

1945

The advent of libertarian communism

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1932

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Brief introduction

I think that before starting the novel I should give the reader a brief explanation of certain points, because I fear that if I do not make things clear from the beginning, I will be unpleasant from the beginning of the book.

The aim is to perform an educational function that allows us to understand, with a novelistic plot, the possibility of the libertarian communist regime and how the civilized life of humanity will develop under it.

The author therefore needs to use his imagination to be able to present a plastic picture of the new order of things that we anarcho-syndicalists aspire to without the tricks of explanation, transporting the reader to glorious future times.

But, in trying to depict the advent of libertarian communism before it was consolidated and in a normal state, he has been forced to set a specific date for the triumph of the social revolution. This is precisely the point I need to clarify because, assuming that these events will happen in 1945, that is, thirteen years from now, I fear that the countless impatient and hopeful deluded people will find that I have set a date that is halfway distant and think that I am too lukewarm in my desires for the triumph of our ideals.

That is why I want to briefly discuss here the many things that we still have to do before we can safely say that we are ready to implement the new regime without hesitation.

It may be that the impatient are right and that the social revolution will take place much sooner than I imagined. But in that case it will not be that we make the revolution, but that the bourgeoisie will clumsily deliver it to us and that we will be forced to take power and take charge of the administration without being properly prepared for it.

In order to be really capable of having the unions take control of production and distribution by establishing the libertarian communist regime, it is first of all absolutely essential that we do away with not the differences of ideology and tactics, but the hatred that such differences cause in certain cases. As long as we are not governed by the imperatives of love and camaraderie, we will be incapable of any fruitful action.

We took a decisive step towards training by agreeing to organize by industries, but it is not enough to agree on it, we must also comply with the agreement.

We are moving very slowly, although it is evident that it is very difficult to move more quickly given the difficulties arising from the incessant persecutions we are suffering. Can the reader imagine a date on which all the corresponding bodies of this organization would function?

But after such an organization has been established, the workshop committees, factory councils and industrial federations will need some time to master the levers they will have in their hands, and then even more time to establish statistics that will allow us to know how much is produced and consumed, how much can be produced and how much will need to be consumed under the new regime, as well as the stock of each product in each locality at any given time.

Only after all this will we be truly capable of attempting a social revolution. Given the pace at which we are moving, I believe that talking about 1945 is a waste of optimism.

Chapter 1: In the year 1945

I woke up as I did every morning, remembering in the semi-drowsiness of the first moments all that had happened the night before, the taste of the strange stew still lingering, my conscience mocking my credulity, but, when I opened my eyes, I noticed with immense surprise that this was a different room. When I raised my hands to my eyes to rub them, doubting what I saw, I noticed with even greater surprise that during the night I had grown a beard. Suddenly the light came on. The drug had taken effect and I was living in future times. I jumped out of bed looking for a calendar. Soon I found a monthly calendar hanging on the wall with the page corresponding to the month of May 1945.

That room was undoubtedly mine. There was my typewriter, my watch, the circular mirror that I have always used to shave. I looked at him and was amazed. How I had aged! Although I had a few gray hairs on my head, my beard was all white.

But the most wonderful thing was that there, on the table, was this book that I am now writing, already written and published thirteen years ago... I looked through what the reader had read so far and it corresponded to the memories of the previous night, and then he threw the following paragraph in my face, which corresponds to what was at that moment a mystery to me.

It would be awful, I read, to come across this book tomorrow, recounting in detail and chronologically the events of my life that are to be repeated. Living knowing at every moment what is to happen must be an unbearable torment. So in this vision of the future, without slightly falsifying events, I will only narrate the main events, intending only to create a picture that reflects the environment.

I found myself, then, suddenly, in 1945 without knowing anything of what had happened since 1932, and in thirteen years many things would have happened that I was completely unaware of, which was going to make my life very difficult. It was a case of partial amnesia limited to a chronological period. I didn't even know in which town or on which street I lived...

While I was thinking about these things I had been getting dressed and, as I sat down at my desk, I saw on the folder a large notebook with a note on the cover written in my own hand that said: «Memories of my life».

I had foreseen the situation I was going to find myself in and had prepared that book to resolve it. This was stated in the last note stamped in it the day before.

With what curious anxiety I went through its pages, informing myself quickly and concisely of the history of those thirteen years!

A history that must also be presented to the reader of 1932 so that he can explain the events that will occur later. But it will be essential for us to do so in a synthetic and global manner, without descending into many details, presenting before your eyes a picture of the state of the world in general and of Spain in particular, in the year 1945, when libertarian communism was going to be proclaimed at any moment.

Chapter 2: Historical summary

The year 1945 closes a cycle of twelve years, one of those fateful cycles in the history of Spain that make the note of tragedy vibrate in this strange country every twelfth.

Year 1861 – Cholera.

1873 – Cantonal uprising.

1885 – Cholera.

1897 – War in America.

1909 – Barranco del Lobo and Tragic Week.

1921 – Annual.

1933 – Separatist uprising in Catalonia.

1945 – Implementation of libertarian Communism.

In all European countries, the social revolution continued its triumphant march as an inevitable reaction to the collapse of capitalism, characterized by the increasingly distressing problem of unemployment. The number of unemployed had been increasing everywhere year after year, and the vast majority of men found themselves in a desperate situation, driven by hunger.

The palliatives that the bourgeoisie had tried to employ, such as compulsory workers' insurance and the reduction of the working day, had only succeeded in making the workers the ones who were helping their unemployed colleagues, sowing general discontent among all the workers who were condemned to extreme hardships even when working. There was work for everyone through this reduction of the working day, but in this way everyone ended up partially unemployed and the miserable salary they received was not enough to cover their most pressing needs and the discontent was as great as it was general.

Faced with the threat that this state of affairs represented for the bourgeoisie, it had become fashionable in Europe to do without the comedy of democracy, to which the social-fascist dictatorship of the plasterer responded perfectly.

In Russia, a tragic struggle had begun between the peasants and the Bolsheviks – green Russia against red Russia – and in 1945 the triumph of the anarchist ideals that the former represented seemed almost certain.

In Italy, on the other hand, fascism had passed over to state communism, after Mussolini fell victim to an assassination attempt.

In Germany, Hitlerite fascism reigned with its ferocious brutality. It was the desperate and blind defence of the big manufacturers and high finance against the hungry workers. The Hitlerites were the whip and the red-hot iron of the tamer of the proletarian beast.

In 1945, England was in agony, India had been separated, war had been declared on Ireland, the pound had been devalued and unemployment had spread to almost all of the workers that the State was responsible for feeding.

France was the country that best withstood such bad times. There the effects of unemployment had been somewhat reduced thanks to an immense bureaucracy that gave jobs to countless

people and the promotion of popular savings that had transformed an immense number of workers into tiny bourgeois. Social democracy had been more skillful there than elsewhere in knowing how to interest the working masses in the comic comedy of parliamentary politics, and France was the European country in which the social revolution was moving most slowly.

In Spain, politics, since before the author fell asleep, had lost all ideological content and had become only an instrument of struggle between capitalism and libertarian communism. The parliamentary farce was already useless, because the politicians knew the game behind the scenes and we anti-politicians had already learned not to be fooled, so that the dictatorship of the socialists was the most logical and rational.

Out of hatred for the predominant anarcho-sindicalism in Catalonia, Catalonia had been pushed to revolt and later a terrible repression was exercised.

Trade unionism was slandered and persecuted to death throughout Spain with the most villainous and miserable methods, but trade unionism grew all the more powerful the more it was persecuted. The entire working class finally realized the circumstances and the socialists were reduced to a minority of rulers and bureaucrats who had the army, the assault guard and the civil guard. The Confederation was declared illegal, its premises closed and its militants imprisoned, while the thugs in the pay of the governors hunted our people in the streets as in the time of Anido, despite all this or perhaps because of all this, the unions operated clandestinely every day with more enthusiasm and determination, every day with a greater number of adherents, spread throughout Spain and especially among the peasants.

Such was, in summary, the situation in Spain when I woke up one morning in May 1945, learning, with great joy, that in the Ministry that held power, the portfolio of Public Instruction was held by Mr. Juan Pich y Pon, who had become a socialist, and his friend Paco Madrid was governor of Barcelona.

Lerroux, the same deluded gentleman as always, who I have never understood why he has a reputation for being smooth-talking and clever, continued in 1945, already a stale old man, but without having yet managed to govern.

Among the politicians who stood out the most in 1932, Unamuno had died of an indigestion of intellectuality and García Prieto to show that he was a man of his word. Guerra del Río had retired from politics, the owner of a fortune that almost equaled that of the former councilor Santamaría. Cordero had managed to collect fifty connections, celebrating his golden anniversary with the bureaucracy, counting not by years but by jobs. The ex-commander Jiménez, who was unconditional to lieutenant colonel Espino when both tried to introduce fascism in Spain in agreement with Anido, creating what they called, I do not know why, the Traza, and later felt himself to be a revolutionary extremist, in the face of the political circumstances, had become a socialist and held a general management position. «La Tierra», which he tried to create in a sweet alliance with Bellando in the times of Primo de Rivera, an affair that Massó, then usufructuary of «El Imparcial», spoiled for Cánovas Cervantes, naturally, found the dictatorship very good and defended it with fervor from his columns. All the politicians had demonstrated with their conduct that they were worthy of being so except one. Angel Samblancat had finally renounced politics and had come to our field, even though he knew that among us, because of his background, he could not hold office.

I imagine that the reader would like to know the infinite details that have been left between the keyboard of the machine without being put on paper. But he has no choice but to settle for

the above synthetic vision. In any case, these are small things compared to the great things that he will be able to read later.

Chapter 3: My person in 1945

If I read with anxiety the story of those 13 years in the notebook entitled *Memories of my life*, I wrote just as much about something that does not interest the reader much, but that was transcendental for me: my own personal story.

As I read the adventures I experienced in that period of time, a mystery that had intrigued me from the first moment was explained to me. On my work table was, as always, my calendar—a block in which I have always had the habit of writing down daily expenses, income, and cash balance. One of my first glances fell on it, learning with astonishment that it was worth eight thousand and something pesetas. There, in that little box that has always been screwed to the table top and that opens with a tiny key that I keep in the carabiner of my watch, was surely that large sum that, accustomed to the current hardships, seemed fantastic to me. I hurried to open the little box and jocundly stumbled upon the bills that had the effigy of Indalecio Prieto stamped on them.

The memories of my life taught me that it had been improving financially day by day; that my collaborations were paid more and more splendidly; that the editors requested my works and compensated them without sordidness; that my books reached long print runs.

A disturbing thought struck me: if this vision of the future, written thirteen years earlier and detailing everything that was going to happen, had become very popular, my situation would be very violent. Fortunately, as I later discovered, in 1945 no one remembered this work and I was freed from the annoyances inherent in the role of prophet.

I continued to live in Barcelona and in the house of my old boss, with whom I was very close friends, both of us accustomed to tolerating each other, he my extravagances, I his increasingly accentuated madness. We had moved house three years ago. My new room was not larger than the old one, but the sun came in all day long and its window looked out onto a garden that was completely unknown to me.

I took my business card from my jacket pocket and, examining one of my cards, noticed with surprise that he lived on Luis Capdevila Street. How could my old bohemian friend have risen to such fame that a street was named after him?

I looked among my books for a Barcelona guide. The first surprise was to learn that Barcelona had reached two million inhabitants. The unifying forces of capitalism, centralism and politics had continued to act vigorously until then.

I examined the street map and thought I was going mad. Almost all the streets had had their names changed. Thanks to the map I was able to orient myself a little. The Passeig de Gràcia was then called Karl Marx Avenue. Las Ramblas, Pablo Iglesias Avenue. All the more or less conspicuous socialists had their names on the corners. Surely Luis Capdevila had felt like a worker and had joined the General Union of his companions.

At home, as usual, I was alone. The keys, as always —I am an enthusiastic standardizer of my life—, were within reach on the bedside table. The day was splendid and I hurried to grab my hat

and cane and go out to the street to contemplate the Barcelona of 1945, but not before having put in my pockets the eight thousand or so pesetas that were in the little box.

Before leaving, with the Barcelona guide and the map, I had managed to orient myself by learning that my street was in the new neighborhood built on the Montjuich mountain.

A magnificent neighborhood overlooking the sea and the old city, with wide avenues that spiraled up to the summit where, as I fell asleep, the castle rose and then the magnificent palace of the National Labor Promotion rose proudly and defiantly.

Climbing to the top, I contemplated the panorama of the immense city that had spread out over the nearby mountains, filling everything.

At my feet, the old and traditional Chinatown had disappeared, replaced by wide streets of tall skyscrapers.

It seemed impossible to me that such an enormous transformation had been made in only thirteen years and I considered the immense effort made by the working class to create so much wealth for the benefit of the bourgeoisie. I was outraged by this scandalous example of human exploitation carried out thanks to the complicity of those who call themselves socialists. And I abhorred, my heart filled with rage, once again politics.

Fortunately, exploitation was coming to an end. I had fallen asleep thinking intensely about the precursory moments of the great social revolution that would establish libertarian communism and had woken up in 1945. This meant that great events were approaching and that exploitation was going to cease very soon.

I walked down to the Rambla along Professor Besteiro Street, formerly Conde del Asalto. I went to a newspaper kiosk and examined its merchandise. The owner was the same one from 1912 and I was his regular.

I examined with curiosity my latest work, absolutely unknown to me. It was a bloody satire entitled "Promotion, breeding and exploitation of the poor."

I had already read in my memoirs that no Confederate newspaper was allowed to be published and that only certain French newspapers that were sympathetic to our ideas could be purchased clandestinely. As usual at that time, I bought "The Flood" to read its information and find out about events. With it in my hand I sat on the terrace of a café and ordered a vermouth.

The old newspaper was still the same. Those thirteen years had not passed by it. The same format and the same sloppy layout; the same leading article; the same sections and the same free collaboration; the same concealed and hypocritical support for the bourgeoisie and the same poorly hidden hatred of the Confederation.

The news from all over Spain was the same: strikes, bloody repression, robberies, hunger, unemployment, calamities of all kinds, contrasting with the orgy of the politicians and the scandalous business dealings of the capitalists.

Abroad, the social revolution was constantly raging in full support of Spain.

That night Cambó was giving a lecture on the sanitation of the peseta, which was still incurable.

As I was finishing my glass of vermouth, an unfortunate man approached me and said:

— Can you help a poor worker without work?

I helped him splendidly. Knowing that soon those pesetas I was saving would lose all their value, I had little attachment to them. At first I selfishly thought of spending them happily, but soon I was ashamed of my bourgeois selfishness and planned to give that money to the Organization to cooperate in revolutionary work or to help prisoners. That unfortunate man deserved

a few notes that would allow him to live comfortably until the glorious day arrived when everyone could consume what they needed with no other obligation than to work according to their strength.

Chapter 4: The last infamy of capitalism

In the afternoon of that first day of my early life, I was able to confirm something that completely reassured me: I had a double personality.

At the same time that my old personality from 1932 lived within me, with consciousness, memory, and all the attributes corresponding to my individuality, which was surprised by everything and related it to the events of thirteen years ago, at the same time my personality from 1945 lived within me, also with its own consciousness and memory. Although both personalities were unknown to each other, they would exist simultaneously.

I was able to confirm this by the fact that, without realizing the reason that impelled me to do so, my personality from 1932 believing that my steps were moved exclusively by chance, I attended a meeting that I had to attend. My 1945 self acted on its own without giving any explanations to my 1932 self, who had to be reduced to being a mere witness whose initiatives were only realized when the other personality was indifferent or indecisive.

The meeting I attended was the weekly meeting of my «Exploiters of the Future» gathering.

It was an organization of which I had no more than a project in 1932 and which I was able to verify in 1945 that it had developed in accordance with its transcendental purpose: to make every kind of effort to anticipate the time of possible anarchy by propagating generosity as the most exalted moral virtue worthy of being practiced.

It was an organization made up of small groups called tertulias that consisted of five to nine members and that were divided into two when they reached ten. In order to form a harmonious and organic whole with these groups, they were grouped in turn into “peñas” formed by the grouping of tertulias also in number of five to ten. The peñas were also grouped into other groups of a higher order and these into others and others. In the different groups of higher order, only the delegates of the groups of immediately lower order met once a month and they only served to coordinate efforts, deliberately being exclusively the weekly gatherings. There were no presidencies and the meetings were round tables and no dues were paid nor were there any badges or membership cards.

This, which when I fell asleep was only an embryonic idea that was beginning to crystallize in some notes with the declarations of principles, had reached, in 1945, immense development and constituted a very important auxiliary element in the communist-libertarian conspiracies.

That afternoon, at the meeting of my social gathering, attended by other exploiters of the future of other social gatherings following the regulated practice of “visits”, I found Comrade Viura very old and as crazy as ever, and he informed me that another foundation of his initiative that was also being born in 1932, that of the Universalist Nucleus, a kind of philosophical conception of libertarian communism with naturalist and sentimental tendencies that, in combination with a very protocolary ritual, made it almost a religion without a god, and that was looked upon at first with suspicion and as a madness by skeptical and mocking spirits, had also achieved extraordinary development filling the whole world with countless local nuclei and had become like the Rotarianism of anarchy.

At the meeting of the gathering many things were discussed, but the one that most impressed my imagination as a man of 1932 was the reference to the most monstrous crime to which capitalism, fatally dragged by its essence, had to come.

In the last thirteen years, the experiments of Dr. Voronov had been continued and evidence had been achieved of the rejuvenation of living organisms by means of the grafting of genital glands of young individuals of the same species.

Scientific experimentation was conclusive and had pronounced its last word. Truly surprising rejuvenations had been achieved with animals of all species of a very advanced biological order. However, with hunger, grafted into his organism with monkey glands, nothing conclusive and definitive had been achieved, but it seemed obvious that rejuvenation would also be achieved by grafting human genital glands.

And the rich old men, in complicity with infamous doctors, had not hesitated to consummate the infamy of buying the testicles of strong and healthy young men to rejuvenate themselves.

Although the duplication of such organs and the sufficiency of only one of them for procreation were alleged, the fact was so repugnant and vile that it infuriated me, the man of 1932. Perhaps my self of 1945, already more accustomed to the vileness of the rich, felt less indignation, because my fellow-members warned me that it excited me more than usual.

But there was something much more serious still, which had motivated a violent press campaign, making the subject extremely relevant.

A very rich and decrepit old man, whose name I am keeping silent for reasons that are easy to understand, had been transformed after one of the indicated operations into a handsome young man, and a newspaper had reported that the testicular glands of a barely pubescent boy had been used for the graft. The government was asked to protect children from the lust for life of the rich and to severely punish the trafficking of children's virility.

I felt such repugnance at such events that, had I not known that all this was going to end very soon, I do not know what violent decision I would have made.

Chapter 5: The conspiracy

In the evening I attended a clandestine meeting of the militants of my union.

For my self of 1932 it was very pleasant to meet after so many years such excellent friends, comrades in struggle and enthusiasm. To see that they were still alive and that they could witness the glorious triumph that was approaching, even though they themselves were not very sure of it.

I also saw new faces whom I greeted affectionately by their names that came to my lips without me knowing how. They were the young generations of the union attracted to our bosom by the persecutions. At that time the number of members of the Intellectual Workers' Union was more than ten thousand.

And they were all determined anarchists, far away from the time of the famous split that caused the "firemen" to leave our ranks, attracted by their whims by the siren of politics and leaving the Confederation exclusively in the hands of the FAI.

There was active conspiracy and the revolution was being "chewed up." Such was the accumulation of iniquity and justice, such was our enthusiasm and such was the self-confidence that we had and so great was the self-confidence that we had in our own strength, that we walked towards the supreme blow with a firm and determined step.

All efforts had been coordinated and there was conspiracy in the clandestine meetings of our Unions in the anarchist groups of the FAI and in the gatherings of the Exploiters of the Future, in which one of the brief articles defending their organization establishes that «The field of action of these organizations will be that which they assign to themselves, and as broad as desired, provided that no agreement is reached with the authorities or politics».

The gatherings of the Exploiters of the Future, with their great mobility, with the mutual knowledge of all their members, with the ease of being tiny groups, endowed, nevertheless, with effective elements of liaison that allowed everyone to reach an agreement and easily reach concrete conclusions, were a very effective weapon for the conspiracy that instilled great panic in the government, its statutes, its form and its ideology, everything was public and only the names of its adherents were unknown. At first, this organization being based only in Barcelona, its members recognized each other only through the introductions that were made during visits to the meetings of the gatherings. When it spread to all of Spain, secret signs were established that facilitated mutual recognition, although, generally, a standard letter of introduction was sent with some excuse, which served to make oneself known.

The conspiracy was carried out preparing the final blow with extreme meticulousness, planning day by day when it would be necessary to carry it out in order to succeed and consolidate the triumph, but without setting a specific date to avoid that, in the event of it coming to the knowledge of the authorities, they could prevent it. When everything was ready, everything studied, our forces accurately counted and the slogan spread everywhere, the revolutionary committee made up of members of the Confederation, the Iberian Anarchist Federation and the Exploiters

of the Future, would propose a close date that would have to be immediately approved by clandestine assemblies of all the unions, all the GG AA and all the E of the F gatherings.

The revolutionary committee had been appointed in a clever way that guaranteed both the revolutionary merit of its men and the secret of their personalities and, in case it was discovered and imprisoned, it had been entrusted, and that referred to the organization of distribution in the big capitals.

The new organization of production was very simple. All the companies and all the industries had already appointed their factory councils that would replace the bourgeois board of directors and their workshop committees that would replace the employers' managers. Once libertarian communism was proclaimed, these companies would be seized, at the same time that all non-unionized citizens would be called upon to join the union corresponding to their profession or to the profession for which they feel qualified, if they do not have a trade.

The various unions, after incorporating all the bourgeois into their ranks, would give instructions to the factory councils dependent on them to intensify production to provide work for the new workers. In all this, there were no serious difficulties anywhere, nor was it very difficult to organize the distribution of consumer products in small towns. It was very easy to invent said products and to know their abundance or scarcity. The abundant ones would be freely distributed to all who requested them, without having to fear that abuses would be committed that would be discovered and sanctioned with public contempt. Rationing would be established for the scarce ones, with each worker being able to collect as many rations as he needed to feed. The distribution would be handled by the personnel currently employed in the commercial department, whose shop committees would seize the established ones. In small towns, where everyone knows each other and where there is no room for bad faith, it would be very easy to organize the distribution well from the start.

But in large towns it would be extremely difficult and our Union had been asked to study a proposal for this.

Chapter 6: The abolition of money

When several points related to the report that had been entrusted to us were studied that night in my union, the issue was the need to abolish and suppress money.

This is the point that I have studied with great attention and that night I saw with joy that I had not changed my way of thinking after thirteen years. It is precisely the most delicate and difficult point and I know that there are many anarchists who do not agree with the system that I have proposed in my essay «Libertarian Communism as expounded by a Spanish engineer».

The horror that money instinctively inspires in us is such that, although we are all absolutely in agreement that it must disappear, there are many who are frightened by what is quickly indispensable to achieve this disappearance.

I will therefore explain here the reasons that I gave that night and that convinced my system to the extreme afterwards.

The formula of libertarian communism, as regards the economy, we already know that it is that everyone produces according to his capacity and consumes according to his needs. But this formula does not speak of how much, without being necessary, is useful. We all need to eat, drink and dress, we should all have as many foodstuffs, drinks and clothes as we need. But the aphorism that says that man does not live by bread alone can be extended to these three fundamental needs. Modern civilized life has created in us countless secondary needs, true luxuries, which it would be absurd to do without, but whose necessity can only be valued by using an auxiliary currency.

But even if it were agreed that everyone should dress the same, that identical furniture were manufactured exclusively for the use of everyone, that the manufacture of so many trinkets were suppressed as are manufactured today without being objects of prime necessity, gramophones, amateur cameras, toys for children, sweets for those with a sweet tooth, checkers and chess boards, bicycles within the reach of those who do not need them professionally... even if the acquisition of books by individuals were prohibited, all of them being made available to them in public libraries, even if the taxi service were considered public, at the disposal of the first person who found them unoccupied, no matter what was done, objects from the capitalist system would always remain in the possession of individuals, which would be impossible to confiscate and which would be desired by people other than their owners. and they could be bought and sold clandestinely.

It is impossible to avoid, as long as there are products that are not essential for consumption and that can determine the desire for possession, that their owners try to sell them to acquire, in exchange, other things that may interest them more.

The simultaneous existence of money and objects that can be bought and sold, as long as there is no substitute for said money that is as effective as it, will always lead inevitably to clandestine trade and to the subsistence and continuance of the capitalists' money in circulation.

This has been the case of Russia, which could not be more eloquent. There they decreed the annulment of the value of money, although without power, as was always the case that the money that was in the hands of private individuals was collected when such a decree was published. But

there were many things that were scarce and those who possessed them sold them clandestinely to provide themselves with other things that were more necessary to them and, finally, Russia was forced to accept the existence of money and private trade that had been stronger than all the decrees, because it had not been possible to find something with the same libertarian power as money, but without its disadvantages.

Besnard proposes the issue of bonds encrypted in the bourgeois monetary unit, valid throughout the country and of permanent value, that is to say: the issue of new banknotes identical to the old ones in all their characteristics.

I, on the other hand, have proposed that work be paid in vouchers issued by the unions, valued in hours of work, valid only in the locality and for a single week.

In addition to municipal services, water, electricity, gas, means of transport and communication, public shows and construction would be declared public services.

All other products would be sold by the Trade Union at a price representing the number of hours of work invested in their production, modified by a coefficient corresponding to the consumption of the unemployed and those engaged in public service work.

With such a system, it would be possible to acquire whatever is needed or desired, clandestine trade would disappear altogether and the old money, which could only be used for annoying and even dangerous clandestine purchases, would immediately lose its value.

Now, this second currency, intended only to solve the problem of distribution in the large centers in the initial moments of libertarian communism and to ensure that the old currency dies irretrievably, will only survive as long as necessary to organize this service in large populations.

Probably such a system will not be used in small populations where effective agreements can easily be reached among all for a good distribution that satisfies the needs and desires of all. It is clear that given the autonomy that our local communities will have, those who believe it is convenient will be able to adopt it, and not those who think otherwise.

The method of eliminating the new currency will be to organize, without the prematureness of the first moments, the distribution and to extend the number of products whose consumption is considered as a public service, until a day comes when this happens with everything. On that day it will be enough for the unions to stop paying weekly bonuses to their workers. The latter will no longer need them, since nothing can be bought from the moment that everything is made available to them free of charge by the Distribution. Whoever saves before and after that day, since the bonuses will not have any value recognized in the shops after the corresponding weekly date, will only have succeeded in renouncing to the benefit of the community the hours of work that he has produced and did not want to consume.

It is true that Kropotkin, in «The Conquest of Bread», shows himself to be an irreducible enemy of money and of all kinds of wages. But he could not act in any other way since he did not count on the unions. Kropotkin's theory is anarchist and the absolute absence of any authority makes the existence of any kind of money impossible. But I believe that in the CNT, all of us who call ourselves anarchists are, today, trade unionists, libertarian communists for the near future and anarchists for a more distant future. Libertarian communism is not anarchy, but rather a path to anarchy, since it recognizes an authority: that of the community deciding by plebiscite. If this authority and its organisms, the unions, exist, there can be a currency issued by them. But such a currency will not at all resemble the old one and will simply be a distribution voucher that cannot be bought and will be valid for only one week. It will be a distribution voucher with which the recipient, with a number of units proportional to the number of people who depend

on him, will not be obliged to buy a certain quantity of this or that product, but will be able to choose as he likes, either a few products that have cost many hours of work, or many of those that are easier to produce.

Generally, such distribution vouchers will only affect the superfluous, since the essentials for life will be declared a public service and distributed free of charge to all as soon as possible, that is, a few days after the new regime is proclaimed in the large cities and on the same day in the countryside and small towns. But think of the tragic problem that will arise in populous cities once libertarian communism is established in order to organize from the very beginning the distribution among so many people of so many varied objects without having the currency. And any disorganization would bring as a consequence giving more value to the bourgeois money that individuals kept, money that will be the weapon they will use to fight us without a doubt if we do not succeed in making anyone interested in its possession in order to easily acquire the other money with which will be able to buy everything that the stores contain.

In any case, it will be necessary to estimate the cost in hours of labour of all products so that an equitable exchange can be made between the different local communities. In this way, farmers will never feel cheated and will hasten to send their crops to the cities knowing that they will receive the products they request, in whose manufacture the workers will have spent exactly as many hours as they have spent in obtaining what they send.

Distribution vouchers, calculated in hours of labour, will never be exchangeable for the worker for products that represent the labour they are worth, since labour represents all the public services that he will enjoy free of charge. Thus, the number of hours of labour that each unit of product represents will have to be multiplied by a factor dependent on the importance and development of the public services in order to fix the selling price. This, consequently, will vary from one locality to another and, logically, much higher in the big capitals than in the countryside, and will grow as public services expand.

As it will be intended to include everything indispensable in life, the new currency will be only a way of managing and organizing the distribution of the superfluous and does not entail any danger for the good functioning of the regime or for the happiness of men, since the short duration of its value prevents its accumulation. In addition, as this money will abound, there is no need to fear that it will provoke envy or theft.

Here is the report as it was approved by our Union:

To the local Assembly:

The Union of Intellectual Workers and Liberal Professions, charged by the confederal organization to study the subject corresponding to the best way to organize distribution in the large capitals and to propose a report with the solution that seems most appropriate so that the local Assembly to be held in Barcelona once libertarian communism is proclaimed can resolve on such an important subject, after studying the matter carefully and debating at length the different proposed solutions, agreed to approve by acclamation the following bases that it proposes to the local Assembly:

1. The right to live and, therefore, to satisfy the needs that life implies, is primordial and superior to the duty to produce so that collective civilized life can be possible. For this reason we propose that every man, by the fact of living, be recognized as having the right to enjoy the distribution of products. For this reason, every Monday

all the inhabitants of Barcelona will receive a voucher for the distribution of products valid exclusively for the duration of the week.

2. Products absolutely indispensable for life, such as water, bread, ordinary meat, vegetables and legumes, oil, butter, coal, etc., as far as food is concerned; ordinary clothing, housing, and, on the other hand, general services, such as electricity, gas, means of transport (trams, buses, subways and taxis, post office, telegraph, telephone), finally public spectacles: all of these will be considered as public services and in all shops where such products are sold, as many as are requested will be delivered to those who request them, without requiring any compensation and with the only limitation that an obviously exaggerated amount is not requested. The Union of the clothing industry will take care of organizing the distribution of ordinary clothing, avoiding abuses. Of the other public services, whoever wants to use them, they will be able to use them as much as they want and as long as circumstances allow.

3. Other products, which are not essential but are consumable, but their use is more or less superfluous, will be distributed in the establishments where they are currently sold in exchange for distribution vouchers, valid only for seven days.

4. Each weekly voucher for a man over sixteen years of age, single or married with no minor or invalid children to support, will cost several divisional vouchers with a total value of forty-eight hours of work.

5. For each adult and incapacitated person in his care, he will receive another voucher also of 48 hours of work.

6. For each child over sixteen years of age, he will receive three hours of t. for each year that the child is old.

7. Women over sixteen years of age, single or married, may choose to work or not. If they work, they will receive their 48-hour bonus every Monday, and if they do not, their partner, father, or whoever works in their family will see to it that their needs are covered with the distribution bonuses they receive.

8. The value of all products will be set by the producer unions, calculated in hours of work, indicating for each unit of the product the number of hours of work invested in its production.

9. The Mercantile union, transformed into the Distribution union, will seize all commercial establishments, replacing the employer or the shop committee. All articles existing in the shops, except those declared harmful, will be sold to whoever requests them in exchange for distribution vouchers and at the price indicated by the local Committee after the report of the technical statistics committee.

10. The technical statistics committee will add up the total number of hours of work distributed each Monday and will divide this total by the total number of hours of work devoted to obtaining products that are not freely distributed. The quotient will be the coefficient by which the production price, given by the producer union, must be multiplied to obtain the distribution price.

11. It will be ensured that in the second, and at most in the third week, such prices corresponding to an equitable distribution will be already fixed, allowing individual

autonomy to determine the kind of products that it wants to consume. In the meantime, and so that the system can be applied immediately, the current mercantile dependency, transformed into a distribution organization, will distribute the articles existing in the store at the price corresponding to the current retail price, assuming that one hour of work is equivalent to one peseta.

This is a rough approximation taking into account the current profits of the intermediaries, the current remuneration of work and after making a global estimate of what is absorbed by public services. The inexactness of the equivalence cannot lead to any economic catastrophe and allows the immediate application of distribution vouchers intended to nullify practically all the value of bourgeois money, by constituting a substitute for it placed in the hands of everyone and capable of providing in the establishments whatever is desired.

12. Objects of high value, such as furniture, pianos, special clothing, etc., may be sold in installments, and the Distribution Union will regulate this accordingly.

13. Once libertarian communism has been proclaimed, as soon as work is resumed after the strike declared for its implementation is over, absolutely all commercial establishments assisted by their employees will be opened. Their owners, since the new order of things will impose on them the obligation to work if they are capable of it, may continue as employees in their establishment or in any other, with exactly the same rights as all the others. The Distribution Union will urgently study the rationalization of the service by proposing:

- a) Establishments that must disappear due to the nature of the goods they sell.
- b) Which ones should disappear because they do not respond to the needs of distribution.
- c) Establishments that can be re-established.
- d) Readaptation to the new system of all old personnel and of the new ones coming from the bourgeoisie and branches that have disappeared.

14. With the greatest urgency compatible with a conscientious study, an attempt will be made in a systematic way to broaden the field of products freely sold without being exchanged for distribution vouchers and the limitation of the number of those sold in exchange for them, until achieving that said distribution vouchers can be eliminated and all articles can be served in the establishments to the public without any other limitation than the rationing that is indispensable in case of shortage.

15. It will be necessary to create a Housing Committee to rationalize this public service by having the premises that lack the necessary hygienic conditions evicted, guiding the Construction Union on the construction of new neighborhoods and distributing, through appropriate works, in the first moments, the excessively large houses for those who currently occupy them among those who most urgently need to improve their housing.

16. The technical statistics committee, in accordance with consumption and according to the data it receives from the Distribution Union, will make the pertinent orders to local manufacturers, transferring the order to regional, national or foreign

manufacturers to the Regional Committee for processing, so that all articles that are consumed and that it is considered convenient to continue being so, always exist in stock.

17. Distribution vouchers received in stores in exchange for products will be sent weekly to the technical statistics committee, which, after finding out the total figure, will proceed to cremate them.

18. Distribution vouchers will be delivered on Mondays in factories, workshops, stores, offices, etc., to all those who work there, according to the list approved by the respective union. The union will deliver these vouchers to workers who are on forced unemployment.

The elderly and disabled will receive the vouchers through the individual in their family who works. When they do not have a family, they may collect them directly from the social assistance agency.

Such bonds will be guaranteed by the seal of the issuing Union and will bear on the back printed in the largest possible figures the date of the day until which they will be valid.

19. The community will adopt the measures it deems appropriate to make effective the obligation of all to work according to their capacity, but this has nothing to do with distribution and hunger should never be used as an element of coercion.

Chapter 7: The proclamation

The glorious day finally arrived when libertarian communism was proclaimed throughout Spain, with the movement triumphing everywhere except Madrid.

At the last minute, the revolutionary committee, certain of its strength, after receiving a report from all its delegates, decided to wage the struggle openly, challenging the government to power. It published a manifesto announcing that the number of CNT members was very close to two million and that they were all, in principle, determined to seize power. But, as the committee lacked the authority to make definitive decisions, it called on all the unions in Spain to hold an Assembly on the following Thursday and agree on whether libertarian communism should be proclaimed on the following Thursday.

Absolutely all the unions in Spain held a clandestine assembly on Thursday and absolutely all of them accepted the date proposed by acclamation. The government already knew this. The revolution had been agreed to a fixed date. But the display of such enormous, determined and disciplined force was the most effective element that the committee had very reasonably counted on. Two million members represented two million families and therefore almost half of Spain. Their will, so clearly and unanimously expressed, constituted a national referendum that had to be complied with.

What would the government do?

What the government did was try to resist in Madrid, where it concentrated the forces of the nearby garrisons.

On the morning of that glorious Thursday I witnessed in Barcelona the most transcendent act of humanity. The memory of the 14th of April 1931 was insignificant compared to the enthusiasm of that day. From the central balcony of the Barcelona City Hall the other free town councils of all Spain were confederated to form the Spanish Libertarian Communist Confederation.

A general strike was also proclaimed until the new order was consolidated.

The proclamation was made by a comrade who is almost generally unknown: libertarian communism lacks representative men: when some have pretended to be so, they have come into conflict with the spirit of the Confederation and have rendered meager services to it.

Meanwhile, the troops remained in their quarters and the barracks were sealed off. The same was true of the Civil Guard and security forces. In the meantime, we were the absolute masters of the town.

The local Committee, which had been joined at its request by two deputy delegates from each Union so that the immense work that weighed on it could be attended to, was in permanent session in the Ciento hall, while the plenary meetings of all the Unions' boards were also in continuous session.

In the early afternoon, while the streets of the vast town were filled with an overflowing crowd, intoxicated with enthusiasm, a proclamation from the local Committee was posted on the corners, in which the orders issued by the only bearable authority, that exercised by the com-

munity itself, appeared for the first time under the initial letters of the National Confederation of Labour and the International Association of Workers. The proclamation read:

CNT-AIT.

– The Committee of the local federation of the Trade Unions of Barcelona, once libertarian communism has been proclaimed, in compliance with its own functions, takes charge of the administration of the city.

– By this announcement, the plenary meetings of all the unions of Barcelona affiliated to the Confederation are hereby called, which will meet tomorrow at three in the afternoon, in the respective premises to make agreements regarding the points of the agenda that are in the hands of their administrative committees and to appoint delegates with instructions for the Great Local Congress, which will meet the day after tomorrow at the same time in the Hall of the Gran Teatro del Liceo.

– While such agreements do not resolve the vital problems that are being consulted, this Committee, in compliance with what are the basic principles of libertarian communism, makes public the following, the non-observance of which, as well as any attack against the new order of things, will incur the corresponding responsibility:

– Private property is abolished.

– The current tenants or owners of the different houses in this city will continue to live there without paying the first or collecting any rent for the second.

– All individuals or entities that possess gold, silver, platinum, jewelry and works of art in their private or social homes must deliver them to the municipal offices that will be set up tomorrow to provide this service.

– From the day after tomorrow, and within a maximum period of two days, all citizens who are not unionized must do so in the union of their profession. Those who do not have a profession, or who practice one of those that the new order of things will make disappear, will opt for the profession for which they believe themselves most qualified.

– The unions will set up a special service, their boards assisted by the militants who are designated in tomorrow's assembly, in order to be able to attend to the rapid affiliation of the new unions. »The following will be considered exempt from the general strike order decreed when the new regime was proclaimed: health and hygiene services, water supply, electric lighting, garbage collection and graphic arts work corresponding to the confederal newspaper that will reappear tomorrow.

The local committee.

And the excited crowd continued to cheer, and trucks full of workers waving red and black flags passed by, tram and taxi services were suspended, and the entire mass of the people, masters of the street and their destiny, maintained the natural order of mutual respect and cordiality, without any violent imposition and without trying to act directly, trusting in the correct functioning of the organization.

But that immense mass was all the people of Barcelona. The enthusiasm had infected those who had never been in the union and even those who had previously fought it. The miracle had

been accomplished and there were no longer state communists, nor republicans, nor indifferent people, and the entire popular mass celebrated with immense enthusiasm the beginning of a new era of justice and freedom.

Meanwhile, the bourgeoisie, hidden in their luxurious homes, watched fearfully outside through the curtains. What were the authorities doing that they did not defend them by machine-gunning the plebs who had taken over the town and could very well feel the temptations of looting?

They could not conceive of the triumph of libertarian communism, since they had paid the politicians to organize an army to defend them. Later the reaction would come and they would take revenge for the bad time they were then going through.

The happiest of all was I. Because all the people felt the intoxication of victory, but there was a certain uneasiness floating in the atmosphere in the face of the ignorance of what had happened in the rest of Spain and of the development that events would have in the future. I, on the other hand, knew perfectly well that I was witnessing the definitive triumph, the establishment of libertarian communism.

Chapter 8: Generality of motion

The National Telephone Union had responded perfectly to the movement by seizing all the central offices except the one in Madrid and maintaining the strike in terms of ordinary service, although passing on all kinds of official news among the different unions, committees and organisations of the CNT.

The revolutionary committee had thus controlled the movement at all times and knew what to expect regarding its development. Comrade Riquer, who was our delegate on the National Committee, brought news to our union that aroused shouts of enthusiasm and cheers for the FAI.

Catalonia had responded completely, except for some flashes of Bolshevism noted in the province of Lérida from where some would-be people's commissar had telephoned talking about a united front.

From Zaragoza the Regional Confederation had telephoned the National Committee to report that libertarian communism had been proclaimed throughout the region without any incident. The public forces seemed to have received the order to abstain by locking themselves in their barracks.

Similar news had been received from the North, from Galicia, from Valencia and from the Balearic and Canary Islands.

In Andalusia there had been a general uprising, but with numerous incidents caused sometimes by the struggle between the libertarian communists and the state, and other times by the overflow of passions that had led to violence.

The entire central region had risen except Madrid. In the capital of Spain the sun had risen that morning illuminating a wild spectacle of military occupation: troops in strategic places, patrols of horsemen, machine guns, assault vehicles, cannons... Meanwhile the police, the Civil Guard and the Security corps did not rest in the task of arresting trade unionists.

The railway workers had responded perfectly to the order and had stopped the trains in the previously designated places. At six in the evening, ensuring the success of the movement, except for what concerned Madrid, orders had been circulated by the revolutionary committee for the trains to continue their journey, although leaving Madrid isolated. Considering the railway as a public service, travel would be free of charge, but all travellers would be required to have a travel permit issued by the Union to which they belonged.

The outbursts of state communism that had manifested themselves in numerous Andalusian towns and in some in Lérida, when the news of the generality and greatness of our movement spread, had been controlled by the libertarians before nightfall without encountering serious opposition.

The Revolutionary Committee, as a measure deemed necessary to ensure the movement, had ordered that the borders be closed and that they could only be crossed by those who carried an express order endorsed by the National Committee.

This one, watching over the primary function of its functions, contacted the different regional committees, and had been concerned with ensuring the quickest and most complete supply of the great capitals, above all Barcelona and Madrid...

—Madrid too?— asked one.

—Naturally— answered Riquer. —The people of Madrid, although they suffer at this moment the stupid tyranny from which the rest of us have managed to free ourselves, are our brothers and we must not allow them to go hungry. These monstrous citizen organizations, these great cities, will devour daily an immense quantity of food, without which hunger would quickly take its toll. Fortunately the fields have responded to our movement with as much enthusiasm as unanimity. The local committees have sent to the regional committees the note of the supplies that their local communities need as well as of what they can offer. From the summaries of the needs of all the regional Confederations, the National Committee has been able to draw up a list of what each peasant committee should invoice for each town. The peasants have been invited to state what kind of goods they are interested in receiving in compensation, and they have been assured that, once the provisions they send in working hours have been evaluated, they will receive goods in such quantities that the same number of working hours have been used to manufacture them.

—Precisely— he added —with a view to supplying the large towns that the order has been given to resume the railways. Today and tomorrow few will go hungry, because, events being generally foreseen, everyone has made provisions for several days.” But it is necessary that the day after tomorrow, as soon as the Unions decide on the form to be adopted for distribution, this can immediately begin to be carried out with complete regularity. Everything was already studied and planned and on Monday all factories will surely resume work and all shops will be opened and social life will acquire its new rhythm full of calm and efficient harmony.

Chapter 9: The public force

One of the first steps taken by the local Committee, once it had taken possession of the Town Hall, was to try in vain to get in touch with the military authorities. It was unable to communicate by telephone with the Military Command, with the Police Headquarters or with any barracks and, as it was later discovered, a strict order had been given to take the receivers off all telephones to temporarily disable their operation.

The commissioners sent by the local Committee were not received either.

Telephones proposed setting up a permanent inspection service in the automatic machines to be able to intercept any communication that the authorities tried to establish, but they absolutely abstained from using the telephone of the general network.

They surely understood each other through the military telegraph and telephone network and attempts were made to establish derivations, although without obtaining any result.

I was one of the first who was able to find out something, because on the night of that famous Thursday I ran into an old friend on the plain of La Boquería who I had met in Africa and who had later enlisted in the Security Corps.

—I was looking for you— he said —so that you could tell me what you were going to do with us.

— With you? We are going to transform you from what you are into honest workers.

— But aren't our lives in danger?

— Idiot! — I answered.

— You can't imagine the panic there is in the Headquarters and in the Delegations. You already know that I became a guard so that I could give a piece of bread to my children and that I have always sympathized with your way of thinking and I have never believed that if you triumphed you would be cruel to the guards. But there is so much fear there that even I have become uneasy. I have tried to reassure them by telling them that I knew you, that you are one of the leaders...

— Stop! — I interrupted him — there is no leader among us.

— Well, understand what I mean. I have assured them that I know you well and that I know that you are a true gentleman.

—Don't be an idiot— I interrupted him again. —A true man, yes. Chivalry is a farce.

—Come on, I mean that I have assured them that you were a very good person and that if the others were like you nothing bad would happen to us. They did not want to believe it and assured me that all those in the FAI are bloodthirsty and ferocious and that they were sure that they were waiting to see the first guard to slaughter him. I have insisted so much that they have asked me to go out dressed in civilian clothes to find you and ask him what you are prepared to do with us, the capitalist unions.

I calmed him down completely and took him to the Town Hall, putting him on speaking terms with the local Committee, thus starting negotiations that resulted in the Security Guards arresting their superiors and surrendering by handing over their weapons.

The Security Corps chiefs and officers, seeing themselves in our power, demonstrated their stupid ignorance with their capitulations, because, although their class seemed to oblige them to possess a certain culture, they were more afraid of us than the guards themselves and, to ingratiate themselves with us, they brought us up to date with the inner workings of the authority.

All this happened in a Delegation, whose Surveillance agents showed themselves even more inferior than the Security officers and the example spread to such an extent that before eight o'clock in the morning the entire Surveillance and Security corps of Barcelona, including the assault guards and the chief of police himself, were disarmed and dressed in civilian clothes, their weapons being handed over to the cadres of the Unions.

We were already getting our bearings on the state of mind of the authorities. From Madrid they had received orders to stay out of the events waiting for the best opportunity to intervene in them. The surprise of everyone had been immense when they learned of the magnitude of the movement thanks to the continuous broadcasting of news made by the radio.

In the barracks, they had tried at all costs to prevent the troops from finding out what was happening outside of them, but some security officers assured us that they were finding out without anyone knowing how and that they were already beginning to notice signs of indiscipline. Some of those officers who agreed to meet with the army chiefs to try to start negotiations with them, entered the barracks and never came out again, probably remaining there detained.

Chapter 10: A pleasant encounter

In order to give the reader a clear idea of how events unfolded, without recounting in detail, day by day, hour by hour, what happened, I will briefly explain that on Friday all the Unions held an Assembly and made decisions, sending delegates with an imperative mandate to the local Assembly that was held on Saturday at the Liceu, with a huge attendance of the public that filled the large premises, without taking absolutely any precaution to maintain the order that was not altered in the slightest, and that in said Assembly the fundamental points of the organization of the new order of things in the free city council of Barcelona were agreed upon, among them the report of Intellectuals creating the distribution bonds, which we have already made known, and it was also agreed that the following day, Sunday, public shows and the means of communication and transport, mail, Telegraph, telephones, trams, subways, buses and taxis, all free of charge, with certain limitations for the latter service.

The following Monday, normal life would resume in all its aspects, distribution vouchers being issued, work resuming everywhere and distribution establishments as well as supply markets opening their doors.

To explain how we discharged the army, I will tell of the meeting I had a few days later with a good friend of mine.

A good friend of mine whom I do not know today, but who was a very good friend of mine in 1945. Today he will be seven years old, because that afternoon, when I met him in such strange circumstances, he was twenty years old. Today, in 1932, at this time, he will be at school, at the rationalist school that is forging in him the anarchist of tomorrow that I found that day on Calle Ancha in a bathing suit with a black and red maillot and white espadrilles.

He was the first chicken-pear of 1945 that I had seen, still unaware that in those days the fashion had imposed the custom of elegant people of both sexes going to the beach from their homes in said suit. So I looked at him in surprise, and even more so when I saw him coming towards me with open arms, saying:

– Hug me, dear friend Rizo. We have finally triumphed!

And, without knowing how, while we were hugging each other, the following words came out of my lips:

– Dear friend Olesa! We have finally triumphed! Do you finally see yourself reinstated in your studies and free forever from the odious military service?

– You see what luck! During the vacation period!

He was a student boy who belonged to the corresponding Section of our Union of Intellectual Workers and was a delegate in the plenary session of the Committee, which in those days was a quota soldier and had been quartered in the proclamation of libertarian communism. I had already found myself several times in a similar situation with a friend unknown to me in the present times, whose name spontaneously sprang from my lips and whose conversation I responded to correctly without knowing how, and, moreover, I had learned to instinctively sense the extent of my affection for him.

—Are you going to take a bath?— I asked him.

—I'm going to take a dip before the meeting. This afternoon we're meeting at the Swimming Club with the committee charged with the reorganization of society on libertarian communist bases— he answered.

—Are you in a hurry?

—No, not at all. We don't meet until dark, and I have plenty of time to dive into the water and sunbathe.

—So, would you like me to treat you to a soft drink while you tell me in detail about the events at the barracks?

—I wouldn't want to?— he replied, bursting into a merry laugh.

Remembering and recounting such events is one of the greatest pleasures of my life. — Where do you want us to go?

— Does it make no difference to you where you go?

— Completely —I answered—. You know that my profession as a writer is not subject to a schedule or work day and I have my hours at my disposal freely, and by listening to you I work and contribute materials for my future work.

— Well then, come with me to the club along Barceloneta and we can go into one of the bars on Paseo de la Democracia Social.

— When will we change these ugly names?

— The local Committee is not in a hurry to do so, and rightly so. The immense ridiculousness of the socialist work could be repeated by libertarian communism and our children would laugh at us if, for example, what was formerly Paseo Nacional and the socialists named Paseo de la Democracia Social were to be renamed Paseo del Anarco-Sindicalismo.

— Ideas pass, times change and things continue. Thus it is dangerous to qualify things according to the times. That is precisely why it is to be hoped that these names disappear, but not to be replaced by others, but by a simple numbering.

— Wouldn't that be very confusing in such a large population? —I asked myself as we passed in front of the old Civil Government occupied by the Port Workers section of the Transport Union.

—On the contrary —I answered—. Last night the initiative came up in our union and we studied it carefully. Division and decimal numbering. Ten demarcations each with ten districts and each district with ten neighborhoods and each neighborhood with ten sectors. Each sector must necessarily have less than ten streets, since these do not reach 100,000. The names of the streets will be five-digit numbers that will allow us to immediately know where they are located by indicating the first the demarcation, the second the district, and so on.

—It seems incredible —he told me in an admiring tone— the radical transformation that everything is undergoing! We ourselves, after carefully studying the changes that would be necessary to introduce when establishing the new regime, were surprised that the transformation had an unexpected link and at the same time we were amazed by the simplicity of the solutions that the new social formula found for everything.

—Shall we come in here?

—As you wish.

—What do the comrades want me to bring them?— asked a waiter when we had sat down.

—Why don't you ask us what we want you to bring us?

—Careful— I intervened. —It denigrates serving a master, but not a comrade.

—Libertarian communism— Olesa answered me —must modify the lexicon and erase the words that recall the old abjection. To serve comes from servitude and serf.”

—Everything will come— I said —but there is no need to rush so much.— Wouldn’t it seem right to you that he should bring us some ice creams?

—Yes, let him bring us two large iced coffees.

—I’ll go and distribute them to you immediately.

—Don’t think I’ve tried to teach you a lesson or that I’ve judged you a caveman for offering us your services.

—Comrade Rizo— replied the waiter —knows that I’m not a Phrygian.

— You’re right — I answered without knowing how — He’s a good comrade of the Explorers of the Future.

— That old man, Phrygian, who was the former owner — he told us, lowering his voice and pointing to another waiter with a wink. — Like everyone else, he’s one of those who most exaggerates a feigned enthusiasm.

— Get paid — I said, giving him a voucher for an hour’s work when he brought us the ice cream.

Chapter 11: How we discharged the army

My friend Olesa, with incomparable grace, always seeing things from their comical side, told me the inner workings of the soldiers' uprising, the effects of which we saw when they left the barracks with their rifles hanging on their shoulders for the funeral, cheering libertarian communism and leaving the chiefs and officers well tied up in the flag room under the surveillance of a completely trustworthy guard.

I already knew the organization that had been established by our members during the period of their military service. In order to be able to act without arousing suspicion and without fear of denunciations, they had adopted the rules of the Porvenir scouts, forming gatherings grouped in clubs that in turn were grouped together to form a group. The groups of the different battalions formed several sections without there being enough military members in Barcelona to form a sector, but they formed it with other sections of civilians, generally escorted by recent discharges, thus being in contact with the entire organization.

The new soldiers of our ideology, who were already known by the others, immediately joined the gatherings with vacancies, and those who came from outside, if they were one of us, brought a simple letter of introduction and visit for any military scout or civilian who made them known to the others.

But, in addition to the organization of the E of the F, they formed a group, a military-syndicalist organic unit, using the organization previously described to be able to act clandestinely.

Once a week each gathering met in some tavern and amidst the jokes and hubbub of the soldiers they secretly learned through the delegate of the gathering in the club of the suggestions from the higher bodies or from other gatherings that should be discussed until an agreement was reached and through the same channel they sent their conclusions or their initiatives, all as is always done among the E of the F. But, at the same time, they attended to the organic functioning of the framework constituted exactly like a factory council or the administrative board of a union, with the only difference that, instead of holding assemblies, the gatherings deliberated and later the scrutiny of the partial votes was carried out to obtain the total, although almost all the agreements were taken by acclamation.

Olesa told me that his battalion consisted of 300 anarchists for a total of 700 soldiers, and that the social gatherings and clubs were quite large. They were in constant contact with the local Committee and had clear and specific instructions on what they should do.

On the day of the proclamation of libertarian communism, when the battalion was in its barracks, they all felt immense anxiety about the events that were coming, as well as youthful enthusiasm that was very capable of leading them to heroism.

The instructions they had were to act in accordance with the circumstances without expecting a sterile suicide from them, but, carried away by their enthusiasm, they were all determined to do something barbaric as soon as a propitious opportunity presented itself.

My friend Olesa was very good at painting the supreme military ridiculousness and before my eyes paraded the joyful figures of the officers that he painted for me with vivid humorous colors.

The protocolary colonel, before whom he had to stand to attention in order to speak to any living person who was less than him, but who was continually ridiculed by the colonel who had been raised to serve in her youth and was like the crystallization of vulgarity. The good gentleman was a fervent believer who offered before the divinity the sufferings and cuckolding that his wife provided him as merits to reach eternal glory.

The rude lieutenant colonel who always had his testicles in his mouth, permanently intoxicated by the morbid pleasure of the salacity of his language, just like someone who enjoys the smell of his own farts.

The drunken commander who in his drunkenness felt like an anarchist without knowing for sure what the word means.

The other commander trapped up to his eyelashes who owed even his assistant and dressed from the store.

The poor lieutenant full of stale and childish worries whom everyone called Don Friolera even though, as a bachelor, he lacked a flirty wife.

The captain who meddled in everything and managed her husband's company with the petty spirit of a boarding-house landlady.

All these men were locked in the flag room, anxiously listening to a loudspeaker whose lamps had been arranged so that it would reproduce the sounds transmitted by the waves very softly, while the soldiers and the rank and file were locked in their company premises with absolute prohibition on leaving them.

The news, which the National Committee was receiving by telephone and which it had transmitted every quarter of an hour, was a cause of the most crushing stupor for these men, although the most optimistic assured themselves, eager to deceive themselves, that it was all a lie. In any case, it was true that Barcelona had risen as one man and that it was necessary to assume that reinforcements would not be long in coming and that the situation would soon be controlled.

In the meantime, the important thing was that the news, true or false, did not reach the troops. As soon as the quarter-corporal or the orderly asked permission to enter the flag room, before authorizing his entry, the current that fed the apparatus was cut off so that it would fall silent, and all kinds of precautions were adopted to prevent the soldiers from suspecting the seriousness of the situation outside.

Meanwhile, the soldiers in the companies commented on the events and the lack of information sources caused the most exaggerated and absurd rumors to circulate, spread and encouraged by our people who had realized that their role at that moment should be to stir up tempers by creating an acute state of anxiety.

Nothing could be easier, given the conduct of the officers. The flag officer had said that instead of gambling and getting drunk, as they usually did in ordinary barracks, they were listening to the muffled loudspeaker, which they silenced as soon as someone was about to enter.

The telegraph operator at the military station of the barracks, an engineer soldier who belonged to the battalion's syndicalist organic cadre (Organization by industry), informed us of the dispatches that were received from the military command and that confirmed the pessimism of the radio listeners. Thus time went by and the panic of the officers and the concern of the troops

and the joy of our own people who were already daring to speak out loud about their idealisms and to make shameless propaganda for libertarian communism became more pronounced.

As time went on, the soldiers' state of anxiety grew to such an extent that the sergeants also became afraid, and almost all of them began to boast of being extremists and revolutionaries.

One of them, realizing the gravity of the circumstances and dominated by what he considered to be the concept of duty, which strictly prohibited anyone from leaving the company premises, sent a message to the captain with his orderly, telling him that he urgently needed to speak to him and begging him to allow him to go down to the flag room, or to go up to the dormitory. When, in the flag room, he told his captain in front of all the chiefs and officers about the state of the troops, the panic of the officers knew no bounds. The colonel ordered the captains and officers to go up to their company dormitories, urging them to use the greatest tact possible to impose themselves on the rioters and reestablish the strictest discipline.

Olesa told me between laughs about the panic-stricken face of his captain as he harangued his men in a wing formation with a trembling voice, telling them that the country expected them to fulfill their duty if the time came by restoring the order altered by the deluded dreamers...

When he was talking about the deluded, turning around halfway, he happened to see a huge poster with a LONG LIVE LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM! and he was disconcerted.

—Among you— he said —there is also a deluded man who dared to put up that poster there. I understand the effervescence of spirit that is produced in you as a consequence of the current events and this makes me excuse such an action. But whoever did such a thing should have the dignity to face the situation as a good soldier and a man of honor. At my command, let the person who put up that sign step forward. Straight ahead... Sea...!

And the entire company stepped forward, absolutely all of them, with overwhelming unanimity, while the captain and officers, crazed by panic, headed for the door.

Unfortunately for them, the door was at the other end and next to it were the armorers. The company soldiers, including Olesa, breaking ranks, ran to pick up their rifles and pointed them at the officers before they could gain the exit, ordering them to raise their arms. They were quickly disarmed and tied up while enthusiastic shouts rang out.

—Boys —shouted a sergeant who felt like a leader—now it is necessary that you obey us sergeants so that this glorious movement does not become chaotic and we can defend ourselves if other companies attack us.

To his great surprise he also saw himself under fire from our men who said to him sharply:

— Comrade: if you are one of us, you can fight at our side, and if you are not, we will lock you in the room tied up with the officers, but you must know that among the libertarian communists there is no one who commands.

The sergeant, with his arms raised, tried in vain to convince them. He had also taken a step forward and was in solidarity with the libertarian communist cause and would fight for it until he died. But he had to understand that without command, any military operation was impossible. If they did not want to obey the sergeants, they should appoint other leaders, but someone should exercise command.

— Command —he was answered— is exercised by the social community, and its orders are carried out by the organic unity committee with technical functions. All those who wish to remain at our side must immediately tear off their stripes.

While the sergeants and corporals were doing this, another armed and rebellious company appeared and came to join us, and in a few moments the entire battalion was in revolt. The general

staff, in the flag room, like the officers in the companies, did not have the gallantry to get killed. The Battalion Council met and agreed that the troops should go out into the street with their rifles to the funeral, while they went to receive orders from the local Committee. The general order was given and a member of the Council addressed the soldiers lined up with weapons in the courtyard of the barracks. As delegate of the Organization, the Council constituted itself as the director of the movement and agreed that the soldiers should go out into the street to fraternize with the people. At the time of the march they had to be at the barracks. Surely they would be discharged the next day, because libertarian communism will never have more soldiers than the workers themselves, ready to fight whenever necessary.

After breaking ranks at the invitation of the person who spoke to them in command, the march was called and the doors of the barracks were opened, causing in Barcelona the enormous joy that can be imagined.

Chapter 12: Two Phrygians

When Olesa finished his joyful narration and after making some comments about the discharge of the troops and the arming of the union cadres, it occurred to me to question the waiter who had previously been the owner of that bar.

—Listen— I said after making him approach with a sign, —I think I recognize you: Weren't you the owner of this establishment before?

—Yes, sir— he answered, —you were the infamous bourgeois who exploited as vilely as he could all those who came here.

—And hasn't the change of regime hurt you?

—How do you expect me to hurt the good of humanity of which I am a part? In the old regime we were all bourgeois, exploiters and exploited. Life was a continuous struggle to annoy others and the proletariat, in seeking economic improvement, acted in a bourgeois manner because he defended his interests based on selfish ambition or personal improvement. In order to live, it was necessary to arm oneself with lies. In the capitalist and authoritarian regime everything was false and good intentions were nothing but harmful nonsense. In that war to the death we all caused each other pain, but we had to anesthetize our hearts and continue fighting. Between being an exploiter or an exploited, I naturally opted for the former, since the exploited, however pure they were, were never completely free of the same sin, as demonstrated by the propensity for strikebreaking, the overtime work that workers easily had access to, even in times of forced unemployment, and the propensity for authoritarianism among those who were called anarchists. I opted to be an exploiter and, naturally, I was led to commit countless infamies, but it was not I who committed them, but the social organization that forced all bourgeois who did not want to become proletarians to commit them. It was a fierce war to the death that made one constantly aware of the whims of business. Money was for me an omnipotent and magnificent god to whom I worshipped. All for him, because it made me powerful and the more money I had, the more I earned. But, surviving in incessant anxiety, I could not enjoy this money, because it seemed to me a profanation to waste it and because the care of my business left me neither time nor mood to amuse myself. Capitalists, under the old regime, did not have a working day. All our waking moments were occupied by the care of our business, by our aspirations to rise in rank, by our concern for the future of the family. While we slept, we dreamed the same.

This man spoke with the eloquence of a convinced man, telling hard-hitting truths that he had reason to know well. At the next table, an elegantly dressed, elderly gentleman listened to the old bourgeois with genuine interest. Our interlocutor continued:

— Now, however, I have absolutely no headaches. I have bread guaranteed for life, and the same goes for all my family. I only have to work eight hours, when before I worked all the time. I am used to economizing, and although the young people in my house, at the age of having fun, are somewhat extravagant, I save a few hours of work almost every week for the benefit of the community. You cannot imagine how pleasant this peace is after that war. I live a better life than before, both economically and materially. I eat more and better than before, I dress better, I rest,

I walk, I go to the theater and the movies, and I even have time to read. And I read Elisee Reclus, Kropotkin, Proudhon, Tolstoy, Pi y Margall, Malatesta, all the libertarian writers, marveling that their luminous and noble truths have taken so long to make their way; surprised that I have been able to live so long without suspecting them and considering the anarchists as the most hateful bandits.

The elegant gentleman at the next table was paying close attention and seemed to want to join in the conversation while the former bourgeois continued:

— There is a general concern that we former bourgeois who now defend the new state of affairs and who have been called Phrygians, exaggerate our love for the regime in order to make us forgive our former behavior and try — with bourgeois tricks — to reach positions of manipulation that will console us for having lost our strength. I assure you that I do not wish to hold any position at all and that if it were offered to me I would never accept it. And I also assure you that I enthusiastically defend the new regime, because I have won with it and I believe that the same happens to all the former bourgeois who defend it.

The elegant, elderly gentleman sitting at the next table finally decided to join in the conversation:

— You are right— he said, —and we must enthusiastically defend the new regime because it represents peace and cordiality among men, even though not everyone has benefited from the new state of affairs.

— What do you mean? — replied the waiter. — Workers and employers: all benefit equally from the new social order.

— I agree — answered the other. — It benefits workers and employers, that is, almost all men, so I accept it and defend it and will defend it. But there are those who, like me, were neither employers nor workers, and a whole life of activity and a whole legitimately won glory have been destroyed by the new regime.

— What was your profession? — I asked him, intrigued.

And that elegant gentleman took from his breast pocket a wallet of Russian leather and from it a card that he handed me with disdain, saying:

— I think my name is well known enough for me to give you a satisfactory explanation.

In fact, the card spoke eloquently. He said: «Eduardo Rubio Fernández (Chiquito).»

— So you are the famous international swindler?

— The same one. You see that he was not in the ranks of the capitalists or of the proletarians, although he was, like the latter, in eternal struggle with the former and with the State.

— And you are not satisfied with the new order of things that allows you, like so many others, your dignity?

— The new state of affairs has broken me down the middle, because it is now absolutely impossible for me to swindle. Without money and with bonds that are only valid for a week, it is impossible to commit the smallest swindle. Without rich people to cheat, my life has no purpose.

— But you can work honestly...

— I am not afraid of work, especially certain kinds of work. You cannot imagine how hard you have to work to swindle. But after being a swindler all my life, I see my career cut short with the advent of libertarian communism, as happens to many others in my profession. I understand that someone who committed crimes forced by circumstances or yielding to a powerful circumstantial temptation easily adapts to the new times and rebuilds his life honestly. But I have never been an amateur or an intruder, but a professional. I am proud of my fame, which I have achieved through

fair fighting. That is why I am going crazy trying to get influence from the National Committee to grant me permission to cross the border, to let me go to my own territory, where there are capitalists and money.

Chapter 13: A desnudist

– Look here, Chichito, nice Chichito, you are a rebel in an eternal struggle against capitalism and you deserve to obtain a letter of marque to freely maneuver in bourgeois countries, but you make a serious mistake in hoping to obtain it through recommendations. That was before, but now, without authorities, there is no recommendation that is worth anything. The National Committee must limit itself to executing the agreements of the collective, and one of them is that no one crosses, until further notice, the border in one direction or another, except to carry out some mission that is specially conferred upon them. The recourse that is available to you is to explain your situation to your union and for it to request that you be allowed to go so that you can continue punishing bourgeois. To which union do you belong?

– I have always considered my work to be an art and I have joined the Syndicate of Intellectual Workers and Liberal Professions, section of Artists.

– Well, man, it is ours, and within it I will try to resolve your situation in a regular manner, especially if you are willing to help us in something extremely interesting for which you are especially qualified.

– I am willing to do everything in my power for the benefit of the new regime, except give up my profession.

– Well, go there tonight. I will propose you as a technician to take part in the committee that studies the way to ensure that no irregularities can be committed in the use of distribution bonds. With your long practice and your keen imagination, you will be able to inform us of what scams can be committed so that we can take precautions against them. After such help, I believe that our Union will have no problem proposing to the National Committee that you be allowed to leave.

– There are a thousand ways to scam, but with your bonds these scams are useless.

– But they can be used by our enemies to disrupt our economy.

– You are right. Those bourgeois! You can count on me.

Chichito, who had moved to our table, called the waiter and begged us to allow him to treat us to something, since we belonged to the same union.

–Who can deny anything to such a great artist?— Olesa said, grumpily.

–It was about time that such a great truth was recognized in me,” he replied hyperbolically. And looking at my rifle that was leaning against the wall within reach of my hand, he said:

–Since you belong to the paintings, you are also a worker, despite your age.

–I could not work, but I prefer to do so. You see, even Loreto Prado still does so. On the other hand, my profession as a writer is quite relaxing.

I must warn the reader that in one of the recent deliberative assemblies that circumstances forced to be held with extraordinary frequency, it had been agreed that the militants who formed the organic cadres, among whom the weapons seized from the army had been distributed, would not separate themselves from them for a single moment and would carry them everywhere, thus giving a sensation of strength and security, raising the spirits of the timid and dispelling the

legends of fanatical plots that the ex-policemen, eager to assert themselves, had invented to tell us mysteriously.

The ex-policemen had also come to us with the story that the ex-bourgeois were conspiring against the bonds, trying to use them to trick them in a thousand more or less ingenious ways, which is why the presentation that Chichito was to advise on as a technician had been appointed.

It was an extremely hot day and, while we were eating another ice cream paid for by the swindler, I envied Olesa the freshness of her suit.

—The truth is— I said —that today's elegance is characterized by comfort, and in the heat I envy your attire.

—Well, you just need to imitate me.

—I would look good in a jersey at my age!

—And with a rifle on my shoulder!— Olesa jumped up with a merry laugh.

And, while we were all laughing at the joke, the former owner of the bar, who was not far away and was listening to our conversation, came up to us and said:

— The comrade has a fair concept of decorum and aesthetics, but not all are like that. Precisely the most cynical man I have ever met is arriving, and he comes every afternoon at this time to drink a horchata. Couldn't the unions take the decision to prohibit spectacles of this nature?

— What is it about?

— He is a desnudist. I know that nudity has its supporters and that the new morality is not alarmed by the sight of flesh, but a guy like that!

Indeed, at that moment the customer came in and we had a hard time containing our laughter. He was a man of about sixty years old, immensely fat, pot-bellied, completely naked and barefoot, who fanned himself with a fanny pack and, lacking pockets, carried his distribution vouchers in his hand, reminding me of Viura's theories advocating aesthetic nudism in which all ugliness should be decorously concealed.

Chapter 14: A sunset on Las Ramblas

Olesa went to the Swimming Club and Chichito and I returned to Barcelona on the tram. At that time of work there were few cars circulating and they were not very full, even though the necessary adaptation at the beginning of the new regime left many people wandering around.

The case of Chichito, presenting himself as an artist, had been reproduced so many times and in such a picturesque way that it had been necessary to create a special union for the unemployed. Those who were found to be unable to work usefully in anything were admitted to it and, in order to provide the personnel that was requested for certain services available to everyone, such as doorman, security guard, etc., its members were considered as minors studying and had the obligation to attend the apprenticeship classes that were being set up.

The Trade Union Migration Committee had also been created, charged with putting order in the change of professions imposed by the need to relieve congestion in some of them and provide workers to others in which they were short. Among the latter, taking the decision to make compulsory education effective up to the age of sixteen, it was the profession of teaching that most urgently demanded personnel and gave the committee the most work, requiring the Teachers' Section of our Unions to create a large inspection body given the general bourgeois origin of the new teaching staff.

On the tram we passed buses that were responsible for transporting schoolchildren home after school.

We got off at Las Ramblas, which were, as always, extremely busy, but soon, when seven o'clock struck and the factory sirens sounded, they were invaded by an immense crowd.

In order to intensify production and provide work for the enormous number of people who during the capitalist regime did nothing, either because of forced unemployment, accidental unemployment, parasitism or because they lived off their income, three eight-hour shifts had been set up in many factories, with production not interrupted for a single moment. The same had been done in several shops and even in some offices, but, nevertheless, the general mass of workers in the production sector had the same hours of 9 to 1 in the morning and 3 to 7 in the afternoon and, when the latter hour struck, the Ramblas were invaded by an immense crowd that moved with difficulty and in tight quarters, at the same time as the trams, which, although their service had increased extraordinarily, were still packed.

And that compact crowd had been circulating for many days at that time along the Ramblas without the presence of any guard and without the order having been disturbed.

At first, the enemies of the new regime were too afraid to dare to try anything. But when they gained confidence, they thought that such an order was very easy to alter and believed that by doing so they would inflict a harsh blow on us. But we met them, making sure that the militants of the organic cadres did not separate themselves from our rifles, and our presence gave the crowd a very picturesque note. Without it, any foreigner would have marveled at the normal appearance of a population that was going through days of such great significance.

People came out of work happy. The shops, which closed two hours later, poured torrents of light through their shop windows. The workers' clothing was not as monotonous and untidy as that of the Russians, but on the contrary, with the new order of things, the note of tragic misery that was often found during the capitalist regime had disappeared. Manual and intellectual workers were difficult to distinguish. Chichito noticed this and told me in an admiring tone.

A little later, trucks passed by distributing «El Noticiero» at the newsstands and soon queues formed for each person to take a copy.

—It is the least I can understand— the swindler told me, —the tactics you follow with the press. You consider it a public service and you distribute it for free and you have allowed the old newspapers to continue to be published and you let them say whatever they want.

—Naturally— I replied —We allow everyone to say what they think best. What harm can they do to us with words spoken or written? The old newspapers, unionized by all the manual and intellectual workers who worked on their production, remained in their hands to continue being published, administered by their company council and their workshop committees. Thus, each of them has its own editorial committee which, in accordance with the decisions of the assembly formed by the editorial staff, prints the ideology it believes best to defend and the journalistic standards to be adopted. A libertarian regime needs all ideas to be freely contrasted with public discussion, and a free press, absolutely free, without the imposition of authorities or the capitalist tyranny of business, is one of the indispensable organisms for the life of the new society.

I left Chichito, who was going to dinner, when, already getting dark, the illuminated signs came on. They put their fantastic and multicoloured touch on the facades of the buildings, but they no longer advertised industries or businesses, advertising was useless when the competition disappeared, but rather shows, social events, conferences... and they also advertised certain ideologies, arguing from facade to facade about spiritualism and materialism and Christian morality and full nudity.

Chapter 15: Eight days later

Eight days had already passed in which Barcelona had lived under the new regime and in which everyone had worked with true frenzy to perfect and consolidate it.

The truly essential thing about the method that we have always advocated and that we were putting into practice is continuity. Starting from the fundamental fact of the disappearance of private property and parliamentary democratic politics, handing power over to the community by deciding by plebiscite and, once this has been done, resuming ordinary life in the same way as the day before, so that the machine can continue to function normally, then gradually introducing the successive reforms imposed by the new order of things.

The first thing that had to be done in those eight days, in the order of said transformations, had been that the former employees of the banks, insurance companies, savings banks, stockbrokers and all purely financial establishments, without reason for further existence, should close the operations of their respective establishments with an inventory and general balance sheet, the precious metals being duly stored and all banknotes and other fiduciary titles being burned and such employees being assigned to other organizations, mainly, for their training, to the statistical offices of the local Technical Council.

We had to mobilize some of the organizational cadres to get the judges and magistrates to evacuate what they call the Palace of Justice and to get the prison employees to let the comrades they had locked up out into the street.

In the assemblies that were held almost every day at night to deliberate on as many points as needed to be defined, the former bourgeois were already daring to go and dare to express their opinion and to discuss. The most difficult question was that concerning positive religions. But the overwhelming majority of our people ended up prevailing.

Our Union of Intellectuals was the one that had gathered the most ex-bourgeois and personnel who, without being bourgeois, were infected by its ideology, and the discussion of the tolerance of religious cults was a hard-fought battle in its Assembly in which I took part trying to maintain the prestige of our Union. The opponents of my thesis stoned me with the word freedom and the noun tolerance. I argued that it cannot be tolerated or freely permitted to deceive oneself by affirming what cannot be proven. However, so many Phrygians had joined our ranks that the resolution of our Assembly was overwhelmed by that of the other unions of manual workers who unanimously opposed the vote of their numerous voters, and the practice of religion was prohibited.

Eight days had passed and the Civil Guard was still locked in its barracks, neither surrendering nor agreeing to negotiate. This forced us to maintain permanent guards in front of these barracks from our organic cadres armed with machine guns, jump tanks and cannons. The tables had turned and now it was we who had such convincing means at our disposal.

During those eight days we had been learning with great excitement about the progress of the movement throughout Spain.

Every morning after breakfast I read the «Soli» from cover to cover, which, not having to fight with financial difficulties or with the persecution of the authorities, had become a magnificent newspaper that was generally preferred and that had a circulation of 200,000 copies.

From Madrid we received detailed news by telephone about everything that was happening, transmitted with the consent of the Government, which realized that it was impossible to prevent such news from reaching us and that it was interested in receiving it from all over Spain as well. Trains also entered and left Madrid, although without passengers, but with merchandise. The usual suppliers of supplies continued to send everything Madrid needed to consume and collect the amount, according to instructions from the National Committee, the money being destroyed, which did not worry the dictatorial government because it had in its possession the plates to print the banknotes and did not care much about resorting to inflation.

During those eight days, the most complete order had reigned throughout Spain and work had been done everywhere. However, in some localities, it had taken longer for the soldiers to revolt than in Barcelona, while in the rural districts the Civil Guard had been disarmed from the first moment. The great Chichito had already been informed before the committee in charge of dictating the rules that could prevent all fraud in the use of the vouchers and it had been proposed to a local plenary session that these should be attached to a matrix that the user should keep and return in order to collect the following week's voucher in exchange for it, and that for all payments the divisional voucher should be detached from the matrix in the sight of the person collecting it, the loose vouchers detached from it being worthless. In this way, the distributor clerks were prevented from spending the vouchers collected.

An inspection service was also set up, authorized to visit any establishment at any time and carry out an approximate inventory, with a view to preventing the employees of the distribution company from taking the goods home. Chichito was not only allowed to cross the border, but was sent there as an undesirable person accompanied by two militants.

Although what was happening in Madrid was so serious, we were not as concerned about it as the attitude of the foreigner towards our movement. The news that the press gave us was full of expectation. Everywhere our exploit aroused the enthusiasm of the proletarian masses and the fear of the bourgeoisie and the politicians, but it seemed that they would not dare to intervene and attack us for fear that a revolution would break out at home. Everywhere the bourgeoisie was impatiently awaiting the failure of our movement, a hope that supported the socialists in Madrid in their attitude, but, as the days went by, our life was developing in perfect order and we were living without the mechanism of the economy suffering any damage, such hopes were being replaced by panic. Would the dictator have to plaster again?

After those eight days, the National Committee sent a communication to all the regional Confederations urging them to hold plenary sessions as soon as possible to decide on the convenience of holding a National Congress to deal with the issue of whether a march should be held on Madrid by all the armed militants of Spain to establish libertarian communism there once and for all and put an end to the tyranny imposed by the public force.

Chapter 16: Libidinous

That afternoon I went up to walk through the gardens of the old Montjuich Exhibition. And this is not right, because they were almost at the same height as my house, on Luis Capdevila Street: but the thing is that I had gone down to eat before.

I did so in a cheap restaurant, as usual. Eating ordinary meals in such places, you only have to pay a small amount, corresponding to the hours of work of the department distributed among all the customers, since the meat, vegetables, legumes, bread, oil, butter, coal, and all the ordinary elements of food were taken from the markets and shops without paying anything for them. But when you want to eat extraordinary, delicate things, brains, partridge, lobster, then you have to pay in hours of work the price they are worth in the market, or buy them and take them to be seasoned for you. Anyway, I, who almost always eat things like that, because I don't have a bone in my mouth and I need special delicacies, among which eggs predominate, which are not abundant and are expensive due to the scarce national production, eat every day an amount that takes more or less half an hour of work.

That afternoon I went up to walk through the gardens of Montjuich where I ran into an old friend of mine, a guard, with whom I started a conversation.

—How are you doing, Mr. Eustaquio?— I asked.

— Desperate, Mr. Rizo.

— And that?

— Because one does not know what to expect.

— What is the matter with you, man?

— Before, one was an authority and now they have told me that I must limit myself to taking care of the plants without worrying in the least about what people do.

— And what more could you wish for? Your new mission must be much more relaxing. Plants are much more tractable than men.

— Ah, if only there were only plants! But the fact is that there are plenty of men and women here and they put on quite a spectacle!

— And that worries you?

— I was used to watching over public morality. And if the word morality sounds bad to you, then over decency. And now I am forced to put up with every little scene...

— You will get used to it — I said smiling.

— But I ask myself indignantly why, since there is now absolute freedom, they do not go to Las Ramblas to put on a show.

— They are wrong not to leave, but there are still remnants of conventional bourgeois modesty. But come on: explain to me what is going on here that bothers you so much.

— I don't need to explain it to you, it's better that you see it with your own eyes and then you can tell me if it's not a bitch to put up with it.

— Let's go see it, guide me. I'll gladly share the bitch with you.

— Come this way.

We went through a thicket and looked out at a clearing where the desnudists showed off their natural lines.

– Have you seen people fresher? – he asked me.

– Look, Mr. Eustaquio...

– Why don't you continue to use the familiar form with me?

– My familiar form is familiar and affectionate and at this moment I feel infinitely distant from you. This spectacle is magnificent and, if I didn't remember Viura's theories on aesthetic nudism or I wasn't aware that naked I would be a mess, I would get naked right now to mingle with these people. That is health and pure beauty.

– That is rubbish, Don Alfonso. They do not do it in search of health or for the love of beauty, but to see each other, to get warm and have fun. Then they hide in the branches and nothing! Maybe you see a quarrelsome stripper who turns away in shame...

– And as Viura said –I interrupted–. It is no longer a question of the Greeks with so little things, but there are all kinds of guys...

– Look here. There is a couple on each of those benches. I used to watch jealously to prevent immorality. Now it seems that they are waiting to see how I approach to kiss and hug and hold on... But it seems that they have given each other syndeticon on the lips.

– You are already old, poor Eustaquio.

– And I have to see my gray hair stained by this filth...

– This does not stain, man. It invigorates. It is the truth and life. And those desnudists who get mad, if they continue, will find in nudism the remedy for their illness. Now they are simply suffering from indigestion from dressing up.

– Look here. There, behind that bush, there is almost always a couple rolling around. Sometimes they even form a queue waiting their turn.

– It seems wrong to me. This is a tribute to bourgeois modesty, which should have disappeared by now. They would receive no punishment if they were to fit in in plain sight. There still exists the modesty so close to the cat, so far from the dog.

– So you are not shocked by anything?

– Yes: I am shocked by the modesty of those who hide themselves in order to achieve the most august and beautiful thing in life.

– Then come over here and look at this picture.

– It makes me sick, Eustaquio. It is disgusting. But you must consider that these men act under the influence of instincts that are dominant in them. They are aberrations and deformities, through no fault of their own. And bear in mind –let us say this loudly, with all anarchist sincerity, without fear of twisted interpretations– that these are not rare exceptions, but something general that we all have something of, a little or a lot. Antole France, in «On the Immaculate Stone», tells how Zeus had made all the organs of man and woman separately and that, when he joined them to finish his work, victim of certain liberations that Dionysus made him ingest, he was sadly mistaken, so that every male has something of the female and every female of the male. Pío Baroja has written that there are many hysterical men (Histerum=womb) and many women who are very squeamish. It is so. We all also have the need to defecate every day. Here we must be grateful for the modesty that makes them hide in these woods. Here I do pity you, Eustaquio.

– But, shouldn't libertarian communism, the collectivity, whoever it is, prohibit this, prevent it?

- We may not feel what they feel, but libertarianism is higher than everything and everything fits in it, as long as there is no coercion or tyranny.
- You'll see when they finally lose their shame and go down the Ramblas...
- Listen to me: If I have the habit of shouting loudly, which I know bothers other people, I'll come here to shout and not do it on the busy streets. There I'd risk getting a smack on the head. Don't be afraid of them coming down. Poor Eustaquio, this is reserved for your show.
- I'll ask for my transfer.
- Or manage the change, the exchange. Maybe there will be someone out there who would be in their glory here...

Chapter 17: The Bloodthirsty Beasts

The first few days it was picturesque and joyful to see the workers, who owned powerful weapons, guarding the barracks of the Civil Guard, but it soon became annoying and tiring, and it was decided to force them to surrender.

To do this, they resorted to the procedure of leaving them without water, and they did not take long to capitulate. They conferred by telephone with the local Committee, asking that their lives be respected and it was stated to them that they would be allowed to leave their barracks one by one, dressed in civilian clothes and without weapons, assuring them that no harm would be done to them.

Word spread, and a huge crowd came to see them flee. The people were furious towards them, without thinking of any other revenge than that of disgrace. The crowd came with the sole desire to see them flee in fear, with their tails between their legs, full of humiliation.

When the time came, as they left one by one, shrill whistles and a deafening uproar resounded, filling them with insults. The workers in the organic cadres contained the public, who, at times, drunk with anger and contempt, felt tempted to attack them.

The exodus lasted a long time, to the immense joy of the spectators, and the fugitives, after running like rabbits, disappeared around the first corner they found, fleeing hastily to hide in the anonymity of the crowd in the central streets.

But, when the last of the fugitives left, there were still a few in the barracks who did not want to flee. They were old wolves that a barbaric and cruel State had molded and paralyzed in rancid concepts and savage hatreds. They would not let themselves be whistled at. They would die defending their order, martyrs of their duty, and who knows if their stroke of audacity would make the good men react and end that unworthy anarchy. Or perhaps it was that, since they had no water, they had drunk all the rum in the canteen.

But the fact was that suddenly the door was flung open and a platoon of mounted savages rushed into the crowd, striking with their right arms and firing their pistols with their left hands.

These were moments of horror that reminded us of those sworn offenders from Jolo who, after stripping themselves of death and bandaging their entire bodies to stop the hemorrhage, entered Manila with sabre in hand, killing to death all those they found in front of them.

These other savages also knew that they had to die, but for their souls, brutalized by a lifetime of authoritarianism and exalted by rum, it was a true case of heroism.

As the crowd fled in terror, our armed militants did not dare to fire on the savages, fearing to injure the civilians, but they ran with the armored car, blocking their retreat to the barracks. When the crowd left the field open... then... they were hunted down with machine guns.

There were twelve horsemen who caused sixteen deaths and forty wounded. But each of the twelve received thirty or forty bullets. The machine guns were truly cruel.

The barbarie, when dying, had the gallant gesture of barbarians.

Chapter 18: The days keep passing

The ex-policemen.

One of the most annoying legacies left to us by the old regime is that of the ex-policemen.

They have such a strong *espirrista* spirit that it is impossible for them to stop being policemen.

Both those who work and those who do not work, lowly and flatteringly show themselves to be in favor of the new state of things and they are constantly investigating and inquiring and harassing us with the denunciation of a thousand fantastic plots.

They are the worst plague that exists, because with their infamous intrigues they sow distrust and make one doubt even oneself. I believe that they act in good faith, but that their spirit is infected by the “cops” that have saturated them during the exercise of their profession.

They are so harmful that I am seriously considering proposing to my Union the suggestion that they should be put on the other side of the border so that they can go and look for Chichito.

Such good friends as they were!

The underworld.

On the other hand, the thugs, the thieves, the robbers, the *trinxeraires*, the crooks, the thieves, the swordsmen, the *topistas*, the pickpockets, the lighters, the full house, the pickpockets, the swindlers, the two-card takers, the beggars, the three-card players, all the scum of capitalist society, are the best and most enthusiastic libertarian communists.

But they are true communists, with their hearts overflowing with gratitude to see that under the new regime they can dignify themselves, that they do not need to steal, because they are given what is theirs, what they have a right to like all men, the necessities of life, and they are not looked upon with the contempt with which the capitalist regime suffocated them.

They are, in general, not very fond of work, but it is all a matter of finding one that is not too tiring. Many of them make excellent tavern clerks, but they are more drawn to the work of kitchen assistants and clerks in cheap canteens. They have come out of the Dantesque hell of daily threatening hunger and enjoy participating in culinary operations. One of them said that his great dream would be to be in charge of distributing the vouchers every Monday, because of the illusion of money.

And the fact is that almost all of them, before being thugs, had a job. They are deserters from work out of rebellion. They were a derivation of the anarchic protest movement towards *pacheism*.

Travel by train.

A train ticket must be obtained from the Union and consists of an authorization to make the trip, indicating the dates of departure and return.

In a very general way, all the Unions have interpreted this power to issue permits in a very restrictive way on work days and with great latitude on holidays. On work days only those who claim compelling and urgent reasons in their union travel, such as the illness of a relative, the need for a medical consultation, or to make a certain purchase and official reasons.

For the acquisition of low-value objects in Barcelona, the custom has been established of buying them with the distribution voucher of a Barcelona friend in exchange for the gift of some game, a basket of fruit or some eggs. When it comes to something of high value, negotiations are opened between the two local federations to arrange an exchange with equal hours of work.

But on Sundays it is customary to grant permission to whoever requests it and the trains leave and enter Barcelona packed with passengers.

In the whole surrounding region, as far as the round trip can be made during the Sunday rest period, full communism is established, without distribution vouchers, except for a few exceptions. Sunday visitors are received fraternally and almost always invited to private homes with abundant free food.

Those who live in Barcelona eat in cheap restaurants and eateries where, since they cannot charge them anything for the work of seasoning, since they do not have our distribution vouchers, the innkeeper has to be content with some of what they bring, which is always substantial.

It has already been thought of how interesting it is to relieve congestion in Barcelona, so permission is granted to anyone who requests it to move his residence outside of it, provided that he presents authorization from the local Committee of the place where he intends to go, and, on the other hand, there is a lot of haggling over the granting of permission to come here to live, for which it is necessary to satisfy reasons of real weight.

Taximeters.

There are no other private cars than the official ones and those of the doctors. All the others have been requisitioned and, on the other hand, those doctors who did not have one have been provided with cars. But the doctors' drivers have orders that only the doctors themselves may use them.

The surplus of the requisitioned cars has been provided with taximeters and dedicated to free public service.

For such service a taxi can be used by the first person who finds it displaying the rental card, without having to pay anything, but with only the right to one trip in which the taximeter marks two pesetas according to the old rate. When reaching that figure, the driver must get out or pay whatever the machine marks at the rate of ten hundredths of an hour of work per peseta.

In such conditions this is the preferred means of transport, but only chance allows it to be used, because as soon as a car is freed it is almost immediately used again.

I have heard that the local committee, when it can safely say that Barcelona produces more than it consumes, will propose ordering a good batch of cars to intensify and improve the service.

For now the drivers work three eight-hour shifts.

For a taxi to leave the municipal district of Barcelona, a special permit from the local committee is required.

The former police officers have made countless complaints of minor abuses, which are not given much importance. These gentlemen believe that they are still active and get involved in everything.

Housing.

The housing committee has the most thankless job these days. He receives constant visits from comrades who ask for housing improvements and they have to spend the day visiting bourgeois houses accompanied by architects and master builders, planning reforms that allow better use of the land.

The first thing he did when building his own house was to have a delegate from the Committee visit him. If his house can be conditioned by reforms, the Construction Union is immediately notified and the builders are soon to arrive to improve the house. On the other hand, when there is no arrangement, the applicant takes over.

In this way, Barcelona's housing is gradually being distributed in an equitable manner, while the National Committee studies the way to relieve congestion and consults all the localities of Spain about which industries suited to the conditions of the country might be of interest to them to be transferred from here with their installation and their workers, for which they must admit into their community the construction workers who are sent to build the buildings necessary for the factory and for the workers' housing.

As for minor deficiencies of municipal order, the local Committee has been forced to relieve its work by creating neighborhood delegations to resolve the thousand daily incidents that come to it with a thousand impertinences.

The barrack delegations have had, in turn, to create neighborhood committees, and thus the new organization is being structured, but with the understanding that these are not authorities in the old style, but mere administrative bodies.

An interview with Ossorio and Gallardo.

The «Soli» has published a curious interview with the old cuckoo that is the most picturesque thing imaginable.

Mr. Ossorio says that in his house even the cat has become a libertarian communist, but that he remains faithful to his ideology as always.

For ideological reasons he abhors the dictatorship that prevails in Madrid and assures that he prefers communism and even anarchy to it.

He has stated that libertarian communism deserves all respect because, although new, it constitutes a true legal system. He fears failure due to administrative disorganization, although he cannot help but admire the perfection with which the national economic mechanism has been functioning these days.

The old jurist is on his way to Phrygia on his way back from Damascus.

Chapter 19: A crime

In a small room in the building that is now the Military Government, our Union of Intellectual Workers had been installed, which, with compulsory unionization, had reached one hundred thousand members. We who made up the “old guard” were gathered that afternoon.

We were the old militants of the heroic times who had known how to give life to the institution and sustain its sacred fire with Herculean efforts, fighting with the countless opportunists and politicizers who came in droves at the beginning, defending the organization from the Bolsheviks who tried to infiltrate, unmasking Marx Bembo and making up for the meager membership with extraordinary dues.

There was Puig, the mystic of anarchism; Soriano, the impulsive; Llorca, the old militant; the great Peña, so young; Piñon, so intelligent and enthusiastic; Riquer, the philosopher; Vidal who x-rayed anarchism to analyze its core; Viura, the cat lover; Arregui, passionate and expressive; Federica Montseny, the strong woman with a fiery soul; finally, me, the dreamer, crazy cook friend.

I must make an observation to clarify some doubts: After many hesitations and trials, the Confederation had been organized by industries, thus obtaining the strength that had given us victory, but this organization was not incompatible with the branches, and even required that these were also organized, which is why our Union continued to exist.

The writer who was hired by a publishing house and the journalist who was an editor for a certain newspaper, logically went to the Graphic Arts Union, but those of us who wrote books or pamphlets without a fixed editor and those who collaborated in magazines continued to belong to the Intellectuals Union, because, in reality, we exercised a liberal profession making a production that we placed where we could, completely detached from the editors and the newspaper companies.

Without the existence of our Union, where would the draftsmen who could work for an architect, a textile factory or a publishing house have joined? Thus, in the Intellectuals' Union there were all those of us who worked mentally without being salaried. Those who received a salary or wage from a company went to the Union of the corresponding industry. In the new Regime, with no more salaries or wages, the same characteristic difference remained and the field of our Union remained perfectly defined.

We were gathered together and engaged in pleasant and agreeable conversation when Benigno Bejarano arrived from Calle Benigno Bejarano bringing us the latest news.

After twelve days of libertarian communism, in Barcelona, a city of two million inhabitants, the first crime had been committed.

It was a bad marriage that she had decided to break up, and the husband, overcome by jealousy, had stabbed her to death. Afterwards she had presented herself at her Union — the Glass Union, giving an account of what she had done and asking that the Union itself decide her punishment.

The Secretary, with very good agreement, had told her that the Union was not the one who should judge, but the conscience of the person who had committed that act. That he himself should entrust the judgment to his conscience and act accordingly.

Bejarano told us that that man left the office with discomposed features and the gestures of a madman and everyone thought that he was going to commit suicide, when what he did was go to a tavern to try to drown his sorrows in alcohol.

— Libertarian communism —said Puig— has the most terrible punishment for these cases, precisely in its indulgence. With authoritarianism, whoever did something wrong had a way to pay for the wrong done and settle his guilt. Now, whoever does something wrong, since no one asks him to account for it, has to appeal to the court of his own conscience, which is the most severe of courts. This man has gotten drunk trying to make the alcohol drown out the voice of his conscience. If he does not commit suicide, he will be very unhappy listening to his accusation every day.

— And thank goodness —I said—, that this is not a mysterious crime.

If it were to happen, the ex-policemen would have the opportunity to confuse us by investigating what no one cares about in complicity with the reporters addicted to an archaic and invincible custom. Then we went on to talk about the National Congress that would be held the following day and for which we had named Puig and Montseny as delegates.

Chapter 20: On the way to Madrid

The National Congress, which was held in Barcelona with innumerable delegates who met in the Liceu theatre and were able to understand each other thanks to the use of powerful loud-speakers, was a great event that consolidated the libertarian communist movement, giving it the unshakeable basis of the unanimous will of the vast majority of the nation.

The National Committee said that the new formula of government had been recognised by the Soviet Republic, which had offered to send us its oil in exchange for steel products, thus resolving a difficult problem of our economy. It also stated that there were no suspicions of hostility on the part of France, which needed to concentrate all its attention on Hitlerite Germany.

The delegates were sparing in their use of words and, given the premature nature of the circumstances, it was agreed by acclamation that they would march on Madrid the following day, with half of all armed militants from each locality in Spain camping in its vicinity, with the National Committee authorized to set the date of the attack, which must be carried out against the troops of the State in the event that the latter dared to resist.

The operation was expected to last a week at the most, and the attackers would have to provide themselves with provisions for seven days, each making the journey in the way that seemed best to him. The members of the different organizational cadres would previously agree with their technical committees to meet at a specific place. As can be seen, it was a military operation that had the least possible militarism and, nevertheless, due to the number of attackers and their enthusiasm, it had every guarantee of success.

I, despite my age, due to my training due to my former military profession, in addition to being part of our organizational cadres, was precisely the president of its technical committees, thus becoming the equivalent of a general of the troops that Barcelona sent against Madrid.

We agreed that each one would go when and how it suited him, and we agreed to meet four days later in Alcalá de Henares. The local Committee, after consulting a plenary session of the Juntas, put all the taxis in Barcelona at our disposal.

I left the next day with Comrade Clariana, a doctor for our cadres, in his car.

It was a great spectacle to see the roads of Spain continually traveled by a caravan of cars heading to Madrid, in which workers were travelling, equipped with Mauser rifles and abundant ammunition, as well as succulent provisions of food.

And all of them were burning with enthusiasm, just like the people who saw them pass by, applauding them.

And as we approached the centre of Spain the caravan became denser and the enthusiasm more vibrant. We all greeted each other effusively, full of camaraderie. We were all the oldest militants in each locality, convinced anarchists, soul of the Confederation, almost all of us coming from the heroic times. We asked each other where we came from and asked for news, and we became more and more convinced of our invincible strength. We had been persecuted so much that we had been Herculeanized. Hammer blow by hammer blow, iron is embossed and transformed into a work of art. We had been embossed by our adversaries the capitalists and their auxiliaries

of the UGT and we had managed, despite their will and their inconsistency, to acquire the artistic form of a gigantic and invincible Hercules. Hercules that gathered its scattered molecules to fall on Madrid, nest of centralist tyranny, cesspool of capitalism and authority.

The influence of cars was such, despite these being the first days, that we could not go very fast. Having left Barcelona before dawn, we could have been in Alcalá, in normal times, at nightfall, but it got dark about a hundred kilometers before we reached a village in Alcarria where we could not pass because the engine had a breakdown that could only be repaired, probably during the whole of the following day.

Chapter 21: Libertarian Communism of the Village

How glad I was that the breakdown had forced us to stop there! I was glad because I had the opportunity to experience one of the purest manifestations of libertarian communism applied in that insignificant little town in an integral way.

We pulled the car off the road and, with our rifle hanging from our shoulder, we got out of the car, pretending to speak to the local committee, asking the first local we found.

—That doesn't exist here— he said. —What do we want it for? Does it serve to ensure that everyone's agreements are fulfilled? Well, we all make sure that they are fulfilled. We fulfill them, and in peace.

—We— we told him, —are coming from Barcelona against Madrid and we have had a breakdown in the car that forces us to sleep here and tomorrow we will spend almost the whole day fixing it. Where could they provide us with beds?

—In this town— he told us, —we are less than two hundred, including men, women and children, and we only had ten rifles seized from the Civil Guard, whose members we took pleasure in giving a few slaps in the face as a revolution, although without being cruel. So only five of our men have been able to march on Madrid, fulfilling the agreement of the National Congress, leaving five beds empty. As there are only three of them, there are still two left, so don't worry.

— Is there much enthusiasm for the cause here?

— For us, the cause is the disappearance of the civilians, the tax collector and the landowner. And, in addition, knowing that in exchange for the crops we send to the city, the city will return products of equivalent value in hours of work, that is to say: we will earn about ten times what we did before. Imagine how determined we are to maintain this conquest that makes us men. But come this way, we will go to my house and have dinner.

— We have a supply of provisions, cold cuts and preserves for seven days.

— Well, tonight you will have a hot dinner. And in Barcelona, is there much enthusiasm?

— Promise me — I answered — that you will come and spend a few days with me on your first vacation, when the care of the countryside is not pressing. So you can appreciate the enthusiasm that exists there.

— I promise you this, since this is another new luxury that is granted to us.

Classic peasant hospitality was then enhanced by anarchist camaraderie and the natural detachment of someone who does not have to calculate the money they spend. That country family received our visit as an unexpected and pleasant surprise that broke the monotony of their life and went out of their way to please us until we feared indigestion. A tender, fattened chicken was stewed with rice, as well as fried blood sausage with potatoes and an exquisite stew of marinated meat with peppers. Then there was local cheese, honey and abundant and exquisite fruits, all washed down with Moorish wine and accompanied by delicious wholemeal bread with black crumb.

After dinner, as the night was splendid and word of our arrival had spread throughout the village, we sat down to chat at the door of the house, attended by almost all the farmers who lived in the town centre, forming a huge circle in which we held an extremely picturesque chat. These farmers were almost all illiterate, but they had a highly developed intelligence that allowed them to easily assimilate the most abstruse ideas. Thirteen years ago we thought that our ideology would find a serious obstacle in the farmer's lack of culture to spread throughout the Spanish countryside, and yet, these men possessed a complete social culture and knew and deeply felt the anarcho-syndicalist ideals. They also easily realized the difficulties that the popularity of the big city represented for the implementation of the new system and they asked us curiously about the functioning of our economy, frowning with suspicion when we showed them a distribution voucher.

In that community, communism was integral and everything that had to be resolved was resolved by plebiscite in an open Council, where everyone met in the town square. Of these meetings, the most turbulent was the one that agreed to expel the priest, which was mostly opposed by the women.

They worked all the land in the municipal area, agreeing in the meetings on the tasks and the equitable distribution of the work, with the school teacher carefully noting the hours spent by each person in order to be able, one day, to determine the value of the harvest. This would be somewhat expensive due to a shortage of livestock and machinery, which was, apart from fertilizers, the first thing they would request from the regional Confederation.

Each person consumed what he wanted, without anyone taking it into account. If someone needed to go to the city to buy something, he could take a few chickens, a dozen eggs or whatever he wanted to make change. The teacher had thus acquired a radio that brought the neighbors together in the square to listen to the broadcasts.

The teacher, who was introduced to us, was a poor man in terms of general culture, but an enthusiastic pedagogue and a convinced anarchist. It was difficult for him, but he managed to convince the community that children should not work until they were sixteen, insisting strongly that someone who knew more than him be sent by the national federation of teachers.

The gathering continued until quite late and then we were led to beds so high, by multiplying the mattresses, that climbing onto them was a mountaineering adventure.

The next day, helped by the village blacksmith, our driver repaired the fault, we set off again in the middle of the afternoon and spent the night in Alcalá, where there were already many of our militants, the people of Alcalá making an effort to provide us with lodging and inviting us generously.

Chapter 22: My prison

In Alcalá there was also the National Committee coordinating, through the Assembly delegation, the efforts of all in the great enterprise; and, since it was necessary for some of us to go to Madrid to warn our people of our plans, I was thought of since it was known that I had lived in the capital for many years and knew it well.

In the afternoon I went by car to the town of the bear and the strawberry tree and waited until it got dark to enter the Entrevías neighborhood, a place chosen because it was thought to be more difficult to guard. I then took the subway at Puente de Vallecas and went directly to Goya station from where I walked to the house of my former employers, people I trusted absolutely with whom I had such strong ties of friendship that they almost made me part of their family.

After greeting them and warning them that I would sleep there, I went out into the street to perform the mission that had been entrusted to me and I went back and forth in a taxi, going through the immense Madrid of two million inhabitants until midnight, the hour at which I made the imprudence, trusting too much in the time remaining until the assault on Madrid, of entering the Café del Norte to have a glass of cognac.

Shortly after sitting down I saw that at a nearby table a small parishioner stood up from a group formed by bad-looking guys and approached me.

— What are you doing in Madrid, friend Rizo? —he asked me without stretching his hand.

I recognized Vivié, a highly clerical and cavern-dwelling employee of Public Works whom I met around 29 or 30, and I stretched out my hand to him, answering:

— A pleasure trip, friend Vivié. And what are you doing now in Madrid?

Without shaking my hand, very seriously, he answered:

— I am now a senior police chief.

My heart skipped a beat and I instinctively put my hand to the pocket where I kept my pistol, but one of the henchmen accompanying my old friend noticed it and stood up as well. He placed himself beside me, threatening.

— Friend Rizo —the senior chief told me with his hypocritical and saccharine little voice. — You in Barcelona are crazy people who do not care about us spying on you. So I think you will not be surprised that I am well informed about what is happening there and that you are the president of the technical board of the organic cadres, a position equivalent to that of general in chief of your military forces. In such conditions and knowing the attack that the anarchist forces are preparing against Madrid, you will not be surprised that I am forced, with great regret, to order your arrest.

—Perfectly— I said to him, —I see that I have fallen into the trap and I have no illusions about the fate that awaits me, but before being led away I ask you to listen to a few words from me.

— Tell me.

— Weren't you a clerical and a Carlist before?

— Yes, certainly —he answered—, but now I am a socialist. You should not be surprised, given the concept that libertarian communists have of politicians.

— You are mistaken, friend Vivié. We have a very poor concept of politics, but not of politicians. In general, and except for natural exceptions, we believe them to be in good faith and mistaken.

Surely you have also evolved in good faith, celebrating that you have done so towards the left.

— You will be taken to the cells of the Headquarters —he told me, smiling hypocritically—, and I promise you, in memory of our old friendship, that you will not be mistreated. But on the other hand I must sincerely tell you that I see your situation as very dark.

— Me too —I answered, smiling stoically—, but it makes no difference to me since I am certain that victory will be ours.

Chapter 23: In the chapel

I was sentenced to death without being very worried about the idea of being shot, because all my life I had had the feeling that it would end that way, having had time to get used to the idea and it seeming to me the most beautiful and picturesque way to die.

I was satisfied that our enemies recognized my rank as a general that I did not hold, judging me in a summary trial by a court martial of general officers and my defender being Matilla, my former companion at the Academy of Engineers.

At noon I entered the chapel and at dawn the next day I would be shot in the courtyard of the prison, where I was locked up.

Vivié visited me and tried to convince me to accept spiritual help, making me lose the stoic serenity that I had known how to clothe myself with.

– If I see a priest or a friar around here –I told him grumpily– I cannot be held responsible for what I will do with him.

After the experience, noticing in myself my two personalities corresponding to the period of my life, and knowing that I was going to die tomorrow, I could no longer dream of waking up ten years later, except in spirit, which would be very unpleasant if it were possible, because it would show me that I was wrong in harboring the comforting belief that spiritual life ends with physical life, that the soul disappears when the body dies.

But, speaking with the Chief of Police, the idea occurred to me that if I was to be shot in 1945, I had no reason to let my two personalities be shot at the same time, nor any need to experience in 1932 the anticipated sensation of death. In addition, I was worried about whether I could wake up again after death.

With real impatience I awaited the result of Vivié's efforts, while playing chess. I was not at all worried about the fact that I would be shot the next day, considering the fact from the perspective of my personality in 1932 and trusting that I would live another thirteen years and see our ideals triumph again.

They asked me if I would accept a visit from the brothers of Peace and Charity and I replied that I would gladly accept any visit, but I warned them that if they wanted to talk to me about God they would first have to put me in a straitjacket or box with me. Two sentries guarded me constantly with fixed bayonets. The Director of the Prison hardly left my side and he pleased me by playing chess, although he did it quite badly. The journalists also came to report on me and their visits were a pleasant entertainment for me. I found the last hours of the man condemned to death interesting and picturesque. Although everyone assured me that I would be pardoned. All of Madrid was convinced that it would be a huge mistake to condemn me and, although the dictator's stubbornness inspired serious fears, there was confidence that at the last minute he would agree to sign my pardon.

Chapter 24: Running back time

I fell asleep on the prison cot, watched by the two guards, and the sleep —perhaps due to the absence of Cazalla’s drinks—was less heavy than the other time.

So, if the other time I went through the thirteen years that separate 1932 from 1945 without realizing it, this time, because the sleep was less deep, it did not happen like that and I went backwards through all the days from 1945 to 1932 with dizzying speed.

This living in reverse, with today coming after tomorrow and yesterday after today, just as history is synthetic, resulted in an analytical process of life, in which the effects first appeared and later the generating causes that motivated them.

My vision of those thirteen years was very fast, living absolutely all of its hours in the course of one night, but seeing it all with a hallucinatory lucidity in a fantastic cavalcade of time.

When I tried to stop for a moment, if I looked at the street, I saw how all the people were marching backwards with their gaze fixed on what for them was the future and for me the past, walking backwards and always moving aside with the opportunity to avoid tripping.

I witnessed how the accused entered the prison voluntarily and were taken home by court order by the police. I saw how a gunman collected the bullets from the body of a corpse that rose in health and life and began indifferently and unconsciously to walk backwards. I saw how a drunkard left the wine that intoxicated him in the glass that the innkeeper placed under the tap through which he climbed up to the barrel, until the man calmed down completely and left, having collected a large penny from the innkeeper for each glass of wine. I saw how at school the teacher was teaching the children who were getting younger and younger, close to entering the maternal womb to be undone there, after passing through the successive embryonic stages of the zoological scale, they ended up transforming themselves into a spermatozoon that the father collected between spasms of pleasure.

Thus, pleasure no longer presented itself to me as the object of life, but as the fixed and eternal substratum on which time moved, sometimes slowly, other times, as it happened to me then, vertiginously.

I lived, then, in a real vertigo for those thirteen years, day by day, but without my memory being able to retain more than a vague impression of the whole, feeling how the year 1932 was approaching, until finally it arrived and, opening my eyes, I found myself in my old room.

Shortly afterwards I had fallen asleep on the bunk in the Madrid Prison...

Chapter 25: Writing this book

Had it all been a dream? The semi-drowsiness of the first few moments disturbed me, but that room was the same one in which I had fallen asleep one night...

It was the same room, my room, with the walls covered with prints that I had pasted one on top of the other to attend to the present in a permanent way. The same room with its large window that I never closed day or night and with the work table on the other side of the head of the bed.

I threw myself out of bed, put on my slippers and went to the work table. It was indeed the day after the one I had gone to bed after dinner. Everything else had been a dream caused by the hemp extract that had given me a vision of the future.

There, on the work table, as was my custom, were the two hundred pages that I had planned to use to write this book, numbered by me in advance in pencil in the upper left corner. To my right was the typewriter, offering me its keys.

My calendar was also on the work table, the block in which I usually write down my daily expenses, my income, and the remaining cash. With a quick glance I saw that the thousand-odd pesetas thing had been a dream. I only had about thirty-something, with no other hope of income for now than the publisher's payment for this book I planned to write. I should hurry to do it in order to receive his money order before my money ran out.

I dressed to work inside the house, as usual. I arranged the bedclothes. I recalled in detail the expenses I made the day before to write down the account in the calendar block, lit a cigarette, put the first page in the typewriter, and began to write...

I began to write this book that I am now finishing.

To do so, I will tell you, reader, that this is a fantastic vision of the future, but that it is something that will necessarily arrive if the current ferment of anxiety about the future continues, of concern for the future, of desires to know what libertarian communism will be, of urgent anxiety to study in advance a plan so that we can walk tomorrow on explored and known ground, these desires that we could say respond to a constructive anarchism and that are like the nucleus of crystallization of the future... If this continues, if we all strive to clear the path of tomorrow, such symptoms are those of the pregnancy of humanity that will give birth to libertarian communism gloriously and in a very similar way to that which I have recounted.

I have limited myself to recounting the advent of libertarian communism, leaving it in its cradle. Perhaps another day I will be pleased to tell you something about this regime, already strong, perhaps too strong, hindering the march towards anarchy, by telling a love story two centuries from now...

THE END

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Alfonso Martínez Rizo
1945
The advent of libertarian communism
1932

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