

Self-discipline in the Workers' Militia

Buenaventura Durruti

24 July 1936

I've said it once and I'll say it again: I've been an anarchist my whole life and the fact that I'm responsible for this human collectivity won't change my convictions. It was as an anarchist that I agreed to carry out the task that the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias entrusted to me.

I don't believe—and everything happening around us confirms this—that you can run a workers' militia according to classical military rules. I believe that discipline, coordination, and planning are indispensable, but we shouldn't define them in the terms of the world that we're destroying. We have to build on new foundations. My comrades and I are convinced that solidarity is the best incentive for arousing individual responsibility and a willingness to accept discipline as an act of self-discipline.

War has been imposed upon us and this battle will be different than those we've fought in Barcelona, but our goal is revolutionary victory. This means defeating the enemy, but also a radical change in men. For that change to occur, man must learn to live and conduct himself as a free man, an apprenticeship that develops his personality and sense of responsibility, his capacity to be master of his own acts. The worker on the job not only transforms the material on which he works, but also transforms himself through that work. The combatant is nothing more than a worker whose tool is a rifle—and he should strive toward the same objective as the worker. One can't behave like an obedient soldier, but as a conscious man who understands the importance of what he's doing. I know that it's not easy to achieve this, but I also know that what can't be accomplished with reason will not be obtained by force. If we have to sustain our military apparatus with fear, then we won't have changed anything except the color of the fear. It's only by freeing itself from fear that society can build itself in freedom.

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