

Ukraine, 1918–21 and Spain, 1936–39

A Comparison of Armed Anarchist Struggles in Europe

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I also want to thank the brothers of the Iota Chapter of the Kappa Delta Rho Fraternity for their friendship, support, and interest in my work. Oftentimes our community reminded me of the anarchist communes I studied, and perhaps our fate was all too similar as well ...

In particular, I want to thank Keith Langkan for not only helping me find the right words on occasion, but for also brining to my attention the existence of the “Korean Makhno.”

My Uncle Neil first handed me *Homage to Catalonia* a few years ago, after I expressed my liking of *Animal Farm*. I had intended to read the former as a supplement to the latter. When I read Orwell’s experience, I realized I had fundamentally misunderstood the Spanish Civil War. Instead of a just a dress rehearsal for the Second World War, Spain had been host to something anomalous, and beautiful. When I came across the Black Army and Makhno in my junior year of college, I knew my work was cut out for me.

Abstract

This thesis is a comparison of armed anarchist uprisings during the Interwar Period. Specifically, this thesis examines the political ideology and manifestations of it shared by the Free Territory of Ukraine (1918–1921), and Revolutionary Catalonia in Spain (1936–1939). This thesis argues that because of a shared political genealogy based on individuals, the revolutions are essential one. These individuals including Kropotkin and Durruti met each other in person and shared advice on their experience, which led to the similar expression of anarchism. This argument follows anarchist discourse of the mid and late 1800s and its direct implementation by way of Nestor Makhno in Ukraine, and the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist trade union, the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT). At every phase of anarchist history in this era, anarchists came into conflict with authoritarian communists, who evolved to be more pragmatic and centrist.

These anarchist societies were able to not only seize control of territory but protect it and allow a functioning society free of vertical control to flourish. By exploring the military of the anarchists, the Revolutionary Army of Ukraine and the CNT militias, similarities are apparent in terms of the unorthodox makeup of the military, and its success against conventional armies. In a similar vein, studying these periods offers a glimpse at a truly classless society. These two uprisings were the only cases of stateless territory in Europe that sustained for an extended period. The experience in Ukraine was transplanted to the Spanish Revolution, from which the likes of George Orwell were greatly influenced. This period of anarchism is significant in uniqueness, two modern stateless societies. There has been no previous scholarship directly comparing these revolutions or synthesizing the individual anarchists into a continuous lineage based on relationships.

Introduction

Anarchists in the Ukrainian Free Territory from 1918–1921 and in Revolutionary Catalonia between 1936–1939 developed functioning stateless societies grounded in anarchist principles. The two movements came from the same political philosophical position, grounded in personal interactions and correspondence between their respective leaders, and as a result created similar societies free of vertical authority. When the Free Territory fell in 1921, its leaders' ideas and experiences were transplanted to Spain to help continue the revolution there.

This argument follows anarchist thought created in the mid and late 1800s, and its direct implementation by way of Nestor Makhno (1888–1934) in Ukraine, and the Spanish anarchist trade union *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT) during the Interwar Period.

Historiography

This thesis was prepared by seeking primary and scholarly recounts of the events of the two wars. As stated in the historiography, the two civil wars have had somewhat of a problematic history. To address this, secondary scholarly work was used as precedent over primary sources in terms of recounting of events. For example, the *Anarchism of Nestor Makhno* by Michael Palij and *The History of the Makhnovist Movement* by Peter Arshinov (Makhno's mentor and comrade) have largely the same events and topics covered.¹ The *Anarchism of Nestor Makhno* was used whenever possible over the Arshinov work. This is because the Arshinov work was written in 1923, right after the remaining Ukrainian anarchists fled the country. Palij drew largely from this, but also did extensive research on topics of the time to complete a history. Bias is a strong word and is often used when "perspective" should be the term. That being said, this thesis was prepared with a large number of primary sources that the only glimpse into the events of the time. George Orwell for example, seems to be one of the only accounts of the militias and Catalonia available. Originally Orwell was going to be used as a non-binding example of another militia, as he fought with independent communists, not the anarchists). However, the anarchist writer Abel Paz, who fought in the Spanish Civil War, himself used the same passage from Orwell as this work to describe the culture and structure of the anarchist militias.

As seems to be the theme with all things anarchist in the interwar period, the Soviet presence is always there. There are claims that Makhno was little more than a bandit, or at the least a violent anti-Semite. Arshinov writes against this claim, and of the Jewish in Makhno's army. Arshinov has a section defending the claims and it became apparent in further research that this narrative was due to Soviet discrediting. There was an odd paragraph in Bakunin's statism and Anarchy when he is writing about Marx, he has several paragraphs on the intelligence of Marx and his political position, then writes that essentially is still a small and unpleasant man because he is a

¹ Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*.

P. Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)* (London: Freedom Press, 1987).

Jew, then goes back to a detailed and nuanced look at Marx's credentials. Ultimately not much time was spent exploring the relationship between the Makhnovist relationship with Jews, it was not particularly pertinent to the discussion of the shared political lineage of the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists. No similar accusations of anti-Semitism were come across in the scholarship of the Spanish anarchists.

The examination of the political philosophers in this thesis is straightforward, examining the works of Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876), Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921), and Karl Marx (1818–1883). Kropotkin's 1892 *Conquest of Bread* describes a stateless society, and it is used here to demonstrate the direct influence Kropotkin theory had on the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists when they formed their own societies.²

The Ukrainian Revolution and Nestor Makhno were much more difficult to accurately depict. The sources are a mix of 1920s and 1930s primary sources and early 1970s secondary sources. and uses much of Makhno's recollections and Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement*. Although Arshinov is writing a secondary historical text, he produces essentially a primary source, being the one who instructed Makhno on proper anarchist theory and taking part in Makhno's revolution.

Makhno's works were essential to understanding the conflict. *My Visit To The Kremlin*, was a great resource to build the opening to chapter 2. It details Makhno's encounters in detail with Lenin. However, it was his recollection of events, and was not meant to be a literal transcript.³ It is still invaluable, however in understanding the relationship and opinions expressed in the meeting, however divergent the exact words spoken were. Makhno's other work, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays*,⁴ and those found in *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, were useful for evaluating the Kropotkin influence. However, they were not of great use for studying the events and scale of the Free Territory, as Makhno was not interested writing for historians. His intended audience was the Ukrainian peasants and workers explaining the failed revolution. This was not true for his *Open Letter to Spanish Anarchists* and *On the History of the Spanish Revolution of 1931*.⁵ Although it is again not targeted at historians, it was direct remarks and advice given to the Spanish anarchists.

The secondary scholarship on the two Civil wars is crucial for a more grounded and objective look into the conflicts, although these aren't without their own nuance. *Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution* by Tara Hunczak, from 1977, displays the concerns in the historiography of Makhno in particular. In this book, Frank Sysyn writes the chapter on Makhno and describes a lack of concrete information on what exactly his revolution was about, if anything. It avoids

² Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926).

³ Nestor Makhno, *My Visit To The Kremlin*, n.d., libcom.org.

⁴ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1996).

Paul Avrich and Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*, Documents of revolution (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1973).

⁵ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays*, ed. Alexandre Skirda, trans. Paul Sharkley (AK Press, 1996), accessed March 12, 2009, as found in[[<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nestor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essay>][theanarchistlibrary.org]]. accessed 8/12/20. Chapter 17

Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* (San Francisco, CA: AK Press, 1996). <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nestor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essays> 19–23.

the controversies described in the introduction of the chapter,⁶ and instead dictates the known events in Makhno's life.⁷ This book's introduction also notes that the opening up of "western archives" seems to have been an uptick in interest in the Ukrainian Revolution as a whole in the 1970's. Michael Palij, in the *Anarchism of Nestor Makhno* (1976), describes the historiography of the Ukrainian revolution as neglected, monographic, periodical, and distorted by Soviet writers.⁸ His synthesis of the various pieces (excluding the Soviet tinged writing) was invaluable to understanding the nature of Makhno's revolution. The writing after the 1970's is much more substantiated and valuable because of this.

The Spanish Civil War has a similar historiographical issue to the Ukrainian Revolution, tainted by Soviet historiography. It also was affected by the Nationalist crackdown after the Spanish Civil War ended. Andrew Durgan's 2007 *The Spanish Civil War* provides an overview of the fractured historiography of the Spanish Civil War. Discussion of the war was essentially taboo in Spain itself and immediately after the war only the histories of exiled partisans and foreign combatants existed. Even after the democratization of Spain in the 1970s, the leaders of Spain believed it best to "draw a veil over the recent past." This had led to most histories being of foreign make and non-interpretive, according to Durgan.⁹ Thus, telling the story of anarchists during the Spanish Civil War must straddle the line between straightforward retelling of events, and anarchists themselves describing their actions.

In addition to general Spanish Civil War books, the introduction of anarchism to Spain and the rise of the CNT was covered in the *Red Years/Black Years: a Political History of Spanish Anarchism, 1911–1937* by Robert Kern and *The Revolutionary Left in Spain, 1914–1923*, by Gerald Meaker.¹⁰ These are both from the 1970's and are strait forwards in their chronological retelling of events. They conventionally tell the story of the rise of the CNT to be the voice of the Spanish anarchists. The introduction of Murray Bookchin's *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868 – 1936* detailed Giuseppe Fanelli's journey to Spain, and the introduction of anarchism to Spain.¹¹

Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain by Frank Mintz, Paul Sharkey, and Chris Ealham was translated to English in 2013 (the original being published in 1970).¹² One of the reasons for writing was the systematic exclusion of the anarchists from the history of the Spanish Civil War. This is addressed as the "conspiracy of silence" and was combatted with com-

⁶ Such as the supposed anti-Semitism and if Makhno was just a profiteering bandit

⁷ Taras Hunczak et al., eds., *Ukraine, 1917–1921: A Study in Revolution*, Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute monograph series (Cambridge, Mass: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1977). 271–304

⁸ Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution*, Publications on Russia and Eastern Europe of the Institute for Comparative and Foreign Area Studies no. 7 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976). ix

⁹ Andrew Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War*, Studies in European history (Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 1–2

In the last few years there have been Spanish histories of the Spanish Civil War, however they are not translated.

¹⁰ Robert Kern, *Red Years/Black Years: A Political History of Spanish Anarchism, 1911–1937* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978).

Gerald H. Meaker, *The Revolutionary Left in Spain, 1914–1923* (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 1974).

¹¹ Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868 – 1936* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1998), libcom.org.

¹² Frank Mintz, Paul Sharkey, and Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2013).

prehensive statistics detailing the anarchist society and industry. The sections on Catalonia were used to complement Orwell's anecdotes with well-informed history and statistics. *Anarchism, Revolution, and Reaction: Catalan Labour and the Crisis of The Spanish state, 1898–1923* by Angel Smith was used for the same purpose.¹³

We, the Anarchists: a Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–1937 by Stuart Christie was from 2008 and explores the dissidence within the CNT.¹⁴ Although the CNT was the voice of the Spanish anarchists, there was the complicated relationship involving the FAI that needed to be addressed. The history of the FAI within the CNT was tumultuous and the book also addresses the struggle between the syndicalism and union-oriented faction of the CNT, and the split before the civil war. Abel Paz's *Durruti, The People Armed*, provided the bibliography of Durruti and his meetings with Makhno, and portrayed him as a prominent leader in the CNT and FAI.¹⁵

There is no work directly comparing the two anarchist movements. Their histories may mention the same philosophers as influence, but there is no dedicated comparison. This thesis was conceived from simply wanting to compare two stateless societies that had a similar trajectory, but then evolving once traces of connection were noticed through a few of Makhno's writings to Spanish anarchists. Across several of these sources, there are limited cross references, sometimes only one sentence, or a footnote, that when synthesized results in a clear passage of the same anarchist political theory. Adding in personal interactions between, meeting between key figures of the development of anarchist theory and of figures in both revolutions, creates a web of people and ideas that results in the CNT in the Spanish Civil War. No work has established the full lineage compiled here, from the first anarchist Proudhon to Durruti, in addition to the similar struggle against soviet communist lineage across political generations.

Methodology

The scope of scholarship and sources available for use was limited due to the language barrier, only English sources could be used (the author has no ability to understand Russian, Ukrainian, or Spanish). The exception was use of the French version of *Durruti the People Armed* (the author has moderate ability to read French).¹⁶ This leads to the elephant in the room, the COVID-19 pandemic. When Bucknell University went to remote learning in Spring of 2020, several plans were altered for this thesis. While many of the sources used in this thesis are available online by way of anarchist websites, many were not and were only in print. This necessitated the author travelling to campus from his home on Long Island several times to pick up books from the campus library, as all libraries around his home were closed. There were also plans to visit anarchist book fairs and an anarchist archive in New York City, but the pandemic made that unfeasible. Regardless, this argument is well supported with more than enough evidence to follow the anarchist thought of Bakunin and Kropotkin anarchist theories as it made way through the Interwar Period. This is achieved through a substantial number of works on the 19th century creation of anarchism, the

¹³ Angel Smith, *Anarchism, Revolution, and Reaction: Catalan Labour and the Crisis of The Spanish State, 1898–1923*, International studies in social history v. 8 (New York: Berghahn, 2007).

¹⁴ Stuart Christie, *We, the Anarchists: A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–1937* (Edinburgh, Scotland ; Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008).

¹⁵ Abel Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, Black rose books no. F. 28 (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977).

¹⁶ Abel Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, Black rose books no. F. 28 (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977).

Russian and Spanish Civil Wars, the place of the anarchists within them, the military wings of each front, and the policies and descriptions of life within the two territories.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: “Anarchist Thought of the 19th Century and the Russian Revolution.” This chapter provides the context to the beginnings of modern anarchism, and how that specific political theory directly instigated the Ukrainian and Spanish Revolutions. This involves Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) and exploring the works of Bakunin and Kropotkin. The personal connections will link the Ukrainian and Spanish revolutions. This includes how Makhno was exposed to the anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin, and personal interactions of Makhno and Kropotkin and Durruti meeting Makhno. The Spanish side of events covers Bakunin and Kropotkin theory becoming popular and the formation of the CNT. Also covered is the beginnings of the struggles between communist and anarchists, Bakunin, and Marx’s struggle in the international. Background on the history and situations in Ukraine and Spain are also covered to explain why this strain of anarchism was able to take root.

Chapter 2: “Ukraine 1918–1921.” This chapter details the establishment and fall of a stateless society in Ukraine during the Russian Civil War. It follows Makhno as he meets Kropotkin and Lenin in Moscow and travels back to Ukraine to foster the anarchist revolution. The chapter analyzes three key instruments of the revolution, Makhno himself, the Black Army, and the Free Territory. These three entities will explain the ideals and reality of a true stateless society. It also covers the communist-anarchist struggle as they become unlikely allies against counter-revolutionary forces, then the communist betrays the anarchists and wage war on them.

Chapter 3: “The Struggle Reborn in Spain, 1936–1939.” This chapter will document the CNT in its peak, during the Spanish Civil War. CNT controlled Revolutionary Catalonia will be examined in social, political, and militaristic lenses. It will be compared and synthesized to the events in Ukraine to demonstrate the clear similarities in the two manifestation of stateless societies. George Orwell will be used to describe the military and societal change in Catalonia.

Durruti’ revolutionary action will be examined as well as its inspiration in Makhno’s advice and impression. The Stalinist crackdown on the CNT will be covered in terms of its similar outcome to the Soviet attack of the Ukrainian anarchists.

Chapter 1: Anarchist Thought of the 19th Century and the Russian Revolution

Changing of the Guard

The Russian precedent must spare you that. May the calamity of Bolshevik communism never take root in the revolutionary soil of Spain!

Long live the union of the workers, peasants and working intellectuals of the whole of Spain!

Long live the Spanish revolution as it strides towards a new world of increasingly liberating gains, under the banner of anarchism!

With my fraternal best wishes,

-Nestor Makhno, 29 April 1931¹

In his *Open Letter to Spanish Anarchists*, Nestor Makhno conveyed a kind of guidance and encouragement, even excitement. He had taken notice of revolutionary activity in Spain. Makhno's days of fighting were long over. He had fought his final skirmish with the Bolsheviks on August 28, 1921, and then fled into Romania.² From there, Makhno, his family, and his eighty-three remaining followers made their way to Paris, France, to live a life in exile.

However, exile was not kind to Makhno. His wounds did not heal from the war, physically and mentally. He had mixed results in finding work and had similar results in writing a cohesive piece of writing based on his experiences during the Ukrainian Civil War. Makhno was in pain,³ far from home, but no less revolutionary. Earlier in his letter, Makhno had written directions for the anarchists of Spain: "For a union of libertarian forces, most especially in the shape of the foundation of a great peasant union that would federate with the CNT [Confederación Nacional del Trabajo], and within which anarchists would beaver away indefatigably." He explains the need for the organization of free soviets and armed volunteer groups, aspects of the revolution he had led. Above all, he warns, quite clearly, of the danger of allying with the Bolsheviks. This letter is eerily prophetic, as if destiny would have the CNT's downfall so clearly predicted. That being said, this letter is a testament to the similar context and ideological issues that the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists faced. He continues,

¹ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays*, ed. Alexandre Skirda, trans. Paul Sharkley (AK Press, 1996), accessed March 12, 2009, as found in [[<https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nestor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essay>][theanarchistlibrary.orgs]]. accessed 8/12/20. Chapter 17

² Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921: An Aspect of the Ukrainian Revolution*, Publications on Russia and Eastern Europe of the Institute for Comparative and Foreign Area Studies no. 7 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 241–242

³ Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 243

Obviously, they [the Spanish anarchists] will have to steer clear here of unity with the political parties generally and with the Bolshevik-communists in particular, for I imagine that their Spanish counterparts will be worthy imitators of their Russian mentors. They will follow in the footsteps of the Jesuit Lenin or even of Stalin, not hesitating to assert their monopoly over all the gains of the revolution, with an eye to establishing the power of their party in the country, an aim the effects of which are familiar from the shameful example of Russia: the silencing of all free revolutionary tendencies and of all independent toilers' organizations. Indeed, they see themselves as holding power alone and being in a position to control all freedoms and rights in the revolution. So, they will inevitably betray their allies and the very cause of the revolution.⁴

In the past, Makhno had made an unholy alliance with the Soviet communists in the fight against counter revolutionary forces. Makhno, in exile, is warning against any such alliance between the CNT and Soviet Union- backed communists in Spain. Makhno believes communists will always betray the anarchists, as the type of vanguard communism that the Soviets emphasize necessitates total control in order for their ideology to prosper. The CNT ultimately sides with the communists and it was their downfall, just as Makhno had a few years before. This was due to the communists' scheming, but also due to the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists' insistence on immediate and total revolution, in addition to their anti-state stance.

The interest in Spain that Makhno held was not unreciprocated. In 1927, he met Buenaventura Durruti (1896–1936), a militant anarchist from Spain. Over the previous seven years, Durruti had helped organize the CNT in Barcelona, assassinated a Cardinal,²¹ waged guerilla war in the Pyrenees and Barcelona, robbed banks in South America, and, in 1926, attempted to assassinate the King Alfonso VIII of Spain (1886–1941), in addition to several other adventures. Durruti was in France to learn from other anarchists abroad. He sought lessons from the Russian Civil War, to examine critically the Russian Revolution, and to answer the question of whether a revolution is always fated to fall into the hands of Bonapartism and bureaucracy.⁵ This desire led him to Makhno in Paris. They spoke for hours on the nature of both the Ukrainian revolution, and the coming Spanish one. The inspiration that Makhno and his revolution had over certain elements of Spanish anarchism was clear. Durruti said to Makhno, “We have come to salute you, the symbol of all those revolutionaries who struggled for the realisation of Anarchist ideas in Russia. We also come to pay our respects to the rich experience of Ukraine.”⁶ Makhno discussed the nature of his revolution, centered around the idea of a commune. He also stated that Spain, within its context, presented more favorable opportunities for an anarchist movement than Ukraine, due to the CNT's organization compared to that of Makhno's former movement.⁷ It was an interesting crossroads, Makhno in the epilogue of his life, and Durruti and the Spanish Anarchists on the cusp of seizing their moment in history. Durruti was prominent in the CNT-FAI⁸ and went on

⁴ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays*. Chapter 17

⁵ Abel Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, Black rose books no. F. 28 (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1977). 12, 50, 65–66, 73, 81

⁶ Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, 88

⁷ Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, 88–89

⁸ Historians seem to use the terms CNT and CNT-FAI interchangeably when talking about the post-1932 history of the organization, or its activities as whole. In this paper, CNT will be used in general, CNT-FAI will be used when the particularly militant side of the organization is pressing the topic.

to lead one of the most prominent fighting forces of the Republican side of the 1936–39 Spanish Civil War, the Durruti Column. Apart from the similarities between the fighting forces in terms of organization and collectivization efforts, many of Makhno's Ukrainian fighters would join the ranks of the column.⁹

The reason that Makhno and Durruti's aspirations were parallel was because the Ukrainian experience was useful to the Spanish, and in turn why the Ukrainians interested in the Spanish movement, was because of a common ideology. This ideology can be traced back to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865), and from there a clear political genealogy and exchange of ideas to Makhno and the CNT. This meeting would be the last in a series of personal meetings between individuals that dates to the original split between anarchist and communists.

Generational Struggle

The line of anarchist belief manifested in Ukraine in 1919–21 and revolutionary Catalonia in 1936–39 was a strain, a genealogy, passed on by certain individuals and their direct personal relationships and interactions with each other. This family tree of sorts displays how Makhno and the CNT shared common ancestors and their ideology. After the fall of Makhno's movement, Makhno will in turn directly influence individuals that would be actors in the coming Spanish Civil War. Similar interactions, personal and political, also provided shared experiences that all generations of these anarchists had with their contemporary communists. This split between anarchists and communists is fundamental to understanding how the anarchist ideology would manifest itself later in the interwar period, and why they faced constant struggle with their counterparts. The communists who interacted with the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists developed over time, becoming more pragmatic in their statist endeavor for equality. The ideology of the anarchist philosophers, and their Ukrainian and Spanish followers was effectively the same over time, a demand for immediate and total societal change.

A Tale of Two Revolutions

The French Revolution of 1789 was, as with most modern histories, the starting point of the modern form of anarchism that would develop in Ukraine and Spain.¹⁰ In the French Revolution, feudalism was for the first time in a millennium shattered, and many political ideologies would find their modern expression. Although Napoleon was defeated, his creation of sister republics

⁹ Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, 95

¹⁰ Of course, there is disagreement about where to start the history of anarchism, not to mention how to define it. There was discussion in Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread*, on the anarchist nature of prehistory, and of the anti-state nature of medieval peasant rebellions and guilds. He and other anarchists start their evaluation of their histories there. For the purpose of this argument, the comparison and shared political ideology of Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists, these medieval events were too far removed ideologically and historically to argue a comparison. While elements in events such as the English Civil War and Protestant Reformation may have had similar grievances to a degree, they were retroactively identified as examples of anti-state actors by anarchists. They had not advocated for a classless society, free of a state. Anarchism, at least as it is concerned here, is a distinct 19th and 20th century movement. The broader movements and philosophy that are continuous to the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchism subjects are only conceived following the French Revolution of 1789.

Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926).

and tactics of encouraging nationalism had changed Europe forever. Republicanism and nationalism allowed for an increase in political discourse. This increasing political consciousness, along with increasing industrialization, led to a political scene from which class conscience arose.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) explained human suffering, a history of the world based on materialism.¹¹ On the eve of the most destabilizing European event of the 19th century, the Revolutions of 1848, Marx and Engels released a short pamphlet of truly legendary status. In 1848 the *Communist Manifesto* described the plight of the working class, the proletariat, as a class alienated from both the joys and fruits of their work, dominated by the owners of the middle class, the bourgeoisie. By seizing the means of production via a class struggle, workers could all mutually and equally benefit from the goods they produce.¹²

To achieve this society, Marx was pragmatic and called for the dictatorship of the proletariat.¹³ The dictatorship of the proletariat was an institution where a proletarian political party would centralize all means of production and hold all political power. This would enable a quick and coordinated revolution where all means of production and land would be owned by the state, and so the proletariat. This idea was what would drive most of the anarchist-communist friction, however, to appreciate fully why the ramifications of 1848 must be considered.

The Great Divergence

While there are many complicated reasons for why the uprising of 1848 across Europe occurred, what is important to this discussion is why political philosophers thought the revolution ultimately ended in failure. The revolutions of 1848 were colossal failures, for radicals at least, and they were driven underground until well into the 1860s. At this point, the burning question was “what went wrong in 1848?” Of course, most revolutionary writers of the time were certain of the eventual demise of feudal and capitalist societies, and how the subsequent world would look. Still, the failure of the revolutions of 1848 was a crushing setback, leading to decades of crackdown on political radicals. This defeat led to questioning the very idea of what a revolution should accomplish. While Communists like Marx were disappointed that the bourgeoisie had not joined the revolution and had instead joined forces with monarchists, others, the newly-minted anarchists, believed that the very attempt to overthrow a government to replace it with another one, no matter how radical, was unable to bring out true revolution through legislation.¹⁴

¹¹ Similar to the previous footnote, this is the definition of communism for this argument’s purpose. The communism referred to in this paper is Marxism, Marxist-Leninism, and Stalinism as noted (the independent POUM, Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, was Trotskyist, they were radical communists as opposed to the centrist Stalinism in Spain). The term communism appeared earlier than the French Revolution and earlier historical movements have been identified as communist-esque, however the communists that the Ukranian and Spanish anarchists struggled against are of a particularly violent and directly state oriented type. Marxism, Marxist-Leninism, and Stalinism are directly continuous and have one modern source, Marx and Engels. As written in the *Communist Manifesto*, “We do not here refer to that literature which, in every great modern revolution, has always given voice to the demands of the proletariat, such as the writings of Babeuf and others.”

Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Martin Puchner, *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings* (New York, NY: Barnes and Noble Books, 2005). 36

¹² Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Martin Puchner, *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*

¹³ *Ibid.* 40

¹⁴ Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926). 9

The anarchist ideology that would inspire the Ukrainian and Spanish revolutionaries was for the most part conceived of in the latter half of the 19th century and primarily conceptualized by Mikhail Bakunin (1814–1876) and Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921). These two anarchist philosophers had direct influence on the ideology of both the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchist forces in their respective civil wars. Bakunin was the founder of anarcho-collectivism and wrote extensively on the need to abolish the state and private ownership of the means of production. Kropotkin was a contemporary and successor of Bakunin, having a similar noble background, stints in the Russian military, exile, writing, and participation in the formation of anarchist cells. Besides a disagreement over the wage system,¹⁵ the two political philosophers were nearly identical in ideology, and they are usually written about and referenced together. Bakunin, along with Marx, were influenced by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

Bakunin had met both Marx and Proudhon in Paris in 1844,¹⁶ and the three corresponded. Proudhon was the first to call himself an “anarchist,”¹⁷ and developed ideas such as mutualism and free association. Proudhon inspired Bakunin’s further development of anarchism. The insoluble beliefs in how one was to read history culminated in Proudhon’s *The Philosophy of Poverty*, and Marx’s provocatively named *The Poverty of Philosophy*.¹⁸ Proudhon was inclined to start his theories with the abstract idea of right, from which economics, which he considered a lesser science, could be derived. Marx was staunchly opposed to this, believing that individualism is derived from economic factors, economics being the determining science of all human relationships.¹⁹ All things considered, these two pieces are relatively obscure and have little impact upon the respective ideologies of their followers except that it caused a monumental split between the camps. This scholarly spat was more indicative of the personal nature that can dominate politics, especially in this age and of its left-wing politics. Regardless of the particular instance that was the final straw, the fundamental divide was clear. The evaluation of people and history that was critical in the formation of these theories had influenced the perception of the state had grown to a point of irreconcilable differences. The end of Proudhon’s friendship with Marx and the beginning of the anarchist-communist struggle and by extension the end of the Makhnovist and CNT, was the question of individualism and economics.

The feud was formalized at the First International. The First International was a series of conferences in cities across Europe, attended by various left-wing groups and trade unions that operated from 1864–1876. The International fell apart due to conflicts between anarchists and statist. The somewhat obscure Karl Marx dominated discussion, and proved divisive to the anarchists at the international. Two camps formed around Marx and Bakunin, and the result was the formation of

¹⁵ Ibid. 152–153 Kropotkin critiqued wage systems as outdated in a society free of private property, Bakunin wrote in favour of a labour cheque system and the latter, which Kropotkin saw as an overlook while writing the comprehensive guide that was the *Conquest of Bread*.

¹⁶ Mikhail Aleksandrovich Bakunin and Marshall Shatz, *Statism and Anarchy*, Cambridge texts in the history of political thought (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990). xxxviii

¹⁷ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon et al., *What Is Property?: An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government?* (Boulder, Colo: NetLibrary, 1996), bucknell.on.worldcat.org. accessed 8/12/20. 260

¹⁸ Marx, Karl. 1955. *The Poverty of Philosophy : Answer to the “Philosophy of Poverty” by M. Proudhon*. Moscow: Progress.

Proudhon, P.-J. 2012. *The Philosophy of Poverty : The System of Economic Contradictions*. Auckland: Floating Press.

¹⁹ Bakunin and Shatz, *Statism and Anarchy*. 142–143

two rival internationals in 1872. The anarchists wanted a direct confrontation against capitalism and the Marxists wanted to engage in parliamentarism.

After Bakunin died in 1876, Kropotkin became the figurehead of anarchism. He fulfilled the need to fully explain anarcho-communism as a distinct ideology, oppositional to Marxism. *The Conquest of Bread* by Kropotkin was his most notable work, an anarchist counterpart to the *Communist Manifesto*.²⁰ Written in 1892, it was both a philosophy and a history. It was a mass printed and distributed, forming the basis of many anarchists' beliefs. This book was fundamental to Makhno and the Spanish anarchists in particular.

Characteristic of Kropotkin were the ideas of mutual aid (that cooperation is better than competition)²¹ and free association (in the anarchist case, no state should own the means of production).²² In addition to political commentary, *The Conquest of Bread* covers an array of arguments critical of feudal and capitalist society. Kropotkin argued for collective ownership of all property, intellectual and useful, due to every individual product being created from a long lineage of invention and collective work. He then provides an image of an anarcho-communist society, one based on production of products of need, pointing to luxury item production while people go without food or heat as examples of a flawed production scheme. He then defends his theories from criticism and warns of authoritarian socialists that may come along promising bread and freedom to revolutionaries.

In Kropotkin's words at the end of the 19th. century, the meaning of the 1848 revolutions becomes clear. France in 1848 was the scene most promising during the European revolutions, and by 1852, the most disappointing to the anarchists. Kropotkin admonishes earlier socialists for not trusting the masses, and quite bitterly writes that "[t]hey put their Faith, on the contrary, into some great ruler, some socialist Napoleon."²³ Napoleon III (1803–1872), nephew of the Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte was elected to be the President of the Second French Republic. Similarly, to his uncle, Napoleon III proclaimed himself the Emperor of the French. This occurred a mere four years after the 1848 revolution in France and was a betrayal in a wider trend that Kropotkin described as a "middle class Republic." The liberals had made some gains, but the socialists had suffered heavily, deported and effectively wiped from the political landscape until 1866, when trade unions formed in London. Socialist effort turned to unionization drives and making common cause with industrial reformers, Kropotkin points to the Owenites in London in 1862 and 1864, who wrote "the emancipation of the working-men must be accomplished by the working-men themselves."²⁴ Other issues were that state socialists like Louis Blanc (1811–1882) believed (according to Kropotkin) that "Socialism had to be a religion."²⁵ Bakunin, in his 1873 *Statism and Anarchy*, writes that Marx was a disciple of Louis Blanc, and has the same faults.²⁶ The belief in the state was the reason why the revolution had failed.. Bakunin and Kropotkin use very similar language to that of Marx, seizing the means of production, the class struggle, the proletariat and bourgeoisie, it was the distrust in any state, no matter how revolutionary that defines the

²⁰ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Martin Puchner, *The Communist Manifesto and Other Writings*.

²¹ Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*. 4–5

²² Mutual Aid was popularised in *The Conquest of Bread*, free association was also promoted by Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropitkin.

²³ Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*. x-xi

²⁴ Ibid. xi-xii

²⁵ Ibid. x

²⁶ Bakunin and Shatz, *Statism and Anarchy*. 142–143

anarchists. In short, the goal of the anarchists was to build socialism by undermining through collectivization, rather than overthrowing the government, and making a new one and then attempting to administrate a revolution. The Marxist proletariat dictatorship was to fade away with the last remnants of a state in the conversion to true communism, but Bakunin believed it could be subverted and turned into a true dictatorship. In this way the anarchists were the first anti-communists.

The beginning of Napoleon III's reign proved to the anarchists that states, no matter how revolutionary in origin, would end up reactionary. The end of Napoleon III's reign in 1870, following the Battle of Sedan in the Franco-Prussian War, would prove another truth to the anarchists. Although the resulting French Commune of 1871, as Kropotkin admits, was far too short lived to prove much theory, it proved to anarchists that communes would be the medium for the realization of socialism. Kropotkin wrote that these communes must be large cities or territories, with large labor associations.²⁷ The situation in Ukraine and Spain during their civil wars allowed for this kind of polity to become manifest.

Spain and the Universal Language of Anti-Statism

In the Iberia of the late 19th C., the anarchist scene appeared quickly by way of intervention from Bakunin. Bakunin's vision of society would see an end to the monarchy, state religion, the military and the state itself. His idea of abolition of land inheritance would end the feudalism that the Spanish peasants still lived in. He promised individual autonomy, in a society dominated by landlords, nobility and bosses in the cities. This was because of radical republican use of anticlericalism and hostility towards the army. Anticlericalism and anti-military sentiment had been on the rise over the previous decades, especially in Catalonia.²⁸ In Spain at the time, the Church controlled all schools (there were no public schools) but did not advocate education extensions. The Spanish military had not been able to defend Spanish interests or honor abroad (for example, in Cuba, and the Philippines), and still yet brutally enforced government repression of Spanish people. The government was ineffectively attempting to reform into a middle ground, although measures like a government sponsored (and strictly advisory rather than regulatory) Institute of Social Reform were ineffective. This a symptom of a rising trend in the industrialization of Spain, the land-owning agrarian elite were aloof or hostile to the growing industrial market in the cities.²⁹ Landless peasants and workers frantically competing for jobs in order to maintain subsistence proved welcoming to the ideas of anarchism, as the state did little to help them, if not hurt them.

In 1868, Bakunin sent Giuseppe Fanelli (1827 –1877) to Spain as a representative of the First International. Fanelli would change the shape of Spanish politics on his trip, which was impressive, as he didn't speak Spanish. The Italian Fanelli traveled to Spain with no practical knowledge of Spanish, no interpreter, and practically no money, but with hand gestures and particularly good

²⁷ Ibid. xii

²⁸ Robert Kern, *Red Years/Black Years: A Political History of Spanish Anarchism, 1911–1937* (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1978). 19–21

²⁹ Ibid. 12–17

Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (Edinburgh: AK Pr, 2010). 2

use of tone, he conveyed a struggle against states and their inherent tyranny.³⁰ The workers he addressed in a series of small meetings were accustomed to moderate liberal politics. They were taken away by Fanelli's alternative methods of communicating and the ills of a society of tyrants, enabled by the institution of the state, that they conveyed. From the first meeting the effect was electric. Fanelli only stayed in Spain a few months, but everyone to whom he spoke became disillusioned with parliamentary tactics and gradual revolution.³¹ His trip proved to be a watershed moment in the development of Spanish anarchism. He was asked to stay longer by some Spanish activists, but he responded to the request by indicating that individuals should enact revolution "by their own efforts, with their own values...common work will not lack the individual and local characteristics which make for a kind of variety that does not endanger unity,"³² This touches upon a fundamental principle of anarchism, the local decisions based on individuals on how to live, independent of larger entities and influence. It is also likely that he was running out of funds at this point.

Fanelli's mission succeeded due to the character of Spain and how it was perceived as ripe for anarchist revolution. Communists did not believe Spain to be capable of revolution, because they were not industrial enough to develop class conscience. Lenin would share this view in regards to the Ukrainian peasantry. Bakunin's ideology was much more suited for Spain's situation, because it called for the abolition of any institution that would limit individual freedom.³³ The notion of ridding Spain of the agrarian elite, church, and monarchy was appealing to many segments of the population. Similarly, to the Russian Empire in 1905, the Spanish had suffered a humiliating defeat in 1898 in the Spanish-American War. The utter disaster that was that war for Spain is a good characterization of the political scene in general over the preceding decades. The war was a convenient way for anarchists to advertise their new ways, as it was obvious the current regime could not even maintain its sovereignty over a meager empire.

In the years following, anarchists in Catalonia began to organize their trade unions in opposition to the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), a socialist trade Union party. In 1907 they succeeded, forming the Solidariad Obrera Foundation. In 1911, the foundation became a national association of trade unions, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo, the CNT. Again, we see that the same influence that the Ukrainian anarchists had, also influenced and helped organize the Spanish anarchists.

In Chapter 3, Kropotkin and the Makhnovist diaspora will be analyzed in terms of their personal influences on the CNT-FAI militias and the similarities between the Free Territory and Revolutionary Catalonia. The moment for the Spanish Anarchists would have to wait however, for the turmoil leading up to the Spanish Civil War's outbreak in 1936. Until then, the situation in Ukraine would prove more favorable for an attempt to abolish the state.

³⁰ Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years 1868 — 1936* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1998), <https://lib-com.org/files/Murray%20Bookchin,%20The%20Spanish%20Anarchists-The%20heroic%20years,%201868-1936.pdf>. accessed 8/10/2020. 12-14

³¹ Ibid. 14

³² Ibid. 14-15

³³ Kern, *Red Years/Black Years*. 19

Ukraine and a Fortunate Timeline

The shocking and humiliating defeat of the Imperial Russian armed forces in its conflict with the Japanese Empire in 1905 was the final straw for many across the Russian Empire. The ease with which the recently modernized Japan had outmaneuvered and obliterated two out of the three Russian fleets and routed the Russian Army in Manchuria was an international display of the sheer incompetence of the Russian Empire. Years of lack of reform, corruption, defeat, and brutal repression led to a massive uprising across the Empire. Revolutionaries across the spectrum rose in defiance, attacking the government and its forces. Here is where Nestor Makhno first participated in revolutionary activity.

A poor peasant from Gulyai-Poyle in Eastern Ukraine, Nestor Makhno was fatherless from eleven years old, so to support his family he had to work for local landowners. Makhno had no knowledge of politics, but the injustice he experienced led him towards revolutionary thought. The Russian Revolution of 1905 was a moment when many Russians were exposed to politics and the nature of the Tsarist regime. Across Russia, disenfranchised peasants and workers were organizing and lashing out at the government and aristocracy. Including Makhno, who now had an outlet for his experiences. Makhno joined a local anarchist group and participated in attacks and revolutionary activity.³⁴

In 1906, Makhno was imprisoned for participating in an attack that left a district police officer dead. He would receive a fateful sentence in 1910, death by hanging commuted to life imprisonment in the Butyrka prison in Moscow. In prison, he met Peter Arshinov (1887–1937), another Ukrainian anarchist in prison for a lethal attack on a police station and. This was a chance meeting and one that would have Makhno gain a friend, ally, and an education. Peter Arshinov educated him on the theories of Bakunin and Kropotkin while they were in prison.³⁵ Peter Arshinov would be a companion to Makhno and would write a history of the Makhnovist movement in exile. It is unclear how well versed Makhno was in anarchist theory prior to this point, considering he was a self-described “semi-literate peasant.”³⁶ It is clear that his chance acquaintance with Arshinov would leave a deep ideological impact, as he would see to a Bakunin and Kropotkin style anarchist revolution. First, though, he had to get out of prison. Fortunately for Makhno, it was soon enough the year 1917 in Moscow. Makhno was freed from Butyrka prison on March 2, 1917, under the Provisional government’s amnesty of political prisoners.

Primed and Ready

A series of individuals and their personal meetings resulted in a political lineage that can be traced from Makhno and the CNT back to Proudhon himself. At the same time, a parallel lineage of communist was conflicted with their anarchist counterparts. This conflict and the political lineage were, up to this point was pen and paper, and by word of mouth. This would not always be the case. After the First World War, the utter turmoil and destabilization in Europe would dwarf

³⁴ Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)* 51–53

Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno* 67–69

³⁵ Paul Avrich and Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution, Documents of Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1973). 128

³⁶ Nestor Makhno, *My Visit To The Kremlin*, n.d., <https://libcom.org/files/MY%20VISIT%20TO%20THE%20KREMLIN.pdf>. accessed 8/12/20. 4 and 15

that of 1905, 1848, and even 1789. The interwar period was the moment that revolutionaries could take up arms and make theory into reality. Just as the revolutionaries would fight battles against forces wishing to keep the world that they imagined it had once been, anarchists and communists in Ukraine and Spain would also find each other's ideology equally intolerable. The struggle was far from over, and so were the series of personal meetings and relationships that tied Ukraine and Spanish Revolutions together.

Chapter 2: Ukraine 1918–1921

All Power to the Local Soviets

In exile, Nestor Makhno recalled his meeting with Vladimir Lenin in interview format, reciting the dialogue between them in *My Visit to the Kremlin*.¹ By January 1918 the Bolsheviks and Makhno's partisans were cooperating to an extent that Makhno retreated with the Bolsheviks out of Ukraine in the face of a joint Central Power and Central Rada offensive.

Makhno had travelled north to Moscow from Ukraine in a harrowing journey, almost getting executed and dodging active fighting, some Bolsheviks would help him, others would disarm him and skirmish with his allies. There are various explanations as to why Makhno went to the Kremlin, apparently it was because he needed a place to stay, but Michael Palij writes that it was probably because he wanted to gauge Bolshevik attitude towards his movement.²

In a rather humorous read, Makhno casually strode into the seat of Bolshevik power. Makhno arrived and bounced around the Kremlin taking in the sites and trying to figure out with whom to talk. He wandered into a building, walked to the third floor, and strode around looking for a good place to go to. Since some rooms were unlabeled, he went with a placard reading 'Central Committee of the Party,' he had just walked right into the meeting place of the committee that directed all soviet government activity.

Makhno asked three men who were sitting in total silence where he could find the Central Executive Committee. A man who Makhno thought was Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938)³ seemed to jump at the opportunity to leave for the day and without asking who this man who just walked in was, took Makhno to the Executive Committee. There a young girl secretary actually bothered to check his credentials and sent him to Yakov Sverdlov (1885–1919), the Secretary of the Communist Party. Makhno addressed the incredible ease in which he was navigating the Soviet hierarchy,

On the way I thought of the stories spread by the counter-revolutionaries, even by my own friends who were enemies of the policies of Lenin, Sverdlov and Trotsky, namely that it was impossible to gain access to these terrestrial gods. They were, supposedly, surrounded by a corps of bodyguards, the chief of whom would allow only visitors of whom he approved.

¹ Nestor Makhno, *My Visit To The Kremlin*, n.d., libcom.org.

² Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno*, 92

Palij's theory makes sense, considering the mixed messages the Bolsheviks impressed on Makhno, sometimes fighting alongside him, and sometimes threatening to kill him depending on which locality he encountered. That being said it can't be ruled out that Makhno simply needed a place to sleep.

In Makhno's interviews in exile he says he went to the Kremlin to meet Lenin, and didn't mention the housing issue.

³ A Marxist writer and Politburo member.

Now, accompanied by the secretary of the CCE, I realised the absurdity of these stories. Sverdlov opened the door himself with a pleasant smile, exuding friendliness, and taking me by the hand, led me to an armchair. The Secretary of the CCE returned to his office.⁴

Makhno and Sverdlov had a short conversation (the information was similar to that of the next conversation), in which Sverdlov seemed to begin to understand who he was talking too, a powerful revolutionary. Sverdlov then asked if Makhno would want to talk to Lenin, arranging a meeting the next day at one o'clock. The next day Makhno "showed up again at the Kremlin" and Sverdlov brought him to the office of one of the most powerful men in the world.⁵

Lenin greeted Makhno "in a friendly manner", grasping his arm, patting him on the shoulder and steering him into a chair. He told Sverdlov to sit down and his secretary not to disturb them until two o'clock (giving them presumably an hour to talk). Lenin sat down and began bombarding Makhno with rapid fire questions. Makhno was responding briefly to each question but began holding his ground when Lenin began to speak of the anarchists condescendingly.⁶

This dialogue with Lenin found the two leaders at odds, Lenin accusing the anarchists of counter-revolutionary activity like that of the White Russian forces and not supporting the Red Guards (Army) and having no realism in their ideology.⁷ From Mankhno's recollection,

[Makhno] 'The Revolution and its conquests are dear to the anarchist-communists; in that respect they are like all other true revolutionaries.'

'Oh, don't tell us that,' retorted Lenin, laughing. 'We know the anarchists as well as you. For the most part they have no idea of the present, or at least they concern themselves with it very little. But the present is so serious that for revolutionaries not to think about it or to take a position in a positive manner with respect to it is more than disgraceful. Most of the anarchists think and write about the future without understanding the present. That is what divides us, the communists, from you.'⁸

Lenin's arguments in this early encounter told a great deal of the disposition of the communists towards the anarchists even at this early stage. Lenin accused the anarchists of cooperating with counterrevolutionaries, an accusation repeated against the anarchists in Spain 30 years later as well. Makhno remarked to Lenin that a party leader should not be pessimistic or a skeptic, which was another incarnation of Marx and Proudhon's feud over individualism. Lenin was confused as to why the Ukrainian peasants were not going out of their way to aid the Red forces. Mankhno replied, arguing that the Red Guards were not cooperating with or aiding the peasants, something on which Makhno would capitalize later. Part of this particular disconnect between the two leaders was military in nature, the Ukrainians at the time fighting as partisans and the Red forces attempting to fight a conventional war based on the use and control of strategic rail lines.

⁴ Makhno, *My Visit To The Kremlin*, 9

⁵ Makhno, *My Visit To The Kremlin*, 7-11

⁶ Makhno, *My Visit To The Kremlin*, 12

⁷ *Ibid.* 4

⁸ *Ibid.* 12-17

As for the realism, Lenin was a believer in Marx and Engels' stages of revolution (feudalism followed by capitalism and in turn by communism), whereas Makhno believed in the radical ideas of Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, of immediate abolition of the state and pure anarchy.

The issue of the near future of the revolution was the main point of contention between the Bolsheviks and Makhno. While they would compromise for the immediate future in the face of White and Austro-German armies, Makhno and Lenin could not agree on the vehicle of revolution. Lenin could not foresee anarchists as a serious organization, and thus to defend their communities, and "that mere peasant enthusiasm would burn itself out and could not survive serious blows to the from the counterrevolution."⁹ The Soviet leader at this point had diverged from Marx, developing Leninism. Leninism is a form of communism developed in response to the perceived failures of communism in the 19th century. The main new feature present was the introduction of vanguardism to expand on the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lenin imagined and created a vanguard party to lead and dictate the revolution. To Bakunin, Marx thought too pragmatically, so Leninism was another degree of removal to the pure, immediate revolution the anarchists' sought. Lenin created a hierarchical party and revolution to create a state to carry forward with the revolution. This development was what Bakunin foresaw, a literal dictatorship rising out of the idea of a dictatorship of the proletariat. This is what Kropotkin feared, for, as to him, a state could not legislate a revolution.¹⁰

The reality of these two ideologies' incompatibility was clear from a single saying: "All power to local Soviets."⁶⁴ Lenin asked Makhno what the peasants of his area thought of the slogan. Makhno said that they took it literally, that they were to have complete control of their own affairs. Lenin responded, "In this case, the peasants from your area are infected with anarchism." When Makhno asked if Lenin thought that was "bad," Lenin assured Makhno that he had not said that, and the anarchists could expedite the communist victory.¹¹

Although tense, the meeting appears to have ended amicably, Lenin never personally attacked Makhno and seemed to appreciate his reports of the situation in Ukraine and arranged for Makhno's return to Ukraine.¹² In retrospect, Makhno's memories are again almost novel-like in their foreshadowing. Lenin was hostile to the ideas of anarchism, of movements independent to his revolution, even to Makhno's face. It seems clear that Lenin saw the anarchists as an opposition, but one that could be used as a tool in the meantime. The Red Army and Makhno's anarchists allied later on against the Whites, for a time,¹³ however these ideological differences would prove too great to bear, just as they did in Spain between the anarchists and communists there a decade later.

Makhno also met with Kropotkin in Moscow, prior to his visit to the Kremlin. Historian Michael Palij recalls,

While thinking about the discouraging state of affairs of the Russian anarchists, Makhno decided to visit their nominal leader Peter A. Kropotkin, from whom he expected answers on all vital questions. Makhno visited Kropotkin on the eve of his departure. Kropotkin received him politely and they spoke at length concerning the

⁹ P. Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)* (London: Freedom Press, 1987). 93

¹⁰ Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1926). 9

¹¹ Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*. 93

¹² *Ibid.* 94

¹³ 1919–1920

tangled situation in Ukraine, including the Austro-German occupation [of...], the hetman government [the nationalist Ukrainian Government], and the anarchist method of struggle against all forms of counterrevolution. Makhno felt that he received satisfactory answers to all the questions he posed...¹⁴

Kropotkin served as a direct advisor to Makhno before he returned to Ukraine, and because of this Kropotkin served a greater role than strictly ideological inspiration. The impact of this was that the Makhnovist revolution was an attempt of bringing the theories of Russian anarchy to reality, immediate and total revolution. That being said, the inspiration that Makhno received from this meeting is not to be understated. In exile, Makhno wrote,

I have always remembered these words of Peter Aleksandrovich [Kropotkin]. And when our comrades come to know all that I did in the Russian Revolution in Ukraine and then in the independent Ukrainian Revolution, in the vanguard of which the revolution Makhno movement played so outstanding a role, they will recognize in my activities that selflessness and that strength of heart and will about which Peter Aleksandrovich spoke to me.¹⁵

Kropotkin was to Makhno as Makhno was to Buenaventura Durruti. Kropotkin was of an older breed of anarchists and passed on his knowledge and spirit to Makhno, who set out upon an attempt to create an anarchist reality. Makhno then became that older influence in turn, a legend to a young Durruti, destined to partake in his own revolution in Spain.

The Moment

The turmoil of the 1905 revolution was nothing compared to Russia in 1917. The Empire began to fall apart during the fall of the Tsar. The Great War was not kind to Russia, a back and forward struggle across Eastern Europe with millions of its citizens dead, and many more starving. The Tsar was no longer in power following the February Revolution of 1917, which was a watershed moment in the revolutionary activity that would envelop the former Russian Empire. This is the moment that Nestor Makhno was freed from the Moscow prison. He made his way back to Ukraine as the former Russian Empire descended into a conflict that historian Evan Mawdsley described as “apocalyptic”.¹⁶

The Russian Civil War

The Russian Civil War was a series of massive multi-party military operations spanning the whole of the former Russian Empire, set off by the October Revolution in November 1917.¹⁷ The February Revolution in March 1917 set up a provisional government that had two main parts (Dual Power): the parliament in Moscow (the Duma) and the Petrograd Soviet. The Russian Army

¹⁴ Ibid. 91–92

¹⁵ Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*. 92

¹⁶ Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987). xi

¹⁷ The Russians used the Julian Calendar at this point, which is why the two revolutions occurred in different dates than their namesakes.

was controlled by the Petrograd Soviet, which in turn was Bolshevik controlled. The October Revolution was when the Petrograd Soviet and the armed forces under their control suppressed the Provisional Government. The White Movement immediately formed, starting the Civil War. The White Movement was a coalition of monarchist, republican, social democrats, nationalist, and several other loosely tied political movements. The single common point was anti-bolshevism. The anarchists of Ukraine were not interested in this coalition. The part of the White Movement that would come to Ukraine was under the command of Anton Denikin (1872–1947). The anarchists and communists allied in the face of counter revolution, a classic example of the “enemy of my enemy is my friend”.

The Russian Civil War was dominated by Russians but was often fought in places where Russians were a minority. The Russians were only 78 million of the 160 million people of the Russian Empire. The nature of the revolution and nationalist tendencies was different in every part of the former Russian Empire. Many minorities were as taken away by the revolutionary rhetoric as in Petrograd, and many of Muslims of the Central Steppes and Finnish, were not. The Ukrainians were the second largest ethnic group of the Russian Empire, with 32 million people. Like many other minorities, they had no recent history of political representation in the centralized Russian government.¹⁸ Ukraine became a hotbed of political unrest and warfare. The Russian Civil War in Ukraine was complicated by the ongoing Ukrainian Civil war, itself a collection of conflicts from 1917–1921.

The Ukrainian Civil War

The Ukrainian Civil War, or Ukrainian War for Independence, was not only similar to the Spanish Civil War because of anarchist elements, but also because of the incredible nuance and complexity of the many participants. This is further confounded by a timeline of rapidly changing and concurring events that are given varying levels of attention by historians. During the February Revolution of 1917, leaders of Ukraine had decided to pursue self-determination for their people, and the Central Rada was formed, a Ukrainian government for Ukrainians.¹⁹ The Ukrainian People’s Republic was a significant development for a territory that prior to 1905 had no legal way of forming political parties and was ruled by non-Ukrainians.²⁰ The People’s Republic of Ukraine would go through several governments drastically altering ideology, starting with the socialist leaning Central Rada. The Russian Army was all but defunct following the Kerensky Offensive in July 1917, and the Central powers started to move into Ukraine. The Central Power signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Ukrainian Rada on February 9th 1918. This was not the well-known Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with the Soviet Provisional Government, which was signed a month later. The Ukrainian Treaty recognized the Rada as a neutral state. Then in April 1918, the Rada was overthrown by the Hetman State, a pro-German Ukrainian Nationalist protectorate.²¹ Partisan resistance to forces started forming and Makhno was active in this. In November 1918, a government called the Directorate formed and fought the Hetman State. The Directorate were another socialist group, though similar to the Rada, but they were not interested in federation with

¹⁸ Evan Mawdsley, *The Russian Civil War* 22–25

¹⁹ Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*. 21

²⁰ *Ibid.* 20

²¹ *Ibid.* 32–35

the Russian Soviet Republic. In response, the Red Army invaded in December 1918. In December 1919, the White Forces under Denikin were entering eastern Ukraine and receiving supplies from the Entente powers. The Allies and the Whites wanted Ukraine to be federated into a non-Soviet Russia. The Polish-Soviet War also occurred in western Ukraine from 1919–1920, the Ukrainians and Soviets (while still in opposition to each other) did not want Poland to end up owning eastern Ukraine.²² This collision of armies was the Ukrainian-Soviet War, which, when including Makhno and the Black Army, was at least a four-way war.

At this point it is best to refocus on Makhno and the people that inhabit the area he fought in. The Zaporizhian Cossacks inhabited the Don Basin and faced systemic imposed economic and political disenfranchisement since the time of Tsarina Catherine II (1729–1796). The other main ethnicity was the Ukrainian peasants, of which Makhno was one. By the early 1900s, the peasants were no longer serfs and some actually owned land, but they still faced an impoverished agrarian lifestyle with no semblance of self-rule.²³ It really is no surprise that peasants in this region would want to destroy any entity attempting to assume power over them.

Between Stays in Moscow

After being freed from prison, Makhno returned to Huliai-Pole, a city in Eastern Ukraine. He quickly became the chairman of a peasant union; of the remaining anarchist of the group he was in prior to imprisonment. He quickly set out organizing similar unions in other villages in the area. As murky as his prior beliefs were before his time in prison, it is certain that he hated all hierarchy after his experience in prison and education as provided by Peter Arshinov, his friend and mentor. As the events leading up to the October Revolution in Russia developed, Makhno reacted by collectivizing all resources of the rich and poor in his area. He detested the Ukrainian governments, as he believed they were foreign -ed. The power of this government was not great in this region, so Makhno had no difficulty gaining control. He raided trains and violently attacked landowners, but he did not accost poor peasants or workers. He distributed his excess goods to the communities around him.²⁴ After raiding for a period, Huliai-Pole committee decided that Makhno was to raise battalions to wage a struggle against the incoming Central Power Forces in 1917. Makhno engaged in direct action to raise regiments to counter the Central Powers forces trying to occupy Ukraine. He waged guerilla warfare, in addition to attacking the nobility. He refused to associate with the Bolsheviks at this point as well.²⁵ Here, Makhno made his faithful journey to Moscow, a harrowing journey, encountering several bands of various ideologies. His meeting in June with Kropotkin and the leaders of the Bolsheviks followed this.

Three Keys

The Makhnovist Revolution had three key manifestations of anarchist principles that allowed it to not only to exist, but to become a truly classless society free of vertical authority. The first was Nestor Makhno, the leader, but notably not director of the insurrection. The second key was

²² Ibid. 117–142

²³ Paliy, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*. 46–51

²⁴ Ibid. 68–73

²⁵ Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)*. 55–62

his army, the Revolutionary Insurrectionary Army of Ukraine, or simply, the Black Army. This army was the protector, not enforcer, of the stateless territory. This was a successful military, successful not only in its ability to project power, but in its ideological purity. The stateless territory was the third key, known as the Free Territory. The Free Territory was a confederation of villages in Eastern Ukraine. The Free Territory was a profound case because it was an actual anarchist polity in theory and practice. The Free Territory was established in an uncertain struggle between several forces: local warlords, Bolsheviks, anti-socialists who were formerly in the Imperial Russian government: nationalist Ukrainians, occupying Austrian and German troops: and finally, rebelling peasants. The Makhnovist movement inspired enough people in Ukraine to form a region where widespread self-reform carried out by the peasants existed, for a time. The time period was only about three years, but true change came about. The revolution began with the establishment of the Free Territory in 1918 and was all over by 1921, with Makhno in Romania and the Free Territory overrun by the Red Army.

The Man

Nestor Makhno was the man who led, but did not dictate, the revolution. It is difficult to try and conceptualize this, and it does seem odd that the entire movement was named after him. The best way to explain this concept is that these revolutionaries marched *with* Mankhno, as opposed to Makhno being the ultimate authority on every aspect of the revolution. As for the name of the movement, the description given is that Makhno was the first one to start the revolution, a model anarchist. The duality is explained in the manifesto distributed by Makhno to the Ukrainian peasants.

Why do we call ourselves Makhnovists?

Because for the first time during the darkest days of reaction in Ukraine we saw in our ranks a faithful friend and leader, MAKHNO, whose voice of protest against all oppression of the toilers rang out through the whole Ukraine, calling for a struggle against all the tyrants, marauders and political charlatans who were bent on deceiving us, Makhno who now marches with us steadfastly in our common ranks towards the final goal, the emancipation of the toilers from all forms of oppression.²⁶

The key phrase is the “steadfastly in our common ranks,” connotating that Makhno is in the ranks with everyone else, the difference being respect for his ideas and judgement. This distinction is of the utmost importance to understanding the reality of the situation in Ukraine. The revolutionaries would freely associate with Makhno and follow his leadership, but with the understanding that he was not the ultimate authority or inherent leader. This distinction would run throughout the revolution and is the basis of the three keys that led to true equality. Makhno was to involve being a simple a figurehead and not absolute enough to be an authority. There may not be a term to accurately describe the true reality of Makhno’s involvement in the movement, even the term leader connotes an image of a boss. That being said, he was the undisputed commander of the Black Army. His army formed from many groups rising to resist the Austro-Hungarians

²⁶ Paul Avrich and Petr Alekseevich Kropotkin, *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution, Documents of Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 1973). 135

and their Ukrainian landlord puppets. They would conduct efficient raids crippling the exportation of Ukrainian goods and money, as well as the ability to occupy Ukraine.²⁷ The leader of one of these units was Mankhno, and he rose to prominence by ascending gaining positions in various unions in the Workers' Soviet of Gulyai-Poyle (a region of Ukraine). The various Ukrainian insurgents were trying to unify to pose a greater threat. Mankhno proved his leadership of his own detachment in an against all odds assault on some Austro Hungarians and their Ukrainian puppets in the town of Bol'shaya Mikhailovka. As Arshinov notes,

Local peasants and detachments of revolutionary insurgents came from all directions to triumphantly acclaim the heroes. They unanimously agreed to consider Makhno as *Batko* of the entire revolutionary insurrection in Ukraine.²⁸

The word "*Batko*" means "father," and displays the respect and trust Mankhno received from his fellow revolutionaries. Mankhno was the key to unlocking the potential of the Ukrainian insurgents as an effective fighting force, ideologically and strategically.

The Black Army

The Black Army is distinct from yet tied to the Free Territory. The Black Army protected the Free Territory from outside forces but did not exert its will on its inhabitants. This is opposed to, for example, the United States Army, which preserves the Constitution for the people in the United States. The Black Army's influence was limited to removing institutions of authority and pushing out anti-anarchist forces. Outside of these measures to ensure that no one was in a position of coercion, the army did not exert any control. "Prisons, police stations and posts" were among the targets, as well as priests, landlords and White Army officers.²⁹ Only ideological enemies were sought after, this may be a broad and similar styled language to contemporary Red Army propaganda, but as Arshinov clarifies,

Throughout the liberated region, the Makhnovists were the only organization powerful enough to impose its will on the enemy. But they never used this power for the purpose of domination or even to gain political influence; they never used it against their purely political or ideological opponents. The military opponents, the conspirators against the freedom of action of the workers and peasants, the state apparatus, the prisons — these were the elements against which the efforts of the Makhnovist army were directed.³⁰

As opposed to Red Army actions, which purged to create their own state, the Black Army eliminated the state itself. A key characteristic of the Black Army's benevolence was the support of free speech. Wherever the Black Army liberated, newspapers would spring up, ones that disagreed with each other and offered discourse.³¹ The notable exception was a restriction on Bolsheviks forming "revolutionary committees" within the territory, because these were attempting

²⁷ Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)*. 48–51

²⁸ *Ibid.* 60

²⁹ *Ibid.* 148

³⁰ *Ibid.* 152–152

³¹ *Ibid.* 153–154

to form a state.³² The Black Army's popularity was evident in its inability to sustain itself materially, they were continuously supplied by the locals.³³ While ammunition could be seized from enemies, food to sustain an army could not. The Black Army was also organized unconventionally, based on soldier assemblies and elected leaders. Orders were followed out of agreement on the competence of the planner, not out of fear of insubordination.³⁴ The morale of the Black Army as a result was particularly high, which was a major issue in other armies of the Russian Civil War. Several times opposing forces would disintegrate in the face of Black Army, often joining their ranks.³⁵ The Black Army also would fight for much longer before routing as opposed to other examples of armed forces in the Russian Civil War. This was because they respected their fellow soldiers and leaders and had a communal sense of military maneuvers.

The Black Army combined the political struggle with the military struggle, and so fought with vigor and unwavering ferocity. Makhno specialized in moving discreetly to the flanks and rear of the enemy, as in a guerilla war.⁹⁰ Guerilla war necessitates ideological and decentralized trust in others, as operations are often behind enemy lines and risky in terms of safe retreat routes. The army established three principles of *voluntary enlistment*, *electoral principle* (voting on policy), and *self-discipline* (voting on measures and adhering to a process of commissions).³⁶

The Army was mostly infantry accompanied by cavalry and *tachankas* (horse-drawn machine gun carriages, decorated with revolutionary slogans).³⁷ In this way, the Black Army was able to defeat the White Army several times, ironically saving the Soviet Republic. The Black Army's patronage was the key to the Free Territory's existence.

The Free Territory

The Free Territory, when sufficiently defended by the Black Army, allowed for stateless communes and associations. Primarily an agrarian society, the first organizations were agricultural communes, distinctive from the Leninist communes due to their lack of top down organization, and free association.³⁸ Industry was harder to reform for the anarchists, but the first steps were taken to convert the peasant communes into industry. Makhno recommended that the railroad workers of the Free Territory unionize and charge for transportation.³⁹ This demonstrated the transmission of original Makhnovist peasant thought to syndicalism, worker and peasants side by side. With the Black Army and defense militias ready to dismantle any form of government, the peasants and workers began to reorganize along their own lines to produce at their own will. The proof of concept was again the support the Black Army received, and so the mutualism came full circle. The collapse of the Free Territory was an external affair. The Makhnovist movement could have collapsed at any point among itself, but it remained intact. This was due to the people that would revolt were the agents of the revolution, there were no opposing parties vying for control, every man consenting to how he lived.

³² Ibid 154

³³ Ibid Chapter 5

³⁴ Ibid Chapter 5

³⁵ Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*, 1985, www.ditext.com. 81

³⁶ Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)*. Chapter 5

³⁷ Skirda, *Nestor Makhno: Anarchy's Cossack*. 124

³⁸ Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)*. 5

³⁹ Avrich and Kropotkin, *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution*. 124

Homage to Eastern Ukraine

Nestor Makhno began operations against the Hetmanate regime in south east Ukraine in July 1918. He fought the Hetmanate, Central Powers, the White Forces, and the Directorate, often moving from attacking one to the other. In late 1918, the Free Territory was developing as more free soviet communes chose to associate with the Makhnovist Movement. Similarly, as time went on, more bands of armed peasants joined the Black Army.⁴⁰ Makhno's army was highly mobile, based on carts and cavalry. Instead of occupying territory, the focus was to prevent Directory forces from establishing control over the land Makhno was protecting.⁴¹ The movement was growing and solidifying as the Red Army attacked the directory, driving it west. The White Armies in the East and Far East were growing and beginning to travel west, and so the Soviets were willing to start organizing with the peasant bands. Representatives of the Red Army and Makhno met on January 26th, 1919 and agreed to several terms. These included the Black Army joining the Red Army and being supplied by the Soviets, retaining their internal elected command structure, allowing for Soviet political commissars to join the force, and that the army could style itself with its chosen name and black flags. Makhno was to continue fighting against the White Front as Denikin advanced on Moscow through Ukraine.⁴² The Red Army had nominal control over the Huliai-Pole area, but their appointed ministers and commissars were having trouble administering it. Makhnovist peasants demanded elected ministers and that the Bolsheviks stop interfering with their social revolution.⁴³ While there was increased agitation in the Free Territory due to (rather unsuccessful) Soviet attempts to establish collectivization on their terms, Makhno ravaged the White Army's supply lines and picked apart their rear lines. This enabled the Soviets to smash the final element of Denikin Army. Makhno had saved Moscow and the Soviets.⁴⁴

Two Betrayals

Makhno had a remarkable ability to mobilize peasants to his cause, greatly aiding in his military endeavors against his and the Soviets' enemies. The Soviets became alarmed at this as they could not mobilize the Ukrainians anywhere near the fashion of Makhno and had no desire to allow him to continue to pursue his independence policy. The Bolsheviks outlawed Makhno's movement and began an offensive against the Black Army. The Bolsheviks were unsuccessful at fighting Makhno's army, Makhno would defeat them in skirmishes and retreat when he could not win. The anarchists continued to harass the Red Army, forcing it to retreat, until another White army, under General Wrangel (1878–1928), formed in the Caucuses out of Denikin's shattered army. The anarchist and communists made another truce; however, the anarchists would not join the Soviet Army this time or allow commissars to join them or their villages. When Wrangel was defeated by a combined effort, the Red Army turned on the Makhnovists once again. Makhno's fighting style was incredibly demoralizing to the Soviets, who faced mass desertion. The Soviets, free from the White threat in Ukraine, began raiding villages and throwing their sheer numbers

⁴⁰ Michael Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*. 143–148

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 104–105 144

⁴² *Ibid.* 148–151

⁴³ Vladimir N. Brovkin, *Behind the Front Lines of the Civil War: Political Parties and Social Movements in Russia, 1918–1922* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1994). 108–109

⁴⁴ Palij, *The Anarchism of Nestor Makhno, 1918–1921*. 206–207

at Makhno. Makhno had better troops, but sheer numbers and the erosion of his base forced him west. Desperate rear-guard action was the only reason he made it to the Romanian border.⁴⁵

The Larger Meaning

Makhno fostered the first stateless anarchist society and army. It lasted for about three years and real change occurred in it. The ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin were present, however their feud with Marx was also manifested. The communists and anarchists had shed each other's blood, unable to coexist outside of facing a greater evil. Upon arriving in Paris, Makhno could only think over his experience and pass it on, hoping for another chance of anarchists to seize the moment.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 231–242

Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)*. 173–208

Chapter 3: The Struggle Reborn in Spain, 1936–1939

Up to Date

In 1933, the Spanish Civil War must have seemed imminent, and Nestor Makhno wanted to make it clear how the Spanish anarchists should move forward based on his experiences. He wrote *On the History of the Spanish Revolution of 1931 and the Part Played by the Left- and Right-Wing Socialists and the Anarchists* 101 in a similar manner to that of *Open Letter to Spanish Anarchists*, encouraging and excited, although it is more specific and has some criticism of anarchist operations.

From 1911 to 1931 the CNT's (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo) efforts had yielded mixed results. The members of the CNT had made their goals clear as early as 1911, to amass enough numerical strength to permit a revolutionary general strike.¹ Also, on the table was direct action² and class warfare. Almost immediately after the CNT formed in 1911, the trade union launched a failed solidarity strike, in response, the Canalejas government outlawed the CNT in 1911.³ Nevertheless, the CNT continued to operate clandestinely. They were very active in Catalonia in 1914, and in 1915 set up a national committee there. Catalonia would remain the stronghold for CNT support throughout its existence. For example, half of the CNT's 30,000 national members were in Catalonia in 1915. During the First World War, Spain served the production needs of the belligerents and as a result, industry boomed. The expansion of industrial production provided a catalyst for anarchist sympathy as the exploitative practices in these industries became clear as the proceeds went almost exclusively to the bosses. In Barcelona in 1918, a conference of anarchist groups from every region of Spain met with the CNT and decided on a massive entry into the CNT. The solidification of almost all anarchists into the CNT made it the dominant organization of anarchists in Spain. The Catalan CNT had begun to organize itself on industry lines (all workers and unions of the same type of work).⁴ The CNT was becoming a massive movement and was developing almost as its own society. The Union was beginning to enact social revolution as well as political, CNT committee rooms became areas where ideas like Esperanto, Female

¹ Stuart Christie, *We, the Anarchists: A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–1937* (Edinburgh, Scotland ; Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2008), 9–13.

² To the Spanish anarchists, direct action was defined by early 20th century French Anarcho-syndicalists rejecting state interference in negotiations with bosses. It insists all workers demands be met, solidarity to convince strike breakers to also strike, and violent reprisal to boss attacks on striking workers. The goal was to reduce boss options to counter a strike, without the state the boss would be forced to either give in to demands, or hire scab (strikebreaker) labor which would result in more strikes and hopefully conversion.

Frank Mintz, Paul Sharkey, and Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2013). 48

³ This particular strike was for workers in Bilbao and against a colonial war in Morocco.

⁴ The CNT had local confederations that made up regional federations, such as the Catalan CNT, which inter made up the national CNT.

emancipation and vegetarianism could be taught.⁵ The union was educating and empowering its members. The CNT expressed direct action and mutual aid in a way that emulated Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, and Makhno.

The power of the CNT was clear in the La Canadiense strike.⁶ The CNT launched a massive city-wide solidarity strike in Catalonia in February 1919 in response to a wage decrease and arbitrary dismissal of a relatively small group of workers.⁷ 100,000 workers struck and Barcelona was left without electricity. A state of siege was called on the situation and the army entered Barcelona and arrested union leaders. The strike ended in victory for the CNT, and the government instituted an eight-hour workday and released some union leaders from prison. At this point, in December 1919, the CNT had 715,000 members, up from 345,000 from the end of the previous year.⁸ The CNT struck again to force the release of the remaining prisoners; however, the government did not back down this time and unleashed a massive repression campaign against the CNT. Employers began sending out assassins to kill union organizers, radicalizing the CNT even more towards violent direct, retaliatory action.⁹ The dictatorship of Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870–1930) forced the CNT underground in 1923. Primo de Rivera was a military officer and aristocrat who believed parliamentary rule had ruined Spain. He wanted to reinforce the monarchy and the Catholic church, and his rise to power was met with remarkably little resistance from any leftist parties. The UGT and POSE¹⁰ openly collaborated with the dictatorship and the CNT was forced to disband and go underground.¹¹ It is worth noting here that there were several Spanish governments formed in the years between 1911 and 1936, the CNT was hostile to all of them and did not participate in electoral politics. They believed that any gains made were temporary in a society with a state and capitalism.¹² The Great Depression undid any economic gains that Spain secured during the dictatorship and Primo de Rivera gave up power, and after some inconsequential political office changes, municipal elections were called in 1931, resulting in the Second Spanish Republic and the abdication of the monarchy.¹³

Makhno on the State of the Unions

This was the point in time when Makhno made his remarks in his *On the History of the Spanish Revolution of 1931*. Makhno writes that the Spanish Revolution, although an electoral rather than violent one, is still in the same vein as the revolutions preceding it in Europe. Makhno's evalu-

⁵ Stuart Christie, *We, the Anarchists: A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–1937*, 10–12

⁶ La Canadiense was a colloquial term for *Riegos y Fuerzas del Ebro*, an electrical company in Catalonia, whose major shareholder was the Canadian Bank of Commerce of Toronto.

⁷ *Ibid.* 11–13

Mintz, Sharkey, and Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*. 43

⁸ Stuart Christie, *We, the Anarchists: A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), 1927–1937*, 12

⁹ Christie, *We, the Anarchists*. 20

¹⁰ UGT; Unión General de Trabajadores (General Union of Workers) and PSOE; *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party). The UGT was a socialist trade Union that was competing with the CNT for influence and membership with the workers. The PSOE was a socialist political party heavily tied to the UGT, effectively the political party wing of the union.

¹¹ Mintz, Sharkey, and Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*. 45

¹² Christie, *We, the Anarchists*. 14

¹³ Mintz, Sharkey, and Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*. 43–46

ation of the situation was that the revolution was not in favor of the anarchists, leftist parties (considered authoritarian from the anarchist perspective) had gained control.

Whilst it [the Spanish Revolution] nonetheless finished to the advantage of authoritarian elements, and proved tragic for the fate of the workers and many revolutionaries, as well as for what these had managed to achieve, the responsibility for that lies largely with the Spanish left-wing political groupings. That unfortunate denouement can be chalked up to the authoritarian and the anti-authoritarian socialists, which is to say to our libertarian communist and anarcho-syndicalist comrades.¹⁴

Makhno writes that “right-wing state socialists” had successfully subverted workers in Spain, and the Bolshevik communists successfully portray themselves as “further to the left than the left.”

Makhno portrays the communist as “nothing more than Jesuits and traitors to all who struggle against Capital and for the emancipation of the proletariat whilst refusing to pass between their Caudine Forks.”¹⁵ Makhno also observes that the Spanish Bolsheviks were not powerful enough to take power in 1931, so their goal of an autocratic dictatorship was still hidden, like Makhno’s experience in Ukraine with Lenin. Makhno criticizes the Spanish anarchists for not seizing the moment:

Spanish libertarian communists and anarcho-syndicalists have a particular responsibility in the shaping of events, above all because they departed from their basic principles in taking an active part in that revolution, so as to wrest the initiative from the liberal bourgeoisie, no doubt, but whilst remaining, regardless, on the latter’s parasitical class terrain. They have, for one thing, taken absolutely no notice of the requirements of our age, and for another, they have under-estimated the scale of the resources available to the bourgeoisie in containing and eliminating all who create trouble for it. What has stopped anarchists from putting their beliefs into practice, so as to turn a bourgeois republican revolution into a social revolution?¹⁶

Makhno is concerned that the Spanish anarchists have been outmaneuvered by the other parties of Spain. He finds two reasons for their failure, first because of the lack of planning and unity that the CNT displayed throughout this period. He notes,

Secondly, our Spanish comrades, like many comrades elsewhere, regard anarchism as an itinerant church of freedom ... That attitude regularly prevents them from arriving at the desired times and places at the working structures essential to the economic and social organization whose duty it is to weave multiple connections

¹⁴ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nesstor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essays> 19–23.

¹⁵ This is an expression referring to a victory the Samnites won over the Romans, not by fighting, but by deception and outmaneuvering. The Samnites surrounded the Romans at the Caudine Forks and chose to let them leave unharmed, in exchange for peace. Roman culture prided itself on honor, and so even though they could have turned around and obliterated the Samnites, were forced to respect the peace. The expression conveys degradation and utter humiliation.

¹⁶ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nesstor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essays> 19–23.

between the everyday and global struggle of the toilers. This has thwarted them, on this occasion, from accomplishing the historical task that devolves upon anarchism in time of revolution. For all the prestige they enjoyed in the eyes of the workers in the country, Spanish libertarian communists and anarcho-syndicalists have failed to tilt in the direction of revolution, the minds of masses dithering between their sympathy with revolution and a petit-bourgeois outlook.¹⁷

The CNT leadership had begun to moderate at this point in time, and the position of immediate complete revolution was becoming undermined in favor of reformism, cooperating with the state, Makhno was critical, as they were at the height of their power. “The CNT expanded its membership at a dizzying rate and became, for all who labor, the spokesman and the forum through which the toilers’ age-old hopes might at last find expression.”¹⁸

Successes aside, Makhno thought that the CNT had missed a critical moment in 1931 and was failing in its original goals of total revolution in an uncompromising fashion. Makhno was however still hopeful and looked forward to the success of the Spanish anarchists. He called for a reorganization of the Spanish anarchists in preparation of an anarchist international. These preparations and conferences,

would rescue our movement from reformist and muddle-headed deviations and invest it with the necessary potency to become the vanguard of contemporary revolutions.

True, this is no easy undertaking; however, determination and solidarity from those who can and who wish to carry it off will greatly facilitate this endeavor. Let this undertaking commence, for our movement cannot but gain by it!

Long live the fraternal and shared hopes of all Anarchist militants that they may see the realization of that grand undertaking — the endeavor of our movement and of the social revolution for which we struggle!¹⁹

Makhno wrote this piece at a time when the CNT was not particularly successful and had a moderate (for anarcho-syndicalists) leadership, seemingly pro-republican government.²⁰ There was also an influx of workers joining the ranks of the CNT in the late 1910s and early 1920s. Although these workers were heavily inspired by libertarian and pro-worker politics, it would be disingenuous to describe them all as full anarchists.²¹ This situation was similar to Makhno’s army, in which it is wrong to describe every member as a politically competent anarchist. There was however a movement in Spain that would cure the moderation and reformism that Makhno and others saw developing in the CNT, the *Federación Anarquista Ibérica* (FAI).

¹⁷ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nesstor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essays> 19–23.

¹⁸ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nesstor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essays> 19–23.

¹⁹ Nestor Ivanovich Makhno and Alexandre Skirda, *The Struggle Against the State & Other Essays* <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/nesstor-makhno-the-struggle-against-the-state-and-other-essays> 19–23.

²⁰ Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and the City: Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (Edinburgh: AK Pr, 2010). 88

²¹ Christie, *We, the Anarchists*. 15

Opposition within the Opposition

In 1927, the FAI formed as an organization of militant anarchists within the CNT who acted to try to keep the labor union committed to its anarchist foundations. The idea of the federation was a pan-Iberian group to unify Portuguese and Spanish anarchists.²² The FAI prior to 1936 acted as a kind of opposition party within the CNT. The closest thing to a direct statement of goals the FAI had was a public manifesto from the Anarchist Liaison Committee of Catalonia, entitled *The Federation of Anarchist Groups of Spain — To everyone*.²³ The document states that the members sought a new society, describing an individualistic society according to one's strengths and capabilities. They were staunchly anti-state and named Marxists, socialists, and communists explicitly as who they opposed. The next sentence, "We are against the State, whether it be aristocratic, bourgeois, or 'proletarian.'" This is an obvious remark regarding the Marxist-Leninist dictatorship of the proletariat. The FAI was explicitly a "bottom up" revolutionary group, as opposed to the top down communist state approach. Most indicative of the goal of these individuals was this statement within the document is the statement,

As workers we are all active in the ranks of the national Confederation of Labor (CNT). But our mission is not wholly consumed by being active in trade unionism. Our mission has a more significant complement. Outside of the unions, absolutely independent, we disseminate our theories, form our groups, organize rallies, publish anarchist reading materials, and sow the seed of anarchism in every direction.

This document spelled out the FAI goals as a nonconforming anarchist group dedicated to pushing an all-encompassing revolution. The FAI was a group within the CNT and would advance an agenda within it. There is considerable debate among historians as to the true nature of what the FAI wanted, how prominent they were in the CNT, how numerous, if members of trust in the CNT had to be FAI members, if the FAI wanted to collaborate or co-opt the CNT (prior to 1931), and even if membership was secret or not.²⁴ Regardless, the takeaway of the FAI was that there was a well-known movement among CNT members to reject moderate and gradualist sentiment in the CNT. This group, or the idea of it, caused considerable controversy in the CNT, which led to a several year struggle over if the CNT was to be primarily anarchist or syndicalists.²⁵ The (as it turned out to be) minority moderate syndicalist faction left the CNT in 1932, leaving the FAI holding great influence over the CNT.²⁶ This was why the CNT was commonly referred to as the CNT-FAI, to demonstrate the affiliation and political shift.²⁷

²² It is best not to dwell on this point, for all intents and purposes, the FAI was a Spanish organization. The Portuguese trade unions sat in FAI meetings, however all notable actions carried out by the FAI was about Spain and the CNT. This does not seem intentional, as the situation in Portugal with its dictatorship allowed for little action while in Spain and the war the FAI could operate openly.

²³ Christie, *We, the Anarchists*.32–37

²⁴ *Ibid.* 47–69

²⁵ All things considered; this is not a massive difference. Syndicalism meant regulating the means of production to trade unions. The anarchists of the CNT were also syndicalists. The issue was syndicalists elements wanting the CNT to be less anarchist and more syndicalist. The syndicalists should be seen as moderates in the CNT as opposed to a different ideology. The CNT before and after this debate was an anarcho-syndicalists trade union.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 130

²⁷ Historians seem to use the terms CNT and CNT-FAI interchangeably when talking about the post-1932 history of the organization, or its activities as whole. In this paper, CNT will be used in general, CNT-FAI will be used when the particular militant side is spearheading the subject.

The confirmation of the militant core of the CNT-FAI would rectify most of Makhno's criticisms, of the state of affairs of Spanish anarchy. The CNT-FAI also now bore remarkable similarities to Makhno, such as advocacy for direct action and class warfare. It was also clear that the lessons of the betrayal of Makhno by the Soviets was not forgotten in the anarchist mind, as the FAI emphasized that they would not cooperate with 'proletariat' (authors' emphasis) governments. The CNT-FAI was an anti-communist organization, in addition to their individualistic and Kropotkin based ideas of absolute revolution. The CNT-FAI was reformed just in time, and they would not hesitate to seize the moment like in 1931.

The CNT-FAI in the Second Spanish Republic

The Second Spanish Republic was in turmoil almost immediately. The left coalition had won in 1931 and instituted reforms aimed at the poverty of the rural regions, some of the worst in Europe, and supported the various trade unions. Undeterred, the CNT-FAI launched three massive nationwide insurrectionary movements in January 1932, January 1933, and December 1933. These aimed to overthrow the reformist regime and were met with brutal repression. The December incident was after the 1933 elections, where the right coalition headed by CEDA was victorious. The CEDA party was a Catholic-conservative party, which gained popularity from disgruntled Catholics who were not pleased by the increasing secularization and attacks on clergy. The left's performance was not aided by the crippling effect of CNT sponsored electoral boycott. In response to the rightist government, the CNT-FAI, UGT, and PSOE launched an armed revolutionary strike in Asturias and Catalonia in response to the conservative win in the 1933 election. This revolt was galvanizing to the nation, the left was praised for their actions and inspired a wave of atrocities against the clergy, which was intolerable to the right. The revolt was utterly crushed by the government, a Francisco Franco (1892–1975), of the Army of Africa, which was key in the crackdown.²⁸

The Popular Front

Communism had evolved once again. Joseph Stalin instructed his supporters to ally with liberals and capitalists to fight fascism.²⁹ Stalin's socialism in one country ideology maintained that the state had to become stronger before reaching a point where it could wither away into true communism. What this meant for the world was Stalinist support of bourgeois capitalist factions, sometimes even in favor of communists.³⁰

Stalin, through the Comintern, instructed the PCE to join with other non-communists and bourgeois parties to confront fascism in the 1936 election in Spain. The popular front was formed between leftist parties to counter the right Carlists (Monarchists), Catholic, and Falangist (Fascists) parties.³¹ The PSUC (Catalonian Communist Party, in line with Stalin), PSOE (Spanish So-

²⁸ Raymond Carr, *The Republic and the Civil War in Spain*, Problems in focus series (London, New York: Macmillan; St. Martin's Press, 1971). 28–37

²⁹ This was Stalinist policy until the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

³⁰ Such as the Soviet support of the more powerful socialist Kuomintang over the Chinese Communist Party in the 1920's

³¹ There is considerable debate over if the Falange was in fact fascist. For the purposes here, they are, as they exhibit nationalist and authoritarian ideals and ally with the other fascists of Europe.

cialist Party, effectively controlled by Stalin), PCE (The Spanish Marxist-Leninist Party, in line with Stalin), POUM (Independent Communist Party, not in Comintern), and the various republican parties made up this front. Popular fronts had been forming across Europe, most notably in France. The CNT did not join the Popular Front, and faced competition with the Marxist unions. The CNT's insurrectionary strategy may have been helpful, the ranks still increasing with workers that benefited little from the Republic's tenure.³² The communists, very small in Spain prior to this point, benefited greatly from the Popular Front. No Small part of this was the influence of the USSR, the only socialist state in the world at the time. The Comintern aligned parties of Spain, the PSUC, PCE, and PSOE, could rely on political support from the Soviet Union, and material support in the case of a war.

CEDA began to discredit the legitimacy of the election and the Falange began to realize that their movement would not succeed outside of the military. Aristocrats realized that electoralism would most likely not protect their interests. While plotting in Spanish Morocco, the Falange had instigated violent street battles to bait the growing numbers of radical militias into conflict in the streets of Spain.³³ War seemed certain, and the radical political parties at least somewhat prepared for the struggle.

The Moment

The July Coup began on July 17–18, and the military took control of Spanish North Africa immediately. They were not as successful on the Peninsula. The Republic's military was now split favoring the coup. The thing that immediately saved the Republic were CNT and UGT general strikes. Spain grinded to a halt as workers ceased work, then headed to party headquarters to sign up for militias. All functions of the Republic ceased, such as courts. The communist-infiltrated police, the Assault Guards and Civil Guards, split their allegiance. The remaining army was disbanded by the Republic, but the Navy was primarily still loyal to the Republic.³⁴

The day of the coup, The CNT-FAI, Assault and Civil Guards, and POUM launched a large attack on the army in Catalonia, completely overrunning the rebels.³⁵ The Catalanian Regional CNT Committee was in complete control of the situation by July 20th, 1936. The CNT unions of Catalonia then immediately set up preparations to liberate Zaragoza, to the west. Besides Catalonia, Zaragoza was the previous center of CNT activity. Zaragoza had been completely overrun by the Army, and the CNT wanted to liberate their comrades. The individual CNT unions began to organize militias, as they had to balance production with sending their workers to fight, this was considered a necessity by Kropotkin in *Conquest of Bread*.³⁶ The Fascist uprising had given the anarchists a chance to control territory once again, and anarchist forces once again fought in pitched battles.

³² Andrew Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War*, Studies in European history (Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). 21–36

³³ Andrew Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War*, Studies in European history, 27–28

³⁴ Helen Graham, *The Spanish Republic at War, 1936–1939* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). 79–81

³⁵ Mintz, Sharkey, and Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*. 61–66

³⁶ *Ibid.* 143

Coup to Civil War

In the immediate aftermath of the Coup, the CNT and UGT militias formed the bulk of the resistance to the Fascists (Nationalists). However, it was clear that the militias untrained and outgunned by the regular Spanish Army would have to find a better way to approach the war.

This entailed two things, organizing all the leftist militias into one Army, and securing foreign aid. Foreign Aid was critical to how the Spanish Civil War was conducted. The Fascists were well supplied by Italy, German, and Portugal, not to mention the well-equipped volunteer Italian regiments and the German Condor Legion.¹³⁸ The foreign supply coming into Republican Spain was almost entirely from the Soviet Union, as the United States, United Kingdom, and France (which was also a Popular Front Government at the time) refused to commit significant military resources, if at all.¹³⁹ The Spanish Stalinists were much smaller and less powerful than the other prominent parties of Spain but gained ascendancy from the previously mentioned Stalin-initiated Popular Front, and even more so by way of securing supply from the Soviet Union. When Soviet arms arrived in Spain, the communists were the first to be equipped.

While not in the Popular Front government, the CNT and UGT were quick to join the Popular Army, decreed on September 30th, 1936 (two and a half months after the war began). The militia units from the various political parties generally reserved their internal composition and structures. The Army was never truly unitary and suffered from systemic issues in organization and strategic leadership. The Popular Army was successful in early offensives but failed to follow up due to lack of logistical support and equipment. The nature of foreign support was evident in the conduct of the army as well as supply. The nationalist tactics were advised by the Germans, while the Popular Army utilized French tactics based on First World War experience. This led to Popular Army tanks being used ineffectively, dispersed within infantry units.

This resulted in a slow and miserable war, an Interwar one, containing the terrors of both the Great War, and of the second war on the horizon. From the First World War, poor tactics and trench warfare were inherited. The to be belligerents of the Second World War also were eager to test their new weapons in combat. Sophisticated artillery such as 88mm flak guns and state of the art Messerschmitt Bf 109 Fighter planes from Germany had few counters from the Republican side, save for some less than equal equipment from the Soviets.³⁷ The CNT and UGT militias and later reformed Republican military never did make it to Zaragoza. This is not to say the Fascist campaign achieved an easy victory. What the fascists underestimated was the determination of the Republican militia men.

The weapons and theory the Republicans faced from the Nationalists were the same that destroyed the French in the Blitzkrieg and almost forced Britain out of the Second World War. In essence, the Republican forces were strategically and tactically inferior, in addition to severely outgunned.³⁸ The sole remaining factor was the morale and tenacity of the men themselves.

Revolutionary Discipline

Revolutionary enthusiasm was what allowed for the anarchist's militias and the Republican Army as a whole hang on. Overall, the anarchist militias were democratic, electing officers or

³⁷ Ibid.78

³⁸ Ibid. 35-36, 77- 78

“delegates”. These officers had no privileges found in regular armies, such as increased pay.³⁹ The enthusiasm of a united anti-fascist struggle was international, many men traveled to Spain to fight for the Republicans. One such man was George Orwell (1903–1950), who fought for the P.O.U.M.⁴⁰

Orwell’s experience was characteristic of the strategic shortcomings of the militias. He was not trained on how to use a rifle, and was frustrated by the use of the term *mañana* (indefinite future), which was the general response to things such as to when training would occur, or when they would go to the front. He also witnessed the incredible atmosphere of this developing army. He chose to open his recollection of the war with a scene of him meeting an Italian militia man who displayed utter ferocity and determination while gazing at a map he visibly could not understand.⁴¹ Orwell described the discipline of these militias,

In practice the democratic ‘revolutionary’ type of discipline is more reliable than might be expected. In a workers’ army discipline is theoretically voluntary. It is based on class-loyalty, whereas the discipline of a bourgeois conscript army is based ultimately on fear. (The Popular Army that replaced the militias was midway between the two types.) In the militias the bullying and abuse that go on in an ordinary army would never have been tolerated for a moment. The normal military punishments existed, but they were only invoked for very serious offences. When a man refused to obey an order, you did not immediately get him punished; you first appealed to him in the name of comradeship. Cynical people with no experience of handling men will say instantly that this would never ‘work’, but as a matter of fact it does ‘work’ in the long run.⁴²

The essence of a horizontally based unit (not hierarchical), according to Orwell, was this notion of “revolutionary discipline.” This type of motivation was based on the principles of ideology that when manifested on a large scale resulted in formations of soldiers that effectively held the line.

We had all been under fire for months, and I never had the slightest difficulty in getting an order obeyed or in getting men to volunteer for a dangerous job. ‘Revolutionary’ discipline depends on political consciousness — on an understanding of why orders must be obeyed; it takes time to diffuse this, but it also takes time to drill a man into an automaton on the barrack-square. The journalists who sneered at the militia-system seldom remembered that the militias had to hold the line while the Popular Army was training in the rear. And it is a tribute to the strength of ‘revolutionary’ discipline that the militias stayed in the field-at all. For until about June 1937 there was nothing to keep them there, except class loyalty.⁴³

³⁹ Ibid. 34

⁴⁰ Orwell fought for the POUM, not the CNT. The importance is not lost in his militia affiliation. Orwell’s experience is remarkably similar to that described of the CNT militias like that of the Durruti Column. In fact Abel Paz in *Durruti, the People Armed*, uses part of the same description of the militia organization from *Homage To Catalonia* as the one in the next paragraph when discussing the nature of the anarchist militias. Abel Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, 235. George Orwell and Lionel Trilling, *Homage to Catalonia*, 28–29.

⁴¹ George Orwell and Lionel Trilling, *Homage to Catalonia*, A harvest book (San Diego: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1980), 1,10–11

⁴² Ibid. 28–29

⁴³ Ibid. 28–29

On paper, the Nationalists should have crushed these militias, but they were unable to. It was not because of weaponry, tactics, or training, but this discipline based on ideological purpose. These various militias held the line against the Nationalists because their moral was far superior. Their morale was based on a shared outlook on a society based on equality.

The militia that Orwell served in was like that of Makhno's Black army, due to the volunteerism, consensus in planning operations, and in morale. The Black Army's soldiers fought because they wanted to, no one made them fight. Similarly, the "revolutionary discipline" of the militia men of the Popular Army was what held the line. The militia, as Orwell describes it, is remarkably similar to the three principles that Makhno's forces exemplified, the three principles of *voluntary enlistment*, *electoral principle* (voting on policy), and *self-discipline* (voting on measures and adhering to a process of commissions). The Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists formed unconventional militias that held off much larger and better equipped armies through ideological belief. It is not as if though these beliefs manifested in miraculous victories, for the anarchist were not super-soldiers. The "revolutionary discipline" kept them in their trenches and from deserting and inspired them to keep coming back to aim yet another shot, or crawl forward to lob another bomb at counter-revolutionary forces.

Durruti

Buenaventura Durruti, like his inspiration, Makhno, found his moment in the turbulence of Civil War. He was involved with the Central Committee of Militias in Barcelona in the weeks after the coup, which coordinated CNT, FAI, UGT, PSOE, POUM, and several other minor parties' militias. The parties would organize their own militias and set up their own headquarters in Barcelona. The CNT in particular was wary of a centralized general staff. This is because elements such as Durruti and the FAI wanted no compromise in their revolution.⁴⁴ Their time had come, and they had no interest in the two-revolution theory that the Stalinists proclaimed. The CNT-FAI wanted a single revolution, military and social, while the PSUC (Stalinist) maintained that centralization of a state and army was the only immediate goal.⁴⁵ While this friction was fermenting, Durruti and his column advanced on Zaragoza. He remembered what Makhno told him "The difference which exists between a military man who commands and a revolutionary who leads, is that the military man imposes himself by force, while the revolutionary must rest his authority on his conduct."⁴⁶ This reinforces the notion that the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchist movements were led from the bottom up, rather than a forced top-down revolution. Along the way to Zaragoza Durruti would instruct peasants to not wait for the revolution and instead begin to seize land and collectivize.⁴⁷

When reviewing the conversation that Makhno and Durruti had,⁴⁸ it is clear that Makhno was telling Durruti that Kropotkin's theory of communes worked. Makhno told Durruti that the Free Territories' communes were the center of economic and political power. He described that since communities were not based on "individual egoism", there was widespread solidarity among regional and communal lines. This meant there was no animosity between cities and

⁴⁴ Abel Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*, 218–220

⁴⁵ Orwell and Trilling, *Homage to Catalonia*. 47–49

⁴⁶ Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*. 250

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 230

⁴⁸ Referencing the conversation they had in Paris, covered at the beginning of Chapter 1.

countryside, industrial and agricultural communes federated together. This enabled decisions in popular assemblies and a unified War Committee made of delegates from guerilla detachments.

This is obvious Kropotkin theory straight from the *Conquest of Bread*. This is further proven by a particular concern addressed by Makhno, that the Free Territory only lasted because it was entirely peasant. Makhno elaborates that the revolution had industrial and countryside support, which was a specific issue Kropotkin addressed as crucial for the future of anarchist revolution.⁴⁹ When compared to the CNT defense committees and the attention to the peasantry Durruti took on his march to attack Zaragoza, it is clear Durruti was acting out the revolution Kropotkin called for, and Makhno had carried out in the previous decade.

The Zaragoza front proved static and Durruti went back to Barcelona and then was persuaded reluctantly to go to Moscow with other high profile CNT leaders in October 1936. This marked a trend in the CNT towards collaboration with the communists in government, they needed the Soviet military aid. Durruti was uninterested in the trip and only addressed the workers of the Soviet Union as opposed to the leaders.⁵⁰ When Durruti returned, the CNT joined the Popular Front government on November 4th against his wishes. Durruti went to Madrid to aid in its defense against the Fascist and was shot and killed on November 20th, 1936.⁵¹ Durruti was in essence, the Spanish Makhno, organized a volunteer-based militia, urged the peasants to take the revolution into their own hands, was skeptical of Soviet Communists, and urged for total and immediate anarchist revolution.

Catalonia

What Orwell and Durruti fought for on the front line were not only the theory of a classless society, but a real one, Catalonia, in particular, Barcelona. The Catalan CNT controlled Catalonia starting July 20th, 1936.⁵² Orwell in December 1936 (five months after the coup) describes Barcelona in full social revolution. Servile language was eliminated, no one said “señor,” instead using “comrade.” Working overalls and militia uniforms were the clothing seen instead of suits. Orwell saw no unemployment or beggars. Barbers were exposing anarchist politics and churches were being destroyed. Women were also serving in the militias.⁵³ Several industries, such as the railroad, metal working, and clothing were taken over by the workers. The firms in these industries would then be collectivized and run by worker committees. The CNT had to ensure that the cities would remain operational and provide goods such as milk and bread, as Kropotkin wrote in the *Conquest of Bread*.⁵³ The CNT had managed to operate a modern industrialized city without a state, run almost exclusively by worker committees.

⁴⁹ Paz, *Durruti, the People Armed*. 89

Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*. xii

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 268–275

⁵¹ *Ibid.* 283, 302–305

⁵² Frank Mintz, Paul Sharkey, and Chris Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*, 63

⁵³ Mintz, Sharkey, and Ealham, *Anarchism and Workers' Self-Management in Revolutionary Spain*. 63–71, 143

Betrayal

The CNT not only shared similar ideological origins, armed forces organization, and societal changes, but also their downfall. The CNT had not joined the Popular Front government, but in the face of fascism, allowed for the Stalinist factions of the Republican government to outmaneuver them. They had also intertwined their militias into the Popular Army. In the face of obvious counter revolutionaries, the fascists, the CNT had allowed for their communist counterparts to set the stage to take control. Street clashes began between the PSUC and CNT-FAI in the streets of Barcelona. When the POUM was outlawed for being “Trotskyist”, the CNT failed to realize the situation, believing it to be a Marxist dispute. In reality the Stalinists were consolidating power and knocking out dissident parties. In May 1937 the PCE, trained by the NKVD (People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, the USSR state police)⁵⁴, began spreading propaganda against the CNT and Assault Guards began storming CNT committees.⁵⁵ The continued fighting in the streets of Catalonia decapitated the CNT leadership and led to pessimism as the CNT could not decide to collaborate or struggle against the Stalinists in vain.

The internal strife came just as the Nationalists began to crack Republican defenses and defeatism spread. The anarchist society was well over by the time the Nationalists seized Barcelona in January 1939 and Madrid in April.

⁵⁴ The predecessors of the KGB

⁵⁵ Durgan, *The Spanish Civil War*. 87–94

Conclusion

When one reads the *Communist Manifesto*, there is a conscious or unconscious recognition that the words written by Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels had become reality. The shadow of the Soviet Union ensures that the legacy of a particular brand of communism dominates the understanding of “far-left” history. Still, the discussion of the nature of the Soviet Union as a “true” communist society is contentious. This is in part due to things such as the evolution of Marxist-Leninism in the Soviet Union. Conversely, when one reads *The Conquest of Bread*, one is given a description and prediction of an anarchist society that did occur, twice. There should be no debate on the legitimacy of the Ukrainian and Catalonian anarchist polities, because they were of the same ideological origins and enacted similar social revolution, military structure, and redistribution of means of production.

These stories of revolutions are obscure, in two overlooked countries during an often-overlooked time. The anarchists of the interwar period reached their zenith as the First World War ended abruptly and just before Europe was hurled into the Second World War. This means that the anarchists and their accomplishments were and are overshadowed by both the Soviet communists and of their situation in period history. What was overshadowed was an unprecedented display of mass movements that did away with the concept of a state based society, having social revolutions at the same time, and mobilizing to defend what they had created.

The Spanish and Ukrainian anarchists had the same political lineage, manifesting in similar approaches to society. Joseph Proudhon was the first anarchist. Mikhail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin then developed what would be the principles of the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists, taking interest in Spain when the communists did not think revolutionary enthusiasm was feasible. Kropotkin wrote *The Conquest of Bread*, coherently establishing what was anarchism, which coherently spelled out anarchist ideology, and inspiring the Ukrainians like Peter Arshinov, who would teach Nestor Makhno on the political philosopher’s theories, and the CNT-FAI’s future endeavors. Makhno sought out Kropotkin in Moscow, seeking guidance on his revolution, and Buenaventura Durruti sought to meet Makhno in turn. Makhno also wrote on the ongoing Spanish revolutionary activity until his death, while Durruti played a pivotal role in organizing the CNT-FAI and the opening stages of the Spanish Civil War. These personal interactions, where the respective figures conversed on the nature of anarchist revolution, display the interconnected nature of the two anarchist revolutions.

In addition to the similar origins, military structure, and societal organization, the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists had the same conclusion. In both Ukraine during the Russian Revolution and Spain during the Republican era, counter revolutionary forces rose in reaction to regime change. In both Ukraine and Spain, the anarchists chose to cooperate with the Soviet and Soviet backed communists, wagering that the counter revolutionary forces were more intolerable. In both cases the Soviets would turn on the anarchists and end their societies through military crackdowns. At every stage of the anarchist political lineage, the anarchist and communist were

ardently opposed to each other. This was due to the unwavering anarchist cause to create a stateless society and the communist state centric revolution. The communists also became increasingly pragmatic in ideology, from Marxism, to Marxist-Leninism and finally Stalinism, this materialized as ever-increasing hostility between the two camps as time went on. Proudhon and Marx were the respective founders of modern anarchism and communism and wrote in opposition to each other's ideology, Marx attacking Proudhon's work directly. Bakunin and Marx struggled against each other in the First International, solidifying the rift between the two ideologies. Makhno met with Lenin and gained a temporary alliance, although the difference in opinion was evident. Their forces would clash soon after the common threat was defeated. In Spain, the Spanish communist did not even wait for clear military gains over the Nationalists before attacking the CNT. The interpretations of the failures of 1848 had led to two descendants of the revolutions to wage ideological warfare.

In 1939, the Soviets had succeeded in retaining control in Ukraine, and the Nationalists controlled Spain. In terms of stateless societies, no Kropotkin-esque polity existed after Revolutionary Catalonia. The CNT was forced underground after Nationalist victory in 1939 and re-emerged after Franco's death in 1975 during the transition to democracy in Spain. The CNT is still active today, although they are a shadow of their former selves. They mostly engage in extra-legal negotiations, based on their interpretation of what is fair, irrespective of laws.¹ They certainly do not have militant columns anymore.

Appropriation

The images of the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists have a legacy that has outlived their revolutions. The CNT-FAI banner is a recognizable image that displays solidarity with the ideals of the union and movement. The legacy of Makhno's imagery is much more roundabout. The Soviet Union was quick to discredit Makhno and his army as a group of bandits and brigands.

The Soviets described Makhno as a Ukrainian separatist and anti-Semite. Interestingly enough, this has made Makhno a nationalist hero to certain elements of current day far-right Ukrainians, who are receptive to an interpretation of anti-communism as general anti-left-wing politics. This has led to the rather odd phenomenon of right-wing militants flying Makhno imagery and banners (including the red and black banner) at parades.²

Elsewhere

Anarchism in the United States was heavily repressed. The Haymarket Riots and assassination of President McKinley were the most notable occurrences. The American anarchists were of multiple types, including notably anarcho-pacifists. This disparity was not conducive to productivity, although it is in anarchist nature to not compromise. The United States anarchists suffered from the Red Scare, ironic as they were just as much anti-communist as the reactionaries. The persecution of anarchists in the U.S. includes the famous execution of Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo

¹ "What's CNT?" n.d., accessed October 26, 2020, www.cnt.es.

² Denys Gorbach, "Anarchism in Makhno's Homeland: Adventures of the Red-and-Black Flag," n.d., accessed October 26, 2020, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/anarchism-in-makhnos-homeland-adventures-of-red-and-black-flag/>. (accessed 10/26/2020)

Vanzetti, although racial motivations played apart. A long-time struggle for the anarchists in the United States was the eight-hour workday, although several anti-radical labor unions were pushing for it as well. The eight-hour workday is generally associated with Theodore Roosevelt and the Progressive Era, finally becoming law in 1937 under Franklin Roosevelt's tenure as president.³ The presences of such anti-radical progressives may have been the reason for a lack of a suitable moment for American anarchists, although they were never as organized, cohesive, or militant as their counterparts in Ukraine or Spain.⁴

Anarchism in Italy was significantly more militant than the Americans. This was because of the economic hardship faced by the Italian peasantry in the 1870's. Inflation and government deficit led to increased food prices and taxes. Bakunin was active in forming the Italian wing of the International, this allowed for discourse to ferment. The type of anarcho-communism that developed in Italy was similar to that which Kropotkin would popularize in *The Conquest of Bread*. In the late 1800's Florence, a revolt was crushed and in Naples, guerillas camped in the mountains. The failure of the Italian anarchists was in their reluctance to attempt to capture a city, believing the countryside to be more revolutionary.¹⁶⁴ Kropotkin would deem it necessary for both rural and urban communes to cooperate for revolution. The success of the Makhnovist and CNT war effort was both the urban and countryside support. Italian anarchism would be repressed heavily until the Second World War.

France was a hotbed of anarchism. It is where Makhno and Arshinov lived in exile. Durruti's adventure in the Pyrenees was another example of the activity in France. France was mainly anarcho-syndicalism, compared to the anarcho-communism of the Italians. Although France's Popular Front government refused to support the Spanish Republic, the Pyrenees were a connection in which anarchists moved to and from the Spanish Civil War. Equipment and men moved into Spain from France to support the CNT, and when the communist crackdown occurred, the reverse occurred, such as Orwell fleeing to France.

From 1929–1931 there was an anarchist federation operating in Manchuria, known as the Korean People's Association in Manchuria. The polity was made up of Korean immigrants (a disenfranchised minority) and had sufficient resources and military forces to operate a classless society. ¹⁶⁵ There are similarities to the Spanish and Ukrainian anarchists at a glance, such as their conflict between the Kuomintang (Stalinist)⁵ and Japanese,⁶ and the leader of the Korean anarchists, Kim Jwa-Jin (1889–1930), being described as the "Korean Makhno."⁷ Unfortunately, there is little scholarship on this anarchist federation, and even less in the English language. This seems to be a retrospective analysis of the individual, however the possibility of an inspirational connection coming from Makhno or Kropotkin is exciting. Regardless, from what information is available, the Korean anarchist federation was a similar society to the Ukrainian and Spanish anarchists, independently conceived or not. This could be a fruitful expansion of the comparison of interwar anarchist polities.

³ As noted earlier, the CNT strikes in 1919 led to the legalization of the eight hour work day.

⁴ Charles A. Madison, "Anarchism in the United States." *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1945, pp. 46–66. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2707055. Accessed 11 Dec. 2020.

⁵ The describes the Kuomintang (KMT) as Stalinist, which is debatable. The KMT was supported by Stalin, however it may be better to describe the organization as Leninist in structure.

⁶ The parallel being drawn here is the KMT taking the place of the soviets in relation to the Ukrainian and Spanish, and the Japanese taking the place of the Nationalist Spanish and White movement.

⁷ www.youtube.com

The Ukrainian and Spanish revolutions are different from the rest of anarchist study, these anarchists realized they were accomplishing something that was thus far unsuccessful.

Peter Arshinov remarks that

The majority of Russian anarchists who had passed through the theoretical school of anarchism remained in their isolated circles, which were of no use to anyone. They stood aside, asking what kind of a movement this was, why they should relate to it, and without moving they consoled themselves with the thought that the movement did not seem to be purely anarchist.⁸

Peter Arshinov was expressing disdain for what he perceived to be rather ineffective anarchist circles that accomplished little besides debating various expressions of anarchism. He knew that he was part of an anarchist movement that was unlike any other, successful, and tangible. This is why Durruti was particularly attentive to Makhno and sought him out; he wanted to know how to make the theory of anarchism a reality in Spain. The Free Territory and Revolutionary Catalonia had completed full social revolutions, they were the proof of concept.

Legacy

George Orwell may have had the most impact out of the characters in this story. Although technically fighting for the independent communists, by his own admittance, “As far as my purely personal preferences went, I would have liked to join the Anarchists.”⁹ Orwell was purged due to his P.O.U.M. membership by the Stalinist factions and had to flee Catalonia, leading to a lifetime and scholarship dedicated to anti-authoritarianism. His works *Animal Farm* and *1984*, were inspired by his experience in Spain. *Animal Farm* was an allegory directed at Stalinist Communism and *1984* a dystopia based on a secretive one-party state. His works have instructed generations to be wary of those who will use the state to dominate personal freedom, the cornerstone of anarchist philosophy.

Another popular cultural reference is the song *Spanish Bombs* by the Clash. Joe Strummer thought that the Basque bombings and the Troubles in Ireland were similar to the violence of 1930’s Spain. He began to learn more about the Spanish Civil War and resonated with the tales of a three-sided struggle between socialism, anarchism, and fascism.¹⁰ The song compares the Spanish Civil War with the Basque insurgency. There are several references to the anarchists as well,

Spanish weeks in my disco casino
The freedom fighters died upon the hill
They sang the red flag
They wore the black one
But after they died it was Mockingbird Hill¹¹

⁸ P. Arshinov, *History of the Makhnovist Movement, (1918–1921)* (London: Freedom Press, 1987). Chapter 12

⁹ George Orwell and Lionel Trilling, *Homage to Catalonia*. 116

¹⁰ Martin Popoff, *The Clash: All the Albums, All the Songs* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Voyageur Press, 2018). 92–93

¹¹ The Clash, *London Calling* (CBS, 1979).

Strummer and Mick Jones passionately sing of the red and the black flags, the banner of the anarchists. The music of the track is mournful, longing and sounding as if Strummer wished he could be back in the time. Strummer compares the “trenches full of poets” of the Spanish Civil War with plane loads of British tourists visiting Spain. His tone seems to indicate that the war was a better expression of art and freedom.

The hillsides ring with “Free the people”
Or can I hear the echo from the days of '39?¹²

Lyrics like this embody a sentiment that is felt towards the Spanish Civil War, of Spain being a battleground of expression. This pathological pull was present in several works set in the Spanish Civil War.

Ernest Hemmingway (1899–1961) was involved in the Spanish Civil War as a reporter. His novel *For Whom The Bell Tolls* is a work of fiction, based on an American in a Republican guerilla unit. The themes of camaraderie and the connectedness of humans are found throughout the novel.¹³ To put this sentiment into perspective, the First World War’s trenches are remembered primarily as filthy, miserable holes where a generation went to die for morally ambiguous politics. This compared to the “trenches full of poets” and the themes of *Homage to Catalonia* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* could not be a starker image. The Spanish Civil War was unique in its admiration.

This perspective is a clue as to why the anarchist uprisings are significant. People read *Homage to Catalonia* and hear *Spanish Bombs* and think fondly of the conflict. Part of this is the adventure aspect of the foreign volunteers flooding into Spain, fighting for a cause bigger than a single nation, but another must be the excitement for the ideology of the revolutions.

The endearing legacy of this argument is that this idea was popular enough that it was attempted twice, on two separate sides of Europe. These anarchists read the *Conquest of Bread* and completed the expectation of Kropotkin that the revolution was on the horizon. Several times, this paper has touched on the idea of the moment, that a part of what makes these two revolutions special was the mass mobilization of those who believed in something, something new and something worth fighting to the end over. Something that was worth trying again, in another country a decade later.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ernest Hemingway, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, 1st Scribner classic/Collier ed., A Scribner classic (New York: Collier Books, 1987).

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