absorption by Marxist elements.

However, because it is not our purpose to conduct an in-depth analysis of the problem of “Specificism”, we shall return to our examination of the various facets presented by the FAI in its disconcerting pilgrimage between theory and practice.

The contradictions are many and the regressions of such a magnitude that they deserve to be highlighted in order to erase from the feverish minds of the panegyrists of the FAI the following definition of what these three letters mean: “a sun that shines on those who suffer persecution and a force that encourages those who hunger for justice; a torch for the pariahs and a promise for the oppressed”, as the Barcelona journal *Tierra y Libertad* proclaimed.

When the ghastly birds of ill omen, of pillage and destruction, nourished by Spanish militarism, the clergy and capitalism, began to circle over the soil of Spain, the FAI felt spurred on—for the last time—by the spirit of its ideological patrimony to hammer its alert, filled with redemptive concepts, into the consciousness of the Spanish people, urging them to fight in defense of their rights, under assault by statist arrogance, and of their freedom that was under threat from the reactionaries.

Here is the resolution approved at the FAI Plenum of Regional Federations, held on February 1, 1936:

“Considering the extreme gravity of the current conjuncture in Spain, due as much to economic difficulties and domestic policies, as to the influence and impact of the international situation, and having learned from the experience of other countries and from the very logic of the events and issues;

“Considering that, because of the size of the revolutionary proletariat in Spain, the latter has more responsibility than in other countries with regard to confronting any reactionary attempts;

“That the phenomenon of fascism, embodied in the totalitarian State, is a system of reaction, of which the street violence and the bestial attacks of the reactionaries constitute merely one aspect of a vast complex of ideas and liberticidal aspirations, which are manifested in the absolute suppression of all rights of criticism and all human dignity and which tend, furthermore, to persist by recruitment from the very beginning. That the fascist reaction is the direct result of the bankruptcy of the economic system of capitalism, that it can be resisted only on the terrain of the suppression of capitalism and in the establishment of a regime of life that will render impossible the monstrous contradictions of the economy, of privilege and of monopoly.

“That the world historical experiences have demonstrated the impotence and the deception of so-called democracy, an alleged political equality grafted onto the most obnoxious economic inequality, in order to modify the essence of the established order.

“The Regional Federations of the Iberian Anarchist Federation set forth their position in the following manner:

“a) They deplore the fact that working class institutions which had blazed a frankly revolutionary and proletarian path in October 1934, should align themselves with the democratic-bourgeois parties in order to find a solution where no such solution exists.

“b) They advocate a total break by the proletariat with all the statist democratic illusions, and its concentration around the working class and peasant solution, which implies the possession of the social and natural wealth by the producers themselves.

“c) They maintain that only in the world of labor, in the workplaces, can an effective and definitive remedy be found for all forms of reaction.

“They state that the agreement of the producers is possible under the following conditions:

“1. The exclusion from the workplace of elements affiliated with fascist institutions, by way of the joint action of the anti-capitalist trade union organizations.

“2. Employment of the insurrectionary method for the conquest of the social wealth usurped by privileged minorities, and its administration by the producers themselves.

“3. Establishment of a regime of life, of labor and of consumption that responds to the common needs of the population and does not allow exploitation and the domination of man over man to exist in any form.

“4. The defense of this new regime of life cannot be entrusted to professional armies or political bodies, but must be in the hands of all the workers, without the latter losing contact with their workplaces.

“5. Respect and toleration for the diverse proletarian and revolutionary social conceptions and guarantees for their free exercise.

“6. The struggle against fascism, an international phenomenon, must be carried out internationally, by the working class and revolutionary institutions, to the exclusion of all nationalist ideas and sentiments.”

As one can see from the document presented above, one may now observe what is essentially a surrender to “alliancism” and the use of the term “anti-fascism”; but this backsliding seems quite insignificant when we compare it to the later treasonous positions.

Let us see how the FAI presented its views after it had already fallen some way down the “fatal slope”:

“All the propaganda and all the action of anarchism are based on anti-capitalism and anti-statism. These two forms of economic and political domination imply the negation of the rights of the producer and of the freedom of the individual.

“In the State, capitalism finds its weapon of defense. The exploitation of the workers, of the peasants, of the technicians, allows the accumulation of wealth and economic power—the force majeure to which the disinherited are subjected—in the hands of an unproductive minority. By means of the laws that assure the bourgeoisie the right of property with all its repressive system, with its armed force, the State constitutes the most solid bastion of the capitalist system. As opposed to the Marxist position that attributes to the State transitional functions in the creation of a new society, and which maintains that the State will gradually wither away until it disappears when class differences will have disappeared, anarchism proclaims the uselessness of the State and states that its presence after the revolutionary events would signify the resurgence of a new power, of a new dictatorship, with the consequent emergence of a privileged bureaucracy and the logical establishment of a party government or preferentially one based on the leaders of the ruling party.

“Economic organization upon socialist foundation, being practicable, causes the new economic order to require a new political form. The anti-capitalist and anti-statist position of anarchism is confirmed by historical experience and by the certainty of being able to organize collective life, providing everyone with the possibility to satisfy their own needs, in exchange for their labor in a regime based on the socialization of the means of production.

“Federative organization, from the bottom up—from the base to the summit—will take the place of the state system. This reaffirmation of principles is fully justified

at the present time. Constrained by the circumstances that accompany the war, the FAI and the CNT have had to participate in the governmental machinery. The collaboration imposed by the supreme and unavoidable necessity of defeating fascism and coexistence alongside the anti-fascist sectors led us to reluctantly abandon our ideological position. But this does not mean that we have renounced the anarchist ideal and tactics. The occupation of posts of responsibility in the departments of the central government and of the Generalitat, posts that we had to occupy, being compelled by the circumstances of the war, by no means implies a change in our theoretical conceptions. No; we shall continue to be anarchists as before, and we shall always have the same opinion of the State and the dictatorial solution (regardless of what name it is given).

“Before the entire world, before our comrades in the anarchist movement, before those who have deliberately distorted the interpretation of the events in Spain and our temporary participation in the government, we can state without any exaggeration that this resolution of the FAI has an incalculable historical value.”

The concepts expounded by the FAI, apart from many inconsistencies and contradictions, break all records for arrogance.

We could reproduce, in order to support our view, a sensible commentary written by comrade A. Schapiro in response to the pathetic appeal issued by the FAI to the international anarchist movement calling upon the latter to imitate the FAI, and to enter into “alliances” with the political sectors of the different regions, but we shall refrain from doing so because the text is already so well known.

We shall, however, transcribe the resolutions approved by the Congress of the French Language Anarchist Federation at its congress held on August 14–15, 1937, concerning the delicate and ridiculous position of the FAI and the CNT, together with the commentary by the editors of *Solidaridad* (No. 143, April 1938), the official organ of the FORU, on these resolutions, because they will save us the trouble of elucidating fundamental objections and because the text containing them is a lapidary counterstroke:

“We shall transcribe some resolutions of the French Language Anarchist Federation, approved at the Congress held on August 14–15, 1937 in the city of Clermont-Ferrand. In view of the chaos that prevails in international anarchism, caused by the Spanish events, which brought confusionism to a large part of our movement, the firm position of the anarchists of the French Language Anarchist Federation merits our attention, who, with great courage, made a firm stand against revolutionary mystifications, sallying forth in defense of the propaganda and of the practices of struggle that are consistent with the principles of anarchism. Even when we do not totally agree with the interpretation they offer regarding the practical application of anarchism in the workers movement—since while they seek to instill the latter with an anarchist character from the outside, from the groups, we, based on the experience of a long revolutionary history, which demonstrates the superiority of the FORist interpretation, opt for the system that recommends that the anarchists must not act in the trade union sections as members of other groups

outside of them, but as members of these same trade unions, and by this means successfully impress upon the workers movement a definitely anarchist orientation, adopting in advance the practices of struggle of direct action, a federalist system of organization by trade and anarchist principles and goals—despite this, we say, we consider it to be of great importance that the French anarchists have returned to activity within the trade unions, which will allow them to gain the influence among the workers that they have lacked until now, due to the erroneous practice of organizing in specific groups outside the working class organization.

“Something else that deserves emphasis, is the fact they have broken with the prejudice of alliances with politicians and the trade union mergers that advocate the absurdity of attempting to amalgamate all the workers in a single bloc, ‘outside of all ideology’, when they openly declare that they are working for the growth of the CGT-SR (affiliated with the IWA), providing it with increasingly greater material and ideological power, which could counteract the emasculating work of the reformist CGT, saving the proletariat from opportunistic ambiguities and political demagoguery and liberating it from all obstacles that could hinder it in its progress towards its emancipation.

“We attribute the highest importance to these resolutions, both with regard to the position against ‘statist anarchism’, as well as with regard to militant action in the working class movement, since it is to be hoped that this attitude will be at least imitated, if not surpassed, by the anarchists of the other countries, which are losing their sense of direction or vegetating in the vicious circle of ‘specificism’, and that those revolutionary aberrations should be abandoned and the comrades should resolve to create a real trade union movement, in which the activity of the anarchists who, for one reason or another do not belong to the trade unions, will not only be allowed but encouraged, on the basis of which one can work freely to forge anarchist consciousness, for the purpose of being able to expose the entire population to the details of our ideal, leading it to conceive the possibility of the existence of a society without a State, based on free agreement and mutual aid, which will lead it to fight consciously for the destruction of the authoritarian regimes and for the establishment of Anarchist Communism.”

Resolutions of the Congress of the French Language Anarchist Federation:

“Considering that, faced with the situation in which a part of the CNT-FAI has committed, from the very beginning, deplorable errors with respect to their positions, this Congress deems that the only way to rectify the situation in Spain, both from the anarchist point of view as well as from the perspective of our final victory, is to immediately abandon all governmental, political, militarist and diplomatic activity and return to revolutionary methods of struggle. That all the non-conformist elements of both organizations are the only ones who can accomplish this, but that the international anarchist movement finds itself obliged to break with the political and politicizing elements of the CNT-FAI, who still speak in the name of the organization and the revolution.

“The Congress declares that it is profoundly saddened and angry because of the official lack of concern on the part of the CNT-FAI regarding the persecution of the anarchists in Spain, and calls for a campaign of energetic protest in every country.

“In favor of the anarchist prisoners and victims of the Stalinist repression—The odious repression underway in Spain must be denounced before the international workers movement and the defamatory campaign waged by the Third International against those who devote themselves totally to the struggle against fascism and who have for more than a year carried out prodigies of heroism to crush the mercenary gangs of Franco, Mussolini and Hitler, must be repudiated.

“We call upon the organizations of the CNT-FAI to respond with firmness and to provide the material and moral solidarity that is owed to the foreign comrades arrested after the May Days of 1937 in Barcelona, to energetically defend them and to attempt by all means to prevent them from being executed, and decide to undertake a campaign to break the code of silence around the ‘anti-fascist’ and ‘popular’ fronts, in order to denounce the organized murder of the best revolutionaries by the lackeys under the orders of Moscow.”

It has been demonstrated that, in the name of the FAI, the “enlightened” ones have been sent to govern the Spanish people. Moreover; when the Marxist politicians did not need their good services and they were “dismissed” from their posts, the FAI attempted to transform itself into a political party in order to prepare itself to once again occupy certain ministerial posts, in case they are summoned—they thought they were indispensable—by the “anti-fascists”.

Despite the fact that they so earnestly desired such positions, the ministerial “crises” that subsequently took place did not provide the *faístas* with an opportunity to continue to demonstrate their great abilities as statesmen, diplomats and sociologists.

Chapter 18: Exported slogans and practices

We have already said elsewhere in this book that the CNT pressured the International Workingmen's Association to accept the "circumstantial" governmental operational practices tested in Spain and to transmit them to the rest of the international workers movement.

We possess perfect proof of what we are claiming in the resolution approved by the IWA at the Extraordinary Congress held in December 1937, insofar as it called for "unity of action" with the reformist international in order to jointly adopt measures of defense in favor of the Spanish people.

Fortunately, the initiative—"transcending all the ideological differences that separate our movement from the International of the reformist trade unions" according to the Secretariat of the IWA—experienced the most resounding fiasco because the reformists refused to comply with the requested unity program, but the ridicule that consequently attached to the IWA, thanks to the obvious pressure of the CNT, is worth noting.

Another slogan that was supposed to be translated into practice, at the insistence of the CNT, was that of "unifying the efforts" of the FOR of Argentina with the FACA, a specificist institution whose members are declared enemies of the FORist workers movement and who are active in the trade unions of the yellow trade union federation of Argentina, the CGT, and in the independent trade unions, instilling them with the anti-FORist orientation wherever they attain prominence.

Also, in Montevideo, some anarchists who have withdrawn from militant activity—perhaps with sincerity and in good faith, we shall not presume to judge them—initiated negotiations to unify the FORU with the group of anarcho-dictators who organized and still call themselves the *Unión Sindical Uruguaya*, negotiations that did not succeed because it was understood that those who split from the mother entity of the Uruguayan proletariat do not identify with the practices and goals of the FORist movement.

But that is now a thing of the past. What remains is the disseminating of frankly authoritarian slogans and practices throughout the World of Labor, a crop that is now ripe for harvest. It was logical to assume that the "ministerialists" of the CNT and the FAI would have to find, in addition to enthusiastic panegyrists, many advanced disciples ready to honor or even surpass their masters and to prescribe as infallible the "anti-fascist" panaceas that were tested with so much tenacity and stubbornness by their "ministerialist" masters, and the text that we shall now read, from *El Andamio*, of Chile, proves what we said above.

Mariano Vázquez claimed that we must not "bury ourselves in dogmatism" and that we should "operate in every country, in accordance with the circumstances, psychology, possibilities and characteristics". But his words were not heeded, and the *cenetista* and *faísta* modes of operation tend to be generalized, and to be translated into the local idiom. In any event, opportunism has long practiced them.

Let us see what Juan Pinto D. says in his recent article that appeared in *El Andamio* on May 26, 1939:

“DISCIPLINE IN THE LIBERTARIAN MOVEMENT. The various theories and doctrines that seek to solve the economic, political and social problems that are affecting humanity have over the last few years undergone such profound changes of position that in some cases—the Bolshevik movement—they have signified an overwhelming negation of their past. The libertarian movement—anarchosyndicalist and anarchist—has also felt the effects of the confrontation with reality. Spain has been the scene of experimentation where the FAI and the CNT found themselves facing the unavoidable necessity of going beyond sacred principles once held to be invariable. It is clear that the position of these institutions has been criticized by a minority of militants and supported by a majority.

“So: we do not want to engage in an in-depth analysis of the international problem, we shall restrict our attention to our own problems.

“In Chile there have been several libertarian federations; these have organized heterogeneous masses and small groups of militants, their revolutionary activity has been restricted to sporadic actions that have not benefited from a process of preparation and training of their own forces.

“Their interventions, then, in the political and social affairs of the country have not influenced the broader course of events. They have not been influential nor do I think they will have an impact in the future if they continue to operate in the same way they have for the last fifteen years. The revolutionary process is complex and requires the intervention of the militants not only on the restricted plane upon which the trade union operates, but in every aspect that is presented.

“A revolutionary movement that wants to have a decisive impact on events, needs a specific organization that has support throughout the entire country, one that presents a single face, which has DISCIPLINE, and above all one that is not afraid of words and the NEW MODALITIES, especially the ones that represented such an innovation in Spain.

“A specific organization. The political apparatus of the revolution; this is the overwhelming necessity in our movement and to satisfy it we must mobilize the enthusiasm of all those who do not want to see the emancipatory hope of humanity symbolized in the anarchosyndicalist movement disappear.”

Chapter 19: The Economic Plenum of the CNT

We have set forth in detail, with excessive redundancy, the betrayals that the responsible leaders of the CNT and the FAI endorsed and implemented. There is one other aspect: the economic, which must be addressed and to which we shall devote a few brief comments.

The *cenetistas* and *faístas*, having lost their way with regard to ideology and slipped down the chute of apostasy, dedicated themselves with tenacious zeal to the task of plugging the holes in the ship of state—which they had saved from sinking—engaging in initiatives directed towards restoring it to its former condition. They still were not satisfied, however, with having put the brakes on the social revolution; they entered into alliances of every kind with the political factions; they collaborated with the central government from the ministries. They had to complement their disastrous activities by addressing, for “constructive” purposes, the complex economic problems the country faced because of the civil war, seeking, preferentially, a possibilist solution.

The policies approved at the Extended National Economic Plenum of the CNT, held in January 1938, exhibit—by virtue of their structure and essence—a passionate appetite for reformism, a multiplication of the governmental bureaucracy and, even more importantly, a mistaken operational conception of state syndicalism.

We must take into account the abnormal situation that prevailed at the time, in order to affirm that the organization and functioning of this Plenum suffered from many defects and shortcomings, which deprive its resolutions of any moral authority. Even more important than these defects and shortcomings are the assumptions and the mentality that informed the conceptual motor force that would make possible the realization of and conferred dynamism to these activities. It could be argued, with powerful logic, that the delegations were not the faithful representatives of the workers organized in confederal cadres, nor did they convey the precise expression of those workers concerning these economic panaceas, since many workers were at the front and did not participate in the preliminary debates.

What is undeniable is the fact that the initiative to convoke the Economic Plenum arose from the highest levels of the organization—from the top down—and that the delegations—except for a few exceptions, let us add—were monopolized by nattily dressed governmentalist bureaucrats.

It would not be appropriate to say that this fact constitutes evidence of malfeasance, because that would be a platitude and besides, it would mean that that we would have to minutely examine all the political and legalistic loopholes and fine points of the whole process. We can say, however, that it was an indecency whose purpose was to sow confusion among the workers.

The CNT, exuding optimism, proposed—according to the text of the approved resolutions—the creation of powerful state-syndicalist bodies—with their respective legions of parasites—to control and direct the industries under their jurisdiction; legislation concerning the various manifestations of human effort, measuring their quality and quantity in order to establish pay scales

and to create files for each category; the centralization or trustification of written propaganda and managing the funds of the organizations. It was a reconstructive plan on a vast scale, which would have left the most prestigious statisticians awestruck and would have made those States that boast of having “advanced” social and economic legislation look ridiculous.

Let us take a look at the concerns of the CNT and the general tenor of the resolutions of the Economic Plenum.

“LABOR INSPECTORS”

In the introductory section of this particular proposal, the CNT asserts that it is not guided by any proselytizing ends. We cannot confirm the veracity of this assertion. We can say, however, that those of us who live in these little republics [in South America] are inured to incredulity. When a political party, whether or not it is in power, proposes the creation of a new government body or inspectorate, besides the proselytizing motive what is of much greater interest to it is to be able to find jobs for its friends.

By calling attention to this example it is not our intention to reprimand the cenetistas by cataloguing them under the heading of politics. They acted with and like the politicians, because of “imperious circumstantial necessities”.

Here is the text of the Articles on the Labor Inspectorate:

“1. The National Industrial Federations, at the proposal of the Trade Unions as conveyed through the Regional, County and Local Federations, will appoint the Technical Delegates needed to inspect and direct the Economic units under their jurisdiction.

“2. These Delegates will propose the norms to be implemented in order to effectively direct the different Industrial units for the purpose of improving their efficiency and administration. They will not operate on their own account; they will be responsible for complying with and enforcing compliance with the directives issued by the Councils, to which they will be answerable.

“3. To achieve greater efficiency and operational improvements and in such cases where it will be necessary, they will propose to the Councils that have appointed them the application of sanctions against those Institutions or individuals who, as a result of the non-fulfillment of their duties, have merited such sanctions.

“The Organization will agree to the extension of the corresponding coercive means to the Institutions which must avail themselves of this right, establishing the Rules that will determine how these coercive means may be applied. These directives are undertaken exclusively by and refer only to the Industries that are in the hands of the workers.”

“PAY SCALES”

The humanist and just anarchist concept—“From each according to his abilities”—had no place in the statist plans of the CNT. Its plans seemed to be oriented in accordance with the standard type established by capitalism. The CNT planned to recompense the efforts of the workers according to their outputs and skill levels, thus preserving privileged categories.

It sought—according to the CNT—“to correct those deficiencies and inequalities that so often sow discord and apathy among the workers, to the detriment of the economy” and therefore the Plenum resolved:

“First. The acceptance of pay according to job categories, and we propose that the National Industrial Federations adopt, while adapting them to their economic possibilities, the following scales of payment, taking X as the initial indispensable quantity necessary to cover the needs of the producer:

“Base Category. Assistant laborer.... X 1a superior category. Skilled worker 20% of increase 2a superior category. Specialist 40% of increase 3a superior category. Assistant Technician 70% of increase 4a superior category. Technical Director 100% of increase.

“The above percentages are to be understood as being applicable to the base category.”

The schedule of pay scales approved at this Plenum was a “revolutionary innovation”. It is very similar to the one established in Russia. We are not saying that the CNT’s version is an exact copy of the Bolshevik system.

“IBERIAN TRADE UNION BANK”

One can very well imagine that, if the CNT was proceeding in the direction of a statist orientation, regulating and controlling the economy of the country, then it logically should create a Trade Union Bank to “increase production”, to “rebuild industry”, “offer loans to the peasants”, etc. Thus it was that, while at the Congress of the Agricultural Collectives of Aragon the delegates were trying to abolish money, creating in its stead a rationing card, the CNT gave money the same exchange value that capitalism assigned to it. This was deliberate. We should point out that in order to arrive at these paradoxical positions, or more accurately, these aberrations, of the CNT, eminent academics had previously come forth to hold conferences on economic, financial, monetary, commercial and statistical topics—among others, Fábregas, Santillán, Leval, López, Carsi, Cardona Rosell, etc.—who oriented the *cenetista* approach in this sense. We are going to read a fragment of the article signed by Amezcua, published in *Solidaridad Obrera* while the CNT’s Economic Plenum was in session, which will help us to evaluate the state syndicalist mentality that predominated among the *cenetistas*. Let us begin by getting one thing straight:

“The ideal ... the suppression of money; unquestionable. But until we get there, we have to go through stages, overcome very prominent obstacles and climb the slopes of the social economic topography.” And he continues as follows:

“MONEY. ITS NATURAL FUNCTION, UNDERMINED BY THE PLUTOCRACY.

“In the liquidated economy, it was the function of the Bank to store the money, to look after its circulation, to ensure its fictitious multiplication, its investment or assignment, constituting with the individual and voluntary deposits of this money, masses of capital with which it decisively influenced the industrial and even the moral life of the country, leading to the hegemony of the possessors of the largest quantity of monetary symbols to the detriment of the more modest possessors, who never obtained more than a sparse and always miserable return on their deposits. The capitalist imagination invented, to the detriment of the non-capitalists and for its profit, the theory of credit and of the loaning of money, and on this basis the greatest immoralities have been committed, giving way to usury, to the abuse of

confidentiality and to fraud, which CAUSED THE DISCREDITING OF MONEY—an element of exchange and circulation of natural and industrial products—by employing it as just another commodity. Naturally, the producers, who did not participate in all the permutations and dishonest games played with money by the bankers, but possessing an instinctive understanding of all this chicanery, and in part understanding it because of its practical repercussions (the price of bread, clothing and other necessities of life), have repudiated money as the cause of the misery of the working class, and had no objection against the proposal that money be purely and simply ABOLISHED, imagining that it could be replaced by the direct exchange of products. It was the specific and precise function of money, however, to regulate this exchange, since it made possible the establishment of a standard of exchange between diverse products—a common denominator for knowing, for example, how much wheat must be delivered by a Peasant Organization in order to obtain a pair of shoes—and to the extent that money performs and is limited to performing this function and is not the object of speculation that would disturb its NATURAL ROLE AS REGULATOR OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND, of production and consumption, THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT ABOUT ITS NECESSITY within an economic complex, much less in a regime whose nature, with the suppression of the capricious and inorganic activity of the individual, and within the structural framework of the Trade Union, will have entailed the disappearance of even the possibility of any deviation of the use of money from its exclusive role as regulator of exchange as well as obviating any danger that it would ever serve as an object of speculation and exploitation of the worker. Once the MONETARY SYMBOL HAS BEEN PURIFIED AND RECOVERED from the grip of the plutocracy THAT HAD DISTORTED IT AND EVEN PROSTITUTED IT, it must perform its natural role in the collectivized Economy, as will that economic sector which, as we pointed out above, has the SPECIFIC TASK OF STORING, CIRCULATING AND INVESTING THE SYMBOL OF EXCHANGE.”

As you can see, in the last paragraph the author argues in favor of the creation of the Trade Union Bank. And not only does he endorse the creation of such a bank, but he also extends the initiative to the creation of two other banks: the Producers’ Bank and the Bank of Foreign Trade. It is unnecessary to point out that the creation of the Iberian Trade Union Bank implies the appointing of a president, vice president, director general and many other employees.

“THE TRADE UNION INSURANCE ADMINISTRATION AGENCY”

The purpose of this institution is to administer the insurance program for illness, workplace accidents, pensions, maternity leave, etc.; in short, what is called social welfare in the “democracies”. The essence of this project is contained in this paragraph:

“a) To demand the representation of the CNT in each and every one of the official State institutions, Autonomous Regional Governments, and Provincial and Municipal Councils in Loyalist Spain, whose mission is to regulate, direct, or provide consultative services with regard to the management and implementation of national, regional, provincial and local, or county policies relating to insurance and social welfare in all of its dimensions. This representation must not be inferior to that already possessed, or which may be granted in the future, to the other trade union central organization.”

CONCERNING THE ADVISABILITY OF REDUCING THE NUMBER OF CONFEDERAL PUBLICATIONS AND HOW THIS ISSUE WAS ADDRESSED

We have noted that in Spain, during the war, it was hard to obtain the raw materials for manufacturing paper. At first sight, this would seem to justify the proposal to impose restrictions on the press. However, of the three “compelling” reasons that the CNT offered, the third one is the one that best expresses its views regarding and its interest in such restrictions:

*“The last reason is the necessity of conferring homogeneity to the orientation of our publications, which is the only way to obtain benefits from the powerful weapon known as the press. We have to put an end to the public disagreements in the Movement. Up until now, this has been largely achieved in the **Bulletin of Internal Orientation**, published by the Secretary of the National Committee, but its effectiveness is cancelled out by the small publications that, although of little importance in themselves, produce no small effect by disorienting instead of orienting opinion and the militants, because they do not abide by the ESTABLISHED LINE of the national order for propaganda.”*

It is obvious that the CNT wanted to centralize control over written propaganda, in order to silence those who criticized the statist orientation that was expressed by the unfolding events.

This is proven by these two paragraphs of the proposal:

“With this plan for the publication of newspapers, the propaganda of our Movement is absolutely guaranteed, with regard to both aspects. The major publications with a large circulation and the smaller papers in the provinces that fulfill the need to provide guidance that is in concordance with the psychology and the customs of each town.

“All the newspapers that do not abide by this plan must disappear as a result of their being contrary to economic efficiency and unnecessary.”

We have already mentioned that the CNT, dominated by a feverish zeal for planning, was passionately preoccupied with “reconstructing” the economy that was destroyed by the war and establishing certain “creations” tested during the subsequent months. This is proven by our summary commentary on the work of the Economic Plenum. There is much more evidence, however, which we cannot provide because of considerations of space. We shall merely proceed, then, by providing the names of the institutions that it sought to create and the rules that it sought to impose, which were approved at the Plenum.

The proposal recommended the creation and further development of “Consumers Cooperatives”. It called for “research on how to carry out the implementation of effective planning of Industry, without waiting for the creation of the National Council of the Economy, a government organization with a mixed state-trade union composition, which would be called upon to fulfill this obvious economic necessity”. We shall add that this government body was insistently advocated by the CNT in its petitions to the central government. The proposal furthermore advised the “administrative Centralization of the Confederal Economy”, and that within the resulting administrative body many other sections would be formed. And, finally, it proposed regulations concerning “general labor standards”, by means of which human labor power could be controlled; these norms would specify the quality and quantity of production and would apply moral sanctions against those workers who failed to comply with their standards, those who came to work late, those who did not carry out the type of production indicated, etc.

So far we have described, in broad strokes, the results of the deliberations of the Extended Economic Plenum of the CNT. By virtue of its contents and its proposals for the future, it may be deduced that the *cenetistas*—having reneged on their ideological patrimony—were concerned, directly and indirectly, with reinforcing the prestige of bourgeois institutions, giving them a trade union character and denomination. We say this because the reader will have noticed that these institutions would, in order to function normally, have to be legalized by the State; that is, the State would have to approve their statutes and participate in their control and supervision. Even assuming, however, that all the proposed initiatives were to be implemented under the aegis of the revolution, what perspectives and what basis did the CNT possess that would lead it to believe that the State would not destroy these creations in the same way—with a military incursion—that the Collectives of Aragon were destroyed? According to the CNT, these proposals were based on the solid purpose of helping to win the war. Furthermore, in the text of the regulations and in the appeals issued by the Plenum, after its adjournment, to the confederal organizations, all language of a revolutionary character is eliminated, with the intention, of course, that no obstacles should be interposed by the authoritarians to the implementation of these plans. This appeal concludes with these words: “Hail to all the anti-fascists, regardless of their other views!”

We are convinced that the Spanish workers movement must be reborn, like the Phoenix, in order to once again take up its post in the struggle for emancipation. Many seeds have been sown and the germination of rebellion and the expression of the anarchist ideal must soon break out with greater force. The Spanish people are indomitable and preserve in their hearts the hope for freedom. They are spurred on by their yearning for redemption and the moral force of their glorious revolutionary history, that moral force that our comrade P. Minotti recalls in an article that we read a short time ago and in one of its paragraphs he says:

“We therefore grant to these moral forces all their splendor and character, due to the elevated significance they imply in the struggles for liberty, in the vehicles of our anarchist propaganda. It can never be the offspring of mere words or of the more or less brilliant demagoguery of leaders, of politicians of every stripe and color, because as opposed to the ephemeral and traitorous words, in the conscience of men there must be, firm in anarchist ideals, ideas of social transformation; the more dismal the present time, the more firm must be the moral forces of the anarchists. They have not been destroyed, nor have they been replaced by the negativism of historical materialism. We need to know how to give the fecund passions of the people their true function in the process of social transformation, which, according to the words of Mikhail Bakunin, will create a new world from the old.”

And when this mission is resumed—the creation of a new world—the Spanish workers will, with their great revolutionary achievements, erase from history all the aberrations and betrayals of the CNT, in order to affirm anarchist communism.

Chapter 20: Defending the orientation of the IWA

No one can deny that, once the first alarming news of the developments in Spain had been received, the two sister organizations on both sides of the Río Plata, the FORA and the FORU, affiliates of the International Workingmen's Association, were filled with enthusiasm and activity in order to reaffirm their moral solidarity with their Spanish comrades. Economic support was contributed in accordance with their means and as the circumstance allowed.

But it is also true that once they became aware of the deviations endorsed by the "majority" of the representatives of the CNT, and subsequently, the pressure exerted by the latter on the IWA to convince the latter to accept and bestow its imprimatur on these deviations, they clearly expressed their disagreements with these developments in both organizations.

This is demonstrated by the resolutions approved on questions pertaining to the CNT which, because of the impossibility of sending delegates in person who would represent both the FORA and the FORU at the Extraordinary Congress of the IWA held in Paris in December 1937, were transmitted in writing. From the texts of these resolutions concerning the problem of the CNT and its "attitude and positions after July 19", we shall quote some excerpts from a text of the FORU:

"The FORU understands that the Congress of the IWA must clearly set forth its position on the Spanish events. The FORU draws attention to the fact that there is a difference between the terms, WAR and REVOLUTION. With respect to the war, the IWA must affirm its traditional mission of opposing all wars and combating the militarist spirit, understanding by WAR the struggle for the seizure of Power among the various capitalist fractions, represented in the various factions in the government, known as monarchists, republicans, socialists, communists, and any other 'isms' that are currently polarized around these two poles, apparently opposed, but both of which are distinctly reactionary, and inveterate enemies of Proletarian emancipation: FASCISM and ANTI-FASCISM.

"With regard to the revolution, on the other hand, that is, with regard to the work carried out from below, outside of and against all governmental institutions, expropriating property without any hesitation at all, abolishing the entire system of exploitation and the regime of wage labor, the IWA must cooperate to the fullest extent of its abilities, for the purpose helping the revolution to advance as far as the circumstances allow."

Concerning the delicate problem posed by the CNT, which was engendering conflict within the movement of the IWA by engendering circumstantially sympathetic nuclei, given the deviationist position of the CNT, the FORU expressed its views in the following manner:

“With regard to the nuclei that are ‘sympathetic’ to the IWA, which exist in various countries, and which the CNT is currently encouraging to intervene in the Congress (except for those which have maintained a connection with the Association as member organizations), this is not the time to give them rights, when they have forgotten their most essential duties, by combating or sabotaging the organizations that are working among the rank and file of the movement, in their attempt to infect the sections of the IWA with authoritarianism, and which on this occasion, taking advantage of our liberality, maneuvered to form a majority, one that approves of participation in the institutions of the State, whether ‘temporarily’ or permanently, and therefore distorting the principled course of the international movement represented in the IWA. Rather, the attendance at the Congress, like all the acts and labors of the International, of nuclei with an organic character which act, even temporarily, within or outside the countries that are currently experiencing emergency situations, but in conformance with the traditional foundation of anarchist militancy, which confers upon the workers movement its transformative idealism, we consider that they must take a position in the entity, since in most cases their disorganized condition is the result of attacks launched by the reactionaries and the opportunists, often concealed behind reformist or dictatorial workers movements. As a result, and convinced that it is a meeting of delegates of member organizations affiliated with the Association, devoted to the task of elucidating the problems that affect the movement, interested in strengthening and affirming its fundamental principles, with the elevated morality of men who are guided by a higher ideal rather than base passions, capable of admitting an error if they have committed one, we have engaged in an examination of the current position of the CNT, and the points that are proposed as the basis for discussion at the Congress.”

The position of the FORU at the Extraordinary Congress is summarized as follows:

“Concretizing the thoughts of the FORU concerning the points that have come to our attention, which were proposed by the CNT to be included on the agenda for the Congress, and also concerning those whose contents are unknown to us, which were proposed by comrades Galvé and Rudiger, which make reference, according to the synopsis of the Secretariat of the IWA, to a ‘reexamination of the Declaration of Principles and of the Statutes of the Association’, we consider it advisable to set forth a summary of our views, in order to inform the comrade delegates attending this Congress, and concerning which we would very much desire to reach a free agreement. Our views are:

“1. Fraternal acceptance by the CNT of the critiques of its governmentalist activities, reaffirming its adherence to the Declaration of Principles of the IWA and its commitment to act in accordance with them....

“3. A Position Statement by the IWA concerning the Spanish events, expressing the deepest solidarity with the revolutionary achievements, manifested in the armed struggle and in the social experiments that have been carried out, or are in the process of being implemented, based on free agreement and direct action. Reaffirmation of its spirit of rejection of all wars, which essentially involve contention for dominance over systems of government, in the game of political disputes, to obtain hegemony over the ‘res-publica’.

“4. Rejection of any ‘revision’ of the Declaration of Principles of the IWA, and affirmation of the current structure of the Secretariat, proposing that should any changes be contemplated, they must first be submitted to the review of the member organizations, and they must be given enough time to issue their reports.

“For the Federal Council, the Secretary.”

Later, for the Ordinary Congress, also held in Paris in 1938, where particular attention was devoted to debating the topics, “Examination and Clarification of the Principles of the IWA Statutes”, and “International Practical Norms of Anarchosyndicalism”, the FORU condensed its views in the following statements:

“Regarding the Examination of the Statutes and the Declaration of Principles of the IWA, the FORU understands the need to affirm the existing Pact and its Declaration of Principles, its anti-state norms and practices and direct action, and if any modification is appropriate it would be for the purpose of making it more consistent with the federalist character of the movement upon which the International Workingmen’s Association is based and in which the anarchist goal of the IWA is embodied.

“Sixteen years after the founding of the IWA, the heir of the First International that Bakunin, Reclús, Lorenzo and so many other comrades worked to create, and which at the Congress of Saint-Imier in 1872 acquired its own distinctive character with the approval of an anti-statist, anti-political and revolutionary declaration during its proceedings, all of which was reaffirmed at the founding Congress of the current IWA that took place in 1922 in Berlin, which ranged us against the reformism of social democracy, the master of the Amsterdam International, the latter therefore being subordinated to the ebb and flow of its statist and legal action, and also against the Red Trade Union International of Moscow, an obligatory appendage of the Bolshevik Party, victorious in Russia, thus distinguishing the IWA as the only libertarian and emancipatory International, diametrically opposed to the centralizing mechanism of these corporate bodies, which are subject to the directives of political Marxism and to its materialist concept of the struggles of the proletariat, our Association, although it has recently experienced a decline in the number of its adherents, due to the persecutions endured by its affiliated organizations in various countries, its prestige and its possibilities have been greatly increased, because the workers, tired of legal agitation, which only serves to bolster the strength of capitalism and the State, are turning towards the methods and practices advocated by the IWA, and that is why it is so essential to intensify propaganda among all the workers, about the meaning of its tactics of struggle, and the content of its Declaration of Principles, putting more emphasis on its syndicalist dimension to influence their activities, positing Anarchist Communism as the final goal, highlighting the comprehensive human meaning that inspires the member organizations of the Association, to advocate forms of social life based on mutual aid and free agreement, outside of the political and economic systems whose reason for existence is based on capitalist exploitation and on the tyranny of the State, regardless of the form of the latter, bourgeois or proletarian, since both are upheld by the Authority of bayonets.”

The FOR of Argentina sent the following proposed resolutions concerning the question of the CNT mentioned above to the Ordinary Congress of the CNT held in Paris in December 1938:

“FOURTH POINT. Every declaration of principles has, of course, a theoretical meaning, since its purpose is to articulate aspirations or proposals for the fulfillment of any particular movement; declarations of principles, however, no matter how brilliant and relevant they may be, are absolutely worthless if the institution or the movement that adopts them is content to restrict them to an existence on paper but does not seek to realize them to the greatest possible extent, adjusting its development and its tactics to their meaning. It is for this reason that, from the point of view of the FORA, which tries to always remain faithful to the message of its principles, declarations of principles do not represent a purely theoretical exposition, but rather a line, a point of perspective that fixes the course of a movement; a line and a point of perspective from which one cannot deviate without falling into irresponsibility, and to which it is necessary to adapt the meaning of tactics and militancy.

“Without this zeal and this faithfulness to which the declaration of principles appeals, it is to be understood that principles can be set aside and that the militancy and daily activities of the movements would follow the path of possibilism and contingency. When the declaration of principles upheld by the IWA was drafted, the FORA took the opportunity to express its opinions and to make proposals through its delegates, and we can today express with satisfaction that the meaning of the principled positions which informed those opinions and proposals of ours, have not changed in the least. Rather to the contrary, the events of the last few years have contributed to the reaffirmation of the concept advocated by the FORA regarding this matter. This is why, confronted with an invitation like this one that calls for a clarification and examination of the declaration of principles of the IWA, we understand that everything that might be done in this respect can only be accepted when it reaffirms the postulates of emancipation that constitute the direction and goal of our struggles; and also in view of the fact that in this sense there is nothing superior to the declaration of principles of the FORA, or to its methods of struggle and its system of organization, we reject any attempt that is directed in the sense of introducing modifications that would tend to diminish the anti-state, anti-political and anti-collaborationist position that must be the guiding beacon for all the actions and activities of the IWA.

“FIFTH POINT. Considering that every statute is always incompatible with the federalist principle and with the free agreement that we have a duty to practice in all dimensions of our activities in order to enable the workers to exercise these same principles, and also for the purpose that, as a result of this consequence, they will be instilled with the faith in the ideals of the movement, it is our opinion that there should be no other statutes for the IWA other than those agreements and decisions made by its congresses and assemblies.

“SIXTH POINT. With regard to the issue discussed in our Fourth Point, the FORA cannot conceive of a tactic that would not be conditioned by its theory, that is, by its declaration of principles. That is why, since the first meeting of the revolutionary

syndicalists that led to the founding of the IWA, the FORA has placed special emphasis on its declaration of principles and on its concept of syndicalism, understanding that the latter must necessarily be conditioned by the former. The FORA set forth its conception concerning this matter in the minutes that it presented to the meeting, and it has reaffirmed this concept at all the congresses or meetings that have taken place since then. Today our opinion has not changed. We still think that working class syndicalism with its tactic of direct struggle, conditioned by a superior declaration of principles, constitutes an invincible weapon in the hands of the proletariat; we think that this weapon cannot be abandoned as long as the regime of exploitation and tyranny that weighs upon the peoples endures; but we consider that, with regard to the interpretation of a regime of equality and social justice, our hopes for working class syndicalism can only be embodied in a declaration of principles such as we advocate, which assures for the future an era of economic equality and freedom of expression through the establishment of Communism and Anarchy. This is the social goal of the FORA and it is also the social goal of the IWA if we take into account the fact that in its declaration of principles Libertarian Communism figures as the leading aspiration of its struggles. We consider that all of this is well known to all those who have had the opportunity to get to know the nature of the FORA within the IWA. We therefore do not think it is necessary to insist on this. We shall only say specifically and even at the price of succumbing to the vice of redundancy, that syndicalism must adapt its tactics of struggle as well as its system of organization to the social goal that has been set forth in its declaration of principles.”

Chapter 21: The Federation of Collectives of Aragon

One of the most fruitful experiments conducted by the anarchists during the first months of the war in Spain was undoubtedly the Federation of Collectives of Aragon, where the transformation of capitalist society into a system of social life characterized by solidarity and justice was to some extent actually realized.

Despite all the compromises and backroom deals with the Marxist politicians, a life of freedom, mutual aid and communal labor was assayed in Aragon. The peasants of Aragon, who had a long history of rebellion, were rapidly able to appreciate the difference of the methods, the practicality of the anarchist ideas and the nobility of the social structure without masters, local political bosses, priests or exploiters.

It is true that in Aragon, the authority principle was not totally eliminated, since the anarchists, in their suicidal offer of cooperation and alliance with the politicians, allowed the preservation of disguised state forms in the Council of Defense, but it must be acknowledged that they made the landlords and feudal lords disappear in order to collectivize the land for those who worked on it.

As we said previously, however, the healthy contentment and satisfaction of the Aragonese peasants would not last very long, because the government that had fled to [*sic*: “from”] Madrid and was reborn with the participation of the “ministerialists” of the CNT and the FAI in Valencia, whose president, under the circumstances—by order of Russia, which was pressured to do so by the “democratic” powers—was the puppet Negrín, decided to abolish the last vestiges of the social revolution, the Collectives of Aragon, and dispatched an expeditionary force under the command of the communist Lister to do the bidding of international capitalism and the “anti-fascist” powers.

This maneuver, which was urgently implemented, is described, with real bitterness, by comrade Ascaso, in an interview with a journalist for *Le Reveil*, of Geneva, excerpts from which we reproduce below:

“Naturally, we held discussions, we examined the danger, we met more than once, but moderation and a wait and see attitude, and a desire to find a compromise solution, always prevailed. It was necessary to hold discussions, to conciliate, to make a deal with Negrín, to go to Valencia, to meet with the various ministers, etc. And then always to wait, not to become alarmed, not to respond to provocations, in order to experience a debacle, which was the inevitable result of such methods.

“... As I already told you, I and the five comrades who, with me, formed the majority of the Council of Aragon, all agreed. We would have resisted, we would have remained at our posts and assumed responsibility for whatever would have happened. Regardless of the defeatist position of the CNT, we would have defended our Council

with arms in hand, because that is how we understood the revolution and we are still to this day the same anarchists and revolutionaries that we were in the past. And I will tell you even more, so you will understand the refined Jesuitism of the politicians. While I was in Valencia on an urgent mission, having been given assurances that we could come to an agreement, the division commanded by the sinister Lister, the communist, marched on Caspe, and I was arrested at the gates of Valencia, after having spoken to the ministers. I am sure that if I had been able to reach Caspe, Lister would not have been able to dissolve our Council, since all the confederal divisions were at our disposal.”

That is how the experiment of the Aragonese collectives ended, which, while they may have suffered from serious operational defects, set the standard that showed that the anarchist ideal had ceased to be a utopia in order to instill in the minds of the peasants the conviction that the capitalist system had denied them the right to Life.

Chapter 22: The underhanded machinations of international diplomacy

The *cenetista* and *faísta* bureaucracy, in its clumsy and ridiculous attempt to justify its betrayals and its collaboration with the State, conceived the argument that it was necessary to support Companys in Catalonia and therefore to obey and uphold the power of the central government as well—whose President was Azaña—so that, on the surface, Spain would give the appearance to the diplomats of the democratic governments of a country ruled in accordance with the legal and political norms inherent to any well constituted State, so that these countries would make weapons, munitions and other urgently needed materiel available to the “anti-fascist” alliance.

It is not necessary to open the book that tells the story of the obscure diplomatic plots and machinations of the anti-fascist powers against republican Spain, which were so clearly revealed by the grave events that took place in those 30 months of fratricidal war, in order to affirm that the “transcendental” resolution of the CNT and the FAI to allow the whole dilapidated structure of the Spanish state to remain standing, in order to obtain moral support and arms from the “democracies”, was merely a crude pretext to conceal their absolute lack of anarchist convictions; their cowardice in the face of the shocking spectacle of the awakening of the Iberian proletarian multitudes; their well-dissimulated ambitious fantasies and their boundless authoritarian careerism. For it is not possible to suppose that during those moments they had forgotten the past of opprobrium and despotism that these nations had behind them, one that is identical with regard to violent methods and servile ends to the behavior currently manifested by the totalitarian states—as the prize of conquest—by imposing humiliation on the Czech, Ethiopian, Austrian, Albanian and other peoples.

France has used the guillotine on its rebels. It has enslaved the peoples of Africa, where it imposes, by force of arms, European “civilization”.

England has demonstrated its barbarous procedures of “adaptation” in the bloody war against the Boers, in Transvaal, and rules over India, Palestine, and other vast, and wealthy, regions.

The United States flaunts, in its long reactionary history, the red blemish of the Chicago Martyrs. It electrocuted Sacco and Vanzetti and it has imposed its military and economic dominance on various little republics in South America. Russia, which, by an irony of language, is denominated by its paid panegyrists as the “vanguard of democracy”, has a rigid and cruel dictatorship of the “proletariat”; there is no freedom of assembly or speech and the only press is the official state press.

However, even if we were to assume that their memories had proven to be unreliable, the suspicious events that were taking place—the refusal to deliver the train cars full of ammunition in Irún; the initiative of the leader of the French cabinet, the socialist Blum, to form the famous Non-Intervention Committee, which resulted in a tight blockade on the coasts of “loyalist” Spain; the fall of the cabinet presided over by Largo Caballero, ordered by Russia with the acquiescence of France and England; the surrender of Málaga, Bilbao, Santander, etc., without a fight, without

destroying the machinery of the mines or the armaments factories; the presence in the port of Barcelona of English and French warships during the May Days of 1937, when the Marxists were murdering the anarchists in order to impose their complete domination over the “workers Republic”; the refusal to send arms to the Aragon front; the Bolshevization of the anti-fascist army, and its infiltration by large numbers of “technicians”, all communists; the control exercised by the communists over the frontier with France; the dissolution of the Defense Committee and the agrarian collectives of Aragon; the intervention of the army of Portugal—an ally of England—alongside Franco’s hordes; the transport, right under the noses of the English and the French, of thousands of “volunteers” sent by Mussolini and Hitler, without their “knowledge” and without them being detected; the bombing of Spanish cities and towns by German and Italian airplanes, fueled with Russian gasoline; and many other grave and symptomatic events—did it never occur to the brilliant minds of the men of responsibility of the CNT and the FAI to be concerned with investigating just where their “ingenuousness”, “good faith” and zeal to make alliances with the authoritarian politicians united in the anti-fascist bloc and with the democratic nations had led and was leading them?

The machinations and backdoor plots being hatched in the chancelleries of the “anti-fascist” countries were no mystery, maneuvers tending to eliminate the danger that was represented, for the governments and capitalists of the totalitarian nations as well as all the other ones, by the revolutionary wave spearheaded by the anarchists of the Iberian Peninsula. *Tierra y Libertad*, of Barcelona, in its issue of March 20, 1937, said:

“International capitalism has no wall that divides the fascist capitalists from the democratic capitalists, or the monarchists from the liberals, the rightists from the leftists. It has its great centers in London and in New York, in Berlin and in Paris, in Rome and in Buenos Aires, in Tokyo and in Geneva, in all the great capitals of the globe.”

Santillán claimed:

“So-called loyalist Spain collapsed as a result of our victory of July 19, under the influence of the imperialist constellation of the allegedly democratic powers. England and France, with the diplomatic alliance of Russia, were not very concerned, or not at all concerned, with the prospect of a fascist Spain; but they were very concerned about the possibility of a revolutionary Spain.”

Furthermore, the “pacifist” initiatives of the English politician Mr. Eden were very well known in Spain, initiatives which entailed the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy. The results of the grotesque Munich Conference were also known, where, with the mutual agreement of the four great powers, the disappearance of Czechoslovakia was decided. The efforts of the English prime minister on behalf of “pacification” were also well known, whom some humorists depicted with an open umbrella; and no one was unaware of the fact that English diplomacy—by dividing countries up or surrendering them—dominates the world; which helped transform Mussolini into a Napoleon; which preferred and helped bring about Franco’s victory; which received the protest of Portugal “against fascist interference” and ... that is already enough. The democratic and totalitarian powers—seemingly at loggerheads—thus fulfilled their mission to “save humanity”, providing the means to make possible the stabbing in the back, the imprisonment and the shooting of the

anarchists of Spain and today, they must be savoring, satisfied and in unison, the tragic task they accomplished in the Iberian regions, by means of the hosts of Franco.

Now that the echo of the military bugles, the roar of the cannons, the staccato tapping of the machine guns, the buzz of the bombers, the heartrending cries of the wounded and the thump of human bodies hitting the Spanish soil, never to rise again, has just recently been silenced, once again the four horsemen of the Apocalypse are galloping over the fields of Europe. Attila returns in the form of Mars.

Once again, the brutal and destructive argument of combat weapons is employed: tanks, planes, gas, armor, flamethrowers and toxic liquids, etc., in order to determine the political and economic pecking order among the capitalist powers. It is thus that the madmen of absolutist sensualism, the unbalanced and dangerous agents of international diplomacy and the arms manufacturers have once again led the peoples of old Europe, after having intoxicated them with the opium of patriotism, to a hecatomb that is even greater than the one that started in 1914, which cost millions of lives and left in its wake millions of invalids, orphans and insane people. In all oral and written propaganda we note the fateful duo—Capital and the State—as the factors that are responsible for the painful and Dantesque spectacle that we behold as spectators from a distance, although the irrefutable arguments that we have always made to the workers in order to point with the finger of accusation at the causal factors of this collective crime and of our misfortunes, sacrifices and miseries, will not at the present time produce any greater reflective effect in the minds of the people, since the latter are dominated by war fever, which the bourgeois press injects into them on a daily basis. We must repeat, however, that those who today unleash the whirlwind of passions, of hatred and of limitless cruelty on the European peoples, are still hiding behind false appearances, seeking to appear as messengers of peace and saviors of humanity.

It is logical to state, then, that every person with an altruistic spirit and noble sentiments must feel despondent in the face of the impressive scene of cruelty, martyrdom and destruction that is currently taking shape in Europe, and must unite their reproach with our anathema against this crime against humanity signified by the war, joining the outcries of the mothers, sisters, children and elderly parents who will be the sacrificial victims of the current madness of war.

That, then, is the anathema we pronounce against all wars.

Chapter 23: Our press

When I refer to “our press”, in South America, in order to call attention to the preaching of anarchist doctrines that is tenaciously being carried out by the newspapers, *Organización Obrera*, the organ of the FOR of Argentina, and *Solidaridad*, that of the FOR of Uruguay, we are not guided by a sense of closed-minded exclusivism. The reason why we express it this way is the fact that these newspapers have been able to keep abreast of the circumstances and events, fearlessly criticizing the *cenetistas* and *faístas* at first for their deviations, and then for their ideological betrayals, keeping the proletarian ranks and the anarchist militants informed of these trends, so that they should not be infected with the confusionist virus that the disastrous actions of those comrades has disseminated and so that the proletarians and the anarchist militants should concern themselves as a matter of the greatest importance with learning all the details about these developments, in order to breach the *cordon sanitaire* that has been organized on an international scale by the anarchists who have implemented these “constructive” and “innovative” experiments.

It is true, of course, that this worthy and noble attitude of our press has induced enormous discontent in the ranks of opportunism and that it has “earned” bitter reproaches and much antipathy. Some other newspapers—only a very few—published by other anarchist groups have also confronted the confused situation brought about by these events and criticized from an elevated vantage point the *cenetista* and *faísta* “discoveries”.

We shall reproduce the following excerpts from two articles from our press, which demonstrate the clear and plainly anarchist orientation of the editorial policy of the newspapers mentioned above:

In issue no. 55 of *Organización Obrera* the following thoughtful article appeared:

“The feeble hopes that were nourished concerning a possible favorable change in the situation of the Spanish republic are totally dissipating in a most spectacular fashion. In reality, considering the way things are going and in view of how the peace process is being prepared, one might say that the destiny of Spain, although not finally determined, has now been cast, since the events of the last few days, both regard to the political as well as the military aspect, leave no room for doubt. Spain, although it is painful for us to say this, will definitely be sacrificed to the caprice of the dictators and to the interest of big international capitalism.”

“However, and despite such a sorrowful conclusion, we must point out that none of the great events of this century, including the Russian Revolution, have contributed a greater mass of experiences than the Spanish conflict, since apart from the deep social significance it acquired during its very first moments, the civil war that is now coming to an end has been rich in facts and examples of every kind and magnitude.

“Indeed. In Spain, to an extent seen nowhere else in the world, we have witnessed the degree to which people are capable of sacrifice and heroism. Alongside this, how-

ever, we have also witnessed the extent to which the suffering and sacrifice of the people, whose fate is now being sealed, was cynically manipulated. For apart from the betrayals that pertain to this case, the deception has in this instance been so real that it will be difficult for its perpetrators to vindicate themselves before the serene judgment of history, much less before the harsh justice of the peoples of the world who might demand on a not-too-distant future date that those who are now its leaders should provide an explanation for their actions. The truth is that the drama of Spain is now coming to an end with the greatest betrayal of our time and that this unprecedented betrayal is the responsibility of all those who helped to cause this valiant people to set aside their revolutionary impulses of the first few moments of the civil war and instead entrust their destinies to the democratic policy that all their leaders were advising them to adopt.

“We will not say anything new, at least not for those comrades who have tried to keep informed and to study the unfolding events of this conflict. If we say, however, that the people who fought on the side of the republican government have not been defeated, we are only shedding light on a reality that nothing or no one can refute or deny. And we shall also mention an incontrovertible truth when we say that the Spanish people, after having been suitably pacified and domesticated, has been miserably surrendered: by means of the deception practiced by all those who led it, first in order to conceal, and then later to annihilate their revolution out of fear of losing the good will of the great democratic nations ... which are now paying them back for their sacrifices by surrendering them unconditionally to fascism. Is it not clear that the betrayal from the outside caused this and made possible this deliberate domestication of the people? Yes, that is the truth, the truth that cannot be concealed with phrases or talk of circumstances....

“The Spanish people lost their naive confidence in their leaders. Although they were heroic and self-abnegating like no other people, the Spanish people were still too childlike. They trusted too much in the old statist and political lies. They were told that it was necessary to uphold democracy and the fiction of the State, but by reestablishing the democracy and once again putting the state back on its feet, both turned against them and stabbed them in the back.

“If, instead of suppressing its impulses of the first moments, it had encouraged the people to continue to engage in the destruction of everything that stood in the way of its desires for a rapid defeat of the rebels and in the process radically transform life throughout Spain; if it had taught the people that its revolutionary conquests could only be defended by undertaking new and more advanced conquests; if it had taught the people that the ‘new’ legislation of justice, even if it was promulgated by a working class minister, was nothing but a skillful maneuver intended to inject new life in the regime that was in its death throes; in short, if it had told the Spanish people that by transforming its revolutionary struggle into a simple war for national independence—an outrageous maneuver that only brought the unitary military command and the militarization of the army in the old style—meant the beginning of the end of all their emancipatory efforts, it is certain that the fate of Spain would have

been different than what is now in the offing, despite the fact that at this time there is talk of an ‘honorable’ peace.

“Not all, however, is lost in Spain. The old promises of anarchism both with regard to its conception of the revolutionary struggle, as well as in relation to its classical position against the State and everything that helps to uphold the present regime, has not suffered any kind of setback. To the contrary, reality has assumed responsibility for once again confirming that everything the people have done that is not in accordance with those principles has been in vain, and produced negative results, although, as in the case of Spain, the people performed prodigies of glory in the greatest struggle of our times.

“It is a terrible lesson that Spain has taught us at the cost of enormous sacrifices. Let us hope that this lesson is heeded by the peoples of the world!”

In the issue of the FORU’s *Solidaridad* for the first two weeks of October 1937, we read:

“Although it might seem surprising to many comrades who view these problems from an objective standpoint, the entry of the CNT-FAI into the government ministries of Valencia and Barcelona, as well as the alliances with the anti-anarchist movements, were not really the consequences of the need to deal with ‘special circumstances’, but resulted from the lack of anarchist convictions among the principal architects of these policies; from the fact that they were not completely liberated from the statist principle, and the essential function that by their very nature the organs of the State perform; from the very fact that they even admitted the possibility that the emancipatory project could be served from the institutions of the State, if only these institutions were to be composed of men of good faith, of anarchists, thus denying the essential principles of anarchism, elaborated on the indestructible basis of the conclusions arrived at from the undeniable facts that history has provided us.

“In brief, we shall not resort to claiming that the misnamed governmental ‘anarchists’ and the men who sought to justify their policies, even if they say it was all an experiment, are basically totally lacking in any anarchist beliefs—quite the contrary: they are basically authoritarians, they deny the creative capacity of the people, from below (the basis of anarchism) and attribute more liberatory capacity to action from above, by means of committees or other institutions that, without or even against the will of the workers, dictate, not initiatives to be studied by all with equal conditions and rights, but indisputable orders, which must be obeyed, regardless of whether or not they respond to the needs of the oppressed, concerning which—and this is the other basis of anarchism—it cannot be conceived that there is any genius who can regulate the needs and aspirations of the people, but that the latter will realize their needs and aspirations only by way of the exercise of their complete liberty; when this exercise of liberty is lacking, then the creative initiative and capacity of the people to struggle against the oppressors and to organize life in such a way as to satisfy their material and spiritual needs, then, we repeat, this capacity will be emasculated, because it will be suspended in expectation of deeds that are to be carried out by

saviors. This anti-libertarian labor, unfortunately, is what has been accomplished by those ‘anarchists’ who joined the government, supported by those who placed more faith in the ‘indispensable’ men than they did in the working people.

“The argument that joining the government was done for the purpose of preventing the intervention of the governments of other countries, so that it would appear to international capitalism that its interests were being safeguarded, but that what they were really doing was safeguarding the revolution, could not be more puerile, since it cannot be assumed, much less by the capable men who joined the government, that international capitalism is so stupid as to not know how to distinguish whether a government was fictitious or real; if it was fictitious then the intervention of armed force that everyone indisputably sought to prevent would have taken place, until the ‘fictitious’ government should either become a real one, or until it is replaced by another that really guarantees its interests and those of the Spanish capitalists, for which both will work in unison, due to the identity of their interests and ideas of social organization, establishing regimes that were fundamentally based, although their outward forms varied, on the subjection of the workers to the exploitation of the employers, thus assuring the existence of their iniquities and obnoxious privileges.

“To understand this question in any other way reflects intellectual shortsightedness, regardless of how intellectual its proponents may consider themselves—and you will pardon us for the heresy that semi-literate workers would be so irreverent towards the ‘elite’ of revolutionary intellectualism—or else bespeaks of a lack of courage that is needed by men to confront the consequences that every revolution brings in its wake and there should not be any revolutionaries who have not studied this problem in advance.

“Anyone who, for many years, has carried out propaganda in favor of the revolution and does not expect this propaganda to bear fruit, would be like a parrot who automatically speaks words without the least understanding of what they mean.

“It is possible that these men have suffered from those two great misfortunes for the revolution: a lack of anarchist convictions and the simultaneous lack of personal fortitude to assume the responsibility that the outbreak of a profound social revolution entails.

“We think, however, that it is the first of these shortcomings, which determined the anti-revolutionary position that these men have assumed and still support. Our view is based on the fact that we understand that there is no such thing as spontaneous generation, but that everything that happens has its developmental process, until it reaches its culmination, when circumstantial factors contribute to its full emergence.

“Assuming this is the case, it is logical to expect that at the moment when the Spanish events compelled these men to take a definite attitude, anarchist or statist, they placed themselves on the terrain that conformed most closely with the social conception that existed in the deepest recesses of their souls. They therefore demonstrated that the idea of liberty that they had disseminated for so many years was only a thin veneer that concealed the authoritarian soul that existed in the depths of their being.

“This assertion is corroborated by the fact that the ‘special circumstances’ they invoked became permanent circumstances, and neither the crimes committed with impunity against large contingents of self-sacrificing libertarians by the so-called anti-fascists, nor the reflux of the revolution due to the work openly carried out to strangle the revolution by the left wing political parties, even while they persisted in their obstinate or dishonest attempts to be admitted to the government, so that from their posts ... they could continue to support the progress of the revolution, without noting that the work of the ‘anarchist’ ministers in the government actually contributed to the effectiveness of the current justice system in its program of imprisoning and executing a multitude of our comrades.

“We shall help the cause of the Spanish revolution with all our abilities, but we shall do so without abandoning our positions, meaning the revolutionary cause, the efforts of the people who are fighting on the basis of direct action, on the openly anti-state terrain, always working from the bottom up, a struggle that is directed towards the complete destruction of all bureaucracy and privileges, establishing forms of social life that will guarantee integral emancipation from every kind of exploitation and tyranny.”

Chapter 24: Sterile sacrifices

It is not our intention to exalt to the heavens the actions of courage and heroism carried out by the anonymous militiamen of the Spanish people and especially, the actions of the anarchists during the epic assaults against the reactionary forces of Franco, reinforced by the “volunteers” sent by the totalitarian States and Portugal, because this would only serve to bolster the war fever that was inoculated clumsily and with irresponsible stubbornness by the supermen of the CNT and the FAI into the ranks of the “anti-fascist” combatants.

There have already been many books published by writers of acknowledged intellectual prestige, and many more are on the way—with the visible signs of having surrendered to the dictates of profit—that contain a chronological and exuberant description of this disagreeable and heartrending aspect of the Spanish problem, and most of them are narratives, saccharine and sentimental, instead of polemical or critical works.

Despite this circumstance, it is our duty to sincerely render a just homage to record the valiant and self-sacrificing conduct of so many hundreds of thousands of anarchist militants who, led by their rebel spirit and spurred on by the noble and compassionate ideal of redemption that they expressed by their words and which beats in their proletarian hearts, faced the emissaries of Mars with bared breasts, in order to offer up their lives in sacrifice for the emancipation of the human species.

In the assaults on the Montana Barracks in Madrid and on the Atarazanas Barracks in Barcelona, at the international bridge in Irún, in San Sebastián, in the siege of Alcázar in Toledo, on the parapets of the Ciudad Universitaria, in Guadalajara, in the reconquest of Teruel, Belchite and Quinto, in the mountains of Asturias, in Gijón and Oviedo, in the generous deeds of the “suicide” battalions, in the epic resistance of Puigcerdá and finally, in all the regions of Spain, falling silent forever, cut down by the mercenaries’ machine guns, many good and valiant anarchist comrades died.

Our sense of honor also obliges us to acknowledge the enormous sacrifices and countless sufferings undergone by children, women and the elderly, who had to endure—during the dreadful inferno that thirty months of a harsh conflict meant for them—the shocking aerial bombardments, the roar of artillery and the lamentable scenes of pillage, arson and destruction that the viciousness and barbarism that possessed the hordes of Moors, Carlists, Nazis and fascists inflicted on them. We empathize with the pain of these innocent victims of the war in order to anathemize those who, out of crude ambitions for power, rapine and exploitation, unleashed, participated in and prolonged this crime against humanity, this hurricane of passions, which raged with an infernal fury, with hatred and the urge for vengeance.

However, with the same sincerity with which we render homage to the memory of the comrades immolated in that tragic conflict and as much as we are horrified by the Dantesque vision of the scenes of suffering, the vicissitudes of the struggle and massacres that the Spanish people experienced, we must also affirm that all those titanic efforts, the indelible deeds of heroism carried out by the anarchists, the lives that were lost, the *via crucis* endured by the elderly, women

and children and, as a final sorrow, the heartrending tragedy experienced in the concentration camps of France, were all completely fruitless and sterile for the noble cause of emancipation of the Spanish people, because when the latter awakened from their torpor, clenched their fists and surged into the streets for revolutionary action, ready to destroy a regime of opprobrium and tyranny, they found themselves surrounded by traitors to the anarchist ideal and politicians, profiteers and reactionaries, who instead of crying, "Forward!", assumed the task of pacifying the holy rebellion of the vengeful crowds and corralled them in the enclosure of treason with the accursed tentacles of political chicanery and authoritarianism.

Chapter 25: Summary

The grave, suicidal and outrageous betrayals that we believe have been clearly exposed in the preceding chapters, cannot be understood to be based on and must not be attributed to fortuitous events, circumstantial necessities or imperatives of the war that began on July 19, 1936, but must rather be understood as previously existing, very deeply rooted methods of activity and conceptions, or, more precisely, a pernicious characteristic that had contaminated the highest ranks of the Spanish workers movement, a characteristic which certain “celebrity” elements, who at that time occupied responsible positions in the CNT and the FAI, further accentuated with their shameful activities.

We must not commit the absurdity or the injustice of accusing all the anarchist militants of complicity in this treasonous surrender, because we know that many good comrades were swept aside by the authoritarian avalanche and those who were not shot as “uncontrollables” were imprisoned in the jails of “loyalist” Spain; but we are not exaggerating when we say that the failure and the stifling of the social revolution—which had such an auspicious beginning—was argued and decided in advance, in the secret meetings, held behind the backs of the majority of the working class and anarchist militants, in the halls of the government palaces. This assertion has its indisputable source in the political machinations that had been underway for quite some time; in the “reasonable propaganda”—as Santillán called it—that had been disseminated by the *cenetista* and *faísta* press in advance of the elections of 1936 that made it possible for the leftists to win, and even more distinctly in the liaison committee formed by the National Confederation of Labor and the Generalitat of Catalonia even before the military uprising.

It is therefore not the fruit of “circumstantial necessities”—a concept that was abusively conceived in self-defense—but the work of apostate and careerist elements who, basking in their literary reputation and in the posts that they filled, waited hypocritically for their chance to victoriously participate in the privileged legion of bureaucrats and thus to obtain the much sought after reward for their authoritarian ambitions and sentiments. These men had no anarchist roots at all. They were dominated by scepticism with regard to the possibility of a successful social revolution. They never wanted it and they opposed any attempt to make it happen, out of fear or convenience. They had already established their position on this question. It was a risky enterprise and far beyond their collaborationist convictions.

Taking a closer look at the analysis of their activities and the concepts that they revealed over the course of the events that we have commented on, we come to the conclusion that they have a particular tendency, which translates a faithful copy of other events and the activity of other men from now distant but not forgotten epochs. History repeats itself.

Let us take a look back in time. Let us go back to the year 1870 and there we shall see identical episodes, men, phrases, slogans and consequences.

A pioneer, an active militant and a valiant propagandist of anarchism—Bakunin—describes for us in the beautiful pages of his books—pages that we must re-read to refresh our memories,

strengthen our spirit and reaffirm our convictions—the events that took place in France during that year, which are the same events that took place in Spain just recently.

Change the names, the date and the country and you will have a picture of Spain, with its personalities, its passions, its intrigues, its betrayals and the strangulation of the social revolution.

Let us see what Bakunin tells us in his letters to “a Frenchman”, published in the book, *The Social Revolution in France*:¹

“All of them are sincere patriots of the State. Separated on so many points, they are completely united on only one issue: they are all equally political, all men of the state.

“As such, they only have faith in the regular means, in the forces organized by the State, and are all equally horrified by the prospect of the downfall, that is, in effect, the dishonor of the State, not of the nation, not of the people; a horror towards uprisings, towards anarchistic movements of the popular masses, which are the end of bourgeois civilization and the certain dissolution of the State.

“They want, then, to save France by the regular means only and by the organized forces of the State, only resorting as little as possible to the savage instincts of the multitudes, which becloud the exquisite delicacy of their feelings, of their tastes, and what is even more serious, that threaten their position and the very existence of the society of the fortunate and the privileged.

“They are forced, however, to resort to it, because the situation is very serious and their responsibility immense. A formidable and magnificently organized power has no other means of resistance than an army that is half-destroyed and an incompetent, brutalized and corrupt administrative apparatus, which only barely functions and is incapable of creating in a few days a force that it was not capable of producing in twenty years. It is therefore incapable of undertaking any serious effort, if it is not supported by the public confidence and assisted by popular sacrifices.

“They were forced to appeal to this sense of sacrifice. They proclaimed the reestablishment of the National Guard throughout the country, the incorporation of the Mobile Guards in the army and the arming of the whole nation. If all of this was sincere, they would have ordered the immediate distribution of arms to the people throughout all of France. But this would mean the abdication of the State, the social revolution in fact as well as in theory, and they by no means wanted to do that.

“This was so unappealing to them that if they had to choose between the triumphal entrance of the Prussians in Paris and the salvation of France by the revolution, there is no doubt that all of them, except for Gambetta and company, would opt for the former. For them the social revolution is the death of all civilization, the end of the world and therefore of France as well. And it would be better, they would think, to have a dishonored, dismembered France, momentarily subject to the insolent will of the Prussians, but with the sure hope of rising again, than a France that is forever dead as a State, killed by the social revolution.

¹ The text that follows is composed of excerpts from *Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis* (written in September 1870), as it is known in English. A selection of excerpts from this pamphlet, which does not however include the passages translated from the Spanish below, may be found online at: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/bakunin/works/1870/letter-frenchman.htm> [Translator’s Note].

“As politicians they had to face, then, the following problem: to issue a call to arms to the people without arming the people, but taking advantage of the popular enthusiasm in order to attract, under different names, many voluntary recruits to the army; under the pretext of reestablishing the National Guard, they wanted to arm the bourgeoisie, excluding the proletarians, and especially the former soldiers, in order to have a force powerful enough to oppose the revolts of the proletariat, who would be emboldened by the absence of the troops; to incorporate into the army the Mobile Guards, who are sufficiently disciplined, and to dissolve or leave unarmed those who were not disciplined enough and who displayed sentiments that were too red. Not to allow the formation of free military units except on the condition that they would be organized and led only by commanders belonging to the privileged classes: the Jockey Club, noble landowners and bourgeoisie, in a word, men of means.

“Lacking the coercive power to contain the population, they used its patriotic enthusiasm, provoked as much by the events as by their declarations and compulsory decrees, to preserve ‘public order’, disseminating among the population ‘that false and disastrous conviction’ that in order to save France from the abyss, from the annihilation and slavery posed by the Prussian threat, the people must, at the same time that they remain sufficiently enthusiastic to feel capable of the extraordinary sacrifices that would be demanded of them, for the salvation of the State, ‘remain calm, inactive, and place themselves in a completely passive way into the hands of the State’—and of the provisional government that has now taken control of the latter—and to consider as an enemy of France, and as an agent of Prussia, anyone who attempts to disturb this confidence and this popular tranquility, anyone who wants to provoke the nation to engage in spontaneous acts of public salvation, in a word, anyone who, not having complete confidence in the capacity and good faith of its current rulers, wants to save France by way of the revolution.

“As a result, there are today among all the parties, without excepting the red Jacobins and naturally also the bourgeois socialists, those who are intimidated and paralyzed by the fear that the really popular socialist revolutionaries inspire in them—the anarchists or, so to speak, the Hebertistes of socialism, who are also profoundly detested by the authoritarian communists, by the State communists, as well as by the Jacobins and the bourgeois socialists—among all these parties, without excepting the State communists, ‘there is a tacit agreement to prevent the revolution as long as the enemy is in France’, for the following two reasons:

“The first reason is that, since all of them can only perceive the salvation of France as coming from the action of the State and in the excessive exaggeration of all its powers and capabilities, they are all sincerely convinced that if the revolution were to break out now, it would have the immediate effect, naturally, of destroying the present State, since the Jacobins and the authoritarian communists would necessarily lack the time and all the indispensable means to immediately rebuild a new revolutionary State, it, that is, the revolution, would hand over France to the Prussians, ‘by first handing it over to the socialist republicans’.

“The second reason is merely an explanation and a further consequence of the first reason. They fear and detest equally the revolutionary socialists and the workers of the International, and, understanding that in the present conditions the revolution would inevitably triumph, they want at all costs to prevent the revolution.

“This position is uniquely balanced between two enemies, one of which—the monarchists—is condemned to disappear, and the other—the socialist revolutionaries—which threatens to be victorious, imposes on the Jacobins, the bourgeois socialists and the State communists the harsh necessity of secretly and tacitly making an alliance from above with the reaction against the revolution from below. They do not fear the reaction as much as they fear this revolution. For they see that the former is excessively weakened, up to the point of not being able to exist any longer without their consent, so they temporarily associate with it and use it in a very disguised way against the latter...

“What is the result? The radical opposition, doubly constrained by the instinctive repugnance that it has for revolutionary socialism and by its patriotism, completely nullifies itself and marches against its will behind this government which it reinforces and sanctions with its presence, with its silence, and sometimes even with its deeds and hypocritical expressions of sympathy.

“This forced agreement between the Bonapartists, the Orleanists, the bourgeois republicans, the red Jacobins and the authoritarian socialists, naturally redounds to the benefit of the first two parties and to the detriment of the latter three. If there were ever republicans working on behalf of the monarchist reaction, they are certainly the French Jacobins led by Gambetta. The reactionaries, driven into a corner, no longer feeling the ground under their feet, seeing all the old means broken in their hands, all the necessary instruments for imposing the tyranny of the State, have at this time become excessively humane and courteous, Palikao and Jerome David himself, so insolent yesterday, are today extremely affable. They shower the radicals, and especially Gambetta, with all their praise and with every kind of expression of respect. But in exchange for these courtesies, they obtain power. And the radical left is completely excluded from power.

“Basically, all these men who are today’s leadership in power: Palikao, Crevreau [Crémieux?] and Jerome David on the one side, Trochu and Thiers on the other, and finally Gambetta, that semi-official intermediary between the government and the radical left, cordially detest one another and consider each other to be mortal enemies, and profoundly mistrust each other, but, all of them are engaged in plotting together, they are forced to march alongside each other, or rather ‘are forced to give the appearance’ that they are going forward in agreement. All the power of this government is exclusively based today on the faith of the popular masses in their harmonious, complete and iron unity.

“Since this government could only survive as a result of the faith of the public, it is absolutely necessary that the people should have, so to speak, an absolute faith in that unity of action and in that identity of opinions of all the members of the government; for if the salvation of France must be achieved by the State, this unity and

this identity is the only thing that can save it. It is therefore necessary for the people to be convinced that all the members of the government, putting aside all their differences and all their past ambitions, and absolutely setting aside all party interests, should frankly be concerned about nothing but the salvation of France. The instinct of the people is perfectly well aware of the fact that a divided government, pulled apart in every way, in which all its members are conspiring against all the others, is incapable of serious energetic action; that such a government would surrender the country instead of saving it. And if they knew everything that was really taking place within the current government, they would overthrow it.

“Gambetta and company know everything that takes place in this government, they are intelligent enough to understand that the government is too disunited and is too reactionary to deploy all the energy required by the situation and to take the necessary measures for the salvation of the country, and remain silent—because if they were to say what they know they would provoke the revolution, and because ‘their patriotism as well as their bourgeois sympathies reject the revolution.’”

All the posturing, innovative ideas and the fireworks of bellicose slogans that are being disseminated by the collaborators of “anti-fascism” were the logical consequence of the compromises made in the vicious circle of the political mania they had succumbed to voluntarily and in a pre-meditated way, and of all the crude justifications that reflected the simple fairy tales of minds dominated by confusion and by a demeaning passion, once they felt that they had failed in their role as rulers and once they knew that they had been transformed into reprehensible scum in the eyes of international anarchism.

Now that they are tumbling down the fatal slope of their betrayals, they do not feel the least trace of remorse, nor do they have any scruples about sowing confusion in all directions in order to find allies. They are not worried about the future. It was the present that offered them praise for their superman pedantry. Not only the connections and the bowing and scraping with and before the powerful, the politicians and the military staff but their performances as statesmen, diplomats, petty bosses and, at the same time, as lapdogs of those same individuals.

The most notable aspect of the activities and speeches of the “ministerialists” that deserves to be highlighted is the ease with which they enshrouded in obscurity an entire past of glorious and honorable revolutionary history that the Spanish proletariat could boast of and how they emphatically disseminated capricious theories and sophistical conceptions.

It is not possible to grasp the scalpel of critique to dissect the complex range of practices and ideas offered by the geniuses of “anti-fascism” and “democracy”, meticulously examining its ineffectiveness and its contents. The output of slogans and excuses was so copious that it would be a most daunting task to provide a chronological account of them. We must, however, make a special allowance for the thesis that was simultaneously upheld by Oliver, Santillán, Peiró and others, which can be summarized as follows: “the social revolution meant an anarchist dictatorship” or “revolutionary totalitarianism”. It might be said that once the activity of the authors of these ridiculous phrases became known, they were bereft of any value. However, since there are many people who find it easy to identify with the acrobatics of the ideal and model their

thoughts and their words on the latest fashions—especially if the latter support their eccentric interpretations—we shall undertake a refutation of this notion.

It would be sufficient to offer some opinions from the prestigious pioneers and theoreticians of anarchism who addressed and resolved the social problem in all its enormous range. But we already know that for the “ministerialists” it is a heresy to feel admiration and respect for the “venerable beards” and the many years that they spent in study and research mean nothing to them, nor do they value the enormous amount of oral and written propaganda they produced; their outstanding activity in various popular insurrections; their cruel pilgrimage from one country to another and from one prison to another and their beleaguered life as militants.

According to the thesis of the “ministerialists”, the fact, once the social revolution breaks out, the capitalist monstrosity is completely destroyed; the population of a region, a city or a town then declares the complete equality of economic conditions; all the privileges that a small minority enjoyed by virtue of the imperative of the brute force of arms are repudiated and annulled; it is proclaimed that there is no more exploitation of man by man; the coercive means that the bourgeoisie today possesses are seized and the proletarian multitudes are encouraged to fully realize their well being and to defend their freedom and their right to Life—all of this signifies, according to the “ministerialists”, “anarchist dictatorship”, “confederal totalitarianism”, or “tyrannical ambitions”.

Captious and sensationalist arguments are crafted in order to disorient the workers, seeking to draw a parallel between the opprobrious reigning system, with its shocking economic and social inequality—where any fool who becomes rich by means of bold robbery or mental derangement and who dreams of surpassing Napoleon becomes, overnight, the master of the lives and the wealth of the people—with the structural harmony that would emanate from a system based on mutual aid, understanding and reason, justice and love for one’s fellow man.

An attempt was made to make the common people feel inferior who, having staged a revolt in favor of a complete social transformation, were supposed to adopt certain precautionary measures against the possible reactions of the drones of the human hive, who, if they would only grudgingly give up the lavish habits that they practice today at the cost of other people’s sweat and blood, would thus give themselves the opportunity to dignify their existence with honorable labor, for the benefit of the collective.

And in accordance with this sophistry, the “ministerialists” put the brakes on the events and chose to submit to those who tyrannized over, exploited and humiliated the people in the name of the principle of authority—the State—saying, with complete glibness, that they adopted this tactic “without considering themselves to be outside the mainstream of anarchism and without having abandoned their principles”.

The cruel consequences of the sudden initial reversal and of the betrayals executed by the *cenetistas* and the *faístas* during the Spanish conflict are now well known, since besides besmirching, with their maneuvers and shady deals and alliances, the greatest emancipatory epic of all time, they also led the Iberian masses to a senseless sacrifice and betrayed them by surrendering them to the authoritarian fiends.

It will be objected that this opinion of ours is the result of our “sectarian isolation”.

If, as Companys told them, “You have won and everything is in your power”; if, as Santillán confirmed in his book, *The Revolution and the War in Spain*, “the dissolution of the defeated army gave us a quantity of arms that made it impossible for the enemy to carry out any attempt to recover its

lost positions.... we could have single-handedly imposed our absolute dictatorship, declared the dissolution of the Generalitat and established, in its place, the real power of the people”; if, during the events of May in Barcelona, when the people erected barricades and immediately dominated the entire city and, furthermore, could rely on approximately 100,000 armed militiamen in nearby provinces, the leaders of the CNT and the FAI had been men of integrity and anarchist convictions, there can be no doubt that in that particular region of Spain, encompassing Barcelona and Aragon, within a few months, days or hours, a system of social life based on the most sublime accord, solidarity and the just ideal of redemption would have been established—Anarchy—and the red and black flag would have flown above many buildings, the symbol of liberty and love for suffering and exploited humanity.

This is not just a dream. The veteran anarchist fighter, Emma Goldman, who was an eyewitness of the events in Spain, declared, several months after the beginning of the civil war:

“I am profoundly convinced, indeed I am certain, that if the CNT-FAI, taking into its hands and under its control, had blockaded the banks, dissolved and eliminated the assault guards and the civil guards, padlocked the Generalitat instead of entering it to collaborate, given a moral blow to the entire old bureaucracy, swept away its enemies near and far, today, one may be certain of this, we would not be suffering from the situation that so humiliates and insults us, because the revolution would have had to consolidate its logical course of development. Having said this, I do not mean to say that the comrades could have realized anarchy, but they would have been able to move in that direction, coming as close as possible to the anarchist communism they talk about here.”

We shall be told in response that if this had been attempted and carried out, all the powers—totalitarian and “democratic”—would have blockaded the emancipated territories and populations by land and by sea and, in addition, the “anti-fascist” political factions would have united to fight them and to suppress this revolutionary experiment.

However, did anything different happen? Were the anarchists not persecuted, massacred and imprisoned by all their enemies? Was there not an agreement between the totalitarian and the other powers to eliminate the hotspot of rebellion represented principally by Barcelona? And as for the “anti-fascists” of “loyalist” Spain, everyone knows about the outrageous personal intrigues carried out by all the wolves of politics, playing the game, some with the totalitarian countries and others with the “democratic” countries, but all of them with international capitalism.

It would have been more dignified, more heroic and more exemplary to devote their lives, all the lives that were lost, for the realization of the system of life that we anarchists yearn for, rather than diligently choosing to deceive the workers and volunteer to collaborate with the State.

R. González Pacheco was right when he wrote, upon his return from Spain, his leaflet, “Todo” [Everything], whose final paragraph reads as follows:

“At that instant of the world, whether yes or no, good or bad, only those who were cowards or weaklings could not contribute something. They are the ones who always take advantage of the defeats of the courageous and the strong. Those who, between the two extremes of the virile everything or nothing, of the leap towards the infinite or the return to the caves, remain in the middle, between two bold stances, which, for them,

are two fears.... The people want everything. Anarchy is everything. Now and always, the anarchists for everything!"

The anarchist ideal has not suffered any kind of setback, nor has it been devalued with regard to its social greatness with the unfortunate and disastrous activity of the comrades of the CNT and the FAI during the course of the thirty months of the civil war in Spain. It is these comrades who have rejected its ideological conceptions, cast a shadow upon its beautiful revolutionary history and have demonstrated their incomprehension or their lack of knowledge with regard to the emancipatory basis that the anarchist idea encompasses.

Anarchy is virile action, creative unrest, responsibility, altruistic thought and goodness and complete freedom. It destroys prejudices, stirs the hearts of the faltering, wipes out border posts and capacitates men and makes them able to live together in an environment of frank camaraderie, mutual aid and fraternal affection.

To the extent to which historical events compel us to compare it with all the sociological doctrines that combat it and reject it, the brilliance of its structure and principles distinctly stands out, and it is perceived that as a product of the human mind it cannot be surpassed.

The anarchist ideal still radiates—with exhilarating flashes—beautiful rays of love and hope upon the consciousness of the beleaguered, sorrowful and downtrodden peoples, and these flashes merely represent the first glimmer of the red dawn of its redemptive dreams.

As for the collaborationist practices engaged in and policies advocated by the *cenetistas* and *faístas*, we are determined to see to it that they will neither flourish nor be instilled into the marrow of the FORist workers movement or in the milieu of the anarchist militants—on both banks of the Plata—which provide the FORist movement with direction and defend it, because both the former as well as the latter have been tested by experience and have learned lessons from the vast, imperishable economic conflicts and solidarity struggles which, by virtue of more than 40 years of organic federalist existence and energetic efforts to keep the banner of revolt and direct action aloft against Capital and the State, have affirmed, with a cherished optimism and an immense spirit of sacrifice, the true north of the Anarchist Communist goal.

State repression has often wreaked havoc among the proletarian FORist ranks; the confusionist current has often arisen to display its practice-oriented “innovations”, but the FORists have always been able to weather the reactionary tempest and neutralize the authoritarian inroads in their organizations. So, too, on this occasion, we must emerge victorious from the confrontation with the serious problems that the Iberian events have posed for the international proletariat.

In spite of the bitterness and skepticism that now characterize the attitudes of many proletarians, after becoming acquainted with all the details of the tragedy the brave Spanish people experienced and are still undergoing, we must not throw ourselves into the arms of desperation and inertia, or declare that we are defeated. There are defeats that are victories.

The facts, the red shafts of light that streak the panorama of the social struggle, which becomes more cruel and bloody the more intense it becomes, regardless of how discouraging and unfavorable they may seem, always leave a resplendent wake that illuminates the path that must be followed to reach the redemptive goal and prepare the peoples to trust more in their own efforts than in the promises of the parasites of politics who, with revolutionary posturing, lower themselves to the level of the multitudes in order to take advantage of their sincerity and generous

natures in order to increase their own prestige, which they need in order to make the deals that will give them a better position among the privileged castes. Capitalism has its coffers well filled, in order to buy those who might disturb their plans for dominance and exploitation.

Thus, the anarchists face an enormous labor of training and sowing the seeds of rebellion in the consciousness of the working masses.

In order to destroy the confusionism that is being injected into the working class milieu by the betrayers of our ideal, it is necessary to become more active, to devote ourselves more tenaciously and more passionately to trade union actions. The FORist cadres must be on the lookout for the revisionist virus and must reinforce their ranks with new revolutionary contingents.

If the violent repression unleashed by the “democratic” States against our militants has not made a dent in our anarchist consciousness, the disaster undergone by the Spanish proletariat must spur us on to fight with more zeal for the emancipation of the human species. The future belongs to us and we must advance towards the future for Anarchy.

Manuel Azaretto

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