

# **Why We Lost the War**

**A Contribution to the History of the Spanish Tragedy**

Diego Abad de Santillán

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# The war in Spain, 1936–1939—The basic reasons for its outcome—Preaching in the desert—The judgment of Solomon

This is the first time that we have been defeated in the long struggle for the economic and social progress of Spain as a modern revolutionary movement; in order to find another comparable defeat on this scale we have to go back to the battlefields of Villalar in the first third of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Just like the Phoenix who rises from his ashes, we have always rebounded from all our disasters, overcoming terribly dramatic moments of political and religious inquisition, leaving shreds of bleeding flesh in the claws of the enemy. Hunger and persecution, jail and prison, torture and assassination, nothing could humble us, nothing could defeat us. Those who fell in battle were immediately replaced by new combatants. One generation followed another in a merciless struggle in which the best, the most generous and the most intelligent representatives of the Spanish people died with a smile on their lips, defying the powers of ignorance and slavery, trusting in the triumph of justice. This time, however, we feel defeated. Defeated! For whom, for what kind of men, for what race, for what people, does this word “defeated” have the meaning that it has for us? Happy are those who died in the struggle, because they did not have to suffer a fate that is a thousand times worse than death: a real defeat, a definitive defeat for our generation!

Our generation pledged its blood to the triumph of a great cause and has been entangled for posterity in a net of complicities that we would like to clarify so that we will be judged for our merits or our defects, for our correct actions or our mistakes, but in all events as a historic Spanish force with the same resolve and the same fortitude as the Spanish people who fought against the Roman invasion, against the absolutism of the Habsburgs in the unforgettable feats of the *comuneros* and the brotherhoods, against Napoleon’s hosts under the command of the invincible General *No Importa* [“It Doesn’t Matter”—a favorite expression of Napoleon’s], and against absolutist and anti-Spanish Bourbonism from Philip V to Alfonso XIII.

Say what you will of us.<sup>1</sup> Say that we are pessimists. We are motivated by the intention of being sincere, of expressing our feelings, of giving faithful testimony concerning what we have done and what we have seen, and we think it is important to make it known that, betrayed, defeated and deceived, we failed, at the side of the Spanish people, on our own terms, without having either stricken or besmirched our flag. A sinister legend has been woven around us. Politicians on the left and on the right compete in bringing fuel to the fire of all the fantasies that have been imputed to us, and it is even possible that the left is worse in this regard than the right. Our organizations were originally formed and subsequently grew under clandestine conditions,

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<sup>1</sup> Note to the reader: the author uses the first person plural throughout this entire book, with a few exceptions, to refer to himself, his texts and his actions. I have retained this usage in this translation. The reader must discern from the context, however, when Santillán is talking about himself, and when he is talking about his close circle of friends, or the FAI, or the “libertarian movement”, or even the Spanish people (Translator’s note).

because they were not allowed a public existence, and this prevented us from addressing and responding to our traducers, because doing so would have been tantamount to informing on ourselves. The literature of the monarchy is replete with alleged discoveries of our relations with the republicans; the literature of the republicans speaks insidiously of our relations with the monarchists. In addition to the old more or less terrifying legend, we now have the new legend and they want to turn us into scapegoats to console those who agree with them, despite all the apparent differences, in order to reconstruct false virginities at our expense.

The vast literature published in foreign countries about our war and revolution is plagued with inaccuracies and malice, and paints a picture of us that borders on the ridiculous when not on the despicable, among the writers who supported the Republic as well as among those who supported Franco. There are some very honorable exceptions, but they are too few. It is almost a duty, after all the outrages that have been publicly attributed to the men of the Iberian Anarchist Federation, before and after July 1936, for the average citizen to attribute every defect to us and blame us for every misfortune. The military phase of the tragedy of Spain has concluded, the F.A.I. is no more. Isn't it high time, now that we have been defeated, for someone who held high-level positions and performed functions of the greatest responsibility in that organization, both before and after the war, to open the curtain a little and tell the truth?

We do not want to defend ourselves, because, despite all the slanders that have come to our attention from even a brief glance at a small sample of the literature about our war, we do not feel that we are the ones who are on trial. On many occasions in the past, we called attention to our own deficiencies and mistakes, whether personal or factional. Silence, however, when those who have plenty of reasons to keep quiet are doing all the talking, and when those few survivors who are in a position to shed some light on these questions are saying nothing, is in our view culpable.<sup>2</sup>

These pages are intended to serve as a contribution to the history of, and an homage to, the Spanish people, the only eternal value, worthy and pure, which must re-emerge despite the defeat, even if it takes years and years of martyrdom, unprecedented even in a country where martyrs are so abundant and come in so many varieties, when none of us who offered our tribute of labor and life to the great liberation movement of 1936–1939 are still standing. From the catastrophe we have suffered, we have only salvaged within ourselves our faith in the resurrection of Spain, by virtue of the same spirit and the same longing that inspired us and that inspired our ancestors for centuries. Governments, despotic regimes, tyrannies, and political systems based on privilege come and go, but a people like ours, which has not yet disappeared, is of such a unique vitality that it has been able to resist the attacks of those who have always sought to distort the meaning and direction of its history. In this resurrection it is very likely that the old parties and organizations will not survive at all; other men and other names will take up the positions on the battlefield that

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<sup>2</sup> Not to mention other works, we sincerely ask ourselves just what kind of opinion can be formed by the English readers of the Duchess of Atholl's book, *Searchlight on Spain* (Katharine Marjory Stewart-Murray, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 364 p.), with a print run of hundreds of thousands of copies, which was written for the most part on the basis of information obtained from the communists and from the Negrín Government's pro-communist staff members. The book often refers to us, but whereas the author had interviewed the leading figures of every party, she did not think it was necessary to get any first-hand information concerning our conduct and our aspirations. [This footnote and all the following footnotes are the author's, unless otherwise indicated—Translator's supplemental note.]

we have left vacant with our defeat and they will revive, with greater power and more experience, the project that was drowned in rivers of blood and terror during our generation.

If the military uprising of the generals triggered a major war, this was entirely due to our violent intervention. The Republic did not know how to defend itself, nor was it even capable of defending itself, against the attack; we were the ones who, in defense of the people, made the survival of the Republic, and organizing for the war, possible. And we were not, nor were we ever, republicans. Just like the war for independence, which brought the despicable Bourbons back to the Spanish Throne, the restoration of the Republic was not our goal; our goal was instead to recover the historical rhythm of our poor country, so we crushed the military revolt across a huge expanse of the Peninsula; our goal was not the consolidation of a Republic that did not deserve to live, either, but the defense of a great people, who returned to claim their rightful place and wanted to take the reins of their fate in their own hands. Has the Republic paid us back the way Ferdinand VII repaid those who restored him to his throne with his cowardly surrender to Napoleon? Even in this respect we see our identification with the cause of the real Spain verified.

If we were to have remained idle in July 1936, if we had obeyed the directives of the republican government, the idiotic recommendations of someone like Casares Quiroga, the Minister of War, we would have handed ourselves over to the execution squads, along with the republican and socialist leaders of every variety, but the war would not have been possible, because the Republic did not have the forces to defend itself, and the military, clerical and monarchist revolt would have been totally successful throughout Spain and its colonies.

In this account we shall review three of the basic reasons for the anti-popular and anti-Spanish course taken by our war, from which all the other secondary causes of our defeat are derived, and we shall attempt to discover what practical measures we should have taken to avoid the tragedy that unfolded on such a vast scale.

The republican idiocy embodied, in the governmental spheres of Madrid, the same lack of understanding exhibited by the Habsburg and Bourbon monarchies in the face of the realities of popular sentiment and legitimate regionalist interests, like that of Catalonia, against whose violent social initiatives the entire apparatus of the central State was mobilized, until the immense possibilities of this region were decimated and it was handed over, broken and embittered, to fascism. Catalonia could have won the war on its own, during the first few months, with a little help from the Madrid government, but the latter was always more afraid that Spain might escape the prescriptions of a scrap of paper called the constitution and experiment with new political and economic projects, than it was afraid of the total victory of the enemy.

The policy of non-intervention, proposed and implemented by the socialist-republican government of France from the very first moments of the war, and then supported by England, became the best weapon for suffocating us, while the enemy was openly supplied with the men and the war materiel that were needed to ensure victory. This sinister farce of non-intervention, in which the unlamented League of Nations finally expired, was certainly effective in mercilessly sacrificing us, but it was not capable of preventing France and England, the main proponents of that bloody joke, from having to pay the consequences in the current war, with millions of their sons and the sacrifice of all their economic and financial reserves.

Just as disastrous as non-intervention for so-called Loyalist Spain was Russian intervention, which began a few months after the outbreak of hostilities; Russia promised to sell us war materiel and, despite the fact that we paid for it in advance with gold, whether or not it was actually delivered to our ports depended on whether or not we abided by the condition that this alleged

aid would also be paid for by our complete submission to Russia's orders with regard to military affairs, domestic policies, and international diplomacy, so that republican Spain was turned into a kind of Soviet colony. Russian intervention, which, from the point of view of the materiel it provided—in paltry amounts, of dismal quality, arbitrarily distributed, giving irritating preference to the toadies of Russia—did not solve a single crucial problem, corrupted the republican bureaucracy, starting with the highest levels of the government, seized control of the army, and so completely demoralized the population that the latter eventually lost all interest in the war, a war that had been started by the incontrovertible decision of the only legitimate, sovereign power: popular sovereignty.

These three causes stood out in high relief from the very first moments of the war; we immediately recognized them and fought to overcome them; we fought to overcome the lack of understanding of Catalanian affairs by the men who held power in Madrid; we called for an honorable decision against the farce of non-intervention; we appealed for defensive actions against the usurpations of the Russians, but achieved nothing but hostility and isolation. We stood alone as we were systematically isolated from any direct role in the war, after having been its first combatants; but we are proud to feel that we are free of any personal and organizational responsibility for the catastrophe and for the policy that led us to disaster, and we cannot accuse ourselves of having refrained from expressing our views for even one single moment. And now, in exile, we who survived the great shipwreck are saying almost exactly the same things we said then, when we tried to remedy the evils we denounced, and not only by way of publications, magazines, books, and pamphlets, but directly, by entering the government itself and its institutions.

In August 1937 the situation was clear, and we could no longer allow ourselves to be deceived. The Prieto-Negrín government, a creature of the Russians, manufactured in order to respond to Russia's commercial and diplomatic interests, rather than to the interests of Spain, traced, with its military, diplomatic and domestic policies, the course that led us to the pointless sacrifice of our great people. We could not remain silent, so we wrote a polemical tract, *The Revolution and the War in Spain: Preliminary Historical Notes*, a small volume that even proved worthy of the honors of *autos da fé*. A relentless war has been waged against this book, from which only a few fragments have appeared in the working class press of various countries, and some unauthorized editions have also been published. The book was denounced, yet widely read, but as for us, we are not interested in finding explanations for all this hatred, despite the fact that the same accusations have been reiterated in other publications, and always more insistently. Why were we not arrested and put on trial? It is true that, as for the contents of that desperate call to return to the right track, very few rectifications of minor details were possible. We were expecting to be put on trial so that we could speak even more openly, since, after all, we were not unaware of the fact that we were at war and that it would not be advantageous to give aid and comfort to the enemy; in a trial, we would have been able to say out loud what we had previously kept to ourselves. No charges were brought against us, despite the fact that we did not hold any official positions and that we did not even spare the leaders of our own organizations from our critical barbs. A few generous voices dared to call for our heads in the press, parroting what was being demanded in the conclaves of the worshippers of Muscovitism. But that was all.

In the introduction to our book, we said the following:

This is not a history, it is not a chronicle of the events of the revolution and the anti-fascist war; it is an internal analysis, a kind of examination of our conscience,

now that we have arrived at a fork in the road and have taken advantage of this moment of respite. Nonetheless, we believe that these pages can be a contribution to history and that some of the reflections and interpretations that the events we have experienced suggest to us might be able to be of service to the movement for freedom in the world.

Right now, the offensive of international fascism in Spain is gaining momentum and the maneuvers of European diplomacy—English, French and Russian, on the one side, and German and Italian, on the other—are accelerating to strangle our movement. It is necessary to reflect upon all of this and to choose, with open eyes and a calm state of mind, the right road to take. The world proletariat is committing suicide with its passivity towards our war and the treasonous democracies are digging their own graves with their irresolution and cowardice in the face of the fascist powers.

We can no longer be responsible, as we were up until now, for the future of Spain, nor can we offer our own blood with the same generous spirit that we did in the past. The sinister game is unmasked and the Spanish people are being led to catastrophe. We do not know whether or not it is still in our power to prevent the collapse of the illusions that arose all over the world with regard to our war and our revolution. It is true that we still have some cards to play, and our friends will know how to play them with resolution and for the right stakes; but the present outlook is not the same as it was several months ago, and if we were to remain silent, we would become accomplices of the crime that is in the making and in which we have played no part at all.

The following pages will serve to clarify, for our friends and comrades in various countries, a few aspects of our efforts, and also to indicate, for those who do not have a clear view of the situation, the obstacles that surround us on all sides. Silence would be conceivable for us only if we were members of a party or an organization; but the destiny of Spain, and the future of humanity, is at stake, for many years and perhaps for centuries. And the right to speak out becomes, under these circumstances, a duty.

Too much of the blood of our brothers and sisters has been shed since July 19 to consent, with our hands in our pockets, to allow the infamy that is being prepared to come to a good end. Many positions have been lost in our war and almost all the positions we conquered in our revolution have also been lost. If we resign ourselves and do not react in time, we will return to worse conditions than those that prevailed before the epic events of July; whoever is capable of tolerating this, of accepting it with equanimity, is worthy of nothing but the chains of every kind of slavery.

Amidst the betrayal that surrounds us on every side, it is necessary for the Spanish people and our friends from all over the world to know the fate that lies in store for us, and our position and our attitude in the face of this dark prospect....

That is what we wrote, on September 1, when Franco's offensive against Northern Spain began, before the fall of Bilbao, in the hope of inspiring a movement in favor of a political transformation that would emancipate us from the tutelage of Moscow, so fatal for our war effort, without having achieved anything but an even more blind, more unconditional affirmation of the Russian myth on the part of the leaders of our government and of the parties of the so-called anti-fascist alliance.



The book we wrote in September 1937 will be re-conceived in this volume. Now we can give it a new title: *Why We Lost the War*. In 1940 we must speak in retrospect and, therefore, the title cannot be anything but *Why We Lost the War*. We shall merely add some new arguments and call attention to some aspects that, in the book's first edition, could not yet be publicly disclosed.

During the Spanish war, we were often reminded of one of the famous rulings of Solomon: Who is not familiar with it? Two women were involved in a dispute over which of them was the mother of a child. Solomon placidly listened to both of their testimonies and proposed to cut the child into two equal parts and give one part to each woman. One agreed to the sacrifice of the creature that was the cause of the dispute, while the other implored Solomon to allow her to withdraw her petition, preferring that the child should live, even in the hands of a stranger. Because of this woman's plea, Solomon recognized the child's true mother and gave the child to her.

The object of our dispute was Spain, as in other periods of our history. On the one side we found ourselves under the flag of a Republic with which we had nothing in common, alongside men and parties that were just as much our enemies as those on the other side of the trenches. And we said so as straightforwardly as possible, loudly and clearly, and in our writings, at every opportunity: For us, the social vanguard of Spain, the result would be the same if Negrín were to be victorious with his communist cohorts, or if Franco were to be victorious, with his Italians and Germans. Why did we go to war? Why did we fight?

This state of mind was no longer a matter of personal opinion, but was characteristic of vast masses of people, and of the best combatants from the very first moment of the war. The war lacked any progressive social goal. Did we fight the war to restore the conditions of existence that prevailed before July 19, or even worse ones? Or did we go to war because we did not see that the final result of the contest, if either side were to be victorious, would be our extermination as individuals and as a movement?

Nonetheless, if we look at the question from a vantage point situated above partisan interests, individual or factional aspirations, the loser in the war would have to be Spain, whose economy would be destroyed, along with millions of its inhabitants, killed in the prime of life and of labor, with ruins everywhere, and with a seed of hatred planted in the blood of its people that would poison everyone for many generations, in a state of political and economic servitude.

Convinced that we were right and of the nobility of the cause to which we devoted the best years of our lives, conscious that only with the solution that we advocated for the problems of Spain could our people have a better future, one that would be worthy of their past and their spirit, and seeing the defeat of Spain at the hands of both sides: why did we not possess the heroic valor to yield, as the true mother yielded in the judgment of Solomon?

The continuation of the war was at most an act of cowardice, not an act of courage or valor.<sup>3</sup> They fought because they were afraid of reprisals, not because they had the least doubt, among those who had no right to lose their heads, concerning the disastrous end of the war for the so-called republican sector. There is no doubt that the victors on Franco's side would not have inflicted such extreme repression if the hostilities were to have ended much sooner. Furthermore, are the individual fears of a larger or smaller number of people a good enough reason to sacrifice

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<sup>3</sup> We said this with reference to most people, but not everyone. One of the sources of the policy of resistance was due to the utter incapacity of the Government of the Republic to render accounts of its financial status, as we shall see below.

Spain? The most heroic and self-sacrificing act would have consisted in yielding, even though we were in the right. But the environment skillfully created by government propaganda and by the acts of terror made it impossible for such ideas to penetrate beyond the intimate circle of a few friends, perhaps those who had given the most to the cause of the revolution and the war.

Our repeated attempts to bring about a change in the government, to provoke a crisis and to compel a sober review of the real situation, in the economic, financial, and military fields, etc., failed on every occasion. The policy that we were at first openly advocating became increasingly more clandestine and individual. We knew nothing about the particular details, although we grasped the general trend. The mission of the government whose formation we sought would be to inspire a little faith in the people, put an end to abuses and extra-judicial terror, liquidate the Russian dominance in the army, examine the financial situation and enforce the necessary sanctions on those who were most responsible for the widespread embezzlement and waste; such were our recommendations with respect to domestic policy; in the domain of foreign policy, we wanted to present an ultimatum to the so-called democratic powers, calling on them to make a definitive declaration, without beating around the bush, concerning their support for Spain and the crime of unilateral non-intervention. If France and Britain would not commit to providing effective aid, then the war would be liquidated. The question of how to end the war would still remain, but the continued prosecution of the massacre with its attendant destruction was an unforgivable crime, which could only benefit the enemies of our people and of their future.

And that is what we thought, we who were the only ones who could not be accused of avoiding the sacrifices of the struggle or of having evaded them in the past.

# **History of the revolution in Spain—Political centralism—The working class organizations—The First Republic surrenders to the Monarchy—The Second Republic and its ineffectiveness**

Spain still lives, we have witnessed one of the epic sagas of its vitality, and for that reason alone we have faith in its future. For close to four centuries every imaginable method was tried to destroy the sources of its existence, and our history, starting with national unification under the Catholic Monarchs, is a martyrology of liberty rarely interrupted by brief periods of resurrection, popular action, and reconstruction of the old tolerant and generous Iberian home. No other nation, no other people, would have been able to endure, without succumbing, what Spain endured in the centuries-long struggle between the two mentalities, the two irreconcilable compass points of its development: revolution and reaction, progress and obscurantism. Are there two Spains, two Spanish races, that cannot coexist on one Peninsula?

These two Spains cannot be identified with today's fashionable terminology of left and right, liberal and conservative; we have often seen the same contradictions in both extremes, the same internal repulsions, and the most contrary aspirations. The Spanish civil war has very deep roots, and there were many occasions when one could perhaps note a closer affinity between what might at first glance seem to be irreconcilable elements than among those who are in one or another of the opposed camps. Are we not still suffering from the incompatibility of the bloodlines and the mentality that entered Spain via the Pyrenees, in contrast to our African heritage, with respect to blood and soul? Are we not still performing as unconscious actors in a historical, geographical, political and cultural contest between two worlds that have not been able to merge into a national synthesis? Do we not need a crucible that would merge us and unite us or an analysis that would separate us and define us, in order to some day, some time, achieve the perfect mixture? When Freemasonry organized in Europe, it entered Spain via the Pyrenees and infiltrated its adepts and its organization into our territory, and even the reflections of its internal rivalries, with its Scottish rite and its reformed rite. In opposition to these ideologies and imported forms of secret organization, the Confederation of the *comuneros* was constituted, the Sons of Padilla, a national organization, influenced by its time, but formed as a reaction against the exoticism of the imported rites. Freemasons and *comuneros* fought for a new Spain of justice and liberty, but their incompatibility was insuperable. Was it merely a question of rivalry, or was it the product of the two Spains to which we have referred?

Of all the great currents of modern social thought that have been represented in our country, one has remained ideologically bound to Europe—Marxism, communism—and the other, the lib-

ertarian tendency, has developed as a profoundly national force, much more so than it would have wanted to admit before July 19, 1936. The contradiction between these two manifestations of socialism is complete, and their fusion is as hard to bring about as that of the forces of reaction and revolution as such. If we advocated a non-aggression pact between these two conflicting branches of socialism, we always did so under the premise that each of them would have to preserve its characteristics and its autonomy. Good concord, but never a merger. Just as there is an incompatibility between the forces that declare their adherence to the cause of progress, so, too, is there an incompatibility between the forces that lay claim to the cause of conservatism, and proclaim, as in 1823, after the invasion of the One Hundred Thousand Sons of San Luis under the command of the Duke of Angoulême, “Long live the chains of slavery, and death to the nation!” And so, too, is there a temperamental kinship between that other kind of Spaniard, the one that fights for his birthplace, for his culture, for the environment in which he was raised, etc., on the other side of the barricades, of the Iberian tradition that, at particular moments, returns to its roots and causes contradictory types to appear in our history, in their conduct and their ideas. Ours is a tragic destiny in this struggle between two worlds, between two legacies that are fighting for survival on our soil: Europe and Africa, a struggle manifested in its instruments and banners by liberals and ultramontanists, constitutionalists and absolutists, republicans and monarchists, phalangists and fascists! The temporary extermination of the losing side has never been able to be thoroughly carried out, because among the victors, sooner or later, Iberianism must once again emerge, like a Trojan Horse, to undermine the European element, and now totalitarian fascism, which will not escape this law, either. Within the ranks of victorious fascism at this very moment, the Spaniard of the defeated side will reemerge and, while on the one hand the Europeanists of the right and those of the left will recognize each other as brothers, those who bear another blood and another spirit, from the most opposite poles, will know how to identify each other to defend the eternal cause of Spanish liberty. From this conflict between the two Spains, from these two historical legacies, a few intellectuals have arisen who have sought to take a position equidistant from the two extremes, such as Martínez de la Rosa, for example, with his Royal Statutes [1834], or Manuel Azaña with the Constitution of 1931, both of whom were condemned in advance to not satisfying either side and to fomenting the civil war whose purpose was to put an end to such fantasies.

The deep-rooted interest of foreign powers in not allowing a real, broad-based resurrection of Spain, due to their fear of its possible economic power and its strategic position, has always contributed to maintaining our decadence, in some cases by means of military intervention—the France of Chateaubriand—and in other cases by the advocacy of non-intervention—the France of Leon Blum. Perhaps this latest European war will bring an end to the primacy of all these powers, democratic or totalitarian, enemies of a Spain that would be the master of its own destiny, and, without their interference in our internal affairs, the Europeanizing influence would cease to divide us, so that Spain would become, if not the beginning of Africa, then at least the natural bridge between the European and the African, more closely connected to the African than to the European, as history, ethnography and geography teach us. We have nothing in common with nationalism, but we are patriots of the Spanish people, and we feel every foreign invasion as a mortal wound, either in the form of military forces or as ideas that are not assimilable by our people. The term traditionalist is applied precisely to those who have the least to do with Spanish tradition, the supporters of imported monarchies, Austrian or Bourbon, and the supporters of Roman Catholicism, while those who uphold the purest and the most glorious Iberian traditions

are presented as anti-Spanish. If there are traditionalists in Spain, we stand in the vanguard of this tradition, and we only see Spanish solutions for our age-old problems, solutions that are as far-removed from Russian communism as they are from Italo-Germanic fascism or spineless French liberalism. This is why we are isolated and this explains our hostility towards the parties and organizations of the so-called left that receive their slogans or their ideologies from bad copies of European models; we were so isolated and they were so hostile towards us that, basically, they treated us as if we were the ones who declared war. Both sides seem to us, as parties and tendencies, foreigners in Spain.<sup>1</sup>

In every Spanish civil war, the belligerent forces were arbitrarily formed, and many who should have come to an agreement regarding their quality as Spaniards, their unquenchable morale, and their ultimately identical aspirations, fought each other to the death. We are very deeply moved, for example, by the respect and affection displayed by Zumalacarregui, a Carlist, towards his enemy Mina, and history preserves testimonials of the admiration shown for General Diego León, an absolutist shot after a failed plot, by his own enemies, those who had condemned him to death. These conflicts have witnessed the involvement of, and indeed the leading roles played by, on both sides, those who had even a minimal connection with the real spiritual Spain, who should have set aside their petty individual interests and lived together in perfect harmony.

Despite the differences that separate us, we see something of this spiritual kinship in José Antonio Primo de Rivera, a combative man, a patriot, in search of solutions for the future of his country. Prior to July 1936 he made various attempts to meet with us. While all the police in the Republic were incapable of discovering the role we played in the F.A.I., Primo de Rivera knew all about us, in his role as the leader of another clandestine organization, the Spanish Falange. At that time, for reasons of time-honored tactical considerations, we did not want to enter into any kind of relations with him. We did not even have the courtesy to acknowledge our receipt of the documents that he sent to us in order to acquaint us with some of his thoughts, assuring us that they could constitute a basis for joint action in favor of Spain. Once the war broke out, he was imprisoned, condemned to death and executed. Argentinian anarchists requested that we intercede to prevent him from being shot. We were incapable of preventing his execution, due to the uncongenial relations between us and the central government, but we thought at the time, and we still think, that the shooting of José Antonio Primo de Rivera was a mistake; Spaniards of that kind, patriots like him, are not dangerous, not even in the ranks of the enemy. They are among those who are loyal to Spain and uphold the cause of Spain even from opposed camps, erroneously chosen as the most suited for their generous aspirations. How the fate of Spain may

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<sup>1</sup> We did, however, encounter examples of real Spaniards among those whom we defeated in the early days of the war, men who knew how to die with the same fortitude displayed by Padilla and Maldonado when they died at the hands of Charles V, or as Riego, Mariana Pineda and Torrijos, when they died at the hands of Ferdinand VII, or as Fermín Galán and García Hernández when they died at the hands of Alfonso XIII: men who fought and died for a cause that they believed was the salvation of Spain. We recognized many of the enemies who were condemned by our Tribunals as real brothers of ours, while we viewed many of those who were on our side, who claimed to support our ideas, with mistrust and repulsion. Such people caused us to call for the repeal of the death penalty only a few months after July 19, and we may have been the only such voices raised above the storm in all of Spain; but we were certain that we were not the only ones to think and to feel that way. What advantage accrued to Spain by killing its best sons on both sides, since on both sides of the barricades they were convinced that they were rallying behind the flag that represented what was best for the well-being and prosperity of the country? See the testimonial we wrote with respect to our opposition to the death penalty and imprisonment in the appendix to the English translation of our book, *After the Revolution* (New York, 1937).

have differed if an agreement between us would have been tactically possible, as Primo de Rivera thought advisable!

There was only one means of coexistence between the two races who eventually populated our territory: mutual tolerance. Tolerance, however, after so many centuries, since the introduction of the Roman Catholic Church and the invasion of the foreign monarchies, is a little-known and inaccessible phenomenon for the Europeanizing party, for the Holy Alliance of the past, and for fascism and communism today. Tolerance and generosity are much more at home in the authentic Spanish temperament. A historian of our 19<sup>th</sup> century has written: "Among us, terrorism is connected to reaction, whereas in other countries it shared this feature with revolution; to tyranny corresponds the privilege of degrading reprisals and atrocities, unworthy of any nation that has not been submerged in the most repugnant barbarism: in Spain, the triumphant moment of liberty has always been an extremely generous amnesty."<sup>2</sup>

When history ceases to be the classical chronicle of kings and tyrants, that is, of the privileged classes, and becomes the history of the people in all their manifestations and sentiments, few countries will offer the wealth of heroism and tenacity that is offered by the Spanish people, from their most remote origins, in their never-ending struggle to free themselves from religious, political and social slavery. The history of Spain can be interpreted as a rebellion that began with the resistance to the Roman invasion by rebels who went beyond the political struggle, like Viriathus, a rebellion that has still not ended even today, because the causes that engendered it still exist.<sup>3</sup>

The names of the parties, the colors of their flags, and the ideological categories have changed; but the racial kinship and the similar essence of the efforts of Viriathus, fighting against the Roman and indigenous nobles, and of Durruti, leading an enthusiastic mass of combatants to liberate Zaragoza from military oppression, is undeniable.

Mainstream historians have always had the preoccupation of casting a veil over the course of history and making it revolve, like a merry-go-round, around the leading representatives of political power, while obscuring and denigrating the memory of those who brandished the banner of freedom against that same power. The truth will out, however, and although separated from us by a vast gulf of time, the defeated rebels of Villalar, for example, are much more glorious and inspirational for the generations that came after them than the memory of their victorious enemies. They symbolized the struggle of the native, of the African, against invasion, on that occasion against the invasion of monarchist absolutism, a concept that was completely unknown in the practical politics of a people who addressed their kings in the familiar fashion and chose them so that they would act justly, and if they did not, then they based their actions on all the doctrines of the right of insurrection and the righteousness of regicide against tyrants.

The heroes of freedom, in every epoch, did not have fawning and ingratiating writings to transmit their memory to the future and, until the advent of modern socialism—disregarding for now the fact that some of its fractions have hated the revolution like sin, according to the expression of the Social Democrat Ebert—every rebellion against ecclesiastical and feudal tyranny was anathematized as a crime that could only be expiated on the gallows.

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<sup>2</sup> A. Fernández de los Ríos, *Estudio histórico de las luchas políticas en la España del siglo XIX* [Historical Study of Political Struggles in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Spain], Vol. I, p. 153, Madrid, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> Jacinto Toryho, *La independencia de España* [The Independence of Spain], Barcelona, 1938.

If we could ever make the real past of our people come alive, it would be the most sympathetic and admired past in the world. What can be said of our generation or of the generations that immediately preceded ours, is nothing but a small sample of what could be said of all the generations that have passed since the most remote times.

We, the Spaniards of our time, have created nothing new, neither those of the right wing nor those of the left, neither the revolutionaries nor the reactionaries: we have only followed a trail that was already blazed by our ancestors and that we reaffirmed so that our children can continue along that same path.

Although centralist domination, always deadly for freedom, was finally imposed in Spain after four centuries of struggles, the struggle for freedom has not ceased for even a single moment. There was no truce between the decentralizing forces of progress and the forces of conservatism and regression, the supporters of centralism. Whenever our people have succeeded, in one circumstance or another, in raising their heads, and turning their aspirations and their instincts into realities, we have seen the essence of the old African Iberianism reestablished, to which the Arabian invasion only added spontaneously constituted local and provincial committees with the popular elements of greater prestige; these committees federated among themselves and then gave rise to the network of a federation of free republics, which then set forth their general policy decisions in the communal *Cortes*. A confederation of republics was, in fact, the force that made war on Napoleon, and a confederation of republics was the force that, throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, fought for freedom against absolutism. It was by way of that same path that we sought to raise the banner of progress and freedom, but on that occasion the centralizing forces—republicans, socialists and communists—split the population and led it astray as much as possible from its natural inclinations. With political centralization—imported from foreign countries by kings of other races and by the Roman Church imposed by those kings—we reaped poverty, collapse, ignorance; with creative freedom, with the federation of diverse regions, we were the light of the world.

All centralism bears within it the germ of fascism, regardless of the name and of the appearances that surround it. This is how Pi y Margall, a disciple of Proudhon, understood it, and this is what made that extraordinary man such a well-respected figure in Spanish political life. The decline of Spain in every respect began with its political and administrative centralization. This was the source of the misfortunes and miseries that have dragged us down, like a ball and chain, during the subsequent centuries. Before the time of the Catholic kings, Spain was the most brilliant focal point of European civilization, and the emporium of world industry. All of this was dried up by centralization. The fields were left fallow; more than forty famous universities in the world of culture were transformed into dens of spiritual obscurantism; the manufacturing centers disappeared and poverty took the place of the old prosperity and the old greatness. Our population was reduced to slightly more than 7 million, where more than 40 million had lived before.

The so-called Arab rule was never a centralizing domination; its liquidation was represented to posterity as a religious question, disregarding the fact that its deep roots and its success in Spain were due to the circumstance that it only signified a reinforcement of the Iberian, Berber spirit itself. It allowed the maximum amount of autonomy to each region and even an admirable religious tolerance in which Christians, Arabs and Jews lived together peacefully and without envy, each practicing their own rites, sometimes even in the same temple, but all of them working together for prosperity and well-being on the same land. Spain was the model and the vanguard of

all countries, which envied its advances, its literature, its science, its industry and its agriculture. All of these factors were ruined in the united monarchist regimes. History teaches us just this, and hence our mistrust of all political centralization and our support for every demand for autonomy and regional independence.

Centralism was the main cause of the demise of the impulse that defeated the military revolt in most of Spain, and without the action and the inspiration of the genius of the people, when military, administrative, political, and propagandistic centralization were imposed by terror and violence, the colossus of July 19 was reduced to the level of an Indalecio Prieto or a Negrín, and at this level nothing else can be expected other than what we got, a shameful and ignominious defeat. Spain does not shine just because of the category of its leadership; if there is anything that is permanently great and worthy of admiration, it is its people. This people, however, by racial instinct, if we may use that term, stands in irreducible opposition to all centralism, and in order for it to assume its rightful place it needs a different apparatus than that of an insensate and incapable central bureaucracy; it needs the traditional federation of regions and provinces and the freedom to exercise its fruitful initiative and its valiant powers of decision.

In no other country have the trade union organizations of the workers been so cruelly persecuted; but nowhere else have they set down such deep roots as in Spain. Nor is there any other country where the workers organizations have fought with such tenacity against the educational system led by the Church and by the State, such as we have in Spain, and this condition of ignorance that is so zealously preserved is responsible for many absurdities and also for many excesses in our past, where we find a people that is passionately devoted to freedom while at the same time worshipping the most disgusting tyrants as idols.

One of the statesmen of the First Republic, Fernando Garrido, in a speech in the *Cortes Constituyentes* in 1869, spoke of a typical episode from the times of Isabel II, but one that is not at all unusual, and is in fact constantly repeated, in every epoch: there was a kind of catacomb in the city of Reus, where, shrouded in mystery, the young workers of that area gathered to learn to read and to write, arithmetic, and other kinds of knowledge. In order to attend their lessons they had to evade the vigilance of the authorities and keep the location of their instructional center a secret, since it was a very serious crime. Education was in the hands of the Church and under its rigorous censorship. And what can you expect from people who proclaim, with Alvarado, that it is better to be wrong with Saint Basil and Saint Augustine than to be right with Descartes and Newton, and who declare that philosophy is “the science of evil”, as it was characterized by an ecclesiastical jurist in Burgos in 1825, García Morante?

The saying of Bravo Murillo has become legendary, when he was presented with a request to legalize the school founded by Cervera, a much-admired popular educator, in Madrid, in order to teach the workers to read and write: “Here we don’t need men who think, but oxen that work”.

Those who have written histories of the medieval guilds, of which the modern syndicalism of Spain is a faithful continuation, although the resurrection of ideologies founded on that natural sense of association of the exploited in France and in other places has made this word popular to characterize their own movements, could only admire the perseverance and the skill that characterize the combative spirit of solidarity of the Spanish worker and peasant in defense of their rights. Despite the efforts made by the Church and the ruling classes of the State to morally and physically enslave them, the workers and peasants were able to organize and to meet together either in public or secretly, facing all the consequences. Representative of this spirit were the rebellions of the peasant farmers of the *Remensa* in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the Brotherhoods of Valencia



and Mallorca in 1519–1522, the *comuneros* in 1521, the Catalanian *nyeros* of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, one of whose last chiefs, Perot Rocaguinarda, appears in the adventures of Don Quijote. And that same work of Cervantes, written in a period of when the fortunes of the anti-popular forces were waxing: is it not replete with references to other, better times, situated in the past, in the golden age of freedom and justice?

Throughout the entire 19<sup>th</sup> century there were dozens of armed insurrections of the workers and peasants who were seeking to reconquer their lost freedom and to establish a regime of social justice. What our contemporaries saw in the deeds of the libertarian movement, was also seen by previous generations in the men of the International, a name they assumed between 1868 and shortly before the end of the century, and in many earlier manifestations of various kinds of desires for a new life, for spiritual renewal and for economic transformation in a progressive sense, that were frustrated but never completely exterminated. And after so many years the combative spirit has never changed. General Pavía, a López Ochoa of another time, said, referring to the battles that he had to fight in Seville against our predecessors, that the internationals fought like lions.

Proletarian revolt was a constant phenomenon in Spain, just as constant as the reaction unleashed by the forces that opposed progress and enlightenment. The Barcelona general strike of 1855, launched to demand the right to freedom of association against the dictatorship of General Zapatero, has been enshrined in the annals of history. Consider the insurrectionary movements of 1902, which astounded the world proletariat because of the sense of discipline, combativeness and organization that the workers of Catalonia, cited as models in all modern social literature, displayed. Consider the rebellion of July 1909 against the infamous slaughter being carried out in Morocco, which was not intended to colonize and conquer that African region, but to justify unmerited promotions in the ranks of a Praetorian army, created by the monarchy to use and misuse as it saw fit. These events provided an excuse for the Catholic Church to destroy the schools created by Ferrer, a 20<sup>th</sup> century Cervera, which threatened to become a great movement of spiritual liberation. Recall the insurrectionary movements of August 1917, in which the working class made the Bourbon monarchy aware of its determination to fight for its emancipation. Recall the endless series of conspiracies during the period of Primo de Rivera, and the bold attacks of the anarchists in Barcelona, in Zaragoza and other places, attacks that, while not leading to victory, at least kept the sacred fire of revolt burning.

The First Republic, which was a republic “more in name than in reality”, according to Salmerón, one of its presidents, was shattered in its battle against social progress, and, not wanting to satisfy the demands of the people and to openly embark on the road of reform, of the return to the sovereignty of the real Spain, it devoted itself to the task of looking all over the world for a king who was qualified for the job of filling a vacant throne. In 1931 as in 1868, the centralists, although they called themselves republicans, made themselves the masters of the situation, and they had more affinities, then as now, with the monarchy or with any other reactionary system than with an openly republican and social, or federative, regime. While the centralists openly conspired, even from their positions in the government, in favor of the monarchy, the International was fought tooth and nail, working class organizations were prohibited and their members were persecuted using procedures that are reminiscent of the formula that prevailed many years later, in attaining similar results: “Aim for the belly!” and “No wounded, no prisoners”.

Our civil wars have almost always been predominantly characterized by social preoccupations. They have not, as in other nations, been wars of an essentially political nature merely in the sense

of individuals, dynasties or classes. They were struggles between reaction and revolution. When the reactionaries win, they openly proclaim, as in the decree of October 17, 1824, that they will pursue the goal of erasing “forever from Spanish soil even the faintest idea that sovereignty resides anywhere but in my royal person” (Ferdinand VII). If the revolution is victorious, it immediately creates the instruments to affirm freedom, the committees, and the federation of provinces and regions, reestablishing popular sovereignty.

The First Republic did not arise solely from the decomposition of a decaying, degenerate and disastrous dynasty, but, above all, from the demands of the liberal and revolutionary forces that were seeking progress in every domain.

The inauguration of the Second Republic prevented the outbreak of a profound popular revolution that was thought to be inevitable. This Republic did not, however, solve any of the problems it faced and within the first few months of its existence it was discredited due to the vices that originated from its ineffectiveness and its anti-proletarian nature. The people, which voted for it one day at the ballot boxes, wanted to take an effective step forward towards their own well being and towards that minimum of liberation and of the reconquest of their sovereignty that the philosophers and republican statesmen either did not know how to achieve, or did not want to restore, or were incapable of restoring. The people wanted to use the Republic as a ladder, although they were hardly skilled enough, to build the framework of a third Spain, one that was equally removed from the two Spains that traditionally, for many centuries, were fighting to direct life and thought in the Iberian Peninsula. It was a total failure. There is nothing worse than half-measures, people who want to be everything for everybody, and ambiguities, in great historical crises.

## **The king abdicated, but the generals remained—The frustrated dictatorship of Gil Robles—The military conspiracy**

One of the many organized centers of resistance of the civil war in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the 1854 Zaragoza Junta, declared, in an interesting manifesto to the nation that advocated extensive reforms in the domains of ideas, institutions and customs: “The military empire is not an element of liberty, nor is ignorance the seed of prosperity.” The republicans of the Second Republic—like those of the First Republic—forgot these postulates, and carried on the work that brought a temporary interruption, in order to prevent greater evils, of the discredited and putrescent monarchy.

So the king abdicated and his generals remained; if there was any force was capable of upholding the Bourbon monarchy it was the king’s own army, formed for the defense of the royal person, a task that the Republic was incapable of performing. Along with the generals of the monarchy, servants of the altar and the throne, the power of the Church remained intact, and generalized ignorance was cultivated just as assiduously as it was in the past. In April 1931 more than 60% of the population of Spain was illiterate; the few schools that did exist were infected with religious superstition and by the age-old hatred of the Church for all culture.

The Moroccan war, after major disasters in the colonies, consumed tens of thousands of lives and hundreds of millions of pesetas, not having served any purpose besides incubating a military caste in which the doctrine of despotism found its favorite home.

The military caste, educated in the monarchy and for the monarchy, could not bear the change of regime with equanimity, and, on various occasions after April 14, 1931, openly manifested its opposition, baring its claws. The conspiracy of Sanjurjo, on August 10, 1932, and other planned coups that were subsequently aborted, were treated by the republicans in power with kid gloves, in contrast to what happened when the rebellion and protest came from below, from the working class masses and the peasants who were tired of suffering humiliation, deceit and poverty.

A few weeks before the military uprising, the tragedy of Yeste occurred, in Estremadura, where 23 peasants were murdered and more than 100 were wounded because they cut down some trees owned by one of the big Estremaduran feudal landowners. The Minister of the Interior went out of his way to praise the Civil Guard, the author of that valiant act in defense of anti-republican and anti-Spanish privileges.

The character of the men of the Second Republic is neatly summarized by the following anecdote:

There was a small group of brave young officers who were ready to fight for a new regime of social justice, and the first step towards this goal was the overthrow of the monarchy. They worked with enthusiasm and audacity, making contact with the representative figures of the parties of the left and with the working class organizations and lying to all of them in order

to get them to commit their forces to a revolt. They sent confidential messages, for example, to Party A, telling it that the members of Party B were ready for action and that the army was at their disposal. No one wanted to be totally left out of this conspiracy that did not even exist and elements of the most varied backgrounds joined it, even dyed in the wool monarchists. Pledges of commitment were being received one after another and the conspirators found themselves, against their will, committing to a project that, strictly speaking, they really did not want to go through with.

These officers had an idea that they thought would turn their conspiracy into a reality. This idea involved seizing the government while it was in session, from the President to the Ministers, liquidate it in a few minutes and then carry the revolt into the streets. The procedure they planned to employ was as follows: a handful of the conspirators would disguise themselves as members of the Presidential staff and present themselves at the homes of the various Cabinet Ministers to summon them on behalf of the King to an extraordinary emergency meeting. The uniforms of the Presidential staff would allay any possible suspicions.

In fact, this was the usual procedure followed when the members of the Cabinet were summoned to emergency meetings. When the Ministers left their homes to be driven to the meeting, the conspirators would shoot them and then try to disappear, taking advantage of the confusion in the street that would necessarily ensue.

They informed Azaña, whom the young officers respected because of his prestige as an intellectual, of their idea. Azaña was almost beside himself with rage, saying that those men were doing their duty and that he did not by any means approve of murdering them.

Azaña pondered the question for a while and proposed a different approach. When the various Ministers come out of their homes to be driven to the meeting with the President, the conspirators should kill the chauffeurs and take the Ministers hostage, bound and gagged, and then take them to a place where they could not be discovered.

This plan was not only more complicated, but the conspirators asked another question: Isn't the chauffeur just doing his duty, too?

This mentality, indicative of Azaña's own status as an heir of the old aristocracy, which measured men by their social status or the privileges they enjoyed, explains the suicidal policies of the Second Republic. For some, "Aim for the belly"; for others, the greatest respect, although the criminal revolt against the regime of April 14, 1931 was of precisely the same kind.

A large percentage of the Republic's bureaucrats, the immense majority, both in the civilian as well as the military branches of the government, were the same bureaucrats who had faithfully served the Bourbon monarchy. The political transfer of power in 1931 hardly changed them at all. At both the highest and the lowest levels of the bureaucracy, the bureaucrats continued to favor the same views and the same routine, and still had the same disdain for anything that smacked of real life, dynamism, or understanding new realities. And the bureaucracy that was incorporated into the new Republic only caused the latter to acquire the vices of the old monarchist administrative system.

Under these conditions, the intentions and statements of Ministers who sympathized with the republican cause necessarily came to naught in their collision with the passive resistance and deliberate sabotage of the bureaucrats.

Anyone who has ever had any dealings with the various departments of the central government could predict, as we did at the time, that the Government Ministers would inevitably fail to achieve their goals due to their powerlessness, regardless of their intentions, against the impen-

eternal wall of a bureaucracy whose sympathies lay more with the enemy than with so-called Loyalist Spain.

Just as the Republic would have to pay a high price for its toleration of reactionary militarism and clericalism, it would also have to pay a high price for its welcome, among the officialdom of the so-called new regime, of the bureaucrats who had been born in, and trained to serve, the monarchy. New wine, if the Republic really was new wine, in old bottles.

This chapter of the ongoing fascist, monarchist, and ultramontane conspiracy, based in the civil service and the military command structure and its bureaucracy, could only lead us to the precipice from which we have since plummeted. We are reminded of the words of a working class militant who wrote, in *El eco de la clase obrera*, a newspaper published in Madrid in 1855: "Every social revolution, in order to be possible, must begin with a political revolution, just as every political revolution is sterile unless it is followed by a social revolution."

Such ideas were quite popular in working class milieus and among the ranks of the liberals in Spain during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The men who took the reins of the Second Republic, however, had completely forgotten them. They occupied high profile offices, which is not the same thing as the highest levels of the command structure, and let everything remain just as it was before.

In return for this betrayal of the hopes of the people, the military caste, very closely aligned with clericalism, became increasingly more aggressive and demanding, and caused the Republic to become a facade for all the immorality and vices of the old regime. We would even venture to assert that, among the politicians of the Republic, the role of ignorance or bad faith with regard to the real economic and social problems of Spain was even greater than it was among the old social conservatives.

Anti-working class policies, or policies that favored one sector of the working class at the expense of another, were mercilessly implemented, and the cornerstone of the new regime, that is, the workers, filled the jails, and they eventually decided that it was not worth making any sacrifices in defense of institutions that had not changed essentially when the national flag was changed.

In its application against us, this policy of repression knew no limits. It reached the point where we had approximately 30,000 comrades in civilian and military prisons. The old politicians of the monarchy possessed the requisite skills and convinced the parties and the so-called leftists and even workerists to carry out this repression. The traditional rivalry between Marxists and anarchists was assiduously cultivated, both by the Marxists themselves as well as their erstwhile republican enemies.

The alarms raised by Orobón Fernández, and by us, were utterly unheeded or misinterpreted, until May 1936, when the idea of a pact between the two big national trade unions was finally accepted, a pact that, in its later development, would be renounced by Orobón Fernández, just as we, its first advocates, also came to reject it.<sup>1</sup>

The deportations to Bata [Equatorial Guinea in Africa] and the draconian sentences handed down for the crimes of going on strike and distributing newspapers were even more harsh than those of a few years before.

The revolutionary workers had constituted a significant part of the Spanish population for more than three-quarters of a century when the elections of November 1933 were held, after two

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<sup>1</sup> *El pacto C.N.T.-U.G.T* [The CNT-UGT Pact]. Introduction by D. A. de Santillán, ETYL, Barcelona, 1938, 160 p. An anthology of historical antecedents, recollections and documents.

years of persecution, deportation, and unforgettable episodes like Casas Viejas, and they did not want to go to the ballot box to reinforce, with their own hands, the men and the parties that were primarily responsible for the first two republican years of proletarian bloodshed and mourning.

A violent anti-electoral campaign was waged throughout the country by our organizations, which had attempted, at Figols in late 1931 and in various other places in Spain in January 1933, to consolidate their position against the Republic, focusing on the road of historical social demands. Naturally, their abstention handed power to the pro-monarchist conservatives, militarism and the Church, which were also enemies of the legitimate Spain, whose most important foundation was composed of the Spanish workers and peasants, the only historical heirs of the Iberian race and its spirit.

The republicans did not want to learn this lesson, nor did they want to understand that the revolutionary working class, working class Spain, was a force of authentic progress and that without it no regime that was more or less liberal and social could be established, and that any attempt to rule over it would require openly reactionary methods.

*The openly restorationist tendency led by Gil Robles, with the support of the Vatican and international capital, gradually consolidated its position within the Republic. In December 1933, after the victory of the right wing in the recent elections, the anarcho-syndicalist revolt took place, and was particularly intense in Aragon, Rioja, Extremadura and Andalusia. This uprising meant that just as the workers rejected the republicans of the two red years (bienio rojo) of 1931–1933, they also rejected their successors, who were equally disastrous for progress and justice in Spain.*<sup>2</sup>

The left wing parties knew full well what the Gil Robles tendency stood for and did not want to allow this restorationist current to openly take power, although they did consent to help moderate this power with their influence and their vast resources. They issued threats. It was from these threats that the movement of October 1934 arose, when the leader of the CEDA, Gil Robles, accepted a Cabinet post in the government of Alejandro Lerroux, with rather dubious credentials as a republican of the Republic.

The insurrection of October would have been victorious if the so-called left republicans would have acted like left republicans and would not have refused to give satisfaction to the working classes, who had not been given any reasons by the Republic to feel any solidarity with it. But its leaders did not want to see the real situation of Spain and it was an insurrection that dispensed with us, and in some regions, as in Catalonia, it was much more aimed against us than against the forces of Gil Robles.<sup>3</sup>

The famous plot of the Catalanian nationalists Dencas and Badia was essentially conceived as a war of extermination against us. The directives issued to their “*escamots*” who surged onto the streets of Barcelona on the evening of October 5 declared open season on the FAI, a “product of Spain”. Minister Dencas and his lieutenant in the offices of the service of public order, Badia, recreated, with the complicity and the silence of the entire Generalitat, the horrors of Martínez Anido and Arlegui and were therefore incapable of playing any kind of role as factors of unity and collaboration in the struggle against the fascists who had legally seized power. We were in a

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<sup>2</sup> The original copy of a text recounting these events that we had written in collaboration with Juanel and M. Villar, and with the help of magnificent elements who performed feats of bravery at the time, among others, Máximo Franco and Angel Santamaria, two heroes whose names must not be forgotten, has since been misplaced and lost.

<sup>3</sup> D. A. de Santillán, *Los anarquistas y la insurrección de octubre* [The Anarchists and the October Insurrection], published in various languages, December 1934. The memoirs of Diego Hidalgo, who was the Minister of War at the time, provide some interesting details concerning these events.

unique position. The separatists accused us of being products of Spain; the centralists accused us of being tools of the separatists; the monarchists revealed that we were body and soul with the republicans, and the republicans disclosed that we were taking our orders from the monarchists.

All we could do was dodge the attacks of the right and left and, without us, the sixth of October in Catalonia was nothing but a risible flop, suppressed within a few hours by two undermanned companies of soldiers under the command of general Batet, who was later shot by the rebels in July 1936 in Burgos, perhaps to pay him off for his loyalty to the republican abstraction in October 1934.

Their confidence that the FAI would not intervene in the struggle encouraged the forces of repression to impose their hegemony, which no one seriously challenged. We recall one captain of the Civil Guard in the plaza at the University of Barcelona, infuriated by his inability to find any criminals.

“Cowards!”, he shouted—as if the men of the FAI would fight him face to face, and face the consequences.

If the movement of October 1934 in Asturias acquired the same aura as the movement of July 1936, resisting the loyalist army and the Lerroux-Gil Robles Government, which then betrayed the cause of the people, this was because in Asturias the workers possessed a desire for unity that was strong enough to resist the campaigns of the politicians who were trying to prevent that unity and turn them against each other. Asturias finally fell, defeated, and was repaid for its determination to resist the advent of fascism with arms in hand with tens of thousands of victims and indescribable tortures.<sup>4</sup>

The unforgettable two years of the republican-socialist government were followed by the no less bloody two years of Lerroux-Gil Robles. The military and ecclesiastical castes consolidated their power in Spain. Every church and every monastery, just like every barracks and every Military Headquarters, became active focal points of conspiracy. The Republic was in the hands of its declared enemies. And it had to deal with us, for the simple reason of self-defense, to survive....

The empire of trite expressions and sacred rites is a reality only in the domain of everyday, lazy and conservative routine. Even in revolutionary movements, it appears more often than one would imagine, tyrannically leading individuals and groups. Generally, when one speaks and acts, one does not reflect or meditate. The weight of the environment, mental habits, and reflex reactions performs the function that should always be performed by free and deliberate thought.

When preparations were underway for the elections of February 1936, we faced a dilemma that our usual routine would have solved without any drama, but which, viewed with a little bit of good sense, offered a panorama that was pregnant with grave consequences. A regional plenum of the CNT was held in Zaragoza and we were disturbed by some of its resolutions insofar as they advocated an intensive anti-electoral and abstentionist campaign.

If we were to reaffirm our abstentionism we would have undoubtedly handed over power to the dictatorship promoted by Gil Robles, whose sacred maxim was, “The leaders are never wrong!” And to give victory to Gil Robles would be equivalent to giving our sanction to the tortures of October and to the continued imprisonment of thirty thousand men. In effect, depending on the

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<sup>4</sup> We have described the horrors that followed the victory of the Madrid Government in our book, *La represión de Octubre: Documentos sobre la barbarie de nuestra civilización* [The Repression of October: Documents on the Barbarism of Our Civilization], Barcelona, 1935 (various editions).

position we adopted, we had the keys to the prisons and to the immediate future of Spain in our hands. With the victory of Gil Robles we would have entered into a period of fascism under the cloak of legality, we would have returned to the delights of the Exterminating Angel of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and other similar spectacles. If we were to declare our support for voting in order to increase the chances of the success of the left, we would have left ourselves open, for those who were incapable of understanding our reasons, to the charge that we had betrayed our principles. The left, in its permanent blindness, was not aware of the fact that we were the key to the situation. The right understood this perfectly well, and made every effort to encourage us to advocate abstentionism; its representatives even went so far, as in Cádiz, as Ballester revealed—one of our best Andalusian militants, murdered by the rebels—as to offer a half million pesetas to us in order to enable us to pursue our usual public campaign against voting.

In November 1933 we had uprooted from power, which had been used in the Republic to reaffirm the class privileges that had existed in the monarchy, those responsible for Casas Viejas; in order to do so we employed the political weapon of abstention, an abstention that was a real, negative intervention in the electoral battle. It was not that we regretted the lesson we taught the alleged republicans of April 14; under the circumstances that we faced in February 1936, however, abstention meant victory for Gil Robles, and the victory of Gil Robles was the victory of the restoration of the old monarchist and clerical powers.

We benefited from the fortunate circumstance of the full agreement of various militants whose opinions carried a lot of weight in our circles, in the groups of the FAI, in the trade unions of the CNT, and in the libertarian press. For the first time, after so many years, we challenged everyone to cast down all the previously impenetrable barriers of sacred dogma. We had the courage to openly confront the concern that everyone brandished against us, and conceded that we were not opposed to the electoral victory of the political left, because if we helped to bring about its defeat, we, too, would go down to defeat.

A view similar to ours had also arisen spontaneously in other regions, and the voices of the prisoners themselves were an eloquent and decisive contribution to the debate. Some of us, like Durruti, who did not understand the need for subtlety, began to openly recommend that people should vote.

We avoided the repetition of the anti-electoral campaign of November 1933, and that was enough; the good instinct of the masses of the people, which is always brilliant in Spain, led them to agree to deposit their little slips of paper in the ballot boxes, for no other purpose than to contribute in this way to evict the political forces of fascist reaction from the Government and to free the prisoners. On other occasions the same result might have been achieved with abstention; on this occasion voting was advisable.

A lot of water has passed under the bridge since then, but we nonetheless do not hesitate to reaffirm that line of conduct, and to assert the correctness of our views at that time. Without the electoral victory of February 16, there would have been no July 19. The attempts on the part of a handful of pseudo-puritans to confute our way of looking at the question were easily repulsed. We handed power over to the left, convinced that under the circumstances this was the lesser evil. That is why the Republic could continue to exist, and we were very well aware of what we could expect from it.

We also had to deal with the impact of hoary dogmas in our struggle against fascism. We were intimately familiar with this morbid affliction, and all the deliberations concerning the danger that it represented seemed to fall far short of the reality as far as we were concerned. In our



meetings, plenums and congresses, it was one of our favorite topics, although we failed to generate much serious interest among the comrades. We even encountered distinguished militants who proclaimed in their speeches that fascism was a fanciful invention of the anti-fascists. We had witnessed such movements based on the resurrection of every kind of barbarism in various countries and we maintained that it was not a racial question but a class question, a question of the defense of privileges, a preventive counterrevolution, and that if the proletariat did not defend itself in time, fascism would become a reality in Spain, too.

Our warnings were not heeded, and this alarmed us, because it was possible that fascism would assume a certain kind of demagogic aura and might even catch us by surprise and be established in Spain. Thus, we were immensely pleased when, a couple of weeks before July 19, we saw the comrades at their posts, awaiting the onset of the events that they presumed were imminent.

Once the left was in power, thanks to us, we saw its leaders persist in the same incomprehension and the same blindness. Neither the industrial workers nor the peasants had any reasons to feel more satisfied than before. The real power remained in the hands of the anti-republican capitalists, the Church and the military caste. And thus, just as the left had prepared for its Sixth of October, although with very little skill, the military feverishly set about preparing a coup that would deprive the republicans and the parliamentary socialists by force of what they had legally conquered in the elections of February 16.

# **The inexorable military conspiracy—Our liaison with the Generalitat—The events of July 19 in Barcelona**

July 19 has a place of honor in the modern political history of Spain. On the night of July 6–7 of 1822 Ferdinand VII attempted to carry out a bloody coup against the Constitution that he had accepted and against the popular militia to which he owed his restoration to the throne of Spain.

He failed due to the heroic action of the militiamen who fought against the Royal Guard; the following year, however, he succeeded in executing his program, plunging Spain into a maelstrom of martyrdom and grief until his death.

It was in July 1854 when the people of Madrid experienced the indelible events of their struggle against the dictatorship of general Fernández de Córdoba, episodes in no way inferior to others that have also been immortalized, such as the scenes of the assault on the Montaña barracks in July 1936.

In mid-June of 1856, the coup d'état of O'Donnell took place, a traitor born and bred, another Narváez in his ferocity, who imposed several years of terror and absolutism on the country in the name of Isabel II, successfully disarming the militia, which had taken up arms two years earlier to defend the liberty of Spain.

In July 1909 the people of Barcelona rebelled against the massacre in Morocco, in heroic and bloody battles that ended with the victory of the reactionaries, but which left deep traces in the memory of that great industrial city and laid the groundwork for the events of 1936.

The military uprising that was being concocted in the barracks, in the most perfect solidarity with the ecclesiastical power, which is so important in Spain, and with the leading forces of industrial and financial capitalism, along with the assistance it was receiving from outside Spain, became more obvious and more unstoppable with each passing day. Even the most politically indifferent people commented in public about the preparations that were underway in the ranks of the army, of that army that was the source of so many disasters and which had become an instrument of oppression of every freedom.

It is a proven fact that the generals involved in the conspiracy, as well as representative figures of the monarchist current and of the spirit of reaction, participated in negotiations in advance with Italy and Germany for the purpose of obtaining material and diplomatic support from those countries. Secret shipments of such contraband have been attested, which arrived long before the first shots were fired. We are only relating what has been divulged by writers who sympathized with, as well as who opposed, the military conspiracy.

The contents of the agreements signed with Mussolini, for example, have been published. And the documents that we discovered and published under the title, *El nazismo al desnudo* [Nazism Exposed], reveal the operations of Hitler's skilled spies. The Italian network and its ambitions

with respect to our country were no less dangerous.<sup>1</sup> The generals who rebelled against Spain in intimate alliance with the bishops only followed in the footsteps of all those who, throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, paid court to the governments of France and England, imploring their military and financial support to restore absolutism in Spain.<sup>2</sup>

Nor should we forget that the First Republic was assisted by the British and the German fleets when it suppressed the Commune of Cartagena in 1873. We would have no objection at all to the military revolt against the republican regime if this revolt was not accompanied by a nauseating immorality. We deny no one the right of rebellion against something that he or she thinks is unsuitable for assuring a more just and dignified life. We have ourselves rebelled against the Republic on various occasions, and since before its proclamation we have manifested our complete independence, knowing in advance that it neither knew how to solve, nor was it capable of solving, the country's age-old problems.

The military conspirators, however, were not in our position. We had not sworn any oaths nor had we given our word of honor, nor had we ever undertaken any commitment of loyalty to the republican regime. The military officers who joined the revolt had sworn an oath of loyalty to the Republic, they were in positions of the highest responsibility in the pay of the Republic. The conspirators' first step consisted of their betrayal of their own pledges; their second step was to admit the participation of the troops of foreign powers in their uprising. In order to obtain this foreign assistance they had to sell the independence of their country, or promise to cede territories or alienate the country's mineral wealth and other resources. Their momentary victory could only be achieved in exchange for the servitude and pauperization of future generations of Spaniards. And there is no comparison between the international brigades that fought on the side of the Republic, and the troops organized, equipped and armed by foreign powers; the former were composed of volunteers who felt a profound sympathy for the struggle of the combatants on one side of the trenches, while the latter were the tools of foreign special interests that were in conflict with the interests of Spain.

In Spanish tradition, the sworn word of honor is inviolable. The military rebels failed to abide by their word, and for this reason alone they will never be able to disavow, despite their victory, the term that is applied to all those who deceitfully renege on freely and spontaneously contracted commitments. There were some exceptions, a small number of monarchists who refused to recognize the Republic and who were always its declared enemies. For them, in their passive resistance or in their active revolt, we grant all the respect that is due to enemies.

Victory can make a lot of things possible, but what it cannot do is subvert the fundamental values of our history, our temperament and our upbringing as Spaniards.

Let us now turn to the *pronunciamiento* of July.

Fully informed of the danger that threatened us, we were the ones who were most seriously affected and the ones who had the greatest interest in opposing the military coup that was being planned. This time it was not a putsch like that of Primo de Rivera, during the occurrence of which one could philosophically stand to one side and wait while the adventure naturally peters

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<sup>1</sup> C. Berneri, *Mussolini a la conquesta de las Baleares* [Mussolini: Towards the Conquest of the Balearic Islands] (1937).

<sup>2</sup> Details concerning these preparations of the military conspiracy may be found in Robert Brasillach and Maurice Bardèche, *Histoire de la guerre d'Espagne*, Plon, Paris; The Duchess of Atholl: *Searchlight on Spain*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1938; Geneviève Tabouis, *Blackmail or War*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1938; and J. Toryho, *La independencia nacional*, Barcelona, 1938.

out. We had the recent experiences of other countries, and the memory of the open wounds in the heart of the progressive world caused by the current wave of dictatorships, right before our eyes.

A few days before July 19, 1936, when it had become a sign of unforgivable obtuseness or suicidal tendencies to have any doubts about the imminence of the revolt, precipitated by the death of Calvo Sotelo, the regional government of the Generalitat of Catalonia—feeling completely powerless to confront the coming events, and in view of the fact that there was no organized force in the autonomous region that was capable of opposing the military revolt, except for the force that we represented—decided in favor of the only honorable solution that remained to it: that it should reveal the actual situation to us in all its ugliness, which we already knew, and its possible significance.

Up until that point we had been the sacrificial victims of the inquisitorial spirit that had been passed down as government policy, in the central and regional governments, for centuries. Only a few months before, one of the last of the executioners of the Catalan proletariat was gunned down in the streets of Barcelona: Miguel Badía, a worthy successor of General Arlegui or Baron de Meer, and his death was blamed on our comrades. The prisons of Catalonia were once again filled with revolutionary workers, despite the amnesty that we achieved as a result of the elections of February 16.

In the face of the threat, which was this time aimed at both the republicans and at our forces, we forgot all our grievances and temporarily set aside all our unsettled business with the republicans, abiding by the viewpoint that the close collaboration of all the liberal, progressive and proletarian forces that were prepared to confront the enemy was indispensable, or at least advisable. As for fighting in the streets, and as for the question of who would take up arms and conquer or die, of course, it was our movement that almost alone constituted a factor to be reckoned with. A Liaison Committee was formed with the Government of the Generalitat, of which I was a member, together with other friends who were well-known for their combative spirit and their heroism.

In addition to encouraging all possible collaboration, we also thought that, in consideration of our enthusiasm and our state of preparedness, the authorities of the Generalitat would not refuse to give us some weapons and munitions, since most of our reserves and various scattered, small caches had disappeared after December 1933, and during the two black years of the Lerroux-Gil Robles dictatorship much of what we had obtained in October 1934, when the “*escamots*” abandoned the weapons they had been given, disappeared. And we spared no efforts in our attempts to obtain arms.

Long and wearisome were the negotiations and we were constantly told that the Generalitat did not have enough arms. We knew that most of the population that was ready to fight were sympathizers or members of our organizations; we did not ask for twenty thousand rifles for the men that were waiting for battle in our trade unions and at the agreed-upon staging points, but for a minimum of aid to commence the struggle. We only asked for enough weapons to arm a thousand men and we promised that with these weapons we could blockade the barracks of the Barcelona garrison, and force them to surrender. Nothing. But with or without arms our people were ready to fight and to risk their lives.

Direct action achieved what we could not obtain in our negotiations with the Generalitat. On the night of July 17, Juan Yague led the assault on the weapons lockers of the ships anchored in the port of Barcelona, and on July 18 the night watchmen and security guards of the city were disarmed. In this manner we obtained a few pistols and revolvers, with very little ammunition.

The initiative of Juan Yague deserves to be memorialized. He was a man of the people, the stuff from which heroes are made, all self-abnegation and spirit of sacrifice. His field of action and propaganda was the maritime district, where he had aroused a great deal of sympathy and earned the confidence of the sailors and dock workers. He knew that every foreign ship had a locker with a few Mauser carbines and a few boxes of cartridges for emergencies, and when he became aware of the paltry results of our negotiations, he resolved to try something different and very soon the ships' weapons were in our power, held by the Transport Workers Trade Union. The Government of Catalonia still had some small shred of hope that the military conspirators would back down and therefore ordered us to return the requisitioned weapons. The Transport Workers Trade Union headquarters was surrounded by the forces of public order.

In order to prevent a massacre that would have destroyed the unity of action that we thought was indispensable, some of the rifles taken from the ships were handed over to the police authorities thanks to the personal intervention of Durruti and García Oliver—who at that moment were exposed to great danger between the hostile attitudes of the Assault Guards and of the Transport workers who were refusing to surrender the guns—whose emotionally moving appeals were very effective. The problem was resolved with the surrender of some of the weapons, leaving others in our hands for the struggle against the military revolt.

We recall that, during those sleepless nights we spent at the offices of the Generalitat, there was an endless series of phone calls from various police precincts informing us of the arrest of comrades from whom the police had seized pistols and even that some were being charged with illegal possession of weapons. We intervened in hundreds of such cases and, although we always managed to reach an amicable agreement, this did not diminish the painful fact that, on the eve of July 19, we had to spend so much time and effort to protect the few weapons that we had for the fight against fascism.

If this was the attitude of the Government of Catalonia, which knew that without our intervention any resistance against the troops of five military barracks would be impossible, one can only imagine the behavior of the members of the Popular Front Government in almost every other part of Spain, instructed by the Madrid Government, which denied the facts and the reality of the uprising. Days before the revolt, the military pilot Díaz Sandino went to Madrid and presented ample documentation proving what was going to happen, and his warnings were ignored. The information we have obtained, for example, from León, Vigo and La Coruña, whose civil governors were shot after the uprising, shows us just how blind the men of the Republic really were, insofar as they were more afraid of the people than of the enemies of the people and that, for that reason, they adamantly refused to distribute to the popular forces the weapons that they possessed so that the people could defeat the rebels.

On the night of July 18 the atmosphere was thick with a sense of the tragedy that would soon unfold. At the local offices of a branch of the Construction Workers Trade Union that had been converted into our general headquarters, we suggested to a group of comrades that it would be advantageous to have access to vehicles for transport. An hour later, we saw requisitioned personal automobiles being driven along the Ramblas emblazoned in chalk with the initials "CNT-FAI". The transit of these first vehicles, signifying that everything was now at stake, caused spontaneous outbursts of pro-anarchist cheers among the pedestrians.

It was four or five in the morning of July 19 when the government was first notified of the departure of the rebel troops from the garrisons of Barcelona.

The proclamation of a state of war by the military conspirators came to our attention. There was not much room left for illusions. And that is how all the parties and organizations understood it, glad to see that we were there to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. The plan drawn up by the rebels was a kind of military parade to occupy the strategic points, communications centers and government buildings.

There was no room for doubt, even for those who had up until then still harbored some doubts, of the reality of the revolt. It seemed that even breathing had been interrupted. Only our people feverishly worked in the darkness and hurried to meet the rebel columns.

The first light of dawn had not yet broken when we saw a crowd of people gathered around the Government Palace insistently demanding arms. They had to be placated to some extent from a balcony. There we saw the first signs of fraternization between the Assault Guards and the revolutionary workers. Guards who possessed both rifles and pistols unstrapped their holsters and gave their pistols to volunteers.

With barely a hundred pistols we departed for the Construction Workers Trade Union headquarters. Within seconds they were distributed among our men who reached out with eager hands and who immediately left with guns in their hands to confront the advancing troops.

Several gun shops were sacked, which yielded nothing but hunting rifles, but even these guns were used during the first few days.

The rifles from the ships, the pistols and revolvers taken from the night watchmen and security guards of Barcelona, and the remnants of our small deposits of arms and the hundred side arms distributed by the Generalitat, were all that we had to meet the attack of 35,000 men from the Garrison.

We had no faith at all in the loyalty of the forces of public order, especially the Civil Guards, many of whose officers and troops had signed pledges to support the revolt, which had to some extent come to the attention of the authorities in Catalonia. The weaponry was vastly unequal and the prospect of victory was insignificant or entirely absent. It might be interesting to point out that while some of us performed our allotted tasks out of a sense of duty, but without optimism or hope, others were fully convinced that we would be victorious. We can still vividly recall the rage and desperation of Francisco Ascaso on the night of July 18, when he heard people saying that the military would not leave their barracks. For our part, we would have preferred not to have to engage in such an unequal struggle that was forced upon us, and from which we could not expect anything but death in battle or in front of a firing squad after our defeat. Regardless of our individual states of mind, however, we had the satisfaction of confirming that none of our people deserted their posts. The combatants of the FAI all took up their positions. Those who did not have weapons, followed behind those who did, waiting for one of them to fall so they could take his place. Two or three light machine guns appeared. Behind those who manned them, lines of envious persons formed who may have actually desired deep in their hearts that the privileged comrades using these guns would be killed so that they could fight with a gun like that. It was truly a moving sight.

The armed forces that had remained loyal to the Republic were in this way encouraged by the example set by our militants who really did their duty and fought alongside them. The enemy had planned to cut off all communications between the various districts of the city, to link up its forces and isolate the various dangerous pockets of resistance, in accordance with a carefully crafted plan.

The troops of Pedralbes, the best units of the Garrison, reached the Plaza de la Universidad, the Plaza de Cataluña and las Rondas, occupying the most defensible buildings, the University, the Hotel Colón and the Telephone Exchange Building. As they passed down the streets of the city they were subjected to extensive attacks by snipers, but were not stopped. Upon their arrival at the Paseo de Gracia from the direction of the Diagonal, they met with the most violent resistance they had yet experienced, when they came under fire from the Assault Guards.

At the Plaza de la Universidad a unit of soldiers, pretending to be fraternizing, mixed in with the groups that were stationed there and suddenly turned their guns on our people and took numerous prisoners, including Angel Pestaña, Molina and many others. The fighting became more terrible with each passing minute. The troops were attacked from all sides and every step of the rebel columns was contested with rapid maneuvers on the part of our people, who appeared everywhere and did not present a solid mass of fighters anywhere. In one of these intense firefights, the soldiers who were advancing down Claris street left several artillery pieces in the middle of the street while they took shelter from the shooting in the doorways of adjacent buildings. In the blink of an eye, some elements of the people's units ran up to the artillery pieces, aimed them at the advancing column and fired, without anchoring the cannons, and left the street strewn with dead animals and shattered equipment. With the surrender and disarming of the soldiers in the vicinity, and with several artillery pieces in our hands, our morale did not take long to improve.

The cavalry regiment rode out of the Santiago barracks and the people of the neighborhood of Gracia forced it to retreat and take refuge once again in its barracks. The people of the Sans neighborhood assumed the task of neutralizing the units stationed at the Lepanto barracks.

There were intense bursts of gunfire from Churches and monasteries and a cordon of fire and steel was established around these locations.

The barracks of the light mountain artillery was entrusted with the mission of taking the General Headquarters and linking up with the troops from the Pedralbes barracks, and occupying the harbor district, the railroad stations and the Catalanian government buildings. The troops from the San Andrés barracks were unable to advance very far from their base and were quickly surrounded as a result of indescribable acts of anonymous heroism.

Our comrades from Barceloneta, with the help of a few companies of Assault Guards, were the first to savor the delights of victory. At nine in the morning the barracks that they had besieged in their district was forced to surrender, defeated in the first skirmishes. The gigantic rolls of paper that were stored in the warehouses of the port were instantly transformed into solid, mobile barricades. With this stronghold of the rebels' plans now in our hands, one of the greatest hopes of the conspiracy was dashed. We soon began to see the combatants of the people wearing the steel helmets of regular soldiers, with Mauser rifles and ammunition belts, with machine guns with their muzzles pointing toward the ground, asking to be told how to operate them. Despite the violence of the attack, the first encounters, although the situation was still not clear, encouraged those who were fighting as well as those who watched the battles unfold.

During the first hours we stood alone except for the Assault Guards skillfully mobilized by captain Vicente Guarner. Between nine and ten in the morning we saw the ranks of the people's fighters swell considerably. Waves of workers from the trade unions joined groups from the FAI who took the initiative to organize groups of combatants throughout the city.

There was still the question of which side the Civil Guards would support. General Aranguren was established in the Government Palace with the commander of the Third Regiment, colonel Brotons. Captain Guarner succeeded in gathering together the troops of the two regiments lo-

cated in Barcelona in front of the balconies of the Government Palace and could then breathe easy. He ordered the 19<sup>th</sup> regiment to attack the Plaza Cataluña, where the rebels were well entrenched. There can be no doubt about it; the Civil Guard was a well disciplined body of troops.

As opposed to the irregular and impetuous action of the people's units, and of that of the Assault Guards, now mixed with the people in complete fraternity, the forces of the 19<sup>th</sup> regiment under colonel Escobar advanced to perform the mission they had been assigned. They marched in battle order, at a slow pace, and despite all the gunfire not one man broke step with the solid rhythm of the march.

Our people walked alongside this column, wary and suspicious. Was it true that it was going to fight against the army? The Plaza de Cataluña was swarming with people, from the subway entrances to the intersections of the adjoining streets. The column was going to attack the Hotel Colón, the Telephone Exchange Building, and the other refuges of the rebels. The Civil Guards quietly took up positions, and a furious outburst of gunfire commenced, and one began to hear the roar of the artillery pieces that had been seized shortly before on Claris street. The rebels' machine guns mowed down avalanches of people, but within half an hour of fighting, with the Plaza littered with corpses, you could see the white flags of surrender begin to wave above the last strongholds of resistance. Almost simultaneously, the troops in the Hotel Ritz surrendered, another one of the improvised fortresses of the revolt.

Encouraged by this great victory, which provided us with regular military weapons, and crazed by the smell of gunpowder, it was an easy task for our men to storm the Plaza de la Universidad, liberating the prisoners who were expecting to suffer the worst fate.

The modern idea of the struggle, as it took shape from our previous integral preparations, was good for something after all. While some people fought in the streets, others devoted themselves to setting up field hospitals for the wounded, and others went to the metal factories to manufacture war materiel, especially hand grenades. By the afternoon, the popular fever was uncontainable; there was fighting on las Rondas and all the barracks were besieged. The units of the Quartermaster's Corps had passed entirely, along with their commander, Sanz Neira, to the side of the forces that remained loyal to the government. Díaz Sandino was hard at work at the military airfield at Prat, and he also succeeded in securing that base, although not without serious difficulties.

A lot had happened by the mid-afternoon; but we had not achieved very much, much less victory. In expectation of a counterattack and without significant resources to defend our general headquarters at the offices of the Construction Workers Trade Union, we stockpiled an enormous quantity of explosives taken from the quarries at Moncada, intent upon blowing up the whole building rather than allowing ourselves to be taken prisoner.

Every neighborhood and every major fighting group of the people's resistance assumed responsibility for a particular objective. Although some army units had been defeated, the greater part of the garrison was still intact.

The Transport Workers Trade Union, at las Ramblas, with Durruti, Ascaso and many other comrades, manned the siege of the Atarazanas barracks, one of the most tenacious centers of resistance. Now that the other barracks had been immobilized by similar sieges, we could operate safely. During the first hours of the night the directive was issued to attack the Military General Headquarters itself, where general Goded was based, the military leader of the revolt, who had arrived in a seaplane from Mallorca. This was no simple task. The Headquarters staff defended itself bravely; the people who had gathered there, however, were undaunted. The battle began and



the enemy's bullets were no longer able to contain the combative spirit of Barcelona. The artillery pieces seized on Claris street were sent to join the assault on the Military General Headquarters, under the command of the dockworker Manuel Lecha, a former artilleryman. When general Goded was informed of these preparations, he made a telephone call to the Government Palace to demand nothing less from general Aranguren than our surrender.

General Aranguren, colonel Escobar and colonel Brotons were later shot by Franco. Concerning Aranguren, certain innuendoes have circulated regarding his relations with Goded. Aranguren's conduct was perhaps characterized by an inappropriate degree of courtesy. When Goded made his phone call to Aranguren to ask for our surrender, since, according to his reports, the events had been favorable for the military revolt, Aranguren responded respectfully, and in a subdued tone of voice.

"My general, I sympathize with you very much, but the reports I have received are quite the opposite of yours and I am told that the revolt has been suppressed. I beg you to proclaim a ceasefire, where resistance is still underway, in order to avoid more bloodshed. I must also tell you that we have resolved to give you a half hour to surrender; at the end of this time, our artillery will open fire."

Goded, of course, responded in a most uncivil manner, but Aranguren, with his soft, elderly voice, simple, unfazed, without even the least trace of annoyance, once again relayed the order of surrender with guarantees that the lives of the besieged men would be spared.

The attack began precisely one half hour later. More than forty salvos of the artillery pieces, exploding against the solid building, made the besieged military personnel aware of the fact that the people had acquired real weapons. The intense gunfire, always drawing nearer, left no room for doubt. The Military General Headquarters was totally isolated and in danger of being stormed by the forces that surrounded it. A white flag appeared. A phone call from the Government Palace informed general Goded that an officer who was loyal to the government, captain Sanz Neira, would assume responsibility for the prisoners. When Sanz Neira approached the besieged building, the machine guns in the Military General Headquarters began to roar furiously. There was no other recourse than to resume the battle and get ready for the assault. Our men were on the verge of forcing the gates of the building when the white flag once again appeared. Already betrayed once, the besieging forces, including the artillery commander Pérez Farraz, stormed the building and captured its occupants. Strenuous efforts had to be made to save general Goded from the fury of the crowd. These efforts would not have been necessary had Goded consented to accept general Aranguren's invitation and there would have been no more shooting after the white flag had been raised.

The rebel general was taken prisoner and brought to the Generalitat, while the other officers who accompanied him were interned in other prisons, especially onboard ships anchored in the harbor. General Llano de la Encomienda, who was taken prisoner at the Military General Headquarters, was subsequently wounded by a stray bullet and remained in the private apartments of the Government Palace until he recovered; later, we occupied the building in the name of the army of the people, the militias.

Goded was accused of cowardice for having confirmed, in his radio address from the Generalitat, that the game was lost and that all those who had joined the conspiracy in obedience to his orders were totally released from their pledge and free to do as they wished. Goded was not the kind of man who would act like a coward. We saw him as always self-composed and conscious of what was in store for him, and we saw him meet his fate with a manly attitude that demanded

respect. The general we defeated enjoyed all the consideration he merited: why didn't general Aranguren merit such consideration, who treated his defeated comrade with irreproachable courtesy and gentlemanly decency?

Goded's surrender naturally had an impact. Among some because of demoralization, among others because of even more encouraging news. Gunfire was continuously directed against the last pockets of resistance throughout the entire day and the siege became even more stifling at night. The barracks at San Andrés was taken by assault and the same fate befell the Artillery Depot, at dawn on July 20. Upon entering the barracks at San Andrés, our men came across a large number of bottles of fine wine with which their officers had sought to instill courage into the hearts of the deceived soldiers. A unique spectacle was afforded by the Carmelite monastery, hosting machine guns manned by officers and monks that swept the streets from its vantage points. They finally surrendered, and one of the men of the cloth was seen throwing gold coins to the crowd to placate it and to see if he might be able to escape somehow. But you did not buy the people of July 19 with gold coins!

Our occupation of most of the barracks yielded a large quantity of arms, especially rifles, although the officers had taken the precaution of hiding the firing pins of more than twenty thousand rifles stored at the Artillery Depot.

The first measure we took was to discharge the common soldiers we had taken prisoner, while we imprisoned the officers. On July 20 the Atarazanas barracks was the last stronghold of resistance in Barcelona, but the struggle could not remain undecided for very long. The besieged troops defended their lives and their position courageously, but the resolve of the people's detachments to attain victory only grew more indomitable. Díaz Sandino mobilized some of his available military aircraft to bomb the barracks. By then we controlled the coastal batteries and the artillery of the Barcelona garrison. If resistance lasted much longer, the fortress would be flattened. But there was no sign of any attempt to surrender. It was at this point that Francisco Ascaso, who was firing a rifle from behind cover was shot in the head and died instantly. The news spread like wildfire and inflamed the ardor of the besieging forces for the final assault. It was waged with irresistible fury and our men burst into the barracks. One of the first, if not the first, was Durruti.

Barcelona was totally in the hands of the combatants of the FAI, particularly the barracks, which we kept under our control until it was later resolved to hand some of them over to the parties and organizations that wanted to organize militias for the war against the fascist forces.

Naturally, we suffered significant losses, and some of them had a major impact on subsequent developments. Many of the men who had proven their mettle over many years of struggle and sacrifice contributed to the great victory with their blood and their lives. And then, to replace them, people showed up among our ranks who could never compare with those who had fallen, even if they claimed to wave the same flag.

Despite the severe blows we suffered, we could not resist feeling deep satisfaction as a result of the victory we had achieved, although we understood the grave responsibility that would fall upon our shoulders as a result.

The Barcelona prison, filled with our comrades, was opened and the prisoners poured forth to swell the ranks of the hosts of combatants.

Barcelona celebrated the great event with unprecedented joy. Spectacles like that of July 20, after the fall of the Atarazanas barracks, are seldom seen during the lifetime of a generation, and are only rarely attested in historical chronicles.

Everyone fraternized with everyone else with such sincerity! There were no parties, there were no organizations, even though the black and red insignia of the victors was everywhere. There was only one people in the streets! A people with only one idea, one will, one strength. When this ideal was attained, everything that tended, due to the party mechanism, and its programs, to once again turn the people into a conglomeration of hostile atoms, seemed as unthinkable as jumping off a cliff, like an irreparable catastrophe.

There is no organizational program, no declaration of principles or party program, no theory, superior to what took place on July 20!

Barcelona became an armed people proud of its victory and conscious of the power it had acquired.

The ostensibly neutral military centers of the region, although they were basically on the side of the enemy, such as the garrison of Tarragona, the machine gun regiment of Mataró, etc., surrendered without resistance. Catalonia was liberated. What happened in the rest of Spain?

The people of Madrid fought bravely, too, as in 1808, and as on many other occasions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with enemy resistance concentrated in the Montaña Barracks. In Levante, Martínez Barrios attempted to form a new Government by offering some Ministries to the rebel generals. The commanders of the garrison wanted to appear to be neutral, until they saw which way the wind was blowing.

The revolt was successful in Morocco, the Canary Islands, the Balearic Islands, Andalusia, Navarre, Old Castille, Galicia, León and Oviedo, the latter city thanks to the stupid belief of the Asturian socialists in the loyalty of Aranda. Vizcaya, Catalonia, the Center, Levante and part of Extremadura, almost all of Asturias, and part of León, were in our hands. Were we victorious? A map of the Peninsula told us that we still had a long way to go. We were particularly alarmed by the obvious fact that the main arms and munitions factories were in the hands of the enemy. And we were also alarmed by the excessive euphoria of many so-called leaders, who did not want to face the fact that the first few days, as brilliant as they may have been, did not yet add up to victory. Victory could have been achieved in almost all of Spain and any possibilities for a resurgence of the military revolt could have been seriously undermined if the statesmen of the Republic were a little more competent and a little more in touch with the mood of the people. Most of the fleet was on our side; military aviation properly speaking was of no account because of the small number of planes under our control.

Once the revolt was liquidated in Catalonia, the President of the Generalitat, Luis Companys, summoned us to a meeting to discover our intentions. We came to the office of the President of the Catalanian government with arms in hand, not having slept for several days, unshaven, confirming with our appearance the veracity of the legend that had been woven around us. Some of the members of the government of the autonomous region were pale and trembling during the meeting, which Ascaso was unable to attend. The Government Palace was invaded by the bodyguard of combatants that formed our escort.

Companys congratulated us on our victory. We could, all by ourselves, impose our absolute will, declare the Generalitat defunct and institute in its place the real power of the people; but we did not believe in dictatorship when it was exercised against us and we did not desire it when we could exercise it to the detriment of others. The Generalitat would remain in place with President Companys at its head and the popular forces would be organized to continue the struggle for the

liberation of Spain. This is how the Central Committee of Antifascist Militias was born, in which we allowed the entry of all the liberal and working class sectors.<sup>3</sup>

The scandal of the burning of churches and monasteries has been blown out of proportion. The Duchess of Atholl aristocratically reports that the arson was our work or that of enemy agents who had infiltrated our ranks. And she states that the communists, on the other hand, had no part in these acts and always treated places of worship with respect. Where did she get such fairy tales?

We had more important things to do and to think about than burning churches and monasteries. While Gil Robles denounced in the legislature the arson attacks on churches during the period between February 16 and July, did he ever mention even one single case in Catalonia, when it was very well known that we were the dominant force in the region? We did not prevent the churches and monasteries from being attacked in retaliation for the fact that they served as bases of resistance for the army and the servants of God. We found arms in all of them, or we forced the armed men entrenched within them to surrender. The people, on their own initiative, exacted a very understandable vengeance. But they did so while also trying to preserve works of art, libraries, treasures and valuable ornaments. Neither the CNT nor the FAI encouraged these fruitless actions, based on mere revenge. We say this because it is true, and if even if we had not followed such a policy, it would not have been a crime that we should regret having committed.

Let us recall the words of Mariano de Larra in his pamphlet, "From 1830 to 1936", explicitly referring to such popular excesses:

Such scenes of incendiarism and bloodshed might be terrible, but their explanation is simple and just.

We must not forget that in Spain the monasteries were not perceived as anything but so many other natural focal points of the civil war, and the monks as the paymasters. Civil war is the most painful wound of the peninsula, and one that affects everyone; hence the general outburst of the country against the monasteries and their inhabitants: to strike a blow at them is to strike a blow at the rebels and at Don Carlos, and so it begins, because this is where the danger lies, and society always attends to the most urgent matters. The consequences might be bloody, but we will at least confess that it is always consoling to think that if we examine the question in a really fundamental way, these deadly scenes are not, as is usually supposed, the effects of momentary caprice or of a blind and disorderly instinct, but merely the logical consequence of the right of defense that all of society possesses when it is attacked, and the indispensable accentuation in such moments of the instinct of self-preservation of each individual who composes that society....

On the significance of the Church in Spain and its permanent alliance with tyranny, there is nothing more definitive than the assessment of the Count of Montalambert, a militant French Catholic, whose book about our country deserves to be republished.

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<sup>3</sup> On the first anniversary of the July events an anthology of texts that depicted the struggle in various cities and regions of Spain was published: *De Julio a Julio* [From July to July], Ediciones Tierra y Libertad, Barcelona, 1937. The pamphlet, "Como se enfrentó al fascismo en toda España" [How Fascism Was Confronted Throughout Spain] (Buenos Aires, July 1938), was based on extracts from this book compiled at the initiative of Fragua Social of Valencia.

We shall be content to cite the following figures concerning the ecclesiastical power in Spain and its colonies in 1580 (during the reign of Philip II):

Archbishops	58
Bishoprics	684
Abbeys	11,400
Religious Orders	936
Parishes	127,000
Monasteries	46,000
Convents	13,000
Brotherhoods and Religious Associations	23,000
Secular Clergy	312,000
Deacons and Subdeacons	200,000
Regular Clergy	400,000

The ecclesiastical population, with its servants, sacristans, exorcists, etc., amounted to more than 1,500,000 persons, that is, one individual for every 45 inhabitants of the country.

The general trend with regard to the number of people devoted to the service of the Catholic Church in Spain is as follows:

Population	Secular Clergy	Monks	Nuns	Year
7,500,000	168,000	90,000	38,000	1700
9,300,000	143,800	62,000	36,000	1768
10,300,000	134,500	56,000	34,000	1797
13,300,000	75,784	37,363	23,552	1826
13,500,000	65,000	31,000	22,000	1835

Ecclesiastical incomes consumed the lion's share of the product of the people's labor. The properties, enterprises and privileges of the Church were the main cause of Spain's backwardness. Its age-old alliance with all the causes of absolutism marked the Church as Public Enemy Number One. It was a question of life or death for the country to separate the Church from power and to expropriate its wealth.

In 1834, Olozaga and Cortina, by order of the government, destroyed a large number of monasteries in Madrid. There were still 72 of them left, however, in 1835. It has been said that the Spanish people are fanatical Catholics, but when the monasteries were demolished, there was a surplus of volunteers to help do the job, and the Ministers who were responsible for these measures, such as Olozaga, were able to make public appearances at the demolition sites and were applauded by the crowds.

Government bodies seldom took the initiative to restrict the power and the wealth of the ecclesiastics, as they did in the time of Mendizabal. Generally, it was the people themselves who participated in direct action to rid themselves of the crushing weight of inhuman exploitation in the name of religion. In no country in the world have so many churches and monasteries been burned as in Spain, and this is true of its entire history. The resurrection of Spain has always been blocked by the black wall of clericalism. The wave of arson of July 1936 coincided perfectly with the tradition of the people who sought to destroy the symbols of their misery and their slavery.

They did not need an organization or a party to assume the responsibility for these deeds; the only author and instigator is the instinct of the people themselves.

Our response is that no official or informal instructions were disseminated by the libertarian organizations of Catalonia encouraging the burning of churches and monasteries; we can be certain, furthermore, that such a directive did not originate from any other movement or party, either.

## ***The Central Committee of Militias of Catalonia—Expeditions to Aragon—The false accusation that we withheld our forces from the front—Political and revolutionary collaboration***

We defeated the military revolt. We never knew the exact price in dead and wounded. During those days no one measured the magnitude of sacrifice; only victory mattered. Victory was ours, and those of us who were lucky enough to be left standing did not have any time to shed tears for the dead, among whom were friends, beloved brothers and the most effective collaborators in our old battles. The result of that victory was an almost unprecedented outpouring of popular euphoria. All power was in the streets, the moral power by virtue of the indispensable part played by the people's fighters in bloody combat, and the material power, the power of force and of arms. The coercive institutions of the old State had melted into the popular masses; in any event, its force could no longer serve as a counterweight to the rebirth of Spain and its fate. In those first weeks after July 20, the parties and organizations could not even control their own members. Something superior to parties and tendencies had suddenly been constituted; a people had been formed and this people felt and worked as one. Wasn't this the time to renounce all selfish interests to join this people, each with his capabilities and his initiatives, his intelligence or his heroism? The day will come when it will be necessary to summarize the lessons of the experience of our revolution; then, the least that can be done will be to harshly judge the split that divided the people of July 20 into rival factions, hostile groups, and schismatic gangs.

We cannot hold ourselves responsible for this unfortunate turn of events; after the victory all the bickering of parties and factions seemed insignificant to us, and even our own organization, to which our victory was due, seemed too confining; the only framework that seemed to be suited to the tenor of the moment was the people, a people drunk with victory, but still capable of every sacrifice, of making every decision and above all capable of building the new world towards which we aspired. Eternal Spain had risen from its age-old slavery and stood amidst its broken chains. To make this possible, parties and organizations, doctrines and programs had been necessary; now, all that was needed was for each person to bring what he possessed to the people, bearing arms or working in a factory, conducting research in a laboratory or cultivating the land.

We had been told that certain gangs associated with the defeated revolt were still committing outrages using various disguises, that there were instances of treacherous sniping directed at groups of militiamen, and that automobiles of unknown provenance were being driven around the city. We could confirm none of these rumors. Now that the arms had passed into the hands

of the people, any plans the enemy forces may have had with regard to reorganizing belligerent operations in the city were absolutely abandoned for many months. A big city like Barcelona, however, is always home to elements that are not capable of merging with the great communion of the people. The overthrow of so many walls and the subversion of so many values had caused the cup of the patience of the masses to overflow, and irresponsible demagogues had already begun to take advantage of the situation, but this was not a major concern for us as long as the masses in question were the working class masses, with a moral sense and a consciousness of their responsibility that were always vigorous and alert.

Between 1808 and 1814 the Spanish people took the initiative into their own hands, which at that time exclusively involved the struggle against Napoleon's hosts. It was right for the people to be swept away by a sense of jubilation, and it was right that they should joyfully bask in the glorious aura of the promised land. But not everyone who heeded the first call, appealing to their reason and to their feeling, were members of the working class; there were people from social strata that did not understand the greatness of the moment and we feared that the victory for which we paid such a high price would be sullied by thoughtless or malicious elements.

The Committee of Antifascist Militias was formed as an authentic expression of the people's victory at a time when the smoke from the fighting was still in the air. It was mostly due to our decision that representatives of all the antifascist political and trade union forces were invited to join the Committee, not so that they could devote themselves, as zealous representatives of this or that cause, to forwarding their particular partisan interests, but rather with the intention that they should merge together into a single will. The "Estat Catalá" was without direct representation, in view of the fact that the Esquerra de Catalunya and the Government of the Generalitat were suitable for representing the autonomous region as such.

We gave the Catalan UGT, despite its small membership, the same representation that we gave the CNT, which represented the majority of the organized workers in Catalonia; the delegates of the rival trade union were shocked, as they did not expect this gesture. We thus made it clear that we wanted to collaborate as brothers and that we desired that in the rest of Spain, and in the regions where we were temporarily in the minority, we should be treated with the same consideration and respect that we showed all those who had cooperated to a greater or lesser degree to bring about our victory.

At the first meeting of the Committee we dispatched some delegates to reconnoiter the situation in the region bordering on Zaragoza and to seek information concerning the enemy's positions, and since a rumor was making the rounds to the effect that an organized column had formed on the other bank of the Ebro to attack Barcelona, we issued the order to mine all the highway and railroad bridges over the river to prevent the advance of motorized columns. The delegates we sent out as scouts, who might fall unawares into the hands of enemy forces, bore no documentation, which circumstance might have saved their lives unless they were killed outright, but they were taken prisoner as suspicious persons.

Without waiting for the reports from these delegates, we resolved to act as quickly as possible. The Committee of Militias was recognized as the only effective power in Catalonia. The Government of the Generalitat still existed and deserved our respect, but the people only obeyed the power that they had constituted by virtue of their victory and the revolution, for the victory of the people was the economic and social revolution. We then initiated a collaborative effort of tendencies and sectors in the Committee that had no relations with each other that morning but



which were now in daily contact with each other and engaged in a common effort, and would now show their true colors.

Even though our plans for the Committee still had a lot of rough edges, if there were times when we would really doubt the wisdom of the path we had chosen, it was because of the always unfaithful conduct that was gradually and at first timidly engaged in during the first few months by the representatives of Moscow communism. With the republican and liberal forces we were always able to maintain such cordial and amicable relations that we never once had reason to regret establishing contact with them.

Our first published declaration was a public announcement, with instructions concerning how the population should conduct itself. The announcement was as follows:

The Committee of Antifascist Militias of Catalonia, having been constituted in accordance with the Decree published by the Government of the Generalitat in today's "Official Bulletin", has approved the following resolutions, whose observance is compulsory for all citizens:

1. A revolutionary order is established, which all the member organizations of the Committee are committed to upholding.
2. For public order and safety, the Committee has appointed the patrols needed to ensure rigorous compliance with all the orders the Committee may issue. For this purpose, the patrols will bear the credentials of the Committee, which will testify to their identity.
3. These patrols will be the only ones accredited by the Committee. Any person who acts outside of the Committee's authorization will be considered to be a rebel and will suffer the punishments that will be determined by the Committee.
4. The night patrols will be strict with all those who attempt to disturb the revolutionary order.
5. From one until five in the morning the only persons who will be allowed to leave their homes will be the following:  
All those who have documentation proving that they are members of one of the organizations that constitute the Committee of Militias.  
Those persons who are accompanied by one of the above elements, who will vouch for their moral integrity.  
Those who can justify their presence in the streets as being due to force majeure.
6. In order to recruit elements for the Antifascist Militias, the organizations that constitute the Committee are authorized to open up their own centers for enlistment and supply of recruits. The conditions under which this recruitment can be conducted will be set forth in detail in an internal regulation.
7. The Committee hopes that, in view of the need to constitute a revolutionary order in order to confront the fascist groups, there will be no need, to ensure obedience to its decrees, to resort to disciplinary measures.

And this Proclamation was signed in the name of the Esquerra, the republican Action Parties and the Republican Left, the Unión de Rabassaires, the Marxist parties—the Stalinist party and the more or less Trotskyist one—the CNT, (Durruti, García Oliver and Asens) and the FAI (Santillán and Aurelio Fernández), the principal delegations.

The Committee allocated various tasks: a general secretary for administrative work (Jaime Miravittles); a section for organizing militias, subdivided into Barcelona militias (the responsibility for which was given to us), and the militias of the other counties of Catalonia—a subdivision that later proved to be impractical, so that this task was also allocated to us; an operational section (García Oliver was appointed to lead this section); a department of investigation and public safety (Aurelio Fernández, José Asens, Rafael Vidiella and Tomás Fábregas were named to be co-chairmen of this section); a department of provisioning (under the leadership of José Torrents); and a department of transport.

Each of the above sections was further subdivided into other subsidiary departments, such as statistics, for example, in the section of the general secretary; the quartermaster general and munitions department, a subsection of the department of militias; a department of censorship and radio transmissions, cartography, a military school and a signaling and radio school, subsections of the department of war and operations, etc.

The most crucial and urgent task naturally fell on our shoulders as the representatives of the most numerous and active part of the proletariat of Catalonia. We not only assumed responsibility for the most important tasks, but also for those in which physical exhaustion due to our enormous efforts would most quickly threaten us. More than twenty hours a day of incessant nervous stress, resolving thousands of problems every day, attending to the crowds of people who swarmed around our offices with the most various requests, all comprised an environment that was hardly propitious for tranquil meditation.

We managed to normalize life in a big city within an extraordinarily brief span of time and we also succeeded in making everyone understand that they could not take advantage of the situation created after the suppression of the revolt in order to pursue private ends, nor could they settle personal grudges, no matter how justified they may have been, nor could they wantonly squander supplies and provisions without urgently restocking the warehouses. There is no question that some excesses were inevitable; the explosion of so many concentrated hatreds and the breaking of chains that had seemed to be unbreakable, could not take place without consequences. To meet the needs of the combatants a number of public dining halls were improvised, under the auspices of all the parties and organizations. The army barracks themselves were converted into people's hotels where free food was given to the militiamen in the improvised units that formed patrols, manned barricades, etc. It took no small effort to finally close down the free dining halls, evacuate the barracks, dismantle the barricades and resume work in the factories and the transport sector. Eight days after the revolt, the only new spectacles offered by Barcelona were the uniforms of the militiamen and the heavily-armed control patrols. It was through our initiative that all the available open land, even in the middle of the city, was subjected to cultivation. And the groups that left the city during the first few days to try to obtain provisions from the peasant villages of the region had to establish a system of exchange, bringing the industrial products that the city possessed to pay for what they received from the workers of the land.

We publicized very stern warnings that we would punish anyone who exceeded these limits, and in order to prevent anyone from thinking that these warnings did not apply to everyone, we shot some of our comrades and friends who had overstepped their bounds. This was the fate

of J. Gardeñes, who could not save himself even by expressing his remorse over the actions for which he confessed responsibility in good faith, knowing that we had declared that we would not allow them; and this was also the fate of the president of one of Barcelona's biggest trade unions, the Food Workers Trade Union, who was accused of having been responsible for an incident of personal vengeance and whose reputation as an old, battle-tested militant did him no good at all.<sup>1</sup>

That is how the FAI and CNT dealt with their own members and comrades and thereby gave notice to all that the revolution could not be dishonored, and set the standard for the Committee of Militias to operate on the same rigorous basis in defense of the revolutionary order. We intervened in thousands of difficult cases, and we only needed to refer to the prospect of prompt justice being the fate of anyone who attacked the established revolutionary order to pacify the impatient and tame the ancestral instincts that were fighting to come to the surface.

And we must point out as a matter of record that we seldom found that members of our organizations were implicated in punishable acts that we had to repress. Thousands of denunciations were received and the coercive departments that we created had to investigate them, and as a result many persons with shady backgrounds were detained and brought before the people's tribunals.

In such cases, the suspects usually did not have a hard time convincing the tribunals of their innocence. And in those cases involving persecution of or abuses perpetrated against elements from the old regime, we very seldom discovered that any of our comrades were behind them.

Starting on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July we posted improvised guards at Banks, medical clinics, pawn shops, etc., and we prevented many reprisals and acts of vengeance. But a convulsion of such depth had shaken everything and had liberated primitive forces that lacked the self-control possessed by conscious revolutionaries, a certain level of culture, a firm moral sense and a clear understanding of the objectives pursued and the means that lead to the attainment of those objectives.

We did not know the true situation of the enemy forces, but it was possible that they would try to attack us, now that they were strongly entrenched in Aragon and Navarre. Elitist republicans like Martínez Barrios tried to create a Government in Valencia and to keep the troops of the garrison in their barracks, maintaining that they were loyal to the government. We had no guarantee of this, and a sneak attack on Catalonia combined with active support for the rebel assault by the troops in Valencia would mean disaster.

We had to threaten to send columns of militiamen to Valencia if the garrison was not disarmed, and as for the threat issued by Mola and Cabanellas, we resolved to go on the offensive and declare war on the rebels in their strongholds in order to take vengeance for the massacre of revolutionary workers and leftists, republicans and socialists, that they had ordered in Zaragoza and in all the counties of Rioja.

We set a date and a time, July 24 at 10:00 a.m. The staging area was the Paseo de Gracia. Durruti and Pérez Farraz, one as the political chief and the other as the military commander, would lead the first expedition. We calculated that we would need twelve thousand men to take Zaragoza.

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<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the Local Federation of Barcelona was too strict. The facts are as follows: this comrade, from Velilla del Ebro, had been denounced on account of his ideas and his activities by a married couple in his hometown and he had been tortured, persecuted and imprisoned repeatedly. When the movement of July 19 broke out, he discovered that this couple was in Barcelona and he decided that he would not stop short of taking vengeance on them. This couple even had CNT membership cards at the time.

Only a few hours earlier, we had no idea of how we were going to figure out where the militiamen would be mobilized, or where the weapons would come from, or where we would get the means of transport; but the column left for Zaragoza on the day and at the time we had set. While the militiamen were gathering, we called upon some officers and non-commissioned officers who had distinguished themselves on July 19 by fighting on our side, or who were known due to their conduct before that date. We found remnants of the Alcántara Regiment in the barracks at the Artillery Depot and at our request they offered volunteers, with captain Salavera at their head, to join the expedition with some machine guns and mortars. That unit was the only organized force that marched down the streets of Barcelona on that day amidst the cheers of the population.

In spite of the widespread enthusiasm, the column under Durruti and Pérez Farraz fell far short of our projected figure of 12,000 men. This was the first miscalculation. The war was supposed to absorb everything: men, arms, labor, thought, life, everything. It was thought that the first expeditionary column would have a surplus of combatants and that it would accomplish its mission without any problems. The three thousand volunteer militiamen who departed to perform this mission did so with an indescribable joy, pride and élan.

A person who could by no stretch of the imagination be counted among the victors of July characterized these first joyful warriors who left the city to sacrifice everything so that Spain and the world would have a better future, the future that others of their kind had already begun to prefigure in the factories, the farms, the mines and the schools. Fortunately for Catalonia and for Castille, these bold tribesmen who attacked tanks multiplied and, instead of waiting for fascism to attack, the emancipated people, occupying the most strategic positions, forced the enemy forces to dig in on the other side of the Ebro.

Within a few days, more than one hundred fifty thousand volunteers had signed up to fight wherever they were needed against the military revolt. And to organize this enormous mass of volunteers with even the least effectiveness, we could not rely on any vestige of the old army. We had ourselves been committed anti-militarists all our lives, and inveterate enemies of war. The first time we had ever set foot in a barracks was when we accepted the surrender of its defenders, symbols of a past that we wanted to leave behind us forever. The power of the will and the eagerness of the people were such that we mobilized as many men as there were rifles to give them, and we sent them to the front organized into centuries, which were like light infantry companies, and we tried to ensure that they were led by men who enjoyed a certain moral authority. After the first column, which established its general headquarters in Bujaraloz, we sent another column to the southern Ebro, which set up its general headquarters in Caspe; another departed for Tardienta, others for Huesca, etc.

Within two months we had formed a front more than three hundred kilometers long in Aragon, with thirty thousand armed militiamen assigned to the various columns who carried out operations with a good record of success, captured materiel and prisoners from the enemy, and did not yield one inch of territory. The only victories of any consequence before Guadalajara were those won on the Aragon front, formed and maintained by us. At the same time, we also carried out the expeditions to Mallorca, those that were under the command of Captain Bayo and those that were under the command of Juan Yagüe, the maritime worker, who organized the Roja y Negra [Red and Black] Column. These operations in Mallorca involved landings on the islands and, by putting pressure on the enemy's forces in the vicinity of Palma, prevented them from consolidating their victory in the Balearic Islands and also prevented the Italians from turning the islands into a naval and air base to be used against the Peninsula.

During the first few days following the victory of July, the Navarran colonel Jiménez de la Beraza, who had managed to cross the border into France in time to avoid falling into the hands of the *raquetés* and Mola's forces, arrived in Barcelona. He was asked what he thought of everything that had been done so far and he responded with a unique perspicacity:

"Militarily this is chaos, but it is a chaos that works. Don't disturb it!"

And he came over to our side, along with the few other professional officers who helped us, with their advice and support, organizing the available artillery batteries for the front, and finding loyal officers for them. Not all of them had the same intuition. The state-worshippers of the various parties and those who were dazzled by the cinematic fantasies about the Russian red army, utilizing every means to undermine the work of the people, turned "chaos", thanks to the Russians who arrived three or four months later, into "order", at least as seen from the vantage point of the "Gazette", and turned order into defeat.

Ever since the militias were transformed into an "army"—an army minus its officers and minus the spirit that had been destroyed in July—we have seen nothing but disasters. The new directors of the war were incapable of understanding, or else understood it all too well, that they could not simultaneously fight both the military rebellion and the people. They waged both wars simultaneously, and first they lost the people, and then they lost the cause that they wanted to defend.

Although it was done without our approval, party and trade union sections were formed within the militias, which were supposed to be a single, unified expression of the people in arms. It was the Marxist tendencies—Stalinists and so-called Trotskyists—which first split the anti-fascist people to line them up behind their party slogans. A column appeared at the front with the name of the Carlos Marx Column. What did Karl Marx have to do with our epic struggle? We christened a column that departed for Huesca with the name, Francisco Ascaso, the hero of the Barcelona July days, killed in battle at the Atarazanas barracks, but not for a partisan purpose, but simply to honor heroism and the revolution. The Catalonians had their Macías-Companys Column, the confederal comrades formed their sections within the columns organized by the Committee of Militias, and the Trotskyists had their own militias. It was not all harmony between these various party-based forces at the front. This excess of partisan feeling should undoubtedly have been avoided. The only column organized by the CNT and the FAI was the one that was conceived and sent to the front by García Oliver, *Los Aguiluchos* [Young Eagles]. All the others were formed at the instigation of the Committee of Militias and were answerable to its authority, to which, by the way, *Los Aguiluchos* also submitted.

There has been a lot of talk about the anarchists at the front being models of indiscipline and disorder. I must point out that the most well organized and most disciplined forces were always libertarian units and, during the period when we were at the front with the militias, they were also the only ones that were regularly manned, supplied and commanded. And after the new army was formed and after it was defeated by Franco's armies, the divisions that were composed predominantly of anarchists, with anarchist commanders, were seen marching into France in perfect military formation, a fact that even the enemy press was able to note at the time.

It was resolved to give every tendency represented on the Committee of Militias a barracks for recruitment and training. These barracks had been assaulted and taken by militants of the FAI and the CNT, which maintained their control over them until we decided that the time was right to hand them over.

In compliance with this resolution of the Committee of Militias, we gave Montjuich to the Esquerra, the Lepanto barracks to the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista [POUM], the Artillery Depot to the Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña [PSUC], and a former monastery to the Partido Federal Ibérico, subject to the condition that all of them would still remain under the supreme authority of the Committee of Militias. The CNT and FAI retained the barracks of Pedralbes, San Andrés, the cavalry barracks of Santiago, the barracks on the Avenida Icaria, and the Engineers Barracks. The barracks of the Quartermaster's Corps and the Artillery Depot were intended to remain free of particular party interference, due to the functions that they performed. The Marxists began to give their barracks new names, calling one the Carlos Marx barracks and the other the Lenin barracks. Then the men of the FAI and the CNT did not want to be left out, so they baptized one of their barracks as the Miguel Bakunin barracks, another they called the Salvochea barracks, another the Spartacus barracks, and so on.

Each of the militia training centers in the barracks named a political chief, who attended to the directives of the various parties that operated them, and a military commander, who was supposed to be without any party preference, although, and this was especially true of the Marxists, the process of choosing these commanders was arranged in such a way that persons who were party members or sympathizers were selected. Otherwise, we succeeded in performing these functions with a good degree of harmony and we carried out daily inspections of the barracks in order to remedy any defects and put an end to any abuses.

In order to provide for the provisioning of the population with food and other necessary goods we formed a Provisioning Committee as a core working group, independent of the Committee of Militias itself, which was exclusively devoted to questions of provisioning and clothing the militiamen at the front and behind the lines.

We continued to organize expeditionary columns and to attend as far as possible to the demands of all the fronts. In September we sent reinforcements to Madrid, a column of Civil Guards under the command of colonel Escobar, and a column of militiamen, approximately 3,000 men, equipped with rifles and ammunition, machine guns, and a few batteries of artillery. When the second column departed for Aragon we already had a disagreement with some of the most outstanding military officers of the libertarian organizations themselves. While it was our opinion that the most capable and popular comrades should depart for the front at the command of the centuries, battalions and columns, certain comrades expressed the view that we should preserve the most outstanding militants for after the war; according to them, we had suffered significant losses in July, which was true, and that if combat at the front were to deprive us of those that remained, we would be in a disadvantageous position with respect to the other parties and organizations after the war was over. We saw that this was a case of counting your chickens before they hatch. Maybe because we had more accurate information, or maybe because we had a more correct view of the situation, this opinion caused us such profound pain that we shed tears; tears of rage, or of grief.

The deaths of our most popular comrades did not weaken us for the future, but made us stronger. And after all, it was not a question of calculations, first you had to defeat the enemy, then we can debate, those of us who remain alive, or those who are still in any condition to do so. Our enemies did not warn us of either the magnitude of the threat they posed or the factors that they had in their favor! We were in a hurry to take the war to every corner of Spain, before the rebel military forces could go on the offensive. During those days in July, when it was a matter of victory or death, did we make calculations about the future and what we would do in the

future? The July days in Barcelona were not themselves decisive; it was still necessary to fight with the same fortitude and the same tranquil and heroic dedication to be victorious or to die. Why stockpile elements in the rearguard that are needed at the front? Why let the columns leave for the front without competent leaders, so that their commanding officers are chosen almost randomly, with a corresponding reduction of their effectiveness?

We had very few military officers on our side and the ones that we did have performed for the most part the functions pertaining to General Staff operations and technical advisors. Furthermore, the militiamen did not want professional officers, and distrusted them, a quite understandable attitude after what had just taken place.

But the overriding concern of almost the high-level leaders of our organizations was the same as that of the leaders of all the parties, none of which wanted to send their leading figures to the front, all of them reckoning with the same faulty reasoning that their chickens were already as good as hatched. A predominant environment of mean-spirited, backroom politics thus arose in the rearguard that would have nauseated the professional politicians of the old regime.

We regret that we must present a review of these paltry details at such a tragic historical moment, which stand out in such striking contrast with the example of such a noble and dignified people; but we cannot remain silent about the attitudes of our own people as well as those of other organizations that made it impossible for us to do what was advisable and what promised to deliver definitive victories during the first few months of the war; the dispatch to the front of strong contingents of mobile and special operations forces, since the forces we had in Aragon, for example, were no more than a thin skirmish line. Thirty thousand rifles, twenty or twenty-five artillery batteries, very few machine guns; this was not enough materiel for such a long front.

We cannot remain silent concerning the fact that, while we had only thirty thousand rifles on the Aragon front, there were around 60,000 rifles in the rearguard, in the possession of parties and various organizations, more armament than at the front, where the enemy was.

Not only once, but dozens of times, we pleaded with the libertarian movement to surrender the military weaponry that it possessed. Or that if it did not want to hand over the arms, then some of the men who bear those arms might at least volunteer for service at the front. To keep order in the rearguard, women, children and stones were enough. They argued that we could not disarm our own people, while the other parties and organizations were getting ready to stab us in the back. We disputed this assertion. The day when our comrades, possessors of the greatest quantity of weaponry, would decide to hand over their guns or go to the front, that same day we would also begin the disarmament of all the other parties and we promised to employ those who were most suspicious about the fulfillment of this promise to help implement it. We would also disarm or assign to frontline duties all those men enrolled in the various institutions of public and judicial order, the Civil Guard, the Assault Guard, and the *carabineros*. But we would not have the moral basis to proceed against the others as long as we did not take a first step ourselves by adopting a resolution to do the same.

The danger of counterrevolution to which our comrades alluded, was as far as we were concerned represented for the most part by those 60,000 rifles in the rearguard of a front that only had 30,000 rifles and that had to severely curtail its operations due to the lack of the most indispensable materiel for combat, since the guns lacked ammunition most of the time.

The complaints of the combatants were continuous, strident and completely justified. Durruti, whenever he came to Barcelona and saw so many people with guns on the streets, roared like a lion. One day, he found out that there were eight or ten machine guns in Sabadell. He politely

asked for them and his request was refused. Then he organized a century and sent it to Sabadell to obtain by force what the people with the machine guns in Sabadell would not hand over to the war effort voluntarily. Since Durruti told us what he intended to do, we were able to arrive in Sabadell before him and prevent a bloody battle, as we compelled the people in Sabadell to hand over a couple of machine guns, under the threat that if they refused we would join forces with Durruti's century that was en route.

These machine guns were in the hands of communist elements, but in Barcelona there were perhaps fifty machine guns in the hands of our own comrades. We did not have that many machine guns on the whole Aragon front. And that is not counting the machine guns under the control of the other parties and organizations.

We are committed only to the truth, and we would fail in our commitment if we were not to relate the feelings that embittered us and the failures that in our view were necessarily fatal.

The parties that had already begun to conspire on July 20 loudly proclaimed that all military weapons must be sent to the front, but they hid their own weapons and bought what they could, confidentially, from foreign suppliers. Their complaints would hardly be valid if the libertarian organizations, that is, the leaders of these organizations, had seriously resolved to hand over all military grade weaponry and to send their best men to the front. Within twenty-four hours, all the other parties and groups, willingly or by force, would have done the same. And the war would have been won in a few months.

The work of the Committee of Militias cannot be described in a few brief and fleeting notes. Establishing revolutionary order in the rearguard, organizing forces that were more or less fit to fight a war, training officers, operating a school for radio and signaling operations, feeding and clothing the militias, organizing the economy, participating in legislative and judicial proceedings; the Committee of Militias did all these things, it attended to everything: the transformation of peacetime industries into war industries, propaganda, relations with the Madrid government, support for all points of conflict, relations with Morocco, the cultivation of all available land, health and sanitation, the coast guard and border patrols, and a thousand other details of the most varied kind.

We paid the militiamen, their families, and the widows of the combatants; in short, a few dozen individuals attended to the tasks that a government would require an extremely expensive bureaucracy to perform.

The Committee of Militias was a Ministry of War in a time of war, and a Ministry of the Interior and a Ministry of Foreign Relations at the same time, serving as the inspiration for the formation of similar institutions in the economic and cultural domains. There was no more legitimate expression of the power of the people. It had to be fortified, it had to be helped so that it could more effectively perform its mission, since salvation lay in its power, which was the combined power of all its component groups and parties, which would otherwise detract from each other's power. In this dual interpretation, we were isolated from our own friends and comrades.

The great Dorado Montero said that the legislator or statesman who could abolish lawyers would perform a major service for the country. He thought that the abolition of that parasitic and corrupting institution is indispensable for a healthy administration of justice.

There is no question about it: we made haste to impose the resumption of productive life; we set in motion all the institutions, initiatives, and elements that could be of use to us for meeting the needs of the war and for the reorganization of the new economic and social order. When a serious case came to our attention, we met in council and reached a verdict. One day, a half



hour after a minor accident at the port involving one of our military detachments, we met in council and summarily convicted the commander of the unit in question and stripped him of his command, yielding to the proposals of the sailors themselves. It did not even occur to us that you need lawyers and judges for such matters. The writings of Joaquín Costa and Dorado taught us many years earlier about the sterility of that profession.

So why did we decide to reopen the Palace of Justice, which had been closed since the days of the revolt, and no one had since tried to open it? What purpose would a judicial power serve in the new way of life that was being organized? One day, Angel Samblancat appeared at our General Headquarters to assist us in the planned occupation of the Palace of Justice, which had to be subjected to the Committee of Militias.

We did not have time to reflect on what we would do with this instrument of all oppression, but Samblancat, although he was a lawyer, deserved our complete confidence and we issued an order to raid its offices, which were guarded by squads of the Civil Guard, on the pretext of conducting a search for weapons. Allowed to enter the Palace of Justice by the Civil Guards, the militiamen who accompanied Samblancat did not leave the building.

And so the Palace of Justice was reopened, and the organization of a so-called revolutionary justice system commenced. People's Tribunals were formed which judged crimes of rebellion and conspiracy against the Republic and against the new legal system. As soon as this function of the Tribunals was attributed to them, when the first opportunity arose the people's judges were replaced by the old professional judges, who had more expertise as judges, and this instrument that we had thoughtlessly restored to life became a weapon of the counterrevolution.

We were never very sympathetic towards either the judicial or the police apparatus. What a bad idea it was to allow the so-called revolutionary tribunals to operate, when the Committee of Militias itself could have performed this task of judging the crimes of the counterrevolution with better judgment and more certainty of seeing to it that our judgments were executed! We had assumed with the Committee of Militias a function of total people's power; why divide this power and surrender such essential custodial functions of the labor that we had taken upon ourselves?

The judges, even if they were members of the FAI, and the police, even if they were members of the CNT, were hardly to our liking; we found these functions somewhat repulsive. That is why we did not welcome the formation of the institution called the Control Patrols. We wanted to liquidate all the coercive institutions in the rearguard and send them to the front. A terrifying legend was soon woven around these Patrols. Most of the militiamen who staffed the Patrols were our comrades and they posed a threat, precisely because they were our comrades, to any possible schemes on the part of any particular group to impose its own political dominance. There were those who wanted to suppress these forces, and the first thing they had to do was discredit them.

It is possible that, among the 1,500 men in the Patrols in Barcelona, some of them exceeded their jurisdiction and were guilty of committing crimes; even if that was true, however, the proportion of wrongdoers was no higher in the Patrols than was ordinarily the case in the other repressive institutions. We are not defending the institution of the Patrols, just as we never defended the Civil Guard or the Assault Guard. Yet they did possess a sense of humanity and responsibility that kept them faithful to the preservation of the new revolutionary order.

If the Patrols had survived, they might have become just another police force, but the campaign of defamation to which they were subjected was without foundation. This campaign was waged mainly by the communists, and their subsequent activities, with the Chekas, the murders of prisoners, and secret prisons, revealed that the real reason for their criticisms had nothing to

do with their alleged desire to remedy the temporary defects of the Patrols. Free of any partisan bias in this question, somewhat hostile towards the Patrols at a time when our own organizations accepted them without any reservations, we defended them when those same organizations abandoned them to the repressive dictates of the central power, and regardless of how many mistakes they made or how often they went too far, which is to be expected from police work, we would never identify their operations with those of the institutions that replaced them, the career Assault Guards and policemen or the new special agents, at the dictate of Moscow.

On numerous occasions we had to intervene to obtain the release of people whose political neutrality convinced us of their innocence, and we were able to observe that these defendants were treated in a way that we were never treated: as human beings. There were in fact conspirators in the rearguard and naturally they must not be allowed free rein to inflict harm on us.

But the population that had lived through the first ten months of the revolution in Catalonia would be able to testify to the difference, from the point of view of repressive methods, of what came later, under the aegis of the “order” established by Prieto, by Negrín, by Zugazagoitia, with the torture chambers of the Communist Party or of the *Dirección General de Seguridad* [General Directorate of Security], which were one and the same, or with the horrors of the SIM, that perpetrated atrocities that not even the Civil Guard under the monarchy could have imagined.

And the campaign of slander waged against the Control Patrols was also extended to the members of the FAI. Once again, we do not say that there were never any cases where our comrades went too far or committed abuses. Even with regard to our own organization, we are far from applauding all of its actions.

It must be said that not even the FAI supported us in our insistence that all weapons must be sent to the front; but as for the slander and defamation directed against our comrades and broadcast to the four corners of the earth, we must proudly say that of all the parties and organizations, the one that exhibited the most generous and humane conduct after the cessation of the violent battles on July 20 was the FAI. At a plenary session of the Committee of Militias, which was attended by the republicans, the socialists and the communists, they angrily showed us safe conduct passes signed by the FAI and the Libertarian Youth for nuns, monks and priests allowing them to leave the country, without any in-depth investigations of the backgrounds of the individuals in question. There was nothing odd about that. It was precisely the most advanced sector of the Spanish revolutionary movement that was the most indifferent with respect to religious matters, and the hatred of clericalism, which had always been entirely justified in Spain, was hardly to be found among our ranks.

Take a look at the literature we published over the last twenty-five years; take a look at our press and you will note the scarcity of anti-clerical diatribes. In other countries, and even in France, the anarchists have published journals devoted exclusively to denouncing the lie of religion.

Our organization in Spain has never been fertile soil for such views. Perhaps this indifference towards religion was an error when the clergy wielded such great power and expressed such decidedly regressive political views; it is, however, a fact, and we must admit it.

The victory of July deprived the Church of its wealth and its functions—why should we persecute its servants? The nuns and monks expressed their desire to leave the country and we did not see any reasons to keep them there against their will; thus, patrols manned by members of other parties often discovered safe-conduct passes permitting emigration in the possession of nuns and monks who did not feel a spontaneous desire to join in the work of the people.

Was it not better for them to leave Spain, rather than to have remained there in a state of continuous conspiracy? How many people came to us to tell us that their relatives—priests, monks or nuns—were living with them, and they wanted us to help them! Has anyone ever heard of even a single case when we spoke or acted in such a way as to summarily and categorically refuse to help such people? Have we not given everyone the highest guarantees of respect as long as they did not meddle with the affairs of the new revolutionary order?

On one occasion a group of railroad workers reported to us that they had arrested eight heavily-armed young priests, who, when asked why they were bearing weapons, arrogantly responded that they were in the service of Christ the King and of fascism. We immediately intervened with the intention of taking the suspects into custody before an extremely predictable fate befell them. When we arrived, one of them asked us if we would let him recite the Lord's Prayer. Why not? After his prayer, he faced us, saying: "You are better than us, because we would not have allowed you to do even this."

Having gone with the intention of saving them, the angry and hateful demeanor they displayed caused us to turn around and leave and return to our work. We do not know what happened to them.

In the assault on the Simancas barracks, in Gijón, a similar case arose. A sniper was shooting with deadly accuracy at militiamen from a safe vantage point. Several houses were raided and in one of them a priest was found with a smoking gun in his hand. He understood that his final hour had come and he serenely said to his captors:

"I am at peace—I killed nine of you!"

A Church that fought like that for the worst causes has nothing to do with religion and cannot be defended against the rage of the people. A revolutionary organization like the FAI, however, never considered, not before and not after July 19, that it had to intervene against it, once it was deprived of its instruments of spiritual and material oppression. The FAI respected everyone's beliefs and called for a regime of toleration and peaceful coexistence of religions and political and social beliefs. Among the military leaders on our side, general Escobar, formerly a colonel, the commander of the 19<sup>th</sup> Regiment of the Civil Guard, hero of the July days, was profoundly religious. He followed up all his decisions with the words, "God willing". The militiamen of the FAI were at first shocked by this kind of talk, but then grew fond of this man who fought at their side yet held such sincere religious beliefs.

As for the convenient ploy of blaming members of the FAI for wrongdoing, we would like to recall two incidents that reveal a little of what lies behind the curtain. And this is apart from the certainty that, if any of our comrades were to have been convicted of criminal activity, they would not have kept their heads attached to their shoulders for very long.

A unit of the Control Patrols composed of some of our militiamen from Casa Antúnez, at the foot of Monjuich, noticed that an automobile passed by their position two or three times, whose passengers were apparently militiamen along with one other individual who looked like a member of the bourgeoisie. Their papers were in order and the Patrol allowed them to proceed.

Sometimes the bourgeois individual returned with them, but at other times he did not. After this car had passed through their checkpoint several times, the Patrol ordered its occupants to get out of the car so that they could verify their identities. They turned out to be common criminals who had escaped from prison during the first days of the revolt. Brandishing the red and black

flag, dressing up like militiamen, and obtaining some documentation that would authorize them to extort money from merchants and businessmen, they even killed their victims after getting their money, to prevent them from denouncing them to the real authorities. As soon as these persons were determined to be common criminals, the members of the Patrol shot them on the spot and escorted their intended victim to his home.

On another occasion, months after the July days, in Pueblo Nuevo, a neighborhood entirely controlled by people belonging to the CNT and the FAI, a big car flying the libertarian flag stopped in front of an expensive-looking house. The occupants of the car went into the house; no one in the neighborhood really paid attention to what was going on, assuming that these men were on an official mission. When the car came to a Control Patrol checkpoint, it was stopped and the driver's papers were checked. Everything was in order.

"We're from the FAI", the passengers said.

The members of the Control Patrol that stopped the car were themselves members of our local affiliates of the FAI, and this spontaneous declaration immediately aroused their suspicions. Not wasting any time, the men in the Patrol aimed their weapons at the men in the car and ordered them to get out; then they disarmed them and found valuable objects that appeared to have been recently stolen. They checked their identification papers and discovered that they were members of the PSUC, the main force behind the campaign of slander directed against us in the national and international press.

The members of the Patrol determined where the objects were stolen, and on the next morning the perpetrators were found on the side of the road to Moncada. It was only long after this act of summary justice was committed that we learned the details. Our indignation knew no limits.

Our men were enraged by hearing these people claim that they were from the FAI without actually being members of the organization, and by the fact that the burglary took place in a house in Pueblo Nuevo, and finally by the fact that the perpetrators were members of a Party that was a declared and irreconcilable enemy of the FAI. They did not want to forego the pleasure of executing justice with their own hands.

And, considering the fact that if the incident were to become public knowledge, they would have to hand over the detainees, they silenced them instead. In this situation, a significant role was played by both the customary practices of revolutionary struggles and the ethics of every clandestine and conspiratorial movement, which forbids one from denouncing even enemies. In this case, however, if we had ourselves obtained custody of the criminals, we would have been able to teach the Party to which they belonged, a Party that delighted in accusing us of every kind of crime, a good lesson. Nor would they have escaped the punishment that they deserved, but it would have been imposed in the full light of day by the responsible institutions. With regard to the way the Pueblo Nuevo Control Patrols operated, however, we had to bite our tongues and keep quiet.

What can we say that has not already been said about Antonio Martín, the commander of the border guards at Puigcerdá? Martín had been a smuggler and had successfully run guns from France since the time of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. He knew the border better than almost anyone and it was determined that it was there that his services would be most useful to us. While he served in that position, life was impossible for smugglers. No one passed through his zone except duly authorized individuals, or those who were performing missions for the responsible institutions. How many very interesting stories did Martín uncover on the border, some of which

involved very high level personalities? He soon became the object of a blood-curdling legend that depicted his activities in the worst light.

He also complied with our order to prevent the volunteers for the so-called international brigades from entering Spain, an order we issued because we did not need men for the struggle, but weapons. He came to Barcelona to report to us, to report to his friends and comrades, not to the authorities. One can lie to the authorities, but not to one's comrades, face to face. He told us the truth about everything that was going on at the border; certain elements were simply trying to make some money on the frontier—hence the opposition he faced.

As for his notorious reputation as a “murderer”, which his enemies had disseminated far and wide, he confessed to us that he had not taken his pistol out of its holster since July 20. It was true, but calumny followed its course and one day he went to a village in Cerdaña to pacify the anger of townsfolk whose traditional livelihoods as smugglers had been jeopardized by his vigilance, and he was assassinated with all the treachery characteristic of cowards. We went to Cerdaña on a couple of official visits, in the name of the Government of Catalonia, once in the company of J. Tarradellas.

Concerning Martín's unimpeachable conduct we always had ample testimony.

At other times the occasional odd character would pop up who knew how to throw stones and then look innocent. We have, for example, come up against the after-effects of the secret accords of the Masonic Lodges. It was due to their rivalries and internal disputes that Barriobero was imprisoned and then abandoned to be captured by Franco, not to mention other mysterious disappearances. There were also a few military commanders or commanders of the various police forces concerning whom we had no unequivocal evidence of their disloyalty, but who nonetheless aroused our suspicions by their sudden taste for demagoguery. It was these elements that ordered the assassination one night of one of our closest collaborators, captain Escobar, and his adjutant commander Martínez. Escobar had reported to us on the attitudes of the staff officers and commanders of the old army and of the Civil Guard whom we were thinking of using for the militias.

Two years later we discovered the perpetrators of these assassinations: they had been told that Escobar and Martínez were traitors and double agents. We immediately had a good idea of the identity of the real instigators of these assassinations and we were not mistaken. Just when we were ready to proceed against and punish the guilty, we lost control over the militias and the case was closed, to our disgust, as we knew that demagogues who were more dangerous than the occasional Franco supporter were making their appearance in many of the anti-fascist institutions, and that these demagogues did not hesitate to irresponsibly incite elements that were unaware of the fact that they were being manipulated.

No dictatorship has ever been creative, nor can any dictatorship ever be creative, especially in countries like Spain, even if we were to be the dictators. A revolution must arouse energies and give free rein to all fertile initiatives; it must not be a force for regimentation and tyranny if it wants to ensure that it is following the path of social progress.

Persons who hold any kind of power whatsoever have a natural propensity to abuse the force they have at their disposal; and the abuse of this force is always employed for the suppression of those with whom they disagree, or against those who have interests that are different from theirs.

We had been masters of the situation in Catalonia since July; we could have done anything yet we did not take advantage of the incomparable opportunities that we had except for the purpose

of fighting the war and engaging in revolutionary construction. We did not use our power as an instrument of oppression except against the enemy upon whom we had declared war. No one can accuse us of having been disloyal collaborators or of having used our influence to oppress or exterminate any of the other tendencies that subscribed to the anti-fascist cause.

We committed more than one mistake, and were guilty in more than one instance of misunderstanding the situation; we had no qualms about publicly admitting and denouncing the errors that came to our attention. But the biggest mistake that we will be accused of making must be that of having been loyal and sincere in our every public action, even while those whom we thought were on our side were sharpening the daggers of treason in the shadows. Furthermore, this is the only mistake that we will commit again in the future.

# **Industry, transport and agriculture in the hands of the workers—The revolution in the economy—The agrarian collectives—The revolution in culture—War and revolution**

Concerning certain matters about which we cannot remain silent, it will be the victors in the Spanish conflict that will inflict harm on the people of July 19–20, but history and living memory will cause the great constructive ability of eternal Spain, an ability that is unique in the world and especially in countries that have suffered as we have, to survive as a definitive acquisition. Even for those who were the most fervent believers in the virtues of our people, it was an unforgettable revelation.

From what mysterious sources of inspiration did so many marvels arise spontaneously, prodigies of common accord and efficient economic reconstruction, in industry, agriculture, mining, and transport, everywhere? There is no doubt that in this eternal Spain, crushed for centuries by foreign political and religious rule, a great number of seeds of resurrection were sown, but the main driving force was the spirit of the people themselves, ennobled by its suffering in grievous servitude. And this seed was sown all over the land, from heart to heart, from brother to brother and from parents to children.

The glitter of the so-called literary generations hardly affected the soul of the people; however, few were the Andalusian peasants, even though they were illiterate, who did not have, even if only in private, something of the memory, of the yearning, of the fervent apostolic mission of a Fermín Salvochea.

This Spain, which does not feature prominently in any bibliographies, which has no flashy orators in the legislature, which has no other representatives than anonymous apostles, victims of the most atrocious persecutions and the most inhuman martyrdoms, was unknown. Very few foreigners plumbed these depths, nor did very many of the conscious and unconscious representatives of anti-Spanish Europeanization, whether on the right or the left, know anything about what had germinated at the cost of enormous sacrifices in the Spanish soul. Every region, every major town, every trade and every industry had its own Fermín Salvochea, the hero and martyr of a long-awaited resurrection of the spirit of the race.

All of its enemies may curse and denounce the epic of July 1936 to March 1939; but although it would be very much to their liking, they cannot be ignorant of the fact that during that period the Spanish people, by intuition and conviction, embarked on the true road of economic and social reconstruction, that the capacity and efficiency of organized labor in industry and agriculture have never before been surpassed and never will be surpassed unless Spain once again takes that same road, the road of July, which encountered just as much incomprehension and just as much

animosity in the Republic of April 14, 1931 as it did among the leaders of the military revolt of 1936.

Our victory necessarily entailed a shift of the locus of leadership of the economy and public life, for the latter at least during the first few days of the new system, away from the men who represented the interests of capitalism and who were associated with the military revolt.

Most of the leading figures of big industry, the major landowners and the big financiers, had fled the country, and it was revealed that the total amount of capital flight from bank accounts during the two weeks preceding the military revolt was in excess of 90,000,000 pesetas, which proves their complicity and their knowledge of what was being planned.

At six a.m. on the morning on July 19, we took over the Casa de Cambó and the Fomento del Trabajo [the headquarters of the Employers Association], a veritable fortress, when we saw the threat of a possible enemy attempt to advance via the Paseo de Gracia to link up with the barracks of Avenida Icaria and the Military General Headquarters [*Capitania General*]. All the offices had been totally evacuated, right down to the service staff. The big capitalists had fled in anticipation of the revolt, some due to their high profile and their past, others because they were afraid of the ravages of the civil war that they had subsidized.

The workers took possession of all social wealth, factories, mines, surface and maritime transport, the estates of the big landowners [*latifundistas*], public services and the most important branches of trade and commerce. Workers control committees were spontaneously organized in all enterprises, in which manual and technical workers collaborated, together with, on many occasions, the former owners who came to terms with the new situation and wanted to be employed within the new revolutionary economy, to give it a name that distinguishes it from the previous kind of economy, and to be workers or technicians like everyone else.

It is hard to imagine the complexity of the problems that this social convulsion caused, with the breakdown of all the old relations and the creation of a new way of life. And all of this took place simultaneously with the prosecution of a war that forced us to send 30,000 men to the Aragon front, not to count the auxiliary units in the rearguard. The presence of 30,000 men on the front required the efforts, in industry and agriculture, of two hundred thousand men. This entire mechanism had to be created and organized from scratch, without the most indispensable raw materials and machinery, under the worst imaginable conditions.

Some industries reached efficiency sooner than others. For example, we should call attention to the magnificent organization of urban transport, rail transport and maritime transport. Under the former administration we would never have expected these services to be so perfectly and precisely operated as they were after July. Besides good organization, there was also good will, the conscious support and widespread emulation of the cause that we defended that the old system could not coax from the workers with the lure of higher wages alone.

We must also point out that many of these workers, the railroad workers, the urban rail workers and the sailors, for example, were some of the lowest-paid workers in Spain, yet they nonetheless agreed to continue to work for the same poverty wage, despite the vastly more intense labor that they had voluntarily imposed on themselves, until many months after they had taken the management of their industries into their own hands. And even during the last days of the war, when the devaluation of the peseta had raised prices to astronomical levels, ticket prices for transportation services were still the same as they were before the war.

If the transport industry as a whole did not operate on the day after our victory in July with the same number of scheduled stops as it did the day before, nor did it strictly adhere to the



schedules under the new management of the revolutionary workers, the reason was not because the workers were incapable of meeting these demands, but due to our need to conserve fuel for military transport.

And the whole fleet, both the merchant marine and the navy, in the hands of the sailors and technicians, demonstrated a capacity for unlimited achievements. Nothing could stand in its way; as long as the sailors of our navy had control over the ships, the sea was ours, initiative and the element of surprise were in our hands. When, thanks to the work of the Russians and their agents in the central government, an attempt was made to impose “order” in the navy, we lost our rule of the seas. In the merchant marine not only did heroism attain new heights, but so did the effectiveness with which every ship could be used for the service of the new Spain.

And while the transport system demonstrated sufficient evidence of ability and responsibility when it was transferred from the management of the former business owners to the management of the workers and technicians themselves, the transformation of peacetime to military production in industry was carried out with astonishing speed. Everyone knows that in order to wage a modern war, the support of a large industrial base operating 24 hours a day is indispensable.

The mechanism of the new economy was simple: each factory created its new managerial department on the basis of its blue collar, administrative and technical personnel. The factories within each industry associated at a local level and formed the Local Federation of their industry. All the Federations of all the industries together constituted something along the lines of a Local Council of the Economy, in which all the centers of production, communications, exchange, health and sanitation, culture and transport were represented. These Local Councils of the Economy sent representatives to a Regional Council of the Economy, and each Local Federation of each industry was also represented on a Regional Federation of Industry, and then a permanent link was established between the Regional Federations of Industry and the Regional Councils of the Economy.<sup>1</sup>

Even the boldest capitalist program, at the highest level of capitalist organization, has never been able to attain, in the advanced countries, such a degree of efficiency, taking advantage of one hundred percent of all the possibilities of each industry, on the local, regional and national scale.

For many people, the revolution is something that happens in the streets; fighting on the barricades, the revenge of the people, and everything else associated with a major upheaval in the age-old routine.

We never confused the revolutionary stage-scenery of the first phase with the essence of the revolution, and we have not hesitated to set forth the orientation needed to really carry out the revolution that the masses were discussing and for which they had long yearned, and which was also viewed with a great deal of sympathy among non-proletarian sectors of the population.

For us, the revolution was above all the creation of wealth and its equitable distribution to the whole population, the increase of general well-being thanks to the contributions and harmonious

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<sup>1</sup> Concerning the general outlines of the new economy ruled by the manual workers, white collar employees and technicians of each industry, see our book, *El organismo económico de la revolución. Como vivimos y como podríamos vivir en España* [The Economic Institutions of the Revolution. How We Live and How We Will Live in Spain], Barcelona, 1936, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 1938 [originally written in 1935, this book was translated into English and published under the title, *After the Revolution: Economic Reconstruction in Spain Today*, Greenberg, New York, 1937—Translator’s supplemental note]. The Extended Plenum on economic questions held in Valencia in January 1938 by the institutions of the CNT filled in the details of the general outlines concerning economic organization that we had envisaged in that book.

and efficacious organization of the common efforts, the labor of justice. We did not want a social transformation that would subsist in poverty, but one that would enable everyone to enjoy a higher standard of living; and this standard of living to which we aspired had to be conquered, not with weapons of war, but with the instruments of labor in the factories, the mines, the fields, and the schools.

The war was a terrible misfortune, an obstacle on the road, a necessity imposed by the defense of our newly-won privileges, rather than a creative element of the real revolution.

From the very first day of the war, we had to face an alarming shortage of raw materials, in a region that has hardly any minerals, fiber crops or hydrocarbon resources. We lacked coal for industry and transport. The average consumption of coal in Catalonia was between five and six thousand tons per day, and the only operational mines, providing low-quality coal, hardly yielded, even with more intensive exploitation, three hundred tons per day. In a few months we managed to raise this figure to a thousand; even so, however, the shortage of coal was a constant tragedy, especially with regard to the shortage of the higher grades of coal used for the metal industry.

Asturias could have made a major contribution, but one of its leaders, Amador Fernández, responded to our requests by saying that he would rather see the coal of Asturias pile up at the pitheads or on the docks at Musel than to see it fall into the hands of the Catalonians; in the meantime, Asturias lacked the textiles that we had in abundance and other elements that we offered to provide.

We drew up plans for, and took the first few steps towards, the electrification of the rail system, and while we were aware of all the difficulties that this task would entail, we were nonetheless also aware of the vast amount of electric energy at our disposal and the consequent rapid amortization of all the expenses that would be incurred by electrification. If, someday, Spain, regardless of the type of regime that rules over it, were to desire to take a decisive step forward in the direction of progress and civilization, the electrification of its rail system, which would entail a reduction in the cost of rail travel and transport in general and the construction of numerous new electric power generation plants, and therefore dams, factories, etc., would be one of its first steps.

We initiated a project to produce textiles from fiber crops that had not yet been used for this purpose to replace some of the cotton that we lacked; some of these programs will continue to be pursued in Spain, regardless of the type of political regime. We built large industrial facilities to process flax, hemp, esparto grass, rice straw and broom.

We built large cellulose factories that used domestic raw materials, and with regard to the metal and chemical industries, the fact that we did the same thing right in the middle of a revolution and a war must have impressed even our enemies, who have now found themselves in possession of an improved industrial base, but one that is twice as large as it was before the war. Produced for the first time in Spain were: metallic sodium, picric acid, ethylene dibromide, octanol, bromine...; substitutes were manufactured for numerous medicines that were formerly obtained from foreign countries. A large number of new factories were built, and factories that already existed were enlarged, in Levante and especially in Catalonia, by the industrial trade unions or at the initiative of the institutions that were created to promote war production.

In addition to the creation of these new enterprises, almost all industrial sectors experienced an unprecedented improvement of their entire industrial apparatus. What feats were not accomplished in terms of concentration and specialization? The wood products industry, for example,

which began with cutting down the trees in the forests and ended in the furniture showrooms, introduced a rationalized system of labor, the assembly line, and thus took advantage of a 50 percent increase in the productivity of human labor.

And how can we not faithfully record, not to cite a thousand other cases, the organization of the dairy industry in Barcelona, which had no reason to envy the most modern dairies in the world, and which was entirely the work of the revolution? And on the day that, by the initiative of the state or private capitalism, something similar is achieved with respect to organization and efficiency that compares with what the Regional Federation of Peasants of Levante accomplished, with every kind of specialized agricultural labor, with the processing of its crops, with the distribution and marketing of its products, with its research laboratories, with its experimental farms, with its schools to train administrative staff for agrarian collectives, etc., we will then admit that the same result can be attained by other roads than the one we advocated. And this result must be achieved, by the efforts of whoever is capable of it, so that Spain can once again be the emporium of wealth, of prosperity and of culture that it once was in times past.

In certain industries it took longer to introduce the fresh air of the modern organization of labor, but we finally created strong foundations. In the clothing industry, for example. At first we had problems meeting the orders placed by the army, although we lacked neither fabric nor personnel; but the obstacles that slowed us down were merely so many lessons for us to learn and this sector, too, traditionally represented by small establishments and by domestic work, was organized in such a way that it was capable of meeting all the demands that were placed upon it.

We laid the foundations for exploiting the natural wealth of the country and its underground resources, which are not abundant in Catalonia, but which are capable of providing a respectable yield. Major deposits of lead were subjected to exploitation, the entire lead industry was organized and lead ore was sold to foreign buyers right in the middle of the war. Copper ore was also mined, smelted and electro-plated; manganese mines were opened that were previously thought to be unviable. We even began to search for oil with antiquated and inadequate drilling rigs.

Never before were so many economic initiatives undertaken in such a brief period of time. Their systematic elaboration put us on the road of a coordinated economy, and at the same time made us aware of what we were able to achieve in every respect and what was possible to achieve in the future. Seldom have those who have intervened in political life, as governmental professionals, done so with full knowledge of the economic possibilities of the country. Even in our revolutionary ranks, we had devoted much more effort and attention to the specific challenge of preparing for the insurrection than we did to real preparation for the constructive period after the revolution.

This explains the difficulties and the uncertainty of all our first steps. We understood that our mission was not that of the typical politics, that of reinforcing the power of your own party and filling up all the government positions with your party's supporters; we believed that we had to devote ourselves, above all, to increasing the wealth and mobilizing all forces and all intelligence in the service of the revolution.

By way of each individual preconception, a magnificent unity of men of every class and every party was gradually forming, men who understood, as we did, that the revolution is something different from fighting in the streets and that, in a real revolution, those who feel predisposed in their hearts and are willing to contribute their physical, intellectual, administrative or technical effort to the common labor have nothing to lose.

The spontaneously generalized movement of confiscation of the social wealth by its manual, administrative and technical staff, in order to place it at the exclusive service of society, found a legal expression, on October 24, 1936, in the Collectivization Decree drafted by the Council of the Economy of Catalonia. This Decree was followed by other supplementary decrees that, taken as a whole, give us an approximate picture of the new economy of Catalonia.

Because the Committee of Militias, which at first had to address and resolve every problem, was gradually being transformed into a Ministry of War during wartime, in order to disencumber it of functions that could only obstruct the performance of its most important mission, we created a Council of the Economy of Catalonia, whose resolutions could not be vetoed by the National Ministry of the Economy. It operated under the authority of the Minister of the Economy in the Government of the Generalitat, and it was also composed of representatives from all the parties and organizations. It was this institution that was the source of all legislation of an economic nature that was implemented during the war and the revolution in the autonomous region of Catalonia.

We established a division of labor that was defined by the following categories: fuels and sources of energy, textiles, metals, construction, graphic arts and paper, finance, banks and foreign exchange, vocational training, chemicals, health and sanitation, etc.

The work performed by this Council of the Economy was impressive with regard to both its scope and its results, although we did not subscribe to the opinion of those who think that legislation implemented within the legal framework of a State is incapable of any lasting achievement. As long as it was possible for us to do so, by way of our own direct participation in the system, we sought to ensure that the Council of the Economy's initiatives would legitimize what was being done on a daily basis in economic practice, and thereby promoted the maximum degree of respect for the supreme legislator, the people themselves. In this Council of the Economy, we at first served in the Department of Fuels and Sources of Energy, and in the performance of this role we proposed, as early as August or September 1936, that bomb-proof electric power generating stations should be constructed for Catalonia, whose main power plants were always in danger of being destroyed; despite the fact that our proposal and credits to finance it were approved, our successors in office said that our plans were unrealistic and they failed to implement the project, and it was the shortage of electric power that was one of the factors that led to the loss of the war. Andrés Nin headed the Department of Textiles; he always worked harmoniously with us and he was always on our side on major questions of principle.

What was most important, however, regardless of what was being studied and what legislation was being proposed by the Council of the Economy, was the creative labor of the workers and peasants themselves. During the first year of the revolution, forty percent more land was being cultivated than during the years immediately prior to the war. Every scrap of land was planted, no matter how unproductive.

The most unexpected development with regard to the question of economic construction was the phenomenon of the agrarian collectives. They were formed spontaneously throughout republican Spain, in Catalonia as well as in Aragon, in Levante as well as in Andalusia and Castille. No one—no party, no organization—issued the order to form collectives; but the peasantry proceeded with determination along this very road, with a confidence and a decisiveness that surprised and filled with admiration even those who had high expectations for the spirit of the Spanish people.

We must also point out that, in the practical implementation of this collective project, of the pooling of labor, of livestock, of land, and of machinery, there were no socialists or anarchists; all acted in the same way and competed with one another in emulation and understanding.

The research laboratories and testing facilities of the Peasants Federation of the Central Region were superior to those of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the Madrid Government itself had to use our agronomists and seek out their advice. The famous Agrarian Reform of the Republic was set aside and forgotten like old furniture and the only collectives that prospered were those formed by the peasants themselves, either by consolidating their individual parcels of land or by confiscating the large estates whose owners had fled to foreign countries or had joined the military revolt.

The improvements made to the land, the irrigation works, the new construction for housing and warehouses and workshops, are the enduring testimony of the work of the peasants, of their surprising progressive leap forward, and of their capacity for organization and ambition.

We had one inveterate enemy of the agrarian collectives: the Russians and their agents in the Spanish Communist Party. They went so far as to create dissident peasant organizations to undermine the work of the collectives in Levante, and these organizations were enthusiastically supported by the Ministry of Agriculture. They were a total failure, because the peasants of the UGT and those of the CNT had the same interests and the same aspirations; their alliance frustrated the plans of the communists. The communists then opened up the floodgates of calumny, claiming that violence had been used to force the peasants to join the collectives. We intervened, in both our official as well as our unofficial capacities, in cases where individuals complained of such abuses; we saw the truth with our own eyes and we had to defend the peasants against those who slandered their achievements.

We nonetheless issued a decree making it easier for individuals who wanted to do so to resign from the collectives, with their individual share of land and tools, seeds and animals. Hardly anyone left the collectives—quite the contrary. And as an example of the achievements of this attempt to break up the peasantry, we present the following fact: the peasant collective of Hospitalet de Llobregat, with 1,500 heads of family, proposed that those who were not happy with the collective would be given the opportunity to leave, with land and tools, because collectives can only exist as collectives of people who are willing members of the collective. Out of 1,500 people, five chose to leave, and these five individuals were not peasants but day laborers; even the former landowners did not want to leave the collective. And the five persons who did leave the collective were compelled to associate with one another, in turn, in order to work in common the land that the collective had given them.<sup>2</sup>

Agrarian collectivism, to whose history, both theoretical and practical, Joaquín Costa has devoted a large volume, is consubstantial with the spirit of the Spanish people. The collectives of Aragon, which embraced almost the entire peasant population of liberated Aragon, were later bloodily suppressed by the communist divisions in a clear attempt at provocation, a provocation that, nonetheless, did not work out as planned; the collectives were almost immediately restored, proving that the peasants really were in favor of them. In Aragon, all the collectives were formed

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<sup>2</sup> Augustin Souchy has written some books summarizing his visits to the agrarian collectives: *Colectivizaciones. La obra constructiva de la revolución española* [The Collectives. The Constructive Work of the Spanish Revolution], Barcelona, 1937; and *Entre los campesinos de Aragón: el comunismo libertario en las comarcas liberadas* [Among the Peasants of Aragon: Libertarian Communism in the Liberated Counties], Valencia, 1937. [English translations of both of these books are available at the website of Libcom.org—translator's note.]

by members and sympathizers of the CNT and, because it was impossible to intervene in them as a political party, in view of the fact that, on some day in the future, the economic organization must absorb and liquidate the separate existence of the parties themselves, and even liquidate the difference between the CNT and the UGT, in order to give birth to a single party and a single organization—Spain, the master of its fate and of its will—the hatred of all those who aspired to create party-based dictatorships as opposed to the creation of the Spanish people that will forever reject such dictatorships, was manifested with a terribly lethal virulence.

For many years before the July movement, we maintained that for a revolution to be really beneficial and for it to be firmly rooted in positive creations, the city must be brought closer to the countryside, and the industrial worker must be brought closer to the peasant.

It was our opinion after July 19 that neither efforts nor sacrifices should be spared to resolve this age-old historical divorce in a harmonious unity.

For a very brief period of time—and to find any vestiges of this we must look hundreds of years into the past—the peasants had a dominant position in the economic, political and social life of the people. Generally, the agricultural workers—as domestic serfs, as glebe serfs, as tenant farmers, as *rabassaires*, or as slaves properly speaking—constituted an underclass, a class of pariahs burdened with numerous duties, but with very few rights.

History can be interpreted in many ways, and there are fashionable interpretations for every taste. One such interpretation explains the past in the light of peasant servitude and the peasants' spasmodic attempts to cast off their heavy yoke.

The peasant was, and still is for the most part, a beast of burden from the economic point of view, a submissive contributor to the treasury of the State, and a source of cannon fodder for the armies of kings and capitalists. Must this always be so? Is it not a fact that July 19 necessarily heralded the overcoming of the traditional divorce between the city and the countryside, between industry and agriculture?

From a sense of human solidarity and justice, and from the understanding of the far-reaching implications of this question, we anarchists were obliged to do everything in our power to bring about the brotherhood of the city and the countryside in a single aspiration for liberty and for productive and dignified labor. We were aware of the fact that unless this result is obtained, a revolution based on justice is not possible, and that the barometer of social progress is the degree to which the peasants are sincerely engaged in new realities and new ideas.

We might be appointed to cabinet positions, occupy high-level public offices, and have the unanimous support of the industrial workers. If we neglect the conquest of the hearts and minds of the peasants, however, it will all be for naught, and economic, social and political progress will only be a façade, an illusion, and a fraud.

With respect to the peasants, they have been systematically overlooked in their rural enclaves. Not even modern socialism made much headway among them, except in southern Spain, in contrast to its successful penetration of the main industrial centers. The welter of definitions and interpretations of the problem of the countryside that one finds in socialist doctrines is quite unconvincing. The conduct of the capitalist regime and the capitalist, monarchist or republican State merits even less consideration. And when these regimes have actually paid attention to the peasants, they did so only in order to exploit their ignorance and their good faith, to put the squeeze on them more effectively for the profit of the ruling castes. They only gave any thought to the peasants for the purpose of poisoning them from cradle to grave with the opium of religion and the hereafter; they thought of them as a docile source of taxes and customs duties, tithes and

first fruits; they gave some thought to them in order to take their sons from them to serve the king or some other state abstraction; they paid attention to the peasants in order to extract from them, for a good price, the fruit of their labor without any limitations or restrictions.

This is how the whole civilization and all its progress and culture that we are so proud of looks like to the peasant: the priest who brutalized and deceived him; the tax collector to whom he gave all his savings; the Civil Guard that terrorized him. And yet there are still people who complain that the peasant is mistrustful and that this mistrust has been passed down by generations of peasants above all with respect to everything that comes from the cities. Even when the cities bring them liberty and justice, those who have so often been at the receiving end of treachery and deceit are right to look with suspicion on liberty and justice themselves!

They are not responsible for their mistrust, for their inherited, instinctive suspicion. The blame falls upon those of us who have turned our backs on the countryside to enjoy ordinary pleasures or the higher pleasures of culture, or a higher standard of living, in the cities; the culpability adheres to those of us who, capable of doing so and actually mandated to do so by our principles, have not carried out the same work of propaganda and persuasion among the workers of the land that we have among the workers in industry; the fault is ours, all of us who have tolerated the ongoing expropriation of the peasants in the name of God, of the King, or of the Republic, without doing anything on their behalf, as we did whenever it was a question of the exploitation and repression of the industrial workers.

We had to harvest the fruits of the oblivion to which we abandoned the peasant. That is, not having sown when the time was right, we cannot expect abundant harvests.

The revolution had to suffer the consequences of this dualism.

The success or failure of a revolution can be due to many causes. One of the most important is the nature of its agrarian policy. If it does not carry out its policies in such a way that the peasants willingly and actively, and even enthusiastically, support the new situation, the revolution will be irremediably lost. And to get their support, one must never for even a single minute forget that there is a major difference between the educational level of the industrial worker and that of the peasant; and that the same words have different meanings or are interpreted differently in the city and in the country, and that facts that are favorable for one side may be harmful to the other.

Generally speaking, with respect to the question of how to get our ideas across to the suspicious and mistrustful peasant, who is suspicious and mistrustful for good reasons, we have to employ an instrument of propaganda that is always effective, even if it seems much slower: the power of example, persuasion by everyday practice. We will always lose the game by following the road of violence, even if we crush all open resistance on the part of the peasants.

Without the sympathy and the active support of the agrarian population, all economic, political and social revolutions will collapse from impotence. Even if they think they are stronger because of their armies, even if they are encouraged by the relative ease with which they can suppress any outbreak of discontent! The history of all times and all revolutions teaches us that, on the road of progress, one cannot effectively proceed any further than where the peasants are capable of going voluntarily.

Almost spontaneously, everywhere, without awaiting directives, resolutions or recommendations, we have seen agrarian collectives arise that were composed, in their vast majority, by men from rural areas who had somehow been exposed to revolutionary ideas or who preserved latent traces of memories of practical forms of labor in common from their local traditions. Land was

seized from the landowners who were sympathetic to the military revolt, all arable fallow land was cultivated, but instead of distributing all of this land in more or less equal shares, these lands were held in common along with their respective tools, machinery and livestock.

This was the real beginning of the revolution in agriculture. There were isolated cases where the process did not go smoothly; it was claimed that there were some attempts to use force. We were not able to confirm these allegations at first hand, quite the contrary; but we have no problem with admitting that they took place. Most of the time these particular incidents were unavoidable. They always happen, and always will happen, during the first phases of a vast social transformation.

The peasants, from whom we expected the least, were able to surpass all our expectations. We must point out that, of all the regions of so-called Republican Spain, Catalonia was the region in which this phenomenon of agrarian collectives was least developed, even though the agrarian collectives in Catalonia were numerous, large and efficiently managed. Why should we fear the future, why should we fear the republican or the communist counterrevolution, as long as the peasants, from a socialist or libertarian background, constituted the unbreakable force on the road of the real revolution?

The collectives sought to prove one thing: that labor in common was easier and that, when circumstances would permit large scale application of machinery to agriculture and the implementation of the results obtained by modern scientific research on hybrid seeds, the use of the appropriate fertilizers, and proper irrigation, not only will the labor of the countryside, performed in common, be healthier and easier, but it will also be infinitely more productive and beneficial.<sup>3</sup>

We needed an instrument to preach by way of example in the rural areas: this instrument was spontaneously formed by the agrarian collectives. Many years ago we had reached a similar conclusion. Preoccupied with this problem, and understanding perfectly the psychology of the land worker, and aware of the ineffectiveness of mere doctrinal propaganda, we called for the establishment of nuclei of communitarian agricultural labor, even if this meant buying land, although still within the capitalist economy.

In this way, by way of example, that was our position, we would be able to get through to the peasant population, and at the same time we would ourselves become factors for progress, prosperity and culture.

Then we had the right instrument right there in front of us, fruitful and full of promise. We did not have to speed up the process more than was necessary. In just a few years, the collectives turned the underclass of the peasants into the most solid and most innovative pillar of the new economic and social edifice.

You should have seen those collectives in Catalonia, in the liberated parts of Aragon, in Levante, in the part of Castille that was liberated from fascism! There you would have found men who were enthusiastic and confident, who did not aspire to occupy a high government position, who

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<sup>3</sup> One of the big metal workshops of Barcelona, run by the Unitary Trade Union of the Metal Industry, devoted to the manufacture of machine guns and bombs and mortars of every caliber, had already prepared the plans and a large part of its equipment for the conversion of the factory, on the day after the end of the war, to the manufacture of tractors for agriculture. And there were thousands of such initiatives, affecting every industry, whose purpose was to draft plans, to be implemented immediately after the war, or within a few years after the war, for an economic and industrial resurgence of Spain capable of situating it among the great European Powers. The loss of the war frustrated these hopes. Franco won the game, but he lost the Spanish people and slammed the door on their magnificent awakening.



did not spend their time thinking of ways to live at the expense of the State; men whose concerns were sowing and harvesting; men who relied on their own labor and dedication for everything; men who loved the earth the way one loves one's mother or one's wife.

In contact with these trailblazers of a new era, one forgot many sorrows, the depressed spirit was refreshed, and one was able to face with more confidence and more security the work that was being done for the future.

To get an idea of the extent of this movement of collectivization of the land, we shall provide some data from the Congress of Peasant Collectives of Aragon, held in Caspe in mid-February 1937. What follows is the summary of the register of county organizations represented at the Congress:

- County of Alcañiz (collectives from six villages, Alcañiz, Castelserau, Belmonte, La Cordoñera, Torrecilla de Alcañiz, Valdeagorda) with 596 members.
- County of Alcoriza: 13 collectives, some, like those of Andorra and Cañizar del Olivar, with 3,200 members each, and that of Alcoriza with a thousand. A total of 10,000 members.
- County of Albalate de Cinca: 16 collectives, the largest of which, that of Ontiñena, had 800 members, while the smallest, that of Almidafa, had 30. Total: 4,068 members.
- County of Angües: 36 collectives with 6,021 members; the largest was that of Casdás, with 406 members, the smallest, that of Sietamo, with 45.
- County of Caspe: 5 collectives, the largest being that of Maella with 757 members. Total: 2,197 members.
- County of Ejulve: 8 collectives, the largest, that of Villarluego with 1,300 members, and Ejulve with 1,200 members; the smallest was in Mezquita de Jarque, with 27 members. Total: 3,807 members.
- County of Escucha: 6 collectives, the largest in Utrilla, with 400 members.
- County of Grañen: 12 collectives (there are no figures for each individual collective).
- County of Lecera: 9 collectives with 2,045 members; the largest, Lecera, had 650 members, while the smallest, Moneva, had 77.
- County of Monzón: 35 collectives, including the collective of Binefar with 3,400 members and the collective of Binacet with 1,800.
- County of Sagunto: 4 collectives, with a total of 478 members.
- County of Puebla de Híjar: 9 collectives with a total of 7,146 members.
- County of Pina de Ebro: 6 collectives with 2,924 members.
- County of Torrente: 3 collectives.
- County of Valderrobres: 18 collectives with 11,449 members; some of them were very large, like that of Fresneda, with 2,000 members, that of Calaceite with 1,740, the collective of Valderrobres, with 1,600, and the collective of Mazaleón, with 1,560.

- County of Mas de las Matas: 14 collectives, with 7,930 members; three of these collectives had more than 1,000 members each.
- County of Muniesa: 11 collectives with 2,254 members.
- County of Mora de Rubielos: 21 collectives with 3,782 members.
- County of Ainsa: no statistics available for the numbers of collectives or their membership.
- County of Alfambra: 6 collectives with 502 members.
- County of Benabarre: 6 collectives with 470 members.
- County of Barbastro: 31 collectives with 7,983 members; the most important of which was that of Peralta de Alcolea, with 1,000 members.
- County of Pancrudo: 4 collectives with 215 members.

Delegates from 275 agrarian collectives attended the Caspe Congress, representing collectives from 23 counties in Aragon with a total of 141,430 members. It must be noted, however, that this figure only counts heads of families. More than 70% of the peasant population of Aragon was associated in the agrarian collectives. The purpose of the Caspe Congress was to form a regional federation of these collectives and to draft some general lines of conduct and goals. The federation's purpose was, according to the resolutions adopted by the Congress, "to coordinate the economic potential of the region and to provide fraternal advice to the collectives with respect to the autonomously-established and federative rules that serve us as guidelines."

The collectives were supposed to generate accurate statistics on their production and consumption, and send these statistics to their respective county committees, which would then transmit them to the Regional Committee; these statistical reports would be the "only way to establish real human solidarity".

This is how the peasants of Aragon planned to organize their resources:

1. Proceed with all urgency to the creation of experimental farms in all the collectives of Aragon in order to undertake the research that is believed to be necessary to introduce new varieties of crops and to thus obtain improved yields and to increase agricultural production throughout the entire region. At the same time, each collective must set aside a parcel of land, no matter how small, for research concerning the kinds of trees that would be most productive and best adapted to the soil of each locality.
2. Farms for the production of seeds must also be established; for this purpose, Aragon can be divided into three large zones and in each of them large tracts of land should be set aside for the production of the seeds that are needed in each zone, and, in the right seasons, to produce seeds for other collectives, even if they do not belong to the same zone. Take the cultivation of potatoes, for example: the seeds of this plant must be produced in the zone of Aragon which has the highest mean elevation above sea level, so that these seeds may be planted by the collectives in the other zones, since the above-ground parts of this plant are not attacked by the diseases that characteristically afflict them if we always produce and cultivate them in lowlands, that is, in humid and hot regions.

These three zones will proceed to exchange the seeds that may be required in each case, according to the results of the research projects conducted on the experimental farms, since the work of these farms must be coordinated and audited by agronomists for scientific review, and so that these results will lead to experiments believed to be necessary and beneficial....

The following are some of the resolutions approved at the Caspe Congress of the Federation of Collectives:

Intensive propaganda in favor of the advantages of collectivism, emphasizing its basis in mutual aid.

Control the experimental farms that should be created in every locality where the conditions of the terrain are favorable for the production of all kinds of seeds.

Help guide young people who have a predisposition for technical training by creating technical schools that would be devoted to this particular task.

Organize a team of technicians to perform a study in Aragon to determine the best ways to obtain the greatest yields in the various kinds of work conducted in the countryside.

To provide the collectives with all the elements they need to grow which, at the same time that they entertain their members, they also help raise the general cultural level of the individual.

To organize conferences to raise the intellectual level of the peasants and to accustom them to the new situation.

To use every means to encourage arboriculture.

The construction of livestock farms in every collective to carry out research and to select the various breeds and varieties of the existing livestock and to preserve those that have shown the greatest yields.

To construct, where circumstances allow, large model farms, with all the advances of modern science, in order to obtain improved yields and to make the results available to all collectives.

The livestock research farms must be directed by technical elements so that their research will benefit from the latest scientific discoveries.

The same concern, the same aspirations, the same understanding of what had to be done, may be observed in the resolutions of all the peasants' congresses at the county, regional and national level, that were held during the years of revolution and war.

This is how the Congress of Caspe resolved to deal with problem of those who were either reluctant to join the collectives or opposed to them, and how it separated them from the collectives:

1. Small landowners, when they voluntarily leave the collectives, insofar as they consider themselves capable of conducting their operations without the help of others, will thereby forfeit the right to receive any of the earnings of the collectives. Notwithstanding this stricture, their enterprises will be respected as long as they are not detrimental to collective interests.

2. The rural estates and urban mansions and other goods of the rebel elements that have been confiscated, will be placed at the usufructuary disposal of the working class organizations that existed at the time of their confiscation, as long as these organizations accept the existence of the collectives.
3. All private land that was farmed by sharecroppers or tenant farmers will pass into the hands of the collectives.
4. No individual landowner will be allowed to farm more land than he can cultivate with his own physical labor, and the individual landowner is absolutely prohibited from hiring wage laborers.

The regional peasants' federations of Aragon, Catalonia, Levante, the Center, and Andalusia formed a National Peasants' Federation to coordinate, on a national level, all the initiatives, information, reports and interests of all peasants who were members of its affiliated collectives—which had more than 1,500,000 members at the end of the war—during the first months of 1939.

The collectives of Aragon were destroyed by communist troops in a disgusting, hateful rampage. They had been eliminated for only a short time when they had to be authorized to reorganize in exactly the same form and with the same policies as before. And when Spain finally wants to solve its agrarian problem, it will have to return to the course marked out by the peasants themselves between July 1936 and early 1939.

International socialism, born during the heyday of the concentration of industry, never understood the soul of the peasant. The industrial worker did not love either his tools or his factory. He switches from one factory and from one job to another without hardly batting an eye. He does not feel intimately engaged in his labor. Most of the time, he is not even aware of the purpose of his labor, although this sentiment was no longer characteristic of the attitude that prevailed in the collectivized factories, in the enterprises founded by our trade unions, where the workers were conscious of the sense of collective ownership. The peasant, on the other hand, loves the soil he cultivates; and because he loves it, he wants it for himself. The supreme illusion of the peasant who works on land owned by someone else, the situation of the tenant farmer, *rabassaire*, sharecropper, etc., is the desire to own that land, not because he wants to speculate on its price on the capitalist real estate market, and not because he wants to get rich, but because that land is part of his personality and he loves it just as much as he loves himself, his wife and his children.

It would be a salutary development if the concept of ownership were to be interpreted in a very different sense, because the private ownership of the land is an obstacle to progress and justice and does not even benefit, as such, the small landowners themselves who cultivate their land at the price of immense sacrifices. This transformation cannot be carried out in 24 hours; it requires a period of gestation and development.

This process could only be accelerated by the living example of the agrarian collectives. It would be a mistake to attempt to arbitrarily skip this stage of transformation of the concepts of property, by means of decrees or by means of terror.

It is not the peasant's fault, forgotten on his little plot of land in the country, that he is so passionately devoted to the idea of owning the land he cultivates. Besides being a natural response, it is also the product of a legacy that we have done nothing to counteract with the light of culture.

It is our personal opinion that, with the agrarian collectives, we were proceeding in the right direction with regard to our policies affecting the countryside. That is why we were not impatient

with their development, because when you are going in the right direction and working with confidence, you always reach your goal.

Our collectives were not like the old medieval monasteries of the religious orders. They did not isolate themselves, but always closely bound their very existence, their interests and aspirations, with those of the peasant masses, while they simultaneously forged similar bonds with the industries of the cities.

Although we are advocates of the collective cultivation of the land, without the use of any violence at all for the purpose of forcing the reluctant or those who do not understand them to join the collectives, we must not forget one thing: the experience of every country, especially those where agriculture is most intensive, shows that the productivity of land that is cultivated by the family unit is not lower than that of land that is cultivated in common by a collective. From the point of view of yields, the existence of the family farm, so deeply rooted in the peasants, is perfectly tolerable. What is more important here is specialization. It is not advisable for a peasant or an agrarian collective to be devoted to all kinds of crops. They should specialize in a particular kind of production and achieve the greatest improvements in the sector they have chosen.

The greatest disadvantage of the family farm, which absorbs the labor of all the members of the family, the father, the mother, the children, the grandparents, is that it demands too much work. Under these conditions, the peasant has no other concern than the land, sowing, weeding, harvest, etc. There are no fixed hours of labor, there is no limit to his physical exhaustion. He is able to obtain from his land, at least during the first few years, proportionally greater yields per worker than would be produced by any single member of the collectives. The peasant, however, should not push his sacrifice, and that of his children, to the extremes. He needs some time left over after work, a reserve of energy to learn, and to teach his family, so that the light of civilization may shine in his home, too.

Work performed in the collectives is more easy-going and allows its members to read newspapers, magazines and books, and also to cultivate their minds and to open them up to the fresh air of progressive innovations.

It is because of this right and this duty to relax, and not to exhaust oneself entirely, stooped over the soil from sunrise to sundown, and because of other things besides, that the regime of collective labor is superior and must be encouraged, especially after the awe-inspiring Spanish experience. However, as long as the peasants do not arrive at this understanding voluntarily, as long as they are not convinced by the force of example, family farms and small-scale agricultural enterprises that do not require outside labor power will continue to exist and must be respected.

The revolution, however, if it is a real revolution, is never just restricted to a single sector. It is a total process that embraces everything and affects everything.

Inspired by the tradition of spiritual and educational renewal that was so brilliantly expressed in the work of Francisco Ferrer and those who followed in his footsteps, the Council of the Unified New School [Consejo de la Escuela Nueva Unificada—CENU] was formed during the first days of the movement, by a Decree issued on July 27, 1936, in which all the political and social tendencies that shared common ground with regard to their understanding of the problems relating to education and children also participated.

The CENU bore precious fruit, carrying out in a few months a project that the republic was not able to implement during the five years of its existence.

As of July 19, 1936, 34,000 children attended the official schools of Barcelona; after five months of the revolutionary movement, this number had risen to 54,758. Schools were created at an un-

precedented rate. The number of elementary and secondary school students in Catalonia almost tripled, not to mention the improvements made with respect to the curriculum and methods of teaching.

Amidst this feverish burst of creation on the military, economic and cultural fronts, not all was satisfaction and happiness; there was also much sorrow and bitterness. The partisan politics of parties and organizations was gradually driving wedges among the people of Catalonia and transforming them into members of enemy factions.

We wanted to unite Catalonia in the war effort and to make victory the foundation of all future construction, but this also implied that there should be no arbitrary hold-outs or shirkers, since, for example, the reorganization of the management of the economy and its restructuring to obtain the maximum yield were also preconditions for victory. Every kind of greed and lust for power came to the surface. A morbid sinecurism made its appearance. We managed a department of the Government of the Generalitat, with 250 civil servants; of this figure, to be perfectly honest, half were superfluous. Our successors, who certainly never thought much along constructive lines, and who did not strive for the implementation of any new initiatives, raised the number of civil servants in this department to more than 900.

The front was too far away, thanks to our timely haste in containing any rebel attack, and the roar of the artillery and the pain and misery of the trenches did not disturb the digestion of those fortunate enough to be far from the front lines. Every sector was a hotbed of political maneuvering, and the divorce between the needs of the front and the appetites of the rearguard became increasingly more evident, and the distance between them ever greater. When the policies and the corrupt and demoralizing example of the central government made their appearance in Catalonia, the defects that we called attention to during the early period in the rearguard multiplied and intensified in a most appalling manner.

## Catalonia and the rest of Spain—The central government vs. Catalonia—Politics vs. geography

Without the victory of July in the streets of Barcelona, the military revolt would have been victorious without having to use much ammunition in almost all of Spain, because the victory in Madrid would have been too isolated, and Madrid could not rely on the defensive advantages of Catalonia. Although their job was made more difficult by the July movement, the commanders of the garrisons whose soldiers remained in their barracks were waiting, in a hostile environment, to see which way the wind would blow in the rest of the country.

That was when we took advantage of this hiatus in the fighting to force the surrender of the garrison of Levante, which was still sitting on the fence, perhaps encouraged by the attempts made by Martínez Barrio to form a government that was supposed to serve as a bridge between the Republic and the revolt. In other parts of Spain the movement fought energetically, but not always successfully. The leaders of the pro-Azaña Popular Front refused to make the arms they possessed available to the working class organizations, and thus gave the enemy forces enough opportunities to concentrate their forces and go on the offensive, which was conducted without showing any respect even for these republican leaders who made their victories possible. The absurd confidence of the Asturian socialists in the loyalty of colonel Aranda was the reason for the loss of Oviedo, and with the loss of Oviedo, Asturias as a whole was immobilized with respect to its opportunities for serving as a springboard for a military offensive and seizing territories from the enemy. And if the entire region did not fall into the hands of the tiny garrison of Oviedo, it was because our comrades took the barracks of Gijón by assault, and it was due to the initiative of the people themselves that most of the heroic mining district was purged of enemy forces.

The battle in the streets of Seville lasted several days, but the people were defeated.

The fighting was very bitter in Madrid, where the socialists managed to convince the Minister of War to issue an order to hand over 1,000 rifles, an order that was later revoked, but the counter-order was disobeyed. The storming of the Montaña barracks is one of the glorious moments in the history of the people of Madrid, along with May 2, 1808, and the overthrow of the dictatorship of general Fernández Córdoba.

But it is not our intention to paint a picture of July 19 as it looked in every part of Spain. What we think should be emphasized is the fact that without the example of Barcelona, and that of all of Catalonia, the rebels would have taken over the whole country and would have imposed their planned dictatorship on all of Spain, since they would have possessed the most powerful garrisons, almost all the gunpowder and cartridge factories, and the stockpiles of munitions in Morocco, which must have contained at least sixty million cartridges at the outbreak of the revolt.

Not only did we lead the way from the point of view of the armed struggle, but we were also in the forefront of the economic and social content of the anti-fascist movement. Although they

had to overcome a lot of resistance and many obstacles, the workers and peasants in the rest of loyalist Spain did the same thing we had done in Catalonia: they took possession of large landed estates, factories, means of transport, hospitals, schools, etc.

We understood from the very first moments that it was not the anti-fascist alliance as a whole that was being expressed in these popular movements, and that a large number of those who publicly displayed their satisfaction with our victory were actually quite worried, and were more alarmed by the revolutionary danger implied by a popular war against fascism than they were by the threat posed to civil liberties by the military revolt. If the satisfaction of the people defied description, the satisfaction expressed outwardly by the professional politicians was only so much lip service, performed reluctantly, and the victory of the masses was considered to be a necessary and unavoidable evil amidst the complete collapse of all the institutions with which the State might have defended itself.

We constantly observed this very same attitude in the conduct of the Madrid Government. Various Cabinets of diverse political hues succeeded one another, but the attitude of all of them was the same: an undisguised hostility towards everything associated with Catalonia, the region that had led the way both in the merciless war against fascism as well as in the profound transformation of economic and social conditions.

In response to the incomprehension and the systematic sabotage that confronted our efforts, such as the evident intention, from the very first moment, to fight any advances towards social justice on the part of the masses of the producers more energetically than the enemy on the other side of the trenches, we could have declared the independence of Catalonia, so we could move forward at the pace set by the July events.

The idea was more or less proposed by certain sectors and, on a few occasions, it was even brandished openly as a threat, but the fact that the country's gold was under the control of the Madrid Government and the circumstance that Catalonia was an industrial zone that had to be supplied with foreign raw materials, combined with increasing difficulties with regard to foreign exchange, made it clear that political independence under these conditions was in fact impossible, except as a hollow gesture or else as part of a plan to turn Catalonia into a protectorate of France, without whose support the Catalonian economy, and therefore the war, would have been unsustainable.

Despite everything we had sacrificed and all our efforts to prioritize certain kinds of production, we still suffered from a severe shortage of certain raw materials, such as cotton, coal, metals, heavy oils and light petroleum distillates. We could not expand our war industry without foreign steel, which had to be purchased with foreign currency, and without imported copper, zinc, etc.; and the central government was the exclusive possessor of the gold in the Bank of Spain that was needed for these transactions.

Basque steel also required foreign currency, and in both Euzkadi and Asturias we encountered nothing but difficulties and obstacles in our attempts to obtain the raw materials that these regions possessed in abundance. We resorted to unusual commercial operations. For example, we made a deal with a major English firm that sold aluminum and zinc to acquire these metals in exchange for oranges, and for this purpose we contracted the entire orange harvest of Almería and Murcia, and we loaded our first ship.

We would pay for the oranges of the Levante farmers and in exchange we would receive aluminum from England. The central government intervened and, since the oranges had to be shipped from ports under its control, prevented the operation, detained the ship for weeks and,



when it decided to sell the shipment directly on the open market, the oranges were already spoiled. On other occasions we obtained olive oil, sold it in France and imported machines in exchange; but these operations were possible only because we controlled the border and the Catalanian ports, where we could disregard the decrees of the central government intended to prevent us from obtaining even these meager supplies for our factories. These procedures, however, were not capable of meeting the needs of the Catalanian economy during wartime.

We needed foreign exchange, we needed to draw on the gold of the Bank of Spain.

A bold financial policy successfully overcame the obstacles of the first months by confiscations from the banks of Catalonia; but these confiscations were themselves limited by scarce supplies, and the time came when, in order to confront extremely urgent needs, we had to resort to printing currency without the authorization of the national treasury.

We therefore had to face the following dilemma: we either had to reach some kind of agreement with the central government in order to defray the costs of the war, or else we would have to decide to establish a politically independent regime that would most likely have been unviable during the conflict and, after the war, would have been a source of misfortune for Spain and for Catalonia.

There was another solution, involving an equitable federative agreement, as the history and the geography of the Peninsula have always indicated as advisable, but republican Spain, too, was the continuation of the Spain of the Austrian Dynasty [the Habsburgs] and the Bourbons and, instead of a federation, the Madrid Government only wanted to talk about subjection, of the surrender of all initiative to the centralist bureaucracy, of the surrender to the General Staff of all control over a war that we had launched when this General Staff did not even exist. "One king and one law"—that is what Philip V said, and the second republic also proclaimed "one law", and, although it had been forced to confer some semblance of autonomy on Catalonia and Euzkadi, it was nonetheless still mired in the centralist tradition of an anti-Spanish past.

Did we make the right choice? We chose to accept a sacrifice for the sake of the war and we yielded, even though we were right, and we had a weapon that the central government lacked: the active support of the people. But was it possible to win the war without the support of the people? And would the people knuckle under, embittered and resigned, as we did?

During the last days of the Giral Cabinet, which followed that of the unspeakable Casares Quiroga, whose myopia was responsible for the military uprising, we went to Madrid with Díaz Sandino, and not for the first time, to explain the situation of Catalonia, its needs and its possibilities, to the Madrid Government. From the very first moment the central government categorically refused any support for our military initiatives in Aragon and the Balearic Islands. But we had to leave no stone unturned in our attempts to make the politicians in Madrid understand that Catalonia held the key to victory in its hands and that it was a crime against Spain and against culture, threatened by the military jackboot, not to place at the disposal of Catalonia the resources that it lacked, in order to bring the conflict to a successful conclusion within a few months.

More than 100,000 men had volunteered and joined our militias to fight at the front against an enemy that had not yet organized its own defenses. We lacked weapons, we lacked munitions and we lacked the raw materials needed to create a nascent war industry that would have to be the most stalwart guarantee of the future possibilities for the prospects of the anti-fascist cause on the Peninsula.

We spent a whole night talking with the Prime Minister, a man who was very misinformed and very badly advised, but who seemed to be sincere.

We put all our cards on the table: we told him about the powerful weapon that Catalonia possessed, its people's capacity for heroism, and emphasized that in a modern war, victory is impossible without a strong industrial base and, in this case, only the industry of Catalonia, with its first-class technology, was in any position to make a major contribution.

We explained our military opportunities, we highlighted the importance of the Aragon Front for the purpose of connecting the Catalanian region with the heavy industry of Euzkadi and with the coal-mining zone of Asturias. We recall having told him that our war would be won on the day that the forces of the Aragon Front link up with the industrial and mining regions of northern Spain. We explained that all we needed was his help with the financial resources that we lacked in order to crush the enemy, and deplored the fact that the central government, because of a senseless hatred of Catalonia and because of its fear of the people's revolution, which was the representative of the real Spain, should put obstacles in our path, which was the way to victory and salvation for all.

We requested a small advance of foreign currency to buy parts for our air force and to acquire some arms that someone had offered to sell to us. Giral seemed to be persuaded that we were right and issued an order to give us the money we needed. The orders of the central government, however, had a very limited jurisdiction. Only those orders were obeyed that did not contradict the plans of those for whom the values of the Republic were a joke, and who only considered something to be "Republican" if it profited them or their party.

We also spoke at length about the gold of the Bank of Spain, which was in danger, and we strongly advised its immediate relocation. We mentioned the precedent set by other countries during the World War and we made him understand that Madrid was not safe and that the historic responsibility of the Government of the Republic, if it were to allow the gold of the Bank of Spain to fall into the hands of the enemy, would be incalculable. Giral summoned his financial advisors to discuss this point with us. These advisors were old civil servants who may have possessed some technical knowledge of finance, but it was obvious that the first thing on their minds was keeping their jobs.

One of the most outspoken of Giral's advisors finally accepted our proposal to transfer the national treasury to a safer location, but only on the condition that the employees of the Bank of Spain would also be transferred so that they would not lose their jobs.

We left that meeting with the Prime Minister, convinced that we had touched a sensitive chord and that, in the future, relations between Madrid and Catalonia would not be so adversarial, and that we would be spared the systematic sabotage that we had suffered up to that point.

Shortly thereafter, the Giral Government fell and nothing remained of all the things we talked about and agreed upon except the memory of them we preserve for posterity. Largo Caballero succeeded Giral; however, he pursued the same of policy of mistrust towards Catalonia, refusing the most basic necessities to the Aragon Front, which was in fact the front that could potentially be the springboard to bring about the end of the war.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> After Caballero was forced to resign from the Government, in his first and last public speech, on October 17, 1937, he revealed many tragic details concerning the behind-the-scenes maneuvers and treachery of the communists. When he was Minister of War, he was accused by the communists of not sending the arms that he possessed to the soldiers on the front. At the peak of this derogatory campaign, the Minister of War had twenty-seven rifles. Was he supposed to publicly proclaim the fact that the Minister of War had twenty-seven rifles in order to respond to a campaign to discredit him? It was during that period that, at the instigation of the Russians, a venomous propaganda campaign was unleashed concerning the lack of activity of our forces on the Aragon Front. Were we supposed to

It did not matter what orders the Ministers issued, if the execution of their orders depended on career military officers or civil servants who would enforce their superior's orders only if they wanted to do so. We had four Ministers in Largo Caballero's Cabinet, three of whom were from Catalonia and who understood the situation we had to face, but the situation remain unchanged. The real Government was not coterminous with the ostensible constituted authorities.

We also attended an interview, with Díaz Sandino, with the President of the Republic, Manuel Azaña, at the old royal palace in Madrid. Our interview took place during those days of panic following the disaster at Talavera. We met Azaña at 10:00 p.m. The bodyguards of the President stood out with their immaculate uniforms, in contrast to our drab militia garb.

We explained our situation in Catalonia and our pressing needs and we told him about our conversations with Giral and conveyed our impression that he welcomed our proposals. We asked Azaña to personally intervene in order to prevent the promises that had been made to us from being frustrated. Azaña told us that he was like a prisoner, that the Constitution did not allow him to intervene in anything and that his function was to keep quiet and let those who were legally vested with the role of governing to do all the talking, with the help of the parties or the legislature. We pleaded with him to use the prestige that he enjoyed, and not just in Spain. His silence and passivity, under the aegis of the Constitution or for other reasons, amounted to a crime, and his attitude of just shrugging his shoulders when faced by such a tragedy does not admit of any generous interpretations.

During the course of our conversation we received the impression that this man did not sympathize with fascism, but that he was even less disposed to sympathize with the revolution and with the direct intervention of the people in public life without any respect for the barriers established by the republican rules that were born with the Republic.

At one point in the conversation, Díaz Sandino had the frankness to tell Azaña that his policy was responsible for the military revolt and that the indecisiveness of the democracy and of the alleged republicans who never measured up to the republicanism they professed had led us to the results with which we were then so familiar. Our fellow delegate had his reasons for speaking this way. He had been one of the most important figures in the conspiracy against the monarchy, and shortly before the military revolt he went to Madrid in a vain attempt to provide indisputable evidence that the revolt was imminent, and no one listened to him. Azaña, who seemed to lack the nerve to face the tragedy that had engulfed us, acted as if he was deeply offended at being reminded of the truth in his own castle. This prisoner of the Constitution became so angry that we thought we should get up and depart without asking the leave of the Head of State. Azaña paused to reflect for a moment, then he softened the tone of his fake indignation, and we stopped talking about the conditions on our Aragon Front.

For men like Azaña, the fascist conspiracy and the loss of the war were fatal.

Our journey through loyalist Spain between Madrid and Catalonia was truly moving. The people's militias, following our example, had organized to fight, where the terrain allowed, a war in which they were outmatched because of the quality of their weapons; but their will to triumph was so great that, if they had been granted even a small amount of aid before the international complications that were to shortly ensue, our victory would have been overwhelming.

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declare, so that the enemy would be informed of our status, that our front was paralyzed because it hardly had a single cartridge?

Numerous delegations from these improvised military detachments met with the Madrid Government to appeal for military equipment; and after their return from Madrid, discouraged and bitter, they came to Barcelona to tell us how desperate they were, and to explain to us their ideas about how to fight the war, and to relate their experiences and disappointments with the Government of the Republic.

We, an integral part of the people from whom we have arisen and from whom we have never separated, understood the immense pain of those who had to return to their comrades on every front with empty hands, and tell them that the Government of the Republic had refused to help them.

We commiserated with them, but our highly-developed spirit of solidarity caused the combatants of the other regions to perceive at the very least that we had a sincere desire to assist them. We sent weapons and munitions to every front: to Córdoba, Málaga, the Center, Levante, Irún, etc.; we provided some artillery pieces to the Southern Fronts at the same time that we were conducting operations at Mallorca as well as pursuing our campaign to reconquer Aragon. Not counting medical equipment, ambulances, trucks, food, clothing, and artillery shells of every caliber, which we had begun to manufacture on a large scale.

We were truly grief-stricken that we did not have enough war materiel to share it in common with a heroic people that was ready to stake their lives in defense of their liberty and their future. No matter how dire our situation was, however, those who came to us in search of help never left with empty hands.

We contributed about 10,000 armed men to the defense of Madrid itself, and we promised that, at a moment's notice, if the central government would agree to give us the necessary weapons, our assistance in terms of men would be unlimited.

Everyone knows about the fall of Málaga and the surrender of Bilbao to the Italian divisions, and everyone has vehemently expressed their criticism of the circumstances that led up to these disasters. In the first case, Largo Caballero was the Minister of War, and this event, followed by the bloody conflict in Barcelona, were capitalized upon in order to get rid of one government and replace it with other governments that were more amenable to Moscow's strategy for victory.

A few high-level military commanders were imprisoned, including general Asensio, but after ten months of investigation they were released without facing trial, because even the Party that had originally accused them of wrongdoing finally had to admit that they had been hung out to dry. As for the loss of Bilbao and of all of Northern Spain, which in this case was the result of the brilliant role played in our war by the Russian advisors, there was no lack of culpable parties, yet those who were officially responsible for the conduct of the war did not go to jail, because this time they were only following orders from the Kremlin. The first step in the loss of Northern Spain, however, was the loss of Irún, a magnificent strategic position for the enemy's relations with France.

Unlike Bilbao, whose surrender was planned in advance, because it was not defended and because the central government, then in Valencia, had failed to provide the air support that was available and without which the defense of the city was thought to be impossible, Irún's defenders fought heroically to the last bullet and the last hand grenade. The armed workers of that county performed feats of extraordinary bravery. If Irún were to have received some aid it would not have surrendered without claiming a large proportion of Franco's troops.

Irún did not ask for airplanes, or artillery; it only requested rifles, a few machine guns, some ammunition. It dispatched some delegations to Catalonia to explain the desperate situation of

the combatants of their region due to a shortage of weapons and ammunition. They assured us that Irún would not fall if they could obtain means to defend it. All their appeals to the Madrid Government for weapons were in vain, and the emissaries then turned towards Catalonia to ask for help.

We remained in contact with them via telephone and they pleaded so insistently and so sincerely that we could not remain indifferent. We could not supply the militias in Aragon that were crying out for ammunition to no avail. The problem of Irún was addressed on several occasions at meetings of the Committee of Militias; but our stockpiles were completely exhausted.

We understood that Madrid had abandoned that brave Northern city and that we, regardless of how many sacrifices we might make, could not save it. But the telephone calls imploring our assistance would not be entirely in vain. There were no weapons left in the Armory and therefore, as on other occasions, we called upon the Defense Committees of the CNT and FAI. They handed over several hundred rifles and some machine guns and we immediately loaded this cargo on some trucks and sent them towards Irún, via France.

The trucks ran into a few obstacles en route, but they did arrive in time, and were met by representatives of the Local Federation of Unitary Trade Unions of Irún, which notified us of their arrival. While the trucks were racing towards their destination with their precious cargo, we were able, with some difficulty, to obtain 30,000 cartridges, with which, the combatants of Irún assured us, they would be able to repulse the fascist offensive that threatened to annihilate them and were awaiting other war materiel that was supposed to arrive at any moment. It all depended on whether the ammunition would arrive in time. We needed a means to transport several tons of cartridges.

Our airfield had nothing that could carry that kind of cargo. We appealed to the Madrid Government, to the Minister of the Navy and the Air Force, to the commanders of the Air Force. We contacted all the ports, explaining the how urgent it was to send this ammunition that we had obtained with such difficulty, and even by depriving our own combatants of its use.

No one wanted to take responsibility for anything. We had prepared everything, the people's forces of Irún were still waiting at their airport anxiously expecting the arrival of the desperately needed ammunition that would save them. The Minister of the Navy and Air Force promised to send us a Douglas and we shipped the cargo of ammunition to the airfield at Prat in order not to lose any precious time.

The telephone calls from Irún were becoming increasingly more urgent and the Douglas had not arrived. We shouted, we rained every kind of insult down upon those who, from their Ministerial easy chairs in Madrid would tranquilly consent to abandon a population in which several thousand men and women were ready to sacrifice everything to keep that precious stronghold in our power.

All our efforts were in vain. Madrid did not provide us with the necessary means of transport it promised, perhaps reluctantly, nor did it want to help the combatants in the North by sending them any of its own stores of ammunition. Irún fell into the hands of the enemy after a desperate and exemplary struggle.

When we think of the sacrifice of the militias of Irún we can only clench our fists in rage at the attitude, which was decisive, of the highest levels of the central government.

All the commanders on the Aragon Front were driving us to distraction with their constant demands for weapons and ammunition, and no one was more tenacious and insistent in this

respect than Durruti, who had established his general headquarters in Bujaraloz. He bombarded us with daily tirades enumerating all the things he needed to fight and win the war.

We could not give him, or anyone else, anything, because we had nothing. Once, under the pressure of the urgency of his demands, and not knowing any way to pacify him, we told him that all his pleading was futile, because the position that he occupied on the Front was the least suitable for an offensive against Zaragoza, and that he was condemned, after having been the first to go to the Front, to be the last to enter the city he had set his sights on taking, where so many of our friends had been massacred and whose deaths he had sworn to avenge. We can still hear him screaming at the other end of the telephone connection. That was the most insulting and provocative thing we could have said to him. But it was also the truth; the bridges over the Ebro had been destroyed, and Durruti could not cross the river unless the columns of the Southern Ebro or the columns sent towards Huesca were already at the gates of Zaragoza.

When he returned to Barcelona, we told him about all our adventures and misadventures with the Madrid Government; we told him that we thought that Madrid had absolutely abandoned us, and that we could not count on getting any help at all from the central government as long as we were in control of the Aragon Front and Catalonia. We made him see how little we had to work with and just how helpless we were with respect to supplying our militia units with weapons and ammunition.

We had disarmed many of our own comrades in Barcelona and the surrounding counties to give him some rifles, but all of them were just a drop in the ocean, if we could not enforce a real disarmament of the rearguard; a short time later, we would also face a severe shortage of cartridges.

Convinced of our failure in our negotiations with the Central Government—negotiations in which all the members of the Committee of Militias had at one time or another participated—we suggested that he should try his luck at seeking an appointment as the commander of an important sector of the Front. So Durruti left Barcelona to meet with Largo Caballero. We do not know exactly what words were exchanged by Durruti and the chief of state, but we are sure that he defended our cause with all the energy of which he was capable.

He told Caballero about some of the proposals to sell us weapons that had been made by foreign arms dealers. He left Madrid with generous promises of support and returned in a good mood to Catalonia to rejoin his unit, awaiting the fulfillment of the promises made by Caballero. We enthusiastically shared his jubilation and for a brief moment we felt a sense of hope. But the weeks and months passed and the promises made to Durruti, just like the promises that had been previously made to us, were to remain unfulfilled.

A few months later we sent Durruti to serve in the defense of Madrid, when the situation there was more serious and there was a very real danger that the city might be occupied by the enemy. Instead of getting the arms we were promised for the Aragon Front, we even had to give up several dozen machine guns and several thousand rifles, with three or four artillery batteries, to contribute to the defense of Madrid, whose fall would have meant, because of its moral and international repercussions, the end of the war, and there he died, after having provided some magnificent examples of heroism.

Some military hardware had been purchased through the mediation of the Russians, who had begun to arrive in Spain, and through a Purchasing Commission of the central government. Orders had been issued forbidding any of these shipments from being unloaded at Catalanian ports.

This was what made us really angry. Even when this or that cargo was earmarked for us, nothing arrived. We had been offered supplies, but we would have to pay for them, and we always came up against the dead end of not having any foreign currency. It may very well be the case that, out of every 100 offers, 99 were fake, but the truth is that we never had the opportunity to see whether or not this was true, because we could never even put down a deposit on any deals. We even received offers from Germany, for which we would have to pay in advance, for cargo to be shipped to Barcelona. What should we have done? And there was more: we had received offers, via Paris, to sell us Italian warplanes. Would this be the first war that was ever lost due to a lack of weapons when the national treasury was full of money to buy them?

In the meantime the enemy, after the disaster of Talavera, staged a very dangerous advance on Madrid. There was some talk of taking what we needed. The Treasury of the Bank of Spain should not be left in the hands of a Government that did not do anything right and was losing the war. Even if we took this money, however, would we still fail to obtain the weapons we needed? We were sure of at least one thing: we would not fail to acquire the raw materials and machinery for our war industry, and we would be able to make the weapons we needed ourselves.

Within a very restricted circle of confidants, we discussed the idea of transferring to Catalonia at least some of the gold in the Bank of Spain. We knew that we would have to resort to force, and we had about 3,000 reliable men in Madrid who were fully informed of all the details concerning the plan to transport the gold in special trains. If the plan were to be successfully carried out, it would not take much time, and before the Government could take counter-measures, we would be on our way to Catalonia with a share of the nation's gold supply, the best guarantee that the war would take a new course. The only problem was that, when it came right down to it, no one wanted to bear the responsibility for an action that would have such major historical repercussions. Our proposals were conveyed to the National Committee of the CNT and to some of the most well known comrades.

The plan scared the wits out of our friends; the main argument that was offered against taking the gold, an argument that was repeatedly made, was that if we did this it would only exacerbate the prevailing animosity towards Catalonia. What should we have done?

It was impossible to go against our own organizations, so we had to abort the plan. The gold, a few weeks later, was shipped out of Madrid, not to Catalonia, but to Russia; more than 500 tons fell into the hands of Stalin and were used to lose our war and to reinforce the front of the worldwide fascist counterrevolution. And it was shipped to Russia without the Government's knowledge, by the decision of a couple of Ministers who were taking their orders from the Kremlin, including the famous Dr. Negrín. Would the outcome of the Spanish tragedy have been different if at least part of the national treasure had been sent to the region where the opportunities, the conditions and the will existed that could have led the war to a victorious conclusion?

Our shortage of ammunition was tragic. Thirty thousand men were constantly asking us for ammunition and we could not satisfy this legitimate demand.

The Central Government refused to give us any help and when it did give us a small shipment, we had to give it back with men and all their equipment. Or we were given materiel that was not wanted on the other Fronts, like the famous 600 Colt machine guns, discarded by the American Army before 1914, and which could not be used on the other Fronts because they were obsolete and ineffective.

During one of these periods of extreme shortages, one of our columns that was posted on the Center Front plundered a convoy of the Central Government, and thus obtained seventy or eighty thousand cartridges for us, which arrived just in the nick of time.

We had been informed that, at the fortress of Mahón, loyal to the Madrid Government, there were several thousand percussion caps for which the garrison there had no use at all. We kindly requested that they send them to us on dozens of occasions and we were always rebuffed. We asked the Minister of the Navy and Air Force, and thus made him aware of the existence of this cache of percussion caps. It was not a very large amount; they could be shipped to Barcelona and we might thus solve our problems for a couple of weeks. Refusal or indifference were always the only responses we received.

One day, Catalonia was urgently requested to ship gasoline to Mahón; we took advantage of this opportunity to once again ask for the unused percussion caps. There was no way to convince the authorities on the island and the Madrid Government that it was a crime to refuse to give us this materiel.

We issued the order to load the gasoline, but we told the authorities at Mahón that the ship would not leave port until the percussion caps were received in Barcelona.

The Central Government intervened, and the leaders of CAMPSA intervened, but we refused to authorize the departure of the ship until our conditions were met.

Mahón's need for gasoline must have been very urgent, but its commanders did not want to yield to our request. Because the Central Government did not possess any means of coercion that could have forced us to send the gasoline to Mahón, we finally won and, after fifteen days of wrangling, the percussion caps arrived in Barcelona and the tanker carrying gasoline that had been embargoed in our port finally departed for Mahón.

Whenever we wrested something, always on a small scale, from the Madrid Government, it was at the cost of similar struggles, or we took what we wanted without asking anyone.

Centralism was leading us to defeat.

Having encountered the systematic sabotage practiced by the Central Government against all our proposals, and also firmly convinced that political centralism was leading us to disaster in the war and to the demise of the people's revolution, whose only possible basis was solidarity in a federation, from the very first weeks we had explained to several authorized representatives of Levante and Aragon the need to form a kind of defensive and offensive federation with these regions to force the Government of the Republic to effectively confront the new situation. Later, the Council of Defense of Aragon was formed, but it never amounted to anything more than a delegation to the Central Government, and Levante remained completely under the authority of Madrid, since Valencia had been the capital of the Republic since November 1936.

The best, most effective political solution would have been a federal Spain, in which each region would have the most complete autonomy to freely express its sense of national solidarity, as they did during all the really crucial moments in the history of Spain. This idea made no headway, or else it was not understood during those feverish days of constant activity. There was no preexisting preparation for this idea and this confirmed our hypothesis that a revolution actually bears no more fruit than that which the people already have inside them, in relation to the degree of their culture.

If we had formed, with the liberated part of Aragon and all of Levante, along with Catalonia, a kind of commonwealth of solidarity, it would not have been so easy for the fascistic bureaucrats of the Central Government to undermine the war effort and hinder the consolidation of the



revolution. And the political, military and police rule of the Russians would never have been capable of attaining the scale that it did, to our misfortune.

After several months of disputes and futile negotiations with the Central Government, and after reflecting on the pros and cons of declaring the independence of Catalonia, and committed, more than anyone else, to winning the war that we had begun with such zeal and such confidence, after having been told repeatedly that we would get no help as long as the Committee of Militias, the organ of the people's revolution, held power in Catalonia, regardless of how much we loved this institution that was created to respond to the exigencies of a new social and political situation, and having no other choice than to yield or to exacerbate our position in the conflict, since we did not want to resort to violence to get what we needed, either, we, even though we were right, had to yield.

We expressed our willingness to dissolve the Committee of Militias, that is, to abandon a revolutionary position such as the Spanish people had never before occupied. We would do anything to get weapons and financial assistance to successfully fight our war.

We knew that it was not possible for the revolution to be victorious without first winning the war, and we were willing to sacrifice everything for the war. We were willing to sacrifice the revolution itself, not realizing that this sacrifice also implied the sacrifice of the goals of the war.

The Committee of Militias guaranteed the supremacy of the people in arms, it guaranteed the autonomy of Catalonia, it guaranteed the noble aims and the legitimacy of the war, it guaranteed the resurrection of the Spanish soul and way of life; we were repeatedly told, however, that as long as this institution continued to exist, that is, as long as we continued to consolidate the power of the people, no weapons would be sent to Catalonia, nor would we obtain the foreign currency we needed to buy them on the foreign market, nor would we be provided with raw materials for our industry. And since the loss of the war also implied the total defeat of the revolution, and the return of Spain to a state like the one that tormented the country during the rule of Ferdinand VII, and because we were convinced that the initiatives introduced by us and by our people would not entirely disappear from the militarized armed units that were favored by the Central Government and from the new economic order, we left the Committee of Militias to join the Government of the Generalitat in the Ministry of Defense and other vital departments of the autonomous government.

For the first time in the history of the modern social movement, anarchists participated in Government offices with all the responsibility entailed. But not because we had forgotten our own doctrines or forgotten the essence of the governmental apparatus. Overriding circumstances beyond our control led us to situations and to procedures that we found distasteful, but which we could not avoid.

A people's revolution is not conducted from within the State or by the State. At most, and this might have been the most positive aspect of our participation in the government, the State may refrain from putting too many obstacles in the way of the new creations of the people; but to entrust the revolution to the State, even if we were the only organization in it, would amount to renouncing the revolution. We did not have any faith in revolution by decree.

Great economic and social transformations are always the work of the direct action of the people, of the working class masses of the city and the countryside. They are the ones who have to carry out the revolution, they are the ones who have to create the institutions of the new way of life, and it is only with their support that any revolutionary policy can be implemented.

There can be no doubt that, even in the middle of the war, major social advances were made. But these advances, this transformation, and this progress were obtained outside of or against the State, as always. What can be done from within the government—and this is not always easy, but it is possible as long as the masses remain alert and retain their sense of initiative—is to facilitate the legalization, the recognition and the official sanction of the revolution that was carried out elsewhere, in the factories, in the fields, and in the domain of customs.

The power of the revolution was not, nor will it ever be, in government Ministries; it is down below, in the working people, in the constructive capacity which the people are capable of displaying.

Even though we were represented in it, we cannot attribute any useful revolutionary functions to the State.

If it were only a matter of the revolution, the very existence of the Government would have been an obstacle to destroy, rather than a favorable factor; but we found ourselves facing the demands of a large-scale, bloody war, and international complications that were necessarily connected with the world market, with our relations with the surrounding States, and for the organization and leadership of this war, under the conditions we confronted, we had no instrument that we could have substituted for the old governmental apparatus.

A modern war cannot be waged the way the old civil wars or even international wars of the past were fought. It requires the existence of a major industrial base that is kept running twenty-four hours a day, and this industry presupposes, in those countries that do not enjoy complete economic self-reliance, political, industrial and commercial relations with the centers of world capitalism that possess a monopoly on raw materials.

All the countries of Europe were already suspicious of us, when they did not send men and weapons to help our enemies. Our enemies on the other side of the trenches and our false friends on this side circulated horrifying legends about our activities. It was said that we had constructed guillotines in the Plaza de Cataluña and that these guillotines were working day and night.

While we were working assiduously without a minute's rest, organizing the militias for the war, increasing productivity in the factories, and marshalling all available resources, we were described by the foreign press as bloodthirsty monsters who thought of nothing but vengeance and terror: the cold-blooded massacres ordered by the military rebels were depicted as military necessities, since their military operations could not tolerate the existence of unreliable or lukewarm elements in their rearguard; the sanctions imposed by the Republic were bestial murders. In this environment, international capitalism, which was responsible for these stories, barred us from any successful development merely by denying us the raw materials that were essential for our industry.

We did not dissolve the Committee of Militias without first taking all these matters into consideration; but we did not see any other solution because, along with the hostility of foreign countries, we had to face the no less implacable and dangerous hostility of the military and civilian bureaucracy and the centralizing fanaticism of the Government of the Republic.

The dissolution of the Committee of Militias to demonstrate our good will and our overwhelming desire to win the war was not the last sacrifice we would make. The more we yielded to the benefit of the common interest, however, the more abuse we had to endure from the counterrevolution embodied in the central power. And for what results? Certainly not for the benefit of our war aims; or at least not for the benefit of victory over the enemy.

Almost all the factories producing military hardware were in the zone controlled by the rebels. Among the few arms factories that we did possess, the most important were the cartridge factories in Toledo, under the control of the Government of the Republic, which ignominiously allowed them to be lost.

Catalonia was a major industrial region, but not with respect to war industries. We lacked steel, copper, zinc and coal. The only explosives produced in Catalonia were small amounts of gunpowder for hunting rifles. We nonetheless undertook, from the very first days after July 19, the task of building our own military industry, relying on nothing but the determination of the workers in the factories. Technicians can testify to the implications of this effort at a time when the most indispensable raw materials, as well as the money to acquire them from other countries, were lacking.

In addition to the utter absence of any industrial facilities suited for this kind of production, we must also mention the circumstance that we had no experienced managerial personnel, and no workers who had ever worked in such industries. All the metal factories were converted to war production, each one producing what it could: armored vehicles, hand grenades, ambulances, etc.

At the beginning of August the War Industries Commission was formed to coordinate these first spontaneous efforts and to oversee the creation of a powerful arms and munitions industry in Catalonia. Its members included technicians like Giménez de la Beraza, enterprising spirits like José Tarradellas, a member of the Committee of Militias, outstanding workers like the metal worker, Eugenio Vallejo, and Marti, from the chemical industry, one of the people's army's first artillerymen on the morning of July 19 in Barcelona.

Hundreds of metal and chemical factories were assigned to manufacture to order the most urgent materiel, artillery shells, bombs, cartridges, gas masks, ambulances, armored cars, etc.

As a result of unfounded political hatreds and rivalries, virulent propaganda campaigns were waged against the Catalanian war industries, in which 150,000 men worked. Proposals were submitted to bring all of them under the power of the Central Government, and when these industries needed aid from the latter, it did nothing but put obstacles in their path, refusing their requests for foreign currency, raw materials, etc.

Even so, by the beginning of December 1937 more than 60,000 ammunition belts had been produced for Mauser cartridges, and up until September of the same year more than 76,000,000 bullets had been produced in the factories of Catalonia. Many difficulties had to be overcome before cartridges could be manufactured, difficulties that were exacerbated by the refusal of the Government of the Republic to provide any help; but Catalanian cartridges were the only ones that finally allowed the war to continue. The production of artillery shells began in September 1936, at first at the rate of 4,000 per month, reaching 900,000 per month in April 1937. And up until September of 1937, 718,000 high-caliber artillery shells were produced.

Around 600,000 fuses were manufactured in Catalonia prior to September 1937, which means a lot to those who know what a fuse is good for. A gunpowder factory with a capacity of one thousand kilos per day was built, and thanks to the metal industry of Catalonia the production of gunpowder in Murcia, which was previously the only source of this materiel in the Republic, could be considerably augmented. In September 1936, trinitrotoluene, pyronite, dinitronaphthalene and picric acid were already being manufactured in Catalonia. Within one year, 752,972 kilos of pyronite were produced. At the end of August 1936, one month after the defeat of the military revolt, bombs containing pyronite manufactured in our own factories were loaded onto

our warplanes. We witnessed the birth and development of Catalonia's war industries and we can say that one will rarely encounter such an example of improvisation, because one seldom encounters such a perfect degree of accord and such a unanimous passion among the political authorities, the technical authorities and the workers of all the trades of a country. Foreign military advisors who had first-hand experience with this project assured us that we had accomplished in a few months more than what was achieved, with much greater means at their disposal, by more prepared countries, like France, in the first two years of the war of 1914–1918.

In August 1936 we began the construction of a factory to produce octanol, which would also produce methyl chloride and pure tetraethyl lead, the first such factory in Spain and one of the few in Europe.

We not only manufactured war materiel, however, but also the machines needed for its manufacture. Beginning in July 1936, 119 hydraulic presses (112 30-ton presses, 2 250-ton presses, one eccentric 250-ton press, etc.), 214 lathes (178 parallel lathes, 6 revolving lathes, 30 special lathes for boring and rifling gun barrels), 28 drills, 18 hole-punching machines, 6 buffing machines, 4 filing machines, 7 special machines to straighten cannons, 16 special machines to cut and make slots in ammunition belts, etc.

To prevent discord and to satisfy ambitions for command and administration, Catalonia surrendered its control over its war industry, with the exception of the new facilities constructed by the Generalitat, but not all of it, because some factories were transferred to the Undersecretariat of Military Procurement, an institution created by Prieto to show how it is possible to sabotage the war by means of lavishing excessive financial resources and facilities for every kind of managerial task on ambitious, but incompetent or treasonous, bureaucrats.

The Commission of War Industries of Catalonia had a few factories under construction when it had to surrender to the Central Government a machine for producing military hardware that normally would have taken many years to manufacture. One of the factories under construction was a factory with a projected productive capacity of 20 tons of cellulose per day, which it produced from esparto grass. It was in operation right up until the final catastrophe, with large quantities of raw material in storage. Another factory under construction was a large explosives plant in Gualba, which was alone capable of supplying all the needs of the Peninsula even in wartime. Yet the history of the new factories also has its comical, and also immensely tragic, episodes. So many obstacles were placed in the way of these projects by the officials of the Government of the Republic, that it was necessary to steal the cement we needed to build them with the connivance of the workers committees of the factories, painstakingly collect old pieces of scrap iron and melt them down, and employ a thousand tricks to smuggle all kinds of goods to prevent these projects from being aborted.

And all of these factories are still there, just as Spain still hosts modern poison gas factories, built in anticipation of gas warfare. There will be a shortage of personnel for most of these high technology and chemical factories, built during the years of revolution and war; otherwise these industrial facilities could have been major suppliers for a Europe armed to the teeth.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Commission of War Industries of Catalonia drafted a (confidential) *Report d'actuació* [Progress Report], a thick mimeographed volume, dated October 1937. In a brief introduction, Tarradellas, its president, says: "Catalonian industry, over the last fourteen months, has performed a veritable wonder of labor and profound intelligence, and Catalonia will forever be in the debt of all the workers who, with their enthusiasm, their hard work and often with the sacrifice of their own lives, endeavored to help our brothers who are fighting at the front..." Luis Companys, the President of the Generalitat, summarized the most important information from this report in his polemical letter

During one of our many meetings with the central government, our delegates proposed that the government should give us one of the cartridge factories in Toledo, which was in danger of being destroyed by continuous bombing. The State controlled three cartridge factories in that city. Two of them were operational; the third had been idled for several years because of its antiquated machinery and its unprofitability.

Toledo's situation was critical; enemy forces were still entrenched in the Alcázar and they also knew that the city was vulnerable, because that front was still extremely disorganized, and enemy forces were moving forward with strong contingents.

We did not ask for either of the operating factories, even though we knew they were in danger and that they would have been much safer and more productive if they were transferred, along with their specialists and technical personnel, to a zone like Catalonia; we only asked for the one that was shut down and was not producing anything.

The hatred and the mistrust of Catalonia were so great that we were categorically denied the use of the shuttered factory and, a few weeks later Queipo del Llano could boast that the factories that the Central Government had not wanted to move to Catalonia were producing cartridges for the rebels.

We could provide numerous testimonials concerning similar incidents. If the itinerant Madrid-Valencia-Barcelona government had intended to lose the war from the very beginning, it could not have done anything more effective than what it in fact did.

From a strictly economic perspective, we made this summary observation in a confidential report drafted in September 1938:

But all the details are superfluous, because the most telling fact is the following: even though the entire industrial apparatus of loyalist Spain is insufficient to supply our fronts, we can state that not even 50% of the motors, machines, etc., are being used, and those that are being used do not yield 50% of their potential production, due to the demoralization of the personnel who work in these factories without decent food, due to the incompetence that has taken the reins of military affairs, due to the interference of foreign interests and due to considerations relating to despicable partisan politics.

*This situation cannot continue. And if we persist in our silence and our passivity, there is no way that we will ever be able to deny our complicity in the loss of the war and in the epic schemes of those who are trafficking in the blood of our people.*<sup>3</sup>

In our report we made the following proposals, in the name of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI:

1. Urgently do whatever is necessary to transform the Undersecretariat of Military Production into a Ministry of Military Production.

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dated December 13, 1937, sent to Indalecio Prieto. A small volume has been published in Buenos Aires by the Servicio de Propaganda España [Spanish Propaganda Service]: *From Companys to Prieto: Documents on the War Industries of Catalonia* (91 p.), with information derived from the confidential report and other primary source documents.

<sup>3</sup> "Informe sobre las comisiones de compras, la subsecretaría de armamento y el despilfarro escandalosa de las finanzas de la República. Por la creación del ministerio de armamento" [Report on the Purchasing Commissions, the Undersecretariat of Military Production and the Scandalous Waste of the Finances of the Republic. An Appeal for the Creation of a Ministry of Military Production], Barcelona, September 1938. Presented to the National Plenum of the Libertarian Movement.

2. Vest this Ministry with the responsibility to acquire arms and munitions, machinery and raw materials, and for the manufacture in loyalist Spain of every conceivable type of military product.
3. The Ministry of Military Production should be controlled and advised by two mixed bodies, composed as follows:  
Control of commercial operations. This institution will be formed on the basis of one member from each party that is a member of the Popular Front. Without the approval of this department, the Ministry will not be able to make any acquisitions of weapons or other war materiel.  
A Superior Council of Military Industry. With respect to everything relating to military production in loyalist Spain, this institution will be the advisor and the decisive voice; this Council will be composed of representatives of the following Federations of Industry: Light, Power and Fuels, Chemicals, Steel and other Metals, Transport and Construction, from the CNT and from the UGT.
4. The parties and organizations will be held responsible and will be sanctioned for the conduct of their delegates in the above institutions and in cases of bribery, embezzlement or sabotage of war production.
5. The activities of the currently existing Purchasing Commissions and the Undersecretariat of Military Production must be investigated and referred to the Justice Tribunals.

The above proposals for reorganization are most revealing with respect to the unsavory aspects of the matter.

# **International diplomacy—British miscalculations—The events of May 1937—The war effort in danger—The political situation and military disasters**

Foreign intervention in Spain's domestic affairs is not a recent phenomenon, and it has usually come from Rome, Paris and London. Nor was 1936 the first time Germany was involved in Spain. Secret agents posing as diplomats and armed interventions have haunted us for centuries, ever since the hegemony of Spanish laws and traditions came to an end and we have been at the mercy of greed, careerism and various combinations of European powers. The French-English policy of non-intervention of 1936–1939 was a very obvious way of intervening.

Rome, with the Papacy, after the invasions of the Roman Empire, and then in the fertile alliance of Papacy and Empire; Paris with the Sun King or with the Holy Alliance, with Chateaubriand, with Thiers and Guizot; London in a thousand ways and with open or concealed methods has over the last three or four hundred years been involved in Spanish affairs, either in association with other countries or on its own.

On one occasion, Guizot confessed:

Up until very recently, the policies of France and England in Spain were unjust, as that generous country was made the victim of the rivalries and disputes of those two great powers.... But the Cabinet of Saint James and the Cabinet at the Tuileries have finally concluded an agreement concerning their conduct in Spain....

However, the fact that they reached some kind of agreement concerning the way they intervened in Spanish affairs, did not mean that they renounced intervention. How many governments have been overthrown, how many *pronunciamientos* have taken place, how much blood has flowed at the initiative or with the support of Paris, London and Rome!

Lord Palmerston said, during a session of the Chamber of Commons, on March 10, 1939, that he would rather see a Spanish Spain than an Austrian or French Spain. We are not aware that England has ever, during its history of involvement in our Peninsula, acted according to this principle.

The marriage of Isabel II was the culmination of a long and impassioned battle over a period of many years between Naples, Paris, Rome and London. On that occasion there was not even the slightest hint of a possible royal connection with Portugal, due to their shared fear of the possibility of the restoration of Iberian unity, which might have made the Peninsula a hotbed of prosperity and thus undermined the prospects for many festive bursts of imperialist expansion or pillage.

The France of Chateaubriand intervened in favor of absolutism in Spain and the France of Leon Blum, by declaring its policy of non-intervention with respect to the less absolutist, legitimate government of Spain, is the same France that is interested in the economic and political subjugation of Spain. From ultramontanism to socialism, the conduct of our neighbor on the other side of the Pyrenees has never changed.

To a certain extent, we were first-hand witnesses of the early stages of the Russian intervention in Spain. We were showered with praise by the Russians. The *Manchester Guardian* of December 22, 1936 contains an interview with Antonov Ovseyenko that is a kind of paean to our achievements, broadcast to the world. Against us, personally, he initiated a kind of persecution with banquets, promises, flattery. What did he want? We stood in the way of an intervention that went beyond what was appropriate, beyond what was implied by legitimate solidarity. He had to test our capacity for resistance. Antonov Ovseyenko and Stachevsky, together with the staff officers of the Army, Air Force and Navy, and with the industrial technicians that Russia sent us to highlight their superiority compared to the Spanish military officers and technicians, would not let us have a minute's peace.

It was his idea to send Negrín and Prieto to Barcelona; it was at his suggestion that they contacted us. It was his idea to overthrow Largo Caballero, who once said in Catalonia that as long as he was the Head of State, the Aragon Front would not get any arms, while it turned out that the refusal to provide arms to our front was an exclusively Russian condition, as was later revealed. It was his idea that we had to give up our militias, the last major obstacle that stood in the way of his plans of intervention and of control of the war and Spanish government policy.

In an attempt to win our trust he let us have a small quantity of arms and ammunition, making sure to tell us that he had used his own personal influence to get us these weapons and that he did so because he implicitly trusted us. The weapons were inferior, antiquated and mostly inoperable. On one occasion we received a shipment of nine thousand rifles, but at his instigation we had to send them to the front along with our men.

The details of our conversations with this man are of little interest. We were alarmed to see how these men who had so recently arrived in Spain had in a very short time assumed control over Spanish affairs, and the Spanish government, as if we were merely a colony under their administration.

They were the ones who called the shots about who was to be president and what the policies of the government had to be. We had to deal with the Valencia Government to request foreign exchange and raw materials. Stachevsky cunningly told us that we could count on him to make sure that Prieto and Negrín would consent to our requests. So we had to be available to meet with him on several occasions so that he would not find our doors closed to him.

He made a proposal to us to buy the textile products of Catalonia when we were members of the autonomous government and we refused because the terms were unacceptable; he asked us to eliminate Andrés Nin and his Party and we refused to do these favors for him.

It seemed to him that we were not just putty in his hands and that we would not join the team of Russian tools like Prieto and Negrín, the first in order to get rid of Largo Caballero, the second due to his simple irresponsible adventurism, for whom Prieto had provided the ladder of his fantastic rise to power and whose hands were left free for his brilliant innovations as an economist, whose first act was to send most of the gold of the Bank of Spain to the Russians, and whose second act was to create a gigantic army of *carabineros* for his own private use.



We have not directly examined the forms of Italian and German intervention on the side of so-called nationalist Spain. It was quite obvious, but no more so than Russian intervention in loyalist Spain. With the difference that the other side had the justification of effective assistance, while on our side we did not get effective assistance, and the Russians controlled everything from finance to the most insignificant appointments.

The most persuasive argument for this tolerance on the part of all the parties and organizations for the annoying interference of the Russians pointed out that Russia was the only country that sent us weapons and munitions. Not for free, of course, but at astronomical prices, whether or not the materiel arrived at our ports.

Prieto himself admits<sup>1</sup> that he agreed to sign receipts for cargoes that never arrived in Spain and recounts, among other incidents, signing a check for \$1,400,000.00 without knowing the identity of the payee, or for what purpose the check would be used. The Russian weapons were, furthermore, besides being very expensive, of poor quality, sent in small numbers, and above all distributed on the basis of a demoralizing party-based favoritism, in exchange for rendering homage to the genius of Stalin. They could not meet the needs of the war and they closed off any chance we might have had to negotiate with other countries that were hostile to Russia, and that did not look favorably on a Spain in the hands of Soviet emissaries or agents.

Our first encounter with the Russians involved a commercial deal, and from that point on our suspicions grew with each passing day. They wanted to buy our textiles, as we said, and at that time we were engaged in various negotiations to sell potash to France and England, always with the result that the small samples we shipped for testing were seized. We proposed to the Russians that they buy our potash, whose reserves could provide the wealth to finance part of the costs of the war. The ships that came to Spain from Odessa could return with cargoes of potash. Russia refused to buy our potash, arguing that it all belonged to the potash trust, in which German corporations held majority ownership. Russia showed more respect for the potash trust than for its emphatic declarations of solidarity with republican Spain. It preferred to buy the potash it needed from the trust rather than from us, although ours was of superior quality. France and England, by imposing their embargo on trade with Spain, and Russia, by refusing to buy our potash, whether with regard to raw materials or arms, all did more or less the same thing.

Russia, however, was wrong about Spain, if its intention really was to establish a long lasting intervention and not to merely work in conjunction with the German General Staff on behalf of German interests; if the Republic were to win the war, Russia's predominance and interference, which were completely rejected by the Spanish people, would have been liquidated, even if there were enough traitors to buy their government jobs and their fleeting rise to power in exchange for an insincere profession of the Stalinist faith. The day after the end of the war would have been the first day of the liquidation of Muscovitism in Spain if the Republic were to have been victorious; Moscow's power in Spain was unfortunately only liquidated by way of the victory of Franco, who had more luck with his allies than the Republic did with its allies.

It was not just Russia, however, that misplayed its hand in Spain; France and England did the wrong thing in a big way. And the new Great War of 1939 ... is unfortunately the payback for their disastrous mistakes.

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<sup>1</sup> *Cómo y por qué salí del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional. Intrigas de los rusos en España* [How and Why I Resigned as Minister of Defense. Russian Intrigues in Spain], Paris, 1939.

The far-reaching character of the Spanish civil war, due to the diametrically opposed aspirations of the combatants, had profound implications for international diplomacy from its very first moment. The defeat of Spanish military fascism would have had a major repercussion on European political and economic life. The war that we declared on the enemy, within our national borders, was a war for revolutionary aspirations and achievements, it was a war that dethroned the old privileged classes and destroyed the regime of the capitalist economy as a dominant regime.

A Spain in the hands of the workers, the peasants and the technicians would have been a major factor, an irresistible encouragement for the proletarian classes of every country, and a cause of instability in the economy of the old world, because Spain, on the basis of its abundant raw materials, would have been able to become an industrial power and a prosperous country, into whose orbit, as an additional historical and geographic region, Portugal would necessarily be attracted, after having undergone so many disasters at the hands of French and English dominance. And the major role that we played in these events increased the concern and the anxiety of the guardians and beneficiaries of absurd privileges.

We were very well aware of the meaning of our victory, the victory of the anti-fascist cause; that is why, as opposed to those who amused themselves with pursuing petty squabbles in the rearguard, in satisfying old grudges for past grievances, in bringing grist to the mills of our enemies in hiding or disguised as members of the organizations we thought were our allies, we never tired of repeating that first, the most important thing, the essential thing, was to win the war, and that the revolution was a natural consequence of this victory, the people in arms, that is, us.

We were in a hurry to overcome the obstacles that stood in the way of total victory, because we foresaw that a long war would necessarily be transformed into an international war, although its theater of operations was for the moment confined to Spain.

While international capitalism and statism, without any distinctions of political tendency, agreed in their aspiration to destroy our revolution in Spain, the workers of the world who sympathized with us were incapable of reaching any agreement concerning decisive action in defense of our right to control our own destinies. International diplomacy was given a free hand for its maneuvers, and isolated voices of protest were powerless to make it change its methods or its views in any way.

Within a few months we saw that we would be abandoned, just as Abyssinia had been abandoned, and just as China had been abandoned, despite the multiple international interests that were thus left unserved, and we understood that the desire to prevent a world war was what justified this passivity, even that of our own friends. But just as the old Balkan wars of 1912 had irremediably served as the incubator for the catastrophe of 1914–1918, the Italian invasion of Abyssinia, on the one hand, and the Spanish war against fascism, on the other, along with the Sino-Japanese war, were the not-so-minor preludes to the coming worldwide hecatomb.

The schemes implemented by international diplomacy to utilize every means to destroy us encountered an echo and passionate support among a multitude of people whose misconceived material interests, or their old, long-held habits of political dominance, were threatened by our actions.

Although we could have done so, we never used the people's forces as a springboard for obtaining privileged, executive positions of command; immediately having to deal with the problems of the war, we did not hesitate to assume all responsibilities, taking from the governmental appa-

ratus the influence that had previously been exercised, in the name of often-nonexistent parties, by men who had turned their participation in government affairs into a lucrative profession.

The fear we instilled with our ascent that was indisputably supported by the people, a fear that was based on the fact that others would have immediately transformed their ascendancy into the iron dictatorship of their parties or organizations, found an outlet, timid at first, but becoming more bold with each passing day, in Stalinism's old hatred for us, its truly irreconcilable enemies.

While we focused our attention on the war against the enemy, sacrificing everything to the war, the accomplices of a communist dictatorship, protected by Russia, became active, organized and conspired, and who, regardless of what they said in public, had only one goal: to use every means to remove us from the dominant position that we had attained via the high road of the greatest sacrifices.

While those on one side of the wall venerated Hitler or Mussolini as the supreme embodiment of an ideal of human enslavement, on the other side they rendered an identical worship to Stalin. And there we were between these two extremes, seeking to return to the sources of Spanish rights and Spanish traditions, without selling out to any foreign power.

This dissidence within the Republic was irreconcilable and not a day went by when it did not result in violence. Between February and May, more than eighty members of the National Confederation of Labor were assassinated in Madrid and its environs, the victims of the methods of the Chekas organized by the Russians. On January 7, 1937, the Barcelona newspaper, *Solidaridad Obrera*, revealed that sixty persons, men and women, who were members of the CNT, had been assassinated in Mora de Toledo, for no other crime than to have condemned the communists and their methods of terror and bloodshed.<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Eden, the leading figures of the public side of British policies during our war, were wrong. As dangerous as a revolutionary movement on our soil might appear to the world, Spain was not an aggressor country, with imperialist pretensions, and even if its industry and its agriculture were to be rehabilitated and expanded, it would still have to depend on the international economy and therefore on European and American markets. The solution did not consist in isolating it, nor was there any reason to fear that it would engage in aggressive expansion in quest of *lebensraum*.

Within the national framework, the private capitalist forms of economy would be eliminated, but fascism does not respect private capitalism, either; it either abolishes it in favor of State capitalism, or else it relegates the capitalists to the category of functionaries without any independence, that is, it attacks the very root of the capitalist economy. And a different kind of political regime and economic structure in Spain would not have implied any rupture in the European economy, because we were willing to tolerate any regime with which the other countries might provide themselves, as long as they also tolerated ours, and to maintain good neighborly relations with all the powers. First, however, we had to defeat fascism at home.

Against our wish and contrary to our intentions, we fought for the peace of Europe, for the dominance of the so-called democratic powers against their enemies, the fascist and communist totalitarian systems.

The democratic powers preferred to see the sacrifice of a million Spaniards rather than the loss of fifteen million European lives in a war that seemed to be inevitable. This was the English

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<sup>2</sup> Rudolph Rocker, in *Extranjeros en España* [Foreigners in Spain] (Ediciones "Imán", 1938, 177 p.), discusses the foreign intervention in Spain and its obvious purpose of crushing the will of the Spanish people.

position, which was followed to the letter by all the allegedly democratic countries. It was not true that the sacrifice of a million Spaniards would prevent that of fifteen million Europeans, and it was not true that the sale of arms and munitions to loyalist Spain would mean war with Germany. The fascist powers were aggressive as long as they were not checked by any resistance, and later, when effective resistance was finally mobilized, it was too late to turn back the clock. The first easy victories over Czechoslovakia, Austria and Albania encouraged them to invade Poland and to unleash a generalized war.

If loyalist Spain had won the war, neither Austria nor Czechoslovakia, nor Albania, would have been occupied, nor would Poland have been invaded, and without these triggers the war that was supposed to claim fifteen million European lives would never have started. Chamberlain and Eden, Blum and Dadalier, are now reaping for their compatriots the harvest whose seeds they sowed with their non-intervention in Spain, which was furthermore a testing ground for the most audacious experiments in the methods and weapons of modern war.

Now there is talk of the right of small nations to self-determination, and the example of Finland is proudly invoked, with its early resistance against the Russian invasion. Because they did not want to grant this right to Spain, the new European war has broken out. We therefore have our reasons for grievances and resentment concerning the treatment of our people, who were scandalously delivered over to German and Italian aggressors, even though, as French military specialists recognized at the time, our defeat might complicate France's future relations with its colonies.

The English financial elite calculated that Franco, once he had won the war, would sooner or later run into financial difficulties. Then would come the time for conditional loans, as was the case to a large extent with Italy. But the English financiers were playing with fire and no one thought they were right except for the English politicians and diplomats.

The tendency to seek to restore the monarchy in Spain is of English provenance, and if the current war does not end with the prostration of Franco-British power, and instead thwarts the German-Russian power alliance, perhaps they would proceed with their plans as they did in Greece. This will not prevent them from once again proclaiming their support for the principle of national self-determination, as in 1918, in order to discredit it later as they did with their League of Nations.

Naturally, everything could have happened just as it happened, also, because men who were astonishingly short-sighted or even just traitors with regard to the war held commanding positions in the Republic. With other men and another spirit, this game could have been frustrated.

Once we were convinced of the indifference and the abandonment to which we were subjected on the part of the so-called democratic powers, and once we realized that the best guarantee of our independence was to put ourselves in the hands of Russia, by delivering to Russia more than 500 tons of gold from the Bank of Spain, and upon seeing that all our resources were exhausted and noting the effective aid in terms of men, arms and munitions that our enemies enjoyed, all that remained was to play the game of international politics: a kind of ultimatum to England, France and Russia on the Spanish question. If, within a specified time frame they did not agree to provide us with effective aid in terms of food, weapons and munitions, the war would be irretrievably lost.

Then there was also the option of negotiating directly with Germany and Italy to end the war. At certain moments this seemed to be possible, by purchasing the withdrawal of these powers that were allied against us, at a price that might not have been welcomed by England and France.

This option, with respect to our international policy, and our war policy, would have left us with free hands to speak openly and clearly to our people and to induce them to voluntarily and spontaneously make all kinds of sacrifices.

To concentrate all resistance in an almost non-existent, demoralized, badly-equipped and starving army was to make defeat inevitable. The people, outside of any regular military formations, could continue the struggle and wear down the enemy forces that had proven irresistible in their offensive maneuvers thanks to their high morale and repeated victories, and to their superior armaments. But such factors can only be effective in a conventional war; in a guerrilla war, like ours, the enemy's air force, artillery, tanks, Italian staff officers and German advisors would be useless.

And there still remained the option of choosing some strategic positions, effectively fortifying them and then barricading ourselves in these positions, prepared for a long siege and for eventual death. The government of resistance, however, did not want to be too far from the border and the airfields.

With other men, of another kind, with a different morale, and a certain sense of responsibility, the end of war would have in any case been very different, even if the game was lost.

But let us move on to previous events that were also for the most part caused by foreign intervention in Spanish affairs: the events of May 1937. We shall confine our remarks to our participation in those events, which we experienced first-hand. Concerning the events that led up to this tragedy, and its chronology, much has been written by other authors.<sup>3</sup> Yet the fact that we worked hard to bring an end to that fierce conflict is less well known.

A large-scale military operation was being planned at the time whose goal was to cut Franco's Spain into two zones. Most of the troops that would have to be assigned to this operation were already in position. Only a few more details remained to be worked out—the role to be played by the air force and the tanks, and the transfer of some battle-tested units on the Madrid Front and their replacement by new recruits—in order to increase the operation's chances of success. At the same time, an uprising was supposed to take place in Morocco. Perhaps these maneuvers would not have been decisive in the outcome of the war, but they would have had enormous tactical and strategic consequences, and they would also have had major repercussions on international diplomacy and morale behind the lines.

The Russians refused to provide air support for the operation and it had to be aborted. Had the plan succeeded it would have signified an incontestable victory for Largo Caballero, and Largo Caballero had to be removed from power. Suddenly, a violent internecine conflict broke out in Barcelona, even more furious than July 19. This time the libertarian people's forces were fighting against the communists and their allies. How did such a bloody struggle arise in the rearguard?

We remained on the sidelines of this conflict, for the most part, annoyed for various reasons; we did not participate in the assemblies, nor did we have official contacts with anyone, not even with our own organizations, some of whose attitudes we did not share. Suddenly the proletariat of Barcelona was building barricades, setting up roadblocks, bearing arms and organizing detachments for battle.

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<sup>3</sup> Augustin Souchy, *La verdad sobre los sucesos de la retaguardia leal. Los acontecimientos de Cataluña* [The Truth about What Happened on the Home Front in Loyalist Spain. The Events in Catalonia], Buenos Aires, June 1937, 64 p.; *Informe presentado por el Comité Nacional de la C.N.T. sobre lo ocurrido en Cataluña* [Report Presented by the National Committee of the CNT Concerning the Events in Catalonia], Valencia, May 13, 1937; General Krivitzky, "Stalin's Hand in Spain", *The Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, June 15, 1938.

No one in the streets could tell us what was going on, but we considered the very idea of such fighting to be an outrage and we left the city for a small town nearby where we lived at the time. After what we saw that evening, it was impossible to remain calm. We returned to Barcelona the next day.

Hellish gunfire made it hard to travel through the city. We got in touch with the Minister of Internal Affairs for the Generalitat, Artemio Aiguadé. All we heard from him was excuses, on the one hand, and accusations directed against those who were alleged to be responsible for the fighting. We were told that there were no reasons for it. It was simply a matter of the fact that forces from the General Directorate of Security had attempted to occupy the Telephone Exchange Building, in order to seize it and place it under Government control, rather than under the control of the workers and employees, who eavesdropped on compromising conversations and messages and kept their ears open to detect those who conspired against the rights of the people.

At the Telephone Exchange Building, the police units had established an improvised occupation of the ground floor, but on the upper floors the workers and employees had remained at their posts, ready to defend their positions with hand grenades and machine guns.

During our travels through the city we noted that all the parties and organizations had taken up arms. The massacre had to be stopped, at any price! We proposed that a state of emergency should be declared and that the militias should occupy the streets to restore order.

No faction would have dared to open fire on the militias, due to the consequences that such an action would have entailed. We were told that the Minister of Defense had abandoned his post and that he did not have the respect and confidence of the various political and trade union sectors, anyway. We once again drove through the city, amidst incessant gunfire; our first stop was the Headquarters of the Regional Committee of the CNT and the FAI, and there we were apprised of the real reasons for the fighting and the conditions that would have to be met to stop it. In our discussions with the comrades of the CNT and the FAI, we were told that as a precondition for a ceasefire, the communist Rodríguez Salas must be removed from his position as the Director General of Security of Catalonia, and Aiguadé, of the Republican Left, must be removed from his position as the Minister of the Interior for Catalonia.

With these conditions we went to the Generalitat, only a few hundred meters away. We have never been exposed to such intense gunfire as we were that day during that short drive. But we reached the Palace of the Government of Catalonia safe and sound. We were also joined by García Oliver, the Minister of Justice, representing the Central Government, and Mariano R. Vázquez and Hernández Zancajo, representing the CNT and the UGT, respectively, who had arrived in a plane from Valencia.

We presented the conditions demanded by the libertarian organizations of Catalonia to impose a ceasefire. Companys replied that our efforts were futile, since the Government had ceased to exist, that the representatives of the CNT had forced it to disperse, and that the situation had no solution. We nonetheless obtained the agreement of the members of the Government who were assembled there to cooperate with us in our attempt to bring an end to this appalling internecine conflict. Companys was accompanied on this occasion by Comorera, one of the leading figures and masterminds of the campaign against the anarchists in Catalonia. We got the impression that he did not think that it was possible to defeat the masses in the streets and that was why he did not hesitate to abide by our suggestions.

The libertarian people's forces dominated the outer neighborhoods, and the focal points of communist and Republican Left resistance had been reduced to a few blocks around Claris and

Diagonal Streets, a few buildings on the Paseo de Gracia and on the Plaza de Cataluña, the Puerta del Angel and the building housing the offices of the Catalan Government.

While some people spoke over the radio to the population, calling unanimously for a ceasefire, we got in touch with the Neighborhood Committees and with elements that we knew had some influence over the armed masses. Within a few hours, our intervention began to have some effect. We were determined not to abandon our posts until everyone had put their guns down. And at the Generalitat, constantly on the telephone, we stayed two days and two nights in succession, until a new Government was formed and the ceasefire had taken effect.

We admit that we were the main cause of the suspension of the fighting. Not with pride, but with regret, because as we were bringing about a ceasefire on the part of our comrades, we saw the provocations of the small centers of resistance of the communists and Catalan republicans increase exponentially. Who had an interest in prolonging the massacre? It might have been the effect of the nervous tension that affected all of us and the shame that we all felt for the tragic incident, but we had the impression, from time to time, that the events had been skillfully provoked, and that certain sectors, and certain men, were displeased with the fact that we exercised such control over our mass following.

Was Companys working with the communists because he was afraid, or because he agreed with their policies? He had enough influence among his people, maybe even more than we had among ours, that he could have used to persuade them to cease fire and to stop the provocations. We tried to get the trolleys running again in the city, but the cars had to return to their depots or else were abandoned in the streets under a hail of gunfire from the communist strongholds and from those of the Republican Left and the Estat Catalá.

During the course of the conflict several thousand people had been detained by the various factions. The neighborhood of Sans had arrested and disarmed 600 Assault Guards and Civil Guards, and in all the districts where fighting took place, prisoners were taken into custody by the belligerent forces. Among these prisoners, our people in the downtown district had captured eight *mozos de escuadra* of the Generalitat.

The Generalitat, however, had also taken hundreds of prisoners, most of them from our organizations, and its representatives told us via telephone that the lives of these detainees were worth just as much as the lives of the communist or Catalan nationalist detainees that were being held in our various strongholds. Companys presented us with a message from the Generalitat's *mozos de escuadra*; this message said, more or less, that they could not be responsible for the discipline of their forces and that they would hold us responsible for whatever might happen to their eight comrades held by the people of the Downtown district. It was a threat! We already had enough reasons to be angry. We were in no mood to be threatened, especially now that we were beginning to feel regret for what we had done. With disciplined restraint, we responded to a telephone call from the coastal batteries:

"Don't shoot; we are here. But call every ten minutes. If we don't answer, then open fire."

We requested an urgent meeting with Companys, Comorera, Vidiella, Tarradellas and Calvet, all of them former Ministers of the Generalitat, to decide what to do. We must have emanated a diabolical satisfaction. It was our response to the threat that Companys had just transmitted to us. We explained that the coastal batteries had their guns trained on the Generalitat, and that just

one salvo would be enough to bury us all under the rubble of the building and that we were all condemned to the same fate. No one could leave, not us, or anyone else, until the fighting in the streets ends, fighting that was now the sole responsibility of the communists and sympathizers of the *Ezquerria de Catalunya*.

Finally, we were tired of playing a part that did not suit us, for while everyone else was avoiding taking any action at all, we had not slept for two days, marshalling all our prestige and risking it to bring about a ceasefire. A Government had to be formed that would take responsibility for resolving the situation.

Our reference to the coastal batteries had a marvelously sobering effect. While we were explaining the situation to Companys and his cohorts, we received another phone call from the commanders of the artillery of the coastal batteries, and we repeated our orders. Everyone from the big shots to the small fry imagined the rubble crashing around them. A new government was formed, with the Secretaries of the two Regional Federations of the CNT and the UGT, with the peasants and the *Ezquerria*. We excluded Comorera. They had no other recourse than to consent to our proposals, because otherwise they would in effect have to yield to the decisive ruling of the guns of Montjuich.

Unfortunately, as the Secretary of the Catalanian UGT, Antonio Sesé, was on his way to the Generalitat to assume his position in the government, he was shot and killed. A serious setback; but we could not consent to allow this event to nullify the agreements we had concluded. We agreed to accept Rafael Vidiella as a replacement for Sesé. And that is what happened. We thus formed the Government; so it would work as if it knew what it was doing and was capable of doing it and that it would from now on accept the concomitant responsibility.

We ordered that the eight *mozos de escuadra* who had been detained should be brought to the Generalitat, as a gesture of good faith. Our work at the Palace of the Government was done. But in the meantime a decree issued from Valencia transferred all authority for the maintenance of public order in Catalonia to the Central Government and appointed colonel Escobar to enforce the decree. This colonel Escobar was a man whom we thought we could trust, but he was a career military officer and he had to follow orders.

On his way to carry out his orders, however, Escobar was mortally wounded. Then a temporary substitute was appointed, lieutenant colonel Arrando; at that time, we were still trying to quell the last remnants of street fighting.

And while we were doing that, several columns of Assault Guards and *carabineros* were on their way to Catalonia in full battle array; their commander, colonel Emilio Torres, was a friend of ours, but not only had he been entrusted by the Valencia Government to impose order in Catalonia, but the same decree also transferred the command of the militias in Aragon to the central government, appointing general Pozas to carry out this order. When the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Defense, Juan Manuel Molina, the only cabinet-level figure to retain his position after the May events, who was working frantically to stop the militias that wanted to intervene in the fighting in Barcelona, halted a large motorized column that had been assembled on the Huesca Front to return to Barcelona, under the command of Máximo Franco, he asked for our advice about what he should do, we suddenly foresaw the total loss of Catalanian autonomy and the loss of the war as a result. There was still time to try to stop this from happening and to obtain a more favorable outcome.

It is not as if we lacked the material force. We could have sent general Pozas and his escort back to Valencia with our refusal to recognize his appointment, and we had enough time to stop



the columns of Assault Guards and *carabineros* under the command of colonel Torres. But we lacked confidence in those who had become the representatives of our movement; we did not have a solid core group of determined, respected men to lend us a hand and back us up in an emergency. So we advised Juan Manuel Molina that he should yield possession to general Pozas of the Military Headquarters and of the command of our militias.

What a disaster! Then, after already having agreed to the ceasefire, we were told that one of the local offices of the Libertarian Youth—an art gallery—had been occupied by communists and they refused to leave. We spoke to the representatives of the Catalanian UGT. We discovered that the commander of the Carlos Marx column, José del Barrio, had been appointed general secretary of the Regional Federation of the UGT; when we called, he had already gone to bed, but we were told that we could speak to the acting general secretary in his absence, lieutenant colonel Sacanel, the Chief of Staff of the Carlos Marx column.

We therefore confirmed certain allegations that had been brought to our attention, to the effect that the Carlos Marx column, almost in its entirety, had returned to Barcelona before the May Events along with its commanders and officers, and it was when he discovered this that Máximo Franco mobilized the strong column that Molina was able to stop, after enormous efforts, in Binefar.

An Argentinian writer, González Pacheco, who had just arrived in Barcelona during the May Events, told us that when he was staying at the Spanish Embassy in Brussels he overheard a conversation of the ambassador Ossorio y Gallardo in which the latter took pleasure in assuring his interlocutor that the threat of FAI domination in Madrid had been checked and that at any time now the battlefield would shift to Barcelona itself. This information, together with the presence of various French and English warships in the vicinity of the port of Barcelona on the very same day that the fighting began, May 3, made us consider the possibility of a provocation of foreign origin. And the fact that the communists were mixed up in this provocation we were able to infer from the presence of their forces from the Aragon Front in Barcelona.

We had to react, we had to recover our lost positions. We still had the forces to do so, and, if instead of a spasmodic, disorganized uprising, we were to try to do something by directly mobilizing our forces and seizing the initiative in the struggle, as we did on July 19, any forces that the Valencia Government might send, and any maneuvers on the part of its allies, would be of little avail.

A few days later the famous May crisis of the Central Government took place. The representatives of the CNT resigned from the Government and Largo Caballero was forced to resign from his office as Prime Minister. The Negrín-Prieto Government was formed.

No matter how angry we were at the sight of the conduct of our own comrades who were serving as leaders, it was not possible for us to just stand there with our hands in our pockets. We met for an initial exchange of impressions with the general secretary of the CNT, Mariano R. Vázquez, and García Oliver. It was on the basis of these first impressions, after the recent events, that we would decide what to do. We explained our opinion about the May events; we said that we thought that the whole affair was a foreign provocation and our people were miserably dragged into the fight; once they were in the streets, however, our mistake was to have brought about a ceasefire without first having solved the problems that caused the fighting in the first place. For our part, we regretted the part that we had played and we thought that there was still time to recover our lost positions. It was impossible for us to reach an agreement, however. We were told

that we had done precisely the right thing by calling for a ceasefire and that there was nothing we could do now but await further developments and adapt as well as possible to the new situation.

Then we withdrew, doubly defeated. We did not want to initiate a public campaign of opposition and we concentrated on private discussions to express our dissenting views.

A wave of police and judicial repression was then unleashed against a non-Stalinist communist party, the POUM, and against thousands of our own comrades. Despicable assassinations were committed, and we saw with our own eyes sixteen mutilated corpses of members of the Libertarian Youth of San Andrés and other districts, brought one night to the cemetery of Sardañola by an ambulance. The fact that they had been mutilated and tortured was quite evident. Their bodies bore the trademark signs of the assassins. The May events claimed no fewer than a thousand dead and several thousand wounded in Barcelona. The situation that ensued afterwards was simply intolerable. One could always count on the masses of the FAI and the CNT, but one could no longer count on their so-called responsible committees.

We met with the Russian General Consul; we had no doubt whatsoever that the whole affair had been cooked up in Moscow.

He congratulated us on our efforts during the May events. And that was just what we wanted to speak to him about. Everyone knew that without our intervention the May events would have led to very different results than expected. For our part, we were ashamed of the fact that we intervened to stop the fighting, now that we had seen the spectacle that followed. We did not need to emphasize our sincerity. Antonov Ovseyenko was fully aware of it. However, there were still thirty thousand rifles in the hands of the libertarians, hand grenades in unlimited quantities, machine guns and even artillery. And those of us who had risked our lives to bring about a ceasefire were tempted to risk them again to resume the struggle, but this time to fight to the end.

It was impossible to bear what was happening for even a minute longer! It was not yet time for the counterrevolution!

We really were angry and there was no way we could have dissimulated our state of mind. Under other circumstances we would have earnestly set about planning the offensive and defensive aspects of a military campaign. We said this to Antonov Ovseyenko, because we knew that it was in his office rather than in the offices of the alleged Republican authorities that our protests would have to be made. And we did so individually, without the backing of any organization. Antonov Ovseyenko showed signs that he understood. In fact, the anarchists could not be exterminated, due to their numbers, because of their role in the war and also due to the threat they still posed. Two or three days later, certain directives were issued from Moscow that led to the suspension of the repression, at least in the extremely provocative form that it had first assumed. Was this the result of our threats or of similar impressions?

According to all the press reports, Ovseyenko was shot in Russia because of his relations with the anarchists and the Catalanian nationalists. It seemed to us that, basically, Ovseyenko sympathized with us, that he liked us, even though, on the other hand, he was a fanatical servant of Stalin's directives. The Spanish communists accused him of favoring our cause in their reports to the Kremlin.

Publicly, there were still no signs of internal dissent. And in order not to give aid and comfort to the enemy, we withdrew from all activity, in silence. During the Government crisis of May 1937, the CNT upheld, at least in its public declarations, a dignified and worthy position. It declared,

at that time, that it could not exist side by side in equality with the communist party in any Government, because:

- The communist party had provoked the crisis;
- The communist party had not faithfully collaborated in the work of the Government like the CNT;
- The communist party did not even remotely represent the Spanish people or the Spanish proletariat to the degree that the CNT did.

A report to the membership presented by the National Committee of the CNT, discussing the meaning of the May crisis, included the following passages from the CNT's declaration of the reasons why its Ministers resigned from the government during their meeting with the President of the Republic:

1. The CNT states clearly that it is not responsible for the current situation, and considers it, from every perspective, unacceptable and inappropriate with respect to the interests of the war and of the anti-fascist front, and disavows all responsibility for any consequences that may result from said situation.
2. That it will not offer its collaboration to any Government in which comrade Francisco Largo Caballero does not figure as Prime Minister and Minister of War.
3. That this Government must be based on representatives of the working class, in close collaboration with the anti-fascist sectors.

In the note referring to the maneuvers of Dr. Negrín in his attempt to obtain the CNT's support for his candidacy for the office of Prime Minister, one may read such clear and forceful statements as the following:

The CNT will not collaborate, either directly or indirectly, with any Government that might be formed by comrade Negrín. Otherwise we have no quarrel with the former Minister of Finance.

It is the line of conduct he has followed since then. We did not provoke the crisis, which was so deleterious, inopportune and prejudicial for the war effort and the anti-fascist bloc. Satisfied with the loyal activity of the Prime Minister and Minister of War in the Largo Caballero cabinet, we cannot lend our support to partisan positions that demonstrate a lack of nobility and a lack of collaboration. The CNT, confident and disciplined, trusts that reflection will prevent more mistakes that would aggravate this difficult situation that was brought about by stupidity.

And the CNT's public position was emblazoned on the cover of its manifesto: *Against the Counterrevolution. The CNT to the Conscience of Spain.*

The militants of the FAI had nothing to object to in this position that was so forcefully and clearly expressed. And that was the position that we expected the CNT to take. Only those of

us who had withdrawn from the public life of the organization interpreted it differently, and we doubted that these words, which for the masses of the confederation comprised the only acceptable political line, would have the same value for the improvised leaders of the great organization. These leaders, in conflict with the spirit, the interests and the aspirations of the masses of workers and militiamen, after having publicly pledged their support for the policy of Largo Caballero, would subsequently enter into private negotiations with Prieto and told him that they would support him and when, despite their support, the Prieto Government also fell, they formed an alliance with Negrín that would endure until, and even after, the final defeat.

The war had entered its stage of decline and defeat. It was not possible to remain blind to the facts. When Bilbao fell into the hands of the enemy, *Juventud Libre*, the newspaper of the Libertarian Youth, published an article entitled, "The Fall of Bilbao Signals the Failure of the Negrín Government". This article was reproduced in thousands of copies and distributed throughout loyalist Spain. In one of its sections, fearless in its sincerity and its truth, we read:

All over loyalist Spain we hear only one exclamation, only one shouted demand, in city and countryside: Down with the Negrín Government! Down with the Communist Party, cause of all defeats! We demand a Government based on the representation of all the anti-fascist forces that pursue a real war policy!

But the Negrín Government, despite the simmering crisis it is now facing, is trying to retain its hold on power.

The same methods used by the Republic of April 14 are now being implemented. The press is censored, radio stations are closed down, every means is used to try to prevent the free expression of the working class organizations, meetings are suspended, the Government is refusing to pay attention to the voice of the people calling for a radical change in policy that will lead us to military victory and the triumph of the revolution.

The messages sent on August 10, 1937 from the National Committee of the CNT to the Prime Minister, were worthy exemplars of the tradition of May. Perhaps they erred by being too prudent, too tolerant, and for systematically avoiding the response that was deserved by the provocateurs who were trying to erase our achievements and exterminate our men. But these documents are still, right down to the smallest details, expressive of dignity.

The National Committee of the CNT protested against the censorship imposed at the behest of the Communist Party, a censorship that allowed the publication of slanders and defamation against us, but did not allow us to respond to our accusers. It protested against the proliferation of trials of persons accused of participating in actions against the fascists in July 1936.

Every family that lost one of its members to the people's rage submitted its denunciations and these denunciations were allowed to form the bases of criminal proceedings, without any consideration of the question of whether or not the deceased was involved with the military revolt. It was understood, however, that by bringing those who participated in the July events to trial, the revolution was also put on trial, which amounted to carrying out the work that Franco would accomplish after his victory, and after some juridical atrocities, they had to back off, for among the other discoveries that were made, the following is most striking: the punishment for irresponsible murders would have had to be imposed first of all against those who were promoting the wave of persecution, rather than against the members of any other sector.

In another letter, also dated August 10, 1937, the National Committee addressed the question of the war, and includes a document of serene and well-intentioned criticism. We shall quote a few paragraphs from it:

Ever since the current Government was formed, numerous military operations have taken place that have been characterized by constant blunders. We have not conquered even one position; instead, thousands and thousands of militiamen have fallen; enormous quantities of materiel have been lost and all of this is due to the ineffectiveness and incompetence of those who are responsible for the conduct of the war....

Referring to the Brunete campaign, the following observation is made:

This was not a military operation, but a political operation, and in war it is not possible to carry out political operations, since everyone must attend to a technique and a reality of rifles and positions that stand above all political interests....

The letter denounces extreme partisan politics, as well as the persecution of individuals in non-communist units. Attempted assassinations, like the failed attempt to kill Cipriano Mera, and extrajudicial executions, are also mentioned, and the partisan machinations of the commissariat are condemned. In short, all the criticisms that we had been making and that we continued to make, are summarized in this letter, because none of the evils that it denounces were suppressed except with regard to their degree.

The situation was so serious that the National Committee of the CNT asked, with more than enough justification:

All of these things that are happening force us to ask certain questions. Where are we heading? Are we fighting and persevering only and exclusively to lose the war? Are all these things indicative of an attempt to sow discouragement at the front and behind the lines, to arouse misgivings among the people and to create a situation that will ultimately lead to a time when everyone only thinks about ending the war, and thus facilitating the proposals for mediation that are being pursued by certain foreign powers? (...)

Isn't it about time to put an end to the partisan conduct of a disastrous phase, and for us to immediately prepare ourselves, all of us, to examine the situation with honor and loyalty, and reach the conclusion of drawing a line, with respect to the war, whose results would not be the disasters that have been repeated up until now, and prevent certain demanding activities from thriving, and to prevent the moment from arriving when they will have to be violently cut out, by those who cannot continue to tolerate certain people who want Spain to be turned into a country of submissive puppets of a dictatorship? (...)

Although we did not use the same prose style, we shared these same anxieties at the time and we continued to share them, with even greater justification, after the loss of all of Northern Spain, after the splitting of loyalist Spain into two zones, and after the defeats on the Eastern Fronts, in Levante and Estremadura, seeing how all

the defects and all the evils that were denounced shortly after the May events only multiplied.

With regard to military affairs, the National Committee of the CNT, in collaboration with the FAI, presented the Government with a review of the conduct of the war by the successors of the Largo Caballero cabinet. This report criticizes the campaign against Segovia, which cost us three thousand casualties out of a total of 10,000 combatants. The operations that were carried out on the Eastern Front, which were exceedingly disastrous, were subjected to a detailed analysis. The Brunete campaign, a political operation rather than a military one, which cost us 23,000 casualties and in which there were brigades that lost 70% of their fighting strength, was subjected to the criticism it deserved. The same severe, correct and well-deserved judgment was leveled against the operations on the Teruel Front, with their failures of a technical and political order. The following are some of the conclusions of this report:

1. At the time of the formation of the Negrín Government, there were 550,000 men in the duly-structured regular army, with a strike force ready to attack the enemy's forces at their weakest points, strategically speaking.

The Estremadura campaign "was aborted because the Russian elements who were in command of the air force refused to allow the use of the latter in the campaign, in order to discredit and overthrow the Caballero Government, and this was also the cause of the fall of Bilbao".

3. Once the attempt to attain the international objective, which was the reason for the provocation of the crisis, failed, all efforts with respect to the orientation of the war were undertaken in such a way as to give the false impression of victories that, due to their minor scope, should have been easy, but which, because of their leadership, were just so many more fiascos. Of this kind were the campaigns against Segovia and Aragon.
4. The operation on the Center Front that recently failed was yet another stupid idea, considered strategically.
8. An absence of all coordination between the operations of land and air forces.
9. Indiscipline among the commanders.
10. The Brunete campaign was an exclusively political operation that did not serve the interests of victory over fascism, but was intended to serve the interests of the Communist Party at the expense of the other organizations.
17. We must impose a radical change of course in military policy that will prevent the disaster towards which we are heading if we continue to follow this same road.

In vain do we look for any rectification of military policy, while Prieto was Minister of National Defense, or when Negrín succeeded him, that would have satisfied the doubts, observations and critical judgments of the ruling bureaucracy of the CNT.

It is true, however, that when the CNT ceased to engage in any criticism, Negrín gave the CNT, after many attempts and many humiliations, a Ministry, chosen by him, and only our voice, as an individual, and that of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, stood firm in warning against the collapse almost throughout the entire year of 1938.

After having committed the grave error of calling for a ceasefire in May 1937, without achieving anything except consolidating the position of the Russians and their allies in Spain, I attempted to rectify my mistake by means of energetic defensive action, which was rejected as a crime in the intimate circles of the most well-known militants; and after we had once again committed the error of not responding in kind to the provocations that followed the pacification project of May, the Government should have been overthrown when Northern Spain was lost or when the bizarre campaign of Brunete was initiated and when the methods of the assassins of those who did not follow the Moscow line at the front and behind the lines were revealed.<sup>4</sup> There was no shortage of reasons for a rebellion of Spanish dignity against a Government that was leading us to disaster. But the complete surrender of the bureaucracy of the CNT to the Negrín Government and to the directives of the communists created a situation in which this rebellion broke out, not when there was still time to obtain some results, but only later, in the Center and in Levante, when the war was basically over. Because we understood that what took place in March 1939 in Madrid and in Levante should have taken place in Catalonia, at least in March 1938, if not in May or June 1937, we separated ourselves from all responsibility in the management of confederal affairs; but the FAI alone, without taking its fundamental dissent into the streets, was no longer capable of channeling the rebellion against the Government, which would have been extremely easy in alliance with the CNT.

We will have to answer to history for our passivity and complicity in the loss of the war, and that is why we have revealed such unsavory details as these, which cause us great pain, but which must be exposed, because the masses of the CNT do not share any responsibility for the deception of which they were the victims in the Spanish war. Their deceivers were able to bring their fateful schemes to fruition thanks to the Spanish Ministers, the Spanish political parties, the Spanish military commanders, the Spanish police, and the Spanish writers who followed their orders. The Spanish people are free of any responsibility for the disaster, but the same cannot be said for Prieto. He did not possess the audacity of Largo Caballero—who rejected the Kremlin’s interference in Spanish politics—either when he was in office, or after he had been ousted from the government.

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<sup>4</sup> “Negrín tried to downplay the importance of these incidents. But then comrade Zugazagoitia exclaimed, in an outburst of sincerity, ‘Don Juan, let’s face the facts. Our comrades are being assassinated at the fronts because they do not want to join the communist party.’” (I. Prieto, *Cómo y por qué salí del Ministerio de Defensa nacional*, p. 31).

One of the first steps taken in subjecting the country to a minority of generals, colonels, admirals, consuls, trade representatives, ambassadors, cops, etc.—who invaded republican Spain under orders from Stalin, and who, as we did not yet know at the time, were working hand in glove with Hitler—was the introduction of the international brigades.

Their creation and their admission to Spain provided the perfect argument to the Italians and the Germans to intervene on behalf of our enemies; however, while on the side of the republic the international brigades were only effective as an instrument of communist domination, on Franco's side, Italian and German aid had the objective of military victory, and was, due to its quantity and quality, a decisive factor in that victory.

As far as we are concerned, the men who made up the famous brigades involuntarily contributed to our defeat, since they facilitated the anti-popular machinations of the Russians and of the Government that was taking orders from the Russians.

There was one fact that the Spanish revolutionaries could not ignore: we could count on the active support of many workers and rebels from every country who wanted to come to Spain and fight at our side, for our cause, which was a universal cause of freedom against tyranny. We could not deny them the satisfaction of fighting and dying with us. Many Italians, Germans, Frenchmen, etc., fought on our Aragon Front from the very beginning of the war.

However, this kind of support was one thing, and the political intentions of those who created the international brigades with recruits from many different countries, were another thing entirely. Among these recruits who came to Spain to join the international brigades, there were some who earned our respect, and many of them were simple unemployed workers who were deceived by the attractive promises disseminated by sophisticated propaganda. They had come to Spain, not to die in the war, but to make a living from it, like the mercenaries of old. As for the higher level officers and those who invented the international brigades, however, they had other things in mind.

The truth is that the Government of the Republic, in Catalonia as well as in the Center, in Levante as in Estremadura, did not have the sympathy of the people. The Russians cleverly understood that the Government could only govern by serving the people, responding to the demands and aspirations of the people. They decided that they had to hold the Spanish masses in check, discipline them and subject them to an iron central power, and change the Spanish temperament and soul. The people had fought heroically against the military revolt, but they were not a docile instrument in the hands of the Government and of the bureaucracy of the Ministry of War.

The Central Government needed a first-class instrument to impose its will. Following the advice of Russian diplomats, it allowed the entry into Spain of the so-called international brigades, under the contemptible pretext that the militias did not know how to fight or follow orders. They did not obey those whom they were supposed to obey!



The militias knew how to fight and how to follow orders just as well as the international brigades. There was one difference between them, however: the international brigades were equipped with effective modern weapons, while the people's militias often went barefoot, were armed with primitive weapons, usually without ammunition, and they were persecuted by the constant sabotage of the centralist bureaucracy of the Republic.

We were opposed to the creation of these international brigades and we issued the order to the delegates at the border posts to deny entry to these volunteers. We were then visited by people who wasted no time coming to Spain under the sponsorship of the Russians, such as André Marty, who were trying to convince us to allow the entry into Spain of these men who wanted to fight at our side. We said that we had plenty of men, and that instead of bringing these brigades to Spain, what really needed to be done was to help us with arms and munitions; we thought that it was an injustice and a crime to stand by and watch our militiamen, whose bravery and spirit are beyond compare, left defenseless, while at the same time large units of foreign soldiers were being formed, equipped with everything they needed and given preferential treatment. We stopped more than a thousand of these volunteers at the border with France; when they were turned away from the border, they were transported by ships from French ports to Spanish ports controlled by the Government of the Republic.

On one such occasion, one of our coast guard vessels, the "Francisco", intercepted a shipment of arms intended for these international brigades. We ordered that the ship dock in Barcelona, and when it was unloaded, we saw that its cargo was composed exclusively of inoperable and useless weapons from before the war of 1914–1918, paid for without any questions about price by the Central Government.

All of that stuff was of such poor quality that we had no objection to returning it to its owners, when they demanded that we do so. The French adventurers who served as the front for the organization of the international brigades made a killing, as we have since discovered, in their business dealings with the Government of the Republic.

We had to relinquish our control over the Catalanian militias because of incidents of that kind, skillfully distorted by the Russians, and then the so-called volunteers were allowed free passage over the territory of Catalonia.

We did not yet have a clear idea of the danger represented by these brigades that were at the disposal of the central government, and we were sure that many of their soldiers—the ones who were not mere adventurers—would not have agreed to perform the role they were to play if they had been aware of the fact that it was not the needs of the war that led to the creation of the international brigades, but a treasonous, party-centered policy and the need, on the part of those who aspired to be dictators, to have the use of an obedient strike force, since the Spanish people were insistently declaring their adulthood.

Later, when the mission they had been called upon to perform was accomplished, we expressed our opinion to many of the soldiers serving in the international brigades,

and they agreed with us; but it was too late to undo the horrible damage they had unintentionally caused.

We would rather not talk about the secret prisons, and the assassinations so casually carried out against the volunteers who were not Stalinists. It would seem that the Machiavellianism of the Russians had come to the conclusion that, by taking advantage of the sympathies aroused by the Spanish revolution, they could get rid of their Trotskyist, libertarian, and independent socialist enemies by way of the international brigades, which they would have to join to fight in Spain. To a certain degree, their conclusion would be supported by the subsequent events.<sup>5</sup>

We do not know how many men came to Spain to join these brigades. There might have been twenty- or twenty-five thousand. But the fact is that within a few months, and even while Indalecio Prieto was still Minister of War, most of the soldiers in the international brigades were Spaniards compelled to serve in their ranks, under the command of Russian or other foreign officers. The ranks of these brigades, which were thinned out more by desertions than by enemy fire, were filled with Spanish conscripts.

In our opinion, neither these international brigades, nor, afterwards, the creation of the formidable army of *carabineros*, were more vehemently opposed by any sector than by the Spanish people themselves, which no longer had any say in military policy. In official spheres, our direct action had remained without an echo and without any sequel.

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<sup>5</sup> This is one of the explanations given for the creation of the international brigades by Krivitzky, former Red Army general and chief of Soviet secret services in the West.

# **The nefarious activities of the Communist Party—The Russian “Chekas” in Spain—Our side**

Whenever we have deplored the suicide towards which we were led by the bureaucracy of our own organizations in the Spanish revolution and civil war—the bureaucracy of our own organizations, because if any other bureaucracy had done the same thing in any other organization, in absolutely the same way, it would be of less importance to us—the constant refrain we hear in response is that by acting in this way we avoided being accused before the court of History of having lost the war due to our rebelliousness or our yearning for justice.

It is quite possible that, if we were to have waged a vigorous counteroffensive against foreign interference on our territory and in defense of the rights of the Spanish people against their enemies—both the enemies who were conspiring from their positions within the Government of the Republic as well as the enemies who were hatching their plots in Burgos—we would have thereby abbreviated the war. And by doing so, we would have gone down to defeat in a way that was true to our principles, our people would have been able to reduce the duration of their fruitless martyrdom and it is possible that the massacre that followed Franco’s victory would have been less terrible. And at first, the traitors to Spain on the Republican side would have been able to blame us for what happened, but the time would have come to put things into perspective and it would have become evident that we were destined to lose the war after the fall of northern Spain.

We did not take action, we were obedient and we remained silent, surrendering the fates of millions of Spanish proletarians to the phlegmatic lack of concern of a Dr. Negrín; we put up with insults and treatment that we would have never borne before the war. This was not good sense, it was not reasonable; it was bureaucratic cowardice and it was the betrayal of our people. We will not be accused of having interfered with the plans of the communist-Republican Government, but we can be accused of not having interfered with them, and in the court of the future this charge will be the more serious one by far.

We do not have the nerve to try to justify such conduct; they sold the people down the river for the mess of pottage of a few Ministerial positions. Nor is it any excuse that all the parties and organizations did the same thing.

We did not have the right to do the same, we had the duty to do otherwise, it was our duty not to hesitate in the name of an absurd sense of responsibility. Responsibility to whom? To the gangsters of the Republic? And why did we not have any responsibility towards the fate of a people whose legitimate representatives we were?

As for myself, I only accuse myself of having erred during the May events, and my subsequent powerlessness to rectify the results of my error was a logical consequence of that original fateful mistake. The outcome of the war and the fate of our people would have been very different if,

instead of risking my life to bring about a ceasefire in the uprising provoked by our enemies, I would have risked my life to provide some direction and meaning to that same uprising.

Even during an early stage of the disaster, those who later placed themselves under the orders of *negrinismo* succeeded in preventing, obedient to that very same sense of responsibility, the gold of the Bank of Spain from being shipped to Catalonia instead of Russia.

This sense of responsibility and equanimity in the face of continuous provocations is not enough to absolve those who were factors in the blind subjection of the masses of the CNT; this sense of responsibility and this equanimity are more accurately understood as complicity or cowardice in the face of enemies with whom we should have felt as little in common as with Franco.

Resolutions were voted, under pressure from below, from the people, but those who were so assiduous in fully complying with the resolutions of the Government, did everything that was in their power to prevent the resolutions forced upon them by the pressure of the people from being implemented. As we wrote in a report of the FAI:<sup>1</sup>

The actions of the Communist Party in the war, and in the revolutionary and political order, have merited the most absolute repudiation on the part of the libertarian movement, and have led the latter to pass urgent resolutions.

At the Regional Plenum of the CNT held in Valencia in mid-April, 1937, a committee was appointed to study a way to neutralize the shameless offensive unleashed by the party of slogans against the libertarian organizations, promoting various measures, including, among others, the following:

To work tirelessly to discover their secret organizations of repression and disgusting propaganda and their methods of operation, in order to unmask them, when the opportunity arises, in every “affair” in which they intervene or attempt to mediate. All this work must be carried out with prudence in order to avoid prejudicial setbacks and to catch them by surprise when the time is right.

To attentively and assiduously scrutinize the actions of those who occupy official positions, obtaining as much data as possible concerning their activities, which will allow us to expose their partisanship and their inability to exonerate themselves.

To zealously devote ourselves to discovering in detail the financial operations of the International Red Aid, taking into account the fact that we already have documentation proving that the large donations they receive are used exclusively for their propaganda, and that any intentions on their part to use the money for the purposes of solidarity that they loudly proclaim are entirely absent.

The Regional Plenum of the CNT-FAI-Libertarian Youth, held in May 1937, passed the following resolution, which states:

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<sup>1</sup> Address to the National Plenum of Regional Committees of the Libertarian Movement: “On the need to reaffirm our revolutionary identity and to refuse to support government policies that are necessarily fatal to the war and the revolution”, by the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, September 1938.

It is resolved: Attack the Communist Party on a national scale. Attack, on a local scale, those who have been persuaded to support it, for their conduct in each locality, province or region.

Summarizing the contents of the famous manifesto, “Confronting the Counterrevolution: The CNT to the Conscience of Spain”, the National Committee of the CNT published a number of manifestos that were severely critical of the Communist Party, under the significant titles: “The Party of the Counterrevolution”; “Democratic Procedures”; “The Carrion Crows of the Revolution”; “By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them”; “Above All, The Revolutionary Alliance of the Working Class”, etc.

Our agreement, then as now, with these views has never been a matter of dispute. We completely identified with them. We defended our movement against its most irreconcilable enemies.

Do we need to mention the invasion of Aragon by troops who were enthusiastic supporters of the Communist Party and how they destroyed the exemplary constructive work of the peasants of Aragon? We have more than enough reasons to state that, without the invasion of Aragon by Lister’s divisions, the subsequent invasion of the fascist armies would not have occurred.

Have we forgotten such infamies as the note from the Political Bureau of the Communist Party dated July 31, 1937? We could not stand side by side with the party of maximum irresponsibility and we could not treat it as an equal. Or had this Party changed its ways, its morality, or its purposes?

And what about those articles published in *Frente Rojo* that denounced our economic and military achievements in Aragon? This is how one of these articles begins (October 14, 1937): “The Popular Front Government has made a truly triumphant entry into Aragon. The peasants, instilled with hope, jubilantly welcomed the troops. Aragon is beginning to respect and experience the benefits of the new administration. An odious and woeful epoch has undoubtedly come to an end.”

The mudslinging directed at us by the Communist Party and its press galvanized our organizations, which stridently demanded a minimum of decency and responsibility. The National Committee of the CNT broke off relations with the Communist Party pending the rectification of the article in which Lister’s crimes in Aragon were praised and the epic achievements of the men of the CNT were denounced.

There was a long series of notes, replies and counter-replies, but, to make a long story short, the Party of slogans neither offered any explanations for its actions nor did it disavow responsibility for the content of the campaign of slander and insult of which we were the victims.

We had too much self respect, however, to allow the mainstay of a Government that did not enjoy the approval, sympathy or support of the libertarian movement to appear to have won this argument in the eyes of the domestic and international audience.

Without rectifying even one of its irreconcilably hostile accusations, the Communist Party then attempted to convince the leaders of the CNT to support the Government in order to enlist and manipulate them as rubber stamps for its own policy of hegemony. And it was because of the extent to which the comrades of the National Committee of the CNT actually began to respond favorably to these suggestions that the Peninsular Committee of the FAI found itself in increasingly more serious disagreement with the leadership of the confederal organization.

Nor do we think that libertarian militants have forgotten the October 1937 Pact between the CNT and the UGT, undermined by the communists who interpreted it as “a pact of struggle

against the political parties and the Government” (Resolution of the Fourth Provincial Conference of the Communist Party of Valencia).

The Pact was truly a proletarian and revolutionary landmark. It had to be destroyed, because, among other things, it meant the disappearance, or the irremediable decline, of the Communist Party. It was necessary to create another kind of Pact that would be neither fish nor fowl, neither hot nor cold, and to bind us to the corpse of the Popular Front so that our independence would be trampled on and the whole world could be entertained with the legend of the total subordination of loyalist Spain to its Government, supposedly led by the Popular Front, and to the Thirteen Points.

A whole series of vapid political speeches, public embraces, and calls for unity of action in exclusive support for the Negrín Government did not prevent, for example, the Communist Party from issuing a directive to its Party Committees to work within the CNT to induce splits within our organization, cause its members to resign, influence certain comrades who held positions of responsibility in the CNT, etc.

It is true that the National Committee of our trade union denounced this maneuver, but only on paper. In its everyday operations we noticed that it did not respond to this perverse outrage with the same vigor that it displayed in the past when confronting similar challenges. And there was increasing dissent within our ranks, as we saw the CNT following the political line laid down by the Communist Party.

We believed that the incompatibility of the objectives and methods of the Communist Party with those of the libertarian movement was absolute and that we had to sever all relations with these agents of the Russian Government, who were responsible for our worst disasters.

Let us enumerate a few of the reasons why we must set forth our position with perfect clarity and declare, as we pleaded in vain to the National Committee, that the CNT, that the libertarian movement has perfectly defined ideals and methods and has nothing in common with the policy dictated by Russia to the Communist Party, in consideration of the fact that it is counterrevolutionary and harmful to the effective prosecution of the war.

The Communist Party has combated, in an openly counterrevolutionary way, the work undertaken by the working class organizations, on the pretext that it was necessary to first win the war, without noticing that by depriving the war of its dimension of popular enthusiasm, which was its natural soil, the Party would inevitably harvest the fruits that we have been seeing since May 1937.

The Communist Party shamelessly supported the political sectors that should have disappeared after July, seeking allies and recruits among those segments of society whose background was most dubious from the point of view of the anti-fascist struggle.

The Communist Party is the enemy of the autonomy of the trade unions and denies them the authority to intervene as such in the reconstruction and transformation of society, a mission that, according to the Communist Party, falls upon the shoulders of the Parties, that is, to itself.

The Communist Party has employed the most treacherous means to swell the ranks of the UGT in order to use it as a platform to penetrate the trade unions and to induce splits in them and to paralyze their direct involvement in society's affairs.

It has created yellow trade union organizations in an attempt to see if they can compete with the socialists for control over the UGT. One example is the Provincial Federation of Peasants of Valencia.

The Communist Party has hindered the development of the agrarian and industrial collectives and has used every means at its disposal, the forces of public order, and even the army, to destroy those that have been created and have prospered. It took advantage of the fact that one of its members was appointed as Minister of Agriculture to deny credits, fertilizer and seeds to the CNT collectives. It has used the Unión de Rabassaires to sow discord in the Catalan countryside.

The Communist Party has brandished the blackmail of Russian aid to enforce political changes that it considered most beneficial for its development to the detriment of the other sectors.

The Communist Party has used the bureaucratic and repressive apparatus of the State to eliminate its political enemies, inflicting grave harm on the anti-fascist cause. We need only recall the events of May 1937 in Barcelona, the persecution and outlawing of the POUM and the assassination of militants like Andrés Nin.

They transformed the Ministry of State into a diplomatic annex of the foreign relations bureau of the USSR, to the obvious discredit of Spain, which has been isolated from the rest of the world.

The Communist Party infiltrated the Liaison Committees to undermine the action of the UGT as a trade union that had been moved by our appeals based on the unity of interest and aspirations of the proletariat.

The Communist Party iniquitously exploited our country with their arms deals negotiated on the worst terms and facilitated the acquisition of our commodities at derisory prices, not to mention the robbery by Russian espionage of our industrial secrets.

The Communist Party has paralyzed and castrated by every means the creative initiative of the Spanish people to force us to be tributaries of Russian foreign trade.

It is futile to continue this repulsive enumeration. The Communist Party has been the greatest enemy of the revolution in Spain and it has not hesitated to use the most disgusting and most criminal means, assassination, defamation of character, persecution and torture, to hinder our social advance. All of this is very well known in the libertarian movement. What is important is to learn the lessons and to take the requisite action....

Each passing day provided more than enough arguments and facts to justify an armed rebellion against, or at least the strict limitation of the authority of, the Negrín Government. We did not keep quiet about these facts and these arguments, but the Celestine of the war, as Largo Caballero was called, was used to conceal every outrage, every complicity and every act of cowardice.

One of the aspects that was most prejudicial to our goals was the introduction of the methods of the Russian police in our domestic policy. Torture, extrajudicial executions, secret prisons, and abuse of the innocent as well as the guilty became routine. It was impossible to tolerate and applaud a Government that had abolished the traditional forms of harshness employed by the Civil Guard against its victims. Even in this aspect we became just like the enemy that we were fighting against, for in enemy territory, as well, the German Gestapo and the Italian OVRA had imposed their methods of persecution and elimination of enemies. In loyalist Spain, instead of the Gestapo and OVRA, we had the Russian GPU. Different names, but the same brutality.

What took place in the Communist Chekas of Republican Spain is almost beyond belief. In the Hotel Colón in Barcelona, in the Casal Carlos Marx, at Puerta del Angel 24, at Villamajor 5, all in Barcelona, as well as in the Convent of Saint Ursula in Valencia, in the fortress at Castelldefels, in Chinchilla, etc., crimes were committed that had no precedents in the history of the Spanish Inquisition, which is indeed saying a lot. Were we supposed to remain silent about these facts, so that we would take on the historical shame of complicity or cowardice? We did not mince words when we passed our judgments, which were so richly deserved, on the Ministers of the Negrín

Government, for their passivity and their deliberate blindness. The Spanish revolution and the war against fascism were dishonored by the Dirección General de Seguridad, the Servicio de Investigación Militar, and the private and Party Chekas. Wounds were inflicted upon what was most sacred in the people's soul and eternal Spain cried out against a regime that tolerated or sponsored these horrors.

The municipal government of Castelldefels had issue a formal protest because of the corpses that were dumped every night on the highway near the fortress. There were days when 16 men were found murdered, all of them anti-fascists, but all of them enemies of the communists.

1. *We have exposed one of a thousand monstrosities, that of the assassination of 80 people in Turón, Andalusia.*<sup>2</sup> *This is what happened:*

2. For a long time now we have been receiving more or less detailed reports of the activity of communist elements throughout Andalusia, and especially in the sectors occupied by military units under the command of the Communist Party.

*One of the most seriously affected sectors is the one occupied by the forces of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, which is under the command of a well-known communist, lieutenant colonel Galán. This sector is distinguished by the astonishing ease with which elements that do not sympathize with the Party disappear, elements that are sometimes merely politically indifferent or else openly left-wing. Such was the case of a socialist in the town of Peters, a person with a long revolutionary history, who was a victim of the law of flight [“ley de fugas”] (along with five other prisoners in the town) at the hands of a certain Bailén, a captain in the intelligence section of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, an individual with a dubious background who, prior to the civil war, was a tax collector, one of the worst in the whole region, and whose job now consists in purging the zone of any elements that might compromise him.*

*The shootings mentioned above were carried out under orders from the commander in chief of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, despite the intervention of the Provincial Committee of the Socialist Party of Almería, the Civil Governor of Almería and colonel Menoyo, who went to speak directly with the Minister of Defense (Prieto), who issued the order to immediately arrest Captain Bailén.*<sup>3</sup> *At the present time, the Communist Party is working hard to bury the affair, employing every means at its disposal.*

This case, as serious as it was, was trivial compared to the one that we shall now relate:

*One fine day the brigades comprising the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps received an order from the Corps General Staff, commanding each brigade to assemble a platoon or squad of men whose anti-fascist credentials were beyond dispute. They did so and they were then given detailed instructions to march to Turón, a small village in the Granadian Alpujarra with about 2,500 inhabitants. The men were told that they had to eliminate fascists for the good of the cause. They arrived in Turón and killed 80 people, most of whom were completely innocent, since they were neither disaffected nor for that matter dangerous, insofar as elements from the CNT, from the Socialist Party and from other sectors killed*

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<sup>2</sup> “Report on the interference of partisan politics in affairs relating to public order and on irregularities in the police forces”, by the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, September 1938, Appendix.

<sup>3</sup> The result was surely the same as when Prieto ordered the arrest of “Negus”, a charismatic communist, a major in the army, who traveled all over the loyalist zone, paying visits to the various army staff headquarters to incite them to revolt against Prieto. The Communist Party defended their man, all the charges leveled against him by the Minister of Defense were proven to be true, but the order to arrest him was nonetheless never carried out. See Prieto's report, *Cómo y por qué salí del Ministerio de Defensa Nacional. Intrigas de los rusos en España* [How and Why I Resigned as Minister of Defense. Russian Intrigues in Spain], p. 23.



*comrades from their own organizations, unaware of the fact that they were doing so and thinking that they were acting on behalf of justice, as their superior officers had told them. There are also cases in which daughters were raped in exchange for saving their fathers' lives. And what was most disgusting was the way these actions were carried out, in the full light of day and without any attempt at concealment, so that a wave of terror and tragedy swept over the entire district. At that time, the highway from Turón to Murtas was under construction, and the victims were buried at the construction site, in the roadbed itself. An attempt was made to prevent the affair from being made public, but, faced with the pressure of public opinion, the Permanent Tribunal of the Army of Andalusia could not remain inactive and ordered a criminal investigation. Thirty-five corpses were disinterred, but the investigators refused to dig up the rest, since this would have entailed the total destruction of the highway under which they were buried.*

*This Tribunal began to obtain the testimony of witnesses and, once it was proven that the orders for these killings came from the commanding officer of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Army Corps, Galán (who was a kind of Viceroy of Andalusia), at the order of the Tribunal, was suspended from his command, while the Tribunal informed the Government of what had taken place and requested instructions as to how to proceed.*

Dr. Negrín was the Minister of National Defense at the time—the Minister of Defense was responsible for examining the evidence in accusations of this kind—and it was Negrín who, on the occasion of the incredible provocation of March 1939, would later appoint Galán to one of the most important commands in his planned coup d'état in the Center and Levante, after the fall of Catalonia.

It was our comrade Maroto, a dedicated militant from the region of Murcia—subsequently the target of a fierce defamatory campaign—who most insistently pleaded with the various organizations to which the victims belonged to expose the assassinations of Turón and then to deal with the assassins.

From a pamphlet distributed in December 1937, we excerpt the following fragments, from an appendix to a detailed description of the horrors of Santa Ursula in Valencia:

The cynicism and cruelty of the Stalinist GPU are unprecedented with respect to methods of repression. They never took into account the condition of the prisoners. Healthy or sick, men or women, fascist or anti-fascist, all were the same for the special brigade. And the worst thing about it is that all those sacrifices were completely futile. Once the confessions they wanted were obtained and signed and sealed, the prisoners were abandoned and forgotten in the dark cells of Santa Ursula. They would never actually be tried in a court of law.

And this is understandable. The police knew full well that the victims would denounce them before the Tribunals for the abuses and crimes they committed, that they would repudiate their confessions signed under the duress of torture, and that they would become their implacable accusers.

But Santa Ursula could not guard its secrets forever. Nor could it contain so much pain. The truth finally filtered out through the thickest walls and the most strongly barred doors.

Tragic and bloody accounts reached the working class organizations and were made public. The clandestine press of the revolutionary nuclei and the foreign working class press publicized some of the abuses committed in Santa Ursula. The Government was compelled to intervene. Its intervention, however, was too little, and too late. It did not penetrate to the heart of the matter. The Stalinists remained in their Government positions and there could be no question of forcing a break with them so soon. Furthermore: there were falsified records and testimonies extorted from witnesses by force, as is to be expected, to shut indiscreet mouths and silence people who are too curious.

But as of this time, the Government is still unaware of the fact that a large number of trade representatives of its own suppliers of war materiel, and its own industrial and military technicians, have been detained in Santa Ursula, and that others have disappeared forever. These men came to Spain with every guarantee of their personal safety and financial remuneration. At the Spanish Embassy in Paris all their necessary credentials, papers and contracts were approved. And now they have disappeared. The Government thinks that they left the country. But they committed the crime of being visiting specialists from friendly Russia. And the special brigade was ordered to liquidate them.

Government commissions and even representatives from the working class organizations often visited Santa Ursula. Once, Irujo, the Minister of Justice, went to Santa Ursula in person.... "The visitors never saw the cave of corpses, or the 'cupboard', or the mistreated prisoners."

A typical case is the account of a young man who was a member of the FAI, J. H. Trafalgar, a militiaman who was serving on the front line on the Aragon Front, with whom we were acquainted. He was accused of having attacked an office of Estat Catalá with a pistol and hand grenades during the May events. He had been wounded twice at the Front. He was arrested two months later and brought to a Cheka on Córcega Street, presided over by a certain Gaspar Dalmau Carbonell, a communist. He spent 28 days there, the first eight without being given any food.

Since they could not prove any of the charges against him, the order was issued to free him, but when he arrived at the police station, a car with Cheka agents was waiting for him, and he was taken back to Córcega Street. He had documents that authorized his release; now he was in the hands of his executioners without any possible recourse. We shall let the victim tell his story:

At night, around midnight, I was taken upstairs to be interrogated. First, I was informed that the previous accusation had been withdrawn and that now I was accused of having directly participated, or at least was implicated in the planning, of the attack on Andreu, the Chief Justice of the Barcelona Court.

I explained where I was on the day of the attack, I said that I did not know anything about it, and I told them that I condemned it, as had our organizations, in Solidaridad Obrera.

My statements were to no avail. The police of the Cheka said that I was involved with the secret planning of the attack. And that if I 'sang', I would be released, taken to the border and given a lot of money. That if I had any brains at all, I would have to

inform on those who had taken part in the incident or at least on those who might have participated in the attack. Otherwise, they threatened to take me for the usual 'ride'.

The questions that began in a friendly and even sweet tone were gradually becoming more hostile. The theatrical environment could not have been less consistent with the nature of the interrogation. Dalmau hovered over me with his sarcastic smirk, Calero was playing with a dagger, and various other persons stood around in different postures. On the table, a little more than a meter away from me, was a very bright light that was shining in my face. The rest of the room was in total darkness.

The policemen were all asking me questions at the same time. At the same time, in the darkness, behind a screen, the voice of my accuser claimed that he saw me on the day of the attack in a private automobile in front of the Palace of Justice. In response to my continuous requests that he show his face, he refused, alleging that he was afraid that I would take vengeance on him in the future.

The spectacle would have shattered even the strongest nerves. Exhaustion, weakness, questions, insults, the bright light, the dagger, were all mixed up in my mind in a mad dance. Finally, desperate, and convinced that they would end up killing me anyway, wanting to end this nightmare as soon as possible, I confessed: "Yes, it was me." This declaration, however, was of no interest to the policemen.

They knew perfectly well that I was not involved in the assassination. What they wanted to know was the name of the real perpetrators. And so they continued to badger me with questions about their identity. My response was blunt: "Yes, it was me, with Azaña and Companys." This dashed all their hopes. They had to admit they were beaten. The time had come to employ different procedures.

*Dalmau got up. "You know what you have to do," he told his subordinates. The policemen took their pistols and loaded them. That was the beginning of the end. Calero tried to handcuff me with my hands behind my back. My watch got in the way. I calmly removed my watch and gave it to Calero: "Take it, so that you can give me the coup de grâce as soon as possible."*

We went downstairs to the second floor. They brought me to the bathroom. I assumed that they wanted to prevent the noise of their gunshots from being heard on the street. But the policemen did not seem to be in a hurry. They tossed a bar of soap in the bathtub and opened the faucets. It was a French brand of soap. And it was a very big bar of soap.

It must have weighed at least a kilo. I contemplated the scene without understanding their real intentions. The loud and monotonous sound of the running water instilled me, in my exhausted condition, with a crazy wish to go to sleep.

Once these preparations were concluded, the interrogation resumed. A mixture of threats and advice. "Don't be stupid, confess, you only have a few minutes to live." The idea of death was in every word. I wanted the whole thing to end once and for all. I had a real desire to feel the cold touch of the policemen's pistols on my temples. But my interrogators had more subtle intentions. Why didn't I understand them sooner?

After half an hour the water had filled the bathtub. After one last question, he said to his comrades: "We'll have to dunk him, don't you think?" And all of a sudden I was in the air, held upside down. Then the real torture began. Another question, while my head was raised up out of the water. Naturally, the answer was the same as all the previous ones. And I could hardly remember anything anymore. My head was plunged into the water so deep that it hit the bottom of the tub.

I remember that I felt a terrible pain in my wrists, which were pinched by the tight handcuffs. I must have put up a stupid and unconscious attempt to escape from their clutches. At the bottom of the bathtub I tried to resist the unspeakable. I held my breath for a few seconds that seemed like centuries. Then I could not hold out for even one more second. I needed air. I began to take in water. Everywhere. In my mouth, in my nose, in my ears. I had the sensation that the water was even getting into my brain. I lost control over my will. All that was left was my instinct for self-preservation, brutally and passionately expressed.

I have a faint memory that they began to beat me all over my body, on my head, on my shoulders, on my arms. I lost consciousness. I have no idea how long this lasted. When I came to, I was out of the tub, stretched out on an upholstered chair, my feet hanging over one end and my head over the other. I had vomited a lot.

The soap was an excellent emetic. My whole body ached. My head was spinning as if I were drunk. When I began to articulate thoughts in my head again, the policemen returned to harass me with their questions.... In view of the failure of the interrogation, I was dunked in the bathtub again, while I was insulted and sworn at by the policemen. This time it only took a few seconds for me to lose consciousness. When I came to, I was vomiting, lying on the chair. The policemen had also lost control over themselves and displayed all the brutality that they were capable of.

They punched me and kicked me, and showered me with vulgar insults....

A little more calmly this time, they carried on with their monotonous questions. I was so devastated inside and out that I could not even answer them at all. Ready to bring it all to an end once and for all, marshaling the little energy that remained to me, I got up and fell heavily into the bathtub. It would be better to die by drowning than to continue to endure such torments.

When I regained consciousness I was in a different room. The policemen had taken off my clothes and had thrown me on a mattress. They brought my clothes and shoes. I stayed there for four days. During that period I could not eat and it took me eight days before I could even get out of bed. That is how physically broken I was. The policemen would not accept defeat. For eight days they came every hour or half hour to my room to record my confession. I think every Cheka agent came to see me, all with similar questions and with the same implication: the bathroom.

During the course of these visits I could see that the policemen had taken possession of my best clothes and my personal belongings. One was wearing my bracelet, another my ring, a third my belt, and a fourth was lighting his cigarettes with my lighter....

No doubt about it: besides being executioners, they were also just so many common thieves....

Once I had recovered somewhat I was once again taken to the third floor to confess. The whole procedure was repeated two more times. My nerves were shattered, and I was convinced that these confessions would come to a fatal conclusion in the bathroom. Fortunately, I was mistaken. One night I was ordered to get into a private car. I was going, according to the policemen, to meet my accuser face to face. I understood what this meant. The car turned down Salmerón Street and proceeded towards La Rabasada. Outside of Barcelona, we came upon another car that was stopped in the middle of the road. Surely, it was waiting for us. I was forced to get out of the car. They brought me to the ditch; the road was dark. The headlights of the cars lit up the side of the road. I clearly saw that I had come to the end.

Then three men got out of the other car and came toward us. One of them said he had seen me on the day of the assassination in a private car that was stopped in front of the Palace of Justice. The policemen laughed, satisfied. He was the witness that I had demanded to see face to face. Giving me a push in the back, they said: "You can prepare to die." I responded angrily: they could kill me whenever they wanted to. Then the organization would know what to do.

I told them that, as we were passing by the cells in the Police Station, I had seen some of our comrades and they were able to notify the Juridical Commission and my group.

I said that my death was unimportant. The loss of my person was of little importance for the movement.

And, besides, I told them that I was sure that my comrades would waste no time in avenging my death.

They offered me one last chance to save my life: inform on the perpetrators or my accomplices, as they said. If I refused, they would have to shoot me, and kill me like a dog.

I remained unperturbed. If I had come this far, I might as well go all the way to the end.

They forced me to get back into the car and we returned to Barcelona. They had found the formula: "We are going to give you another day to recover..."

Something had begun to sink into their heads, by various pathways. It was impossible to kill this man without provoking the vengeance of his friends. He was transferred from one jail to another and then once again found himself in Barcelona, where he was held in an official government prison and where he wrote the above account, which circulated clandestinely with other documents of the same kind, and some copies were sent to the authorities.

As a result of a violent incident involving the communist, Cazorla—Minister of Public Order in the Madrid Defense Committee, the same person who, while he was governor of Guadalajara, had made it impossible for all the other parties and organizations to operate openly, and was the inspiration behind the special brigade of Santa Ursula—our comrades in the Center Region spoke

out and shed the light of publicity on the outrages committed against the prisoners under his authority, the return of the methods of Martínez Anido and Arlegui, the arrests of non-communist anti-fascists, the kidnappings, the assassinations. Once it was claimed that there were no government prisoners during the period when Cazorla was Minister of Public Order, and the men of the libertarian movement provided detailed statistics concerning the prisoners in Ventas, San Anton, Porlier, Duque de Sexto, and Alcalá de Henares. These prisons contained the following numbers of prisoners:

January 30, 1937	2,727 government prisoners
February 10, 1937	2,587 government prisoners
February 26, 1937	1,761 government prisoners

Furthermore, as of February 10, 1937, there were 348 female prisoners; on February 26, there were 255.

They also provided detailed figures of the number of prisoners who had been evacuated from Madrid, unaware of their fate, but certain that they were done for. But they were not all fascist prisoners; there were just as many non-communist anti-fascists as notorious supporters of the military revolt among them. If there was any difference in the way these prisoners were treated, it was the fascists who received better treatment, as they were protected and pampered as long as they could buy better treatment and even their freedom.

These police procedures were defended by those who applied them. We publicly protested that this kind of behavior would only lead to victory for Franco, since we were depriving ourselves of the help and support of the people. Nor were we mistaken. If anything specific was known about these methods, it was thanks to our efforts. The other parties and organizations, although horrified, remained silent, because, they said, the war required them to remain silent. We understood that the war called for just the opposite: the end of these horrors that were inspired and organized by the Russian communists and the immediate punishment of those who had furthered them, from government positions or as mere tools, and dishonored our war and our revolution.

It was no legitimate excuse that the situation was even more horrible in Franco's zone; the descriptions that have reached us<sup>4</sup> are truly devastating; but the use of the same procedures under the flag of the Republic fills us with shame, even though we have not ourselves committed such crimes and even though we are not even guilty of the crime of remaining silent about them.

The greater part of the navy remained under the control of the Republic, but certainly not due to anything that government did, but rather due to the efforts of the sailors. Each ship had a small clandestine group, which was in contact with the groups on the other ships, forming a Central Council with its headquarters on the cruiser, "Libertad".

These core groups were composed of between five and ten petty officers and sailors, socialists and anarchists, and above all, each man was in contact with his respective national organization.

Already on July 12 these clandestine groups foresaw that the military revolt was likely to take place on July 20. This information triggered a meeting of the groups on July 13 in El Ferrol, attended by representatives from the "Libertad", the "Cervantes", the "Cervera", the "España", the

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<sup>4</sup> Antonio Bahamonde and Sánchez de Castro, *Un año con Queipo. Memorias de un nacionalista* [One Year with Queipo. Recollections of a Nationalist], Buenos Aires, 1938; Ruíz Vilaplana, *Doy Fe ... Un año de actuación en la España nacionalista* [My Testimony ... One Year of Activity in Nationalist Spain].

“Velasco”, the Arsenal and the naval colleges. The resolutions of the meeting were communicated to the “Jaime I”, which was at Santander, and to the fleet of destroyers at Cartagena.

The revolt broke out on July 17 in Morocco, and the Government of the Republic, without any information at all regarding the position of the navy, issued orders to two cruisers to set sail from El Ferrol towards the South. The ships were not lost because the sailors were aware of what was going to happen and seized control of the cruisers and arrested their pro-Franco officers, under orders they received by radio, always outside of Government channels, at the initiative of the radio operator, Balboa. With the units of the navy that were in El Ferrol, this base belonged to the anti-fascist cause, but with the departure of the two cruisers for the South, the crews of the “Cervera” and the “España” were left defenseless.

A company was mobilized and marched into the street from the Arsenal under the command of Major Manso; but El Ferrol was a strong fortress with 8 regiments in its garrison, and the “Cervera” and the “España” could not use their artillery because the former was in dry dock, and the latter did not have any ammunition. The “Canarias” and the “Balears”, which were slated to be mothballed, were there as well. This great naval base fell into the hands of the rebels.

Somehow or other, the sailors saved a good part of the navy, and retained possession of a battleship, the “Jaime I”, three cruisers, 10 destroyers, 12 submarines (6 type B and six type C), the supply ships “Lobo”, “Tofino”, and “Artabro”, three torpedo boats, 4 coast guard cutters, etc. The rebel fleet possessed one battleship, 3 cruisers, a destroyer, 2 torpedo boats, and some German and Italian submarines.

At first we had the advantage of controlling the Strait of Gibraltar, due to the two cruisers that were sent to put down the revolt in Morocco, even though they lacked the necessary bases for their activities. Then, however, the Government ordered these cruisers that were guarding the Straits to head north, and the enemy took the Straits from its bases in Cadiz and Ceuta. When the navy was in the hands of the sailors and the loyal technicians, they asked the Minister of the Navy, Indalecio Prieto, to fortify Malaga as a base for naval operations in the Strait; their request was not granted, and they had to use Cartagena as a base.

We were therefore not in such an unfavorable position; we actually had an advantage over the enemy with regard to our navy. With this difference in our favor: we benefited from the salutary heroism and audacity of the new captains of the squadron, fervent revolutionaries, capable of any sacrifice.

The libertarian movement had the support of the majority of the sailors. Immediately, a crusade was launched against those who had saved the ships we possessed from the enemy. They were gradually removed from their commands and positions, and already by the middle of 1937 they were openly being expelled from their ships, leaving onboard almost exclusively communists and their sympathizers, although Prieto had a trusted Fleet Commissar on each vessel.

The Russians immediately set to work to take over the navy. The Minister of the Navy, who did not have a personal advisor, was actually ignored and the Russians operated in accordance with the plans for Moscow rule, and placed commanders of their choice on every ship and base.

After the first few months, we retained no initiative with respect to naval affairs, and we only experienced one setback after another, until we lost our majority in the navy. They spoke to us of indiscipline when the ships were in the hands of those who had saved them from Franco, but the whole history of our navy during the war was a constant series of arbitrary decisions and stupendous mistakes. We lost our best ships because of the disobedience of the Russians and their protégés (the case of the “Ciscar” at El Musel, as related by Prieto himself, the Minister of

Defense), through the sabotage of fascist elements who had been exposed a thousand times and were nonetheless protected by the Russians and by the Government of the Republic (the case of the battleship, "Jaime I"), through the incompetence and cowardice of their commanders, and due to the absurd orders issued by the highest authorities of the Navy (the "J. L. Diez").

Under the protection of the Russians—there were eight Russians whose activities were most notorious, one on the General Staff at the base in Cartagena, another in the Ministry of the Navy in Valencia, another in the squadron of destroyers, etc.—and of Prieto's agents, the champions of "discipline", there were even more elements that sympathized with the rebels in the fleet, at the port and the base at Cartagena, and in the naval high command, than there were in the army. In order for these elements to continue to operate on behalf of the enemy, however, it was necessary to almost totally erase the influence of the old Navy of July 19 on the ships, and it was even more important to undermine the authority of the non-communist anti-fascist officers. On December 15, 1938, the General Staff of the Navy was composed totally of communists, except for the second-in-command, captain J. Sánchez, an excellent naval technician. Here is the breakdown of the composition of this General Staff, which followed the orders of the Russian known as "Nicolás":

Chief of Staff: Pedro Prados, who was a lieutenant, promoted to colonel; Manuel Palma, office assistant, promoted to colonel; José Santana, office assistant, promoted to captain; Tomás Martín, office assistant, promoted to captain; López Rugero, office assistant, promoted to captain; Mariano Pérez, fireman, promoted to captain; Magallanes, artillery petty officer, promoted to captain; etc., etc.

As you can see, the argument originally directed against the sailors running the ships was a very weak argument, insofar as office assistants and firemen who had been promoted to colonels and captains were now in charge of the Naval High Command.

One naval officer, a libertarian anti-fascist, submitted the following report, dated September 5, 1938, on the situation onboard the ships of the navy:

The fleet has gone through the following phases:

During the first few months of the movement it fought effectively and with determination. The Cantabrian Sea, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea were completely under its control. It was our misfortune that we did not have an organized and competent General Staff or a Minister who knew what he was doing.

*The rebels' small fleet was bottled up in the Cantabrian Sea, a circumstance that our enemies were later able to circumvent, due to the fact that, with the passage of time, they reinforced their fleet, and finally repaired the battleship, the "España", which was later sunk, and the "Canarias", and it was significantly strengthened by a cruiser that the Germans had rehabilitated in Cádiz, which used to be called the "Republic" (now it is the "Navarra") and by three destroyers given to Franco's forces by Italy, the "Sanjurjo", the "Melilla" and the "Teruel". These ships, with the destroyer, the "Velasco" and the cruiser, the "Almirante Cervera", composed the rebel fleet, plus the submarines that Italy and Germany placed at their disposal.*

In that first phase the fleet was not used rationally, and we therefore saw some ships operating in isolation in the Strait, and others in Africa, and others in the middle of the Mediterranean or in the Cantabrian Sea, as if they were seeking to cover every



front on the sea, yet performing no positive functions at all, apart from retaliatory and surveillance operations, which were conducted without rhyme or reason. It occurred to us to ask: If, within the two first months of the movement, the battleship, the “Jaime I”, the cruisers, the “Cervantes”, the “Libertad”, and the “Méndez Núñez”, the ten destroyers that we had and the troop transport ships, had been used in earnest in one day against Mallorca, would that island now be in the hands of the rebels and the Italians? In less than twenty-four hours, Mallorca, which was defenseless, would have surrendered or else not one stone would have remained standing on another... But let us not dwell on an analysis of past mistakes, since this would only expose the ineptitude of our political leaders.

The fleet was reorganized in Cartagena after almost one year of war; the command over the fleet was given to a certain Buiza, in alliance with several Russians and Bruno Alonso. They instituted a reign of terror against the ‘undisciplined’, but the fleet did not do much of anything. Its stagnation and its disorientation were much greater now than before any of these elements had so much as set foot on a deck of a ship, despite the fact that the fleet had been reinforced with four destroyers that had been under construction. The fleet was used to escort convoys from Russia or from North Africa, but was not used for any other purpose. Two factors played a part in this situation: the fear and incompetence of the naval commanders and the manifest incapacity of their Russian advisors. This stagnation continued until Buiza and the Russians were deprived of their commands in the fleet and escorted off the ships. The current commander of the fleet, Luis González Ubieta, issued the orders to engage in the battle of Cabo Palos, where the enemy lost the cruiser, the “Balears”. Then the fleet returned to Cartagena, about six months ago, and has not seen action since then. What happened in Cartagena? We have oil, we have ammunition, we have torpedos, and we have crews. The enemy is there, weaker due to the loss of the ‘Balears’. So, why don’t we engage the enemy fleet in battle? Why do we not pursue and destroy it? Not because it is in hiding. It is active every day. In the offensive to cut Spain in two in Levante at Vinaroz, our fleet did not leave Cartagena, while the enemy fleet operated with impunity. The day that Castellón was taken by enemy forces, our fleet was anchored in Cartagena and the fascist fleet was in full battle array.

Our land forces overran Motril and our fleet did not leave Cartagena to cooperate in the campaign. While the rebel fleet bombarded Rosas, Valencia and Barcelona, our fleet remained immobilized at its base. Was this the fault of the fleet? Or the fault of its onboard commanders? No. The fleet goes where it is ordered to go, even if this implies the ultimate sacrifice. The fault, then, does not lie with the fleet itself. Who gives the orders to the fleet? The Naval High Command in Barcelona. Who is the Chief of Staff of the Naval High Command? Pedro Prado Mendizábal, a communist, under the protection of the Russian embassy, and the most incompetent officer in the Navy. He was the captain of the “Méndez Núñez” for a brief period, and he turned it into a communist cell. He was in Russia as a member of a commission and in return for his loyalty to Stalin we saw him suddenly transformed into the Chief of Staff of the Naval High Command. It is not at all surprising that people like this do not know

what to do with the fleet. They only use it to ship gold and silver from Cartagena to Barcelona.

The last mission of the fleet was to evacuate numerous staff officers of the navy, air force and army, when the Numantines of the Negrín Government were failing in their last attempt to continue their work of destruction in the zone of Levante and the Center, after having annihilated Catalonia.

There were numerous suggestions relating to how we could regain the initiative in naval warfare, to improve the fleet and to make it more effective. The Russians did the same thing in this branch of the military that they did in the Air Force and the Army: they performed very good work in political recruitment for their policy of party hegemony, but nothing at all with respect to successfully engaging the enemy.

# The political decomposition of the Republic—Financial irresponsibility—The figure of Negrín

Once the Prieto-Negrín Government was formed, in accordance with the plans of the Russian “trade” delegate, Stachevsky, after the famous crisis of May 1937, when Moscow’s policy brought about the fall of Largo Caballero by preventing him from waging his planned offensive to cut the rebel zone in two parts, and after provoking the bloody events in Barcelona—whose real significance we were unable to perceive at that time, just as we were capable of taking advantage of the ensuing situation to put the war and the revolution back on their real popular foundations—at that time, we repeat, we were not entirely alone in our opposition that we deemed vital for the interests of the Spanish people.

The CNT maintained its open and clear opposition, refusing to collaborate in the new government.

The character of Indalecio Prieto was well known, for he was more of an enemy of the revolution and of socialism than he was an enemy of the military revolt, and he was more inspired by his personal grudges than by the endangered interests of Spanish progress and justice; and we have already discussed the plans and the frivolous psychology of Dr. Negrín; and once the forces that were at work within the government against the revolution that began on July 19, 1936 were revealed in May 1937, the CNT did the right thing not to yield without guarantees. And in this position it was enthusiastically joined by the FAI. The Confederation represented the most powerful and most independent organized working class force in Spain, it was the pole of progress, of the emancipation of labor, the product of the hard work and sacrifices of several generations of heroic and unselfish combatants. By preserving its own identity it kept a great hope alive, but if it were to join a government like the Prieto-Negrín government, completely beholden to Russian diplomacy and implicated in the most scandalous affairs, it would hardly be able to avoid losing that identity.

This viewpoint, which the CNT originally maintained with such fervor, would nonetheless persist for many months. As the disasters at the Front multiplied, every one of which should have resulted in a firing squad for the political and military leaders who were responsible for them—the Brunete campaign, the loss of northern Spain, the collapse of the Aragon Front—our isolation increased. On the occasion of the fall of Aragon, which did not lead directly to the end of the war because the people were still ready to sacrifice everything yet were still incapable of freeing themselves from their accursed Government, the FAI marshaled all the opposition it could in meetings with Negrín and with the parties. This opposition was quelled by the expansion of the so-called Popular Front, and shortly after by the hand-out of a Ministry that was given to the CNT, with which our discordant voice was silenced, and the possibilities for effective joint action on the part of the whole libertarian movement were shattered for a very long time to come.

The generals were given promotions with each new defeat that took place on their watch, and the politicians who were responsible for these disasters consolidated their positions. Parties and organizations competed with each other to see who could heap more praise on the heroes of these military fiascos, who could be more servile, and who could be more obliging.

Prieto resigned from the Government after the collapse of the Aragon Front, where we clearly beheld the methods that led to victory ... the victory of Franco. Prieto's sole thought was of obtaining some ambassadorial position, some special mission in America, far from the conflict. He was therefore able to find himself at the fateful moment of defeat, which he had done so much to bring about, at a great distance from the theater of events.

All criticism and all honest reporting ceased. The most insignificant objection was labeled as defeatism. The press, the radio, the various police forces, the judiciary, everything was devoted to bolstering the authority of the government. And what could not be achieved by persuasion was obtained with terrorism, horrible persecutions and liquidations, when the victims were not amenable to the temptations of bribery and corruption. The republican legislature and the parties and organizations were domesticated with a unanimity that was both surprising and unique in our history. And the few individuals who could not be bought were quarantined like mad dogs. Unfortunately, very few socialist, anarchist and republican militants were to be found among these exceptional cases. We are referring to well-known personalities, not to the great mass of the Spanish people, the masses whose only sin was to have too much faith in their leaders.

The war could not be brought to a victorious conclusion with the procedures that were then being employed on the military terrain by the Republic's High Command, with the leadership bestowed on the army, and with the deteriorating morale of the civilian population behind the lines. Furthermore, a movement that had arisen as a great wave of popular passion, based on spontaneous acts of economic and social transformation, was being systematically strangled by the Government, with the approval, the silence, or the acquiescence of all the so-called anti-fascist sectors. We were the only ones to oppose Negrín's Thirteen Points, widely acclaimed as the synthesis of all the aspirations of Spain.

We proclaimed by every means at our disposal, and these means were not abundant, because we could not count on the press, due to both the official censorship as well as the depths to which it had descended, that if we had to return to the conditions that prevailed before July 19, or even to worse conditions, because the alleged government of the anti-fascists had forced us to duly acknowledge the extremely liberal significance of a Primo de Rivera; if the end of the war had to be our destruction, that is, the destruction of the aspirations that had given rise to the war, the victory of Negrín had to be compared to the victory of Franco from the point of view of the authentic interests of Spain, of the Spanish workers. The works that were reprinted or first published by our publishing house, and widely distributed in print runs of 5,000 copies that were immediately sold out, explained Russian affairs, the Russian myth, the Russian and Italian and German methods, and pointed to the similarity and the close parallels between a fascist Spain and a communist Spain of the Moscow type.

In these *a posteriori* considerations we have said nothing that we have not already said, written or expressed in one way or another during the war itself. We therefore feel that we have every right to say in exile what we said before our exile, in the midst of the empire of *negrinista* euphoria, without ever succeeding, unfortunately for so many hundreds of thousands of Spaniards who were deceived and betrayed, in getting anyone to listen to us or to apply the remedies we recommended.

The Negrín government and its motley team thought that the counterrevolution could facilitate victory in the war against fascism. It therefore alienated the people of the factories and the fields from their vital interest in the war, when we maintained exactly the contrary, that the war against fascism, deprived of its social content, was certainly doomed to end in defeat.

We did not confer any absolute value on laws and decrees as criteria for judging reality. The history of a country that is written based on its legislation would undoubtedly be a very incomplete history. However, just as the Generalitat of Catalonia was forced to legally recognize and channel the new economic reality, although it later availed itself of this same legality to do its part on behalf of the counterrevolution, the Government of the Republic remained absolutely unwilling to recognize the legitimacy of anything that was not in conformance with the laws that were on the books before July 19, as if to say that nothing had happened since then.

Here are some fragments of a letter from the General Directorate of Industry of the Ministry of Finance, responding to some clarifications we had requested:

1. Only the Government has the authority to carry out confiscations; therefore, all the expropriations carried out without its previous agreement are rendered null and void, and the industries must be returned to their former owners, except in cases where these former owners are rebels, in which case they are to be taken over by the Department of Reparations (Decrees of March 17, 1938).
2. All transfers of property from one Spanish citizen to another are prohibited, as they require, in order to be valid, the authorization of the Ministry of Finance (Decree of August 14, 1936). Therefore, no official institution may recognize the validity of commercial agreements, legal notices, contracts of purchase and sale or grants, etc., referring to goods owned by Spaniards, if they are not accompanied by the corresponding Ministerial authorization.
3. The first act of any industrial intervention, is to cite the legitimate owner of the enterprise. If the latter or his legal representative presents himself, the Comptroller of Mines, Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, Food Production and Distribution, etc., has no other recourse than to recognize his rights of ownership....  
... in no case, up until now, has any document or any ownership claim that diverges from the status of the property or documentation in question before July 1936 been recognized as valid. If the property or documentation in question is owned by a rebel, it becomes the property of the Department of Reparations. (The Director General of Industry, Barcelona, October 26, 1938)

It is incomprehensible that, despite such indisputable evidence, the parties and organizations that arose from the struggle for a social and economic organization like the one that began to develop with the crushing of the military revolt in Catalonia, Levante and in the Center, had no objections in supporting a government that did not recognize any of the proletarian conquests and that refused to consider that July 19 had opened a new chapter in the history of Spain. Nor were any plausible explanations forthcoming for their complete amnesia concerning their fundamental goals on the part of our own organizations, which also appeared to be yoked to the chariot of Dr. Negrín, the Caesar of the Second Republic.

In a draft report of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, arguing that it was of imperative importance that a National Plenum of the Regional organizations of the libertarian movement must be convoked, we said (Barcelona, August 4, 1938):

We have spoken out, and we had the right—and the duty—to do so, against participation in the government. We are living in extraordinary times and we cannot always apply the frame of reference of normal periods to such exceptionally tragic times as these. But there are different ways to participate in a government:

To affirm a policy, an existing social identity;

To become accomplices of the policies of others.

At the present time we must examine some points relating to our governmental participation:

1. Has our participation in the Government led to any kind of change of direction and of methods with respect to the military, economic, or diplomatic domains, and in every aspect that is essential for the successful prosecution of the war?
2. Should we measure the usefulness of our participation in the Government by the criterion of the new paid positions this participation brings with it, or should we apply a social criterion, and pay heed to the views of those who work for a living and those who are doing the fighting?

We maintain that there has been no change of direction or of methods in the military policy of the Negrín Government since we became implicated in its management, and we say that it is those who labor and those who are serving at the front who should tell us just how useful the CNT's participation in government power has been for them. The numerous anti-fascist prisoners will tell you whether they are happier today than they were before, when we were not in the Government. And the thousands of comrades enrolled in the Army will tell you whether they have benefited from the presence of the CNT in the Government. The agrarian Collectives and the Trade Unions will tell you whether their managerial prerogatives have been increased....

In this same report we also declared that “Dr. Negrín's policy is not the policy of victory ... the Negrín Government is not the Government that the war requires....”

As a *quid pro quo* for the participation of the libertarian movement in the Government, we demanded the following conditions:

Equitable distribution of food and other necessities, control over financial operations, accountability of purchasing agents and their representatives, suppression of the monopolist policy of a certain party in the military and political domains, a change in the orientation of the country's foreign policy so that it is in accord with the needs and interests of the people of Spain, etc. We also demanded the complete cessation of the one-man, absolutist rule that characterized the Negrín government, where the boss either did what he wanted, or let other people do what they wanted, obeying only his own sovereign caprice, without listening to any reasons, without giving any explanations about anything important, not even to his own Ministers, much less to the people who reluctantly endured his rule because they were betrayed by their leaders.

We were asking the leopard to change his spots! In May 1937, the leaders of the CNT had characterized the Negrín Government, in common accord with the entire libertarian movement, as a “government of the counterrevolution”. A few months later, when the counterrevolution was no longer just a tendency but a generalized reality, only a very few of us remained faithful to our convictions. And I only mention this in passing as a possible mitigating factor to excuse our failure; by this time there were so few people actively involved in the opposition that the government could almost treat it as if it did not exist. The masses only listened to the official directives and they had been so skillfully disciplined and regimented by their responsible leaders that the latter could lie to them with impunity.

During the world war of 1914–1918 we witnessed the downfall of working class internationalism, the absolute surrender of the major working class parties and trade unions to their respective governments and to the interests of those governments in the capitalist and imperialist war.

The Russian Bolsheviks skillfully capitalized on this defeat and established an iron dictatorship in the former Empire of the Czars. We believed that our organizations, inspired by other ideals and other tactics, would never fall prey to such a deviation. Their traditional methods of struggle and the higher moral standards and revolutionary faith of their militants create a barrier to any degeneration of this kind. It was our misfortune, however, to have witnessed this spectacle: that of our beloved organizations competing in governmental zeal with the other parties and organizations, and willingly consenting to serve as mere passive tools at the disposal of that incomparable wonder-worker, Dr. Negrín.

It would seem to be a decree of fate that only restricted minorities are capable of remaining faithful to their principles and their ideals. When a select, self-sacrificing, militant minority is transformed into a mass organization of tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of members, it necessarily falls into the hands of its own bureaucracy due to the demands imposed by its mere administration, and the bureaucracy gradually acts more and more in accordance with its own exclusive interest, and it no longer has even the faintest resemblance to the organization’s founders, the champions of the organization during its early days.

Is there no way to escape this vicious circle? We spent years, even generations, to instill life into a powerful instrument for progressive social struggle. When we thought it was possible, we redoubled its power by way of endless sacrifices, when the enemy did not thwart us by means of persecutions, blood and terror, but now this instrument is in the hands of the bureaucracy that had emerged from its own ranks and had become almost an enemy of its former ideals, or at least an obstacle to the realization of the very same goals to which its members owe their very livelihood.

Examine the course of development of the major working class organizations of any country, any revolutionary party or movement, and you will always note the moral and ideological distance that separates the founders from the functionaries who take advantage of the previous efforts and sacrifices of others.

The fact that we must acknowledge our isolation during the revolution and the war in Spain is not something we are proud of; to the contrary, it makes us feel a profound sense of personal tragedy. If we underestimate the number of people who shared our views about putting the interests of the Spanish people ahead of the particular interests of parties and organizations and, most importantly, above those of a gang of unscrupulous adventurers, it is only to try to get the magnificent ordinary people who compose the foundation and the basis of our revolutionary

movement to come to their senses and affirm, on the basis of the terrible experiences they have endured, their will to survive.

There can be no doubt about the fact that one of the first steps of this affirmation would be to repudiate the course that had been passively followed, because they had been deceived, by the masses of the membership, and actively pursued by their bureaucracy, which had regardless of their intentions become the lackeys of Fortune's favorite, Dr. Negrín. Then you also have to seriously rethink the question of whether a democratic regime of administration and planning for a large collectivity is applicable to large working class organizations in times of war as well as of peace, or whether this is mere sophistry, a concept that is illogical and inapplicable during periods that experience a certain degree of turbulence. This is not the place for a digression on these matters. If, however, the democratic mechanism of planning and administration is forced to stop functioning, then there is always a risk that we could lose in a few years what took us decades, of labor, of effort and struggle to achieve when we were not at war.

On August 11, 1938, Negrín resubmitted some of his proposed decrees for the approval of his Ministers, decrees that had already been rejected for various reasons. One of them concerned the Justice System, and another involved the war industries. Both of them were intended to undermine regional autonomy, without any benefits for the war, and their only purpose was to increase the authority of the central State and to reinforce the rule of the agents of Russia. Two Ministers, Jaime Aiguadé and Manuel Irujo, the former Catalanian, the latter Basque, submitted their resignations. President Azaña most adamantly refused to sign the decree concerning the Justice System.

As soon as we were informed about the contents of these decrees, we drafted the following statement, and sent a copy to all the political sectors, to the press and to the members of the Cabinet:

The position of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI with regard to the current political situation.

*The war for independence that we have been waging for more than two years against the allied powers of international fascism cannot be used as a reason or an alibi for constant retreats on the political front, and this is all the more true insofar as Spanish history itself shows us how, during the most turbulent periods with regard to both domestic and international affairs, we attained the most admirable levels of political, moral and intellectual progress. Our first war of independence against the previously invincible armies of Napoleon featured the awakening of the people and of the forces of progress to the consciousness of their destinies. The entire 19<sup>th</sup> century, with civil wars almost from beginning to end, also entailed the destruction of absolutism and the consolidation of the constitutional system and the revolutionary workers movement. And it was precisely during the periods of the greatest domestic peace when the sinister forces of reaction ruled in the most arbitrary manner.*

This war was no exception, after we amazed the world with the constructive genius of our people and with their admirable and unique preparedness to make every sacrifice at the front and behind the lines in defense of their rights and liberties.

At the Cabinet meeting held on that day, August 11, 1938, three decrees were approved, decrees that were very important because of their detrimental impact on the



liberties of the people, and because they constitute an attack against democratic institutions and structures created by the people themselves which formed a minimal defense against certain all-too-obvious trends toward a party dictatorship....

Later in the text we referred to the content of the decrees, or at least as much of their content as had come to our attention, and we said, with respect to one of them:

The decree authorizes the central state to confiscate all war industries, with special reference to the war industries of Catalonia, which were the unprecedented and unparalleled creations of the people themselves, and which are largely responsible for the fact that our militiamen and our soldiers can continue to resist the fascists at the front. Besides the fact that this decree might very well entail an unjustified injury to legitimate feelings, as workers and as revolutionaries we emphasize the fact that it constitutes an assault on certain industries, industries that can be exhibited with pride by libertarian workers, without any assurances that in the new administration they would operate more effectively than other industries that are now under the control of the State, which do not offer very encouraging examples.

Having examined the situation, the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, the exponent of an idea and a movement that are deeply rooted in the history of Spain, an organization which, without assuming any responsibility in the government, has up until now proven that it knows how to sacrifice what can be sacrificed to the supreme objective of winning the war, declares that:

1. The decrees approved by the Cabinet on August 11 constitute an attack on the liberties and the rights of the Spanish people.
2. We call upon all the parties and organizations for whom the general interest is more important than their own individual ambitions, to express their repudiation of the policy embodied in these decrees.

Shortly after the announcement of the Cabinet crisis, an alarming notice from the Military Investigation Service [*Servicio de Investigación Militar*] was sent to the parties and organizations of the Popular Front, warning them of an impending rebel uprising in loyalist Spain. We immediately denounced this clumsy political subterfuge, which in a different, more dignified environment would have produced an effect that was the opposite of what its perpetrators would have hoped for, but in the prevailing technical environment of the cowardice of parties and organizations, it had the effect of a powerful sedative.

This alarming notice was immediately followed by an unusual display of force, with armored assault vehicles being driven through the streets of Barcelona, the deployment of strong contingents of *carabineros*, air force planes flying over the city, military occupation of streets and highways, etc. While these things were taking place in Barcelona, the Prime Minister took advantage of the situation to leave for one of his numerous vacations in foreign countries.

The efforts we undertook during the days of the crisis to influence the superior committees of the libertarian movement, which had insisted on having a powerless Minister in the Negrín Cabinet, a Minister who was chosen by Negrín himself and who was neither consulted nor even informed about matters of vital interest, are indescribable.

The avalanche of reasons, reports, and data that we generated in an attempt to make them understand just how harmful to our interests our collaboration in such a government really was and just how entirely unfit that government was for the purpose of bringing the war to an honorable conclusion, should have made even those who were disinclined to thinking reflect a little more. We achieved nothing, however. We were told right from the start that, regardless of our reasons, no changes would be made in their position.

The CNT, or the ostensible representatives of the CNT, upheld their commitment to their Thirteen Points, despite all the humiliations that they had to undergo even as the crisis was unfolding, and while the other parties and organizations were paralyzed with fear by the repressive apparatus mobilized to repress ... a fictional rebel revolt in loyalist Spain. As on so many other occasions, we stood entirely alone. The crisis was resolved with the entry of two new communist or communist fellow-traveller Ministers into the Cabinet to replace the regionalist Ministers Aiguadé and Irujo, who had resigned.

Long before this crisis erupted we had attempted on various occasions to expose the nature of the Popular Front's support for the Government. We spoke of administrative irregularities, serious financial scandals, and of the need to carefully scrutinize the tax system.

Each of these attempts was greeted with total denial on the part of all the national parties and organizations that were members of that strange Front that was formed without our participation. We nonetheless sought to temper our language, and to look for arguments that were not our own arguments, to play the role of a simple liberal party amidst the total breakdown of all liberalism and of all democratic spirit. The mere idea of appearing to be connected with a government like the one that claimed to represent the people of Spain in the so-called republican zone filled us with nausea and shame. And it is not as if we were too demanding. The Negrín Government was a gang of thieves, and as this gang was becoming increasingly more submissive towards the Russians, we only became even more aware of our sense of what it means to be Spanish, and of our national pride.

I shall now provide the text of a proposal that I submitted to the National Popular Front in the name of the FAI, concerning the preservation of the democratic institutions of inspection and control over the operations of the Government.

What impudence! The job of the Popular Front was to keep its mouth shut and obey, to support the work of the government, rather than to examine and criticize it.

That was the theory of those self-proclaimed believers in parliamentarism. And was it for this that we suppressed the military revolt on July 19, was it for this that we fought against Primo de Rivera, whose dictatorship had never been even one-fourth as absolutist as Negrín's, and whose financial probity could never even be compared with the irresponsible and secret profligacy of Mister Negrín and his team?

Our proposal, which was rejected with a categorical "this is not open to discussion", was based on a sound principle that was endorsed by the political and trade union representatives of Spain, to the extent that Spain can be represented by parties and organizations.

Reaffirming the ultimate goals of the Popular Front to carry out the democratic revolution within the legal framework of the Constitution of the Republic, we shall allow ourselves to submit the following observations:

1. Because the Spanish Republic is, by definition, a democratic Republic, it must never be deprived of the institutions that characterize democracy, and

which are determined by the Constitution, organized in accordance with the circumstances.

*In a democratic regime the control, inspection and criticism of the operations of the Government are indispensable. These rights of control, inspection and criticism were the great conquests of social, economic and political progress of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the battle against the all-encompassing claims of absolutism. And it was precisely Spain that offered magnificent examples of these conquests. The famous Constitution of 1812, unique among its kind, was born in the middle of the war for independence and one can even say that it was born under fire from Napoleon's troops. During the most turbulent years of our civil wars, not only did the Cortes thrive, but elections were held and Constituent Assemblies were formed like that of 1837. In short, our people's war for independence, first, and our civil wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, second, were the seeds, not of political regression, but of indisputable democratic and liberal advances.*

Inspection, control and criticism of the operations of the government, during the periods when Spain had a constitutional regime, were always expressed by way of public opinion, the press, the right of assembly and association, and in parliamentary institutions.

A democratic republic cannot exist without these constitutional democratic institutions. Even if the government were to be the most authentic representative of the people, democracy also calls for the inspection and control of its operations, an examination of its conduct, and the application of sanctions.

The temporary reduction and, depending on circumstances, the suppression of individual rights and liberties, is constitutional; freedom of speech, of assembly and of the press can be restricted, although these procedures have always been resorted to, as stopgap measures and expedient resorts, by governments that were not confident of their strength and feared the expression of public opinion; but the renunciation of control, inspection and criticism of the operations of the government is equivalent to the renunciation of the democratic Republic.

2. No one doubts that the government has the right to plan its military operations in secret; but criticism of military operations that have already taken place has been an extremely important factor in every war. A French military critic states: "war is too important to leave it exclusively in the hands of the military". A lost battle has always been followed by a more or less sweeping replacement of commanding officers, and even a change in the government for reasons of a practical nature and also for psychological reasons.

A democratic republic cannot silence the voice of criticism without ceasing to be a democratic republic, even if during exceptional periods this criticism is only allowed to be expressed by the appropriate party and organizational institutions.

*Impunity in military affairs, or the imposition of rigorous standards only on ordinary troops, is an aberration, a new development in our war, one that has no precedent in any war or in any country throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century up*

*to this point.*

Military action, or a lack thereof, without the spur and the stimulus of observation, of attentive vigilance, of direct popular control or popular control exercised by way of the people's representative institutions, cannot lead to victory, nor is it admissible in a republic like the Spanish republic that is fighting against fascism precisely because it is opposed to political totalitarianism and is seeking to reaffirm democracy, which, besides entailing an anti-fascist and anti-dictatorial mentality, is also a political regime in which the people participate in various ways in the resolution of all matters that affect their lives.

3. *With regard to government finances, nothing at all is known for certain about the real situation. Operations as delicate as the purchase of arms and other supplies, the root of all abuses and of all the horrors of unbridled speculation, are now beyond the reach of any control or inspection, and the kind of criticism to which they are subjected circulates in the form of rumor, without any attribution, without knowing where it comes from or what purposes it serves.*

It is not our intention to completely root out the abuses and excesses to which these operations have given rise in every war, but we maintain that they can be mitigated. A dictatorship of the Ministry of Finance is neither constitutional nor democratic, no more so than any other kind of dictatorship; furthermore, it does nothing at all to help the war effort.

The auditing of the regular budget and the fund for extraordinary expenditures, the assets of the Bank of Spain, the Bank of Spain's foreign branches and also of Campsa-Gentibus (a de facto monopoly over our foreign trade) must be in the hands of all the parties and organizations that support the war. The control and inspection of the financial status of the Republic cannot be delayed without harming and discrediting all of them.

In every war, even in the war of 1914–1918, this inspection and control were in effect. Clemenceau and Poincaré governed France during the war while being constantly assailed by their opponents. Wilhelm II had to obtain the Reichstag's approval for war credits, and even the Russian Czar convoked a session of the Duma where, even facing every imaginable restriction, someone like Karl Liebknecht could refuse to vote for the policy of the emperor, and some of the representatives in the Duma, such as Milyukov, for example, dared to express their dissent.

*The recent Paris Peace Congress<sup>1</sup> has in principle approved a resolution to grant a loan to the Spanish Republic. This loan that, according to the President of the Cortes, could amount to five million pounds sterling, is in fact guaranteed by the Spanish Popular Front, along with all the Popular Fronts of all the other countries, and this obliges us to exercise control and inspection over its use.*

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<sup>1</sup> The congress organized by the *Resseignement universel pour la paix*, attended by a large Spanish delegation, in May or June 1938, despite the fact that its members knew in advance that it was merely a communist front organization.

For all these reasons, which we could multiply with precedents from every country, but which in any event are superfluous because the national Popular Front has declared its support for a democratic government, we propose the following resolution:

1. Inform the Prime Minister of the Republic, the President of the Government and the President of the Cortes, that the Popular Front, in order to more effectively render its support for the government, desires that the democratic principle of inspection and control of the government with regard to financial matters, the conduct of the war, and foreign and domestic policy should be reestablished.
2. That the Popular Front should be structured in such a way as to be able to perform this task.

We failed! The very idea of controlling government affairs, of discovering how its money is spent, of shedding light on things that so many interests wanted to conceal, produced real or feigned indignation. Once again, we stood alone against a one-hundred-percent solid bloc.

But we were speaking the language of every old-fashioned conservative senator. And even that was not enough!

We had more than enough reports to prove that it was impossible to obtain any rendering of accounts concerning government finances, and that if the Negrín Government were to have to answer for its political, economic and financial management, it would end up in front of a firing squad.

Hence, that same Government's interest in fighting the war right up to the final disaster. We were not surprised by such an attitude on the part of those who were primarily responsible for the biggest financial collapse in the history of Spain; but was it true that all the parties and organizations were equally afraid of a little light being shed on their activities? Perhaps with the passage of time, some of the things that we could not explain back then, or now, for that matter, will be made clear.<sup>2</sup>

This proposal coincided with another proposal made by the Spanish Ambassador in Washington, Fernando de los Ríos, who called for the appointment of an Investigatory Committee to audit the Republic's finances.

Araquistain explains in his letter to Martínez Barrios, the President of the Cortes, how his proposal was received. Negrín could still count on the support of the parties and organizations, the Cortes and its standing committee, from which, along with Araquistain, only Álvaro de Albornoz resigned. Either the responsibility for all of those missing billions is shared by all of them, or it is too easy for the men of our generation to allow themselves to be corrupted and bought with the money of Spain, and to sell their country at a bargain price.

If, when faced with the crimes, abuses, thefts, errors and idiocies of the Government of the Republic, we had accepted them for even a single instant and remained silent, then today we would not have the courage to make these accusations.

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<sup>2</sup> An attempt similar to our attempt (to persuade the Popular Front to hold the government to account) was made by Araquistain in the Permanent Deputation to the Cortes, meeting in Paris on April 1, 1939, after the fall of the Republic. Araquistain proposed "that any collaboration between the Permanent Deputation and the ostensible Negrín Government should be preceded by an audit performed by a Commission that will be appointed for that purpose, so that this Government will render an account of its management."

It is only natural that now that they are in exile, and now that the gang of thieves who preyed on the public purse have lost their privileged positions, opponents and critics of the Negrín Government are popping up everywhere, speaking in the name of every organization and party. Now the farcical and tragic policy of the Government will be condemned as it deserves ... and this Government, the Government of victory, will be attributed with the well-justified merit of having liquidated the Republic in an uninterrupted orgy of the most vulgar passions.

We spoke out when everyone else kept their mouths shut, and we tried to save Spain from the shame and the indignity to which it had been led by its latest shepherds. We were unable to bring any of our proposals to fruition, because corruption had polluted everything. But we were not accomplices of the Negrín Government, nor did we remain silent about its infamies. And today we can enjoy the satisfaction of republishing material from the period when this Government was in power and took advantage of every means to silence the voices of its opponents.

On the occasion of a National Plenum of the libertarian movement, we presented a biographical sketch of Dr. Negrín, in the hope that his real personality would be revealed to the delegates and to bring him down from his pedestal of blood and filth. Wrong again! Just as someone who is in love overlooks the defects of the person who is the object of their illusions and passions, even those sectors with a real revolutionary pedigree wanted to close their eyes to the moral and political personality of Dr. Negrín.

This is how we depicted him:<sup>3</sup>

The fate of Spain has been placed in the hands of Dr. Negrín, and our CNT does not want to be an exception. Does this man have the kind of qualities that would merit the confidence that we have consistently refused to give to other politicians whose moral standards were so much higher and who were much more intelligent?

Negrín comes from a reactionary family. One of his brothers is a monk and one of his sisters is a nun.

That is not a crime, of course; but the truth is that his background is far from having persuaded us of his anti-fascist political credentials. Does anyone know what Negrín is thinking, what ideas he has, what goals he is pursuing?

The only thing that is public about this man is his private life, and the latter, without any doubt at all, falls far short of being exemplary or of expressing a category of higher personality. A sumptuous and abundant table, no lack of wines and liquors, and a harem as abundant as his table, complete his system.

He was awarded a Professorial Chair in Physiology on the Faculty of Medicine in Madrid, a Chair that he occupied for a few years. Was he the recipient of this award because of his knowledge or for his well-attested merits? Rumor has it that he knew how to dazzle the department's examining committee and confuse it with his plausible eloquence. He had studied in Germany and it is possible that he was exposed to some ideas from books that were not very well known at the time in Spain. This

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<sup>3</sup> Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I., "Informe sobre la necesidad de reafirmar nuestra personalidad revolucionaria y de negar nuestro concurso a una obra de gobierno necesariamente fatal para la guerra y para la revolución" [Report on the Need to Reaffirm Our Revolutionary Identity and to Refuse to Lend Our Support to a Government Policy that Is Necessarily Fatal for the War and for the Revolution], Barcelona, September 1938. The title of the report provides a good indication of its contents.

simple fact, which in and of itself is not indicative of any particular knowledge of physiology, seems to be the key that opened the doors to an academic career. He wrote nothing, either about topics relating to his alleged profession, or about anything else. Very often he would arrive in his classroom without any idea of the lesson that he was supposed to teach, and knowing even less about it than his students. The medical students of San Carlos know that he was one of those professors who was ridiculed in class by his students because of his incompetence and his lack of interest in teaching.

He always made his way in the world with flattery, studied amiability, and personal charisma. When he joined the Faculty of Medicine, his clinical eye fell upon Dr. Recasens, an old authority figure at the university. He was so slick and ingratiating that poor Recasens fell into the net, and gradually made Negrín his personal favorite. Negrín took advantage of his status by maneuvering in the shadow of this department head in order to become a kind of master of the Faculty, engaging in intrigues, favoritism and corruption, a domain in which his true mastery must be acknowledged. He employed the same methods at the Ciudad Universitaria. There he became the lackey of Floristan Aguilar, and in his shadow Negrín's influence grew and he secured his position amidst the affairs of this extravagant enterprise of the Primo de Rivera era.

He had no political inclinations whatsoever. He insinuated himself into the circle of a man of intellectual prestige like Araquistain, thinking that perhaps, under his wing and without any effort at all, he could acquire the culture that he lacked. He served as a kind of unpaid lackey for that writer. When Araquistain rejoined the Socialist Party around 1930, Negrín also applied for admission into the Party, not because of any socialist convictions, but in order to follow the man for whom he seemed to nourish a kind of servile worship. If Araquistain were to have joined the Patriotic Union, Negrín would have also joined the Patriotic Union.

When the Republic was proclaimed, the Socialist Party did not have enough qualified candidates for the numerous electoral slates and Negrín was listed among its candidates for Madrid Deputies. No one knew who he was except for the students of San Carlos who used to make fun of him, and, as a socialist, the future jailer of Largo Caballero was also an illustrious nobody. He entered the Cortes as a member of the Party's contingent. And in the elections of 1936, as a Deputy for the Canary Islands, he was Vice-Chairman of the Budget Committee.

Just as he did at the Faculty of Medicine with Recasens and at the Ciudad Universitaria with Floristan Aguilar, and just as he did with Araquistain during the first few years of his intellectual and public life, so he sheltered under the wing of Indalecio Prieto and entangled the latter in his net of flattery, servile cringing and personal devotion.

When Largo Caballero asked the Socialist Party to name three men to form a government in September 1936, Prieto responded by submitting his own name, that of Negrín for Minister of Finance, and that of Anastasio de Gracia. Thus, Negrín became

a Minister of State. How easy it was for a man with so few merits to rise so high in such a short time!

He is neither intelligent nor hard-working. He could not pass for being street-smart, not even in the Canarian sense, which is the worst kind.

His association with Prieto covered him like a suit of armor, and a series of incidents in which he was complicit and certain business deals with which he was associated gave him *carte blanche* to proceed in the Ministry of Finance. It must be admitted that he wasted no time in doing so. He had the keys to the bank and the first thing that occurred to him with regard to finance was to create a kind of executive bodyguard of one hundred thousand *carabineros*. We had never had so many as 15,000 *carabineros*, even when we had many thousands of miles of coastlines and borders, and Dr. Negrín, without any coastlines and without any borders, thought it was necessary—to enforce his tax policy?—to have an army of one hundred thousand men. The crime of those who consented to this embezzlement from the public treasury deserves the most severe punishment. And those who have, without any complaints at all, tolerated this special executive bodyguard of a social climber without morality or scruples, should also be held responsible, for their negligence or their cowardice, for this crime against the treasury and against the revolutionary conquests of the people, which was the ultimate purpose of this organized and well armed counterrevolutionary force.

His sycophants have spoken on more than one occasion of Dr. Negrín's dynamism. Negrín is, to the contrary, a lazy do-nothing. His dynamism is exhausted in senseless hustle and bustle, in Pantagruelike banquets and indulgence in the pleasures of harems paid for by the finances of the poor Republic to serve the recreational needs of the latest savior of Spain. This man never worked a day in his life, and his useless life is there to prove it, he is not even capable of devoting two straight hours to thinking about anything whatsoever. Furthermore, this universal and dynamic Minister needs the help of injections to pursue his lifestyle of waste and debauchery.

Intellectually, he is a nullity; morally, he is a *nouveau riche* who spends money on dissolute pleasures and abuses of every kind; politically, we do not know any more about him than what he has told us and what we have experienced.

Concerning every aspect of his administration one must rely absolutely on the opinion of the people around him. And he tries to surround himself with men who do not cast a shadow on him. That is how things are going in this poor loyalist Spain. Loyal to what?

This figure of calamity, and this is his real title, has implemented a policy of systematic secrecy. We repeat that his private life is the only thing about him that is public. His public life is a mystery, not just for the people who are fighting against fascism, who work for a living and pay their taxes, but even for those who serve at the highest levels of the government itself.

He is a master of the Machiavellian art of corrupting people, and it is this corruption that implicates everyone around him in power that makes possible the secret of the



policy that he practices, a policy that, due to the immorality and the wasteful spending upon which it is based, can only be secret, like the art of robbing a bank. Secrecy in financial affairs, however, has no precedent in any country. Mussolini himself, Negrín's idol, must get the Italian parliament to approve his budget proposals and vote for credits to finance his exploits. Negrín's dictatorship is in this respect more absolute than Hitler's or Mussolini's, since it is neither compelled nor does it consider it necessary to render accounts to anyone, not even to its own Cabinet, for the billions of pesetas that have disappeared.

This generous policy of corrupting individuals from every political tendency made operations like the transfer of most of the gold in the Bank of Spain to Russia possible, without any conditions, and the opening of numerous bank accounts in foreign countries containing hundreds of millions of pesetas, allegedly to help future émigrés from Republican Spain.

Not even the Government itself knows all the details about these transactions. In this sense, Negrín is an innovator, since he has accomplished under the cover of the war what no governing power, not even the absolutist monarchy, was ever able to do in Spain....

When Negrín was the master of Republican Spain, and when everyone was bowing down at his feet, we said these things to induce our friends to renounce their active support, as evidenced by their presence in his Government, for a man who brought ruin and discredit upon us. There is nothing that we would subtract from our little biography. He is still living his ostentatious life on the money that he stole from Spain, and he spent a half million francs on just one trip to the United States, while half a million men, women and children are starving, abandoned in concentration camps offered by French hospitality.

Such was the representative figure of Republican Spain.

Could the war have ended differently? Isn't all the blood that was shed, and the lives that were ruined, to be deplored, as we have pointed out?

## **Our report of August 1938 to the Government of the Republic concerning the conduct of the war—A critical-military review**

Those who had not sworn to any secret commitment to do what they could to see to it that the war would have a disastrous end, that is, honest people, of a liberal and progressive spirit, capable of a modicum of reflection, those who had preserved a minimum of independent personality, understood that the situation was grave, that the inevitable could not be postponed forever by lying to the public, that there was an urgent need for an effective remedy for the general orientation of government policy and especially military policy. We could not resign ourselves to merely revealing to our militants a reality that so many people had such a major interest in concealing. It was not possible for us to appeal to the masses to try to convince them to put a thousand kinds of pressure on the government. Largo Caballero's attempt to do so a few years earlier had led him to house arrest. It was not as if we were afraid of this or any other eventual outcome, but in that regime not even personal sacrifice could achieve any positive results.

On more than one occasion, the government press, and almost the entire press was the government press, insinuated that many people had been imprisoned or shot for lesser crimes than we were guilty of committing. And in these same articles it was claimed that it was merely due to the generosity of the government that we were allowed to walk the streets at all.

And this was true, many decent Spaniards had been shot or imprisoned for lesser causes. We also exposed this fact as just one of the many reasons why the worst government that Spain had ever known for many centuries should be brought to trial and punished.

What we said in our publications, what we told our militants, what we discussed in a small circle of friends, we also said clearly to the government itself. On August 20, 1938 we sent a report to the Chief of State that should have either been heeded or at least led to our immediate imprisonment.<sup>1</sup> The response to our report was eloquent silence.

This same document was also sent, for information purposes, to the former Ministers of War, to the high level military commanders, and to the parties and organizations that supported the government. Despite the silence of the majority, our incontrovertible arguments and criticisms would eventually be accepted by many people as a result of developments that soon thereafter transpired in accordance with our predictions.

We shall introduce our text with some comments we received from various recipients of the report.

Largo Caballero (September 1) told us:

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<sup>1</sup> "Observaciones críticas a la dirección de la guerra y algunas indicaciones fundamentales para continuarla con más éxito. Informe que presenta el Comité peninsular de la F.A.I. al Gobierno de la república" [Critical observations concerning the conduct of the war and some basic advice about how it may be conducted more successfully. Report presented by the Peninsular Committee of the FAI to the Government of the Republic], Barcelona, August 20, 1938, 24 p.

... The document seems good to me, and most especially your proposed solutions, which I would endorse without any hesitation.

Indalecio Prieto, another former Minister of War, said:

I have read the document with great interest. It is, of course, extremely interesting. All those who are now vested with the responsibility to direct this conflict should meditate on the observations set forth in its pages.

*The level-headed approach to the study of the difficult problems of the war, and the high level from which this vast panorama is contemplated, are praiseworthy. You may be sure of my gratitude and my best wishes....* (September 4)

General Rojo himself, the Chief of Staff of the General Staff, who had been profoundly affected by our observations, had to admit that:

*... the document is undoubtedly of the greatest interest and although I had already been briefed as to its contents by the Prime Minister, I am very grateful that I have received a copy. Concerning this report, I will only say that I agree with many of its points, whose orientation I believe is correct and beneficial for the war effort, and many of which have already been repeatedly formulated by this General Staff in certain proposals....* (September 1)

Luis Araquistain (August 31) told us, among other things:

I congratulate the author or authors on the technical competence revealed by the work and for the civic act of exposing crimes, anomalies and abuses that are so intolerable and disastrous that if they are not rapidly corrected, they will lead us, as you say quite well, to ultimate disaster. It is very sad that such a magnificent display of intelligence and of the Spanish character, understood properly, will not come to the attention of all Spanish anti-fascists and independent minds.

Colonel Díaz Sandino (September 2):

I have read the document and, sincerely, it is very gratifying to tell you that no honorable criticism has ever been more correct, or more just or true. I can only congratulate you. It would have been necessary for an organization or a party to have the courage to say these things, and since you took the initiative, I will not spare my praise....

Colonel Jiménez de la Beraza (September 3):

I was thrilled to be acquainted with the robust moral courage that underlies your analysis of the political activity that has been the principal cause of our military misfortunes and the inactivity in which men who are efficient in the military sense and absolutely loyal and trustworthy have been maintained....

Colonel Emilio Torres:

*Many of the suggestions you make coincide with my own oral and written suggestions, and it is to be hoped that they will receive, on the part of the government, and insofar as they are practicable, the favorable welcome that their good intentions deserve.*  
(September 11)

General José Asensio:

*... I totally agree. I praise the conclusions, which encompass a complete program, without partisan distortions and without any other purpose than to defeat the enemy and to win the war and, with it, not just the independence of Spain, but liberty, justice and civil rights, which are the foundations of the organization and the well being of the people.*  
(September 15)

There is a large amount of correspondence concerning this document. We have highlighted some of the most important statements made by well known political and military figures who cannot be suspected of sharing our revolutionary ideals. And now, we shall summarize the contents of the report, since its great length will not allow us to provide the full text.

We began by recognizing that the military progress of the enemy had been constant over the last two years of the war, involving the conquest of extensive territories and important cities in our provinces.

We can say that our army has done nothing up until this date other than resist with various degrees of success, and the offensives that we have mounted have almost always been neutralized by the enemy, which on most occasions has reconquered more land than was at first lost to our offensives, thanks to an important mobile strike force that we must ourselves form, to win the war, with twice as many troops as our enemies....

There can be no doubt that the leadership that we have conferred upon the conduct of the war in our camp suffers from serious defects, and our people's army and its commanders, lacking training and competence and undermined for the most part by partisan politics, also exhibit these same defects.

There is therefore nothing to be gained by deceiving ourselves. To the contrary, we believe that it is worth the trouble to call attention to the errors we have made, in documents not intended for publication, backed up by our experiences in our campaign whose purpose is to see to it that these errors are corrected. Otherwise we can only hope for an international solution based on the mediation of our conflict, a mediation that would certainly be unfavorable for the Republic. Either this, or we must hope for the same old miracle that will save us from the final disaster...

Then we mentioned the causes that had led to such a difficult military predicament.

a) The absurd and pernicious influence of politics on the war.

First, upon the outbreak of the military uprising and its defeat in several major cities, and especially in Barcelona, instead of everyone sharing the same correct view of reality, it was believed by the majority of the parties and organizations that the conflict was more or less won, that it was just a matter of a few weeks or months and, consequently, each party and each organization

began to concern itself with the future, with reinforcing its positions of dominance. They did not want to focus all available human and military material on the war. The infiltration of dubious elements in the ranks of anti-fascism also contributed to squandering our opportunities during the first few months when military initiative on our part was still possible.

Later, the politics of partisan hegemony in the rearguard caused our fighters to focus on defending the so-called conquests of the revolution, ignoring what was essential, which was the war, which was necessarily a revolutionary war. Parties and organizations devoted themselves to hoarding arms in the rearguard, for the purpose of dominating the post-war period that they thought was imminent, taking these arms from fronts that were unstable, badly organized and lacking the elements that had been removed from them.

Once these first mistakes had been partly rectified,

... a political party appeared in the spotlight, a party that had few members, which, relying on the policy of a foreign power, after carrying out an intensive propaganda campaign among the ranks of the army and in the institutions of public order, offering the bait of promotions and appointments to high level positions, which attracted neophytes whose anti-fascist credentials were hardly impeccable and who were morally deficient, many of whom it protected by giving them membership cards backdated to 1933, brazenly attempted to transform the people's army into a creature of the party.

Proselytism by way of corruption, flattery, promotions, favoritism, and all kinds of coercive measures, even in the trenches, created an atmosphere of decomposition and discontent that undermined the morale and effectiveness of the military apparatus.

Using the most repulsive methods, these elements who were obeying the dictates of a foreign power seized control over the General Staffs and devoted themselves to slandering military officers who were not sympathetic to their party ideology, and replaced them with party members.

And because membership in this party does not by virtue of that fact alone confer any guarantee of ability, the army of the Republic has been given, with the knowledge and consent of its leadership, a large number of commanding officers who lack the personal experience and technical knowledge required for the management, which has so often been entrusted to them, of large units.

Some of these commanding officers have introduced arrogance and discourteous treatment as aspects of their leadership style. Despite always having the word "comrade" on their lips, they have never felt comradely in their hearts, since they have even restored corporal punishment in the army, often employing it to discredit the revolution. And despite the formation of authorized military tribunals, they have even gone so far as to secretly shoot people and harrass individuals in complete violation of military law.

*The interference of politics in the war has reached such an extreme that it interrupted operations that might have otherwise been decisive to save northern Spain, at a time*

*when the enemy did not possess the Italo-German and Moroccan manpower that it possesses now. In this case, this interference successfully prevented the victory that would have meant a veritable political El Dorado for a certain public figure, without anyone pausing to consider whether or not this harmed the cause of the Spanish people, which cannot be the patrimony of any particular party or made the victim of schemes and cults of personality.*<sup>2</sup>

It can be said that everything that has since been undertaken, especially with regard to the composition of military units and appointments to commanding positions, has been done solely to serve political purposes; it is under such conditions that our war is waged....

#### b) The Commissariat of War

When the military uprising first broke out and we improvised an organizational framework for fighting the war, when all the military resources were in our hands, not knowing which professional elements to whom we should entrust the command over our columns, we resorted to the appointment of political section leaders or commissars who, accompanied by military officers who were more or less sympathetic and trustworthy, exercised control over military operations.

It was the only advisable procedure under the circumstances. We could not leave the commanding positions in the hands of personnel with whom we were not familiar, and we had to restrict appointments to commanding positions to those military leaders who had declared their support for the people in arms. It was a measure imposed by circumstances, until the situation became more clear. Shortly afterwards, officers of revolutionary and popular origin began to graduate from our military schools, and many of our militiamen proved to be excellent military commanders at the front, such as Durruti in Catalonia, Cipriano Mera in the Center, Higinio Carrocera in Asturias, etc. The intervention of a dual apparatus that was both political and military was useless, if not harmful; not to mention the poison of proselytism that was its fuel and vehicle.

We said to the Government of the Republic:

In good military doctrine, the man in command must be everything to the soldier, who must see him as a paternal friend, a faithful administrator, and a teacher who guides the soldier in every way (and who even teaches him to read), providing him with an apprenticeship in culture and social life. If an officer does not have these traits, he must be removed from the ranks of the army, but the solution does not lie in placing a commissar at his side to make sure that he demonstrates them, or as is almost always the case, to see to it that he does not demonstrate them.

The soldier must see the man in command as a superior person who can effectively lead him in the tragic and terrible experience of battle. He must see the officer as a model and an example, in whose hands the supreme sacrifice of life must be placed. Life cannot be risked arbitrarily, no matter how just the cause that is defended. Sacrifice must be crowned with victory, that is, with the occupation of the objective

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<sup>2</sup> I was referring here, above all, to the operation whose purpose was to cut the rebel zone of Spain into two parts, which was to have been launched from Extremadura, and was planned during Largo Caballero's term as Minister of War. This plan, and the contingencies to which it gave rise, would provide enough material for a whole book. The fall of Largo Caballero was mainly due to the prospects for success of this planned campaign, for which the Russians denied the use of the air force that they controlled.

designated by the commanders. Dual command has never existed in history, since even in the era of the Roman Senate, the two consuls who were named alternated in the exercise of military command.

Some military operations were disrupted in their development by absurd ideas imposed by thoughtless commissars. On other occasions the commissars denounced military commanders with a notorious flippancy, motivated by resentment and partisan ambitions....

With the commissariat, an enormous and byzantine bureaucratic machine has been created within our army that has no obvious military use....

We used to complain about the enormous burden represented for our country by 22,000 officers on active duty. We should calculate the impact on our future of, in addition to the 45,000 officers that we have now in our army, another 45,000 commissars....

This institution, therefore, not only does not contribute in its current form to the successful prosecution of the war, but actually hinders it due to its interference, with the political proselytism that is carried out in favor of a party and with its lack of tact and of military knowledge....

*In certain units, the commissars have been noted to meet with the officers who support certain ideologies, and with the cells that were formed everywhere, to allocate the units' commanding positions. Furthermore, commissars have participated in executions carried out in defiance of military law, an extremity that it is precisely their mission to prevent, as the custodians of the safeguarding of military order....*<sup>3</sup>

c) The military advisors from the USSR and the use of the air force

We did not want to address the famous aid received from the USSR. This aid was all paid for, at market prices and without any discounts, regardless of the quality of the materiel we received in exchange. That is all well and good, but at most all that was required of us was prompt payment and all the gratitude our supplier wanted.

*However [we said to the Government], we think that our identity should not be mortgaged and that the Republic, and we, the Spanish people, should not abandon the lead role in conducting our government policy and our war. The USSR has sent to our country numerous teams of more or less experienced and discreet military technicians of various degrees of professional competence. Some of them eventually demanded that they be obeyed, and others have worked to place staff officers and field commanders who are members of a certain kindred party in positions of command and on the General Staff of our army, so they can dictate their orders to them; they also show preference*

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<sup>3</sup> Manzana, a captain in an artillery unit, Durruti's adjutant from the very first day of the revolt, who later replaced Durruti in Aragon, sent us the following note concerning the commissariat: "In the technical-advisory aspect it plays no role at all, since its members can hardly participate in any debates about an operation if they do not understand the meaning of operational orders, nor do they have the least knowledge of tactics, logistics, strategy, fortification, firing lines, etc. [...] In the current phase of the war, I would prefer a competently operated field gun or an adequately manned fighter plane to a good commissar, and it is less costly to obtain someone who is good at the former jobs than the latter." (September 1938)

*and indulgence for units that they consider to share their own ideology, and neglect for those which they consider to be influenced by other parties or organizations.*

This is proven by the fact that there are divisions in our army professing the communist ideology that possess more artillery, a machine gun battalion, and another battalion armed with submachine guns, with better armaments, a field hospital and their own surgical equipment and free hands for their commanders to obtain supplies of all kinds....

[As we were told by Hilario Esteban:]

*The part about the commissariat is right on target and I hope that it is taken into consideration, since the commissar has forgotten his proper function and everything else in order to serve the party that nominated him for the position of commissar. There have been many occasions when these partisan intrigues have yielded disastrous results for army units. (Hilario Esteban, Coordination Section of the Regional Committee of Catalonia of the CNT, September 1)*

The commissar of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Division, Antonio Barea, told us:

*Furthermore, I totally agree; so much that when I read some of your statements (for example, those referring to the commissariat, the Russian advisors, the SIM) it seems that I am reading something that I wrote myself.” (September 18)*

*This is the secret behind the fact that they [the communist units] are more capable of resisting the enemy than other, similar units. Operations that amounted to stupendous disasters were ordered and implemented by some of these advisors from the USSR, concerning whom we sincerely believed that we could ask them for moral and material support and even technical advice, but in whose not always skilled hands—although the members of the communist party, with an admirable provincialism, think otherwise—the executive decision making of the campaign must never be placed....<sup>4</sup>*

Lieutenant colonel Jover maintained that,

... we can by no means consent to being replaced by foreigners.... With our patient efforts, we must compel all those who want to fight against fascism at our side to behave like Spaniards and to become Spanish; then we shall see....

For our part, we worked with many members of the military teams sent from the USSR and we have been able to observe their one-track way of thinking and their almost total lack of ability to solve unforeseen problems. That is why, generally speaking, when an operation did not work out as planned, they were confused and left the planning of measures to rectify their failed operations to chance. And as for the colonels and generals they sent us to serve as technicians in the art

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<sup>4</sup> With respect to the Russian military advisors, Captain Manzana wrote, in a letter to us: “I have the impression, at least from the ones that I have dealt with, that they are just as incompetent as advisors as they are bad military officers. You need only take a look at the current disposition of our lines and the failure of all the offensives that these advisors have planned and directed.” (September 1938)



of waging war, they were no better, and this is saying a lot, than the average level of any of our half-trained captains.

The air force we possessed was completely in the hands of the commanders from the USSR, an extreme solution easily understandable due to the special conditions of the air arm, as distinct from those of the land army, and we had even formed numerous contingents of magnificent Spanish pilots, and we manufactured several planes each week in our factories. Our air force, however, was not used effectively, since we did not have the tactical support planes that could work in cooperation with the armies, perhaps due to a lack of trained pilots.

We can state that our infantry never feels that it has sufficient support from the air force, which has never operated in concert with the land forces, in contrast to the way our enemies use their air force. No real efforts are made to engage in aerial observation, nor are any photographic charts compiled, nor are operational plans updated, nor are the enemy's efforts to build fortifications being monitored, nor is there any attempt, in short, to perform the real work that should be performed by the air force in a modern war.

*The air force is, as the famous saying has it, "the eyes of the army" and the "left hook of the boxing match of the commanders". And we regret to say, from this point of view, we find ourselves, in the people's army, very nearly totally blind, and that our commanders can only use the right uppercut of the artillery in their boxing match.*<sup>5</sup>

d) An atmosphere of suspicion haunts the military commanders

There has been a tendency to create, without intending to do so, by the rumors spread by commissars and local committees, agents of the SIM, agents of the parties, etc., an atmosphere of real suspicion around numerous military commanders. It can be stated that our intelligence sections know very little about the enemy, but instead know a lot of gossip, most of it unfounded, concerning the officers of the army who are not members of the party that holds the key positions in these intelligence sections or predominates among their informants. An apolitical Napoleon Bonaparte commanding a major corps in our people's army would surely be dismissed if he had a commissar or a cell from a certain party in his general headquarters. On the other hand, false military prestige has been fabricated for ignorant and inexperienced individuals, precisely on the basis of the complicity of cells and commissars.

Under these conditions a moral climate has been generated that is far removed from a healthy and noble environment of exemplary comradeship that should be the rule amongst the loyalist officer corps, and it is in this factor that the cause of many routs, military disasters and the lack of good commanders must be sought....

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<sup>5</sup> In our discussions with several Spanish military pilots concerning the fact that our air force still remained in the hands of the Russians or their stooges, and the ineffectiveness of a military weapon that was being used to such decisive advantage by the enemy, we reached the conclusion that the Republican air force was being preserved above all for the eventual emergency evacuation of high level government and military personnel. A statement has been attributed to President Azaña whose authenticity we cannot confirm. Denouncing the *negrinista* policy of resistance, Azaña said: "I think that the time for extreme and futile heroism has passed. I am, however, ready for a new Numantia, but ... without airplanes."

If we could dispassionately read the dossiers compiled against the non-communist staff officers and field commanders, we would behold a monstrous and irresponsible intrigue that turned our army into a soulless and inconsistent mass.

e) Shirkers and morale behind the lines

*There are far too many cases of complicated intrigues, and recommendations sparing certain people from front-line duty, and ultra-revolutionary figures in the rearguard accomplish the impossible by evading their military obligations after receiving their conscription notices.<sup>6</sup>*

And among the commissars, personnel destined for pseudo-industrial, auxiliary, engineering services, etc., removed from the ranks more than thirty percent of their number.

Nor were these the only ways to evade one's military duties.

In May 1937 we had a large surplus of armed men, a real reserve army that today, despite a series of additional military drafts, we no longer possess. These men were used disproportionately to reinforce units performing the services of public order and the treasury police that could have been performed by other, non-military, bodies. These units composed of young men who had been mobilized should have been assigned to the fronts and should have constituted the reserve armies.

Exemptions from service at the front, for political reasons, for those who are said to be indispensable for civil administration, those assigned to war industries, those who are included in the conscription classes that were mobilized to fill up the ranks of the carabinieri, the uniformed security corps, the SIM and the police, produce a great deal of discontent among the front line soldiers and their families. All these things should be rectified with a strong hand and with impartiality. An example: a few days ago, the undersecretary for propaganda of the communist party was mobilized as a war industry worker, and it is from that position that he serves his party by disseminating tons of communist propaganda.

Another factor that is conducive to demoralization is the fact that on the home front, the only ways to get food are to have money or to be a member of a party or organization characterized by its support for the government or the USSR.

We then referred to the lie of the apoliticism of the army and the scandalous way that almost everything that was essential for the conduct of the war effort was controlled by the communist party and by the Russian advisors. And then we summarized what was accomplished by Catalonia for the war effort and for the manufacture of military products, in response to the campaign of calumny waged by the Moscow-oriented press, pointing out that this ignorance of such an unparalleled force could only sow the seeds of bitterness and cynicism in a region that is vital for the future of the war.

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<sup>6</sup> At one of the meetings of the National Popular Front, the supreme institution of *negrinista* policy, on a certain occasion when we opposed a new military draft we proved that the majority of those who were such enthusiastic supporters of sending more human cannon fodder to the front were themselves eligible for military duty and had found some way to have themselves declared indispensable for serving in the rearguard. Indispensable for aiding and abetting the policy of defeat.

We devoted one section of our text to the executive command of military operations, and to the critique of the Teruel campaign, initiated under extremely unfavorable circumstances for us. One division was missing three thousand men, and there were artillery batteries that had only one gun. We had on our side the advantage of surprise, a concentrated focus of action, and the fact that the offensive capacities of the enemy were at that time directed towards Guadalajara, but faced with the enemy's counteroffensive, our army's defective operational planning became obvious in general as well as with respect to the details. The demoralization of the units that surrendered also testified to the failure of the military policy that had been followed up until that point.

f) Disregard for the idiosyncrasies of the the Spanish people

We have sketched the outlines of what a people's army, rather than a party or a fraction, must be. Now, we would like to refer to another form of armed struggle that is known throughout the world as the Spanish-style or guerrilla war. Even the very word "guerrilla" has passed into the vocabulary of every language as a synonym for irregular warfare. Currently it is the Chinese who are revealing the real prospects of this kind of war.

The guerrilla is consubstantial with the Spanish temperament, with Spain's broken terrain, with its mountains and ridges and its natural fortifications. The militias that were formed during the first few months of the conflict had this character; but the lack of a regular army caused us to use them as regular forces and this largely explains their failures and those of their commanders. The militias as free undertakings, autonomous, with bold volunteers, with no other discipline than that imposed by the needs of the moment, would have been able to accomplish for our victory as much or perhaps more than the army. They would have paved the way for the regular forces with their decisive victories, they would have been everywhere, harrassing the enemy with surprise attacks, interrupting the enemy's supply lines, causing unexpected losses, sowing unease and nervousness in its ranks.

*The Government of the Republic would have been able to more effectively organize the army from the very start if it had not been forced to employ these organized forces in operations for which they did not have sufficient training. The direct or indirect cooperation between guerrillas and regular forces would have given this war a different course. Guerrillas or cuerpos francos have arisen in every war and have been encouraged by every school of military thought. The Russian Revolution was able to defend itself from its enemies not with the embryonic Red Army, but with brave guerrillas like Makhno, Chapaev and thousands of others who were less well-known. Our current war is the first time that guerrilla tactics have been totally eliminated.*

*But while it is true that guerrillas and cuerpos francos have been fostered by the military and civilian authorities in all times and in all countries, nowhere more than in Spain have they played such a decisive role. It was the volunteer and popular guerrilla forces that sealed the fate of the Napoleonic armies on our territory; and it was the guerrillas who decided the first Carlist war that lasted seven years in favor of the system that seemed less despotic and backward to the people.*

The complete suppression of the people's militias, which could have performed auxiliary services behind the lines and could have focused their main action on surprise attacks, infiltrating enemy territory, and a thousand sporadic, yet disruptive, actions against the invaders, has deprived us of an active vehicle for the support of the people and has taken from our hands a precious instrument for effective cooperation with the army.

So much for the critical part of our statement. In what follows we offer some solutions. We proposed four urgent, preliminary measures:

1. A complete overhaul of the highest echelons of military operations and war policy. As long as no decision is made to expel the volunteers as requested by the Non-Intervention Committee, then Spanish commanders should be appointed to lead the International Brigades. No foreigner should occupy any position of command or responsibility in the army, in the air force or in the navy. The Russian advisors will desist from their independent operations and will become members of the General Staffs, subordinate to Spanish supreme commanders. Interpreters will be provided by the Government.
2. Reestablishment of strict military discipline. This entails as a consequence the severe punishment of illegal acts and the incompetence of the commanders, whether or not they are protected by a particular political party. For example, the officer who, with pistol in hand, forced an artillery unit to fire its guns at a faster rate than the equipment would permit, thus damaging and rendering inoperative several guns, should be punished; and so, too, should anyone who robs or loots the country that he occupies; or anyone who shoots someone illegally; or anyone who exceeds his authority and who is not trained for or capable of exercising the command functions for which he is appointed to serve, notwithstanding the sanctions that are set forth in the military code for treason or cowardice for all the members of the army.
3. The strict delineation of the functions of the commissariat of war, so that it is no longer capable of infringing upon the authority and responsibilities of the military command structure.
4. A radical reform of the SIM. This military investigation service merits a separate discussion:

There can be no doubt that it has committed useless acts of cruelty, for which we justly reproached Martínez Anido, employing methods "to make people talk" that have been renounced by all the police forces in the world. It is also true that it has been responsible for the defects of bad police methods, which imprison all the residents of a block to arrest one thief. Despite some successes achieved by this service, its ineffectiveness is obvious. The Fifth Column exists in all its enormity, and the enemy's espionage services set up by the Gestapo and the OVRA operate freely on our territory, and concerning the enemy we are totally in the dark with regard to intelligence....

It is a notorious fact that this service, which can avail itself of such extraordinary intellectual refinement and skill, has since the outbreak of the war not been in the hands of a sufficiently skilled leadership, since, taking into account the fact that enemy territory offers a favorable environment for this kind of work and the ease with which we could infiltrate agents who speak the same language as our enemy in rebel territory, it would have been entirely practicable to carry out large-scale plans similar to those carried out by the various secret services during the world war.

Indiscriminate terror is not a weapon that can benefit our cause. The selection of ignorant and inexperienced agents can only lead them to justify their paychecks by generating mere gossip that is far removed from the great mission that must be performed....

As for what must be done to win the war, the Government knew as well as we did, but we nonetheless believed that it was necessary to openly state it in so many words:

A victorious outcome, achieved strictly by military means on the battlefield, is not to be expected today, nor can we envision such a result taking into account the means at our disposal, our difficulties, our mistakes and also taking into account the fact that we are fighting the war with draftees who are married men or veritable children, who are facing Moors, Legionnaires, adventurers and fanatics whom the enemy uses as assault forces and storm troops....

If military victory was impossible, however, the enemy nonetheless had his Achilles Heel, the home front of the rebels that was liable to decomposition and demoralization. Naturally, a revolt in the enemy's rearguard was not to be expected to result from mere propaganda. Several factors had to be combined in addition to propaganda campaigns, for example, a complementary activity of propaganda in Morocco, a more effective and consequential military policy and more extensive use of irregular warfare.

For us, the infiltration of a network of agents into enemy territory, speaking the same language, familiar with the political and military life of the country, of the national psychology, capable of inspiring the proletariat and the so-called democratic sectors to rise up against the invaders, sowing discontent by means of a skilfull dissemination of news and by repeated acts of sabotage, would pose no problem. We proposed the following operations:

1. The division of rebel-held territory into operational zones.
2. The assignment of agents to each zone.
3. The systematic infiltration of these agents and their joining the parties of the rebel side.
4. Ensure the transmission of reports, orders and news in enemy territory and from enemy territory to loyalist Spain.
5. Each zone should possess at least one chief agent, one or more for each political party, responsible for transmitting and executing orders, propaganda, etc., one central clearing house of news and means to disseminate it, and one or more saboteurs.

6. In each division of the rebel army we should be able to rely on at least one agent of our secret service, and if possible one in every newspaper, Ministry or important agency or organization.

The first five points we considered to be applicable to Portugal as well, and it was our opinion that they should even be extended to Italy.

A coordinated propaganda campaign and an attempt to foment rebellion in the rebel zone, coinciding with an equivalent campaign in Morocco and with a stunning military victory on our part, might have been able to facilitate the victory of our cause.

We proposed to introduce the seeds of decomposition and demoralization in the zone of the Moroccan Protectorate as well, in Ifni and the Spanish Sahara, aware of the fact that the Islamic world is always prone to exaltation and revolt against its oppressors.

The Kabiles of Northern Morocco are impoverished, exhausted and have suffered numerous casualties as a result of the war....

Xenophobia has always prevailed among Moslems and especially among the tribes of the Maghreb. As for the regions bordering on, or located in, the desert, their inhabitants are constantly prone to indulge in passionate, mystical movements, besides the fact that warfare and a nomadic way of life have always been the usual occupations of the natives, which is why we think that it would be very easy to spur them to rise up against the foreigner, playing on both the religious sentiments and the xenophobia of the masses, and the petty ambitions of the most influential men in their Yema'as or assemblies....

We emphasized the strategic importance of the Sahara and the southern part of Morocco for communications with South America, and we proposed that we should come to some kind of agreement with France regarding this project, and with the Pan-Islamic Committee in Geneva, with the high level Zionist leaders in London and Paris, with the Moroccan Jewish elements, with the main religious brotherhoods and with prestigious local figures.

We called attention to the advisability of establishing groups of skilled agents, knowledgeable in Arab culture, in Uazzan, Fez, Tazza and Uxda, for the North, and in Marrakesh, Agadir and San Luis in Senegal for the South, whose mission would be to:

- 1) gather intelligence; 2) spread suitable news and rumors among the tribes; 3) work to attract influential persons to our cause; 4) obstruct the recruitment and the training of native units; 5) bombings and sabotage; 6) smuggle and distribute arms; 7) start a revolt in the country and attack enemy organizations and military camps.

The distribution of money, weapons and ammunition was the most adequate means to achieve our ends.

Our proposal combined these activities in rebel territory and in Morocco with an inexpensive campaign on the part of our army that was guaranteed to succeed. We recognized that we did not possess the means or the manpower for offensives like the one whose purpose was to recover the regions of Lérida, Gadesa or Vinaroz, or to cut the line of communications between Teruel and Guadalajara, to straighten out the Madrid Front, to recover the Valley of the Serena for the purpose of subsequently occupying the communications node of Mérida, for the reduction of the Bujalance or the Alcalá la Real pockets so as to later reach Granada. Our objective was more

accessible and was a long way from the Ebro and Levante, where our enemies had concentrated their reserves. Our objective was the Pozoblanco sector.

In the chosen zone, we find the mining region of Peñarroya to be an objective of extraordinary importance of every kind, whose possession would allow us to threaten Córdoba from very close positions and to make communications between that province and Estremadura extremely difficult.

The situation of the troops that the enemy has been forced to station in this region is quite unfavorable tactically due to the positions they occupy and due to the ease with which they can be isolated, with a river behind them (the Guadiato), and squeezed into its valley.... Strategically speaking, the enemy occupies the northern wall of a veritable dead end, formed by the Guadiato, which flows behind their positions from Northwest to Southeast, from the swamps of Calderín passing through the Sierra de Chimorra, Sordo, Alcornocosilla, Cabeza Mesada and positions facing Hinojosa. The northern wall of the dead end only offers possibilities of communications as far as Villaviciosa.

The rest of the region is completely impassable for retreat or for supplying the rebel forces, which necessarily have to rely on the Córdoba-Villaharta-Belmez and Peñarroya highway for supplies, which passes through the same dead end formed by the river. To the Northwest, the enemy can easily communicate with Estremadura and to the Southeast with Córdoba.

Of the two basic maneuvers exclusively used by strategy, which consist of cutting the opposing army into two, or encircling it, in this case it is reasonably clear that among the numerous aspects and nuances with which the military art adorns them, faced with such a strategic situation, only encirclement can be applied....

Our report then provides further details concerning this proposed campaign, and the requirements for its successful implementation.<sup>7</sup>

We must point out with respect to this matter that in our proposals of actions to be taken we did not expect our suggestions to be followed to the letter, but we only sought to delineate possible solutions we might ourselves have modified once we put them into practice depending on the changing day-to-day situation.

Then we highlighted the possible significance of a guerrilla war behind enemy lines, combined with action in northern and southern Morocco, and with a military campaign of the kind we proposed, along with an effective campaign of propaganda, intelligence and sabotage in the enemy zone.

Now we shall summarize what a sensible military policy would have looked like.

Military policy must be of a solely technical nature, establishing a unity of action and of the will to achieve the greatest efficiency in the use and coordination of naval, air and ground forces.

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<sup>7</sup> A very similar operation, initiated by General Asensio, was launched a few months later, although without the means and the preparations suggested by our report. Asensio later wrote to us: "I agree with the general outlines of your proposals to win the war, but not with regard to the details, which must be the responsibility of the person who is charged with executing the overall plan. Their general orientation is acceptable and I think they are of fundamental interest."

Specifically, this policy must involve the use of the military forces, the choice of theaters of operation, the distribution of forces and manpower among them and a military system to be employed in each case, without any interference at all, just as such interference is not allowed in scientific research or technological research and development, of the ideologies and policies of parties, or of the aspirations of particular classes.

And among the practical measures we proposed certain measures that were indispensable for the implementation of our critical suggestions, including the reduction to the absolutely necessary minimum of the forces of public order and of the Ministry of Finance, the Treasury Police [Cuerpo Único] and the *carabineros*, so that the Ministry of War would have authority over all the members of these units that are incorporated into the mobilized conscription categories. The other armed bodies that serve as policemen, prison guards, labor camp guards, traffic police, etc., would also be subject to having some of their armed personnel mobilized for active service at the front. We also called attention to the need for a “policy of personal and collective responsibility for those who participate in public life as civil servants or as representatives of parties and trade unions”.

We did not in any way seek to diminish the scope of the sacrifices, privations and austerities imposed by the war; but we did oppose an absurd policy that was inspired much more by the idiotic ambitions of partisan dominance than by the goal of winning the war. We ended our text with the following words:

More than two years of experience are more than enough to enable us to determine which road leads to military defeat. We have tried to show which one this is. And we have proposed the needed corrections.

Enemies of partisan politics with respect to these questions, and above all when our existence as an independent nation is at stake, we want nothing, we are not asking for anything, that cannot be advocated by all the political and trade union forces.

We rose up in July 1936 to take the first steps to prevent the establishment of a dictatorship. We still think that dictatorship cannot be an instrument of progress and prosperity for Spain, and we also think that it cannot bring us victory in the war.

We are proposing a democratization of public power to the exclusion of all partisan hegemony. We are proposing that loyal Spaniards do not renounce the leading role in conducting the war or commanding the forces that are fighting it. A Spain without any identity of its own cannot fight with all the potential of which it is capable for its own dignity and for its own independence.

We shall repeat what we said on other occasions. It is not with pride, but with shame and profound bitterness that we now summarize the position of the Iberian Anarchist Federation in the Spanish tragedy. It seems incredible that we stood entirely alone in taking a position that was by no means extremist, but which rather, to the contrary, perhaps erred by being too moderate. We asked for nothing for ourselves. We only wanted to win the war, to see the cause of the Spanish people more fully understood and more effectively defended.



If, on an individual level, face to face, we were told that we were right, when it was a question of parties and organizations, they turned their backs on us and joined forces with the strategists of defeat. Fear? Complicity? Let each of them clarify the motives that led them to unconditionally support a figure like Dr. Negrín, a man without any qualifications and without any experience, viewed by the people as a mere tool of the foreign policy of a supposedly friendly power, but in fact the gravedigger of the Spanish war and revolution.

## **A report presented to the libertarian movement in September 1938 calling attention to the course of the war and to the requisite reforms**

We had already addressed the anarchist militants (July 1938), we had told the government what we thought of the situation in general as it concerned the war without mincing any words (August 1938), and all that remained for us to do was to inform the entire libertarian movement, the National Confederation of Labor, the Iberian Anarchist Federation, and the Libertarian Youth; we did this in September of 1938, on the occasion of a National Plenum of the three libertarian organizations, held in Barcelona.<sup>1</sup> In our publications we had repeatedly insisted on the woeful contrast between the masses who were superior, for their qualities, their understanding and their constructive abilities, compared to their representatives. We noticed this fact even during the first days of the movement, and as time passed our view was only reinforced, both with respect to military affairs as well as economic and constructive aspects.

From the point of view of the course of events, it seemed to newcomers to the movement to be a little chaotic; but the human material was so excellent that it was seldom that appeals were made to the sentiment and the reason of the people in arms without achieving the most favorable results. Once those who made mistakes were sincerely and honestly shown that they were in error, they rectified them.

The logic of the people does not always coincide with the logic of their leaders. As a result of the victory of July, these leaders were at the mercy of the people, who were the masters of their own destinies, and of their own will. If this liberation was capable of instilling panic into the professional rulers, if it gave rise to some individual excesses, if under the shadow of this liberty some bad seeds sprouted along with the good ones, the majesty of the sublime spectacle was not thereby diminished. As long as the people took the initiative into their own hands, leaving their political, military and trade union leaders behind, they did not yield one inch on the battlefield. To the degree that the people were deprived of their initiative, the constructive spirit in the economy, combativity and heroism at the front, the enthusiastic participation in all the foundations of life, of labor and of creation, all declined accordingly.

The Regional Plenum of the libertarian movement was an occasion for us to experience great sadness, not because our observations and our desires went unheeded, but because it became evident to us, once again, just how vast was the moral distance that separated the vast movement of the people who rallied around our flag from those who claimed to represent them, who availed

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<sup>1</sup> "Report on the conduct of the war and the rectifications demanded by its results", presented by the Peninsular Committee of the FAI at the Plenum of Regional Committees of the libertarian movement, Barcelona, September 1938, 17 p.

themselves of all the arts that are so familiar all over the world and in every organization when leadership becomes a career and the possession of commanding positions is considered to be the supreme goal.

The so-called demands of the war had abolished the democratic functioning of the people's institutions of management, criticism and planning. And was this a good thing for the conduct of the war? No, but it was good for those who, caught up in the gears of the system, were able to boast of jobs, sinecures, and positions for which they were not qualified and which they otherwise would have never been able to enjoy.

We consider it to be our duty to reproduce these documents, both in order to highlight our attitude that earned us isolation and the animosity of those whom we condemned, but also so that those who are the surviving victims of a suicidal policy that was implemented and presumably authorized in their names will have the opportunity to become acquainted with their contents.

The reader will perhaps notice that we shall repeat some facts and observations that we already quoted from other documents. It was the same spectacle and the same passion that inspired all our efforts.

How much we wanted to be proven wrong! And we must confess that on more than one occasion, having noted the futility of our efforts, and having seen how we were up against the solid and unyielding wall of the representatives of every party and organization, we experienced self-doubt. Perhaps we were the ones who were wrong? Let he who can, judge for himself, from a vantage point above all the passions that were aroused by this bitter dispute. We cannot be both judges and defendants. That is why we shall allow the documents to speak for themselves, to convey the expression of our discontent and of our view of each incident.

First, some general considerations.

We shall not attempt to render a detailed survey of our errors with regard to the war and military policy in general. We all bear some responsibility for these matters, at the front or behind the lines, due to our action or our inaction, in the turn taken by events and in the loss of our positions, insofar as we have played a leading role in this war and were also its first organizers.

The most efficient and adequate instrument of irregular warfare, of the Spanish style of warfare, was improvised, and arose as if by magic: the popular militias of the first few months of the war. Our lack of an organized army forced us to employ these forces in operations and for purposes ordinarily assigned to regular military units. To this discrepancy we must also add the lack of arms and ammunition, and the sabotage we had to deal with from the very start on the part of the Government of the Republic against these popular formations that had arisen in the midst of the victory of July.

We had to create an army, but did we also have to abolish the militias? Is it not true that these two kinds of military bodies have coexisted in the past, and that they performed different but nonetheless complementary functions in warfare?

The abolition of the militias was a political error from the revolutionary point of view and a military error from any point of view. What happened afterwards was merely the logical and necessary outcome of this first big mistake.

*Without our support, militarization would not have been possible. Moral pressure alone, or Government decrees, would not have been enough to quell the discontent against, and diminish the instinctive spirit of resistance to, a militarization policy that had other purposes besides merely imposing discipline, as we saw later.<sup>2</sup> We lacked the insight to propose that the two formations should exist side by side, the regular formations of the army and the irregular formations of the people's militias. We therefore placed our fate, and the fate of revolutionary Spain and of the war, in the hands of our natural and irreconcilable enemies, the usurpers of the so-called aid from Russia, which was not aid at all, but a scandalous business deal involving the sale of weapons that were often defective or useless, and a shameful exchange that surrendered control of the political affairs of Spain as well as the conduct of the war to a foreign power.*

A campaign was waged in the ranks of the army to crush the best qualities of the Spanish soldier. The intention was to impose a brutal regime of discipline by way of terror. In order to further this project, huge armies of state police, Carabineros, Security and Assault Guards, ordinary police, the SIM [Military Investigation Service], etc., were formed. In 1930, in all of Spain there were 694 commanders and lower level officers of the Carabineros, 14,526 infantry troops, and 350 cavalry. Compare these figures with the 100,000 carabineros who are currently on the payroll in a territory that is so truncated that it covers only about one-fifth of our country. And this proportional increase in the number of carabineros has been more or less equaled by all the other forces of public order. Were the people who created these monstrous armies of policemen in the rearguard, which have always proven to be worthless when it came to fighting the enemy on the other side of the trenches, thinking of the necessities of the war, or were their actions instead motivated by their desire for political dominance?

There have been numerous shootings and assassinations; instances where qualified men were passed over for promotion or assignments, and where corporal punishment and court martials were inflicted on the best soldiers who dared to resist the dictatorship imposed on the ranks by order of Russia, and who protested against the stupid mistakes and the catastrophic campaigns that uselessly squandered lives and blood for objectives that served exclusively political interests.

We have had almost two years of experience with militarization. Ever since the commanding heights of the republic's military affairs were placed in the hands of the usurpers of the so-called aid from Russia, we have experienced nothing but defeats on the military fronts, ruinous blunders on the economic terrain, and loss of prestige in international affairs, and we have also witnessed the demoralization of our soldiers that necessarily led to such disasters as the collapse of the Aragon Front and the subsequent routs in Levante and Estremadura.

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<sup>2</sup> General Krivitzky's revelations concerning Stalin's policy in Spain shed some light on the reasons behind militarization, the creation of the International Brigades, and the whole bureaucratic and military mess inspired by the Russian emissaries. (*The Saturday Evening Post*, April 15, 1939, Philadelphia)

What follows are some excerpts from the report submitted by comrade Gil Roldán, recently appointed Commissar of the Armies of Catalonia, to the Commissar General:

“It can be responsibly stated that our soldiers are not treated adequately.... The soldier is very badly provided for and combat takes place for him on a raw level that is not determined only by the enemy. It is not at all surprising that under these conditions the capacity for self-sacrifice diminishes and the faltering man falters a little more; that is why the need to remedy these problems, whose remedy is within our power, is becoming increasingly more urgent.

“It is very hard to get a man who has not eaten in two days and has no shoes or proper clothing to agree to perform his duty with a meeting or a political speech....”

In a report from the National Subcommittee of the CNT, released in Valencia and dated July 21 of this year [1938], we read the following:

“The Army of Estremadura has been fertile soil for the policy of the communist party, which may be summarized as shameless favoritism in appointments to commanding positions, and proselytism among the troops. Not only were all the higher level commanding positions, from the Army Chief of Staff to the commanders of brigades, domains that were under the control of the communists, but, under pressure from the Party, these same commanders also constantly transferred the personnel under their command in order to satisfy personal ambitions.... Thus, brigades like the 91<sup>st</sup> had six commanders in six months.

“What has been most detrimental to the morale of the soldiers, however, is the tedium and demoralization imposed by two years in the trenches, and their loss of a sense of comradeship with their officers, as a result of their being treated with the old methods of the barracks that quite naturally constituted vulgar insults in light of recent events (as testified to by the events that took place in the 20<sup>th</sup> and the 109<sup>th</sup> brigades). And we must also mention, with respect to those who have been persecuted by the Communist Party, horrible cases of extrajudicial executions, consisting of murders under the pretext that the victims were en route to cross over to the fascist zone to join the enemy. Even soldiers in the rearguard areas have been murdered in this way, more than 50 kilometers from the front, on the pretext that they were defecting to the fascists;<sup>3</sup> it reached the point where uncooperative officers (e.g., a captain from the CNT in the 109<sup>th</sup>, and a lieutenant in the 20<sup>th</sup> brigade) regularly refused to leave their

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<sup>3</sup> Among hundreds of cases, we shall cite the names of two twenty year old men, members of the 66<sup>th</sup> Mixed Brigade, Felipe de Mingo Pérez, from the CNT Food Workers Trade Union of Madrid, and Antonio García Menéndez, from the UGT in Madrid, both of whom had been volunteer combatants since the very beginning of the movement. They were shot on December 14, 1937 in Chinchón.

command posts at night because they felt threatened by assassination and other barbarous attacks.

“Another factor of demoralization has been the private conduct of the high-ranking officers. The commander of the 37<sup>th</sup> Division in Castuera, lieutenant colonel Cabezudo, for example, was accused of leading a sybaritic and luxurious lifestyle, and that he even received civil authorities with his girlfriend sitting on his knee, an idol of luxury in ankle-length skirts. The girlfriends, the parties, and the squabbles between the Chief of Staff of an army and the commander of a division in the same army, all are part of the same night-watch awaiting the catastrophe.

“Naturally, the whole activity of the high command has been reduced to bureaucratic paper-shuffling...”

How did we react to all of this? By shrugging our shoulders, or with a text whose purpose was to conceal contradictions, without any real decision to impose a limit on this state of affairs, or with silence, with the approval of the Government’s policy, with the silencing of all criticism, with the abdication of all revolutionary identity, ready to say that the persecutors are right to persecute their victims, and that those who are leading us to defeat are right as opposed to those who want to prevent this from happening, that those who are strangling the revolution are on the side of right against those who want to defend it?

*We could not put up with this state of affairs for much longer and we appealed to the libertarian rank and file militants to resolve this problem and to show the way forward. The Peninsular Committee of the FAI, beginning in the summer of 1937, sent fraternal notes to the National Committee of the CNT whose purpose was, since we had left the political initiative to the confederal organization, to convince the latter to spearhead a sharp turn in the direction of recovering our identity in order to slow down the dizzying collapse of revolutionary Spain as much as possible. We must say that our efforts in that regard were not crowned with success and our disagreements in our daily discussions concerning our collective conduct became more inflamed, and finally reached the point where it was impossible for us to find any common ground for a joint orientation, a single assessment and a single solution for the diverse problems of the war, the economy, domestic and foreign policy, etc. We sincerely believed that this Plenum would have the virtue of unifying the libertarian movement on the only possible basis, the defense of the movement itself, in order to always have an invincible instrument at the service of the war and of the revolution.<sup>4</sup> Although we were the main protagonists in this war and its first organizers, the militarization of the militias and the creation of the army and the commissariat have deprived us of all effective influence over the course of the conflict. From the time of the Prieto-Negrín government, and then under Negrín alone,*

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<sup>4</sup> Vain illusions. After almost fifteen days of exhausting discussions, the policy of the Government of Victory was barely mentioned in a few paragraphs of the resolutions that were adopted out of boredom. A few minor concessions to our viewpoints on paper did not lead to any practical modifications in practice. Those who claimed to represent the great Spanish trade union have successfully kept it chained to the triumphal chariot of Dr. Negrín, even after the defeat.

*our expulsion from the decision making process of the war was almost absolute. Despite the fact that our forces accounted for forty percent of the front line troops, we did not even have five percent of the commanding positions, and the proportion was no different in the Commissariat, not to mention the fact that all military resources are in the hands of people who are more concerned with their own party than with the common cause.*

In order to blind us to these facts, however, it is said that we are conquering positions, and that we are better off than before. Besides the error implied by assuming that appointments to a handful of commanding positions, the achievement of a few promotions, or the right to appoint certain commissars, which are utterly incapable of influencing the larger course of events, can be identified with “conquering positions”, it is also false from the numerical point of view, for the indisputable predominance we once exercised in the command over the conduct of the war against fascism has since become a matter of mere cannon fodder. Our share of commanding positions and commissars is derisory compared to our popular support and the number of our comrades fighting at the fronts.

#### Communist Blackmail

*Once Russian aid became an factor of financial speculation, the Communist Party immediately set to work recruiting in the ranks of the army and among the forces of public order, corrupting persons with low moral standards, promising promotions to the hesitant and implementing a program of favoritism for those who joined the Party. This is why the army is still not a real army. It is a soulless mob whose members are kept in some sort of order by means of terroristic methods that are unprecedented in Spain, this very same Spain that had experienced the Inquisition and the most despotic military and civilian dictatorships. Assassinations, imprisonment, being passed over for promotions, penalties that include corporal punishment,<sup>5</sup> persecutions, and all the other methods that have been inflicted on the men of the libertarian movement and other organizations, men abandoned to their fate, without any effective efforts having been made in their defense or in solidarity with the victims.*

Russian aid therefore became the main factor of demoralization and defeat, because it was used to destroy the popular roots of our war and to suffocate the revolutionary spirit that inspired it.

The Peninsular Committee of the FAI has repeatedly called attention to the danger posed, to the revolution and to the war effort, by the Communist Party, which is composed for the most part of dubious elements, former members of the Spanish

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<sup>5</sup> Taking advantage of a 24-hour informal truce, some soldiers from the 31<sup>st</sup> Mixed Brigade went to Madrid for a few hours to visit their families on January 2, 1938. When they returned to their units they were arrested, their heads were shaved and they were forced to march down the main street of El Vellón (near Madrid) wearing signs around their necks announcing their offense, escorted by armed soldiers. The people of the town were outraged, and two men who protested against this disgraceful spectacle, which was so unworthy of the so-called republican regime, said that the offensive signs should be hung around the necks of those who ordered their use. For this crime, the two men were arrested and immediately shot by a firing squad, without any legal formalities. One of them was known as “El Chato”, a member of the Construction Workers Trade Union of the CNT, and the other was named Pedro Calvo, who was a member of the Metal Workers Trade Union of the UGT. They died with their fists in the air, shouting “Viva la República!”

Military Union [Unión Militar Española] and right wing organizations, or even just ordinary profiteers [caballeros de industria], without any revolutionary background at all, who could not care less about the future of Spain. This party is more motley in its composition and more obscure in its origins than any other party in Spain. It does not stand for a doctrine, a guide for action, a direction to take; it stands for the pillage of the public revenue for private ends, and the exploitation of an infamous case of blackmail.

*When Aragon was invaded by communist divisions to pave the way for the invasion of that territory and Catalonia by Franco's divisions, we publicly expressed our protest against Lister's crimes, depredations and counterrevolutionary actions. We published a report by the Aragon Regional Federation of the CNT that highlighted the economic reconstruction carried out by the peasants, which was brutally and arbitrarily wiped out by the Muscovite invaders.*<sup>6</sup>

A policy of favoritism and unmerited promotions destroyed the army of the monarchy. This same policy in the people's army has up until now prevented this army from being in any condition to victoriously confront the enemy.

*The Communist Party gained control over the army and over all the major military-related political and economic institutions of loyalist Spain for the purpose of recruitment, for planning a coup d'état, and for establishing a dictatorship, but it has not been able to build an apparatus that can resist the fascists. The whole mechanism of the Party is oriented towards subduing the home front, and reinforcing its positions against the will of the people themselves, rather than achieving victory over the enemy. And it is doing this with the silent acquiescence of the libertarian movement, which, as I have constantly pointed out, has deviated from its specific function by handing over all of its initiative to its Superior Committees. The promotions granted to communist commanding officers presented a scandalous spectacle. All at once, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division granted unmerited promotions for meritorious conduct to 49 lieutenants, and the 46<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> Divisions, and others, did likewise.*

*In the 27<sup>th</sup> Division, over a period of fifteen days (May 1938, D.O.N. No. III, 120, 122), 1,148 promotions were awarded to corporals, sergeants, lieutenants and captains. This is how the commanding officers for the non-communist divisions were trained.*

*With such commanders, operating in accordance with the kind of guidelines that have received priority consideration in the conduct of the war, it is not at all surprising that, for example, the 38<sup>th</sup> Mixed Brigade suffered 1,100 casualties recently in an absurd operation, or that the attempts to cross the Segre ended in the destruction of two battalions of the 153<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, which was originally a libertarian unit, while the commanding officer in that sector, a communist, was not disciplined for the defective planning that preceded these operations. This exemption from punishment, however, is nothing compared to the case of Lieutenant Colonel Gallo, the chief of staff of an army corps, who*

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<sup>6</sup> Having lost all our documentation, there is very little in the way of concrete data that we can provide with regard to the superlative accomplishments of the agrarian collectives in Aragon, concerning their experiences and the results they obtained. These enterprises are beyond all praise, and even if there were no other reasons to justify our strangled revolution, they alone would be enough, and they will survive in the memories of those who experienced them.



*fled to France, leaving his troops behind, and then returned to Spain to accept an offer of a high level military position.*

The following cases are also extremely eloquent testimonies:

General Sarabia, who led the Army of Levante to defeat, instead of being put on trial, was granted the “command” over the Armies of Catalonia.

Colonel Antonio P. Cerdón, the current Undersecretary of the Army, a graduate of the Military Academy, demonstrated his lack of ability in the headquarters of the Operations Section of the General Staff and was censured for incompetence, but was subsequently offered the position he now holds.

Colonel Ricardo Burillo, who was appointed Chief of Staff of the Army of Extremadura in November 1937, was incapable of implementing any measures to reorganize his forces, having concerned himself exclusively with furthering the interests of his party. After eight months under his command, the Army of Extremadura was swept away by the enemy offensive in that sector and in a matter of a few days we lost 1,200 square kilometers of territory. Instead of being put on trial as responsible for this disaster or in order to determine the extent to which he may have been responsible, he was transferred to the staff of the Ministry of the Interior.

Lieutenant Colonel Trueba was on the verge of being shot for his role in the operations at the Zuera Nature Preserve, in September 1937, because of his manifest incompetence. He was deprived of command over his unit, but the machinations of his party allowed him to once again occupy positions of command, and he currently commands a unit in the Tenth Army Corps.

Here is the testimony of the Assistant Commissar General of the Army, comrade González Inestal, taken from a report addressed to the confederal organization, dated September 7 of this year [1938]:

“A policy of arbitrary promotions is being implemented. Since the Teruel campaign, communist elements have been promoted along with others who are members of certain cliques. On the other hand, however, elements of proven ability and diligence have been systematically passed over for promotions. Examples: Matilla, Guarner, Casado and many others who are not associated with these cliques. There is the case of a lieutenant from the CNT who serves with the General Staff, who was proposed, along with various other persons, for promotion. All of them got their promotions except him. This comrade, who was furthermore very enthusiastic, diligent and competent, was awarded the medal of duty.”

The same report discusses the “monopoly” of high level commanding positions held by the communists in the armies of the Catalan zone, and offers as evidence the Armies of the Ebro, under Modesto, the Fifth Army Corps, under Lister, and the Fifteenth under Tagüeña, the Twelfth under Etelvino Vega, the Eighteenth under del Barrio, and the Eleventh under Galán.

*It may be observed, however, that it did no good for the 26<sup>th</sup> Division to have fought most effectively and to have withdrawn in such good order following the final collapse of the Eastern Army Group, nor was Sanz rewarded for having been its commander.*

#### Extrajudicial executions

In all the units of the army, despite the fact, as we have pointed out, that we account for 40 percent of the soldiers, party cells have been operating a network of activities that sow discontent and mistrust among the soldiers and officers. We, who do not support the idea of a party-army, but of a well organized and carefully coordinated instrument for liberating the country, have rejected, and have tried to block the implementation of, the idea of the formation of our own groups within the army to control it and to struggle to counteract all kinds of ulterior maneuvers and extra-legal actions. We are convinced, however, that on this terrain our activity would be unequaled, because we can count on the experience of many years of revolutionary conspiracy and we have the bravest and most self-sacrificing men on our side.

*The Commissar appointed to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division, Máximo de Gracia, presented to the Ministry of Defense and to the Commissariat General of the Army a long report, dated June 25, 1938, concerning the activities of the communists in that division when it was in the Pyrenees, attributing the final collapse to their machinations. The report speaks of assassinations, the threat of assassination faced by non-communist officers and soldiers, the opening of letters, immoral behavior, etc. Nothing has been done to date to determine who is responsible for these activities. The report states, for example:*

“In my conclusions, my report reaches its culmination with considerations that are, in my view, the fruits of honest experience. If these activities are not held in check by those who should use their authority to ward off the dangers that threaten us, it will not be long before fate provides us with scenes of violence that could lead to inflamed passions that will be disastrous for the goals of our war.... The events that took place in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division are so serious that they should be closely scrutinized by the authorities, with objective impartiality, as the consequences of a political management that with one hand extends its support to the Popular Front, and with the other picks fruit that, because it is not ripe, is leading us to the terrible conclusion of conditions of decomposition that threaten the unity of the army which, to fight the enemy, according to the correct slogan of the Head of State, needs an unbreakable unity and respect for all the ideologies that compose the anti-fascism of the Popular Front.”

*We are still waiting for a decision by the Government and for the disciplinary measures that are needed to remedy the evils exposed in the report quoted above. It must be said that numerous groups of comrades from the CNT have also made serious accusations with respect to the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division, accusations that corroborate, clarify and amplify the abuses exposed by the socialist, Máximo de Gracia.*

From a report signed by a group of officers from the same Division, held in confinement at the Figueras fortress, dated July 13, 1938, we excerpt the following passage:

“For belonging to the CNT, the Second Lieutenant of the Ammunition Section of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Brigade was shot in the back, and the captain of the same unit, Pedro Ucar, along with others, was constantly persecuted for the same reason. Hatred was unleashed against the elements of the Spanish Socialist Workers Party and the CNT. During the period when the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division was stationed in the Pyrenees, in one incident a lieutenant from the *carabineros* was shot by the current commander of the 287<sup>th</sup> Battalion because he did not know the whereabouts of his unit, and on other occasions various individuals from the 21<sup>st</sup> Brigade were shot without trial or formal proceedings (a grave accusation that can be confirmed by the declarations of soldiers who are currently serving in the brigade), a tactic that would have been employed against the officers from the 102<sup>nd</sup> Brigade if they had reported as ordered to the Divisional Headquarters.”

It was the Commissar, Máximo de Gracia, who prevented these officers from reporting as ordered to Divisional Headquarters; he had a premonition that made him recommend to these comrades that they should disobey the order in order not to sacrifice themselves in vain.

Our organizations are aware of many such incidents. We expect, however, that they will respond in a worthy manner in defense of the life and the dignity of the soldiers.

*Lieutenant José Fortuny, from the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division, 72<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, 286<sup>th</sup> Battalion, a member of the CNT and the Libertarian Youth, says, in a declaration of which we have obtained a copy:*

“After I had spent about a month performing the duties to which I had been assigned, I went with lieutenant A. Gallardo to a meeting with the Commissar, who informed us that we needed, so he said, to join the Communist Party, which we vehemently refused to do, and since then life has become impossible for us in that unit. Once again we were invited to join the Party, and we persisted in our refusal. Then we were promised that if we joined the Party, we would get positions as officers on the General Staff, and we refused....”

In the same declaration, the deprivations and persecutions to which the officers who belong to our organization are subjected for refusing to abandon the CNT and the Libertarian Youth to join the Communist Party are described. The report mentions the names of certain officers who belonged to the ‘Esquerra’ and the republican parties who, with less personal valor than our comrades, had to join the Communist Party in order to avoid being passed over for promotions, harrassed and persecuted.

*The following passage is taken from the report submitted by Captain Pedro Ucar, of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Brigade:*

“Finally, they organized a small Cheka. The leader of this party of assassins is lieutenant Moisés García. This person has no authority whatsoever and he was the one who assassinated comrade Puertas, a second lieutenant who belonged to our organization. He was a good comrade,

from Campo (Huesca), whose only crime was to have been a consummate anarchist. Upon having been informed of what took place I sought an explanation from the Commissar of the Brigade, who told me that he was sure that he had been shot for attempting to desert to the enemy. I was not satisfied by this explanation, however, so I undertook my own investigation and I discovered that his execution had taken place in an automobile.

“This Moisés García, boss of the Cheka, shot him twice in the temple while saying to him: ‘Take this, asshole, so you won’t make any more trouble.’ This took place on the highway from Ainsa to Bielsa, on April 6 or 7. His body was buried in La Fortunada, a small village in the Valley of Bielsa. A good witness with respect to this crime is the Company Commissar, Augusto Sánchez, since the killer himself told him all about it...”

Comrade Pedro Ucar’s account is just one of many such cases. This procedure is all too common for it to go unpunished, and for us, those of us who are not at the front, but who nonetheless have a mission to perform, it is unthinkable that we should just put our hands in our pockets and cooperate with the murderers of our comrades and abandon those who are the authentic base of our movement to their fates.

*The sinister achievements of communist policy in the 43<sup>rd</sup> Division are confirmed by the captains of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, Francisco Santos Molina, Francisco Gálvez Medina, Eusebio Llorente Sala, and Agustín Gómez Núñez, all of whom are members of the CNT.*

Comrade Carrillo, in a report to the Defense Section of the Regional Committee of the CNT of Catalonia, states as follows:

“I will tell you about the events that took place on the Aragon Front on April 13, at 7:00 p.m. (1938). A company from the 26<sup>th</sup> Division, some 80 men serving under four officers, while proceeding down the highway at Doncella, when it was passing by the base of the Disciplinary Battalion of the Eleventh Army Corps was invited by some persons under the order of the commander of the base, Palacios, the commander of the Disciplinary Battalion, to stop at the base so that the commander could have a few words with company’s officers.

“Upon arriving at the base, the officers were invited to the office of the commander, and upon entering his office they were disarmed, so that the commander could assemble the soldiers of their company and make them listen to a crude and vulgar speech. Then the company was ordered to come forward five at a time and surrender their weapons. Then he told the soldiers that they could continue on their way to their base. A sergeant of the company, seeing that the officers of the company were not leaving with them, asked the commander of the Disciplinary Battalion if they were being held at his orders and the commander told him that he should take command of the company until it returned to its base. On April 14, 1938, at four or five in the morning, the officers, three lieutenants and a

Commissar, were stood up in front of a firing squad without any judicial proceedings under military law, and it is assumed that their only crime was to belong to the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. On the next day the Commissar of the 26<sup>th</sup> Division contacted the Disciplinary Battalion by telephone to inquire about the status of the detainees, and the commander told him that they had been found guilty by a summary council of war and that Galán acted as counsel for the defense.

*This comrade says that there was no such council of war, and that the officers were shot for belonging to the 26<sup>th</sup> Division.*

*Comrade Baztán, a militant from the Center Region, has written a report on the operations carried out in the Montes Universales, in which the 70<sup>th</sup> Mixed Brigade and other forces participated. These units were under heavy pressure and a company was sent to reinforce one of their positions, under the command of captain Francisco Montes Manchón, a communist, who was ordered to discreetly insinuate his men into the position on the front line so that they would not be observed by the enemy. This captain led his men in single file, ignoring his orders. When this company of reinforcements arrived at its destination, the Commissar of the battalion of the 70<sup>th</sup> Brigade, comrade José Gómez Álvarez, was making a speech to the soldiers to encourage them to fight heroically. Captain Francisco Montes shot him in the back, killing him and a soldier, and wounding a corporal from the same Brigade, and then loudly berated the officers for being members of the CNT [confederales] (testimony endorsed by the senior officer of the battalion, Ramón Poveda). This report, which contains many other interesting facts, bears the date of August 18 [1938].*

We could easily mention and provide documentation for a thousand cases like the ones that we have related here and whose victims have preferentially been comrades from the CNT, the FAI and the Libertarian Youth.

These facts are not unknown to either the National Committee of the CNT or the Peninsular Committee of the Libertarian Youth. The current Minister of Public Instruction, comrade Segundo Blanco, submitted a report on March 25, 1938 to the Minister of Defense in the name of the Defense Section of the National Committee of the CNT, in which he exposes a number of scandalous incidents and is obviously referring to Dr. Negrín when he says, "Our warning is serious and our readiness to see to it that justice is done is firmly categorical..." We do not know just how serious and categorical this position on the crimes committed with impunity at the front really was. We do know, however, that acts of the same kind are still being committed and that up until now no one has been punished for committing them. And the signatory of this report exposing communist criminality is himself a member of the Government that has tolerated and continues to tolerate this criminality, when it has not fostered it by way of its Ministries, its Russian Advisors and its fanatical commanders.

*The report we just mentioned also describes a meeting of communist cells held in Torralba de Aragon, on March 16, 1938, with the names of the attendees and a summary of their directives to violently eliminate all who oppose the implementation of the Party's*

*plans. The commander of the 142<sup>nd</sup> Brigade, A. Merino, summarizes the views of those who attended this meeting with the following words: "Whoever gets in the way, in a visit to the trenches or to the workplace, is looking for a bullet and he will find it. Or, you put him behind barbed wire, and then four bullets for desertion and we achieve the same result or even better".*

*Those responsible for the assassination of the political delegate of the radio company of the 141<sup>st</sup> Mixed Brigade, José Meca Cazorla, and of another soldier from the same unit, José Hervás Soler, have yet to be brought to justice. Nor have the murderers of the soldier Jaime Trepas, from the same unit, even though the investigation conducted at the initiative of comrade Molina, the Commissar of the Army Corps, provided enough solid clues to expect that the perpetrators of these crimes would be rapidly brought to justice and punished. Proof of the seriousness and soundness of this investigation is the fact that its results were submitted by the Defense Section of the National Committee of the CNT to the Minister of National Defense by the current Minister of Education, Segundo Blanco.*

There is nothing to be gained by extending this macabre account. We may conclude by saying that many active-duty comrades serving at the front are more afraid of being assassinated by their communist allies than they are of dying in battle with the enemy from the other side of the trenches.

*This state of affairs is not just sporadic, but endemic, ever since the agents of Moscow infiltrated the ranks of the army. Collaborating with them, on the pretext that the war renders it necessary, is more than just a mistake, it is madness.<sup>7</sup>*

Proselytism and corruption in the army

You do not have to take our word for it when we talk about the proselytism and the corruption in the army due to the work of the Communist Party, which parades its lack of scruples on every terrain. This is what the unrefuted reports in the hands of our Superior Committees say.

For example, the Health and Hygiene Trade Union of Barcelona tells us in a report dated June 18, 1938, among other serious matters, the following:

*"There is a growing problem in the military hospitals. It is this: the most despicable and vile politics is being practiced; and the patients, our wounded brothers, are its targets. It traffics in their pain and their wounds, and makes their welfare contingent on their political affiliation."*

The same Trade Union reveals how communists are being evacuated from the front for alleged illnesses, and provides evidence that cannot be ignored without harm to the very same confederal organization that tolerates all of this from outside of and within the Government in which it participates.

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<sup>7</sup> In a previous report we presented to an earlier Plenum of Regional Committees of the libertarian movement, we referred specifically to this aspect of the inadvisability of contributing our support to help sustain a government that was necessarily fatal for the war effort and for the revolution.

Member Number 13653 of the Madrid Socialist Organization says, in a long report on party activities in the army and the decomposition of the army due to the prevailing climate of immorality and terror:

“In the Headquarters (of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Mixed Brigade, February 1937), a cell was formed that determined the ways and means to place members of the Communist Party in all the decisive positions involving command or planning.

“We clearly recall that shortly after the operations at Brunete, these elements attended a meeting in order to inflict severe punishment—so they said—on several of their own group for the crime of having obtained safe-conduct passes and the means of escape for the Marquis of Fontalba who was being held in the Escorial, but at the meeting everything remained mysteriously concealed, since it could be ascertained, and the meeting proved it, that all of them were implicated in these crimes and this opportune silence was maintained by way of a sharing out of the loot that was paid as ransom....”

*In the same report we see how an officer, the commander of a Brigade, the 33<sup>rd</sup>, was relieved of his command because he did not want to join the Communist Party, and how the Party replaced him with a semi-fascist, Cabezas, a man who was exposed as such and as a personal friend of Queipo del Llano and of Doval by the soldiers themselves, without any measures being taken to prevent the fate of thousands of men from being placed in such dubious hands....*

The Regional Committees of the CNT and of the FAI of Catalonia (Defense Section) sent a well-documented report on party activities in army camps and bases to the Minister of National Defense, dated October 2, 1937, without getting any response.

This report exposes instances of proselytism and the machinations of the Communist Party that can lead to no other result than the demoralization and decomposition of the ranks....

*Of the 19 transport battalions that currently exist, ten or twelve are in the hands of communist commanders, and only one or two are under the command of our comrades, despite the fact that 70% or 80% of the personnel of these battalions is composed of members of the CNT and the FAI. And we took advantage of the occasion to mention the following inexplicable wage scales: in the army they pay 15 pesetas, in the air force 12, in the carabineros 25 and in the Undersecretariat of Munitions 30, for the same work.*

Our organizations also possess the reports of comrade Baztán submitted a few months ago [summer 1938], based on his tours of the fronts in Levante and the Center. In them you will also find abundant evidence to support our allegations.

Party criminality is not just restricted to the lower-level officers, it is also manifested higher up, in the superior commands.

We read in a report from the Secretary of the Defense Section of the Regional Committee of Catalonia, dated June 11, 1938, that the comrades

“... are becoming disillusioned with our organization, because it leaves them defenseless and at the mercy of the Communist Party and because they do not see us doing anything effective to help them; the demoralization of the soldiers, constantly subjected to pressure to join the Communist Party, to contribute to Red Aid, and so on.... Internal operations in the army must be fundamentally overhauled. There must be a sweeping purge of all commanding positions, the SIM must be purged, the tribunals, the medical sections, the radio sections, the transport sections, the engineers, the general staffs of the Army Corps and of several divisions, all must be purged; the problem of the Commissariat must be resolved, etc. And above all we must prevent our comrades from being persecuted, and turned into grist for the mills of political maneuvers and constantly victimized by every kind of outrage....”

It is not a lack of specific revelations, it is not unawareness of the truth on the part of the Superior Committees of our organizations that explains why nothing has been done to rectify the current state of affairs. The Committees of our organizations know what is going on. Their unanimity of opinion therefore seems natural and their response, the only possible one. We have not, however, even been able to agree with respect to the urgent need for defending the lives of our militants at the front and behind the lines.

*In a well written and thoroughly documented report on the situation of the Army of the East, submitted by an officer serving with the 26<sup>th</sup> Division, after an abundance of details concerning the military situation and the condition of the soldiers' morale, and after explaining the reason for so many military defeats and disasters, we are warned in the following terms:*

“We think that one can, and one must, demand respect and recognition of the value that each person represents, and our movement, both with regard to its individual members as well as its organization, must demand and impose this respect if we are to prevent its men from becoming dispirited and discouraged because they are not supported by the libertarian movement, support to which they are entitled and which must not be renounced, regardless of the excuse, no matter how critical the situation may be and however many obstacles stand in the way of the accomplishment of their tasks as men of responsibility....”

At this time we have already observed certain cases of our comrades who, without any attempt on the part of the organization to defend them, cornered in their positions at the front line, have chosen to accept the membership card of the Communist Party. This seems to us to be a very serious symptom.

Our comrades have the impression that no one cares about them, that the sinister policies of the Communist Party have been given free rein. And we are not talking about just a few cases, but of thousands and thousands of comrades who confess that they are more afraid of being assassinated by the enemies on their side of the trenches than of being killed in battle with the enemies from the other side.



The Peninsular Committee of the FAI has attempted to provide an active and energetic defense of our comrades, and has exposed specific cases but has not succeeded in obtaining the necessary support and interest from the other Superior Committees for engaging in decisive joint action. The time came, however, when toleration could no longer be anything but complicity and the Peninsular Committee resolved to work on its own account, exposing the real situation of the militants and calling upon them to defend themselves. This was the purpose of several pamphlets we distributed to the anarchist militants. And it is our aim to appeal to them to prevent them from being blinded to what is really happening.

We also sent a documented report, dated August 20, 1938, to the Head of State in which we emphasized the disastrous results of the military policy that is currently being implemented, and in which we also pointed to the remedies for rectifying the situation, calling for a fundamental change in all the arbitrary and criminal procedures that are currently being practiced.

Furthermore, the National Committee of the CNT itself said, in a letter to Dr. Negrín dated May 14, 1938, that

“... it will eventually become impossible to preserve the collaboration of all anti-fascists unless the constantly growing power of one faction over the others is curtailed, since this power causes that faction to lose its head, and to believe that it can single-handedly control the situation, and this will unleash the violent clash that will shatter anti-fascist unity”.

The National Committee therefore recognizes the gravity of the situation, and has expressed its alarm to the Head of State. So this is not an isolated opinion of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI. It is just that we, as in the past, believe that the truth known by the National Committee of the CNT, which leads the latter to work in a particular manner, must also be known by the rank and file militants, so that they will be the determining factor in resolving affairs of such great importance.

We have often heard comrades attribute a special gift to responsibility: ‘If the comrades knew the truth about what is going on, the continuation of the war would be impossible.’ Frederick the Great of Prussia was of the same opinion: ‘If my soldiers were to learn how to read, no one would be left in the ranks.’ No, we are aware of the situation and we do not turn our backs on the conflict. And we are not made up of different stuff than the comrades who are fighting at the front or working behind the lines. We have the common denominator of human nature. If the National Committee of the CNT knows the real situation and does not abandon its post, there is no reason to think that the rank and file militants would do anything different. However, we have the advantage of possible joint action to remedy the disasters caused by the terrible leadership of the war, which would allow us to carry on with the conflict, not as we have until now, without any direction, but with guarantees of efficacy and victory.

The Secretary of the Defense Section of the National Committee of the CNT submitted a report to the National Committee, dated July 29 [1938], concerning political

propaganda in the army. We agree with its contents and we wish to point out that we are not the only people who have turned the weapons of criticism on the current leadership of the war. A comrade as competent as Miguel Yoldi writes:

“It is depressing to note the scorn with which the officers are treated who, although not lacking the indispensable professional qualities and moral stature needed for successful operations, are not counted among those who, due to a lack of intelligence and personal valor, find in the deceitfulness and conformism inherent to the opportunism of politics, sinecures, distinction and respect.... We could compile a whole book listing the names of intelligent men who have desk jobs or honorary positions who are refractory to party slogans.”

*This report then describes the disastrous campaign at Brunete as “an eminently political operation, not a military one”. We suffered 25,000 casualties in that campaign without attaining a single strategic objective, all for the purpose of saving the Government which had just expelled the trade unions from the cabinet. It was clear from the very beginning that the problematic Brunete campaign was the responsibility of a certain political fraction, the savior of Spain. The same party-based criteria prevailed over the operations on the Aragon Front in mid-1937, and a new mayor of Zaragoza was appointed before that offensive even began.*

“It would be idle to enumerate more instances” [the report continues], “to show that the army has been used on occasion as a political weapon in the service of politics to the detriment of the war itself.... The army is more suffused with party politics than ever before, and our soldiers and officers will never display the bravery that we can expect from them and of which we know they are capable as long as the use of their qualities is subject to a certain political leadership that persists, from the directive institutions of the war, in fostering influence-peddling and viewing the problems of the war from its own political perspective.

“And to top it all off, there is the case of the Army of Extremadura, whose commander in chief was exclusively devoted to recruiting party members and allocating commanding positions without any consideration of the qualities of the men involved, relegating training, defensive preparations and the competence of the officers to a secondary level.... Capricious removal of officers, abuses and the subjection of military units to party interests were the standard conduct of this commander, which led to the decomposition of the army....”

We also agree with this final assessment:

“These things are so common, and so serious, due to the consequences that they entail, that for us to remain silent about them and even for the Government to ignore them, is criminal....”

The slogan of resistance.

We shall now speak a little about this resistance, of the slogan of perpetual resistance.

It is not we, the anarchists, who will have to provide an accounting, not even when the war is over, for our actions. But we do not want to be guilty of approving a slogan that says nothing or that is not practiced by those who preach it, either.

We do not want to go into details about whether those who talk about resisting the enemy will effectively resist to the end, or whether they only say this as long as they have an airplane at their disposal, nor do we want to explain our legitimate doubts concerning the sincerity of certain sectors when they preach resistance 'a outrance', while they set aside hundreds of millions of pesetas for settling exiles in America. We do not want to ascertain whether those who are most lavish in their praise for resistance already have their families and their liquid assets in foreign countries, nor do we even want to know if the authors of this hoax have succeeded in making certain arrangements in the suites of European embassies that are inconsistent with this famous resistance to the end. But the policy of resistance imposes some preconditions that we cannot remain silent about and concerning which the view of our militants who are fighting and dying must not be obscured with rhetorical hot air.

1. To resist the Italo-German powers that are providing weapons, technicians, raw materials and men to the enemy, we need a possibility for economic support. However, the two long years that we have fought this war, and the concentration of the anti-fascist population in the loyalist zones, have absolutely exhausted all the resources of our country. We therefore do not possess what is necessary to subsist economically and to feed, with every imaginable restriction, the population of our territory. Hunger is beginning to make itself felt in a most disturbing manner and everything points to the fact that our difficulties will reach such a pitch this winter that it will be very hard to even continue the war. Foreign aid, after our own financial reserves have been depleted, is only a hypothesis, and with a hypothesis we cannot build the framework of a resistance that must also be a physical resistance, the resistance of the population that is called upon to make sacrifices.
2. To resist we also need weapons, or the means and the raw materials that are indispensable for their manufacture. We do not have the weapons or the ammunition for a long campaign nor do we have factories or raw materials to supply our needs in this respect. The interruption of the more or less clandestine trafficking in arms and ammunition destined for loyalist Spain, with respect to this minimum amount that arrives in our hands, may take on the contours of an irreparable and immediate catastrophe. There is no guarantee at all that we could lay the foundations for this resistance that is so fervently praised, that we could consolidate this resistance in a state of affairs that would offer us secure perspectives.
3. *Nothing is known about whether or not there is any gold left in the reserves of the Bank of Spain. But we will point out one fact that speaks quite eloquently: Russia has acquired the textiles and other products stockpiled in Catalonia, products worth hundreds of millions of pesetas, and there is a well-founded suspicion that*

*these acquisitions serve the purpose of guarantees of payment. The financial policy of the Government of the Republic has been implemented, ever since the outbreak of the war, in an atmosphere of secrecy that is historically unprecedented, even in the regimes of imperialist despotism. We know absolutely nothing—and we assume that this is also the case for all the political parties that participate in public affairs—about what is going on with our finances, or even their approximate status. And in order to commit ourselves without any objections to a slogan of absolute resistance, the first thing that we would have to know and examine is our own financial situation. With our finances in a state of bankruptcy, without gold, our commercial credit, already weakened by the hostility of the fascist-sympathizing countries of the world, has come to an end, and with it so have our possibilities of obtaining products from foreign countries.*<sup>8</sup>

4. *The communist policy of seeking predominance, focused more on domestic rule than on the achievement of effective victories against the enemy, has brought us to this situation in which we cannot count on an organized army, and in which we do not have military commanders capable of performing the great mission that is incumbent upon them in this tragic hour. Having sown demoralization and disorientation in the ranks of the combatants by means of continuous injustices and by abuses and outrages that have become the rule, to the detriment of those who do not have the membership card of the Russian agents, at this juncture the only organized army we possess is in the pages of the “Gaceta”. We shall merely point out one fact: while extraordinary contingents have been organized and equipped with the most modern arms for the services of public order—carabineros, security corps—the Catalan zone does not have any reserve forces for its army, which leads us to fear that a new enemy breakthrough at the front, without any reinforcements to contain it, could very well mean the end of the war.*<sup>9</sup>

The Commissar of the Army Corps of the Catalan zone submitted a long report, dated August 25 [1938], to the Commissar General of the Army, from which we shall extract the following opinion and this exhortation suffused with human feeling and realism:

“The parties and organizations should basically concern themselves with solving the problems of supplying food and other necessities to the civil-

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<sup>8</sup> It was because we were viewed as a factor of secondary importance that October 1934 turned into a disaster; because it was thought that the war could be fought without us, without our enthusiastic support and regardless of our suggestions and observations, the war led straight to catastrophe. There are politicians, governments and methods that are used up in action. And the Negrín government was more than just worn out when it was born, it was rotten. What we knew as a result of a close examination of the situation, was discerned by the people, who considered the Negrín team to be a team of thieves of the public treasury, responsible for a policy of irrational and irresponsible murders. In any event, even for the continuation of their senseless policy, they would have to get rid of these men who were outstanding only for their lack of seriousness, their lack of good sense, their ineptitude, and their *nouveau riche* spending sprees. But the political orientation, in its international as well as its domestic dimensions, would also have to be changed, and to carry out this change men of a different kind of character, a different tradition and a different kind of prestige were necessary.

<sup>9</sup> In the *Boletín del militante* of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, we have insisted on various occasions on this serious fact of the absence of any reserve forces. Events would soon definitively demonstrate that our fears were to be confirmed to the letter and would even be surpassed in reality.

ian population. The present lamentable state of organization has deep repercussions on the front. The soldiers think that their loved ones at home are hungry and this undermines their morale...”

Unless this problem is solved, one cannot, and one must not, blindly lead this great people to this so-called policy of resistance, whose weakness we have indicated. Real supporters of the idea that the struggle must continue until victory, we emphasize the previous points to indicate that it is precisely those who are calling for resistance ‘a outrance’ who are not creating the necessary conditions for this resistance to be possible.

It is our desire that, at least among our militants, cured of their terror by the crucible of the struggle, a defeatist slogan like “resistance” plain and simple should not attain the category of myth, and, were they to confer too much credit to those who espouse it, they would therefore fail to take advantage of the opportunity to impose those absolutely necessary changes that our cause demands so that the war will end in a satisfactory way.

Our situation must improve and will improve, but only on the condition that we do not deliver ourselves, blindfolded, into the hands of those who, due to a lack of ability and efficient managerial skills, are seeking to deceive us with fairy tales.

The Russian advisors

One of the most serious misfortunes that have undermined the effective leadership of our war effort was the invasion of the so-called military technicians or advisors from Russia. They are utterly unfamiliar with the terrain, their level of military knowledge is no greater than that of a French or German lieutenant, and their ideas are more political than technical. They are far from being superior to our average career military officers, and none of these advisors can compare with our more advanced officers.

Among the reports of our Investigation Sections [Secciones de información], we may read the following:

“An air force officer [name omitted to protect his identity], as a result of the conduct of the operations that led to the loss of Teruel, submitted an exposé in which he proved that the deliberate failure to use our air force during those operations could be qualified as treason. This exposé was received by Prieto, who then sent it to a military commission which, before making any attempt to obtain extensive information about the air force commanders, ruled that the failure to use our air force in those operations was due to orders sent by the Russian advisors embedded in the air force high command. Our informant, in view of the fact that there were enough operational planes for engaging in the operations at Teruel, believes that the communists, using the war for their own political ends, were trying to bring about the military disaster that would discredit the Minister of War and would lead to the precipitous fall of Prieto.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Prieto eventually came to view Russian meddling as a nuisance, and it was claimed that he was responsible for certain proposals to oppose this pernicious interference. This does not exempt him from responsibility for having

With respect to the air force command structure and how it became subservient to a policy that had nothing to do with the war, we shall cite one of the cases with which we were personally acquainted. Forces from the Carlos Marx Division successfully overran and seized the Church of Santa Quiteria, a strategic position from which Almudevar could be dominated, and whose possession made possible an immediate extension of the Aragon Front. The success of the initial operation promised to be merely the prelude to subsequent brilliant military victories.

The enemy was entirely aware of the importance of the loss, and made preparations to retake the church regardless of the cost, with the help of its air force, artillery and shock troops. An appeal was made to our air force to come to the support of the troops who had occupied the church. Because this matter involved a victory won by a communist-oriented military unit, this support was taken for granted. However, the air force planes that departed from Sariñena were diverted to Valencia, in accordance with the orders they received en route. The Church of Santa Quiteria had to be evacuated. We recall the indignation of the communist soldiers in the Carlos Marx column. In response to our complaints, the Russian Consul Antonov Ovseyenko declared to us that the Russian commander of the planes who had refused to allow them to be sent to the aid of the defenders of the church had been shot; but this was not true.

The truth is that the significance of the storming of Santa Quiteria and the operations that it immediately made possible would have constituted a resounding victory for the combatants on the Aragon Front, because then they would have been able to reinforce certain political positions that were the targets of an attack that was even then being planned.

The conduct of the war has been put into the hands of these Russian emissaries. Our High Commands and General Staffs have almost been reduced to just following their orders. And the succession of defeats, and the pointless waste of human lives, have not yet put an end to this foreign intervention in our war. How long do we have to wait before this element of corrosion and defeat is stopped?

The Party interests that were created and continue to develop on the basis of the blackmail of Russian aid are so vast and so decisive that any change in the conduct of the war instantaneously also presupposes the precipitous and definitive fall of a whole political framework whose totalitarian tendency is repugnant to the people of Spain.

No one is more grateful than us for, and no one is more unsparing their recognition of, the help that has been offered to us by non-Spaniards. But the case of Russian aid is not help in that sense, it is a business deal from the point of view of arms sales, and it is an intolerable mortgage on the future finances of Spain from a political point of view. We can abide by the business deals, in which Russia has as much interest as loyalist Spain, but the mortgage on Spain's future cannot continue, because Russia has

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made Russian predominance possible because of his inveterate hatred for Largo Caballero, for Catalonia, and for anyone and anything that did not obey him.

taken payment in gold for everything that it has sent us, without any need for haggling or negotiations about price. We have paid everything that has been demanded from us. Maybe we paid a hundred pesetas for something that was only worth ten. But that is another question.

The Russian advisors do not have the technical qualities required to conduct our war, since we have loyal Spanish officers who could give good lessons in tactics and strategy to the generals, colonels, majors, and all the rest of them sent by Stalin to teach us how to win battles, like the battles of Brunete and Teruel, or the routs of the Armies of the East, Levante and Extremadura.

The conduct of the war

*We recommend the report written by the leader of the Investigation Section [Sección de información] of the 26<sup>th</sup> Division, R. Busquets, dated April 20, 1938, on the operations of the enemy offensive on the Eastern fronts and on the subsequent situation. From the first to the last lines of the report, he draws one terrible lesson:*

“Our units, our military organization, and their leaders, do not have the necessary mental or material flexibility.... The solution lies in the immediate supply of our army with the elements, the means, the command structure and the leadership, at least equal in quality to regular soldiers....”

The National Committee of the CNT itself, in a document sent to the Government at our initiative, dated March 15, 1938, highlights this defect and stresses how little has been done to remedy it.

We have a mass of soldiers who are superior to their commanders, and if this situation is not resolved, the war cannot end with our victory.

During the days of the rebel offensive towards Sagunto and Valencia, the National Subcommittee of the CNT drafted several military reports that display knowledge and understanding and are very well informed. In one of them, we read the following:

“What chances does our army have to stop the enemy’s offensive and neutralize its military action by turning it towards the terrain upon which we have an interest in waging the struggle? With respect to men and materiel, we have never been as well prepared as we are now, but we have never witnessed such a disastrous use of all of these men and all that materiel as we have seen during the last two months. Whole units, such as relatively well armed divisions and brigades, are employed, when the enemy attacks, in a direct frontal confrontation with the enemy and often these units are deployed on terrain that is not suitable for defense. These units employed in this way are totally worn out after three or four days of headlong attacks on the enemy’s vanguard. Not once have reserve divisions or brigades been used in counterattacks on the enemy’s flanks. Every one of the enemy’s offensives have offered excellent targets for counterattacks from one or another side to cut off the constant advance of the main spearhead of the enemy’s forces.”

The report does not refer to these errors as being responsible for the loss of the war, “but we do think”, it says, “that the high level decision makers of this army are incompetent...”

This same opinion is expressed in thousands of reports submitted by military commanders, staff officers and commissars who are members of our organizations. The Russian advisors, the only people in Spain who have the power to make decisions that affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of Spanish soldiers, are just a facade. When an operation does not work the way they planned it, they are plunged into confusion, they renounce all initiative, and it is only measures improvised at the front itself that can occasionally rectify the situation.

For our units, it is the doctrines, the methods and the orders of the Russian advisors that have given us General Rojo, the Chief of Staff of the High Command of the Republic. General Rojo does not have what it takes to perform his task or to bear his responsibilities. And the right time to fire him was after the disasters that took place after he was appointed to his current position as Chief of Staff, but his responsibilities were not limited in any way.

That is enough for now, however. We have only touched upon a minuscule part of what needs to be said about the war, about its leadership and about the preconditions that must unavoidably be created in order to win it. But the facts we have related above, which were not our personal views, but excerpts from unrefuted documents that are filed in the archives of our organizations, is enough to make a decision. And if the arguments were not eloquent enough, one need only glance at a map of the Peninsula and one will see the thousands of square kilometers that were lost under the leadership of those who are currently responsible for the conduct of the war, and the enormous number of cities that have been taken by the enemy, including some very important ones: Bilbao, Santander, Gijón, Lérida, Castellón, Teruel, Caspe, Alcañiz, Morella, Vinaroz, Balaguer, Tremp, Castuera...”

We then proposed to the combined Plenum the creation of a Commission for Military Planning and Operations, to be composed of the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, the National Committee of the CNT, and the Regional Defense Sections.

In our view, this Commission would have directed its efforts towards the following goals:

To bring about a complete overhaul of the highest levels of military decision making and the removal of those responsible for the military disasters of the Prieto-Negrín, and then the Negrín, Governments.

To take measures to bring about the immediate withdrawal of the Russian advisors and their subordination to Spanish commanders.

To work for the selection of military commanders from among the commissars and the restriction of the commissariat, which will have to be given more specific responsibilities.

The radical reform of the SIM [Military Investigation Service], without prejudice to the demand to bring to justice those who committed or instigated the horrendous



crimes that have taken place beyond the borders of Spain and which are being discussed in the European chancelleries. The SIM will preferentially be employed in the rebel zone and in Morocco.

All promotions awarded and punishments inflicted in the military since May, 1937 will be subject to review.

To immediately impose the criterion that military commands will be conferred based on ability rather than the candidate's membership in any particular party.

All the military commanders and commissars who have joined the various parties and organizations since July 19, 1936, will be compelled to choose between being dismissed from their positions or renouncing their party membership.

The carabineros, the security police, the SIM agents on the homefront, the shirkers who have been protected by their political parties, etc., who belong to the categories being called up to serve as military replacements, will be placed at the disposal of the Ministry of National Defense.

Reserve units will be formed from the over-staffed institutions of the homefront, rearguard battalions, labor divisions, police forces, etc.

Foreigners will be removed from positions of responsibility in the army and in the forces of public order and information services.

To carry out an immediate purge of the commands of every unit in the army and the forces of public order.

To organize a campaign of irregular warfare as a complement to the war of regular armies.

Severe punishment will be demanded for those who have perpetrated or ordered the assassinations committed at the front and behind the lines for reasons of party affiliation.

An intensive project to reinforce all fortifications, using, if necessary, contingents of workers belonging to the civilian population.

To see to it that arms and auxiliary services in the army are equitably distributed to all units.

To coordinate the high command centers of the army, the air force and the navy, and the armored units.

*On these foundations and with this orientation, a Joint Commission could assure the unity of action and interpretation of our movement and give a minimum of satisfaction to those comrades who are fighting and dying for the anti-fascist cause.*

Viewed in retrospect, now that the war is over, it seems impossible that the vast number of serious accusations that we summarized in that report did not merit radical resolutions, a change in the line of conduct, a refusal to support in any way the government that inspired or consented to this state of affairs in the army. So many lies had been told, so much dissimulation deployed—a political weapon—that when the leaders of the parties and organizations were presented with the naked truth, they deliberately shut their eyes so that they did not have to see it. A policy fit

for ostriches. Our own friends were afraid of the truth and preferred to allow themselves to be bewitched by the songs of the siren of *negrinismo*. We carried on alone, a restricted minority even in the Peninsular Committee of the FAI, supported only by our conviction that the great masses of the combatants were on our side, and that the people in the rearguard also shared our views. But at the heights we occupied we lacked the power necessary to translate our opinions into deeds; every vehicle of access to the masses had been closed to us by the war policy, and as for the outside world, for those who were completely unaware of our efforts, seeing our organizations even participating in Negrín's cabinet, the impression of unity, of harmonious accord and solidarity of all the political and social tendencies, seemed to leave no room for doubt.

With the publication of these documents we want to reestablish the truth. We did not overthrow the Negrín Government because we did not have the power to do so, because our movement had been weakened by confusion and had broken apart and dispersed, and because those men from other parties who agreed with us concerning the urgent need for a change of the helmsmen of the government and of the war, were in the same position as we were, isolated, under constant surveillance like prisoners, removed from all contact with the people and even with their own party or trade union institutions. For all of them, the Spanish tragedy has been an awful disaster, but it was even worse for us, who have never lived with our eyes closed and who had been screaming at the top of our lungs, calling attention to the reef towards which we were being led, full steam ahead, cheerfully, in the name of the policy of resistance and in the name of imminent final victory.

# **The political and military conditions preceding Franco's final offensive in Catalonia—documents and reflections**

Assured of his increasingly more preponderant and clearly demonstrated military superiority, aware of our internal weakness due to war-weariness, an anti-Spanish and anti-popular policy, and an excess of sacrifices without any comprehensible purpose, Franco announced, months in advance, the offensive against Catalonia, which had been the improvised stronghold of the war effort and the constructive and exemplary focal point of the revolution.

It was supposed to be the final offensive to bring an end to the conflagration, which had already lasted thirty months, during which all our initial advantages had been lost thanks to the intervention of Russia and its methods in so-called Republican Spain. In this offensive, Franco took into account not only the overwhelming superiority of his armament, artillery and air force, but also the dismal morale of our troops and the people in our rearguard. The fall of Catalonia, where the army's best units had been shattered under other political, economic and moral circumstances, was an operation of the type executed by the totalitarian powers against Austria on March 12, 1938, against the Sudetenland on October 1, 1938, and then against Bohemia and Moravia on March 15, 1939, against the territory of Memel, and against Albania. The enemy's propaganda broke down all the moral resources that might have underpinned any resistance and, when the troops of conquest and occupation arrived, they hardly needed to fire a single shot.

We had the presentiment, and we expressed it unambiguously, that the occupation of Catalonia, considering the state of moral collapse of the army and the rearguard of Republican Spain, would be a military walk in the park. We still had the forces, although we lacked the help of essential armaments, to mount significant resistance in a war of movement, to blunt the enemy advance, stop the enemy troops at the abundant natural strong points and wear down the enemy forces in fruitless attacks for months. Man is still the heart of war, and man had been destroyed by Stalinist policy, up to the point where he did not want to fight and instead chose to accept the bitter fate of emigration and the curse of defeat. The only organization that enjoyed increasing popular support and prestige and that remained incorruptible in the face of the new masters was the FAI, but all the parties and organizations had joined together to render any action by the FAI impossible, which is the opposite of what happened in the enemy zone with the Falange, which was much less numerous and battle-tested, but was always considered to be an indispensable factor in the war against us.

More than eight months before the offensive began, we offered the Government a plan for organizing the defense of Barcelona within a radius of fifty kilometers, ignoring the lines of defense and resistance planned by the Central General Staff. Colonel Claudin, one of the commanders of the coastal defenses, taking into consideration the terrain and the few natural access points to the capital of Catalonia, proposed defensive fortifications that would begin in El Perelló, continue

to Bruch, and end near Manresa. He envisioned that they would be constructed by volunteers and that the walls, trenches, machine gun emplacements, artillery batteries, etc., would also be manned by volunteers. We were committed to completing the preparations for this Maginot Line of Barcelona within a few months; all we needed was the necessary authorization and the materials for the fortifications. All the rest would have been based on voluntary labor. General Asensio was also involved, along with Colonel Pérez Farraz and other political and military leaders. We participated in the delegation that was received by the President of the Generalitat, Lluís Companys, to explain the project to him and to suggest that he seek from the Central Government the organizational means, for Catalonia itself, in the form that we thought necessary, for the defense of Barcelona, with the direct contribution of the men who were most capable of influencing Catalan public opinion.

Our offer, perhaps because it was ours, and because Negrín was working under orders to prevent us from initiating any major projects, was not accepted by the Central Government or its instruments and we had to content ourselves with standing there with our hands in our pockets, announcing the collapse of the front if the state of affairs that prevailed among the combatants was not urgently addressed and radically remedied. We had already witnessed the collapse of the fronts in the East and in Estremadura as a consequence of Russian leadership of the war and we did not have to claim to be prophets when we maintained that these same causes were still at work, and that they must continue to produce the same results.

If our initiative had been presented to the Governments of the Republic and of Catalonia by other hands, let us say, if it had been presented by men from a certain political party, it would have been taken seriously, probably, but we had obtained the support for our proposal of certain military officers and civilian figures, to whom we really wanted to assure a somewhat dignified denouement to this war and whom we did not want to see implicated in Negrín's feast of Sardanapalus. That is why every door was closed in our faces.

The population was exhausted, and the government's confusion and incompetence could hardly be concealed by the censorship, the persecutions of dissenters, the strident clichés emitted by the press and the radio, and the rogue's gallery of the parties and organizations. Russian dominance, however, was widely felt to be an intolerable burden. The systematic looting of the wealth of Spain was evident and it had to be covered up. Catalonia's textiles were the main object of Russian greed. From the beginning of Russia's intervention it always had its eyes on this great treasure.

Whole factories were also shipped off to Russia, with specialized machinery, etc., not to mention the appropriation of the commercial secrets of several industries, for which a network of spies was created from the very first moments of Russia's intervention to penetrate every vital sector of the economy, as was the case in the army, in the navy and in the air force....<sup>1</sup> No deci-

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<sup>1</sup> One example, among many others: that of the cigarette paper factories. Everyone knows that Spanish cigarette paper, from Levante and Catalonia, had a secure place in the world market. The Russians, when the Spanish paper factories had to be closed because of a lack of raw materials, offered to provide the raw materials, and also offered the workers and technicians of these factories large wage increases and special access to food and other goods if they would work overtime to produce cigarette papers for export to Russia. In this way Russia began to assume the role of the main customer for this product and Russian industrial technicians were in a position to transfer this specialized production to Russia, even shipping the machines to Russia on several occasions. When Spain once again resumes its manufacture of cigarette papers, it will have to face some previously unknown competition: that of Russia.

sion was made without Russian knowledge and without the Russians giving the green light. It was the same in the economy, in finance and in international diplomacy as it was in the military.

Favored by the blackmail of Stalinist aid, which was not really aid at all, but a scandalous robbery of our finances and our economy by the Russian trade delegates, the Spanish communists, numerically insignificant, and just as insignificant in terms of quality, once the July movement broke out,<sup>2</sup> gradually attracted to their ranks all those who had no place in the other parties and organizations due to their dubious past, and imposed their dominance in every sphere of public life. As for spontaneous popular support, they had none at all.

If, for our part, we would have been at a loss if we had to choose between the victory of Franco or the victory of Stalin, the politically indifferent population preferred the victory of Franco, in the vague hope that they would be treated better under Franco, and that at least the suffering would be no worse and that the persecutions and tortures would not be more ruthless.

And because of the hatred of the Russian domination that they had to endure in Republican Spain, the fact that, on the other side, Italian and German domination were neither more gentle nor essentially different with respect to their procedures and aspirations was underestimated.

The people were spiritually alienated from the war, they did not know why they were fighting, they saw the bacchanalia of the new privileged classes, and they could not conceive that things could be worse on the other side of the trenches. And without the active support of the people the war was lost, irremediably lost. The faith—the absurd faith—in the support of the so-called democratic powers, repeatedly invoked by those who were instrumental in handing Spain over to Russian domination, was never seriously believed by anyone, after all the declarations and press releases of the famous Non-Intervention Committee. Thus, if our alliance with Russia had not fundamentally transformed our situation with regard to the acquisition of arms and food, and if the democracies were resolved upon abandoning us, we only had one card left to play: that of the people, forgotten in the dirty game of the war and republican and communist diplomacy. The people always have the resources when they passionately desire something. And they could have discovered the means to thwart the advance of the enemy armies without relying on any of the factors that distinguish modern warfare. How? With the very same methods used, among others, on July 19. Barcelona alone had the power, and more than enough, in the form in which it could have fought, to consume the armies of Franco and to render all his arsenals useless.

In order to be able to count on the people as an active factor in the conflict, however, a change of government was necessary in the civilian domain, and especially the removal of Dr. Negrín and his servant for foreign policy, Alvarez del Vayo, agents of Russia, dictators taking orders from the communists, and in the military domain it was necessary to impose an in-depth reorganization of the command structure, to carry out a review of the personnel of the combat forces, to use leaders and officers who had been passed over for promotion and persecuted despite their anti-fascist histories and their abilities, and to suppress the crimes that were constantly being perpetrated in the ranks of the army for the purpose of ensuring the ascendancy of a certain party....

We were unable to obtain the implementation of any of our proposals, because of the cowardice of some, and because of the complicity of others with the orgy of corruption, upon which the foundations of the Government of Victory rested.

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<sup>2</sup> During the July Days in Barcelona, we are told of the appearance of a real novelty: someone had seen a communist on the street, a former member of the CNT Metal Workers Trade Union.

We even considered the use of force, the possibilities of a frontal assault, and we evaluated the arms at our disposal; but we understood that, in view of the close connection of most of the leaders of the parties and organizations with the policy of Dr. Negrín, whom they considered to be the providential man of the resistance, we would not have been able rely on unanimous support and we would have lost the battle, uselessly augmenting the number of victims. If we had been successful in achieving the necessary agreement of all the sectors of the libertarian movement with our theses, the events that took place in the Central Zone and in Levante after the fall of Catalonia would have taken place in Catalonia itself, due to the initiative and under the responsibility of the FAI, the only Spanish type of organization that had refused to work in the service of foreign powers, and the only organization that represented an authentic connection with the sentiments of the people.

We, who had been life-long internationalists, were the only representatives of the independence of Spain, the only sincere defenders of the formula: Spain for the Spaniards!

If we have to point to one change that we underwent as a result of the war, it is perhaps the fact that we were no longer the doctrinaire anti-patriots that we were in the past, but the only real patriots, ready to sacrifice everything for the future of Spain. And while our views were changing in this sense, those who had always been nationalists were not thinking about anything but how to stash away money in foreign countries for after the defeat, and most of all the famous preachers of resistance until victory....

Even if only to serve the truth, it is necessary for us to state what our position was at that time, and what we did, during a war that was born from our battles against the military uprising. If history must judge us, and in this case, right now, this means the history written by the winners, then let it judge us for our deeds and our words, but not for a solidarity that we never felt for the Government to which Franco owed his victory.

We want history to respond to what we did, whether for good or for ill, and to our intentions, which were of the best, but separately from the Government of the Republic and the Russian agents. We were neither Republicans nor did we remain silent in the face of communist domination. Circumstances obliged us to establish contacts with people whose goals were opposed to ours and whose conduct deserved the firing squad, but we have preserved our identity and we have not lost our way, even when we lacked the material force to serve Spain more effectively.

On December 7, 1938, the Government of Victory convoked a meeting of the Popular Front in one of the sumptuous palaces of Pedralbes. In attendance were Mije and La Pasionaria for the Communist Party, Cordero and Lamonedá for the Socialist Party, Rodríguez Vega and Amaro del Rosal for the UGT, Mariano Vázquez and Horacio Prieto for the CNT, Baeza Medina for the Republican Left, Mateo Silva for the Republican Union, and Herrera and Santillán for the FAI, who submitted the following confidential report to the Regional Federations of the FAI:

Negrín began by stating that the purpose of the meeting was simply to inform the parties and organizations of the Popular Front of the current situation. At first—or so he said—he thought of convoking a joint meeting of the National Popular Front and the Popular Front of Catalonia; but for a lack of a meeting hall large enough to accommodate so many people, he decided to convoke them separately. This will oblige him to repeat the statements that he was going to make at this meeting when he would meet later with the Popular Front of Catalonia.

He provided explanations concerning the operations in the Ebro region, beginning with the month of June, when they were first conceived and implemented. He indicated the causes that lay behind these operations—the need to stop the enemy’s offensive and to divert some of the enemy’s forces from their irresistible advance towards Sagunto and Valencia, which posed a serious threat to that zone, although fully aware of all the risks that this entailed and which were already reckoned with in advance. He expressed his view that the Ebro campaign had exceed all expectations, and that thanks to the fortitude of our soldiers and to the strength acquired by our army with its discipline and good organization, we have inflicted an enormous setback on the enemy and we have also gained precious time that has allowed the international diplomatic climate to improve. He therefore believes that it was a meritorious operation, deserving of everyone’s respect, and that even though we suffered quite a few casualties, they were fewer than the casualties we inflicted on the enemy. And besides, our casualties, including dead, missing and wounded, would be compensated for by the prisoners we took.

Then he refers to the terrible distress occasioned when it became imperative to consider withdrawing our troops to our side of the Ebro. He says that this had been planned long before it was carried out, which proves the capacity of our spirit of resistance. He points out that organizations and parties, in expressions of their good will, have submitted proposals for future military operations and proposed revisions of existing plans, etc., all of which are very valuable suggestions that have been implemented as much as possible, and that one of these proposals urgently called for recognizing the need to organize our withdrawal before a disaster takes place. He reports that the withdrawal was a marvelous achievement, carried out with such extreme subtlety and precision that even he was surprised, especially in view of the fact that he had already reluctantly accepted the prospect that the withdrawal would be very costly in terms of men and materiel, when in fact it took place without any considerable losses.

He then speaks at length about the situation of the enemy, pointing out that the situation is very critical in the rebel zone, since there is an increasing level of discontent in the enemy’s rearguard, the enemy regime is losing credibility internationally, and its economy is plagued by severe shortages. All these factors forced the enemy to prepare a major offensive that will allow for a few military victories with which the enemy’s all-too-compromised credibility can be reinforced. It seems that the enemy’s forces are on the verge of unleashing a major offensive, which is indicated by the enormous stockpiles of men and materiel at certain locations. He says that, since this offensive will be an operation lavishly supplied with men and firepower, it will necessarily produce a momentary wavering among our ranks. He says that of course it will not be very serious, since the requisite measures are being taken to prevent a catastrophe. He thinks that we will yield some ground, but that we will not lose any vital positions, and the offensive will not have any unfavorable consequences if we are all forewarned and ready to stand fast.

Under these circumstances, he considers the preservation of morale in the Army and in the rearguard to be indispensable. The Army has provided sufficient proofs

of its morale and its ability, with respect to both defense and attack. The rearguard has also demonstrated that it, too, has been working hard, and that it knows how to endure all kinds of privations with stoicism. At these critical moments, however, all the anti-fascist sectors must devote their efforts to maintaining unity of action and of will, setting aside their disputes and particular aspirations.

He points out that with respect to food supplies, while we have lived through some very difficult times, it seems that we have turned the corner and that we are now on our way to overcoming these problems. Although they cannot be considered to be completely resolved, we can say that they are being considerably improved. We must therefore do everything possible to uphold morale at the front and in the rearguard, both of which are necessary, since the morale of each considerably influences the other. For all of these reasons, he wants the parties and organizations that control opinion to keep in mind, discreetly, of course, what might happen, so that there are no excessive and unfounded panics....

Then he said that he did not have enough food for everyone at the meeting and that since he could not invite us to dinner, he invited us to have a glass of champagne in an adjoining reception area.

This is the summary of what Negrín said in his meeting with the parties and organizations of the Popular Front. This meeting was strictly and exclusively for the purpose of providing information. It was not considered to be an appropriate venue for representatives of the sectors of the Popular Front to ask questions or to challenge or even support Dr. Negrín's policies, as was demonstrated by the silence observed by all of them. Negrín did not ask anyone to support the Government's policy, and therefore no one could give him their support. As a significant fact regarding our conduct as a delegation, we shall mention that, immediately after leaving the meeting hall on our way to the reception lounge, we decided to absent ourselves without either taking advantage of the free alcohol or participating in the various knots of conversations that were forming. Correctly but without warmth we took our leave of the Head of State, and Santillán and I made a hasty exit. At the door to the courtyard I noticed that Negrín had come halfway down the stairs behind us and was talking to Santillán before he turned back to go upstairs, thus giving him another chance to bid us farewell. The rest of the representatives of the parties and organizations remained upstairs in the reception lounge, and we were unaware of whether, in our absence, any other questions were addressed.

As Negrín was speaking, one word fought violently to burst from our lips: Fraud! Everything he said was a lie. A lie about the small number of casualties incurred at the Battle of the Ebro, for it cost us approximately 70,000 men, including those taken prisoner, killed or wounded, and an enormous amount of heavy and light weaponry, which could not be replaced. It is true that the campaign did slow down the enemy's advance towards Valencia, but only at the cost of wasting the best chances to continue the defense of the Catalan zone. It was a lie about the disciplined army, it was a lie about the stoic resignation of the rearguard, it was a lie about our improved international position and it was a lie about the critical situation of the enemy. His tall tales did not convince us at all, although we were able to confirm that the representatives of the other



parties and organizations gave signs of being satisfied and proud. A few days after the meeting we even saw internal bulletins disseminated by some of the organizations that were represented at the meeting in which Negrín's arguments and assessments were passed off as their own. We had never before seen such a case of voluntary servitude.

As for military materiel, we had ten bombers, we lacked artillery, since the artillery pieces sent to us by the Russians, which were more than fifty caliber, were so defective that the weapons were rendered inoperative after they were fired a few times. Enormous quantities of rifles and machine guns had been lost in the Battle of the Ebro.<sup>3</sup>

No one will ever know how much was lost, since one of the purchasing agents for the army, the gynecologist Otero, a man who was a calamity for the Republic, was the Undersecretary of the Commission on Armaments and Munitions, and almost all the purchasing operations passed through his hands.

On the day after the meeting convoked by Negrín, the Popular Front met to find a way to effectively help the Government face the next offensive. We had been trying for several months to bring about an in-depth reassessment of the question of the conduct of the war and the moral decomposition of the army. We finally succeeded in getting these deaf volunteers from the Popular Front, that Moscow-style mystification in which we had become implicated against our better judgment, to resolve to debate one of our proposals. What follows is the text of an internal bulletin sent to the regional organizations of the FAI:<sup>4</sup>

After certain procedural formalities were dispatched, it was resolved with respect to the declared incompatibility of the Popular Front of Guadalajara with the Communist Party and with the Governor of that province, Cazorla, that each party or organization should compile first-hand reports to complete the information we have already received which is not conclusive enough for reaching a decision on this matter.

With regard to the food supply policy proposed for study by the CNT delegation, the Secretary reports that the Director General of Food Supply has not yet responded to the note that was sent to him in connection with the CNT proposal and therefore this point will be deferred to the agenda of the next meeting.

The next topic for debate was the FAI's proposal on military policy and the problem of the activities of parties and organizations in the army.

This is a summary of our speech:

Our army, like many other aspects of our national life, is suffering from the excessive enthusiasm of the neophytes of the parties that have been constituted since July 19, 1936. Every new adept of a doctrine naturally has a tendency towards the abuse of his zeal and the exaggerated expression of his sectarianism, without regard for and

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<sup>3</sup> On one occasion, Jiménez de la Beraza, a colonel in the artillery section of the army and the heart and soul of the war industries of Catalonia, was summoned to a meeting with the Undersecretary of Armaments and Munitions to investigate the scarce yields of our artillery, which was rendered inoperable after having been fired a few times. Some spoke of the low quality of the gunpowder, others of sabotage being practiced by the gunners, etc. Colonel Jiménez de la Beraza maintained that the cause of the defects in question was the fact that those who purchased such materiel had not been shot.

<sup>4</sup> Peninsular Committee of the FAI, Circular No. 57 (Confidential), September 19, 1938, Barcelona.

even with an Olympian scorn for whatever has not been passed through the screen of his organization or party.

In addition to the aggressive and intolerant psychology of the neophyte, under the current circumstances, we must also take into account the very dubious backgrounds of the members of certain parties that are not very discriminating in their recruitment standards, trusting more to quantity than to quality.

If we were to examine the membership rolls of each one of the parties and organizations that are represented here, we would uncover more than a few surprises, and it would not be hard to reach the conclusion that, under the cover of many nominally anti-fascist membership cards, the representatives of Franco have free rein to ply their trade. For its part, the FAI would not hesitate to open up its membership lists and to thank in advance anyone who could reveal the activity within its ranks of any individuals from suspicious backgrounds; we can confidently state, however, that the immense majority of our members, almost all of whom are of authentically proletarian origin, were militants long before July 19.

Another phenomenon that has been the focus of much of our attention with regard to the policy that has directed our war effort during the last two years, is the considerable number of professional military officers of the highest technical qualifications with verified anti-fascist convictions who have been passed over for promotions or persecuted.

*The commanding positions in the army are often occupied by newcomers of unknown origin who are mostly lacking all the technical experience required for performing their missions. We can confidently state that the most prestigious military officers, the ones that are most loyal to the Republic, the ones who possess the best training, those who could do the most to help our war effort, are passed over for promotions, left without commands, and even persecuted, when they are not just assassinated.<sup>5</sup> We are referring, without the need to name any names, to certain cases involving shootings that have taken place.*

Everyone knows that our shortage of high level commanding officers is considerable. However, we have command-level infantry officers and general staff-level officers who are currently without any assignments and have been passed over for promotions who are truly outstanding figures in our militia, from the lowest level junior officers to the highest level staff officers. If you want us to mention some names, we will not hesitate to do so in order to prove the truth of what we are saying.

One of the great masters of Spanish artillery is now walking the streets of Barcelona. His activity, beginning on July 19, is unequaled and his technical qualifications as well as his anti-fascist credentials are matters of general knowledge. He has two life sentences to his credit, one for his activity against the monarchy, and the other for the events of October 1934. This man has even offered to serve as the commander of an artillery battery as a simple captain, since he has not resigned himself to remain-

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<sup>5</sup> Jacinto Toryho, *The Independence of Spain*, Barcelona, 1938; see the chapter entitled, "Republican officers who are not supported by the Government", pp. 144-149.

ing in the rearguard instead of contributing everything he can until the very end to the war effort. His generous offer has been refused.

Let us tell the story of one of the most famous pilots of Spanish aviation. Without his intervention, it is quite possible that the Republic never would have existed, and this is not even taking into account his participation in the battle against the rebels on July 19. This pilot, a colonel, has also volunteered, in his case to serve as a mere lieutenant in command of an infantry platoon, and he received the response from the General Staff that there were no vacancies in our Army. This is a man with a long history of military and civic achievements and now he is walking the streets of the current capital of the Republic, despondent, and without any hope of placing his knowledge and his name at the service of the war effort. Yet all kinds of people are being used in the air force, whose backgrounds and identities were not subjected to very much scrutiny. One of the high-level positions in the air force is occupied by one of the pilots who machine-gunned the Asturian workers in 1934, and his role in that feat of pre-fascism earned him the medal of military merit.

*Only a few days ago, the captain who served as the adjutant to Undersecretary of the Air Force Camacho defected to the enemy in a Republican fighter plane, and his revelations concerning the Republican air force that have been broadcast on the radio from Teruel are far from having been refuted. The contrast between the glorious figure of the air force to whom we referred above and events like the defection of Captain Carrasco and other incidents like it that are taking place daily, cannot be a factor that enhances morale in the ranks of the soldiers or on the home front of loyalist Spain. Let us recall, with respect to this question, that we have on several occasions expressed the suspicions we harbored concerning the conduct of certain men, including Captain Carrasco, who joined the victorious movement in Barcelona on July 20, whereas on the 19<sup>th</sup> they had rendered homage to General Goded, who arrived from Mallorca to assume command over the revolt.*

Facts of this kind, together with the promotions policy that is currently in effect, entail an enormous threat to the unity of the Army and a successful conclusion to the war. We must not forget that the Army of the monarchy was decomposed and demoralized by extraordinary promotions; if we are now committing the same mistakes as the monarchy, we will not be able to avoid the same guaranteed results. We would also like to refer to other aspects that have been repeated too often for them to possibly go unnoticed: the assassinations of elements from certain sectors, for example, primarily from the libertarian sector, at the front. We do not want to accuse any particular party of having committed these crimes.

We are convinced that these crimes must be repudiated by everyone, without exception; but there is the coincidence that the victims are almost always soldiers and officers from the CNT and the FAI, while the assassins are often working behind the cover of the membership card of the Communist Party. We are convinced that these people are following the orders of the generals from their faction and that they are executing their plans. This is why we think that the Popular Front must take these

revelations into consideration and take measures to bring an immediate end to these incidents in order to avoid consequences that all of us will later have reason to regret. We shall discuss only one incident, the most recent one that has come to our attention. But we could provide documentation for hundreds of similar cases.

*A lieutenant, with whom we are personally acquainted and who joined the militia as a volunteer in August 1936, was arrested in Barcelona. The charge is irrelevant. After spending some time in a barracks in this city, where a famous boxer was in charge of interrogations, he was transferred to Pons with a group of soldiers. There, they were all told that they were being released and that they were to rejoin their original units. This lieutenant was serving with the 153<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, while the soldiers were members of the 26<sup>th</sup> Division. They were advised to observe principles of good behavior, discipline and obedience, to avoid falling prey to the infractions for which they had been arrested. They were loaded onto a truck, which was followed by a staff car with the escort of a communist leader, a former member of the Civil Guard. When the truck came to a certain point it stopped, and they were told that they should follow a certain path they were shown and that they would find their respective units. They had hardly turned their backs when they heard the roar of machine guns being fired from the staff car that had followed the truck. The lieutenant immediately thought that they were being assassinated and he threw himself on the ground as soon as he heard the first shots. He hit the ground just in time, because two of the soldiers who were with him were gunned down right next to him and the others, six or eight of them, also fell within a few meters. The assassins emerged from the car to make sure that their victims were dead but they did not notice that one of them, the lieutenant, was not even wounded. Once they were done, they got back into their car and drove away while the man who fortunately lived to tell us the tale was able to make his way back to Barcelona on foot, from Mollerusa, where the executions took place. And he is still in Barcelona, without any intention whatsoever of returning to the front, where our men have to be more wary of the allies on their flanks than of the enemies on the other side of the trenches. He is willing to speak to the Popular Front, in case the Popular Front wants to examine this specific incident that we are bringing to its attention as an indication of an endemic state in the ranks of the Republican army.*

In our recent meeting with him, Negrín told us that our successes are due more to the moral force that inspires us than to weapons and materiel, which we lack. We agree, and that is why we are suggesting that the necessary conditions should be imposed for this morale to be preserved and to prevent this force from being dismembered, thus leading to a very dangerous collapse in the face of the imminent enemy offensive he warned us about.

In every country and in every war, when military disasters take place, an automatic combing-out of the military commands is implemented. This has a well-demonstrated psychological effect and instills the soldiers with hope, in the assumption that the new commanders would have to be better than the old ones. It is precisely our war that displays the contrary phenomenon. The more military disasters a staff officer or high level commander has under his belt, the more pro-

motions and medals he is awarded. We shall not avail ourselves of this opportunity to go into details about the quality of certain high level military commanders, but we shall only point out that the fact that they have retained their positions does not benefit the quest to bring the war to a successful conclusion.

And we must point out that it is precisely our organization, without any right of asylum beyond the borders of Spain, that has the greatest interest in making sure that this war does not end in a catastrophe. We know that our place is here, that we must not desert our post, and due to the number of our militants in the ranks of the army and in the workplaces on the home front, we believe we have every right to demand that the basic conditions upon which the foundations of our fighting spirit must be based have to be taken into account.

To summarize: We are proposing that the excesses of the party neophytes be stopped immediately, excesses that often give the impression that they are working on behalf of the enemy, with similar abuses and procedures.

Second, we demand the employment, depending on their abilities, of the military officers who have been unjustly passed over for promotion, and the examination of the activities of those who have been appointed to high level positions of responsibility without the technical and political prerequisites for these positions.

We also demand the immediate cessation of the assassinations that are taking place at the front and a purge of the officers who presently occupy high level positions, which would instill the soldiers with the hope that their new leaders will do better and be more successful than the old ones.

We shall conclude by saying that, without these conditions and under the current circumstances prevailing in our Army, we do not predict anything good coming from the offensive Negrín told us about and which would appear to be the final campaign....

The delegation from the CNT then addressed the meeting to say that the Popular Front had to take into account, and bring to the attention of the Government, the matter of the assassinations, as well as the use of the officers who could be identified as lacking proper employment. With respect to the number of such officers, it might be as large as the FAI delegation says it is or it might be smaller, but the truth is that there are in fact officers who have been passed over for promotions and this situation is not justifiable unless there is some overriding cause for it.

The CNT delegation also referred to the counterproductive policy regarding promotions, which has stirred up a lot of resentment and anger. But one cannot speak of the responsibility of the Government in this case, any more than in the case of the assassinations or the officers passed over for assignments, and the delegation suggested the formation of a commission representing all the political and trade union forces that would intervene to ensure that all promotions are granted fairly and are not inspired by extreme party interests.

The delegation of the Republican Left insists above all on testifying to the veracity of the claims regarding the proselytism of the Communist Party in the Army and to

the dangers it entails. Direct reference is made to the case of the commander in chief of the CRIM Number 16, a colonel Pedro Las Heras, a republican, against whom a veritable conspiracy was mobilized to remove him from his position. The delegation also told the story of the significance of colonel Díaz Sandino and of how a man of his political and military background was passed over for promotion. The socialist delegation expressed its views on the role of the Popular Front and recommended moderation, and offered some minor objections and clarifications.

A lively debate then took place concerning our reports and proposals, especially with respect to our references to General Hidalgo de Cisneros, an officer who rose up from the ranks of the Quartermaster's Corps and is now a regular army general, which is an unacceptable promotion, since he was not even a sergeant in the infantry. In tactical regulations, a simple infantry sergeant can take command of a major unit when there are no other Army officers available, but a General from the Quartermaster's Corps cannot do the same.

The delegation of the UGT declares that their trade union federation has no knowledge of any of its members having been assassinated at the front, and expresses its doubts about the veracity of our revelations.

*We once again insist, in the name of the FAI, on calling attention to the arbitrariness and the dangers of the promotions policy. With regard to the assassinations, we only want the Popular Front to assume responsibility for conducting an inquiry into the cases that we can present to it in order to determine whether their perpetrators were merely party fanatics or whether they were acting under orders from their superiors or from instructions directly from the enemy. We reminded the Popular Front that the tolerant attitude of the victims might one day come to an end<sup>6</sup> and then we could not be held accountable for what might happen. Not so long ago, with the help of the civil and military authorities of Catalonia, the Employers Association unleashed the pistoleros of the so-called Free Trade Unions who claimed many casualties among the most active militants of our movement in Barcelona. Then our patience reached its limit and it was resolved, after the assassination of Salvador Seguí, that these instruments who had earned the gratitude of Martínez Anido and Arlegui had to be decisively confronted. The battle lasted only a few weeks and ended with the overthrow of the hired assassins from their ephemeral reign in Barcelona.*

It might have taken some time, but sooner or later the result would have been direct action against the Russians and their allies, until their extermination from Spain, or else the annihilation of the anarchists. The blind governmentalism of certain elements who had allowed themselves to be enthralled by the brass and ribbons of the military high command, would soon enough be

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<sup>6</sup> In response to this situation, defensive affinity groups were beginning to be formed in all the units of the Army on the Catalanian front and they did not take long to go into action against the monopolist policy of the Russian agents. Although we could not count on the unanimous support of the libertarian movement, some of whose superior committees proudly displayed the most closed-minded governmentalism, we encouraged the formation of these clandestine nuclei, so that the defense of our soldiers and officers against the enemy on our flanks should be a coordinated effort and should not respond to momentary urges for revenge, without the proper preparation, as was the case in the 153<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, where the Stalinist commissar Rigabert was killed, triggering a massive and spectacular wave of repression.

left behind by the masses of followers who were kept in line by the directives of their leading committees only at the cost of significant efforts. What later took place in Madrid, with the Defense Council, would have inevitably also taken place in Catalonia if the war were to have lasted a few more months.

We do not want to turn anti-fascist unity into a fratricidal massacre. But we must make it understood that we are not willing to tolerate any more assassinations, and in this respect the victims' affiliations are immaterial. Our attitude would be the same if those who are killed in this way are republicans, socialists or our own comrades.

Finally, it was agreed that at the next meeting certain matters would be dealt with in detail, including a declaration against the rampant proselytism in the Army, signed by all the parties and organizations.

The delegation of the CNT emphasized the fact that it does not consider that the discussion of these problems implies an encroachment on the sphere of government responsibilities; that it is the mission of all the parties and organizations to reinforce the government and no restraints are placed on the government when it is informed about certain affairs that might otherwise have escaped its notice.

*The communist representatives admit that there might have been some abuses perpetrated by over-zealous neophytes and assert that it is necessary for the Popular Front to restrict its efforts to lending its support to the Government without encroaching on its jurisdiction. They regretted that the delegation of the FAI had made such unfriendly references to the case of Hidalgo de Cisneros, and denied that their Party effectively dominates the Army.*

Such were the most important points addressed at the meeting.... Instead of paying heed to the seriousness of our revelations, the parties and organizations of the so-called Popular Front found it more convenient to agree that no action would be taken to implement our proposals and that the latter should be sabotaged, always diverting the discussions from the main point. Our desperation, and our insistence on calling attention to the responsibility they would incur by doing so, were of little avail. We came to the realization that all of them were fully aware of what would happen, since we do not want to deny to the representatives with whom we consistently clashed the minimum of intelligence necessary to understand the outcome of Negrín's policy. But we were unable to perceive just what advantage they thought they could derive from the disaster towards which we were proceeding with greater speed than one would have thought desirable.

In accordance with the resolutions that were adopted, we sent to the National Popular Front, in the name of the FAI, the following clarifications:

In order to comply with the resolution adopted at the most recent meeting of the Popular Front, we shall summarize some of our views in order to cooperate more closely in the labors of the Government, noting the defects that have come to our attention with respect to the conduct of the war:

1. An investigation should be conducted by the Popular Front, which will submit its results to the Government, of the excesses, abuses and acts of coercion as-

sociated with proselytism, so that, in compliance with the prevailing laws and the decrees issued by the National Ministry of Defense, and even in accordance with the Thirteen Points of the Negrín Government, the army will be purged of all party activity. The application of the sanctions that these party-based acts of violence and coercion deserve will be left to the discretion of the Government.

2. An investigation should be conducted by the Popular Front of specific cases involving the assassinations of soldiers and officers of the People's Army and the results should be placed at the disposal of the pertinent authorities.
3. The Government of the Republic should be notified of the names of some of the command-level officers of the Army who have an outstanding record spanning many years due to their technical abilities and who are irreproachable from the point of view of their anti-fascist convictions, who have been passed over for promotions or assignments or who have been posted to serve in positions that are incompatible with their abilities and their service records.

Among those names, the FAI mentions the following (the names of 1 general, 10 colonels, 9 lieutenant colonels, 7 majors and several captains follows. And we added the following comments to the list):

*We mention only those who are, in their respective specialties, legitimate authorities in the Army and whose backgrounds require no discussion, because they are so well-known. Some of them occupy subordinate positions that are totally unrelated to their skills; others have absolutely no assignments at all.*

4. Before the upcoming enemy offensive, and as a way to raise the morale of the soldiers and the population on the home front, we should proceed to suggest to the Government the salutary effects of a reevaluation of the high level commanding personnel of the Army, for the following reasons:

Because they have spent almost two years experiencing military setbacks and because they have not inspired the necessary confidence in the combatants (the case of General Rojo);

For their exaggerated party-centered focus, characteristic of every neophyte in an organization or a party (the case of the Undersecretary of the Army, Colonel Antonio P. Cordon);

Because of their suspect backgrounds and also on account of more recent events that induce mistrust (the case of the former Undersecretary of the Air Force, Colonel Camacho, the commander in chief of the Central-Southern sector, who was decorated for his achievements as a fighter pilot in October 1934 in operations against the Asturian workers, and whose adjutant just defected to the enemy with valuable plans and reports concerning our air force capabilities).

While our best and most loyal pilots are idle or occupy positions beneath their skill levels and their ranks, the air force in the Northern Sector is commanded by a person who is neither a bombardier nor a pilot, Reyes; the Undersecretary of the Air Force is Colonel Núñez Maza, who was a captain when the movement began in July 1936, and the Quartermaster's Corps Colonel Luna is the Chief of Staff of the Air Force



High Command, a captain when the movement began, whose behavior in Asturias left much to be desired.

We also have, for example, a lieutenant colonel Quintana, who holds three positions. This is the same person who, a few days before the movement began in July 1936, went to Mallorca with Major Fanjul, the brother of the general shot with Goded, and he met with Goded there. Another person with three positions is the Commander in Chief of the Army in the Madrid Region, who rendered homage to Goded on July 19 at the Naval Air Station of Barcelona, along with Captain Carrasco.

We shall not mention the large number of officers who have not been promoted since the movement began, not even by way of the kinds of promotions that reward mere loyalty to the regime.

Without a review of the high-level commands and the personnel of the general staffs, our main force, the force of morale, cannot constitute the barrier that we all desire against the forces of the invasion.

We are not seeking to transform the Popular Front into an executive organ, but we do want it to help clarify for the government certain situations that might lead us to more difficult and conclusive events....

Such was the tone of the FAI's address to the Popular Front, the political nexus that claimed to support the Government.

The first response to our presentation was the press campaign to praise the achievements of those whom we referred to as deserving, at the very least, to be removed from their positions. And behind closed doors, the lackeys of Dr. Negrín savored their victory over our views. We were defeated because, in the name of the movement itself, common cause was made with our enemies on this side of the barricades, who were no less evil than the enemies on the other side; but the suffocation of our demands in the network of complicities upon which the Government was based is not evidence of our having been entirely wrong.

We reproduce these documents, and many others that we will not even mention could also be reproduced if the need were to arise, so that each person can bear his share of responsibility for his part in the shameful loss of the war.

We also called for the appointment of a Commander in Chief of the Armies of the Republic, since this was the first war fought by Spain without a responsible leader for two and a half years. We offered examples from all our wars; we brought forth as evidence the tactical regulations for the use of Large Units, etc., so that any doubts about the need to satisfy our petition should be dispelled. Everyone responded positively to our suggestions, they all understood that we would have conducted the war differently, but they thought that everything was just fine the way it was, and that by staying the course we would achieve victory.

If Franco were to have wanted to weaken our forces, and to dismember them, demoralize them and pave the way for his victory, he could not have found better instruments than the leading institutions of the parties and organizations of Republican Spain. These institutions made it possible for a government as opposed to the people and to Spain as the Negrín Government to remain in office. To each his own! The victors should reward all their servants, within or without the so-called nationalist ranks. The war lasted so long because it was not possible to win it before

the people were weakened and demoralized by men like Prieto and Negrín and their numerous satellites.

Discouraged and embittered, we ended up for the millionth time being drowned in the sterility of the Popular Front when it came to doing anything but applauding the Government and crushing the voice of criticism of the discontented.

Throughout the whole time that we expressed such views, some of the illustrious representatives of the parties and organizations of Republican Spain whispered the word, defeatism. We were defeatists because we wanted to abolish the obvious conditions of imminent defeat? But if we did not use the Popular Front, where were we supposed to bring our discontent, our truth, if the press was subjected to communist censorship, and the wall of restrictions on all freedom of expression and criticism was impenetrable? Should we have resorted once again to clandestine mimeographed leaflets? Should we have returned to our old conspiratorial ways of the past? That was the only solution that remained to us.

In the history of Spain there is no record of such servility towards tyranny as was displayed towards the Negrín Government. One could find a few weak resemblances in history, in the epoch of Ferdinand VII, but that was a phenomenon of a different kind. It would be hard to find a comparable case of corruption and voluntary servitude, even hundreds of years ago, in our history.

News from the front brought daily confirmations of our fears and predictions. The demoralization of the Army was complete. The only units that maintained any discipline and any will to resist, for reasons far removed from the government propaganda, or precisely because of the fact that in these units the propaganda and the corrosive activities of the Government could not operate, were those in which our comrades were more or less totally dominant.

Our uncertainty about the military situation was shared by those who did not want to allow themselves to be bought off by the masters of the moment, the agents of the sinister plans of Stalin. We tried to encourage them to seek honorable solutions, but they did not want to accept the ones that we proposed, a change of Government and a profound purge of the military commands and the directive positions in the Army and the administration. All in vain!

As our reward for what we tried to do to save Spain from the tragic and shameful end that was rapidly approaching, the agents of Moscow took the heroic measure of dispatching General Asensio to Washington, ordered arrests that could not be carried out without arousing serious dissent, and decreed several assassinations that could not be executed quickly enough before the collapse of the Stalinist military and police gangster state, and because they would not have been so easy, anyway, and above all because they would have had repercussions involving unforeseen consequences. The assassination of Andrés Nin and the moral effects of that crime saved many lives.

Since the Popular Front was completely deaf to even the least objection against the Negrín Government, and since all other avenues of publicity were also closed to us, we resolved to direct an appeal to the President of the Republic, Manuel Azaña. We could not appeal to the legislature, which had surrendered, like the parties and organizations, to the policy of Moscow; we could not use any representative of the Government to express our dissent, because there was no such person; we could not use the press, or propaganda, to speak to the people and to tell them the truth about what was going on in the war and in the world. At least the President of the Republic should know that we were not part of the chorus of adulation and servility, and that we disavowed all responsibility for our imminent defeat.

With García Birlan and Federica Montseny we visited Azaña at the beginning of December. It was the first time that we had presented, in the name of the FAI, our views on policy to the chief of State. We had decided to break with our tradition of total abstention in view of the grave situation faced by Spain.

Here is a summary of our appeal to Azaña:

In the general political order: Formation of a real Spanish Government, one that does not bear, in fact and in law, the stigma of its dependence on Russia, insofar as our present Government is composed of men who are exempt from any accountability for their administration that is both disastrous and irresponsible.

A transparent policy of financial solvency, to buoy the confidence and morale of the civilian population and the front, as opposed to the secret, one-man policy that now prevails.

In the military order: Appointment of a Commander in Chief of the Armies of the Republic.

Employment of the military officers who have been passed over for promotions, refused commissions and persecuted for not submitting to the dictatorship of the Communist Party, and a purging of the military command structure.

A combing-out of the high level command centers in the Army, the air force and the navy, due to the discredit into which they have fallen after two consecutive years of defeat and confusion.

Suppression of all party politics in the army.

Incorporation of the bloated forces of public order, sorted according to their conscription classes, into the units of the regular Army.

Restructuring of the administration of the war industries, in order to increase output.

International policy: implement an independent foreign policy so that it does not appear that Republican Spain is a mere instrument of Soviet diplomacy.

There was more, but those were the main points of our appeal. If they were not complied with, we would renounce any responsibility for the inevitable downfall.

The President of the Republic, who was on this occasion much more voluble than usual, expressed his complete agreement with our views, and explained how he had been trying to influence the course of events in the direction of our proposals.<sup>7</sup> He reminded us that, as we were also

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<sup>7</sup> "It was many months ago that a government Minister, the Prime Minister himself, who is not exactly a Talleyrand when it comes to political talent, but who is at least like him with respect to his almost morbid love for political exhibitionism, announced that all of Spain could be lost, but that they, Negrín and his team of brilliant statesmen, would continue to govern Spain from France. And now they want to fulfill that prediction. Only such a hypnotic, almost pathological, fascination with power could explain how, at a particular moment in the year 1938 when Azaña even thought of changing government policy and therefore the Government itself, Negrín, with the insolence of a big baby, of someone who is basically weak and without character, but who by way of an effort of simulation wants to appear to be a real dangerous tough guy, told Azaña right to his face: 'You won't remove me from office, and if you try, I will resist, and I will assume the leadership of a mass movement and the army, which supports me.' It is from you, señor Martínez Barrio, that I heard this deplorable anecdote, and you heard it from Azaña who, it would appear, tolerated this spontaneous outburst, a veritable coup d'état, without ordering the arrest of his insolent subordinate or

aware, constitutionally he had no other recourse than to abide by the decisions of the legislature or the parties and organizations that participated in the Government. The legislative branch of the government [*Las Cortes*] had repeatedly expressed its unanimous support for Negrín and for his policy, and as for the Popular Front, we constituted its only dissenting voice, since the other parties and organizations, when we had appealed to them to support our proposals, displayed their complete approval of the Prime Minister. What could we do?

Legally, that was the case. Any responsibility that Azaña may have had for the continued existence of the Negrín Government had to be shared by the men who claimed to represent the opinion and the will of the Spanish people in the legislature or in the Popular Front. Everyone in Spain, however, was sick and tired of the Negrín Government and its communist and pro-communist military, financial and police team. Yet we were the only ones who dared to express this sentiment, this authentic sentiment of the people, in the name of an organization. Poor democratic structure, a useless mechanism of action that cannot avoid using the methods of the dictatorships!

A gesture of support for our proposals from Azaña would have had an immense impact, even during that final period, when the enemy offensive that our irresponsible government had assured us that it could repel was imminent.

We warned Azaña that, based on our knowledge of conditions at the front, the situation of the troops, the discontent among the officers, the prevailing disorder and incompetence, and the declining morale of the population on the home front, we were obliged to declare that the enemy offensive would not be repulsed and that the war was virtually over, without an immediate change of Government, of procedures, and of objectives.

If our proposals were to have been implemented, we still had the resources and reserves, more than any other political or trade union force, to have a serious impact on events, but this would only be possible with a different government, with other political procedures, with other war aims.

Negrín was notified within hours of our interview with Azaña, and of our proposals. But he should not have been worried, because our independence, our sense of dignity, and our resistance to corruption, were fully counteracted by the attitude of all the other parties and organizations that were yoked to his victorious chariot. We were sure that we were the only ones who could still galvanize the will of the working class and peasant masses, because of both the quantity and the quality of our militants, and because everyone knew that we had not been contaminated by the *negrinista* policy.

Besides, we have always had the reputation of teaching by example, while we could point to the outrageous fact that almost all the preachers of resistance until victory were men who were eligible for conscription, but who were exempted from having to serve in the military in exchange for their unconditional support for Dr. Negrín, men who had furthermore worn out their welcome with the masses because of their blunders, their repeated failures, and by their infantile folly, if we should attribute this feature to folly rather than to plain unvarnished treason as the motive for their conduct.

Of our basic proposals, the points that we thought were indispensable to contain the enemy offensive, none were implemented. The government would not budge an inch. It was the only

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taking advantage of this opportune moment to resign" (Luis Araquistain, letter to Martínez Barrio, President of the Cortes, April 4, 1939, Paris).

thing that was immobile in Republican Spain, where the Republic itself was sinking right before our eyes.

An appearance of *détente* was contrived with respect to the autonomous governments of Catalonia and Euzkadi, according to reports in the press, after banquets with the respective representatives of these tendencies. To satisfy some people, the Commissariat of Religion was created, masses were celebrated, and religious burials were allowed. Others were supposed to be content with the return of Quero Morales, who had resigned during the last crisis, to the office of Undersecretary of State. Agreement obtained from above, between the summits of power, therefore seemed to be complete. The Negrín Government was a strong Government, supported by the official positions of the parties, the trade union organizations, and the autonomous Governments. In this choir only our poor voice was lacking, which represented something more than an organization of struggle and ideas, it represented Spain, the Spain of labor and of the war, the people's Spain, with which none of the other parties and organizations concurred.

So, did we just cross our arms, shut ourselves up in an ivory tower, and remain passive in the face of so much infamy and so much tragedy? No. We returned once again to our mission, to offer a proposal to the Government, on December 7, on our own account, as combatants independent of the existing military mechanism whose virtues we did not recognize despite the futile praise lavished on it by the journalists and the politicians of the pro-government faction.

We told the Government, among other things:

We consider that it is necessary, in view of our inferior position with respect to military equipment, to save the human material that we still have, which is incomparable as a mass of fighters, but finite, and to look for a way to fight man to man....

After the Battle of the Ebro, whose consequences did not escape our notice, and in view of the international situation, we think that one of the most effective ways of waging an offensive struggle against the invasion consists in coordinated action, supported by every available means, in the so-called rebel zone, that is, Spanish-style war [guerra a la española]....

The FAI has not spared nor will it spare any efforts with respect to the war on national and international fascism. It is largely due to the efforts of the FAI that this war ever began at all, due to its defensive participation in the crushing of the rebellion in Catalonia, and the FAI was also responsible for the first organized resistance mobilized in loyalist Spain, without weapons or financial resources....

Because of our knowledge of the country, due to the fact that many of our comrades are still involved in active or passive resistance in the rebel zone, we believe that we are in an incomparable position to organize a battlefront behind enemy lines with incalculable consequences as a factor of decomposition in the other zone and of active revolt against the invasion. We are absolutely certain that in this respect we are the only force that can carry out effective action....

Then we set forth a detailed plan of action to wage war behind the enemy's lines, where we proposed to infiltrate thousands of our battle-tested men, and solicited the blessings and the material support of the Government for this enterprise.

The Chief of Staff of the Central Front, General Rojo, gave our proposal a favorable review from the point of view of military efficacy, but Negrín notified us through his servant Zugazagoitia

that everything that we had proposed was already being implemented, at the initiative of the Government, and that we should notify him in advance of any steps we might take in this direction.

We knew that this was a lie, we knew how the official republican propaganda directed at Franco's zone was being conducted and where its budget was squandered, we knew that certain intelligence services had been created that did nothing but lodge their men in fancy French hotels and send reports from France about what was being said in the press.

We had kept in touch with Franco's zone, not the way the Basques did, in complicity with the enemy authorities, but by taking all kinds of risks, crossing the double borders of the republican and nationalist frontiers. Our agents worked in Zaragoza, in Pamplona, everywhere. What we wanted to do was to amplify this infiltration, with more resources, with a more far-reaching strategy, seeking out likely contacts and carrying out actions in small groups of guerrillas.

Together with a few high level military commanders and some political figures who opposed, as we did, the Negrín Government, we evaluated the possible extent of this kind of action behind the nationalist lines, which might perhaps have been able to turn into an independent movement against the Italian and German invasion, but also against the Russian invasion, under the banner that we had ourselves raised: Spain for the Spaniards!

Properly speaking, our intention, we must confess, did not consist in giving the palm of victory to a regime that did not deserve our defense and which concluded in a bacchanal of rich gangsters, but in situating our men on an independent terrain of action, against both sides, but at the side of the Spanish people and in defense of their interests and their fate.

Instead of accepting our suggestions, the Government resolved to call up two more conscription classes. We were opposed to this, and once again we stood alone. We pointed out that with the categories that had already been mobilized, if their personnel were utilized rationally, there were more than enough men to defend the reduced front that remained to us. We pointed out that in the air force, with ten bombers and about fifty or sixty fighter planes, there were 60,000 men. And concerning its quality, the following facts provide eloquent testimony: when a request was circulated among the air force's seven thousand officers and non-commissioned officers for volunteers to join the army, only one lieutenant, one captain and one colonel answered the call. An enormous number of conscripts have been granted refuge in the *carabineros*, the Assault Guards and other useless home front units. We said that this noxious apparatus should be used for the war in its current form and then any other conscription classes can be called up as needed.

We calculated that more than one hundred thousand men could be extracted from these forces of public order and from the treasury police, without undermining the necessary functions of these institutions. We were preaching in the desert!

In our total isolation, we had the impression that we were surrounded by enemies rather than by allies.

Those leaders of parties and organizations who were always in absolute agreement, and above all when it was a matter of confronting our critical observations—were they working together for defeat? Were they sincere in their supine attitude towards the government? Or was it simply a matter of personal idiocy or psychological and moral defects caused by the positions they held? Were we the ones who were wrong? Was it possible that we, and a handful of isolated military officers and political figures, were the sole exceptions? The general opinion is one of the criteria for truth, say the Catholic philosophers.

As we encountered one setback after another in our hopeless battle with the gang of Russian agents, testimonials of support began to arrive from the front. They were not numerous, but they were significant and they encouraged us to continue on the road that bore the signs of the only road of resistance and dignity. But the leadership mechanisms of the parties and organizations were blind and deaf to the idea of such changes. A coup d'état? It would necessarily come to that if the war lasted much longer, due to the work of the clandestine nuclei that we had begun to organize in every unit, and due to the growing discontent among some military commanders who were not taken in by muscovitism. At the time, however, the main positions of command were held by unconditional supporters of Stalin, or docile and weak characters, and our units, which were systematically integrated into a Greater Unity, were tactically dependent for the most part on communist formations.

The enemy offensive began on December 23, advancing against all our positions on the front. The attack was crudely staged. The intention was to discover which sectors of the front would resist and which would fold. Wherever the defending forces were predominantly libertarian, in the Northern Zone, for example, their combative spirit was admirable and the enemy's opportunities for advance were few and far between. In those areas, Franco's offensive was stopped and contained. The former Durruti Column, one of whose flanks was covered by *carabineros* who fell back before the enemy assault during the first few days of the offensive, suffered five thousand casualties, but held its positions and preserved its honor. On the other hand, the section of the front defended by the famous Red Army of the Ebro, whose commanding officers were communists to a man, under the command of the so-called colonel Modesto and lieutenant colonel Lister, totally collapsed. It was through this sector that the enemy's advance was concentrated. The great hope of the Stalinist dictatorship in Spain, the Army Group of the Ebro, did nothing but retreat in forced marches toward the French border, which necessitated reinforcements for the Northern Sector.

The Government and its high command saw that all their calculations had proven wrong. Or perhaps that all of their calculations were working out exactly as planned?

They proposed that battalions of volunteers should be formed to man machine gun emplacements as a last-ditch effort to contain the enemy's advance, and our participation was solicited. With morale the way it was? With the regular army in flight? We should hand ourselves over to an incompetent, if not frankly treasonous, government? We clearly stated our views: we have no confidence in the government, we have no faith in the high command of the army, since our comrades were still being assassinated. If the government were to offer us the necessary guarantees, if we were to be allowed to appoint the military commanders ourselves, and if these forces were to be used under our direct control, then we would provide volunteer battalions. Without these guarantees, no, and there would be no such volunteers.

Our position was greeted with a clamor of fake indignation on the part of all the parties and organizations. Demand guarantees from the government? What you have to do is shut up and follow orders.

But it was because we did not shut and follow orders on July 19, 1936, that we surged into the streets. And we were the same people we were then.

These volunteer units were tested without our participation, and they failed, as we had predicted. In view of this setback, ten more conscription classes were called up, amidst enormous confusion. Only an insignificant number of the conscripts showed up at the draft centers, despite the use of terror.

We then decided to form volunteer battalions on our own account, as the Iberian Anarchist Federation. Then we would see just how much they would act in accordance with or against the government. We had resolved to staff these units exclusively with our own commanders and not to let them lead us wherever they wanted, with our eyes closed. What we wanted was to have at our disposal a properly organized and responsible force, to meet any eventualities that might arise. Even at this very late stage of the war we were hamstrung to some extent by some of our own friends who, in the name of the CNT, still blindly followed the directives of the government and devoted themselves to the task of sending human meat to the slaughterhouse, while we, for our part, thought that we had to save as many comrades as we could and that the government was an obstacle that stood in the way of an effective war strategy and that it had to be disobeyed and overthrown.

We proposed, at a joint meeting with the CNT and the Libertarian Youth, the formation of a Defense Council, but our initiative was rejected. With Negrín until victory!

Only a truly popular decision could save the situation. But everyone was afraid of the people, more afraid of the people than they were of Franco, and the final tragedy now seemed inevitable.

The enemy advance was chalking up more and more spectacular gains with each passing day. No force opposed its forward progress. On January 5 Borjas Blancas fell, on the 14<sup>th</sup> Valls, on the 15<sup>th</sup> Reus and Tarragon....

When the headquarters of Sarabia's General Staff was moved to Matadepera, north of Tarrasa, in mid-January, we saw one of our presentiments fulfilled, but it was one that we did not dare to express. The government abandoned the struggle, because it had abandoned the industrial zone of Catalonia, it abandoned Barcelona. The war was given up for lost.

At that point we refused to engage in any dialogue with the lackeys and sinecurists of the Negrín Government. We also refused to attend any more meetings of the Popular Front. But in private gatherings and meetings of the FAI we discussed the military situation. Barcelona had been abandoned by the Government ... of Victory. We explained why. Some friends, still inclined to expect miracles from the mysterious magical powers of the man of resistance and still getting their information from official sources, directed inquiries to the government offices in Barcelona to discover whether or not this was true. Their concerns were placated with fine words. Abandon Barcelona? Nonsense! They were told that we were hallucinating, that we were defeatists, that we should be shot. The same as always. Resistance was possible, the situation was grave, but not desperate. And so the wheels began to turn. Vapid articles in the press, vague addresses broadcast on the radio, proclamations, declarations, lies that were not even white lies. Just bureaucracy.

Manresa fell on January 24. When the enemy forces arrived at Tarrasa we feared that they might break through from Granollers to Mataró, and surround Barcelona. The celebrated Government of Victory and its entourage of tens of thousands of *arriviste* civil servants fled towards the border on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The brave González Peña heroically took up a position four kilometers from France.

The FAI held a meeting at midnight on January 25. In Barcelona, no one remained but us and those who, still fooled by the assurances issued by the Government only a few hours before, did not know that the Negrín gang had already fled the city.

We reported on the gravity of the situation and on its possibilities.

The enemy forces had proceeded along the coast from Garraf and were now in Casteldefels. They could be in Barcelona, if they wanted to, by morning. Nothing stood in their way.



Enemy units were also advancing along the highway from Martorell and would soon be on the outskirts of Tibidabo, not to mention the danger that they could cut off the escape routes towards the North by taking the salient between Granollers and Mataró.

Means for resistance? As we had often pointed out, the army created in the *Gaceta* did not exist in reality. The forces of public order were neutralized by panic, in some cases, and by enemy propaganda, in others. Those who felt that they were tainted with complicity with the Republican cause had also already fled from the city. We had to rely only on our own forces and those that we could improvise in the heat of the struggle that would soon begin in the streets of Barcelona, if we were prepared to resist.

We had no artillery, and the ammunition had been transported towards the North about two weeks earlier. The defense of a city is militarily simple and safe enough, if these conditions are met: the useless civilian population is evacuated, women, children and the elderly; the existence of food and other supplies to withstand a siege; and an abundance of ammunition.

With one and a half million people in the city, without enough food for more than fifteen days, without artillery, with hardly any weapons or ammunition—is it worth the price of offering more sacrifices? Should the FAI assume the responsibility for prolonging on its own account a resistance that could no longer decide the war in our favor and would instead be interpreted and used in exile by the traitors in our government as an unexpected political windfall?

No, in these conditions in which we had been abandoned, we must not contribute to producing even one more victim for this war. We could destroy factories, we could burn down half the city. For what purpose? We denied ourselves a futile vengeance whose consequences would have made things worse for those who remained in the city.

Our report, even though no one expected anything new, produced dismay. It seemed incredible that the prospect that we had been announcing as inevitable for almost two years unless there was a radical change in national and international policies, was now a palpable reality.

In one last outburst of hope, emissaries departed from the meeting and went off in various directions to see if any of our reports could be verified, especially the one about the proximity of Franco's troops. It was all true! The leaders of the parties and organizations, who had as recently as a few hours before been proclaiming the slogans of resistance until victory, resisted all night long without sleeping, but their resistance proceeded in the direction of Gerona as their first rest stop....

At midnight we received a phone call from General Asensio. The war was lost, but the end could not have been more shameful. What were we thinking of doing? Could he count on our help to set an example with our own sacrifice, and thus save the honor of Barcelona? If he could count on us, he would demand that the fugitive government hand over command over the city.

We hesitated. Resistance was useless. The small amount of ammunition and the scarce supplies of food that the heroes of resistance of the Government of Victory had left us, would last only so long. And then, nothing. We were not immune to the human factor and we felt a wave of combativity and heroism sweep over us at the very moment when the masses would expect the FAI to assume responsibility for the defense of Barcelona, but this would have to be done, naturally, in revolt against the government that had fled the city. We did not care whether we lived or died. This was a quite generalized state of mind. If we used to run to the bomb shelters, now we viewed the arrival of the Italian bombers with indifference and everyone just went on his way amidst the sirens and the explosions. For us, the mainspring of our will to live had ended with a defeat that we did not deserve.

“Yes, General Asensio, you can count on us.”

If he would assume command over the garrison and obtain some weapons and munitions, but above all, some of the materiel that had been transported towards the North, we would stay in Barcelona. He would personally deliver those munitions on the morning of January 26 if we answered in the affirmative. If our answer was “no”, then he, too, would head for the border.

On the morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>, the bombers would not let us get a minute’s rest; you could not tell when the sirens were sounding and when they stopped. The DECA had withdrawn. All activity and all traffic had come to a standstill in Barcelona. Those who were in the streets were looking for vehicles to facilitate their departure following the same route as their brave government. We heard nothing from Asensio. He had refused to take command over the city, even after it was abandoned!

Naturally, we could have assumed command ourselves; no one would have stopped us, much less lieutenant colonel Carlos Romero, who was ostensibly the military commander of the city, but who only had less than a battalion at his disposal. On the night of January 24–25 almost all the most well known leaders of our organization left the city. Only the people remained, in part happy to see the war come to an end, but in part terrified by the reality of a situation that they had not foreseen until the very last moment. In crucial moments like these, hours, or even minutes, are decisive. Even on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January, it was still possible to organize the defense of the city. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, any idea of organizing such a defense was shattered by generalized indifference towards any attempt to do so, including ours. The enemy forces did not enter Barcelona on the 26<sup>th</sup>, because the rebel leaders thought that it was better to allow the city to be evacuated.

We calculated that we had just enough time to pass through the neighboring towns, that were largely ignored, where excellent comrades might suddenly be surrounded. So we travelled through these towns. A few hours after passing through Granollers, half-destroyed by Italo-German bombing, Franco’s troops arrived and at the same time they entered Barcelona without firing a single shot.

Such were the rewards of Russian policy in Spain.

While Franco’s armies were occupying Barcelona, the cheerful Prime Minister of the government of victory was declaring to the foreign press: “The Republic currently has perfectly organized fighting men, and war materiel in abundance.... Today I can assure you, categorically, that we shall find a way out of this situation.”

And Negrín’s cynicism was parroted by that poor cabinet Minister, Alvarez del Vayo, Litvinov’s secretary, who published the following statement in the foreign press on January 28: “The government is absolutely determined to continue the struggle.”

Numantines with airplanes!

Do you want us to talk about the shameful incidents, the crimes, the new attempts at blackmail that took place while an entire people was in motion, on foot, or in cars or trucks, in boats and ships, gripped with panic and frantically attempting to reach the French border, displaying a spectacle such that history cannot duplicate? Just imagine at least 600,000 people flooding all the open roads to France at the same time.

During that terrible exodus we meditated on the fruitlessness of the sacrifice of so many precious lives since July 19, 1936, on the fronts for thirty months, and on the downfall of a way of life of faith and struggle. Not only had the war come to an end; a world of noble hopes of well-being and justice for all had also come to an end.

We can't help but recall the spectacle of another mass exodus, two years before, that was also heading for the border. It was at nightfall one day at the end of September [1936], if our memory is accurate. The enemy battleship "Canarias" was shelling the coastline of the Bay of Rosas. The local authorities were afraid that the rebels might land troops there and they notified us of their concerns, calling for help. They also saw other warships in the vicinity.

At that unforgettable Central Committee of the Militias of Catalonia, the true institution of the people's war and revolution, we resolved to raise the alarm and to notify the most important population centers that they should be on alert, that they should carefully monitor the coasts, that they should set up checkpoints on the streets and highways, that they should organize militia convoys. Those who had no other weapons occupied all the strategic locations in Catalonia with nothing but hand grenades.

In view of the magnitude of the mobilization we thought we could contain the resulting avalanche, but this was impossible, for while some towns succeeded in getting the armed population to remain in a state of alert, taking positions oriented towards the coast, and awaiting orders, in most cases the convoys of militiamen spontaneously drove off towards Rosas in search of the enemy. All the way from Tortosa to Rosas the roads were filled with people's forces determined to fight to the death if necessary. There were towns, like Sallent, that presented us with 500 men armed with rifles, machine guns, mortars and hand grenades, organized in a small motorized column.

At that time, the machinations of the Russian agents were already a factor as they worked to undermine our influence among the people, accusing us of every crime. The spectacle of that memorable night of mobilization in response to the shelling of Rosas made them understand that their time had not yet come. The working class and peasant people of Catalonia in arms still had to be contended with, and these people were prepared to make any sacrifice, should we give them the signal, to assure a new social order of justice for all. The Russian agents decided that the situation was more favorable in May 1937.

After two years of communist and republican rule, the exodus only became greater, but this time not towards the enemy as in September 1936, but towards the border where the promised land was imagined to lie, deceived by the idea that once they were in France the horrors, the nuisances and the privations of a war whose goals they did not understand would come to an end, and the people who had endured the war with blood and tears would finally find peace.

## Conclusion

The Spanish war came to an end thanks to the impressive amount of Italo-German aid granted to our enemies, in men and in materiel, and also thanks to the criminal complacency of the so-called democratic Governments, authors of the farce of non-intervention. The Spanish war is over, but the world that prevented us, under futile pretexts and false presumptions, from having any chance to really put up a fight, now has to pay the piper in a new hecatomb.

Bourgeoisie and proletarians alike, in every country, were united in sharing the comfortable interpretation that our war involved only us, the belligerents. When they were not committing the grave crime of helping our enemies—the proletarian paradise, Russia, sent the gasoline to Italy that made it possible for the fascist air force to bomb us, destroying cities and massacring civilian populations—they were imposing blockades on us to make us yield. France and England as a result had to face the reality that we had warned them so many times was inevitable. No intervention or unilateral intervention in favor of the rebels! That was the position that led to our downfall.

The defeat of fascism in Spain would have been the first step towards the destruction of fascism in Europe and in the world. We understand the tragic situation of England, which had supported Italian fascism since it began to show its true colors as an instrument for the destruction of freedom, when it was suddenly confronted by the obligation, if it were to attend to its own interest, to help the anti-fascist cause in Spain. The events we have since witnessed show us that it made its choice in favor of Italy and against our Spain, against this same Spain that it had believed it was duty-bound to help in its struggle against Napoleon, and made its choice this time against Spain to its own detriment.

If the Franco-British allies are to be victorious in the present military conflict, they will first have to satisfy in advance the debt they contracted with their stance towards our war. All debts must be paid!

The struggle in Spain did not end the way we wanted it to end, but rather the way we had foreseen that it would end if certain changes in the leadership and the policy directing the war were not made: with a military catastrophe—with the collapse of the fronts and of the home front—and with an orgy of bloodshed at the expense of the losers. Two books tell us about this final phase: one by Colonel Segismundo Casado, *The Last Days of Madrid*, and the other by J. García Pradas, *Cómo terminó la guerra en España* [How the War in Spain Ended]. Both confirm, point by point, from their vantage points in the Central theater of the war, what we have sought to depict from our position in Catalonia. The same disastrous intervention by the Russian emissaries and their Spanish allies, who were so weak and so amenable to corruption, the same crimes against the people, the same conspiracy against Spain, the same moral decomposition achieved by means of a policy that had no other goal than the predominance of a single party in the State apparatus.

Of the three causes that we declared were the fundamental causes of our defeat—a) the Franco-British policy of (unilateral) non-intervention; b) Russian intervention in our affairs; c) the patho-

logical centralism of the itinerant Madrid-Valencia-Barcelona-Figueras Government—only with regard to this third aspect does our account differ essentially from the accounts offered by these two authors. We shall not examine these two books about the end of our war, however, with reference to the events in which we did not participate—and not because of any lack of desire to do so or interest in their outcome—or for their description of milieus with which we were not personally acquainted.

We now feel that our defeat, and the fact that we have revealed more than some people think advisable about the cloak of secrecy in which our movement has always operated, have elevated us above the heat of battle. This is why we can speak about the past and maintain that, from now on, each person will have to bear the responsibility that is due to him in the tragedy of Spain. We are doing enough now to bear our own share.

We represented the oldest political-social organization of modern Spain. The Iberian Anarchist Federation is the same Alliance for Socialist Democracy [*Alianza de la Democracia Socialista*] founded in 1868 in Madrid and in Barcelona and which spread throughout the Peninsula, including Portugal. A close-knit nucleus of propaganda, working class organization and struggle, the victors are still concerned with the pursuit of its liquidation, to judge by the numerous everyday indications that neither the terror nor the shootings have succeeded in making it disappear. The end of the war caused many thousands of us to be removed from the struggle. But even with our exclusion, it is not to be taken for granted that our movement will be totally uprooted. Others have already taken the places of the fallen and of the survivors who went into exile, survivors who are also final casualties, because survival outside of our geographic, political and social climate is the same thing as death. To carry on with the history of Spain there is only one suitable terrain: Spain!

It is to this clandestine movement, characterized by a strong moral and combative constitution, that the orientation, the development and the defense of the revolutionary working class organizations in Spain, their heroic struggles, their unparalleled resistance to all the methods of the political inquisitions of right and left, without interruption, since the dismal era of Sagasta, is due. How many bleak periods of bitterness have we traversed since then! How many generations of militants have been consumed in this battle! Now it is the turn of our generation to fall in battle. And it has fallen but it fought the good fight, on its own terms. That is why it will rise again, and it is already arising, the same red thread of our history, and it will carry on with the battle for justice. But what can all of this matter to those who are no longer soldiers in this crusade?

The activities in pursuit of progress and justice that have taken place for almost three quarters of a century have had a major impact on the development of modern Spanish history. On more than one occasion, when all other possible means were foreclosed, and mere propaganda and trade union methods were rendered impossible, it was necessary to resort to more energetic and expedient measures. The torturers and executioners of the people were always haunted by the shadow of anonymous vengeance. Certain individual acts of retaliation and various armed insurrections—the last ones having taken place in December and January of 1933 and in October of 1934 against the exotic Republic itself—and the invisible but constant operational presence of our groups dispersed in every walk of life, spurred a lot of talk about us, weaving a legend and a myth. This myth and this legend proved, in July 1936, to largely correspond to reality in certain respects.

Outside of the passionate cooperation of revolutionary socialism in Madrid, with which we shared the victory over the military revolt in the capital of Spain, in all the other regions where

the military was defeated, we did almost all the work. And we were not victorious in all of Spain only because our people lacked weapons and the Government of the Republic warned the civil governors not to give arms to the people.

At the end of 1937 we had 154,000 members. It is true that they were fewer than they were before the war, but their influence reached millions of industrial workers and peasants. On many occasions left wing parties and organizations believed they were the determining elements of events when in fact they were nothing but puppets dominated by an environment that we had prepared in order to take one more step along the path of the economic, political and social progress of the country. We have mentioned, for example, why we had evicted the left from power in 1933, and why we decided to return it to power in February 1936.

Now we can speak of many things for which we were senselessly held responsible, and of those for which we were not held responsible because their sources and determining factors were unknown at the time.

None of the Parties that sought power in the Government or the legislature had an organization as strong as ours, nor did any of them possess the numerical forces that were so deeply rooted in the people, to whose interests and aspirations we always remained, and still remain, faithful. Due to our loyalty to the people, rather than to their Government, we sought to the very last moment to fully deploy our forces, in our own way, but we were not allowed to do so.

We never had any contacts or links with any organized force besides the National Confederation of Labor, a new name, dating only from 1911, of the old working class organization that was supported since 1869 by our movement. When the war began as a result of our victories against a succession of rebel army garrisons, we thought it was necessary to publicly show our face and to coordinate as many willing individuals as possible around the conflict. We are accused by some of having been more concerned with the war than with the revolution. The only way we could have established and consolidated a new economic and social organization was if we were victorious in the war. Where did they want us to carry out a revolution if most of the territory was in enemy hands? Are social revolutions made in the clouds? We were not victorious, we lost the terrain upon which a great social and economic transformation might have been carried out, because the workers and bourgeoisie of every country converged in a common policy to destroy us, standing by without doing anything or else working for our enemies. And the hoped-for revolution in Spain, which conformed to the climate and the preparation of the people called upon to carry it out, rather than to the dogmatic blueprints of parties, was liquidated for who knows how many years.

The final results of the conflict that began on July 19, 1936 and which ended as a real international war of Spain against the most aggressive military powers in Europe, in April 1939, cannot be forgotten or belittled. Only those who are ready to emulate that heroic saga and to pay the same price for their ideals that was paid by the Spanish revolutionaries for their own ideals have the right to accuse us of anything, to demand explanations or to lecture us. No fewer than two million people died on both sides, and more than one hundred thousand people were shot and murdered in Spain after the fascist victory. And then we have to add to these numbers a million prisoners in the Spanish concentration camps and a half million refugees in the concentration camps in France and North Africa, 60,000 of whom are estimated to have died during their exodus and in exile of starvation, exposure and despair.

These figures tell us something about the greatest outburst of popular heroism in modern times. Not even its defeat diminished its glory and its historical transcendence. These corpses

will be fertilizer for the vitality of eternal Spain, that will arise from its ashes, stronger and more invincible than ever.

The brave Government of Victory, that creature of Moscow, possesses enormous financial resources in foreign countries that could be used to meet the needs of the victims of the vast exodus. But just as we were unable in Spain, by means of the Popular Front, to obtain information about the situation of our treasury, we were also unable to obtain from the opportunist thieves who robbed our national treasury, in our requests directed to the institution of the Permanent Delegation of the Cortes, based in Paris, to provide even the least explanation of their profligacies. Some facts have come to light outside of certain circles of insiders, due to the sensational defection of Prieto and Negrín, each of whom claims to have the right to administer the loot from the war for their own benefit and for that of their friends and accomplices. For the most part, however, the matter remains obscure.

As for the reasons for our defeat, one of which was the policy of Russian intervention in Spain, perhaps even in close cooperation with Hitler's Germany, we should also add, for the masses, the proof of the deception they experienced and fought under and the discovery of the moral quality of the leaders and beneficiaries of our war. The myth of resistance with or without bread, with or without weapons, was merely an artifice so that those leaders could ensure their exclusive enjoyment after the disaster of the loot they acquired with our defeat, which was their victory.

And with those millions drained from an impoverished and disgraced Spain, consciences and pens will be purchased that, high above so much tragedy and so much ignominy, will raise the lucky ones up onto a pedestal of heroes. And that is just what they want, too. Someone once wrote, and we hope that this is the case: "They want to pass into history in marble and bronze but they will have to be satisfied with a dungheap."

There is but one pure, martyred hero, now and always: the Spanish people. We can no longer stand at its side, except with our sympathy and our affection. It is the only greatness before which we bow with respect. The only thing that puzzles us and embarrasses us is the fact that so many traitors have been able to emerge from this great people, in the name of the most diverse ideals.

The Iberian spirit lay crushed for almost three centuries after the defeat of the *comuneros* of Castille and of the brotherhoods of Valencia by the Emperor Charles V, and after the liquidation of the liberties of Aragon by Philip II. Who would have thought that the spirit of our people would still be alive in 1808? In that glorious heroic epic lasting six years Spain once again entered the rolls of History. But in 1823, the abject tyrant Ferdinand VII, who founded the bullfighting schools, once again succeeded in imposing his despotism with rivers of blood and countless martyrs. Between that era and July 1936, interspersed with civil wars, popular uprisings and periods of exhaustion and demoralization, an interval of a little more than a century, how many prophets had heralded the death of Spain? In 1936 our people once again showed themselves for what they really are, heroic in struggle and brilliant in economic and social reconstruction, recovering their own rhythm within a few months of liberty. The defeat of 1939 will last for a shorter or a longer period of time; but only at the cost of the total extermination of the Spanish people will it be possible to definitively change the spirit of this great people and succeed in suppressing its hope for a new life, for a new dawn.

Buenos Aires  
April 5, 1940

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Diego Abad de Santillán  
Why We Lost the War  
A Contribution to the History of the Spanish Tragedy  
1940

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