

Workers War To Stop Fascism

**Reports on the Events in Spain by the Secretariat of the International
Workingmen's Association**

Industrial Workers of the World

July 1937

Contents

The Development of Anti-Fascist Spain after July 19, 1936	3
The Position of the syndicalists and of Anarchists	3
The Road Followed by the C.N.T.	4
Counter-Revolution Makes Its Appearance	5
All power to the government!	5
Terroristic Campaign	6
The Conflicts in Catalonia: at the Frontiers of the Pyrenees	6
The Death of Roldan Cortada	7
The Workers' Sections with the C.N.T.	8
Calm is Re-established	9
Documents of the Fighting Days	9
An Appeal to the Policemen	10
The C.N.T. and F.A.I. and Trotskyism	11
The Present Situation in Catalonia	12
The C.N.T. Vital Nerve of Spain	13

The Development of Anti-Fascist Spain after July 19, 1936

In Spain, as elsewhere, the democratic bourgeoisie proved itself incapable of overcoming fascism. The Azana regime prepared the way for the clerical and military rebellion in the same way as the Weimar Republic had prepared the way for nazism. In the meanwhile, on July 19, 1936 a strong popular movement prevented the success of the military putsch in Spain, and if the traitor generals gained the upper hand in Saragossa, Palma, Seville, it was but due to the failure of the republican authorities. In a large part of the country the rebels were defeated only thanks to the heroic action of precisely that part of the population that was most relentlessly persecuted by the Azana regime: the revolutionary workers. The labor union organization of the revolutionary workers of Spain is the C.N.T. Its tactics resulted in the July 19 victory in Catalonia. The triumphs of the workers in this economically very important region of Spain created the possibility of seriously undertaking the war against fascism.

After the victory in the streets, the column of popular militia proceeded to the other districts dominated or menaced by the rebels; and in the rear, the social transformation of the economic life was begun. In this it was the labor unions that took the initiative. The social renovation of Spain began at the bottom: it was the workers who took the direction and the responsibility of the economic organization of the region. The only function that the state had left was to give sanction to the accomplished facts.

The Position of the syndicalists and of Anarchists

With a clear view of the possibilities of the moment, the C.N.T. declared itself for the immediate realization of its own goal; libertarian communism. The C.N.T. , through its syndicates, (labor unions), undertook the collectivization of the large and medium sized industrial enterprises, and declared itself for the substitution for the old State institutions, a new economic, political and cultural organism under the control of the labor unions. The position of the C.N.T. on this subject had been clearly set down prior to July 19, but alone, the C.N.T. could not accomplish this task. Therefore it proposed a revolutionary alliance between the anarchist and socialist labor unions: between the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. , in order to be able to carry out these objectives. Starting from this viewpoint, the C.N.T. granted the U.G.T. equal representation with itself on all committees, although the U.G.T. was not a labor union force in Catalonia prior to July 19, and after that date its growth was due to the fact that it became a haven of refuge for a certain moderate layer of the proletariat, and of the entire lower middle class.

At the time the battle was raging at the gates of Madrid and the defense of the capital city had become the crucial point of the struggle (the socialist-bourgeois government had fled to Valencia), the C.N.T. demanded the creation of a Defense Council that should replace the central government. The Marxists and the republicans refused to accept this proposition. The C.N.T. wanted the unity of the people against fascism, at all costs, and considered it its own mission to establish such a union. In order to facilitate the people's union against fascism, the C.N.T. laid aside its own tactical conceptions and consented to be represented in the central government. The workers of Madrid rallied for the second time in order to block the road to fascism and Madrid was saved.

Since July 19, the C.N.T. never ceased making sacrifices; many of its best militants died on the front and the C.N.T. did not insist on the unconditional immediate realization of its own social

aims. In spite of its being a powerful revolutionary organization, it abstained from imposing its own dictatorship, which it could have easily done in large portions of the country. The C.N.T. was inspired consistently by its traditional principle of liberty and free and voluntary collaboration, in its relations with the other anti-fascist organizations that used to consider the C.N.T. as the enemy organization and treated it as such. The disinterestedness of the C.N.T. , its generous tolerance towards the others and its readiness to forego, temporarily, the pressing forward of its own particular aims, all this was taken to be a sign of weakness by the old-line professional politicians–republicans, socialists, communists–and they took advantage of this to push forward their own political plans and to lessen the direct influence of the workers on the economic life of the country and to restore the old privileges. And discontent grew among the masses of workers, particularly in Catalonia. That was the real source of the tragical events of May 3-6, where the anarchists again gave proof of their strength and of their willingness to understand.

The Road Followed by the C.N.T.

The C.N.T. is a labor union organization; it considers that the building of socialism is the mission of the economic organization of producers and consumers, and not of a totalitarian State or of some political party with a dictatorial character. If the C.N.T. had followed since July 19 a policy of understanding with the other anti-fascist sectors and had made numerous sacrifices in order to allow the common policy to be carried out, this was because it considered that in this manner it is possible to build up the libertarian and anti-dictatorial socialism. Its tolerance, its rapprochement to the U.G.T. had a constructive character and was directed towards a positive goal.

"No other organization works with so much zeal for the economic reconstruction of the country, in a socialist sense," recently wrote *Fragua Social*, Valencia organ of the C.N.T.

"The collectivization movement developed rapidly as soon as the bourgeoisie lost its economic power. Through the labor unions, the workers seized the factories, the landed estates, the mines and the means of transportation. And that was but the natural outcome of an idea that was maturing in the minds of the workers. The workers were ready to take into their hands the administration and the direction of the national economy at the first opportunity they had ..."

"...Another proletariat, placed in the same circumstances but lacking the revolutionary tradition of the Spanish working class, would have lacked the social aim for which they should have striven, because they would have lacked the solid ideological basis which resides in the labor unions of the Iberian peninsula. The problems confronting us are not due to our lack of general orientation as was the case in the other revolutions (in other countries). The Spanish proletariat knows exactly what it wants. But we have to organize our activities, to coordinate them, so that our powerful popular movement, overcoming the difficulties of the embryonic stage of economic reconstruction, could advance towards the concrete forms of libertarian socialism. Pursuing this work, the C.N.T. consecrates its forces to the creation of national federations of industry on the one hand, and on the other hand, to the concluding of an alliance with the U.G.T. for the attainment of the economic and military tasks. The proletariat should solidly organize the economic life. The isolated enterprises and the efforts limited to certain particular spots should be condemned. The economy should rest on the industry and on the coordination of all industries."

"We should also bear in mind the fact that neither the one nor the other of the two labor union tendencies—the C.N.T. and U.G.T.—can singly accomplish that mission. The two organizations cannot act independently of each other. The U.G.T. cannot impose its will on the C.N.T. or vice-versa. If such a case would occur it would mean civil war.

"And neither can exist, simultaneously, two different forms of economy. In the factories, the workers have discovered the practical solution by mutual understanding between the followers of the two tendencies. But that should be realized also on a national scale. By contributing to the creation of industrial federations and to a C.N.T.-U.G.T. alliance, we are laying the foundation of a new Iberian economy, essentially different from all the other social experiments attempted up to now and which is a specialty of our own people."

The C.N.T.-U.G.T. collaboration policy is not a question of opportunism, but it is the very expression of the will of the Spanish syndicalists and anarchists. They are renouncing neither their libertarian aspirations nor their will to accomplish completely their social revolution. The C.N.T. has consistently followed this road since July 19, 1936. It has naturally met with obstacles on its road. The defenders of the old policy: politicians' bureaucracy and special privileges, have placed themselves against the categorical postulates of the libertarian revolution.

Counter-Revolution Makes Its Appearance

For the revolutionary workers of Spain, the struggle against fascism is merged into the struggle against the capitalist regime. Neither the hope of the problematic "aid" of the so called democratic states, nor the external political interests of Russia, could divert the C.N.T. from this point of view.

The small and middle class bourgeoisie of the country and of the cities, the artisans who are yet independent, the proletarian followers of reformistic organizations and especially the communists, carried on an active policy for the restoration of the old economic conditions. The corrupt bourgeois parliamentarism was presented as if it was the ideal of the people fighting against fascism. A big offensive was inaugurated against the revolutionary committees composed of representatives of the C.N.T. and of the U.G.T. and often also of the representatives of the antifascist political parties, committees that had assumed all the vital economic functions, after the miserable failure of the republican authorities following the fascist rebellion.

All power to the government!

Such was the common slogan of the right and left republicans, of socialists and communists. They made use of the long duration of the fight and of its transformation into a war, necessitating the most modern means of combat and an adequate military organization, as an argument for imperiously demanding the restriction of the revolutionary initiative of the workers. The definition of the "petite bourgeoisie" who were left of the process of collectivization, was stretched. The rural landowners were set up against the workers farm collectives. One of the symptoms of this struggle was the conflict that broke out between the communist minister of agriculture (of the Valencia government) and the farm workers' collective, formed by the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., in the orange plantations of the Valencia region. In the same sense the conflict broke out between the C.N.T. union of Barcelona and the minister of provisions, also an adherent of the Third In-

ternational, who brutally opposed the socialization of distribution (limited as it was to the food products), and against the socialization demanded by the revolutionary workers of Catalonia.

Terroristic Campaign

This situation led to the terrorist campaign carried on at Madrid by the communists against the C.N.T. In the region of the Center, during the last months eighty anarchist comrades were cowardly murdered. The Commissary of Public Order of the Madrid Defense Junta (abolished since) engaged in the most relentless persecutions against the C.N.T. in the region of the Center, where it is not as strong and powerful as in other places. At Almeria, the militia column chief, the anarchist Mareto, was thrown in jail and shamefully slandered. He was finally released on May 3. At Murcia, a secret communist Cheka was discovered, which had already done away with several anti-fascist inhabitants belonging to different schools of thought. The will of domination of the Third International, which never had a real influence over the masses of Spain, and whose centralistic ideology is diametrically opposed to the Spanish mentality, found a field of penetration in the socialist labor unions, the U.G.T. The Executive Board of the U.G.T. (whose seat is in Valencia) took issue against the domination of the U.G.T. by the communists in Catalonia. In the general elections within the U.G.T. the communists were defeated in Madrid as well as in the Asturias.

The contest between the defenders of the old bourgeois democracy, of the propagators of calm and of capitalist order on the one hand, and of the C.N.T. on the other hand, took more and more violent forms, especially in Catalonia.

The Conflicts in Catalonia: at the Frontiers of the Pyrenees

Already during the last governmental crisis in Catalonia—that lasted three weeks—the extent of the already mentioned opposition came to light. On this occasion, too, the C.N.T. showed itself accommodating, and for the sake of the anti-fascist unity sacrificed several demands that the revolutionary workers deemed of prime importance. The members of the C.N.T. gave then proof of their self-discipline by accepting the situation. But at that same time, certain incidents took place that seemed to be provocative.

Although the guard of the Pyrenees front was well taken care of by the workers' militia, the Central government suddenly sent several thousands of men into Catalonia as frontier troops for the replacement of the workers' guards. These troops (the carabinieri) were carefully handpicked in the preceding months by the central government and they were composed almost exclusively of the adherents of the two "marxian" parties. Their arrival in Catalonia provoked general astonishment and their placement at the frontier points as a provocation. There were violent frictions at the border. The small, purely anarchist town of Puigcerda—where the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. performed a great social and cultural accomplishment, admired even by the foreign visitors—was the center of this new conflict. The president of the Peoples' Council of Puigcerda, one of the most notable representatives of the Catalonia anarchist movement, Martin, fell under the bullets of the Catalonia separatists, who ranged themselves on the side of the troupes sent by the central government.

The Death of Roldan Cortada

At that same time a new incident took place. A well known militant of the U.G.T. , Roldan Cortada, was murdered near Barcelona by some unknown persons who to this day could not be discovered, in spite of all the searches undertaken. The Regional Committee of the C.N.T. , in a manifesto that it immediately issued, condemned the murderous act. But at Mollins, near Barcelona, nine members of the C.N.T. were arrested in connection with this murder. Not finding a shadow of guilt against any of them, they were finally released. A campaign of slander was started against the C.N.T. Large peasant centers, where the C.N.T. was predominant, were placed in a state of defense and public order was maintained by armed workers. In such places where the old police—partly under communist influence—functioned, the anarchists were harassed, especially in the central quarters of Barcelona. In spite of all that, calm was reestablished in the Pyrenees region, in the agricultural centers of the Barcelona province. A compromise was reached with the central government on the basis of reducing its troops on the Catalonia-France borders to the size it was prior to July 19. The C.N.T. members, arbitrarily arrested, were released. The latent conflict seemed, therefore, disappearing. But at this moment the provocations that caused the troubles on May 3-6 occurred.

In the latest ministerial composition of the Catalonian government, the control of the public order and the interior defense was in the hands of Aiguade, a member of the left bourgeois party. The General Commissar of Public Order was the communist Rodriguez Salas. Both of them came from that same political medium whose main preoccupation during the years of 1931-1934 was to hound the members of the C.N.T. and to secure the maximum convictions for them. The petty bourgeois nationalists and Catalonian separatists saw in the struggles of the revolutionary workers the greatest obstacles to their own political program. And there is precious little difference in principle between the left bourgeoisie and the Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia (P.S.U.C.), affiliated with the Third International. Both are constituted of the same social layers, pursuing the same antirevolutionary tradition of the republican politics of 1931-1934. Their representatives in the organisms of the Public Security of Spain made use of their power to realize their own political interests.

The Telephone Exchange of Barcelona was under the control of the C.N.T. and of the U.G.T. and of some delegates of the Catalonian Generalidad (government). On May 3, at three o'clock of the afternoon, Aiguade sent a strong detachment of police, under the direction of Rodriguez Salas, to "seize the telephone exchange." But the workers did not allow the police to reach the upper floors of the building. There were brawls, there were gatherings of workers in front of the building, and in a few hours the C.N.T. workers of the workers' quarters were spontaneously mobilized. "To the streets in the defense of the revolution!" Such was the watchword. Parleys were immediately instituted between the government and the regional committee of the C.N.T. and during the night an understanding had been reached. But the provocation of Aiguade and of Rodriguez Salas had in the meanwhile caused bloody incidents, which continued for three days, gravely compromising the anti-fascist unity of Catalonia. From the beginning, the attitude of the C.N.T. was purely defensive, for it was the C.N.T. that had created the anti-fascist front in July 1936 and maintained it since then at the price of great sacrifices. And now again the C.N.T. left its own aspirations and its own particular goals in abeyance, being aware that the very critical situation of Spain required that the Spanish anarchist movement contribute all its strength toward victory over the hordes of Franco, Hitler and Mussolini.

The Workers' Sections with the C.N.T.

Events of May 3 showed once again what the anarcho-syndicalist movement of Catalonia is. As on July 19, there was a total mobilization of the working population within the space of a few hours. This act was a veritable plebiscite of the streets. All the workers' quarters of the city, without exception, were transformed into fortified quarters of the C.N.T. In the workers' sections, where there were barracks, police stations, or republican or communist militia, these either sided with the workers (as was the case at Sans and at San Gervasio), or they declared themselves neutral, as was the case at the communist barracks of Sarria. The workers' sections of Barcelona remained loyal to the C.N.T. and they will continue to remain so. The old police, the republicans and marxists, were in control of the bourgeois quarters and of the central sections, inhabited precisely by that part of the population of which these parties were the emanation. But, as a whole, the police did not go against the workers. A large part of this police remained passive, only a very small part of them allowed itself to be dragged into the fight against the C.N.T. workers when the excitement of the masses and the provocations of certain elements caused the bloody incidents.

The general strike broke out immediately. Only industries producing war material continued to operate. The police and the communists attacked some labor union halls; the revolutionary workers attacked, arms in hand, the police barracks and the halls of the parties and of the reformist unions from where shots were fired upon the workers. The headquarters of the Regional Committee of the C.N.T. was subjected to the fire of the enemy during these days. On this occasion too, the C.N.T. lost comrades of great value. The Italian anarchist Berneri was arrested at his home by the communists and one day later, being prisoner, he was murdered, shot in the back. Domingo Ascaso, the brother of Francisco (who had been killed by the fascist bullets July 20, 1936) was killed in the center of the city. The nephew of Francisco Ferrer was killed by the communists while he was escorting his mother in the street. Having been wounded at the front, he was walking with the aid of a cane.

On May 5 a commission arrived from Valencia, composed of two members of the Executive Council of the U.G.T. and two members of the National Committee of the C.N.T. Although this commission entered immediately in conference with the various anti-fascist sectors of Catalonia, it was not possible to immediately pacify the spirits. After the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. on May 6 issued a joint appeal to the workers advising them to resume work, the communists and the police force took by assault the headquarters of the Leather Workers union of the C.N.T., destroying everything found in the locality. Other C.N.T. union halls, among them that of the sanitary branch, and of distribution were also taken, and everything destroyed within. In the center of the city, members of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I. were arrested, disarmed and imprisoned, although they were authorized to carry arms the same as the other anti-fascist elements. In the workers' sections of the city, the armed proletariat took energetic measures against the police force intending to attack them. At Sans, after a violent struggle, the barracks of the civil guards was taken and 400 of the police force taken prisoners by the members of the C.N.T. unions. In the barracks monarchist and fascist emblems were found. In spite of that, these prisoners were treated humanely and after calm was re-established, they were restored to freedom, a regular procedure with the C.N.T. in cases of this kind.

Calm is Re-established

On the evening of May 5, a new Catalonian government was formed, composed of one representative of the C.N.T., one of the U.G.T., one of the left bourgeois party and one of the small peasant party. When the firing ceased and the barricades were dismantled, on the orders of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., the Valencia government sent 5,000 assault guards to Barcelona to replace the Catalonian police functioning there up to that time.

The constitutional provision relating to the autonomy of Catalonia provides that in case of permanent troubles, the central government has to take charge temporarily of the control of Public Order in Catalonia. Minister Aiguade and chief of police Rodriguez Salas were dismissed from their jobs. Thus the two notorious enemies of the revolutionary workers, who considered that "maintenance of Public Order" consists in the persecution of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., were put out of business. The new responsible heads of the Public Order, appointed by the Valencia government, and who are in charge of the police forces and of the anti-fascist patrols, gave assurance that they will discharge the duties of their office without regard to political tendencies.

We have to warn our friends against the biased versions of these events, circulated throughout Spain as well as in other countries by the Spanish communist and bourgeois parties. According to their version, there was an uprising "against the regular government." This affirmation is absurd since the C.N.T. had its representatives (and it had them before May 3) in the Catalonian government as well as in the Central government. The C.N.T. did not rise against a government of which it was itself an integral part, and which had to be reconstructed during the trouble, with C.N.T. collaboration. The protest movement was directed against the political parties that were using their power within the government to create provocations against the revolutionary workers. And furthermore, this conflict was not in any manner the action of "irresponsible elements", or provocateurs. Our enemies hasten to qualify as "irresponsibles" not only the militants of the C.N.T., but also the populous workers' quarters of Barcelona during the troubled days; anyone who noted the beginning of the movement on that afternoon of May 3, has to admit if he is not deliberately lying (as they slanderously lied about the Spanish anarchist movement for the last 70 years), will have to admit that this was a spontaneous popular movement, a sudden revolt, a violent protestation of the masses themselves. Any of the slanderers who speak of "Trotzkyist" and fascist provocateur infiltration in certain labor unions, has not been to the workers' quarters of Barcelona in search of proofs, no matter how inconsequential, in support of his gratuitous affirmation.

Documents of the Fighting Days

At the beginning of the conflict, the Committee of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I. issued a manifesto to the population describing the Catalonian situation in the following words:

"For months past, hangs over Catalonia such a poisoned atmosphere as to make it impossible to maintain confidence between the different sections of the anti-fascist front. Besides other problems, in the matter of war and revolution, we wish to call the attention of everyone to the facts interesting the Ministry of Interior of Catalonia(Public Security). In the first hours of the revolution, the central government, through a decree, authorized the creation of committees within the police formations, whose duty was to supervise the functioning of the police and to see to the elimination of fascist

elements that are still within the police forces. When the present Minister of the Interior (Aiguade) took office, he absolutely refused to recognize these committees notwithstanding their legal standing. At the time when elsewhere the fascist element was consistently excluded from police functions, in Catalonia recognized fascists are allowed to remain at their posts, on the police force, because the Minister, in agreement with certain chiefs and officers, is opposed to all modifications. Thanks to this high protection, 62 civil guards from the post of Gerona fled with ease to the border. Of the Barcelona post, 31 policemen ran away, taking away with them important documents, among them the plans of the coast fortifications. And, yet, it was known for months before their escape, that these men were fascists.

"After the Central Council of the Civil Guards (located at Madrid) was informed that a new batch of 40 men attempted to run away from the Ausias March barracks, the Council demanded a list of the elements with reactionary sympathies that were still in the ranks of the Civil Guard of Catalonia. It was only on April 13 that these elements were excluded by a decree of the Central Government. But the Interior Minister of Catalonia prevented the execution of the central government decree of discharge, and he allowed the fascists to remain at their posts. At the same time he stiffened his opposition to the committees. On the other hand he has done everything in his power to disarm the members of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I., with the aid of the followers of certain political parties, in order to break the revolutionary power of the members of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I., power that is the best guarantee for the working people, who are not wishful for the return of the regime of exploitation and for state oppression ..."

And the manifesto concludes:

"For the restoration of confidence among the anti-fascist forces! For the victory over fascism! Against the systematic provocateurs, Aiguade and Rodriguez! For the purging of the high posts of the police force! Long live the social revolution!"

This manifesto was signed by the regional committees of the C.N.T., of the F.A.I., of the Libertarian Youth and of the Barcelona local committees of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I.

An Appeal to the Policemen

The C.N.T. had therefore serious motives to be suspicious of the Catalonian police, which, under the direction of the workers' enemies Aiguade and Rodriguez Salas, were ruling the region. In the meantime, even while the conflict was on, the two libertarian organizations appealed also to the members of the police force: *"It is not against you,"* the appeal said *"that the present protest movement is directed, but against those who are using you as a counter revolutionary instrument of their political schemes."* Here is a passage of one of these broadcasted appeals:

"They placed before us the question of force and this has to be now settled. The bloody encounters on the streets are the outcome of a long and painful development of facts, the aim of which is the annihilation of the C.N.T. after this organization has given the strength and the blood of its militants and members in the struggle against fascism. Don't let them fool you, members of the police force! You know, for you have the proof, that the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. are not fighting against you. You are, like ourselves, soldiers in the anti-fascist cause. Your place is on the side of the people as it was on July 19th."

The C.N.T. and F.A.I. and Trotskyism

In the appeals published by the different organizations, after calm was reestablished in Barcelona, reference is made in a general way to the necessity of establishing the anti-fascist unity in spite of all obstacles. Attacks and accusations against organizations of the anti-fascist front were avoided. The May 3 movement in Barcelona was a spontaneous action of the workers' quarters and not the work of some individuals or of an organization, and even less that of the P.O.U.M. Let us give a few facts on this matter.

The communist party could not miss this opportunity of throwing some accusations against its pet adversary, the so-called Trotskyites (the P.O.U.M.), a small Marxist fraction that has developed in certain Catalonian workers milieus, and which is opposed to Stalinism. We do not want to wrangle on this subject as we do not feel competent to establish the fine lines of differences between the different opposition communist groups. By its organic form of unionism, by its anarchist ideology the C.N.T. is neatly and sharply separated from the other anti-fascist organizations.

The elements that at present compose the P.O.U.M. belong to that mass, that up to 1936, considered the exclusion of the anarchist movement as an essential condition for any progress of the Spanish labor movement. The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. have nothing in common with them. Since the middle of 1936 that party drifted constantly to the left and today it shares with us certain elementary conceptions of the anarchists in reference to the importance of the civil war.

However, the two tendencies have not come any nearer concerning their essential and positive postulates.

The P.O.U.M. participated in the anarcho-sindicalist protest movement, but to present them as the determining factor of the movement, carrying the C.N.T. in town, reminds one of the tactics used by the nazis, who made political scapegoats of the Jews making them responsible for everything: for the war, the peace pact, the revolution, and the reaction ...

We have no ties whatever with the P.O.U.M. but the C.N.T. demanded that it be recognized as an anti-fascist organization. On May 9, *Solidaridad Obrera* demanded that the police return to the P.O.U.M. the print shop it had occupied, which was complied with.

To accord the P.O.U.M. the initiative and the responsibility of the protest movement of Barcelona is another calumny circulated throughout the international press.

Another version of the tragic events is the following: The position of the C.N.T. in this affair was dictated by the Anarchists of the F.A.I., but that the C.N.T. rebelled against the anarchists and stopped the hostilities. This version also is of the domain of pure phantasy. In the discussions and parleys that have taken place between the third and sixth of May, all decisions taken, all proclamations that were drawn up and published, were by common consent of all the committees of the libertarian movements of Barcelona: the regional and local committees of the C.N.T., of the F.A.I., and of the Libertarian Youth. All decisions were adopted unanimously. The protest movement of the workers did not really come from the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. but from what is known as the "Barridas," of the workers' quarters of the city, from the masses themselves. The committees of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I. were in constant consultation with the delegates of the workers' quarters ("Barridas") until the danger caused by the bloody encounters in the streets abated, when by a common accord they gave out the watchword: "Stop firing." In no case could there be a question of an opposition between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I.

Statements of the Militants Concerning the C.N.T. and F.A.I.

On the night of May 4, speeches were broadcast by the different representatives of the antifascist organizations.

Mariano R. Velasquez, the secretary of the National Committee of the C.N.T., said among others: "Comrades, anarchists, members of the C.N.T., anti-fascist workers. In this critical hour, maintain the same attitude as on July 19th! Do not waste an ounce of the powder so sorely needed at the front! If you are not capable by your own will to do what you should do, Franco will impose on us his law. There will be no other choice for us if we do not defeat fascism, which is our duty to do. The world will spit its contempt on us if we are not masters of the situation and we do not emerge victorious from the battle."

Severino Campos, secretary of the Regional Committee of the F.A.I., wrote in *Solidaridad Obrera* of May 10, the following lines:

"We anarchists of Catalonia did not want to attack. We were on the defensive as anyone could ascertain. We figured that it was a crime to mutually slaughter ourselves in the rear, while on the front the workers of all political and unionist tendencies suffer and fight together. That we know and we shall not forget. We want the unity of all workers."

All the known militants of the C.N.T. and of the F.A.I. of Barcelona declared themselves in the same sense. The workers of the workers' quarters, in spite of their deep indignation caused by the provocations which are the source of these tragic events, accepted the decision of their committees and quitting the barricades, resumed work.

The Present Situation in Catalonia

An open fight between the different anti-fascist sectors was avoided. The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. have amply demonstrated that they are still the only workers' organizations that count in the workers' quarters. But they also have demonstrated that they are not disposed to allow themselves to be eliminated by the enemies of the social revolutionary development, and by the secret agents of a foreign power.

At the end of this fight there are neither victors nor vanquished. No sanction can, should or will be taken. But the police forces should finally be purged and the suspected elements excluded. The police forces sent by the Valencia government are composed of anti-fascist militiamen of all tendencies, who have fought on the front as volunteers and who are qualified to function as policemen in Catalonia. The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. expect of them and of the present Catalonian chief of Public Order, Torres (who was formerly an officer of the confederal militia column "Tierra Liberta") an impartial attitude. They hope that all fresh provocations will be avoided.

As before, the partisans of the social revolution are opposed by those who also call themselves "communists," but for whom the great sacrifice consented to by the Spanish people should accomplish no more than the restoration of the political and economic conditions that existed prior to July 19, 1936. As before, the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. will spare no efforts to propagate among the masses the ideas of integral social transformation. The two organizations know that while the struggle in common of all the antifascists against the common enemy is on, that aim cannot be realized by competition or by violent rivalry, but it has to come as the fruit of the creative policy of an intelligent, methodical, social and cultural formation.

The Spanish anarchist movement has demonstrated a thousand times that it cannot be destroyed, and the same is true of the C.N.T. It has fought for many decades against the regimes

of exploitation and domination. All the governments that have succeeded each other in Spain wanted to exterminate it. The prosecutions and the murders have not stifled the libertarian aspirations of the masses.

The conspiracies of silence, and the campaigns of slander of the international press of all tendencies, never attained their end. Slanders, like those propagated by the Spanish ambassador in Paris, Araquistán, abusing his official power, concerning an alleged absurd pact between the monarchists and the anarchists, turn against their authors.

The C.N.T. consolidates its positions and its effectiveness which are increasing, but one can also observe its powerful development in regions where formerly it was in the minority. It is also improving its tactics. It understands today perfectly well the teaching it received from Orobon Fernández: "The two Spanish workers' organizations, C.N.T. and U.G.T., should never aim to devour each other, they should arrive at an understanding."

The Revolutionary Labor Alliance is the sole road towards an understanding. It is not a question if This or That will prefer to take another road. There is no other road to arrive at a solution.

But the understanding will be difficult. During many long years the two organizations had considered each other enemies, one having been on the side of the oppressors and the other on the side of the revolutionary masses.

It was only when the Spanish socialists began to lose some of their democratic illusions, after 1933, that a rapprochement on certain questions could take place. And there is still a long road to travel before a positive understanding can be attained.

Large layers of the bourgeoisie, scared and anxious to save their privileges, have taken refuge in the socialistic unions. A political current that is not rooted in Spain, oriented towards a foreign power that is making a show of its solidarity with the anti-fascist Spain, also profits by the political situation for influencing the U.G.T. to progress backwards. In spite of all, the C.N.T. is ceaselessly appealing to the socialist workers of the U.G.T., who since 1934, together with the C.N.T. members, faced the same persecutions and who are today attacked by the same hordes of Franco.

The C.N.T. Vital Nerve of Spain

After the tragic event of May 3 to May 6, *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona, published the following lines:

"Every popular movement brings us a new lesson and the events that are developing have taught us that the spirit of revolt of the Catalanian people has not been exterminated, although they wanted to demonstrate the opposite to us. The Catalonians revolt against all injustices, and it is perhaps for this reason that Catalonia is the cradle of Iberian anarchism, and that it remained always loyal to that movement.

"Basing itself on the libertarian tendencies of the Catalanian people, the General Confederation of Labor (C.N.T.) was able to develop here, as it has developed itself in all the other regions of the peninsula, in such proportions that no other organization attempting to implant artificial doctrines into our country will ever attain. And we are proud. For if we are not partisans of a narrow and sectarian Catalanianism, at the same time we are living in Catalonia, and we desire its development and its happiness and we wish that she should indicate the road leading to the social revolution which is our aim."

In a manifesto published by the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. during the conflict we read the following:

"The F.A.I. and the C.N.T. do not want a dictatorship, and do not seek to impose one. But as long as one of its members is living, they will not allow, and they will not submit to any dictatorship. If we are fighting fascism it is not because we like fighting, it is in order to safeguard the popular liberties and to prevent the return to power of those who want to massacre the militant workers and to exploit the working people and of those who, without openly calling themselves fascists, want to institute an absolutist regime, absolutely contrary to the traditions and the history of our people."

In spite of the provocation which endangered the anti-fascist unity for several days, the C.N.T. remained loyal to the line fixed by the May 1936 Congress, which had already been worked out in 1934 by Orobón Fernández. He formulated his ideas in the midst of hesitations and contradictions and of the skepticism of those who, after having made for a long time common cause with the oppressors, joined the organization which was later to conclude an alliance with the C.N.T. because such are the supreme interests of all the workers, above all special interests. Orobón Fernández said:

"The Spanish bourgeoisie has thrown off its mask of liberalism. The counter-revolutionary examples which are presenting themselves in Europe have given it courage. Today it endeavors to fortify its political and economic monopoly with the aid of the totalitarian state. In order to vanquish this enemy, which is menacingly raising its head against the proletariat, the creation of a granite-hard proletariat bloc is indispensable. The tendency which fails to recognize this truth isolates itself and assumes a heavy responsibility before history. For to defeat—which inevitably will result from isolation—we should, without hesitation, prefer a partial proletarian victory which will lead us (without there being an exclusive domination of one or the other tendency)—to the realization of a minimum program permitting in its turn the realization of the aspirations of all the signatories of the pact of understanding, by the socialization of the means of production and by the first mortal blows against the capitalist domination. Placing itself at the head of the movement towards unity means the opening of the road Which leads to the revolution !"

"We see the things as they are, without glasses, without doctrinary prejudices. It is a question of a revolution and not of an academic discussion on this or that principle. Principles should not be rigid commandments, but subtle forms adapting themselves to the exigencies of reality. Does this platform guarantee the establishment of pure libertarian communism on the day after the revolution?"

Certainly not! But it guarantees the defeat of capitalism and the crushing of its sustainer, fascism. It guarantees the edification of a democratic regime without exploitation and without class privileges, and that will open wide the road to a libertarian society in the best sense of the word.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Industrial Workers of the World
Workers War To Stop Fascism
Reports on the Events in Spain by the Secretariat of the International Workingmen's
Association
July 1937

[https://web.archive.org/web/20101010185350/http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/iww/
maydays.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20101010185350/http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/spain/iww/maydays.html)

Translated by Joseph Wagner, *One Big Union Monthly*, July, 1937

theanarchistlibrary.org