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Response to the Manifesto of the Thirty

Buenaventura Durruti

2 September 1931

We anarchists will respond in an energetic but noble way to the attack made upon us by some members of the Confederation. I hope it's clear that this is a direct attack on García Oliver and me. That's natural; I clashed with these figures when I arrived in Barcelona and, after we spoke for several hours, it became obvious that we had two different positions, which are only becoming more and more distinct.

We, the men of the FAI, are nothing like what many people think. Indeed, there's an aura around us that's unmerited and that we need to dispel as soon as possible. Anarchism isn't what many pusillanimous spirits suppose. To be fair, our ideas are much more widespread than the privileged classes believe and they are a serious danger to capital and even for the proletariat's pseudo-defenders in high positions. Of course the manifesto that Pestaña, Peiró, Arin, Alfarache, Clarà, and others recently published pleases many of the bourgeois leaders and labor activists in Catalonia, but the FAI has no solidarity at all with these men's mea culpa and will continue along its path, which we believe is the best.

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Durruti in the Spanish Revolution by Abel Paz.
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English translation by Chuck Morse.

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How can they expect us to support the present government, which allowed four workers to be killed in the streets of Sevilla four days ago, which revived Martínez Anido's shameful practices, after they were updated by Mr. Maura, the Interior Minister? How can they expect us to embrace a government that fails to sanction the parties from the dictatorship and allows them to conspire openly in Lasarte? How can they think that we'd support a government formed in part by men who worked with the dictatorship?

We are absolutely apolitical. We are convinced that politics is a system of artificial government and completely against nature. Many men succumb to it so that they can continue occupying their positions, sacrificing whatever they think might help them, particularly the humble classes. What's happening now is simply what had to happen, because a revolution wasn't carried out on April 14. The changes needed to be much more far-reaching than they were and now the workers are paying the price. We, the anarchists, are the only ones defending the principles of the Confederation; libertarian principles which the others seem to have forgotten. Proof of this can be found in the fact that they abandoned the struggle precisely when it should have been waged more strongly. Clearly Pestaña and Peiró have made moral compromises that hamper their libertarian action.

The Republic, as presently constituted, is a real danger for libertarians. We will descend into social democracy if the anarchists don't act energetically. We have to make the revolution and to make it as soon as possible, since the Republic offers the people no security, either political or economic. We can't wait for the Republic to finish consolidating itself. Right now, General Sanjurjo is asking for eight thousand more Civil Guard. Naturally, the Republicans have the Russian experience in mind. They see what happened to Kerensky's government, which was nothing more than a preparatory stage for the real revolution. That's exactly what they want to avoid.

The Republic can't resolve the religious question. The bourgeoisie also doesn't dare do battle against the workers, although they have taken positions. They have a dilemma: either support social democracy, like in Germany or Belgium, or the organized working masses will expropriate them. They aren't fools and have chosen the path that's most comfortable for them: social democracy.

Macià, a man of infinite goodness, so pure and upright, is one of those responsible for the anguishing situation of the workers [in Catalonia] today. Instead of positioning himself between capital and labor, as he has done, if he had leaned definitively towards the workers' side, the libertarian movement in Catalonia would have spread throughout all Spain and Europe, and would have even found adepts in Latin America. Macià has tried to make a little Catalonia, while we would have made Barcelona the spiritual capital of the world.

Spanish industry can't compete with foreign industry and yet the workers are much more advanced here. If Spain's industry is going to modernize and compete with that in other countries, we the workers will have to take a step back. We're not going to do that.

It's necessary, indispensable, to resolve the problem of the unemployed, whose numbers grow daily. We workers have to provide the solution. How? With social revolution. It's time to make way for the workers. Although it seems paradoxical, the workers and only the workers have to defend Spain's wealth.

Getting back to the manifesto, I should mention that during one of our meetings I suggested to Pestaña and Peiró that they be theorists and that we, the youth, be the dynamic part of the organization. That is, that they come after us, reconstructing. As members of the Confederation, those of us in the FAI have only 2000 members, but we have a total of some 400,000 workers [in Catalonia], considering that at the last meeting we obtained sixty-three votes against twenty-two. It's a question

of whether or not to give a revolutionary response to the first provocation of the present government.

The first meeting of the Local Federation will be held on Sunday and we'll articulate our protest against the published document there... We know that our organization [the FAI] causes great fear in the Catalan bourgeoisie, but we'll never take a step backward as far as the workers' demands are concerned.