

# **The CNT in the Spanish Revolution, Volume 1**

José Peirats Valls

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We do not make war just for the sake of making war. Were our movement compelled to be encapsulated by one blunt adjective that adjective would not be “warlike”, but “revolutionary”.

There is yet time for us to express ourselves in the most readily understood form possible. Definite facts and definite ideas must be given their proper names. There must be an end to this mistake of double entendres which complicate the dictionary. And the fact is that frequently a play on words is followed up by the *fait accompli*. “War” has been so loudly trumpeted as a synonym for “revolution” that we have been induced to invest in this war with all of the bellicose accoutrements that were always odious to us: the regular army and discipline. The same thing has happened with discipline in the proper sense. There have been comrades aplenty who, despite their *bona fides*, have flirted with the term and spoken to us of discipline while painting this in colours diametrically opposed to freedom.

This, far from rendering discipline more humane, is a bestialisation of freedom. It is not so very long ago that an attempt was made in our circles to peddle a version of discipline implying order and responsibility comparable with anarchy. Such an endeavour always called to our minds the idea of “good government” or “tutelary authority”, as opposed to despotic or blatantly authoritarian government. And just as it has not been possible to sort governments into good ones and bad ones — since in fact there are, rather, only bad ones and worse ones — we have come to learn with the passage of time that all discipline is a tributary of regimentation.

We aver that all wars are inauspicious. Were it our belief that we are making a war, we should be the first to desert. The fact is that war never erupts to the advantage of those who inflict and suffer its ravages.

We are not fighting here to advance anyone’s private interests, though there will be no shortage of bigwigs who will seek to commandeer the fruits of our struggle and gamble on the ups and downs of our successes and our reverses, turning our rearguard into a stockjobbers’ lot.

Our fight is against privilege and not for the nation, a fight for liberty and not for the fatherland, a fight for anarchy and not for the Republic. We risk our lives for the collective good and not for a privileged caste. While one of us remains standing, the social revolution, which is the driving force behind our liberation movement, will never want for defenders and combatants, whether they use pen, fist, word or rifle.

We do not make war; war is always made for the purposes of someone else, and fought out between the brethren who are poor in spirit. We make revolution for the benefit of all human beings and against the cliques who are hangovers from parasitism and self-centredness. And as we are making revolution, not one square metre of reconquered ground must be subtracted from the process of transformation, despite the froglike croaking of those whose lack of spirit and mettle inclines them to dabble in the stagnant waters of politicking.

— Editorial from *Acracia* (Lleida), 1936–7



## Glossary of organisations

<b>BOC</b>	Bloc Obrer i Camperol/Worker-Peasant Block; an anti-Stalinist communist party
<b>CADCI</b>	Centre Autonomista de Dependents del Comerç i de la Indústria/ Autonomist Centre for Shop and White-Collar Workers; a Catalan white-collar and shop workers' union, the leading union in this sector
<b>CEDA</b>	Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas/Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rightists; the main rightist party in the 1930s, of quasi-fascist persuasion
<b>CGT</b>	Confédération Générale du Travail/General Confederation of Labour; Europe's leading anarcho-syndicalist union before World War One, it later fell under socialist and communist influence
<b>CGTU</b>	Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire/ Unitary General Confederation of Labour; formed by communists and allied to the RILU
<b>CNT</b>	Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/National Confederation of Labour
<b>CRT</b>	Confederación Regional del Trabajo/Regional Confederation of Labour; the regional bodies that made up the CNT
<b>ERC</b>	Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya/Republican Left of Catalonia; a middle class republican party
<b>FAI</b>	Federación Anarquista Ibérica/Iberian Anarchist Federation; the pan-Iberian federation of anarchist affinity groups
<b>FIJL</b>	Federación Ibérica de Juventudes Libertarias/ Iberian Federation of Young Libertarians; the anarchist youth movement
<b>FJS</b>	Federación de Juventudes Socialistas/Socialist Youth Federation; the youth movement of the PSOE
<b>FNTT</b>	Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra/National Federation of Land Labourers; the UGT agrarian workers' union
<b>FOUS</b>	Federación Obrera de Unificación Sindical/ Workers' Federation of Trade Union Unity; a dissident communist union federation close to the POUM
<b>FSL</b>	Federación Sindicalista Libertaria/Libertarian Syndicalist Federation; a moderate anarcho-syndicalist answer to the FAI formed during the power struggles in the CNT prior to the civil war
<b>ICE</b>	Izquierda Comunista de España/Communist Left of Spain; a small Trotskyist grouping

# The history of a history<sup>1</sup>

José Peirats's *La CNT en la revolución española* is the history of one of the most original and audacious, and arguably also the most far-reaching, of all the twentieth-century revolutions. It is the history of the giddy years of political change and hope in 1930s Spain, when the so-called 'Generation of '36', Peirats's own generation, the generation of workers and landless labourers who found it impossible to live under the old order, who yearned for a better Spain, finally rebelled against the inequitable and repressive structures of 'old Spain'. It is also the history of a revolution that failed, and which was followed by years of despair, defeat and diaspora, as General Franco's dictatorship set about cleansing society of the 'Generation of '36'. During the long winter of Franco's obscurantist reaction, the insurgent 'Generation of '36' paid the price for daring to challenge the traditionalist and elitist verities of the agrarian and industrial oligarchies in front of firing squads, in German concentration camps, in Franco's prisons or in exile.

This book emerged from the huge population movement provoked by Franco's attempt to cleanse Spanish society of revolutionaries and to 'silence' the 'Generation of '36'.<sup>2</sup> The origins of this book are to be found in France, at the second congress of the Movimiento Libertario Español-Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (MLECNT), the exiled Spanish anarchist movement, which was held in Toulouse, in October 1947, some eight years after the conclusion of the Spanish civil war.<sup>3</sup> In one of the less publicised moments of the congress, Benito Milla and his friend Peirats, a 39-year-old anarchist exile and secretary-general elect of the MLE-CNT, proposed the publication of a historical study of the Spanish revolution. Not only was this project firmly in keeping with the traditional concern of the Spanish anarchist movement for history and culture,<sup>4</sup> but many exiled anarchists were acutely aware of the need to offer an alternative to the one-sided, distorting and self-justifying official history being produced by the academic apologists of the dictatorship, whose incessant propaganda offensive denied the place of the anarchists and the entire left in Spain's history.<sup>5</sup> In this context, to write a history connoted a readiness to stake a claim to the past, the present and the future of Spain. It is surprising, therefore, that the proposal made by Milla and Peirats went unheeded. But this apparent paradox is perhaps best explained by the exigencies of exile. Thus, while many of those who attended the congress undoubtedly accepted the desirability of and the necessity for such a history, this project was pushed onto a secondary

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to the following people who have read and commented on my introduction: Federico Arcos, Richard Cleminson, Mark Hendy and Frank Mintz.

<sup>2</sup> For Franco's attempt to impose 'silence' on Spain see Michael Richards, *A Time of Silence: Civil War and the Culture of Repression in Franco's Spain, 1936–1945*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>3</sup> CNT, *II congreso del MLE-CNT en Francia (Dictámenes y resoluciones)*, Toulouse: Ediciones CNT, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> See especially Pere Solà i Gussinyer, *Els Ateneus Obrers i la cultura popular a Catalunya (1900–1936): L'Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular*, Barcelona: Edicions de la Magrana, 1978. In English see the general study by Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years, 1868–1936*, New York: Free Life Editors, 1977.

<sup>5</sup> See Alicia Alted, 'Education and Political Control', in Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (eds), *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 196–201 and Carolyn Boyd, *Historia Patria. Politics, History and National Identity in Spain, 1875–1975*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997, pp. 232–301.

plane by the burden of everyday life: the imperatives of organising the fight against Franco and the daily struggle for survival in exile in a country then undergoing post-war reconstruction.

Yet, such was the enduring cultural and educational commitment of those who had developed intellectually within Spanish libertarian circles, Milla and Peirats had already sown the seeds of what would, in just a few years, germinate into the most comprehensive survey to date of the activities of the CNT during the 1930s. A large part of the responsibility for this rests with the indefatigable work of Martín Vilarrupla, the self-proclaimed 'minister' for culture and propaganda of the CNT. For Martín Vilarrupla, the history project became an abiding concern: first, he convinced a few comrades of the importance of recording the revolutionary experience of the 1930s; more importantly, he acquired several small offers of material support; and finally, he set about finding a suitable author for the history. Following lengthy consultation with the anarchist movement's 'intellectuals',<sup>6</sup> Martín Vilarrupla was convinced by the arguments of Antonio ('Dionysios') García Birlán, one of the most sagacious of the exiled Spanish anarchists, who insisted that Peirats was the most capable figure to undertake this work of history. And so, in the first of many ironies and twists of fortune that accompanied the creation of *La CNT...*, Martín Vilarrupla resolved to enlist the authorial services of one of the individuals who had planted the idea for a history of the Spanish revolution so firmly in his own mind.

Typical of many other CNT 'intellectuals', Peirats was an autodidact, a self-educated proletarian, who started work at the age of eight and who stole hours from his sleep in order to continue his education.<sup>7</sup> A brickmaker by profession, like many of his generation, the CNT was Peirats's school, while prison served as his university. Despite the cultural deficit imposed upon Peirats from birth, in his twenties he emerged as one of the leading lights in the vast constellation of newspapers that surrounded the CNT and the anarchist movement. In stark contrast to many of his contemporaries in Spain, both inside and outside the anarchist movement, Peirats's journalism revealed a keen eye for synthesis and an aversion to an excessive reliance on adjectives, making for a direct, concise and clear prose style, based on short, clipped sentences. These features were allied to a powerful and emotive narrative style, vast reservoirs of humanity and a mordant irony. (These features would later become hallmarks of his writing and, indeed, of *La CNT...* )

It was not until 1948 that Martín Vilarrupla tracked down his chosen historian. At this time Peirats's term as secretary-general of the CNT-MLE was over. Despite being re-elected by an overwhelming majority, Peirats refused to continue as secretary-general on principle, believing that it was wrong for any one individual to occupy such an important position for two consecutive terms, particularly since this was one of the few positions within the anarchist movement that was salaried.<sup>8</sup> Peirats was also a reluctant historian; in his memoirs he made no mention of having given any further consideration to the history project which he and Milla had proposed a year earlier. Indeed, despite Peirats's longstanding cultural commitments, his perspectives were dominated by the everyday struggle for material survival in the adverse circumstances of exile: at roughly the same time that Martín Vilarrupla approached Peirats to write the history, he was

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<sup>6</sup> As will be seen in my introduction to volume II, these 'intellectuals' were largely proletarians educated within the structures of CNT reading groups and cultural associations and the anarchist athenaeums.

<sup>7</sup> My introduction to volume II will provide a full account of Peirats's intellectual development.

<sup>8</sup> Letter from Federico Arcos, 21 February 2000.



about to establish a logging co-operative with a group of fellow exiles.<sup>9</sup> Unsurprisingly, therefore, Peirats flatly rebuffed Martín Vilarrupla's suggestion that he write a history of the Spanish revolution.

But Martín Vilarrupla remained undeterred: he was as stubborn as he was tireless, and he remained convinced that Peirats was the ideal choice of historian. And so, a year later, in 1949, Martín Vilarrupla repeated his offer to Peirats, which led to a heated yet fraternal discussion:

'You're the one who will write this book,' Martín Vilarrupla informed a protesting Peirats, whose protests he quashed thus: 'Quiet, let me speak! I know your game. You'll say that they are many better candidates than you — Alaíz, "Dionysios", Gastón Leval, García Pradas...'

'I agree with you. They are better...' retorted Peirats.

'I said, "Be quiet!" They may be "better"... But you're going to do it. You will write this book because you're resolute and you have self-respect.'<sup>10</sup>

Peirats's resistance evaporated in the face of Martín Vilarrupla's arguments, and shortly afterwards he started work on a book with the working title *Historia de la revolución española* ('History of the Spanish Revolution').

The first task confronting Peirats was the same task that confronts every historian: the need to locate the primary bibliographical material that constitutes the empirical infrastructure of historical writing. The vicissitudes of revolution, repression and exile in 1930s Spain made this far from simple. As the Francoist army extended its grip on republican territory, the Confederation lacked the resources to transport its supporters and wounded out of Spain and much of the CNT-FAI archive and the documentation produced by the revolutionary collectives and communes was destroyed. In Barcelona, the epicentre of the Spanish revolution, vast clouds of smoke rose above the city as documents were destroyed in order to prevent them from falling into the hands of the forces of repression. As Peirats later noted:

Hundreds of thousands of bonfires issued grey columns into the sky, a myriad gaseous molecules which moments before had been precious material: books, journals, collections of newspapers, bulletins, minutes, reports and archives of correspondence.<sup>11</sup>

This valuable source material was tragically but unavoidably lost to the historian forever. Such a precaution was, nevertheless, justified by the painstaking efforts of the Francoists to seize and scrutinise any remaining trade union records and membership documentation, materials which were later used by the authorities to prosecute those guilty of committing the 'red crimes' of revolution and resisting fascism. Following the partial relaxation of repression, and the achievement of the bloody objectives of the counter-revolution, this material formed the basis of the state archive in Salamanca and provided the documentary basis for the highly tendentious, pro-regime 'history' writing of Eduardo Comín Colomer.<sup>12</sup> For Peirats, the Salamanca archive was as far beyond his reach as the materials that had been destroyed in Barcelona in 1939.

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<sup>9</sup> *Triunfo*, 21 August 1976. According to Arcos, 'The work at the farm was hard and barely produced enough for everyone to subsist. In the end he [Peirats] left completely broke.' (Letter from Federico Arcos, 21 February 2000.)

<sup>10</sup> José Peirats Valls, 'Una experiencia histórica del pensamiento libertario. Memorias y selección de artículos breves', *Anthropos Suplementos*, 18, 1990, p. 102.

<sup>11</sup> *Frente Libertario*, March 1971.

<sup>12</sup> His two main works are *Historia del anarquismo español*, Barcelona: Editorial AHR, 1956 (2 volumes) and *Historia del Partido Comunista de España*, Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1965 (3 volumes). Since the end of the Franco

Peirats was therefore forced to rely on whatever documentary material he could find outside Spain. Although this material was far from scarce, our aspirant historian confronted a series of obstacles when it came to gaining access to this documentation. For instance, the CNT-FAI archive, which had been placed in the safe-keeping of the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam in 1939, had been relocated in London for the duration of World War Two and remained unclassified, in a state of complete disorder.<sup>13</sup> Another set of problems flowed from the dispersal of the CNT across south America and Europe, where it was further divided into regional committees, all of which retained important documentation. Besides these geographical divisions, there were splits and factions in an organisation that was frequently beset by deep jealousies and internal rivalries; in these circumstances, documents could be withheld on the basis of petty, sectarian whim.<sup>14</sup> If this was not enough, the problems facing the historian were further compounded by both the decentralised organisational structure of the CNT (in practice little more than a series of loosely federated regional union bodies), and by the uneven and localised nature of the revolutionary process in 1930s Spain. Consequently, Peirats was highly dependent on the cooperation of the myriad local union committees to loan him their internal documentation.

Peirats's first step was to issue a circular to all CNT local federations in France and South America, calling on them to provide him with any information on the collectives that they had withdrawn from Spain. This yielded significant, albeit predictably uneven, results.<sup>15</sup> Peirats also benefited from the collaboration and support of the International Institute for Social History, which generously supplied copies of internal bulletins and other materials. This was most welcome, since Peirats lacked the financial resources that would enable him to visit the Amsterdam archives. Yet, perhaps most decisive of all was the collaboration of Aristide Lapeyre, who made available to Peirats his extensive archive of Spanish labour newspapers, which covered the pre-civil-war period and the years of the revolution. As Peirats's reputation as a researcher and collector of historical documents grew, he was also able to exchange source materials with other historians and writers, particularly the North American Burnett Bolloten, who was then busy preparing his own monumental study of the Spanish left during the civil war.<sup>16</sup>

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dictatorship, and the trend towards decentralisation, the continuing presence of the spoils of Franco's war in the Salamanca archive under the control of the central state has generated much controversy, particularly as the post-Francoist regional authorities have petitioned for the return of important local historical sources. See Joaquim Ferrer, Josep Maria Figueres and Josep Maria Sans i Travé, *Els papers de Salamanca: història d'un botí de guerra*, Barcelona: Llibres de l'Índex, 1996.

<sup>13</sup> It is quite likely that this archive would have been transferred to Salamanca had it fallen into the hands of the Nazis. It is also possible that the materials might have been either lost or destroyed by the Nazis. Indeed, according to John Saville's keynote address to the London Socialist Historians' Group in May 1999, at the end of World War Two a number of barges moored on the Rhine were discovered to contain records from the Amsterdam archive.

<sup>14</sup> On the CNT in exile see José Berruezo, *Contribución a la historia de la CNT de España en el exilio*, Mexico: Editores Mexicanos Unidos, 1967 and Abel Paz, *CNT, 1939–1951*, Barcelona: Hacer, 1982.

<sup>15</sup> Peirats's unquestionable success in amassing a vast body of documentary material doubtless gave rise to the erroneous claim that 'Peirats has for decades been the leading archivist of the CNT in exile.' (Gabriel Jackson, 'The Living Experience of the Spanish Civil War Collectives', in *Newsletter of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 1970, volume 1, number 2, pp. 4–11.)

<sup>16</sup> The first edition of Bolloten's history appeared as *The Grand Camouflage*, New York: Praeger, 1961 (reprinted 1968). In the late seventies a new edition appeared: *The Spanish Revolution: The Left and the Struggle for Power during the Civil War*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979, while the definitive third edition was published posthumously: *The Spanish Civil War*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991. See also the bibliographical essay at the end of Volume III of this study (forthcoming).

If Peirats gradually resolved the difficulties he faced regarding documentation, on an everyday level he continued to face enormous and unrelenting material privations throughout the time in which he was preparing his history. When Martín Vilarrupla successfully enlisted Peirats's pen to write the history, full assurances had been given that the CNT would meet the day-to-day living expenses of what would effectively be its historian in residence. Early on, before Peirats commenced work on his history, there were already signs of the problems that would lay ahead. Just to bring Peirats to Bordeaux it proved necessary to hold a raffle among grassroots *cenetistas* in order to purchase a train ticket.<sup>17</sup> While Martín Vilarrupla's promises of financial assistance were unquestionably made in good faith, both he and Peirats were fully apprised of the scarcity of the CNT's internal resources and the erratic and variable nature of its funding priorities to appreciate the limitations of these assurances. If, as is likely, at the start of the book project some — perhaps even sufficient — money had been put aside by the organisation to cover Peirats's living expenses, it would have been uncharacteristic of the CNT for such a fund to be ring-fenced in any way. Moreover, the activities of the CNT had always been such that union funds could quickly disappear on a variety of extraordinary, unforeseen and incalculable expenses, such as legal defence and prisoners' welfare in Spain, pressures which were all the greater owing to the offensive of the dictatorship against the CNT and the generally precarious economic circumstances facing activists during the exile years. Given the above, the prospect of a small subvention from the CNT could not have appeared as an opportunity to secure a comfortable existence during the uncertain years of exile and it probably would not have exerted any influence on Peirats's decision to write the history. Rather, by accepting to write the history, Peirats entered into a Gorkian world, a Bohemian-like existence dominated by incessant privations, personal suffering and physical hardship. On one level, Peirats's origins, his direct experiences of working-class life and of the proletarian Bohemia imposed by low wages and the constant threat of unemployment, prepared him for the challenges that lay ahead. Yet it is also possible to argue that the harsh economic circumstances facing Peirats were increasingly cushioned by his ineluctable commitment to history: like any historian, his motives were vocational, his life dominated by the intrinsic pleasure of writing history.

At the start of the writing process, during the particularly harsh winter of 1949– 50, Peirats took up residence in a very modest, and extremely cold, Bordeaux hotel room which, by night, served as his study. From the beginning, Peirats worked tirelessly on his history, the icy night air of his room serving as a willing accomplice as he stole countless hours from his sleep. His days were taken up outside, researching in libraries and, in particular, in the archive room of *Tierra y Libertad*, the leading Spanish anarchist newspaper. It was here that Peirats amassed a huge amount of notes on documentary materials that later comprised a great part of the empirical infrastructure of *La CNT*... It is worth emphasising the awful conditions under which Peirats worked at this time. In his unpublished memoirs he paid generous tribute to the concierge of the inhospitable and unheated *Tierra y Libertad* archive room, who brought him coffee and, ironically given his previous profession, hot bricks on which he would rest his feet while he wrote. The other spheres of Peirats's life were similarly Spartan. The 'allowance' he received from the CNT was never adequate and did not cover his living expenses, let alone permit him to enjoy any of life's luxuries. The intestinal fortitude and perseverance displayed by Peirats during these years certainly confirmed the wisdom of Martín Vilarrupla's choice of author. Indeed, once he had

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<sup>17</sup> Letter from Federico Arcos, 21 February 2000.

committed himself to write the history, Peirats showed no self-doubt or uncertainty. If anything, Peirats seemed to derive strength from the manifold privations that his new lifestyle imposed upon him; incredibly, his single-mindedness and growing vocation as a historian enabled him to make frequent sacrifices in order to facilitate his research in situations where other, more egotistical individuals probably would have viewed compromise to be either possible or reasonable. This is evidenced by Peirats's description of his life as a full-time and frequently unpaid writer, when his daily existence resembled that of a Bohemian poet:

Working like a beast, eating little and badly, washing and darning clothes, making economies even with correspondence costs. A stamp for America was an expensive luxury, equivalent to a morsel of cod or a good spread...<sup>18</sup>

Shortly afterwards, in the spring of 1950, Peirats made further economies, leaving his hotel for a spare room in the flat of a sympathetic CNT comrade, an arrangement that allowed him to live more frugally and to devote his 'allowance' in full to his research expenses and writing materials. Indeed, the disinterested solidarity of the anonymous exiled CNT members in Bordeaux and beyond, who generously met many of Peirats's living expenses, and who took turns to invite him for lunch and dinner, which played an important role in the completion of *La CNT*.. This was mutual aid in action, for Peirats was only too happy to share his growing knowledge of the CNT and the revolution with his hosts, who would enthusiastically probe him about his research and his writing over the dinner table.

In the light of the personal sacrifices already made by Peirats, it is difficult to imagine the despair he must have felt when, in May 1950, Martín Vilarrupla informed him that the fund set aside by the CNT to meet both his living expenses and the publishing costs of his history had 'expired'. While the failure of the CNT to meet its financial commitment could not have come as a shock to Peirats, the news that his historical work was seemingly at a premature end was nothing less than devastating. Penniless, he went to stay with Federico Arcos, an anarchist friend from Barcelona, who was living in Toulouse.<sup>19</sup>

Once again, it was Peirats's tenacity and his refusal to accept defeat that kept his history on track. Confident in the knowledge that vast majority of activists wished him to serve as secretary-general of the newly established CNT Intercontinental Committee, the transatlantic nexus that aimed to unite the exiled Spanish anarchosyndicalists of Europe and South America, Peirats presented the organisation with an ultimatum: he would return as secretary-general on the understanding that the money be found to allow him to proceed with his historical work.<sup>20</sup> His gamble paid off: a small sum of money was found to enable him to resume work on his history.

At this stage, doubtless chastened and scarred by the earlier threat to the future of his book, Peirats changed his working title from *Historia de la revolución española* to *La CNT en la revolución española*; this change was far from cosmetic: it signalled a desire to narrow the focus of the book and thereby enhance his chances of completing his study prior to any future financial contretemps. On a more positive note, the appearance of his first book, *Estampas del exilio en*

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<sup>18</sup> Cited in Víctor García, 'José Peirats Valls: una bibliografía biografiada', *Anthropos*, 102, 1989, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> According to Arcos, 'For some time we were sleeping in the same bed, the only one we had in the very small place where I was staying.' (Letter from Federico Arcos, 21 February 2000.)

<sup>20</sup> Letter from Federico Arcos, 21 February 2000.

*América*, a volume based on Peirats's early experiences in exile, would have given him a new sense of purpose as a writer, encouraging him to press on to finish his history, notwithstanding the succession of setbacks and the daily demands that his role within the CNT placed on his time.

Any psychological stability or peace of mind that Peirats had attained was short-lived, as the truly precarious nature of life in exile would shortly be revealed to him. In January 1951 an armed gang failed in its attempt to make off with the contents of a postal van in Lyon, in the south of France; as the gang made its escape, two policemen and a bystander were killed, and a further six bystanders were left wounded. Eye-witness reports that the gang members had Spanish accents led to a hysterical newspaper campaign in France, and in Spain, where the Francoist press attributed the attack to an exiled Spanish anarchist 'action group'. Amid enormous public revulsion in France, over 2,000 policemen were mobilised, including detachments of the paramilitary CRS, in the hunt for the 'Gang des Espagnols'. The attention of the French police immediately focused on the exiled Spanish anarchist 'action groups', some of which favoured *golpes económicos* ('armed expropriations') as a means of financing their activities. Under considerable public and official pressure to make arrests, the police quickly detained six Spanish anarchists, including Francisco 'Quico' Sabater, the legendary guerrilla fighter and member of the Movimiento Libertario de Resistencia (MLR), a paramilitary group which prosecuted armed resistance to the dictatorship in Spain and whose tactical differences with the rest of the anarchist movement led to the expulsion of its members from the CNT in 1947.<sup>21</sup> It has never been established whether Sabater's group perpetrated the Lyon attack and it is certainly not my intention here to attribute it to him and his comrades. Nevertheless, several MLR groups, including that of Sabater, were famous in CNT circles and beyond for their daring and intrepid armed expropriations that dated back to the period preceding the civil war. Moreover, 'action groups' such as Sabater's continued to perpetrate *golpes económicos* in Franco's Spain and this was one of the reasons why the supporters of the MLR had been expelled from the CNT. It is easy therefore to see how Sabater's high-profile 'action group' might arouse the suspicions of the gendarmerie, and, although they had hitherto refrained from such actions in France, an attack like the raid on the Lyon post office van bore many similarities to the *modus operandi* of some of the groups which made up the MLR. Yet police repression extended far beyond Sabater and his group, and, indeed, beyond the scattered anarchist paramilitary groups of the MLR. In what appeared to be a sweeping clampdown on the Spanish *émigré* community and on the organisation of the CNT in France, a total of 20 exiles were detained, including Peirats, who was detained by the Toulouse police on 6 February 1951, and later charged with complicity in the Lyon robbery.<sup>22</sup>

How can we account for this spiral of detentions? On one level, the tactics of the police, who subjected the original detainees to 'third-degree' interrogation and frequent beatings, can explain the succession of arrests. It is possible that one of the detainees calculated that a 'confession' would bring an end to their suffering at the hands of the police, and thus implicated Peirats in the Lyon robbery. But this begs the further question: why Peirats? There are some quite innocent possibilities. For instance, owing to his prominent role in the exiled anarchist movement, it is

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<sup>21</sup> For Sabater see the study by Antonio Téllez, *Sabaté. Guerrilla urbana en España (1945–1960)*, Barcelona: Virus, 1992. (2nd Edition). (There is also an English edition: *Sabaté: Guerrilla Extraordinary*, London: Davis-Poynter, 1974.) See also the recent study by Pilar Eyre, *Quico Sabaté, el último guerrillero*, Barcelona: Península, 2000. On the schism between the MLR and the CNT, see Paz, *CNT, 1939–1951*, pp. 320–1.

<sup>22</sup> David Wingeate Pike, *Jours de gloire jours de honte: Le Parti communiste d'Espagne en France, depuis son arrivée en 1939 jusqu'à son départ en 1950*, Paris: Sedes, 1984, p. 224.

possible that Peirats was simply unfortunate in that he was in the public domain and that his name was well known.

Yet there are more sinister and Machiavellian possibilities. As has already been noted, the original detainees were anarchist guerrillas from the MLR, all of whom had been expelled from the CNT. If, therefore, relations between the MLR and the CNT were already fraught with tension, they could only have been aggravated by an official CNT press statement released shortly after Lyon events. In what was a clear attempt by the CNT leadership to avoid any complications with the French authorities, the press statement denied the involvement of any CNT members in the Lyon attack. More controversially, however, the CNT went on to attribute the failed robbery to what it described as ‘Spanish criminals’ who, it was claimed, portrayed themselves as members of the anti-Francoist resistance in an attempt to ennoble their actions. As far as the MLR was concerned, in the best light, the tone of these criticisms alone was worthy of contempt; in the worst light, it was possible for the MLR to conclude that they were being ‘fingered’ to the police by the CNT leadership. It is, therefore, not beyond the realms of possibility that Peirats, who was CNT secretary-general at the time of the expulsion of the MLR, and who was clearly unpopular with its activists, was in turn ‘fingered’ to the police by the MLR-affiliated detainees.

There are, however, other explanations for the police offensive of 1951. For instance, exiled Spanish dissident communists and French socialists have suggested that the legal ‘scam’ organised against Peirats was hatched by Stalinist members of the French police.<sup>23</sup> Although the exact circumstances surrounding Peirats’s detention will probably always remain a mystery, there is no doubting the readiness of the French authorities to exploit the public outrage following the Lyon killings as a justification for a clampdown on the activities of the exiled anarchist community and of organisations such as the CNT and the MLR, whose direct action methods and unequivocal hostility to the Franco dictatorship had caused much disquiet in official circles. This would account for the detention of two other members of the CNT secretariat, despite the fact that there was no evidence linking any either them or Peirats with the Lyon events. Yet the efforts of the authorities to tie the MLR and the CNT ultimately led the police to pursue an absurd and contradictory line of investigation. For example, during his detention, Peirats was quizzed by police about the activities and the whereabouts of Laureano Santos Cerrada,<sup>24</sup> a CNT veteran and MLR member, who had been expelled from the CNT during Peirats’s time as secretary-general; given that Peirats and Santos Cerrada had never maintained personal contact, it was difficult to see how the latter’s banishment from the CNT could have drawn the two men together!

There is absolutely no likelihood that Peirats was involved in the robbery. During the economic recession of the 1930s, when Peirats experienced several periods of unemployment, and during the years of privation in exile, he had been a consistent opponent of those who justified *golpes económicos* either to raise funds for the unions or as a response to individual hardship.<sup>25</sup> Quite

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<sup>23</sup> Peirats later claimed that the charges levelled against him following the Lyon events were part of a plot to prevent publication of his history, the first volume of which was due to be completed that same year. See Peirats, ‘Una experiencia histórica...’, pp. 103–106, for his version of events.

<sup>24</sup> Peirats, ‘Una experiencia histórica...’, p. 105. Santos Cerrada was a veteran of the Barcelona CNT Railway workers’ union and an anarchist ‘action group’ member. During World War Two he fought in the French Resistance, participating in acts of sabotage against Nazi installations and supply lines. According to Paz, he was expelled from the CNT on the grounds that ‘he employed methods that clashed with libertarian morality’ (*CNT, 1939–1951*, p. 250, n. 19). In October 1976, at the age of 70, Santos Cerrada was murdered in Paris in deeply mysterious circumstances.

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the conflicts in the CNT and the anarchist movement over *golpes económicos* see Chris Ealham, ‘Anarchism and Illegality in Barcelona, 1931–1937’, *Contemporary European History*, 4, 2, 1995, pp. 133–151.

simply, such direct action methods of financing were contrary to Peirats's personal disposition and to his ideological formation. These doctrinal niceties were clearly lost on the police, who repeatedly beat Peirats in an attempt to secure his 'confession'. Despite the pain and suffering inflicted upon him, and fully aware of the irrevocable damage that a 'confession' would do to the reputation of both the CNT and the *émigré* community, Peirats refused to yield to police pressure and implicate himself in a robbery in which he had played no part.

Battered and bruised, Peirats was transferred to Péraage Jail in Lyon, while the police continued to prepare its fictitious case against him and the 'Gang des Espagnols'. Notwithstanding the trauma of this ordeal, Peirats steadfastly refused to bring his historical work to a halt, and part of *La CNT...* was written during his incarceration. In fact, his sojourn in Péraage jail inspired him to keep his pen active, particularly when he discovered that his new and unwanted place of residency had earlier been used to imprison Pyotr Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist philosopher, revolutionary and, like Peirats, engagé activist-historian of the anarchist movement.<sup>26</sup>

Outside the jail, Peirats's supporters wasted no time in mobilising for his release. Peirats's defence campaign attracted supporters from across the left, including the Catalan dissident communist exile, Jordi Arquer, and a number of French socialist leaders. Several leading French intellectuals also spoke out in favour of Peirats, the most famous being the Nobel laureate, novelist and philosopher Albert Camus. As the clamour for Peirats's release grew, Henri Torrez, a prestigious Parisian lawyer, applied the judicial *coup de grâce*, demolishing the contradictory web of lies and falsehoods which constituted the case against Peirats with considerable aplomb and brio. And so, in June 1951, Peirats was released on licence, on the understanding that he would reside in the Toulouse area. Finally, seven months later — a full year after his original detention — all charges against him were dropped. (The authors of the Lyon attack were never discovered.)

Upon his release from jail, Peirats displayed a new determination to complete *La CNT...* in the shortest possible time and, thereby, avoid any further setbacks, whether of a material or a judicial nature. And this he did: Volume I was duly completed before the end of 1951. Despite this success, Peirats was clearly uncertain about the future of the history, a mood that was reflected in the introduction to Volume I in which the author reflected sanguinely that: 'It is our ambition, at the very least, to see the publication of a second volume... Time, along with the resources and goodwill of our sponsors will tell.'<sup>27</sup> In private, Peirats was dominated by fears that the legal and material uncertainties that impinged upon his everyday life might hinder the completion of the history. And so, he immersed himself fully in his writing, promptly starting work on the remaining two volumes, which were completed in 1952 and 1953 respectively, a truly astounding effort of intellectual will on the part of a self-educated brickmaker-turned-historian.<sup>28</sup>

When considered alongside the abundant body of writing produced by Peirats in the course of his life,<sup>29</sup> *La CNT...* stands out, beyond doubt, as his *magnum opus*, a work that earned him the status of the Herodotus of the CNT.<sup>30</sup> Notwithstanding the author's efforts to narrow the

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<sup>26</sup> *Triunfo*, 21 August 1976.

<sup>27</sup> Peirats's introduction to the first edition follows my own introduction.

<sup>28</sup> *La CNT en la revolución española*, Toulouse: Ediciones CNT, 1951–3 (3 volumes).

<sup>29</sup> For a fuller discussion of Peirats's writings, see my introduction to Volume II (forthcoming).

<sup>30</sup> Peirats has been described as 'our first historian, the "Herodotus of the CNT"' (Prologue by Víctor García to José Peirats, *La Semana Trágica y otros relatos*, Móstoles: Madre Tierra, 1991, p. 17) and as 'the Herodotus of the first libertarian syndicalist movement'. (Francisco Carrasquer, 'José Peirats, de los pocos que quedan', *Polémica*, October 1989, p. 20.)

scope of his book project in order to bring the project to fruition, the final three-volume study vastly exceeded the original hopes of Martín Vilarrupla, who conceived of a fairly specific study of the revolutionary collectives. Instead, *La CNT...* is a case study of a mass anarcho-syndicalist organisation, its militants and its supporters in revolution. The survey of the revolutionary social transformations is the culminating point of Volume I, the mammoth Chapter Fifteen, in which the workings of the collectives are explored in all their local complexity. Based heavily on reports about the collectives in the libertarian press during the civil war, on the daily bulletins produced by the information services of the CNT-FAI, and on the published minutes of collective assemblies, as well as the responses to a questionnaire that Peirats sent to ex-collectivists exiled in Europe and South America, the rich historical detail of this chapter underscores Peirats's triumph over the initial problems which he encountered in gaining access to source materials. Indeed, the expansive and firm empirical basis of *La CNT...* ensured that it quickly superseded the earlier study of the Spanish revolution written by Diego Abad de Santillán, the Hispano-Argentinean anarchist intellectual.<sup>31</sup>

Nearly fifty years after its initial publication, some practitioners of labour history might contend that *La CNT...* is little more than an old-fashioned 'top-down' political history of a labour union, which, owing to its reliance upon congress reports and conference proceedings, ignores *perforce* both the aspirations and the *praxis* of the union rank-and-file, who are relegated to the role of passive observers of historical processes over which they have no direct impact. It was precisely this type of institutional labour history that was the target of the movement towards history 'from below' which, following the appearance of E. P. Thompson's landmark study of the English working class, revolutionised social history methodologies and revitalised the writing of labour history by opening new areas of study among the working class as a whole, in all its rich social, cultural and political diversity.<sup>32</sup>

Given the era in which it was written, *La CNT...* inevitably bears some of the hallmarks (along with some of the shortcomings) of the first wave of labour history; for instance, there is the occasional suggestion that all workers were consistently revolutionary in orientation. Similarly, Peirats offers few insights into the *cultural meaning* of participation in the CNT-FAI for rank-and-file activists, just as there is little exploration of the everyday lives of those which he described elsewhere as 'the men of combat... the men of action... the anonymous militants who swarmed among the alluvial mass of dues-paying members... the pre-eminent functional engine of the unions... , the nervous cells that put the machinery of the CNT in motion from below...'<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, when we consider the manifest ambivalence of the CNT-FAI hierarchy to the revolution of July 1936, a revolution which, as Peirats reminds us, was, more than anything, the spontaneous and unguided work of anonymous grassroots union militants, it is possible to regard *La CNT...* in a very different light: as a history of the voiceless landless labourers and industrial workers who lived and struggled 'from below', in the streets, in the fields and in the factories of Spain and who,

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<sup>31</sup> The work in question — *Porqué perdimos la guerra (una contribución a la historia de la tragedia española)*, Buenos Aires: Imán, 1940 — was used by Peirats in the preparation of this book, despite the fact that it was based largely on the reminiscences and views of the author, a leading protagonist in both the revolution and civil war of the 1930s, and, therefore, lacked the documentary basis of this current study.

<sup>32</sup> E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1968 (2nd, revised edition).

<sup>33</sup> José Peirats, *Figuras del movimiento libertario español*, Barcelona: Picazo, 1978, pp. 5, 297; cited in Ignasio de Llorens, 'José Peirats. La historia como escenario de la libertad. Presentación de su figura y obra', *Anthropos*, 102, 1989, p. 43.



in the summer of 1936, set about establishing new revolutionary relations in agriculture, in industry and in various areas of social life. Accordingly, the resolutions from the assemblies of the revolutionary collectives, along with many other documents and union press releases, constitute a barometer of the goals and the aspirations of communities of workers and landless labourers in free assemblies, a vivid reflection of the aspirations of those who were taking control of their own lives, and not simply following the dictates and slogans of leaders and intellectuals. To Peirats's credit, he was the first to attempt to relate this revolutionary experience 'from below', so while he periodically refers to the 'leaders' of the CNT: he always regarded the *locum tenens* of revolution and historical change to be not the wisdom or the heroic endeavours of great men but, rather, the energies and aspirations of large collectivities of anonymous masses, of those who often go unrecorded in written history but who, very rarely, such as in 1930s Spain, grasp an opportunity to make their own history by struggling for a better world.

The appearance of *La CNT...* affirmed the stature of Peirats as a historian of the Spanish revolution. Thereafter, numerous leading foreign and Spanish academic historians regularly acknowledged their intellectual debt to Peirats, who, until his death in 1989, freely and patiently shared his vast reservoirs of knowledge and information about the Spanish revolution. Besides the many historians who entered into correspondence with Peirats, there was also a steady stream of visitors to his house, the doors of which were always open to anyone in search of the answers to puzzling questions about the collectives or to historians attempting to locate vital source materials. With a characteristically prescient appreciation of the historical moment, Peirats sought to alert researchers to one scarce source of information that was disappearing with time: the memory of those who, like himself, had lived through the experience of revolution. 'Be swift, because a valuable and rich mine is being exhausted,' Peirats would regularly emphasise: 'These men from our ranks are taking the secrets of the collectivisations with them to the grave.'<sup>34</sup>

Such was the interest aroused by the publication of *La CNT...*, the stocks of the first volume were exhausted by the time that Volume III appeared in 1953. Despite the reprint of Volume I in 1956, by the late 1950s all three volumes had completely sold out. It is likely that the bulk of the first edition ended up in the hands of CNT militants past and present or of survivors of the 'Generation of '36'. For obvious reasons, *La CNT...* did not go on open sale in Spain, although copies were smuggled across the French border and distributed by the clandestine anarchist resistance to Franco. Only towards the latter part of the 1950s, when the first edition was already out of print, did foreign and exiled academic historians come to learn of *La CNT...*. In his keenness to find a wider audience for *La CNT...*, and to ensure that the Spanish revolutionary experience of the 1930s did not become relegated to the footnotes of European history, Peirats expended much time and energy to ensure that any spare copies of his increasingly scarce history made their way to academics and intellectuals in both Europe and America. Peirats even issued regular appeals to exiled CNT activists to loan or donate their copies of *La CNT...* to interested foreign

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<sup>34</sup> *Frente Libertario*, May 1972. Unfortunately, this cry was unheeded, and the voices of the 'Generation of '36' often went unheard in exile, just as they went unheard before the revolution. Partly the problem here was the manner in which the powerful winds of exile disseminated the 'Generation of '36' across the world. Added to this was the lack of interest of historians in oral testimony before the 1970s. While there is still no published oral history of the Spanish revolution, in recent years there have been attempts to make amends. Of particular note here is the work of the Fundación Anselmo Lorenzo in Madrid, which has done much to publish the memoirs of members of the 'Generation of '36' and to bring together recorded interviews with CNT-FAI veterans.

historians or to academic institutions, and it was only thanks to the sacrifices willingly made by CNT veterans that many university libraries managed to acquire a copy of the first edition.

The reluctance of any publisher to organise a new edition of what was increasingly a rare and much sought-after study was the source of considerable frustration for Peirats. Finally, in the early sixties, Peirats set about preparing an abridged version of *La CNT...* in the hope that a single tome distilled from the original three-volume study would prove more attractive to publishing houses. The result was *Breve storia del sindacalismo libertario spagnolo* (Genoa: Edizioni RL, 1962), a single-volume study of the revolution which, while necessarily lacking the expansive documentary basis of *La CNT...*, enjoyed enormous success across the world: in 1964 a Spanish language edition appeared under the title *Los anarquistas en la crisis política española*<sup>35</sup> and there have been subsequent reprints;<sup>36</sup> an English version of this work appeared in 1976,<sup>37</sup> a second edition being published in 1990,<sup>38</sup> and a French edition was published in 1989.<sup>39</sup>

Ironically, the appearance of *Los anarquistas en la crisis política española* probably served to delay the appearance of a second edition of the *magnum opus* on which it was based. Thus, it was not until 1971, some twenty years since the appearance of the first edition, a time during which *La CNT...* was, for the most part, unobtainable, that all three volumes were reprinted. The climate of the early seventies – the heady days of worker–student radicalism that followed Paris ‘68 and the opprobrium directed at Stalinism following the invasion of Czechoslovakia – aroused an interest in anti-statist revolutionary projects in general, and the Spanish revolution in particular, which favoured the reprint of *La CNT...* by Ruedo ibérico, the great Paris-based anti-Francoist publishing house. Besides a new introduction and a few corrections of textual errors and alterations that were made in the light of new source materials and documents, there were no significant modifications to the original text.

After the death of Franco in 1975 and the demise of his dictatorship, the 1971 edition finally went on sale in Spain, amid a climate of great political optimism and of hopes for imminent cultural, economic, political and social change. Given the huge public interest in the revolutionary history of the 1930s Spain, a history that had been suppressed and falsified during nearly forty years of dictatorship, it was no surprise that the second edition of *La CNT...* quickly sold out. Aware of the burgeoning market for Peirats’s history, Ruedo ibérico decided to publish a third print of *La CNT...*, a project that was halted following the death of its founder and owner, José Martínez. For a number of years *La CNT...* was, therefore, once again, out of print, and it was only in 1988 that a third edition appeared.<sup>40</sup> The 1971 edition remains the definitive edition of *La CNT...*: all later Spanish-language editions have been based on this version, as was a four-volume Italian version.<sup>41</sup> This first English translation is also based on the 1971 edition.

In the course of the fifty years since its first publication, *La CNT...* has become an obligatory point of reference for all students of the Spanish civil war, essential reading for anyone interested

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<sup>35</sup> Buenos Aires: Alfa, 1964.

<sup>36</sup> Curiously, the publisher of the second Spanish edition released this book under two different titles: the first remained true to the original, whereas the other was *Los anarquistas en la guerra civil española*, Madrid– Gijón: Jucar, 1976.

<sup>37</sup> *The Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, Detroit–Toronto: Black-and-Red, 1976.

<sup>38</sup> The London-based Freedom Press published the second edition in 1990.

<sup>39</sup> *Les Anarchistes espagnols. Révolution de 1936 et luttres de toujours*, Toulouse: Régreves-Silena, 1989.

<sup>40</sup> This edition was published jointly by Ediciones Madre Tierra in Móstoles, Madrid, and the La Cuchilla press in Cali, Columbia.

<sup>41</sup> *La CNT nella Rivoluzione Spagnola*, Milano: Antistato, 1976–8 (4 volumes).

in the development of internal politics within the anti-Francoist camp. With the exception of the ideological henchmen of the Franco dictatorship, all historians, irrespective of their political persuasion or approach, have continued to accord enormous value to this study. Thus, the liberal north American historian Gabriel Jackson recognised that '[t]he internal evidence of [Peirats's] writing shows [him] to be intelligent, and humane...'<sup>42</sup> Academic historians have also praised Peirats for his use of source materials; for instance, Julián Casanova, who has written extensively on the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement, and who cannot be accused of sympathising with Peirats's ideology, nonetheless recognised that *La CNT...* 'is the best documented work to have left the pen of a militant... [It] has served as the basis for numerous later works.'<sup>43</sup> Indeed, elsewhere Casanova has singled out the importance of *La CNT...* for subsequent students of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement: '[W]ell-informed, it has been very useful for later works — in fact, it has sometimes been their very basis.'<sup>44</sup> Similarly, Paul Preston, the internationally acclaimed biographer of Franco, has described *La CNT...* as 'indispensable'.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps the greatest tribute to *La CNT...* is the fact that it continues to be cited by every new generation of historians of the Spanish revolution, just as it continues to appear in the bibliography of most new books on the Spanish civil war. It is, without doubt, a prime documentary source, containing much material that continues to be inaccessible today.<sup>46</sup>

In addition to their praise for Peirats's *oeuvre*, liberal historians, such as Jackson,<sup>47</sup> have also impugned Peirats for his alleged absence of 'objectivity'. Although I do not wish to revisit the polemic surrounding the more assumed than real 'objectivity' of liberal scholarship,<sup>48</sup> it is necessary to point out that those historians who condemn Peirats's 'partialities' from the smug vantage point of 'objectivity' generally fail to appreciate the genuine significance of Peirats's historical writing. Indeed, it is precisely Peirats's 'partialities' that give his historical writing its power and resonance.

It is necessary to explore these themes more fully. First, we need to appreciate the importance of *La CNT...* as a counterbalance to the school of historical falsification established by the propaganda machine of the Franco dictatorship after 1939. When Peirats's history appeared the 'historians of order' loyal to the regime were busy propagating a series of historical myths which legitimised the dictatorship and its repression and, simultaneously, distorted the history of the revolution and of the Spanish left as a whole. For instance, one of the central myths disseminated by historians such as Comín Colomer was that the Spanish Communist Party was, in the summer of 1936, on the brink of seizing power in an illegal revolutionary coup, a catastrophe that was only averted by the alertness and the bravery of the Spanish army. Another major theme of Fran-

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<sup>42</sup> Jackson, 'The Living Experience...', pp. 4–11.

<sup>43</sup> Julián Casanova, 'Guerra y revolución: la edad de oro del anarquismo español', *Historia Social*, 1, 1988, p. 64.

<sup>44</sup> Julián Casanova, 'Anarchism, Revolution and Civil War in Spain: The Challenge of Social History', *International Review of Social History*, 38, 1992, p. 399.

<sup>45</sup> Paul Preston, 'The Historiography of the Spanish Civil War', in Raphael Samuel (ed.), *People's History and Socialist Theory*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 190.

<sup>46</sup> A point that was emphasised by Vernon Richards, who noted that '[o]f the source books on the revolution... [*La CNT...* is] the most important work available to the student.' (*Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, London: Freedom Press, 1983 (3rd edition), p. 222.)

<sup>47</sup> Jackson also described Peirats's writing as 'almost religious in tone... so thoroughly convinced in advance, on theoretical grounds...' ('The Living Experience...', pp. 4–11.)

<sup>48</sup> Noam Chomsky, 'Objectivity and Liberal Scholarship', in *American Power and the New Mandarins*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969.

coist historiography was the non-consensual nature of the civil war collectives which ‘enslaved’ the honest, law-abiding Spanish peasantry, ‘the backbone of mother Spain’, which could only be liberated from the ‘red terror’ in 1939. In the face of this unalloyed intellectual repression and historical falsification, there was little scope for ‘impartiality’ or ‘objectivity’. And it was precisely the pro-revolutionary ‘bias’ of *La CNT...* that helped to redress the historical balance and recuperate memories of a revolutionary transformation that the ‘official history’ of the regime sought to obliterate from the history books. In doing so, *La CNT...* exposed the emptiness of the claims of the dictator’s apologists and, simultaneously, attacked the legitimacy of the dictatorship.

Second, the astoundingly rich historical detail of *La CNT...* reflected Peirats’s insiders’ knowledge of the CNT.<sup>49</sup> No historian, either before or after him, has benefited from the same unrivalled and unhindered access to rare or sensitive documents, internal sources and official CNT documentation. Moreover, the confident and frank nature of the responses by former collectivists to Peirats’s questionnaire can be explained by their affection for and trust in a well-known and respected comrade. Indeed, at a time when the dictatorship was still repressing leftists for their part in the revolutionary events of the 1930s, one cannot expect a questionnaire from an unknown academic historian to have elicited equally open responses. Peirats was, therefore, in a highly privileged position, a position that many historians could only dream of occupying. Added to this, *La CNT...* is enriched by an experiential element: this is an example of history written from personal experience; it is the political autobiography of a revolutionary determined to historicise the vicissitudes of the struggles through which he lived and which he helped create. Peirats writes as one who experienced the glory of the revolution just as he later lived through its disfigurement and suppression at the hands of its enemies.<sup>50</sup> The immediacy of these experiences did not diminish Peirats’s rigour as a historian, nor did it prevent him from questioning deeply held myths about the CNT and the civil war. In fact, there were occasions when this experiential element actually enhanced his critical judgements. Take for example the manner in which Peirats questioned the authenticity of one of the most famous and much-cited expressions to be attributed to an anarchist figure during the civil war: ‘We renounce everything except victory...’, a watchword which seems to prioritise the war above the revolution and which was credited to Buenaventura Durruti, the libertarian militia leader, shortly after his death. Having served as a journalist for much of the civil war, Peirats was in an excellent position to reveal that Durruti had never actually uttered any such expression: Peirats had reported on the very meeting at which the ‘official’ CNT press later claimed that Durruti had effectively reneged upon the revolution in favour of the war, and his extensive notes revealed that no such declaration had been made. This direct experience enabled Peirats the historian to conclude that the words imputed to Durruti were part of a cynical fabrication by those who then controlled the CNT propaganda machine

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<sup>49</sup> Peirats has often been described mistakenly as the ‘official’ historian of the CNT. For the most recent example see Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years, 1868–1936*, Edinburgh–San Francisco: AK Press, 1998 (2nd edition), p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Despite their vastly different social origins and political convictions, as revolutionaries and as historians certain parallels can be made between the work of Peirats and that of Leon Trotsky, another revolutionary-historian: both shared the same goals as writers which, in the words of the latter’s most erudite biographer, amounted to ‘a twofold vis historica: the revolutionary’s urge to make history and the writer’s impulse to describe it...’ (Isaac Deutscher, *The Prophet Outcast. Trotsky: 1929–1940*, London: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 218.) Deutscher also observed that the historian of revolutions has to ‘enter into the nerves of millions of people in order to feel and convey the mighty heave that overturns the established order.’ (*Trotsky*, volume III, p. 232) Peirats achieved this and it stands as yet another of his achievements.

to exploit the prestige of one of the anarchist movement's most charismatic figures in order to pursue its own political and strategic objectives during the war.<sup>51</sup> Incidents such as these lend strength to the verdict of Ignacio de Llorens, who correctly observed that Peirats was 'the person who knows the Spanish libertarian movement best and who best knows how to relate its history'.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, as Peirats made clear in his introduction to this volume, he did not entertain any illusions that his history-writing could be 'impartial' or 'objective'.<sup>53</sup> Instead, *La CNT...* is committed history, a history written in an engagé style; it is based on a systematic and coherent interpretive framework: it is an attempt to write a history that illustrates the social alternatives facing humanity, a history premised on the assumption that the revolutionary road to freedom is preferable to all those that lead to the subjugation of the human spirit and social servitude. (This approach lends particular puissance to Chapters Eight and Nine, where the irruption of the masses in the streets during the struggle against the attempted military coup of July 1936 is discussed. In celebrating the revolutionary energies of the anonymous masses in the streets, Peirats leaves the reader with a strong sense of the political and social order teetering on the brink of collapse as the reactionary army fought against all odds to preserve a traditional order.) Unlike those historians who conceal their likes and dislikes under the veil of 'objectivity' and 'balance', Peirats espouses a revolutionary 'subjectivity': his loyalties and partialities are glaringly obvious at every twist and turn of his narrative, there is no subterfuge, hidden agenda or sleight of hand. In this respect, Peirats's historical writing is far more neutral than the study by César Lorenzo,<sup>54</sup> the son of Horacio Prieto, the CNT general secretary at the height of the political alliance between the CNT leadership and the republican state during the civil war, and whose history of Spanish anarchism is a thinly veiled attempt to defend the memory of his father and to 'settle scores' with the 'pure' anarchists who opposed 'collaborationism' with the state. In Peirats's case, in his writing, as in his life, he was never afraid to reveal his colours: he praises his heroes and vilifies his villains; nowhere does he hide or disguise his preferences or dislikes. He stood for the revolution and for all those who supported it, he exalted the revolutionary energies of the CNT and its grassroots militants; meanwhile, he damned those who sought to contain or to place obstacles before the revolutionary project, be they self-proclaimed counter-revolutionaries, the weak-willed liberals who sought to reach a deal with the Francoists, conniving Stalinists, dithering reformists or wavering revolutionaries.<sup>55</sup> In particular, Peirats vents his anger on the various factions inside the CNT who favoured 'collaboration' with the Republic and who sought to de-

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<sup>51</sup> José Peirats, 'Razones y sinrazones de la participación libertaria en el Gobierno', *Polémica*, 22–25, July 1986, p. 64.

<sup>52</sup> Peirats, 'Una experiencia histórica...', p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> As Peirats recognised in his Introduction to the 2nd edition, one of the strengths of his writing is 'The tone of the aficionado, which no supercilious historian will ever excuse... [I]t must remain as partisan as when it was born. It is not an objective book and this is how it will remain... The author has been a militant anarcho-syndicalist since his youth. And moving from *making* history to *writing* history one cannot be coldly objective. These advantages, rather than any abilities as a writer, allow me to grapple with issues facing Spanish anarchism in the 1930s in a way that would be impossible for a professional historian.' José Peirats, *La CNT en la revolución española*, Paris: Ruedo ibérico, 1971, volume 1, (2nd edition) p.14.

<sup>54</sup> *Les Anarchistes espagnols et le pouvoir, 1868–1969*, Paris: Seuil, 1969. (There is a Spanish edition: *Los anarquistas españoles y el poder*, Paris: Ruedo ibérico, 1972.).

<sup>55</sup> This point concerning Peirats's honesty was made in one review of the third Spanish edition of *La CNT...*. See also Francisco Carrasquer, 'El libro de Peirats: "La CNT en la Revolución Española"', *Polémica*, June–July 1990, pp. 22–4.

tain the revolution, mercilessly criticising the union's past, his union's past. All this occurs from a consistently anarchist position, resulting in what has been described as 'a devastating critique of the anarchosyndicalist leadership'.<sup>56</sup>

Peirats's history is then a history with a cause. A committed revolutionary until the end of his life, he was an activist-historian. His historical writing constituted part of an open-ended intellectual project, a guide to action, an attempt to convince, influence and raise questions in the minds of others, all of which were integral parts of his lifelong struggle in pursuit of freedom and liberty. He was not alone in this struggle, and in this respect Peirats's history, which documents the hopes and desires for social transformation of hundreds of thousands of workers in the 1930s, is the political autobiography of his generation, the 'Generation of '36', the generation which made a revolution only to suffer defeat in a civil war, the 'lost generation', which General Franco and his supporters sought to silence in unmarked graves, concentration camps and foreign exile. Yet, while many thousands of his generation were lost to history, or became embittered and disenchanted during exile, Peirats refused to remain silent. It is this voice that we are pleased to now make available to you.

**Chris Ealham**

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<sup>56</sup> Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists*, p. 9.

## **Notes for the reader of the first English edition**

Changes to the original text have been kept to a minimum. Some of the original footnotes intended for a Spanish audience have been suppressed on the grounds that their content is already covered in greater detail in my own notes which have been written especially for an English-speaking audience. References to the names of people, places and streets have, where appropriate, been changed from Castilian to Catalan, which is now more widely used than in Peirats's day. From time to time the long and sprawling sentences which are characteristic of Castilian, and which do not translate well into English, have been pruned back. Needless to say, the meaning of these sentences remains unaltered in keeping with my central concern: to allow Peirats's voice to be heard throughout.

# Introduction

Since 1936 a great stream of books dealing with the Spanish civil war and the Francoist regime has come forth. If we leave to one side those studies written on behalf of victorious Francoism and confine our attention to publications by authors who identify with the Republic, the majority of these books are blighted by a fundamental shortcoming: the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) and its role in the Spanish revolution are either omitted or shrouded in silence. The authors who have been bold enough to pay simple tribute to this important element in the life of Iberian society have been few in number.<sup>1</sup>

The principal objective of the lines which follow is to highlight the role of the CNT throughout the revolutionary process. To this end, we have deployed all our objective capabilities. It is for the reader to determine the degree to which we have been successful. Were we to cast ourselves as judge and jury, we should have to confess our misgivings. In any event, we crave the indulgence of the reader.

In the overall layout of the book we have sought to keep the narrative sections to a minimum for reasons of space, and to let events and original sources speak for themselves by virtue of their intense interest. We vouch for the authenticity of the latter sources, which, for the most part, we have reproduced without tampering with their form, even in those instances where aesthetic considerations would have commended such a path.

In this first volume we begin with a painstaking narration of the events in which the CNT was involved between 1911 and 1936. Notwithstanding the difficulties we have had to overcome in the matter of documentation, it is our belief that no aspect of significance has been omitted.

It is our ambition, at the very least, to see the publication of a second volume in which we intend to relate the events intervening between the closing date of this present volume and the military conclusion of the Spanish civil war, tying them in with the activities of the CNT.

Time, along with the resources and goodwill of our sponsors, will tell.

The Spanish crisis is one of the deepest crises by which any people could have been racked. Its duration can be measured in centuries — centuries of continual struggles between the state and the spirit of the people. In Spain, the state is doubly centralistic. The centralism intrinsic to the state has its seat in the central geographical area of the peninsula, on the broad plains of Castile, that playground of feudal and military absolutism.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Since this book was written in the early 1950s there have been considerable changes in the bibliographical landscape. An analysis of the evolution of the historiography of the Spanish Revolution can be found in Chris Ealham, 'The Spanish Revolution: 60 Years On', *Tesserae*, 2, 2, 1996, pp. 209–34 and in the bibliographical essay accompanying Volume 3 of this study.

<sup>2</sup> In 1561, when Felipe II made Madrid the capital of the emerging Spanish state, the city lacked most of the qualities possessed by great European cities. However, Madrid was an administrative centre and this choice symbolised the triumph of the centralising project of the Castilian nobility over the mercantile and commercial classes, which were dispersed around the periphery of the peninsula.



By way of a counter to the unitarian mentality, itself a reflection of a geographically monolithic *meseta*, the fringes of the Peninsula, with their mountain ranges, meadows and valleys, form a cordon of compartments each with its infinite variety of types, languages and traditions. Each zone or recess of this pockmarked countryside represents a sovereign unit jealous of its own institutions and proud of its liberty.

This is the womb of Iberian federalism. This geographical configuration was always a seedbed of autonomies bordering on separatism, the reply to absolutism. The overweening ambitions of the central authorities over peoples endowed with their own personalities and culture have frequently driven these peoples in the direction of cantonalist solutions. In this instance separatism, right from its first faltering steps on the stage of history, has been merely a derailment of the spirit of freedom, parallel to the deviance of our rabid individualists.

Federalism occupied the middle ground between absolutism and separatism, and indeed between *caudillismo*<sup>3</sup> and individualism. Federalism is based upon the free and voluntary liaison of all autonomies, from the independence of the individual, the unit of society *par excellence*, up to that of natural or sympathetic regions, via the free municipality.

Far from giving the lie to it, the warmth with which certain ideological influences emanating from outside the country was received in Spain affirms the existence of a native federalism scarcely mitigated by centuries of usurpation. In Spain federalism fell upon well-worked furrows. Its most unmistakable manifestations (not counting the regionalist movements), in the shape of the Valencian guilds (the *Germanies*),<sup>4</sup> and indeed the war of Castile's *comuneros*,<sup>5</sup> formed part of the baggage of the organised world of the workers.

In the second half of last century the First International<sup>6</sup> burst upon the world. The driving force behind it was the French, Belgian and Swiss workers who followed the teachings of Proudhon.<sup>7</sup> Political federalism had been introduced to Spain through the writings of Pi i Margall.<sup>8</sup> Bakuninist emissaries<sup>9</sup> planted their libertarian federalism among the Spanish working class.

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<sup>3</sup> The autocratic style of the military leaders, or *caudillos*, in medieval Spain. The title of Caudillo was adopted by Franco during the civil war, whereafter it became the Spanish equivalent to the Italian Duce and the German Führer, while *caudillismo* was comparable with the German *Führerprinzip*.

<sup>4</sup> The *Germanies* or Brotherhoods emerged in the 1510s when they were the focus for popular rebellion during what was a period of economic and political crisis and protest against the existing order. The *Germanies* sought a new urban democracy based upon increased popular representation in municipal affairs and fairer taxation. While initially urban-based, and largely concentrated in Valencia and Mallorca, they later spread into Catalonia and into rural areas.

<sup>5</sup> The *comunero* movement of the 1520s can be seen as the first attempt at bourgeois revolution in Spain as the nascent urban bourgeoisie declared war on the monarchy, the nobility and the high clergy.

<sup>6</sup> Formed in London in 1864 in order to coordinate solidarity and class action across Europe, this was the first ever international association of workers' organisations. Bedevilled by internal divisions and conflicts, the First International was dissolved in 1876.

<sup>7</sup> The federalist and decentralising ideas of French anarchist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon were also to enjoy great influence in Spain.

<sup>8</sup> The son of a Catalan textile worker, Francesc Pi i Margall studied law in Barcelona and Madrid, where he acquired a doctorate. As leader of the Partido Republicano Federal (Federal Republican Party), he imported the radical decentralising ideas of Proudhon into Spain, as divulged in his 1854 work *La reacción y la revolución* (Reaction and Revolution), a study that exerted a profound influence on the evolution of leftist thought in Iberia. For two brief months Pi i Margall served as president of the ephemeral First Republic (1873–4), during which he advocated a secular, decentralised republic and wide regional autonomy. Although his social philosophy was vague and did not exceed far beyond mutualism, Pi i Margall was heavily influenced by Proudhon and his sensitivity towards the plight of the dispossessed, and his stress on federalism ensured that he was admired by future generations of anarchists.

<sup>9</sup> Mikhail Bakunin was a Russian aristocrat-turned-anarchist who raised the banner of libertarian communism during the struggles within the First International. The most famous of his emissaries was Giuseppe Fanelli, a former

The federalism of Pi i Margall served the purposes of the working class more than those of the Republican party. Politically, federalism vegetated until it eventually lost all face while in power in 1873.<sup>10</sup> The working class reaped the fruits of federalism's frustrated hopes: these proved a marvellously rich crop which would rob the Restoration authorities of much sleep.<sup>11</sup>

For the first time in the history of Spain we witness the renaissance of independent popular activity, free from the tutelage of politicians and their parties, shorn of parochialism and absolutism, and boasting the repudiation of frontiers, racial prejudice and religious charlatanry.

In terms of democracy, Spain was still a century and a half behind the times compared with the major European countries and America. To distinguish themselves from one another, the political factions labelled themselves conservative and liberal,<sup>12</sup> not that this spared the populace of the spectacle of *pronunciamientos*.<sup>13</sup> The working class alone had proved capable of facing up to the times. Almost from the very outset, the Spanish section of the International attended its world congresses, representing substantial federations, such as Catalonia, Levante, Aragón, the Centre,<sup>14</sup> Andalusia, etc., and participating in those famous debates where the talk was of the insurmountable contradictions of capitalism, the general expropriatory strike and the socialisation of the means of production.

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follower of Garibaldi and founder of the Alliance for Social Democracy, who arrived in Spain in October 1868. Prior to his departure in February 1869, he helped organise cells of anarchist supporters in Madrid and Barcelona. While Fanelli's sojourn was important in so far as he converted important working class nuclei to the libertarian cause, his brief visit has, in my opinion, been frequently exaggerated as a factor in the later growth of Iberian anarchism, particularly as he lacked financial resources to travel widely throughout the peninsula and because he spoke no Spanish.

<sup>10</sup> At this time Pi i Margall's Federal Republican Party was the main anti-monarchist party and its radical liberal-democratic programme attracted wide sections of the urban middle and working classes. The recriminations following the demise of the First Republic led to enormous organisational fragmentation within republicanism and the defection of a key part of its working-class base towards the anarchist movement.

<sup>11</sup> The Restoration monarchy (1875–1923) was created and destroyed by the military who first installed King Alfonso XII on the throne and then, almost fifty years later, established the monarchist-dictatorship of General Miguel Primo de Rivera. The Restoration system was designed to end the political instability of preceding years through social defence and control and to prevent the masses from influencing elite politics. This was achieved through the marginalisation of the working class from the political process and the firm repression of protest. Thus, although the image of politics during the Restoration years was based on the British parliamentary model, and resembled that of a functioning bourgeois democracy, this masked the underlying mechanisms of the system: electoral falsification, corruption and repression. Every election in this period was rigged in order to allow the two dominant parties (see note 12 below) to alternate peacefully in power. This *turno pacífico* (peaceful turnover) was organised from the Interior Ministry in Madrid which, through local civil governors, formed alliances with caciques (see note 15 below) who organised electoral fraud. At the end of the nineteenth century the system was dealt two severe blows. First, the architect of the Restoration, Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, was assassinated in 1897 by Michele Angiolillo, an Italian anarchist. Second, following the colonial defeat of 1898, mass mobilisation was increasingly less easy to contain and the system entered a condition of near-permanent crisis.

<sup>12</sup> Inspired by the British political system, the two hegemonic parties of the Restoration era, the so-called 'dynastic parties', were known as the Liberals and the Conservatives and were little more than vehicles for the interests of the landed elite. The main difference between the two was that the Liberals represented the concerns of the wheat growers of the central region, whereas the Conservatives championed the cause of the southern aristocracy.

<sup>13</sup> This was the classical form which military intervention assumed in nineteenth-century Spain. Literally translated as 'pronouncements', the *pronunciamientos* were swift interventions in the political arena, designed to replace one government with another or to alter the direction of government policy. It is generally accepted by historians that most of these *pronunciamientos* were informed by liberal intentions; however, during the last part of the nineteenth century the military adopted more conservative positions.

<sup>14</sup> The area known as the Centre consists largely of the two Castiles of the Spanish *meseta*.

Battle commenced. A new element, the proletariat, entered the arena, ready to make an almighty effort to right Spain's many ills and lift the country out of its cultural backwardness and impoverishment, freeing it from religious, seigneurial and military *caciquismo*.<sup>15</sup> Thus, that which the progressive parties had always balked at attempting was now taken up by those who were seen as the most backward social class of all. The manifestos issued by the Spanish internationalists display an ideological richness that defies calculation. Before that richness can be grasped one has to place it in its contemporary context. They hurled down a gauntlet to time. The manifestos bore the proud signatures of tanners, machinists, printers, weavers, etc. They dissected statist society, enumerating its underlying injustices and contradictions, while stigmatising the exploitation of man by man, the law of 'free competition' which turns the world into a sea infested with licensed buccaneers. And this shattering critique is merely the introduction to glowing pages of authentic socialist theory, and earnest socialist theory at that, shaped by the federalism fashionable in Iberia.

It might perhaps be added that there was a disparity between the effort expended by the Spanish workers' movement and the meagre results it obtained. But what is beyond all criticism and which stands up to the most rigorous ergo-nomic measurement is the groundswell of selfless idealism, integrity, fighting spirit and readiness for sacrifice of the Spanish libertarians. This unswerving commitment to the absolute emancipation of the workers brought savage repression upon their organisations. The very emergence of the International was followed in the chambers of the parliament (witness the speeches of Garrido,<sup>16</sup> Pi i Margall, Castelar,<sup>17</sup> etc., on the subject of the International), as was its proscription and the repression of its militants.

The significance of the libertarian labour movement on Spanish politics and society cannot be measured simply through its direct impact. Whether in the guise of more or less independent societies and guilds like the Spanish Regional Federation<sup>18</sup> in the days of the International or, in the wake of repression, as a series of bodies working under the umbrella organisation Solidaridad

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<sup>15</sup> In the Spanish American empire, *caciques* were local chiefs who made arrangements with the colonial administration. In Spain the term was used to describe those local notables operating at the centre of a clientelist network based on favours and intimidation. Since power relations in this system were frequently bound up with the agrarian economic and social system, the *cacique* was often the largest landowner in any given area, but also might be a priest or an eminent professional. During the Restoration era the *caciques* were responsible for rigging elections and delivering votes.

<sup>16</sup> Labour historian, novelist, painter, journalist and polemicist, the indefatigable Fernando Garrido Tortosa espoused Fourierism and cooperativism and was a member of Pi's Republican Party. He also developed strong contacts with the nascent anarchist movement, befriending Élie Reclus and meeting Fanelli during his visit to Spain. His two-volume *Historia de las asociaciones obreras en Europa* (Madrid, 1870) contains crucial material on the early history of the Spanish labour movement.

<sup>17</sup> Emilio Castelar y Ripoll was a bourgeois democrat and leader of the republican right during the First Republic whose repression of the left paved the way for monarchical military reaction.

<sup>18</sup> A series of anarchist-inclined labour groups adopted variations upon this name, beginning with the Bakuninist Federación Regional Española de la Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores (Spanish Regional Federation of the International Working Men's Association), which was formed in 1870 and which had around 60,000 members before it was forced underground by state repression in 1874. In clandestinity it gravitated towards illegalist tactics before becoming the Federación de Trabajadores de la Región Española (Federation of Workers of the Spanish Region) in 1881, a union-oriented body that was eventually perceived as 'reformist' by many anarchists and which ceased to operate in 1888. Between 1900 and 1905 a Federación Regional Española de Sociedades de Resistencia (Spanish Regional Trade Union Federation) existed although it showed few signs of life.

Obrera,<sup>19</sup> or, later on, as the CNT, for the past eighty years the anarcho-syndicalist movement has represented a profound shock to the system as far as Spain's social and political status quo has been concerned. Yet it would be a crass error to believe that it has been only that.

Anarcho-syndicalism has always trailed in its wake an intense flurry of propagandistic activity, whether artistic, scientific, philosophical, pedagogical or eclectic. It must be regarded as the putative sire of one of the most intriguing educational movements ever to have emerged in the peninsula: the Modern School, which shared in the glorious martyrdom of Francesc Ferrer i Guàrdia.<sup>20</sup>

Despite what its many detractors may say, this movement is very far from being a run-of-the-mill essay in brazen demagoguery. That some may have managed to make capital out of its 'abruptness' in no way diminishes the importance which it holds *per se*. Extremism is endemic among currents geared to renewal and tends to be exaggerated by virtue of the contrast between innovation and tradition. And in this connection, the fierceness of the clash between a proletariat born to revolutionary aspirations and a Spanish state cut from old cloth meant that the struggle between a modern educational ethos imbued with materialistic positivism and the official education system monopolised by clerics and Jesuits would be all the sharper.

Nevertheless, through the Modern School, and through other tragically curtailed educational projects, the workers were initiated into the fruits of the discoveries of the last century, fruits which in Spain were truly forbidden ones.<sup>21</sup>

Another of the qualities of the Spanish labour movement is that it is independent of all external influence, with the exception of anarchism, which is anything but alien to the people of Iberia. We might say again here that the doctrinal anarchism of Bakunin's emissaries found fertile soil in the idiosyncrasy of our people.<sup>22</sup>

More than a platform of struggle without quarter, anarchism represents a philosophical and social outlook. Taking as its starting point the natural tendency of man towards freedom — a notion

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<sup>19</sup> Established in Barcelona in 1907 by a mish-mash of anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, republicans and socialists, Solidaridad Obrera was a Catalan union organisation aimed at securing broad working-class unity. However, political diversity ended in disintegration as the various factions failed to agree on the future orientation of the movement. The anarcho-syndicalist elements later formed the CNT, whose newspaper adopted the name of the defunct federation.

<sup>20</sup> Created by Ferrer, the *Escuela Moderna* (Modern School) was an educational movement committed to 'rationalist education' and progressive pedagogy as an alternative to traditional Catholic schooling. Ferrer participated in the insurrectionalist wing of the republican movement in the 1880s before leaving for exile in Paris, where he became a Dreyfusard and an advocate of libertarian, non-coercive education. He returned to Barcelona in 1901 and founded the first Modern School in which spontaneous expression and experimentation were encouraged. By 1905 there were around 50 of these schools in the Barcelona area, although the following year they were subjected to state repression under the pretext that a worker at Ferrer's publishing house attempted to assassinate King Alfonso XIII. In 1908 Ferrer acquired an international reputation when he formed the International League for the Rational Education of Children. Inside Spain he was despised by the clergy for challenging their educational monopoly and for stimulating a culture to rival that of the authorities. He was executed in the state repression which followed the anti-militarist/ anti-clerical riots of 1909, despite an international campaign for his clemency and regardless of the fact that he had not participated in the events of 1909.

<sup>21</sup> This is one of the many instances in which the author wrote from personal experience. For a discussion of Peirats's educational background see my introduction to Volume 2.

<sup>22</sup> Such ethno-psychological explanations of the popularity of Spanish anarchism have enjoyed widespread popularity at different times. For instance, Gerald Brenan attributed the development of anarchism in Spain to 'a great natural difference of climate, culture and character' (*The Spanish Labyrinth*, Cambridge, 1986, p. 200). The attraction of such arguments for anarchists was that it explained the popularity of their movement in terms of 'ethnic' and 'spiritual' factors or the 'indigenous' or 'racial sentiment' of the Spanish people and, therefore, not the criminal conspiracy which was claimed by the authorities.

held in common with all schools of socialism — anarchism has been the only current capable of escaping the contradictions between ends and means. For anarchism, such a contradiction exists between the notion of liberty and any form of authority.

The solution to this conflict consists in the abolition of the very principle of authority. Authority as such is no less authority just because others foist it upon us. Authority as the pure and simple negation of liberty can never be a reliable guarantor. Indeed quite the contrary: authority is the natural and most ferocious enemy of liberty.

Another of anarchism's discoveries is that authority as a transitional solution is a sophism. Authority as a means inevitably degenerates into permanence. Authoritarian measures are never temporary. All the political or revolutionary experiments which have had authority as their basis bear witness to the truth of this. Hence anarchism's unwavering opposition to the seizure of political power and the imposition of liberty from on high.

One of anarchism's most important battles has been the battle against Marxism. It began in the bosom of the First International between the supporters of Marx<sup>23</sup> and those of Bakunin. To all intents the degeneration of political socialism worldwide and the Soviet phenomenon have resolved the issue in anarchism's favour. Leon Blum's admission to the congress of the French socialist party in 1945 leaves no room for doubt. 'Only two courses remain to socialism:', he said, 'either to go on being the loyal and honest steward of capitalism or to return to the tactics of Bakunin.'

As far as Spain is concerned, we have to look to two things to grasp the 'anarchisation' process within the labour movement: the temperamental anarchism of Spaniards and popular discontent, the product of the inveterate greed in the country's politics. The CNT emblazoned upon its banner the precept of independence from all political parties, and the most absolute abstention in electoral and parliamentary contests. Yet this did not imply any abdication of the ambition to shape the destiny of the nation.

Quite the contrary. The working class has always taken issue with so-called 'pure' unionism. Hence its 'purposeful' intentions and its acceptance of tactics, principles and objectives. The CNT espouses the principles, tactics and objectives of militant anarchism which constantly informed and guided it.

The aims of the CNT are the organisation of all the exploited for the pursuit of short-term demands and for the revolutionary destruction of capitalism and the state. Its supreme goal is libertarian communism, a social system rooted in the free municipality (or commune) federated at local, regional and national levels.

As for the Confederation's federalism, this is not merely an aspiration or ambition: it is the very organisational and operational structure of the CNT. So much is this the case that some theorists have purported to divine a foretaste of the functioning of the society of the future in the very manner in which the unions operate and reach and implement their decisions.

That functioning proceeds like this. The unions constitute autonomous units, linked to the ensemble of the Confederation only by the accords of a general nature adopted at national congresses, whether regular or extraordinary. Apart from this commitment, the unions, right up to their technical sections, are free to reach any decision which is not detrimental to the organisa-

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<sup>23</sup> The founder of 'scientific socialism', which was rejected as 'authoritarian' among other things... by the anti-statist, libertarian wing of the First International.

tion as a whole. There are no exceptions to this principle and it can be stated that it is the unions which decide and directly regulate the guidelines of the Confederation.

At all times, the basis for any local, regional, or national decision is the general assembly of the union, where every member has the right to attend, raise and discuss issues, and vote on proposals. Resolutions are adopted by majority vote attenuated by proportional representation.

Extraordinary congresses are held on the suggestion of the assembled unions. Even the agenda is devised by the assemblies where the items on the agenda are debated and delegates appointed as the executors of their collective will. This federalist procedure, operating from the bottom up, constitutes a precaution against any possible authoritarian degeneration in the representative committees.

The CNT's fighting tactics are those proper to revolutionary syndicalism, namely the tactics of 'direct action'. On the one hand these tactics imply the repudiation of all arbitration, whether official or otherwise, in conflicts between capital (or the state) and the unions; and, on the other, the absolute forswearing of electoral and parliamentary contests.

Anarcho-syndicalism has deduced its tactics from its own principles and objectives. Let us look at them.

The CNT campaigns for the abolition of capitalism and the state. According to the CNT, the state is by nature an agency of oppression, corruption and privilege. The state is also understood to be any central agency of authority indissociable from a repressive, military or police apparatus.

The state, of which capitalism is but the outward economic form, is the premier foe of social progress. Anarcho-syndicalism holds the state to be incompatible with liberalism. The state cannot be liberal except in so far as the traditional privileges and hierarchies which it stands for are respected. It also has to be said that the democratic transfiguration of the state is construed as a mere camouflage. As far as the state has been concerned, democracy has simply been a necessity foisted upon it by circumstances and, in its hands, an effective instrument in ensuring that its caste interests of absolute power and indisputable authority are better served and spared from interference. The state is always attended by a caste mentality.

Every deviation from the precept of direct struggle is regarded as collaboration, that is to say, as a negation of the principle of class struggle. Parliamentaryism, aside from being a breeding ground of corruption and demagoguery, necessarily leads either to the conquest of the state or to collaboration with the state. Conquest of the state is always an illusion. In the end, the state conquers its conquerors, or turns into the state all those who achieve such eminence, whether through the ballot box or by storm.

Confederal direct action represents an ongoing practice of struggle. Then again, it also represents the technical, moral, cultural and organisational preparation of the workers before the decisive insurrection against the state, which will usher in the management of the economy by the unions, that is to say, libertarian communism.

At the level of short-term economics, the CNT espouses the precept of class struggle and, in its disputes with the bourgeoisie, does not countenance interference by any authority outside of the belligerents. All arbitration is regarded as conciliation, and conciliation is seen as the first step towards collaboration. The interests of capital and the workers' interests cannot be reconciled. Needless to say, the issue becomes even more complicated when the conciliator is, as is most often the case, the state.

Collaboration with the state has already yielded fruits that are attractive to the eye but bitter to the taste. Those fruits are known as reformism, that is to say, superficial reforms, endless promises,

procrastination and adulteration. As far as anarcho-syndicalism is concerned, the experience of the reformist management of socialism and political unionism has been conclusive. In Blum's earlier quoted phrase, both have amounted to a self-inflicted wound.

Political reformism has been the elixir of long life for the capitalist state, while for state capitalism it has been at the root of the ideological emasculation of the workers, not to mention the cause of the sterility of political socialism and the domestication of unionism.

With the publication of the ensuing chapters our aim is to brief the public about the CNT's participation in the Spanish Revolution, about what the Confederation is and what it represents and to make public its triumphs, aspirations, vicissitudes, shortcomings and errors.

We dedicate this first volume to all scholars who are concerned with revolutionary and social issues; to those who know nothing of the CNT other than those three symbolic initials; to all whom we lost to state repression, in the days of Martínez Anido and Arlegui, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship,<sup>24</sup> to the rifles of the Republic's Civil guard,<sup>25</sup> on 19 July 1936, in the civil war, in exile and in the resistance against Franco's regime. We dedicate it to all the friends and sympathisers who encouraged us in our undertaking and helped amass our data and documentation. And lastly, we dedicate it to the generation of young libertarians fated to take our places in the march towards a new life.

**José Peirats**

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<sup>24</sup> As will be seen in Chapter One, the triumvirate of Martínez Anido, Arlegui and Primo de Rivera unleashed a fierce repression against the CNT after World War One.

<sup>25</sup> Formed in 1844 to repress rural banditry and nullify the conflicts emanating from Spain's iniquitous agrarian structure, this stridently monarchist, paramilitary police force became a key weapon in the repressive arsenal of the Spanish state and was, therefore, worshipped by the conservative middle classes, who knew it as the '*benemérita*' (the 'well-deserving'). Civil Guards were always stationed away from their birthplace so that the force would remain aloof from the local populace, something which was effectively guaranteed owing to the exemplary violence practised by the force ('preventive brutality'). Accordingly, the Civil Guard dispersed protesters by opening fire on demonstrations, thereby reclaiming the streets for the authorities. In the short term these methods successfully maintained public order, but they did not quell deep-rooted social tensions and many landless labourers, especially in the south, came to look on the force as a foreign army of occupation. Despite the fact that 'preventive brutality' would inevitably engender greater casualties among concentrated city communities, the authorities deployed the Civil Guard to preserve order in several urban centres. Widespread popular hopes that the birth of the Second Republic in 1931 would initiate a radical reform of the security forces and disband the Civil Guard were frustrated. The views of the new republican government were summed up by Julián Besteiro, a leading social-democratic ideologue and professor of logic at Madrid University, who described the Civil Guard as 'an admirable machine [which] should not be suppressed but made to work in our favour' (cited in Manuel Azaña, *Obras completas. El transito de un mundo histórico*, Mexico, 1967, vol. 3, p. 294). During the Republic the Civil Guard was used to repress the revolutionary left, as it had done throughout the monarchy, but it had felt little loyalty towards the new regime and in August 1932 and July 1936 sections of the Civil Guard rose against the Republic.

# CHAPTER ONE: From the Bellas Artes Congress to the Primo de Rivera dictatorship

The climate that existed before 30 October 1910 — this being the birthdate<sup>1</sup> of the CNT — was such as to favour the founding of a nationwide, revolutionary labour organisation. The memory of the First International had not faded from workers' minds. Apart from brief interruptions, anarchist-oriented, revolutionary forms of labour organisation had been commonplace during the whole period leading up to the foundation of the CNT.<sup>2</sup>

Events in Barcelona in 1909, when the need for some sort of solidarity action by all Spanish workers made itself so sorely felt, strengthened the determination to coordinate the fragmented forces across the country. However, the immediate aftermath of the 1909 'Tragic Week' and the tremendous repression, culminating in the firing squads on Montjuïc, retarded the crystallisation of the Confederation.<sup>3</sup>

The so-called Bellas Artes Congress held at the Palace of Fine Arts in the Catalan capital on 8–10 September 1911, drew together a huge number of delegates from all parts of Spain. Little is known of its resolutions and proceedings, because of the harsh repression incurred by one of these resolutions, which called for a nationwide general strike in protest at the carnage in

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<sup>1</sup> In the earlier Spanish-language editions of this work the birthdate of the CNT is given as 8 September 1911, a date that is also cited in many academic studies. There is, however, a certain amount of confusion on this question, due to two congresses having been held at Barcelona's Palace of Fine Arts. The first of these assemblies, which took place during 30 October–1 November 1910, agreed to transform *Solidaridad Obrera*, the Catalan Regional Confederation of Labour, into a national body. Almost a year later, during 8–10 September 1911, the CNT held its first congress at the same venue. Manuel Buenacasa, a founder member of the CNT and the author of *El movimiento obrero español, 1888–1926. Historia y crítica* (first published 1928, reprinted Madrid, 1977), an influential history of the Spanish labour movement, viewed the 1911 congress as the birthdate of the Confederation. Because Peirats relied heavily on Buenacasa's history, he initially accepted this later date. However, in his prologue to the republished proceedings of the 1910 congress (Toulouse, 1959), Peirats recognised that the 1910 gathering was in fact the founding congress of the CNT. I have reflected Peirats's change of opinion in this work.

<sup>2</sup> That said, while one can discern a buoyant anarchist counter-culture in Barcelona from the end of the nineteenth century, it is less easy to establish the influence this had on the labour movement before 1914. Indeed, rather than a purely anarchist organisation, the CNT was formed as a nationwide federation in the aftermath of failed general strikes in 1902 and 1909.

<sup>3</sup> The events of the 1909 'Tragic Week' (*Semana Trágica*) were confined largely to Barcelona, where protests against Spain's failed colonial ventures in Morocco culminated in a general strike of the anarchists, anarchosyndicalists and socialists in *Solidaridad Obrera*. The general strike was quickly transformed into an anti-militarist urban insurrection.



Morocco<sup>4</sup> and in solidarity with the strikers at the Bilbao steel foundries.<sup>5</sup> The CNT began its revolutionary career with a show of strength in the streets, fighting against militarism and Spain's ruling castes and earning the organisation an automatic ban. Not until 1914 did the CNT regain its right to a legal existence.

Spanish neutrality during the war in Europe was a stimulus to the class sentiment of the proletariat in industrial areas such as Catalonia. The manpower requirements of industries supplying the needs of both warring camps had two immediate effects: to stimulate both the ambitions of nascent capitalism and also the consequent demands of the proletariat. The trade union movement acquired new meaning for the people. Besides the problem of starvation wages, there was the matter of the rising cost of living.<sup>6</sup> Capitalising on the effervescence created by these two problems, the republican parties, the PSOE<sup>7</sup> and Marcel·lí Domingo's quasi-socialist party<sup>8</sup> made their play. The so-called 'Assembly of Parliamentarians',<sup>9</sup> while heralded with the trumpet blasts

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<sup>4</sup> The Madrid-based political élite hoped that a militaristic campaign in North Africa would compensate for the loss of the remnants of the Spanish empire in 1898 and allow the military to mend its damaged ego. Colonial adventures also provided the Restoration authorities with an opportunity to paper over social divisions by diverting internal political conflict overseas into the field of foreign policy. However, instead of inducing political stability, the incompetence of the Spanish army command ensured that this expansionist strategy resulted in profound political crises (1909, 1917, 1921 and 1923) and, eventually, the demise of the Restoration monarchy.

<sup>5</sup> The metallurgical workers' strike was part of a vast mobilisation by the Bilbao working class which began with an economic strike by the carters at Bilbao docks at the end of August 1911. Following an appeal by the carters for solidarity from other workers, the dockers paralysed the waterfront on 6–7 September. The strike then spread up the Bilbao river to the docks at Deusto, Erandio, Baracaldo, Sestao and Zorroza, while 5,000 metallurgical workers at the San Francisco steel mills and the Nervion shipyards walked out in solidarity. In what was increasingly a trial of strength, the local bourgeoisie responded with a lockout, an escalation of the conflict which prompted the Bilbao delegate at the Barcelona congress to table a motion in favour of a nationwide general strike in solidarity with the Basque workers. Thus the nascent CNT mobilised during 12–20 September and partial or local general strikes occurred in A Coruña, Barcelona, Cádiz, Calahorra, Huelva, Linares, Seville, Valencia, Vigo and Zaragoza, while in Valencia province a revolutionary insurrection was attempted. Apparently fearing a new 'Tragic Week', Prime Minister Canalejas ordered a full repression of the protest movement and of the CNT. Canalejas was brought to book by the anarchist Miguel Pardiñas, who assassinated him on 12 November 1912 in the Puerta del Sol, in central Madrid.

<sup>6</sup> Despite the fact that from 1916 onwards Spain's balance of payments no longer showed a deficit, the cost of living rose enormously. A plan by the finance minister for a tax on the vast profits made by speculators during World War One was sabotaged by the Catalan plutocracy and its allies. (Note by the author.)

<sup>7</sup> Created in 1879 as a Marxist, class-based party, the Partido Socialista Obrero Español's commitment to revolutionary politics was always tenuous and, like the other parties of the Second International, it evolved into a reformist, social-democratic party. This was highlighted by the resolution passed at its 1902 congress which stipulated that the general strike should never exceed two days. A similar cautiousness shaped the *modus operandi* of the PSOE-affiliated trade union, the UGT, which, while formed in Barcelona in 1888, relocated to Madrid in 1899. The conservative UGT leadership looked upon the general strike in the same way that a miser views money and espoused tactics based around negotiations with the employer class. Because this approach was ill-suited to the traditionally direct and violent class struggles of Barcelona and Andalusia, right up until the 1920s the social basis of the UGT was largely restricted to the more traditional working class of Madrid, the Asturian miners and the Basque metallurgists.

<sup>8</sup> A reference to the tiny Partido Radical Socialista (Radical Socialist Party). The son of a Civil Guard, Domingo became a schoolteacher and was drawn into left-wing republican politics. Detained during the 1917 revolutionary strike for inciting troops to rebel, he cultivated a number of contacts inside the CNT during 1917–23 and participated in many conspiracies against the monarchy. During the Second Republic he served as Minister of Education in the Provisional Government, becoming Minister for Agriculture in October 1931, where he was responsible for implementing the agrarian reform. Under the Popular Front government he was Education Minister. Despite its title, his party was essentially republican in outlook.

<sup>9</sup> The 1917 'Assembly' movement sought to introduce a bourgeois democracy that would enhance the influence of regional and industrial élites over governmental policy and break the power of the agrarian oligarchy over national

of a revolutionary apocalypse, was peacefully broken up by nothing more than a decree from the government.<sup>10</sup> That episode put paid to working people's faith in the shepherds of politics. As a result, the CNT's unionism discovered its apolitical ideology. The betrayal by the bulk of the republican leadership, including the loud-mouth Alejandro Lerroux,<sup>11</sup> culminated in the general strike of 1917, one of the most unanimous revolts by the people of Spain.<sup>12</sup> Those political leaders who were convicted won their freedom the following year owing to an amnesty granted immediately before elections which enabled many of them to secure a parliamentary seat. A telling indication of the intentions of the politicians is to be found in the celebrated retort by Indalecio Prieto<sup>13</sup> to the majority in congress: 'Sure, we gave weapons to the people. But it is equally true that we did not give them ammunition.'<sup>14</sup>

The disrepute of politics was sealed. As the labouring masses began to discover their own strength, they drifted away from the parliamentary quagmire.

Another event that same year endowed the spirit of the workers with a new zeal: the Russian Revolution. The Iberian proletariat greeted this event with genuine enthusiasm.<sup>15</sup>

The July 1918 Sants regional congress of the Catalan CNT signalled a new stage of organisational maturity with the establishment of the *Sindicatos Únicos*, which embraced the various associations in any given branch of industry.<sup>16</sup> A provisional national committee was also ap-

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politics. Backed by an unholy alliance of bourgeois-democratic parliamentarians (liberals, regionalists, republicans and social democrats), the Catalan bourgeoisie and liberal sections of the armed forces organised in the military trade unions, the Juntas Militares de Defensa (Military Defence Committees), the reformist unions of the UGT pledged to further the demands of the Assembly movement through a general strike. Some sections of the CNT were attracted to this movement, believing that they could take advantage of a revolutionary situation, wrest control of the protest movement and pursue their own social agenda.

<sup>10</sup> The government appeased the Juntas Militares de Defensa by meeting salary demands. With the army on its side, the government felt confident to crush the opposition of the labour movement. The reform movement was finally undone when the street fighting between workers and the army convinced liberal sections of the bourgeoisie that its interests were best defended inside the Restoration system rather than by pursuing dangerous mobilisations with the organised labour movement.

<sup>11</sup> Leader of the Partido Republicano Radical (Radical Republican Party); his populist, anti-clerical demagoguery enabled him to establish a significant base within the Barcelona working class at the turn of the century, but his inability to match his blood-curdling discourse with practical revolutionary action made this appeal short-lived.

<sup>12</sup> Because of the economic malaise of the time, the trade union groupings, the UGT and the CNT, worked out a joint plan of attack. One expression of this was the successful 24-hour general strike of 1916, and another the indefinite stoppage of a revolutionary nature that erupted on 17 August 1917. (Note by the author.)

<sup>13</sup> A Basque PSOE deputy whose important contacts with Basque finance capital were put to good use in his role as finance minister during the first republican-socialist government during the Second Republic. A committed reformist, he was more of a liberal-democrat than a socialist; of all the PSOE leaders in the 1930s, he was the only one to have absolutely no truck with Marxism, even at a rhetorical level. During the civil war he was vehemently opposed to the spread of Stalinist influence within the PSOE.

<sup>14</sup> Quote taken from Buenacasa, *El movimiento obrero*, p. 70. It is clear that Prieto hoped that these words might lessen the repression of his party following the events of August 1917. (Note by the author.)

<sup>15</sup> There were certain superficial similarities between Spain and pre-revolutionary Russia: both were autocracies on the edge of Europe and both were presided over by unpopular monarchies; also, historical problems such as agrarian reform and the status of nationalities were intricate and unresolved in both countries. When news reached Spain that the Bolsheviks had seized the large estates and given land to the rural dispossessed, there was a wave of agrarian occupations and insurrections, particularly in the big estates of the south. This wave of rural mobilisation ended when the army was sent in to reimpose the old social order.

<sup>16</sup> At this congress the Catalan CNT claimed a membership of 73,860, of whom 54,572 were from Barcelona. The main policy adopted was that of the *Sindicatos Únicos* ('Single Unions'), which were akin to the 'One Big Union' of the North American Industrial Workers of the World in so far as they aimed to unite all workers in any given industry,

pointed, which controlled the direction of the CNT until the 1919 La Comedia national congress in Madrid.<sup>17</sup> One of the Sants congress's most important resolutions was the decision to organise a propaganda campaign throughout Spain. Many of the meetings in this campaign coincided with regional peasant congresses. Various labour associations and federations affiliated to the CNT *en bloc* as a result of this travelling roadshow which saw the Confederation's finest public speakers penetrate into even the most far-flung corners of the peninsula. The rate of recruitment was so promising that the government deemed it necessary to put a stop to the campaign, jailing a huge number of the propagandists.<sup>18</sup> When this was deemed insufficient, the organisation *per se* was driven underground again and its press organs shut down by governmental order. The workers retaliated, and a few weeks later came the celebrated 'La Canadiense' strike, perhaps the best organised strike by the CNT proletariat, and maybe even one of the best organised in the whole world.<sup>19</sup>

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skilled and unskilled alike, within the same union. It was hoped that this new organisational model would overcome the craft divisions and sectionalism that undermined solidarity in the traditional workers' societies and that the more militant sectors of the workforce might sweep along their less radical brethren during disputes. In under-industrialised areas or where the CNT presence was limited, there would be one *único* for all *cenetistas* in the locality. In operational terms the *únicos* were decentralised, autonomous organisations, based on direct, rank-and-file democracy in mass, open assemblies — this was the direct antithesis of the hierarchical and centralised social-democratic unions. Wary of the dangers of bureaucratisation and reformism, the *únicos* dispensed with strike funds, preferring direct action, class solidarity and the active strike based on energetic picketing and collective practices, such as boycotts. Although each union was sovereign, there was intense solidarity between the various *únicos* in different industrial sectors, especially during strike mobilisations. The new structure was specifically designed to withstand repression and, if the strike committee was detained by the police, it would be immediately replaced by other workplace activists. The key figure within the *único* was the *delegado de taller* (shop steward), who was empowered to call stoppages whenever instructed to do so by the union membership. Moving up the CNT organisational chart, each *único* elected a sectional committee and delegated a representative to the local federation, the forum for discussion of all CNT unions in any particular town or city. In turn, the local federation reported to a regional committee, the last level of organisation before the national committee. Crucially, none of the higher committees could exert a directive capacity over the shop stewards, who were solely responsible to the union rank-and-file at workplace level.

<sup>17</sup> This had symbolic importance, since the Spanish capital was also the capital of Spanish social democracy. Only in the 1930s did the CNT gain a significant presence among the Madrid working class.

<sup>18</sup> When the Restoration political system proved incapable of curbing mass mobilisation and the conflicts engendered by capitalist modernisation, the authorities increasingly relied on *detención gubernativa* (internment without trial), whereby individuals, including labour activists, were detained without charge on the order of the civil governor for fifteen days; if necessary, the police could apply for an extension and sometimes detainees languished in gaol for months, even years, without trial. Clearly, such an aberrant procedure was open to abuse by the authorities and there were frequent complaints that the police exploited this system to clear up unsolved crimes.

<sup>19</sup> This extravagant claim reflects the potency of this strike as a symbol of proletarian unity and the rising militancy of the CNT. The conflict began in early 1919 when a handful of CNT white-collar workers were sacked at Barcelona's Ebro Irrigation and Power Company, an Anglo-Canadian concern known locally as 'La Canadiense'. In reply, CNT power workers — blue- and white-collar alike — walked off the job and appealed to the Barcelona CNT for solidarity. In this way, a minor conflict over union rights was quickly transformed into a protracted struggle between the local authorities and the bourgeoisie, on the one hand, and the confederal working class in the Barcelona area, on the other. Much of the repressive state arsenal was mobilised; martial law was implemented and, following the militarisation of essential services, soldiers replaced strikers and up to 4,000 workers were jailed. Despite this, cuts in the energy supply ensured that as much as 70 per cent of the industry in Barcelona province was closed down for 44 days, while food shortages, power cuts and torchlit army patrols made the Catalan capital seem like a city at war. Finally, the employers were forced to accept CNT demands for pay rises, the payment of all wages lost by strikers and a complete amnesty of pickets; in an attempt to forestall further class conflict, the Spanish government became the first government in Europe to legislate the eight-hour day in industry. This triumph heralded the coming of age of the recently expanded CNT and, with Barcelona now possibly the most unionised city in Europe at this time, it had emerged as a major player in the industrial arena.

1919 found Catalan anarcho-syndicalism at its acme. In Catalonia alone, the Confederation numbered half a million members.<sup>20</sup> Alarmed, the bourgeoisie resolved to engage *cenetistas* in battle, mobilising gangs of paid gunmen whose dastardly deeds were performed under the aegis of the civil authorities.<sup>21</sup> Activists Pau Sabater<sup>22</sup> and José Castillo<sup>23</sup> were the first victims of the guns of these mercenaries. But the intrigue of the employers reached further than this. By way of a reply to the many strikes in Catalonia, in November 1919 there was a lockout by the bosses.<sup>24</sup> The lockout lasted for four weeks but was converted into a strike by the workers and, although their energies visibly declined in week ten, the stoppage was prolonged into a twelfth week. This dispute affected upwards of 200,000 workers and ended in a calamitous defeat for the proletariat. It was against this background that the La Comedia congress was held.

The La Comedia congress was attended by more than 450 delegates representing over 700,000 *cenetistas*.<sup>25</sup> Among the accords the one concerned with the statement of the principles of the CNT deserves special mention. It went as follows:

To congress. Bearing in mind that the tendency most strongly manifested in the bosom of workers' organisations in every country is the one aiming at the complete and absolute moral, economic and political liberation of mankind, and considering that this goal cannot be attained until such time as the land, means of production and exchange have been socialised and the overweening power of the state has vanished, the undersigned delegates suggest that, in accordance with the essential postulates of the First International, it declares the desired end of the CNT to be anarchist communism.

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<sup>20</sup> The membership of the Catalan contingent at the 1919 CNT national congress was given as 428,631; of these workers 256,082 hailed from the greater Barcelona area.

<sup>21</sup> Once battle commenced, the logic of events enhanced the prestige of the CNT's paramilitary *grupos de defensa* (defence groups) which, hitherto, had been largely concerned with picketing and security at meetings. Because the scale of the anti-CNT offensive stretched the resources of the union-based *grupos de defensa*, exclusively anarchist *grupos de afinidad* (affinity groups) also entered the fray, protecting the unions and developing new contacts with the Confederation. During the period of repression there is a sense in which armed groups substituted the unions as the fundamental unit of the CNT. For instance, when official restrictions on union collections meant that the CNT *Comité pro-presos* (prisoners' support committee) could not meet the financial needs of detainees and their families, some defence groups responded with attacks on banks and payrolls. Many anarcho-syndicalists resented this militarisation of the CNT and the activities of the armed squads but, in many respects these were central to the survival of the CNT at a time when the authorities and the employers were committed to its destruction.

<sup>22</sup> The president of the dyers' section of the Barcelona CNT Textile Union whose murder on 19 July 1919 was followed by a succession of assassinations in the Catalan capital.

<sup>23</sup> A member of the CNT national committee, he was murdered in a barber's shop in Sants in July 1919.

<sup>24</sup> The 'Canadiense' stoppage radicalised the industrial strategy and the social philosophy of the Catalan bourgeoisie. As the post-World-War-One downturn began to affect profit margins, growing numbers of employers looked upon the CNT as an unacceptable barrier to their attempts to introduce 'labour flexibility' and shift the costs of the economic crisis onto the workers. The changed material context strengthened the arm of those capitalists who favoured direct action and the complete destruction of CNT by means of a lockout, the classic union-busting device, whereby employers refused to hire union labour.

<sup>25</sup> Whereas in 1915 the CNT had around 15,000 members in Spain, by 1919 total membership had grown to 714,028, an increase of 4,760 per cent.

This proposition carried the signatures of Josep Canela,<sup>26</sup> Eusebi Carbó,<sup>27</sup> Saturnino Meca,<sup>28</sup> Paulino Díez,<sup>29</sup> Antonio Jurado,<sup>30</sup> Enrique Sarralley, Simó Piera,<sup>31</sup> Mateo Mariné, Enrique Aparicio, Diego Larrosa, Vicente Barco, Emilio Molina,<sup>32</sup> Ángel Pestaña,<sup>33</sup> Juan José Carrión,<sup>34</sup> Emilio Chivinello, Román Cortés, Mauro Bajatierra,<sup>35</sup> the national committee and other delegates.

Following this statement of principles, the congress adopted the following proposition regarding tactics:

Congress agrees that the union of the proletariat ought to be attained through direct action, jettisoning the archaic systems hitherto employed. It condemns the formation of the 'Mixed Commission' of Barcelona but recommends that everyone be satisfied

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<sup>26</sup> A metalworker and prominent anarcho-syndicalist. Before his murder by right-wing gunmen in November 1920, he opted for more moderate syndicalist positions.

<sup>27</sup> A highly effective propagandist, both in the press and in the rationalist schools movement. After World War One he was active in the development of the libertarian press in the Valencia area, editing *Guerra Social*, an anarchist weekly, and establishing a fortnightly local edition of *Solidaridad Obrera*. Initially impressed by the Russian Revolution, he was jailed in Italy en route to the second Comintern congress in 1920. He returned to more orthodox anarchist positions, serving on the editorial board of Barcelona's *Solidaridad Obrera* on various occasions in the 1930s, where he defended the anarchist position against their anarcho-syndicalist rivals. Unswerving in his belief in the libertarian essence of the CNT, he formed part of the 'Nervio' affinity group that included Diego Abad de Santillán and Pedro Herrera and which came to control the FAI Peninsular Committee in 1934. During the civil war he represented the CNT in the Economic Council of the Generalitat and edited the newspaper *Catalunya*. Like Peirats, he was exiled in South America after the civil war.

<sup>28</sup> A prominent Barcelona CNT activist.

<sup>29</sup> A staunch advocate of anarchist syndicalism, member of the Andalusian CNT and national secretary during summer–December 1923. He defended anarchist positions in the unions in the 1930s.

<sup>30</sup> A veteran Andalusian *cenetista*.

<sup>31</sup> A building labourer and founder member of CNT, he was president of the Barcelona Construction Union during 1918–20, before converting to republicanism during exile in the 1920s. In 1931 he joined the Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC).

<sup>32</sup> An activist from the Valencia CNT.

<sup>33</sup> Born in Léon, he was one of the most important figures in the CNT's history. After a nomadic existence in which he worked in France and Algeria, he settled in Barcelona in 1914. A self-educated worker, he excelled as an anarchist organiser, editing *Tierra y Libertad*, Barcelona's leading anarchist newspaper, as well as *Solidaridad Obrera* during 1917–19 and 1923–24. He played a leading role in the general strikes of 1916 and 1917, when he represented the 'pure' anarchist current within the CNT. A delegate at the second Comintern congress in Moscow in 1920, his critical report sealed the end of the Confederation's flirtation with the Russian Revolution. Upon his return to Barcelona, he was wounded by right-wing gunmen in 1922. This coincided with his adoption of increasingly moderate anarcho-syndicalist, then syndicalist, positions, something that earned him the hatred of the 'pure' anarchists. Jailed on a number of occasions during the dictatorship in the 1920s, he argued that the unions could only achieve their goals within the context of wide legal freedom, a position that was denounced by his opponents as 'possibilism' (see Chapter Two). CNT national secretary during 1929–30 and 1931, he sought to hold back the radicalised union rank-and-file and the new generation of more militant leaders during the Second Republic, inspiring the Treintista manifesto (see Chapter Three). Expelled from the Barcelona CNT Metallurgists' Union by the new, radical leadership in December 1932, in 1933 he formed the Federación Sindicalista Libertaria party with other moderate anarcho-syndicalists. Finally, in January 1934, he confirmed the suspicions of his anarchist critics, forming a political party, the Partido Sindicalista, for which he was elected parliamentary deputy for Cádiz on the Popular Front slate in February 1936. He died in December 1937, shortly after being readmitted to the CNT.

<sup>34</sup> A leading Andalusian *cenetista*.

<sup>35</sup> A baker, self-taught writer and outstanding journalist, he wrote numerous plays and social novels and contributed to all the major libertarian newspapers. In the early 1920s he was charged with the assassination of Prime Minister Dato only to be found innocent. During the civil war, he became *de facto* 'war correspondent' for *Solidaridad Obrera* and CNT. In March 1939, too sick to leave Madrid, he remained in his house, where he greeted Franco's troops with hand grenades and firearms.

with the declaration made by the regional committee of the CNT in Catalonia, in which it acknowledges its error and undertakes to struggle in accordance with the arrangements and procedures espoused by the Confederation.<sup>36</sup> It praises also the repudiation of any findings and agreements the government may have promulgated to regulate the working conditions of farm workers, agreements which tend to split the working class by means of puerile diversions and lead it away from the road to emancipation. The working party (*ponencia*) recognises the important role played by sabotage as a weapon in the struggle against capital, but recommends that this measure be used intelligently and only where it is deemed proper, opportune and effective.

The congress agenda contained an item concerning unity with the UGT. Some delegations, including the one from Asturias, were fierce in their advocacy of the fusion of the two trade union bodies.<sup>37</sup> At the conclusion of the debate, the following proposition from Barcelona's Construction Union<sup>38</sup> was approved:

Given that the tactics and ideas of the CNT and the UGT are diametrically opposed and well defined and, therefore, known to all, we take the line that the amalgamation of the two bodies should not occur. Instead, because the CNT represents a membership tally three times greater than the UGT, the workers inside the UGT should first be absorbed [by the CNT]. Secondly, since the Confederation's ideas and tactics are known to all and since elements from the UGT have failed to accept their invitation to this congress, they are clearly in disagreement with our ideas and with our desire for unification. It follows therefore that to hold another pro-unity congress would be a pointless exercise, since they would be unable to win us over or bring us round to their way of thinking. Because of this, we propose to congress that the Confederation draft a manifesto addressed to all Spanish workers, giving them a period of three months during which to affiliate to the Confederation, whereafter those unions which fail to do so will be declared yellow and outside the labour movement.

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<sup>36</sup> Created by the Madrid authorities in the late summer of 1919, the 'Mixed Commissions' (Comités mixtos) were arbitration bodies composed of equal numbers of representatives from the employers' federations and trade unions and presided over by a government-appointed chair. Designed to provide conciliation in the hitherto unmediated and increasingly violent class struggles in Barcelona, the Commissions were backed by the more transigent sectors of the Catalan bourgeoisie and by the 'pure' syndicalist wing of the CNT. This attempt at pacifying labour struggles was stymied by the post-war economic crisis which favoured the rise of the most combative sectors of the capitalist class, who favoured total war against the unions. In turn, the spread of employer militancy paved the way for the radical anarchists inside the CNT and the re-emergence of class conflict based upon the Confederation's traditional anti-political direct action.

<sup>37</sup> The Asturian CNT had a strong tradition of practical united working class action and favoured unification with the UGT through transaction.

<sup>38</sup> The vision of unity espoused by the Barcelona Construction Union, a bastion of anarchist purism, differed from that of the Asturians in that it sought to absorb the UGT. The difference between these two approaches towards the question of unity is perhaps best explained by the respective balance of forces between the two unions in Barcelona and Asturias: in the former, the UGT was virtually non-existent, whereas in the latter the socialist union was the hegemonic syndical formation and the CNT constituted a minority.

Congress had to tackle the burning issue of the Russian Revolution and the connected question of affiliation to the Third International. The achievement of the Russian people galvanised the world's proletariat, who greeted it as the event of the century. Spanish workers, and in particular the CNT, which had just raised the demand for the absolute emancipation of mankind from capitalist tyranny, were electrified by Russian events. However, amid the euphoria of enthusiasm, analytical minds and prophetic voices were not missing. Take the case of Eleuterio Quintanilla<sup>39</sup> who had this to say on the topic:

The Russian Revolution does not embody our ideas; it is a revolution of a socialist tenor... Its direction and guidance are determined, not by the workers' interventions, but by those of the political parties. To ensure that Europe's central and western nations do not surround and strangle the Russian people, we must seek an understanding with the other workers of the world; yet, because I consider the Third International to be political, it is my opinion and belief that there is no reason for the CNT to be represented in it.

Even so, congress approved the following resolution:

The national committee, by way of synthesising the thoughts expressed by the various speakers who have addressed us today, proposes: firstly, that the CNT declare itself a staunch advocate of the principles of the First International as upheld by Bakunin; and secondly, declares that it is affiliating provisionally to the Communist [i.e. Third] International on account of its revolutionary tenor, until such time as the CNT organises a worldwide labour congress that can agree and determine the conditions on which the authentic International of the workers will be governed.<sup>40</sup>

With the congress closed, the martyrdom of the Catalan proletariat increased. The hired gunmen of the bourgeoisie targeted the visible heads of the labour movement. The courageous and heroic retort to this merely led to an escalation of the offensive by the bosses and the police until the extremes of collective murder were reached. The Catalan CNT suffered enormous losses in a contest in which it was, frankly, at a huge disadvantage.<sup>41</sup> But in the provinces, the movement was making headway. Against this backdrop of ongoing tragedy and bloodshed, Salvador

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<sup>39</sup> A schoolteacher, founder member of the CNT and a leading figure in the Asturian workers' and anarchist movements before World War One, particularly in Gijón, where he established a Centre for Social Studies and edited the weekly newspaper *Acción Social*. He had a pragmatic attitude towards cooperation with the UGT and adopted 'constructive' anarcho-syndicalist positions in the 1930s similar to those of the *treintistas*, although he remained inside the CNT.

<sup>40</sup> This motion reflected the viewpoints of the two main tendencies at the congress. Hilario Arlandis led the faction that today would be described as pro-Soviet; Eleuterio Quintanilla represented the other expansionist current, which favoured revolutionary centralism. Reasoned arguments did little to check the sympathy among proletarian ranks across the world for the Russian Revolution; this was particularly evident at a congress of a radical organisation. Salvador Seguí (see note 42), who spoke last, nevertheless achieved this. His assertions satisfied the revolutionary passion of the anarchist militants while also building bridges for an eventual retreat. (Note by the author.)

<sup>41</sup> Between 1913 and 1921, 81 employers, 108 policemen and 532 workers (the majority of them *cenetistas*) were killed in Barcelona alone.

Seguí<sup>42</sup> went to Madrid, where he negotiated an accord with the UGT. A plenum held at the end of 1920 was unanimous in its condemnation of this accord but, having accepted it as a *fait accompli*, it was decided to put the *bona fides* of the socialist workers to the test. At the time, a strike at the Río Tinto mines was taking place. The CNT suggested to the UGT that they tackle this dispute together, by means of a general solidarity strike. The miners and railwaymen of the whole of Spain, under their socialist leadership, were the first into the fray. As a result the Río Tinto miners had to capitulate after four months of struggle.<sup>43</sup> Meanwhile, the wave of assassinations was spreading. The murder of the militant Canela was followed by that of the CNT's legal counsel, Francesc Layret,<sup>44</sup> on 30 November. The following day, 36 leading CNT activists, including Seguí, were deported to Maó's Fort Mola on the island of Menorca.<sup>45</sup> A general strike was declared in Barcelona, which then spread to the whole of Spain. The UGT refused to join this strike. The unity accord between the two trade unions was broken and the CNT continued

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<sup>42</sup> Born in Lleida in 1887 and known affectionately as 'Noi del Sucre' ('Sugar Boy'), he moved to Barcelona, starting work at an early age. Probably the most famous and flamboyant representative of the post-World-War-One generation of labour leaders, he was the most charismatic national secretary in the CNT's history. Shaped by Nietzschean influences as a youth, he once formed part of a gang called 'Els fills de putas' ('The sons of bitches'), whose bawdy antics on the mean streets of downtown Barcelona became notorious in the Catalan capital and he always retained a certain bohemian air. An active syndicalist, he was secretary of the Barcelona Construction Union and a founder member of Solidaridad Obrera and the Ateneu Sindicalista (Syndicalist Athenaeum), a trade union educational centre. A firm supporter of proletarian unity, he defended the need for a CNT-UGT alliance in 1910, brokering agreements between the two unions in 1916 and 1917. One of the main organisers of the 1918 Sants congress, he led some of the historic struggles of the post-war era (most notably the 'Canadiense' strike) and his fight to keep the trade union movement independent of all political groupings led him to attack the influence of both Lerroux's republicanism and organised anarchism. An advocate of a kind of 'proletarian catalanism', he believed that the trade unions should champion the cause of oppressed nationalities and that labour should challenge the hegemony of bourgeois nationalism. CNT national secretary from December 1922 until his murder in Barcelona in March 1923, his contacts with left-wing Catalan politicians were criticised by 'pure' anarchists, who feared that he might establish a Catalan labour party. Despite rumours that some anarchist groups had been planning to assassinate him, he became a legendary figure in CNT circles after his death and a variety of groups, ranging from communists, anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists and left-wing republicans, all of which had condemned him at one time or another, nevertheless claimed his mantle. He provided Victor Serge with the inspiration for the character of Dario in his autobiographical novel *The Birth of Our Power*.

<sup>43</sup> In what was a most bitter conflict, the strike of the Río Tinto miners, the majority of whom were represented by the CNT, began in June 1920. Encouraged by large coal reserves, the employers refused to treat with the CNT. In reply, sections of the CNT hoped that a general solidarity strike by CNT and UGT miners, backed by the predominantly socialist-controlled transport workers, might force the company to negotiate. This was not to be, largely because the UGT leaders refused to stop the transport network, fearing that an escalation of the conflict might result in a revolutionary general strike. The pusillanimity of the UGT bureaucracy discredited the objective of unity in CNT circles and while the syndicalists, moderate anarcho-syndicalists and 'communist-syndicalists' continued to advocate unity of action to varying degrees, the anarchists and radical anarcho-syndicalists were hostile to such action.

<sup>44</sup> A lawyer and politician who, despite being partially paralysed by a childhood illness, fought tirelessly for the cause of social progress. In 1905 he was a founder member of Barcelona's Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular (Popular Encyclopedic Athenaeum), a body devoted to the democratisation of culture and the spread of a variety of anti-monarchist ideas, ranging from republicanism through federalism to anarchism. Layret adopted socialist and radical federalist positions in the late 1910s and, as a fervent supporter of the Russian Revolution, was elected to parliament to represent Sabadell, a provincial Catalan industrial town. It is possible that the legal privileges he enjoyed as a parliamentarian led to his murder, because as a deputy he could not be included in the wave of arrests that was being planned for leading *cenetistas* and leftists.

<sup>45</sup> This was highly characteristic of monarchist 'justice', the authorities viewing social protest as a conspiracy of 'troublemakers' to be curbed by isolating the 'ringleaders'. The deportees were not charged with any crimes but simply deported and interned without trial in the hope that their removal from Barcelona would pacify the dynamics of social conflict. They remained on the island from November 1920 until the end of April 1922.



alone to brave the savage repression.<sup>46</sup> Eduardo Dato,<sup>47</sup> Cardinal Soldevila<sup>48</sup> and the Count of Salvatierra,<sup>49</sup> among others, paid with their lives for the murderous provocations by reactionary forces.

Amid the disarray, the supporters of the dictatorship in Moscow managed to obtain key positions in the CNT.<sup>50</sup> At the April 1921 Lleida Plenum, under the prompting of the communists

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<sup>46</sup> CNT–UGT unity would not be attempted again until 1933–4.

<sup>47</sup> The prime minister who saved the monarchy in 1917 by dividing the broad-based reformist coalition and repressing the workers' movement. After enlightened reforms designed to subdue the labour movement proved difficult during the post-World-War-One economic crisis, he opted for 'gun law' and anti-union terror in Barcelona. The descent into repression signed Dato's death warrant and in March 1921 he was assassinated in Madrid by the anarchist action group 'Metalúrgico', which was based in the Barcelona Metallurgists' Union.

<sup>48</sup> Cardinal-Archbishop of Zaragoza, Juan Soldevila Romero, was reputed to be the recruitment officer for anti-CNT gunmen in Zaragoza city and a key organiser of the 'dirty war' against trade unionists. He was assassinated by Francisco Ascaso and Rafael Torres Escartín, both of whom formed part of the 'Los Solidarios' affinity group, which included Buenaventura Durruti and Juan García Oliver.

<sup>49</sup> His real name was José Maestre Laborde; Barcelona civil governor between January and May 1920, and later civil governor of Catalonia, he spearheaded the repression of the CNT, driving the unions underground with internment without trial and a 'dirty war' that claimed the lives of 33 trade unionists. He was assassinated in August 1920 by a Valencian anarchist group.

<sup>50</sup> This is an example of Peirats's fierce anti-communism. Given the unbureaucratized nature of the CNT, it is difficult to see how the pro-Bolsheviks could have launched an institutional coup, whereby they seized power within the unions in the 1920s, just as it was equally impossible for the FAI to have done the same in the 1930s. Rather, the ascendancy of the supporters of the 'communist-syndicalist' supporters of the Russian Revolution reflected the appeal of their slogans among key sections of the CNT rank-and-file at a time when the reputation of the Bolsheviks was at its height in Spain.

Andreu Nin<sup>51</sup> and Joaquim Maurín,<sup>52</sup> a delegation was appointed to visit Russia.<sup>53</sup> A subsequent plenum in Logroño revoked this decision. The Zaragoza national conference (11 June 1922) gave the final verdict on this question. Pestaña, who had recently returned from Russia, delivered a report on the Soviet dictatorship to the plenum and advocated the ratification by the unions of a resolution to remove the CNT from Moscow's orbit. Meanwhile, a firm decision was made to attend the founding congress of the IWA,<sup>54</sup> due to take place about that time, so as to underline the CNT's support for this new international revolutionary grouping.

The months which followed, right up until the army *pronunciamento* by General Miguel Primo de Rivera,<sup>55</sup> were occupied by great strikes, such as the Barcelona metropolitan transport strike, which had huge repercussions for the communications industry in Spain as a whole. The dictator-

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<sup>51</sup> A schoolteacher, trade union leader and politician. He moved to Barcelona in 1910 and became immersed in the city's politics, gravitating from republicanism to communism, via socialism and anarcho-syndicalism. Representative of the Liberal Professions' Union at the 1919 Comedia congress, he defended the 'communist-syndicalist' position in favour of the Russian Revolution. Wounded by right-wing gunmen, he was CNT national secretary during March–August 1921 and formed part of the Confederation's delegation to the founding congress of the pro-Soviet Red International of Labour Unions syndical movement in Moscow in July 1921. Charged with being a 'moral accessory' in the murder of Prime Minister Dato, he chose to remain in Russia, where he backed Trotsky in the battle for succession after Lenin's death. Politically isolated, he gained fame for his Catalan translations of Russian literary classics, including Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, and was fortunate enough to leave Russia in 1930. Upon his return to Spain he was active in the Spanish Trotskyist Izquierda Comunista de España (Communist Left of Spain), although relations with Trotsky cooled owing to a number of doctrinal and tactical disagreements, particularly his decision to form the dissident communist Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista in 1935. Despite his rupture with Trotsky, Nin was targeted as a 'Trotskyist' and viciously murdered by Stalin's agents during the civil war.

<sup>52</sup> A schoolteacher, trade unionist and politician. He worked closely with Nin and the 'communist-syndicalists' inside the CNT during the post-war years, particularly in Lleida province, where he was immensely popular with *cenetistas* and secretary of the Lleida CNT in 1920. A member of the Catalan regional committee in 1921, he represented the CNT at the 1921 RILU Moscow Congress and served as CNT national secretary from August 1921 to February 1922. He later led the PCE in Catalonia but was shot by police and jailed during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The most outstanding theoretician of the Iberian communist movement, he displayed tremendous political independence, breaking with the Stalinist PCE over its plans to split the CNT during 1930–1 and also condemned by Trotsky (and Nin) for refusing to take a stand on the power struggles in the Soviet Union. In 1930 he formed the dissident communist BOC, whose members were active in reorganising the CNT in certain sectors of the workforce in Barcelona, particularly among the printers and white-collar workers, and in Tarragona, Girona and Lleida, which was dubbed 'Mauringrad' by the anarchists. In 1932 the unions loyal to the BOC were expelled from the CNT and they became known as the 'Sindicatos Excluidos de la CNT' (Unions Excluded from the CNT). In 1935 he was reunited with Nin when they merged their organisations to form the POUM. A reluctant candidate on the Popular Front slate in the 1936 elections, he was elected parliamentary deputy for Barcelona. Captured by Francoists in Galicia at the outbreak of the civil war, he was sentenced to 44 years in jail before being allowed to emigrate to the United States in 1947.

<sup>53</sup> Angel Pestaña went to Russia to arrange the conditional affiliation of the CNT to the Communist International. He returned deeply disillusioned after numerous meetings with Russian comrades Peter Kropotkin, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. During his return journey, he was arrested in Italy and, before he could report his sad experience to the CNT, in Barcelona. The reality of Russian events therefore remained a mystery for the majority of the delegates at the April 1921 Lleida plenum. This explains the decision to send an openly pro-communist commission to the third congress of the Third International in June 1921. (Note by the author.)

<sup>54</sup> The Berlin-based anarcho-syndicalist international organisation known in Spain by the acronym AIT (Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores), initials which frequently appeared alongside those of the CNT.

<sup>55</sup> The second Marquis of Estella and military dictator during 1923–9. Although denounced by some at the time as a 'fascist' dictatorship, his regime was an eclectic mix of traditional conservatism and technocratic modernisation. In fact, one of the central problems of the regime was its inability to institutionalise a coherent power base and establish a clear political project. José Antonio, the dictator's son, displayed far greater ideological constancy, forming, in 1933, the Falange, the Spanish fascist party.

ship brought the organisational activity of the CNT to a standstill. The CNT had by then suffered much loss of blood.

But we cannot conclude this chapter without first clearing up a few specific points. We write for history's sake and also for the purpose of enlightening future generations of fighters. In the light of this, none of the mistakes made by workers should be glossed over in silence.

One such error, all the more damaging because it was repeated, was the way in which the strength of the adversary can be misjudged due to a reckless triumphalism based on strength, as indeed the CNT was strong between 1919 and 1923. We have noted that in Catalonia alone the CNT achieved a membership of half a million. The contingent of active members, of those people ready to face the struggle and make sacrifices, was nowhere near this figure. However, time and time again this misconception formed the basic premise of the CNT.<sup>56</sup> Then again, initial successes elicited a presumptuous enthusiasm bordering on a dangerous triumphalism.

Cut from reactionary cloth, the Spanish state was not about to resign itself to seeing the workers become the virtual masters of public life. The nascent bourgeoisie, typically selfish and intransigent, was even less tolerant of an obstacle that threatened their business and disturbed their blithe existence. So the reaction was to be expected and it would be all the more brutal in proportion to the obstinacy of workers' resistance. When the clash came, even the clear-sighted minorities in the syndicalist camp recognised their inability to restrain the passions of the suicidal, extremist, hot-headed majority. The crass error was made of casting the net in the worst of conditions. Leaving aside specific instances of deliberate provocation, they succumbed to a sort of collective vanity as represented by the ostentatious and immoderate use of violence. And the retaliation, perhaps readied in advance, was not long in coming. Party to it were all the agencies of 'order', nor forgetting mercenaries recruited from the ranks of the underworld and from the workers' own ranks. The bourgeoisie, the clergy, the military, the civil governors, the police chiefs and inspectors, factory managers, the local watchmen, the *requetés*,<sup>57</sup> the Sometent militia<sup>58</sup> and a whole gamut of international adventurers<sup>59</sup> supplied the cadres of white terrorism.

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<sup>56</sup> In order to grasp the distinct levels of militancy within trade unions, including revolutionary unions like the CNT, it is useful to refer to Antonio Gramsci's model of union consciousness (Antonio Gramsci, 'Some theoretical and practical aspects of "Economism"', in *Selections From The Prison Notebooks*, London, 1971, pp.175–85), in which he differentiated between sectional, corporate and hegemonic consciousness. The first two categories were concerned with 'economistic' issues and improvements in working conditions and had little room for matters of revolutionary transformation, while only those militants with hegemonic consciousness were, in Gramsci's view, truly revolutionary in so far as their behaviour was inspired by the view that proletarian interests demanded the suppression of capitalism and the creation of a new socio-economic system.

<sup>57</sup> Formed in 1911, this was the militia of the ultra-reactionary, *sui generis* Carlists, the supporters of don Carlos María Isidro de Borbón, the would-be king whose claim on the throne was denied in 1833. Inspired by the slogan 'God, Fatherland, King!', the Carlists opposed liberal secularism and modernity, pursuing an insurrectionary strategy throughout the nineteenth century. Marginalised during the Restoration monarchy, the Carlists retained a presence in their traditional strongholds in the north and north-east of Spain, where the *requetés* guarded their meetings and specialised in streetfighting and attacks on their socio-political rivals.

<sup>58</sup> A right-wing, strike-breaking militia formed in Barcelona in 1919 in response to the spread of urban class conflict. Trained by the Spanish military, it was largely recruited from discontented middle-class and bourgeois elements. By the end of 1919 it had 8,000 members, claiming, at its peak, 65,000 supporters and sections in other industrial cities like Madrid and Zaragoza.

<sup>59</sup> During World War One neutral Barcelona gained a reputation as the 'Paris of the south' and attracted many new residents, including playboys, gangsters and spies from the belligerent powers. The most notorious of these newcomers was the self-styled 'Baron' de Koenig, a German national whose real identity was never established, who was initially employed by German secret services to inform on Barcelona companies working for the Allied

Not until the monstrous crimes of Franco-Falangism would ignominy on a par with this be seen. The harassment and *attentats* were coldly mooted and then effected no less cold-bloodedly. The repression was directly instigated by the highest authorities in Catalonia, including Joaquim Milans del Bosch,<sup>60</sup> the captain-general of the garrison, Severiano Martínez Anido,<sup>61</sup> the Barcelona civil governor, and Miguel Arlegui,<sup>62</sup> the chief of police in the Catalan capital. The costs of the operations were covered by the generosity of the employers' association.<sup>63</sup>

The application of the *ley de fugas* (shot while trying to escape) was typical of the practices of the day. Prisoners or people who had merely been detained were removed from their cells in the middle of the night and, on the pretext of their having attempted to escape, were vilely murdered near police stations. In broad daylight, CNT militants were hunted down and murdered by gunmen given *carte blanche* by the authorities. It is impossible to reckon the numbers of victims. What follows is only an incomplete list:

José Aicart, Jaime Albericias,<sup>64</sup> Juan Alemany, Gaspar Alós, Ramón Archs,<sup>65</sup> José Aymerich, Benito Bailó, Ramón Batalla,<sup>66</sup> Miguel Beltrán, Manuel Bermejo, Evelino Boal,<sup>67</sup> Moisés Bustamante, José Calduch, Josep Canela, Agustín Canet, Jaime Carellar, José Castillo, Aurelio Cerderio, Emilio Cervera, José Claramonte,<sup>68</sup> Rafael Climent,<sup>69</sup> Alberto Coll, Antonio Coll, Francesc Comes,<sup>70</sup> Ángel Corominas, José Cristóbal, Jaime Crusat, Emilio Desplá, José Domínguez, José Duch, Jaime Espino, José Estrada, Gregorio Febes, Hilario Felipe, Antonio

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war effort. After the war he formed a gang of gunmen that specialised in hunting down and murdering key CNT activists and included the ex-Barcelona police chief Bravo Portillo, himself a former employee of German intelligence. Operating from an office on La Rambla, in central Barcelona, the de Koenig gang was reputedly paid 50,000 pesetas per month by the Barcelona employers' federation. The tide turned against the gang in September 1919, when a CNT defence group assassinated Bravo Portillo and, in May 1920, de Koenig was expelled from Spain following revelations that his gang had staged fake assassination attempts against capitalists in order to guarantee protection work for themselves. Some claim that de Koenig moved to Paris, where he changed his name and dedicated himself to extortion and corruption.

<sup>60</sup> Born into a famous Catalan military family, as captain-general of Catalonia during 1918–20, he masterminded the repression of strike movements and the 'dirty war' against the CNT. Convinced that labour protest could be dealt with *manu militari*, he became the darling of the city's bourgeoisie during the 'Canadiense' strike and was later invited onto the board of the company in recognition of his services to the employers. A staunch supporter of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, during 1924–9 he was a singularly unpopular civil governor of Barcelona, especially for his decision to close the ground of Barcelona Football Club following 'anti-patriotic' manifestations on the terraces.

<sup>61</sup> A politician, army officer and Barcelona military governor during the crisis year of 1917. As civil governor from November 1920 to October 1922, he was at the forefront of the drive to crush the CNT with a hard-line strategy of selective assassination, deportations and internment without trial. Revered by his admirers as 'the pacifier of Barcelona', he later occupied ministerial positions in the dictatorships of General Primo de Rivera and General Franco and was responsible for much of the repression in the Francoist zone during the civil war.

<sup>62</sup> Head of the Barcelona police authority during 1920–2, when he worked closely with Martínez Anido in repressing the CNT. He was responsible for public order under the dictatorship after 1923.

<sup>63</sup> A reference to the *Federació Patronal de Barcelona* which, formed in 1919, consisted of the most militant capitalists who united in their desire to destroy the rising power of the CNT.

<sup>64</sup> A respected CNT and anarchist veteran.

<sup>65</sup> A metalworker and leading activist in the CNT defence groups. According to one militant, he was among 'the hardest in the organisation at the time': Juan García Oliver, *El eco de los pasos*, Barcelona, 1978, p. 31.

<sup>66</sup> A labourer and Barcelona CNT activist.

<sup>67</sup> Born in Valladolid, he moved to Barcelona and worked as a printer. CNT national secretary during 1919–21, he was a regular contributor to *Tierra y Libertad* until his detention by police and murder in the summer of 1921.

<sup>68</sup> A defence group member.

<sup>69</sup> A defence group member.

<sup>70</sup> AKA 'Paronas', a close friend of Seguí's, whom he accompanied at the time of his murder.

Feliu,<sup>71</sup> Jaime Figueras, Juan Figuerola, Joaquim Fortuny, Miguel García, José Gaspar, Ramón Gil,<sup>72</sup> Felipe Giménez, Rosendo Giménez (journalist), Rafael Gironés, Ramón Gomar, Alfredo Gómez, Rafael Guirau, José Guitart, Francisco Jordán,<sup>73</sup> Hermenegildo Latasa, Francesc Layret (lawyer), Joan Llobet, Miguel Llopart, Félix Lozano, Pedro Martí, Miguel Mas, José Meléndez, Benito Menacho,<sup>74</sup> José Mestre, Enrique Miguel, Ramón Miró, Jaume Molins, José Monclús, José Montserrat, José Pagés, José Palau,<sup>75</sup> Ramón Panella, Jaime Parra,<sup>76</sup> Jesús Parrado, Alfonso Peiró, José Pérez, Ramón Peris, Joan Pey,<sup>77</sup> Ricardo Pi, Vicario Piferrer, José Piqueras, Lorenzo Planas, José Planellas, José Prades, Pedro Pueyo, Francisco Ráfols, Pedro Ramas, José Riera, Juan Rius, Domingo Rivas, José Rivero, Bautista Roca, Armando Ródenas, Jaume Rubinat, Pau Sabater, Antonio Samper, Francisco Sans, Salvador Seguí, Juan Solanas, José Solano, José Soler, Diego Subirá, Agustín Subirás, Alberto Tolón, Jaime Torrecasana, Pedro Vandellós,<sup>78</sup> Andrés Ventura, Felipe Vicente, Evaristo Vilaplana, Joan Villanueva,<sup>79</sup> Juan Yragari, etc.

The following were seriously wounded and some of them later died as a result of their injuries:

Gregorio Ambrosio, Gonzalo Barcelona, Antonio Bargués, Juan Barrachi, Diego and Luisa Baranco, Jaime Bart, Antonio Bolea, Francisco Bravo, Baudilo Burdoy, Andrés Cabré, Sebastián Canals, Joan Cervelló, Juan Cusí, Antonio Elías, Agustí Flor, Jaume Foix, Emilio Fuertes, José Garrigós, Jaime Gras, José Hernández, Ramón Llobera, Vicente Martínez, Olegario Miró, Francesc Monturiol, Luis Oliveras, Magín Palau, Diego Parra, Julián de Pedro, Ángel Pestaña, Léon Portet, Elías Quer, Jaime Ramón, José Rivero, Manuel Salvador, Ramón Salvador, José Torres, Luis Tubau, Sebastián Vera, Joaquim Vilarrasa, Juan Jaime Vinet, Francisco Vizcaíno, and others.<sup>80</sup>

Three repulsive characters dominated the scene: the government official, the informer and the gunman. The three ‘highest’ authorities referred to earlier belonged to the first category. In the captaincy-general of Catalonia, in the civil government and in police headquarters, the provocations and attentats were devised from intelligence supplied by informers operating from within the unions.<sup>81</sup> The famous ‘Lasarte Dossier’, discovered after the collapse of the dictatorship,

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<sup>71</sup> CNT treasurer and member of the national committee.

<sup>72</sup> Secretary of the CNT of Catalonia.

<sup>73</sup> An Andalusian labourer and CNT national secretary during 1916–17.

<sup>74</sup> Barcelona correspondent for *Cultura Obrera*, a Palma de Mallorca weekly newspaper.

<sup>75</sup> Suspected by the police of being a defence group member.

<sup>76</sup> A defence group member.

<sup>77</sup> A prominent figure in the Barcelona CNT Woodworkers’ Union and member of the Catalan regional committee and the national committee. He was shot as he left work.

<sup>78</sup> Believed by the police to be a defence group member.

<sup>79</sup> Killed by the Civil Guard on 26 January 1921 in the first case of ‘*ley de fugas*’.

<sup>80</sup> Strangely Peirats makes no reference to Pere Massoni, his one-time mentor and fellow brickmaker, who died in 1933 at the age of 37 owing to injuries inflicted upon him by right-wing gunmen during this period.

<sup>81</sup> The origins of *pistolismo* in Barcelona are to be found in World War One, when German secret services attempted to impede the movement of supplies of Catalan industrial goods to the Allies. A group of spies in contact with German submarines had, as one of their collaborators, the chief of police, Bravo Portillo. The first armed action of the group was directed at the industrialist Barrett, the owner of a howitzer company. The perpetrators attempted to blame the crime on the CNT. *Solidaridad Obrera*, a daily newspaper from 1916, published Photostat documents revealing the machinations of Bravo Portillo, leading to his trial. Quickly acquitted, Bravo Portillo organised the first assassination of a CNT member: Pablo Sabater. The murderer was then later assassinated in the middle of the street. At the end of the war, the gunmen of Bravo Portillo’s group placed themselves at the orders of the Catalan bourgeoisie, at a time when the latter was exploring every possible means to hold on to its war profits. The response to a failed attack on the union leader Seguí came with the attack on the employers’ leader Feliú Graupera. There followed a prolonged dialogue of pistols. The labour unionists paid the price of an unequal struggle. (Note by the author.)

brought the whole sordid story to light.<sup>82</sup> Informers like Pere Homs<sup>83</sup> and Inocencio Feced,<sup>84</sup> and gunmen of the calibre of Ramón Sales<sup>85</sup> and Joan Laguía,<sup>86</sup> filled this terrible period with shame. Some of them, losing heart or stunned by remorse, later made sensational public disclosures. The following is one such revelation by Feced:

[Civil Governor] Martínez Anido worked in conjunction with Sales and Laguía; it was he who put the price on the attentats that were carried out. Arlegui [the police chief] even paid some people. For the Layret job, Martínez Anido handed out 40,000 pesetas which had been paid over by Maties Muntadas, owner of l'Espanya Industrial.<sup>87</sup> He also paid out a sum of money for the Pestaña job; how much, I cannot say. The gunmen were issued with a blue card. If pursued after carrying out an attack, they had only to show the card and they would be left to go free.

In the majority of attacks, their retreat was guarded by policemen assigned by Arlegui; these included agents Escartín, Martínez and Pérez. Policemen were at their disposal to carry out house searches, to apply the *ley de fugas* and to detain people with utter impunity. Sales was in charge of sharing out the money for the attentats; he would hand over a picture of the victims and often served as executioner himself. Homs took charge of “fingering” victims for the gunmen and his sweetheart, “La Payesa”, used to help them whenever the condemned men stepped out of her

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<sup>82</sup> Compiled by Captain Julio de Lasarte, this was a massive archive of intelligence reports concerning real and suspected communist and anarchist/anarcho-syndicalist activists in Barcelona. In 1930 these records, which were used to repress the revolutionary wing of the labour movement during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, fell into the hands of Pere Foix (AKA ‘Delaville’), a veteran CNT activist and the friend of a number of those who had been killed as a result of the information contained within the ‘Lasarte Archive’. Foix published extracts from the files in *Los archivos del terrorismo blanco. El fichero Lasarte, 1910–1930*, Barcelona, 1931; reprinted 1932 and Madrid, 1978.

<sup>83</sup> A labour lawyer for the CNT, police informer and agent provocateur. In 1921 he became an energetic organiser of anti-union ‘death squads’ and, following the flight of the ‘Baron’ de Koenig, his gang became the élite of the right-wing gunmen. He allegedly organised several assassinations, including that of Seguí.

<sup>84</sup> Formerly a CNT gunman, he was arrested by the police, who ‘turned’ him into an informer and agent provocateur. Reputedly Homs’s most trusted gunman, he was responsible for numerous outrages, including the 1920 attack on the Pompeya café, which left six workers dead. He was executed in Alicante in the early days of the July 1936 Revolution.

<sup>85</sup> A devout Catholic and Carlist, founder member of the Sindicatos Libres (Free Unions), the employer-funded ‘yellow’ unions that flourished due to the largesse of capitalists and the tolerance of the authorities. Previously a member of the CNT Banking and Administrative Union, he, like the rank-and-file of the Libres, rejected militant, revolutionary syndicalism in favour of moderate, corporatist trade unions. The Libres were also home to right-wing gunmen dedicated to eliminating the cream of the Catalan CNT, as seen during the period 1919–23. The high point of the Libres came during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, when they claimed a membership of over 100,000; however, the change in the political context after the birth of the Republic and the re-emergence of the CNT conditioned their decline. Sales went into exile in France in 1931, returning to Barcelona in 1935 and participating in the military-fascist uprising of July 1936, during which he was detained by *cenetistas* and executed. In his sometimes unreliable study, Colin Winston claims that Sales was tied to four lorries at the crossroads outside the *Solidaridad Obrera* offices and, when they sped off in different directions, drawn and quartered: *Workers and the Right in Spain, 1900–1936*, Princeton, 1985, p. 322.

<sup>86</sup> A former Jesuit novice, he was Sales’s right-hand man and a leading gunman in the Libres. Widely believed to have participated in the murder of Seguí, he was later expelled from the Libres for his unquenchable desire for violence. He was assassinated after the July 1936 revolution.

<sup>87</sup> The Conde de Santa María de Sants, he was a leading figure of one of the most important bourgeois families in Catalonia which had owned textile factories since the eighteenth century, including the l'Espanya Industrial factory in Sants, one of the largest textile enterprises in Barcelona.

house.<sup>88</sup> In the Bar Izquierda<sup>89</sup> there was always some gunman or other laying in wait for those emerging from her house, who “La Payesa” used to “finger”. Homs had no dealings with Arlegui; his understanding was with Anido and nobody else.

Sales and Laguía were the ones who sent Arlegui the gunmen to enforce the *ley de fugas*, and these were backed up by the policemen Agapito Marín, Escartín, Pérez, Domínguez and others.

Pita<sup>90</sup> was in charge of supplying files and addresses released by Arlegui to Sales who, with the aid of gunmen and police, would carry out searches, make arrests and carry out murders. Arlegui paid for these services with monies handed over by Miró i Trepal<sup>91</sup> and Muntadas. Whenever a “hit” was made, Laguía would receive payment from Subirana,<sup>92</sup> Marsá,<sup>93</sup> Domènec Sert<sup>94</sup> and other employers; these monies would be shared among the members of the executive committee made up of Sales, Laguía, Lorenzo, Martínez, Anselmo Roig, Marco Rubio and Antonio Olivares.

Under the orders of Honorio Inglés were Andrés Hortet, Ramón Ródenas, Miralles and Carlos Baldrich (also known as ‘Onelo’), who applied the *ley de fugas*, carried out searches and made arrests. Inglés was in the pay of the Hispano-Suiza company.<sup>95</sup> Pita pointed out those who were to be “hit” at police headquarters and sat in on interrogations carried out by Arlegui; they were two of a kind.

At present, Lasarte is the henchman of Malillos; he has the policeman Martínez at his disposal, as well as other Sometent members. He takes charge of arrests and searches and compiles data before attacks and the application of the *ley de fugas*. He also has the assistance of Police Inspector Fernández Valdés. Their rendezvous is the Lion d’Or,<sup>96</sup> a place which is frequented by a Sometent member who always has a pipe in his mouth and who passes on intelligence he received from someone in the CNT. Were you to tail this individual, you would learn many things of consummate importance as far as you are concerned. I don’t know how Lasarte lives but it would be easy for me to check on the streets because I am friendly with him. Without my assistance, Lasarte is liable to do you lots of damage.

Carmen Olivella, a religious instructor, is responsible for securing the release of gunmen. She played an important role in the Foix affair. She perjured herself.

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<sup>88</sup> This was a ‘house of ill-repute’ in Barcelona.

<sup>89</sup> A popular bar in central Barcelona.

<sup>90</sup> A police informant.

<sup>91</sup> Owner of a major construction company, Joan Miró i Trepal was representative of the most combative wing of the Catalan bourgeoisie and played a leading role in its class organisations.

<sup>92</sup> An established bourgeois family with interests in the textile sector.

<sup>93</sup> Another industrial oligarch.

<sup>94</sup> Brother of the famous Catalan painter and the second Count Sert, he was from a prestigious bourgeois family and was always at the forefront of anti-trade union resistance. An active member of the main Catalan bourgeois-nationalist party, the Lliga Regionalista (Regionalist League), and, during 1922–9, served as president of the Foment del Treball Nacional, the main Catalan employers’ association.

<sup>95</sup> The main automobile factory in Barcelona.

<sup>96</sup> A large and extremely popular café-restaurant and music hall in downtown Barcelona. Interestingly, one of the waiters, Ramón Berguñó Balcells (AKA ‘El Pencas’), was a member of the Llibres and a notorious cocaine dealer. He was assassinated after the July 1936 revolution.

Gloria, the concierge at the union building in Sant Andreu,<sup>97</sup> harbours gunmen. Her home is a safe house for them. She has carried weapons in some attacks.

The woman called Santoro, the wife of Marco Rubio, has taken arms to the gunmen and signalled the moment to strike.

I do not know where Dionisio Martín can be found. Domínguez, from the transport police at Madrid's Mediodía station, used to come in by express train from Madrid. Casetas Pérez performs the same role. Martínez serves alongside and Honorio Inglés, who was expelled from the police, is in Orán.

Pita is with state security; Agapito Martín is in Seville and Arlegui took nearly all the rest with him to Madrid.

Layret. The "hit" was planned by Arlegui, Martínez Anido, Pita, Martínez, Sales and Laguía. 40,000 pesetas was put up by Muntadas. José Conca, the Alvarado brothers, Baldrich and Fulgencio Soria were involved in it. The police covered their getaway. With a shout of "Layret!", Soria fired the first shots. I think there was a woman with Layret who must have heard Soria's shout and must also recall that he was wearing a black shirt with trousers coming up to his chest. He is squat.

Seguí. That "hit" was planned by the employers' federation and the Libres. Baldrich, Manuel Simón and Amadeu Buch took part, aided by Juan Torrens, Homs and a waiter from *El Tostadero*<sup>98</sup> by the name of Saleri. This attentat was strongly encouraged by Sales.

Boal. This was planned at police headquarters by Arlegui and a small clique. It was carried out by Sales, Luis Calderón y Tejada. As Boal slumped to the ground, Tejada leaned over to check whether he was dead and received a blow from the dying man that smashed his glasses. He has a slight mark from the glass above one of his eyes.

Pestaña. This one was the work of Viñals, Juan de la Manta,<sup>99</sup> Baldrich and Ramón Ródenas. Pestaña must recall that before he fell down wounded, someone said to him: "You're the one I'm after!" and then immediately opened fire. That person was Viñals. After the attack, Viñals and Ródenas went to Barcelona. Ródenas's pistol went off on board the train and he was wounded in the leg, a wound which he had treated clandestinely. Ródenas was the victim of an attack by his colleagues and was treated in the Clínic.<sup>100</sup> Check who tended to him and you will find that he owes his treatment to one person above all the rest. When I was arrested, this person had me write two letters to an uncle of his, in which he said, roughly, that when called upon to make a statement he should say that when the incident took place he was at home. Seek out the witness by the name of Ródenas, from Valencia province, and you may perhaps find the letters from his nephew. Martínez Anido paid for this attack.

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<sup>97</sup> A working-class district in the north of Barcelona.

<sup>98</sup> A popular café in downtown Barcelona.

<sup>99</sup> AKA Juan Plandevila Cucurull. During the Second Republic he was implicated in a right-wing plot to murder Prime Minister Azaña.

<sup>100</sup> A reference to Hospital Clínic, then the main hospital in Barcelona.



Tomás Herreros.<sup>101</sup> José Cinca, Baldrich, Manuel Navarro and León Simón all had a hand in it. Question Herreros and he will tell you that his bookstall was approached by some people who began to browse and ask prices. After a while, one of them bought a book, paying him while simultaneously drawing a dagger wrapped in a piece of paper and stabbing Herreros, making off immediately up the Rambla.<sup>102</sup> The individual concerned is tall and thin. I believe that Herreros got a good look at him. I do not know whether he was, at the time in question, wearing his customary black or green spectacles. His name is León Simón. Sales gave him 300 pesetas for this job.<sup>103</sup>

Josep Maria Foix.<sup>104</sup> This one was planned by Jaime Fort, Sales and Homs and carried out by José Conca, Manuel Simón and Fulgencio Vera. The attackers were positioned in Plaça de la Universitat and Homs, Fort and the Sometent member Torrens waited for Foix to pass the Bar Izquierda. As Foix passed by on his way home from work, Homs “fingered” him to Fort, who in turn “marked” him for the gunmen. From behind a truck, Vera fired the shots that killed Foix. Homs and all the others had been assigned to prepare the getaway. This “hit” was paid for by Jaume Fort from the Bank and Stock Exchange Union.<sup>105</sup>

Felipe Manero.<sup>106</sup> This one was set up by Homs, Torrens and the Libres. It was carried out by Cinca, Baldrich and Manuel Simón. Homs ‘fingered’ him for the gunmen. They were so close by that Manero must have heard him, since he turned his head almost at the very instant that Manuel Simón fired a single shot at him from point blank range. That shot missed its target but others caused his death, though not before he could make a statement. This, too, was paid for by the Bank and Stock Exchange Union. Salvadoret and Albericias. This was set up by the Libres, Homs and Torrens and carried out by Cinca, Baldrich, Sales and Manuel Simón, who took up positions in the Passeig de Gràcia where the victims were “fingered” by Homs and Torrens.

Canela. This was put together by Arlegui and the Libres, and carried out by Sales, Cinca and the Alvarado brothers.

Crusat and Canals. This was planned by the Libres, and Vera took part along with A. Coll, A. Oliveras and Paulino Pallás. This assassination, like the others, was paid for by Martínez Anido and Arlegui and the costs defrayed by the employers through

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<sup>101</sup> A typographer, anarcho-syndicalist and founder member of *Solidaridad Obrera*, he called the general strike in July 1909 that culminated in the ‘Tragic Week’. Later active in the formation and consolidation of the CNT, he also helped create the Barcelona anarchist weekly *Tierra y Libertad*. Blacklisted by employers, he opened a bookstall near Drassanes, at the bottom of La Rambla, near the port, which served as a point of contact for anarchists in the city. During the 1930s he was an administrator on *Solidaridad Obrera* and served on the Catalan CNT regional committee.

<sup>102</sup> Barcelona’s main thoroughfare that bisects the old Roman city and runs from the port to Plaça de Catalunya, which marks the beginning of the modern, post-nineteenth-century city.

<sup>103</sup> This sum was approximately four months’ wages for many of the low-paid, unskilled workers of Barcelona.

<sup>104</sup> A militant in the CNT Mercantile Workers’ Union, a ‘communist-syndicalist’ and believed by the police to be a defence group member.

<sup>105</sup> A close ally of Sales and a leading militant in the Libre-affiliated Bank and Stock Exchange Union, one of the bastions of right-wing syndicalism.

<sup>106</sup> President of the CNT Rag Trade Union in Barcelona, he was murdered on 27 April 1923.

the Libres. The employers had assigned Miró i Trepal, Muntadas and others to take charge of payments.

Pey. This was plotted by the Requeté in collusion with Torrens and Homs, who “fingered” him. Beltrán, Puente and others took part; they were *jaimistas*<sup>107</sup> and members of the Sometent to a man. Three people were to have perished in the attack but, untypically, Pey was alone.

Pestaña. Muntadas offered the Libres 23,000 pesetas for Pestaña’s death and the Libres organised the attack as follows: almost directly opposite Pestaña’s balcony is another flat with a balcony. Since Pestaña was fond of sitting on his balcony, Sales believed he could be picked off with a rifle. To this end, he paid 100 pesetas to ensure that the flat opposite remained vacant.

Obviously they were unable to proceed with the murder bid as they didn’t have a rifle, or because Muntadas said that he would pay the perpetrators of the attack instead of Sales.

The Reus incidents. Plotted by police headquarters, the civil governor, the Employers’ Federation of Reus and Ferrisa. It was effected by Vera, Nicanor Costa, Paulino Pallás and the Alvarado brothers, who were arrested. The order went out from Barcelona that they should be allowed to escape from jail. From Reus they made their way to Tarragona concealed in a hay cart, before returning to Barcelona. Martínez Anido, Arlegui, Junién and leading figures in the Requeté and the Reus Employers’ Federation were implicated. Of the perpetrators, only Vera was picked up. Pallás is an inspector on the trams in Zaragoza; Costa works in Barcelona city hall and Alvarado operates a taxi from Plaça del Arc del Triomf, a present from the owner of the Lion d’Or. An important role was played in these incidents by a mosaic manufacturer from Reus. I do not know his name, but I believe it would be easy to trace.

The carrer Tres Llits<sup>108</sup> attentat. Manuel Simón, Cinca, Baldrich, Casas Roura, Puente, Sales, Torrens and several Sometent members took part.

Regarding Homs, nothing is known of his past other than what has been stated here. He is in the pay of the Interior Ministry and is in charge of keeping surveillance on progressive elements in Madrid and ensuring that those from Barcelona do not go unsupervised. He keeps tabs on Eduardo Barriobero.<sup>109</sup> On one occasion already Barriobero was on the verge of meeting his death in carrer de Carme when he was in Barcelona for a defence case, but since the case was suspended, he returned to

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<sup>107</sup> The reactionary followers of Jaime de Borbón, the Carlist pretender to the throne.

<sup>108</sup> A street in downtown Barcelona, near Plaça Reial, just off La Rambla.

<sup>109</sup> An extreme republican and Madrid-based lawyer who represented the CNT. Once an anarchist, he later joined the Partido Republicano Federal, which enjoyed close links with the anarchists. During the civil war he established ‘revolutionary courts’, in which he sat as a judge. At the end of the war he was executed by *garrote vil*, a medieval method of strangulation.

Madrid the same day by express train. Homs was the one who “fingered” him for Calomarde and another man, who worked in the Casa de Caridad<sup>110</sup> ...<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Literally ‘Charity House’, this was a church-run workhouse in downtown Barcelona.

<sup>111</sup> These disclosures appeared in the Paris-based *Tiempos Nuevos*, published by anarchist emigrés in France, in the spring of 1925, during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The Interior Minister at the time was Martínez Anido. (Note by the author.)

## CHAPTER TWO: From the military Directory to the Second Republic

Irresponsible critics with their own agendas have spoken of the CNT's voluntary extinction on 13 September 1923.<sup>1</sup> Anyone who has scrupulously and dispassionately followed the *via dolorosa* of the confederal labour movement from 1919 to 1923, however, will have to acknowledge the magnitude of the CNT's outlay in energies and lives. If we add the impact of a brutal military dictatorship, we will have more than enough to explain away the fall in membership during the heyday of the military regime. Let it also be said that the CNT, a union which had been almost bled dry and well-nigh decapitated by white terrorism and whose members filled the jails and prisons, refused to submit to the corporatism of Mussolini's fascist abortion, the so-called 'parity' arbitration system.<sup>2</sup>

The CNT faced the dilemma of having to sacrifice its ideological identity or go beyond the parameters of legality.<sup>3</sup> In 1924, following the *attentat* against the executioner of the Barcelona

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<sup>1</sup> This was the date of Primo de Rivera's coup. Before the coup a combination of factors, most notably the debilitating internal struggles within the unions, the failure of the summer 1923 Barcelona transport strike and Libre-police repression, meant that the CNT was too weak to offer any meaningful resistance to Primo de Rivera. The scale of the crisis within the Barcelona CNT was reflected in the relocation of the Barcelona local federation to Manresa, a far less conflictive, provincial town where confederal circles had not been poisoned by internal rivalries and where the regional committee was also ensconced at this time. Although the confederal press was rigorously censored, the CNT unions were allowed a limited legal existence during the first few months of the dictatorship. At this time the CNT was preoccupied with a lively tactical debate, as the various factions competing for the leadership of the CNT — the 'communist-syndicalist' supporters of the Russian Revolution, the 'pure' anarchists and the anarcho-syndicalists — all interpreted the new political situation differently. Most of the anarchists wished to operate clandestinely, while the other factions, who accused the anarchists of seeking to impose their 'dictatorship' over the unions and of limiting union democracy, felt that it was best to preserve the organisational structure of the Confederation within the restricted freedoms offered by the dictatorship. The dialogue between the various factions ended shortly after the Sabadell regional plenum of May 1924, when an anarchist group assassinated the newly appointed Barcelona High Court executioner, an attack that provided the authorities with a pretext to force the CNT unions underground, where they remained until 1930.

<sup>2</sup> Inspired by Mussolini's fascist corporazioni, the *Comités paritarios* (Parity Committees) were designed by Eduardo Aunós, Primo's Labour Minister, and started functioning in November 1926. They differed from the Italian system in so far as the Parity Committees admitted union pluralism and workers were allowed to affiliate to any trade union that accepted state tutelage in industrial relations and participated in the *Comités*. The main unions represented within the *Comités* were the socialist UGT and the right-wing Libres.

<sup>3</sup> While the limitations imposed on trade unions during the dictatorship were clearly inimical to revolutionary syndicalist practice, at various stages CNT unions chose to manoeuvre within the existing legal spaces, submitting their union statutes to the local authorities for approval. An example of this was Peirats's own *Sociedad de Ladrilleros* (Brickmakers' Union) which functioned within the restrictions set out by the dictatorship. By the late 1920s *cenetistas* in a number of industries had started working within the *Comités* in order to counteract the growing influence of the Libres and to reorganise the Confederation in certain industries; examples of this trend include the shoemakers, transport and textile workers of Barcelona and the construction and metal workers of A Coruña in Galicia.

High Court, the expected offensive of the praetorians in government was unleashed.<sup>4</sup> The persecution visited upon the CNT militants was savage. A large number of them crossed the Pyrenees to seek refuge in France, where they swelled the ranks of the victims of the regime. However, that same year saw the bloody incidents of Vera de Bidasoa, an incursion across the Pyrenees which cost the lives of various anarchist plotters in Pamplona and Barcelona.<sup>5</sup>

The Vera de Bidasoa events occurred on 6–7 November 1924, during the first phase of the military Directory.<sup>6</sup> The most salient facts are the following. In advance of these events news was received in Paris, the focus of the conspiracy against the dictatorship, to the effect that a popular, revolutionary uprising was imminent in Spain. The Spanish anarchist groups, without concerning themselves excessively about the reliability of the source of this intelligence, assigned several of their members to the frontier with the mission of passing into Spain. Once at the border, a courier was dispatched to gather intelligence concerning the situation in the interior. The courier was behind schedule and those who awaited him impatiently crossed the border under arms on the night of 6–7 November. They encountered the Civil Guard near Vera de Bidasoa, an engagement which resulted in the deaths of two guards and the wounding of one of the conspirators. Realising their mistake, the intruders now attempted to retreat back into France under cover of night, a difficult undertaking given their ignorance of the terrain. By daybreak on 7 November, the forces of repression had mounted a veritable manhunt, which resulted in the deaths of two revolutionaries, while four others were wounded and 19 arrested.

The summary hearing held in Pamplona refused to pass the case on to the ordinary court. General Burguete, the captain-general of Burgos, rejected this decision and sent the case to the Supreme Naval and Army Court, whose prosecutor nevertheless agreed with the findings of the earlier summary hearing.

Finally, the intervention of the director-general of the Civil Guard made the case into a question of the honour of his corps and, despite the resignation of the prosecution counsel, he successfully obtained the death sentence for three of the accused: Pablo Martín, Enrique Gil and Juan Santillán.<sup>7</sup> The first of this trio took his own life in the presence of his executioners, hurling himself off the top of the gallery into the prison yard.

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<sup>4</sup> The executioner was assassinated by an anarchist affinity group on 7 May 1924, an action that led to a full clampdown on the CNT, the banning of its press and the internment without trial of activists. Even though the radical anarchists might have justified this assassination in terms of the victim's position within the repressive state apparatus, the fact that the executioner had not taken the lives of any anarchists meant that this killing did not fit the pattern of the classic anarchist *ajusticiamiento* ('settling of accounts'). Rather, coming just three days after a clandestine regional plenum at which the rival factions within the Catalan CNT had debated the merits of legal and illegal tactics, many *cenetistas* interpreted this attack as the work of anarchist agents provocateurs determined to compel the authorities to drive the Confederation underground and, in the process, satisfy their own predilection for clandestine activities.

<sup>5</sup> The conspiracy was compromised by a police informant among the émigrés and in the ensuing repression two anarchists were arrested in Barcelona and executed for their part in the plot. The main anarcho-syndicalist leaders, including Pestaña, were also detained, and much of the clandestine CNT apparatus was dismantled. The manifest incompatibility of insurrectionist plots and clandestine union activities served to increase the tactical differences and enmities that already existed between anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists.

<sup>6</sup> This first phase ran until 3 December 1925, when civilian politicians entered government and the civil Directory was established.

<sup>7</sup> Because the accused, all of whom were members of the anarchist action groups, were tried in an army court, there were none of the checks and balances inherent to the civil court system: the 'defence' team was selected by the military judge, the trial was conducted with perfunctory speed and the defendants had no right of appeal.

The repercussions of the Vera de Bidasoa incidents were felt in Barcelona where, around this time, there was a frustrated attempt made to storm the Atarazanas barracks.<sup>8</sup> Two of the people subsequently arrested — Josep Llacer and José Montejo — did not receive a full trial and after summary hearings both were sentenced to death.<sup>9</sup> Execution was carried out on 10 November 1924, in the yard of Barcelona's Model Prison.

Whereas the period of white terror was typified by the monologue of gunfire, the dictatorship, which had pledged to end 'unionist terrorism', brought spells of preventive detention for months or years, as well as the shameful cycle of trials and monstrous sentences. For six long years the road to the prison cell was well-travelled.

Not until the second half of this ghastly period does one enter the terrain of joint conspiracies with the political left, both civilian and military. Though not quite on a par with the sellouts which blight the record of the UGT, there were, to be sure, some defections from the CNT, such as those militants who had drifted into the orbit of Russian communism and those who felt that the revolutionary ardour of years past had subsided. The Joan Peiró<sup>10</sup> – Pestaña polemic is the most poignant document of what was fortunately only a passing crisis.<sup>11</sup> As can be seen perfectly well by the texts we quote below, a tendency in favour of revising the CNT's fighting tactics elaborated at the La Comedia congress began to make some headway.

During the first four years of the dictatorship militant activity was confined to intermittent theoretical work. With the Catalan unions shut down and the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera* suppressed, the odd periodical of more or less precarious life-span still lingered in some provincial capitals. As a sample of our press during the dictatorship we might refer to *¡Despertad!* (Vigo),<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This mobilisation by the anarchists of Barcelona was timed to coincide with the Vera de Bidasoa invasion.

<sup>9</sup> Following another hastily concluded military trial, the two defendants, members of 'Germen' (Source), a Barcelona-based anarchist affinity group, were executed by means of *garrote vil*.

<sup>10</sup> A glass worker and autodidact, he learnt to read and write during his early twenties and became one of the most accomplished journalists, pamphleteers and polemicists in the labour movement and one of the most important figures within the Spanish anarcho-syndicalism. Despite his firm support for the independence of the CNT from anarchist groups, he was, nevertheless, an active member of an affinity group. From the early 1920s he was often the main driving force behind the Catalan CNT, serving as CNT national secretary during February–December 1922 and January 1928–June 1929 and as editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* from June to September 1931, when he was forced to resign from the editorial board because of the opposition from radical anarchists. When the Confederation split during 1931–6, his ideas inspired the moderate anarcho-syndicalist opposition and he contributed frequently to their newspapers, including *Cultura Libertaria* and *Sindicalismo*. He nevertheless remained a firm advocate of a unified CNT and ensured that most of the anarcho-syndicalist opposition returned to the Confederation in the months before the civil war. During the civil war he returned to the *Solidaridad Obrera* editorial board and gained notoriety as one of the 'anarchist ministers' when he served as Industry Minister in central government during 1936–7. In 1938 he became editor of *Catalunya*, the Catalan CNT's daily paper, gaining a reputation as one of the most talented Catalan writers of his day. He went into exile in 1939 only to be captured by the Gestapo in France in 1940, who deported him to Spain, where he was offered a position within Franco's 'national-syndicalist' state apparatus. Faced with a choice between ignominy and death he chose the latter and was executed in 1942.

<sup>11</sup> I dispute the judgement of the author here. The polemics of the 1920s over legality versus illegality and the role of anarchist groups within the unions presaged the split in the CNT during 1931–6, when this debate was resurrected. Indeed, there is a case for arguing that the CNT would have undergone a split in the 1920s had it not been for the dictatorship, which imposed conditions of clandestinity that effectively neutralised internal divisions within the unions.

<sup>12</sup> Published 1928–30, this was the weekly newspaper of the Galician Regional Maritime Federation, edited by José Villaverde, a 'humanist anarchist' and one of the most tireless figures within the Galician anarcho-syndicalist movement. Active in the reorganisation of the CNT during the dictatorship, he advocated the 'moral hegemony' of

*Acción Social Obrera* (Sant Feliú de Guixols),<sup>13</sup> *El Productor* (Blanes),<sup>14</sup> *Redención* (Alcoi),<sup>15</sup> and *Horizontes* (Elda).<sup>16</sup> The censorship was somewhat less stringent where journals were concerned. Barcelona's *La Revista Blanca*<sup>17</sup> attracted lots of readers. Barcelona also saw the emergence of *Vértice*<sup>18</sup> and *Iniciales*<sup>19</sup> and lots of books of the social novel genre.<sup>20</sup> In Valencia *Generación Consciente*,<sup>21</sup> the celebrated journal which later became *Estudios*,<sup>22</sup> specialised in scientific and ideological matters and made headway with its glossy presentation. In France, militants in exile published a vast number of theoretical and campaigning publications.

In Barcelona and the provinces some carefully disguised rationalist schools sponsored by groups of like-minded workers survived. The book, the magazine, the manifesto, the circular and the excursion, followed by the clandestine meeting, linked arms with conspiracy and the cult of the goddess of Change. A new generation grew up in the shelter of this period of relative tranquillity.<sup>23</sup>

Once the dictatorial regime entered a period of disintegration, militants began to drift across the frontier to spearhead the so-called 'confederal cadres' inside the trade unions which had emerged largely spontaneously under the aegis of the legislation of the day. Even where there was no union, the local federations began to make their presence felt, as did the regional confed-

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anarchists over the CNT but opposed attempts by affinity groups to control the unions. He had close ties with Peiró and other Barcelona anarcho-syndicalists.

<sup>13</sup> A weekly CNT paper in Girona province which, although subjected to the occasional ban, appeared during 1928–32.

<sup>14</sup> Two libertarian publications adopted this name in the 1920s: the first of the two – subtitled 'Organ of the Unions of Girona' – was the official publication of the CNT in Girona province and was published in Blanes, between 1921 and 1931; the other publication was a mouthpiece of anarchist syndicalism and was printed in Barcelona during 1925–6.

<sup>15</sup> Subtitled 'Organ of the Single Workers' Union of Alcoi and mouthpiece of the CNT', this anarcho-syndicalist weekly appeared during 1921–3 in Alicante province and became the official publication of the Levante Regional Committee. Before its prohibition by the dictatorship in September 1923, it replaced *Solidaridad Obrera* when the latter was banned and, under the editorship of José Juan Pastor, explored many cultural and health issues besides the obligatory focus on trade union affairs.

<sup>16</sup> Published during 1921–31 in Alicante province.

<sup>17</sup> First appearing in Madrid on 1 July 1898 under the editorship of Joan Montseny i Carret, who was better known in anarchist circles under the nom de plume Federico Urales. Inspired by the French anarchist journal *La Revueblanche*, the first phase of the journal ended in 1905 owing to a mixture of state repression and financial problems. The journal enjoyed a new lease of life between 1923 and 1936 when it was published in Barcelona, and by 1925 it had a print run of 6,000. The forum for developments in the international anarchist movement, as well as the individualist, ruralist philosophy of Urales and his entourage, in the 1920s the journal remained aloof from the debates on the future of CNT, partly due to Urales's fear of the censor and, perhaps most importantly, because of his rejection of all syndicalism, including 'anarchist syndicalism'.

<sup>18</sup> This anarchist publication appeared from 1921 until 1929.

<sup>19</sup> A monthly journal for 'true individualists, nudists and vegetarians' published 1929–37.

<sup>20</sup> This genre was favoured by revolutionary writers of the epoch. Perhaps the most famous example of this literary form was the *Novela Ideal*, published by the *La Revista Blanca* publishing house in Barcelona, which had a print run of around 15,000 in the 1930s.

<sup>21</sup> Established by the *Redención* editorial team in June 1923, this Alcoi-based monthly anarchist cultural magazine was edited by Pastor and was largely concerned with theoretical, moral and cultural issues and, therefore, ignored the political debates surrounding the orientation of the CNT. Burdened by debt, it folded in 1928.

<sup>22</sup> Continuing the work of *Generación Consciente*, this prestigious anarchist cultural magazine appeared between 1928 and 1937 in Valencia. At its peak it had a print run of 60,000 copies and formed part of a successful publishing house of the same name.

<sup>23</sup> Peirats is referring here to his own generation.

erations and the first national committees also appeared on the scene. In 1929 the CNT began its resurgence again to the sound of edifying doctrinal debates. Joan Peiró tempered his pen in a series of articles published in *Acción Social Obrera*, in which he challenged Pestaña's possibilist syndicalism. Here are some extracts from his series:

... In mid-1927, at a meeting of militants from the Barcelona textile trade which I attended for some reason or another, Pestaña stated that the parity committees accorded with the principles of the CNT. The fact is that when I replied with a vehement expression of shame at his claim, Pestaña resorted to sleight of hand, an "art" in which he is highly skilled. But, in spite of everything, Pestaña had "blown his cover" sufficiently to alert those of us who realise that the CNT is "content" as well as "container".

In "Where we Stand"<sup>24</sup> (*Situémonos*) we have examined the hasty assertion that the "Confederation is a content but not a container", which means to say that the CNT is not the expression of enduring principles but can adapt itself to all manner of precepts however reformist these may be. This of itself is tantamount to claiming that "principles are made by men" — does anyone believe them to be god's work? — and that "men have it in their power to change them", etc...

No. Let me tell comrade Jaume Saltor<sup>25</sup> and all past, present and future Pestañas: yes, the CNT's principles can be changed and modified but only insofar as this affects the process of economic, political and social change. On the other hand, the CNT has certain basic precepts whose essential and enduring nature cannot be repudiated.

The confederal congresses can change all the principles of the CNT should they deem such amendment necessary. However, what no congress can do, much less any man, no matter how well-endowed with a "grasp of reality" and a "practical mentality", is renounce those principles which are the CNT's essential premise, its foundation and its *raison d'être*: anti-parliamentarianism and direct action.

What I have been saying amounts to a declaration that, were it possible to speak freely today at a regular congress, then everything amendable would be amended. The Confederation's conference and plenums have already made a start on this task, but the CNT's two basic and intangible principles — direct action and anti-parliamentarianism — would remain. Otherwise, the CNT will lose its reason for existence. And what I am defending here is nothing more than that which gives the CNT its reason for existence.

Other prominent militants entered the debate, among them one 'E. Negresco' (a pseudonym of Carbó). In an 'Open letter to comrade Peiró' published in *Acción Social Obrera*, 7 December 1929, 'Negresco' enquired:

What is at stake, essentially? That the victory should go to X or to Y? That one should make one's reputation as a redoubtable polemicist? No, quite simply the issue is

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<sup>24</sup> Pestaña published a series of articles under this title in *¡Despertad!* between 1 June and 23 November 1929.

<sup>25</sup> One of Pestaña's allies.



to examine specific attitudes and to see if these square with our principles. It is a question of seeing clearly whether these principles prohibit certain lines of conduct. Lastly, it is a question of demonstrating whether a given interpretation of the current requirements of the labour movement may be endorsed, and of divining whether the basis for such lines of conduct constitutes the negation of the very principles in whose name it purports to act.

The current situation, the problems of the moment, the tangible, that which is detectable by the senses, which can be translated into an insubstantial economic positivism, have obscured the vision of the overriding requirements of the future, of that which only minds capable of the loftiest deliberations may attain. For such minds a potato is always outweighed by an idea.

Furthermore, the dividing line between present and future has been established. Is it not in the bowels of the present that the splendid tomorrow of which our minds have dreamt is continually being gestated? And will not our positive assistance make that gestation all the more speedy? Is it by adapting ourselves to vices or errors, or to the absurd practices of the past transplanted to the present that we aim to reinforce the basis of the inevitable achievements of the future?

In the same issue of *Acción Social Obrera* Manuel Buenacasa<sup>26</sup> wrote:

Today we see word and deed in the service of a lawful, compliant organisation and also on behalf of another one which adopts the line that principles must be adhered to before all else. For the former I reserve the silence of my contempt. Since that silence and contempt will be shared by class-conscious workers generally, I am confident that nobody will swell its ranks and, logically enough, that it will perish or vegetate as indeed it deserves to. All of my sympathies lie with those who advocate that the organisation should retain the principles of the CNT in an undiluted form and I ask of them that they take heed of the advice and opinion of an old and humble militant. Opinion or advice, nothing more.

I am not one of those afraid to call a spade a spade and, this being so, it is my opinion that it is best that the “trade union cadres”, if exist they must, should be the appropriate unions and federations. In all logic, the CNT cannot be founded except upon its building blocks, which are the unions.

But before we turn to the events which were about to occur across the country, and in which the CNT was to be heavily involved, it behoves us to refer to one incident of note: the creation by anarchist groups from Spain and Portugal of the FAI. Little is known of the proceedings and

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<sup>26</sup> One of the most influential figures in the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist movement, leader of the Barcelona Woodworkers' Union and founder member of the CNT, Buenacasa was national secretary during 1918–9 and, like Peirats, a historian of the workers' movement.

resolutions of the anarchist conference in Valencia in 1927. Not until 1931 would the FAI, in conjunction with the CNT, have a decisive impact upon Spanish social life.<sup>27</sup>

Conceived for the healthy purpose of watching over the essence of the Spanish libertarian movement, the FAI made its presence felt against the deviationist peril to which we have just been referring.<sup>28</sup> From a signed communiqué from the FAI's peninsular committee, dated December 1929, we have chosen the following paragraphs:

Given the emancipatory nature of the labour movement, it is sophistry to believe in trade union neutrality and independence in matters of ideological outlook and subversive propaganda. This is particularly true given the undeniable growth of the labour movement in the social sphere, which makes it impossible to avoid the influence of those ideologies vying for hegemony within society, not least because the labour movement's sociological and moral achievements are the product of the most powerful minority acting within it. This is why we find so many labour movements on the international scene with corresponding social, political and religious inclinations.

Every labour movement, whatever its nature, be it an imperative of the capitalist, statist system, be it a response to the political and economic exclusion of the working class, or be it concerned with short-term action for material and moral improvements, cannot, nor should not, forget those other social movements which, despite their different characteristics, are also struggling for the economic betterment of the oppressed, the humanisation of the labour and complete disappearance of all political and economic privileges.

Hence if the CNT truly wishes its activities to be transcendental and transforming in the widest and most comprehensive sense of the words, it must of necessity seek a liaison with that organism which shares its tactical procedures and agrees with its premise, without — let us reiterate — thereby losing its peculiar independence. On the other hand, should the CNT not accept the proposition formulated by this Secretariat, and unless, through the unstinting work of anarchists, it openly describes and declares itself anarchist, it will most likely risk a deviation greatly detrimental to its full recovery, resulting in the loss of its moral and revolutionary values, which form its most distinguishing feature.

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<sup>27</sup> Created clandestinely at a picnic on the beach at Saler, in Valencia province, the FAI resembled the Bakuninist secret societies of the nineteenth century and sought to become the committee of the libertarian revolution. Its central aim — to liaise between the hitherto dispersed anarchist groups in the Iberian peninsular — was thwarted by 'anti-organisation' groups, a number of which only entered the FAI on the eve of the 1936 revolution. Although Portuguese members were represented in its ranks, they were always a minority and the organisation consisted predominantly of Spanish groups. It was not until the birth of the Republic in 1931 and the return of many anarchist groups from exile that the FAI displayed real signs of life.

<sup>28</sup> The overriding aim of the FAI was to forge an explicitly anarchist union movement by guarding the CNT against syndicalist and communist incursions within the unions. From 1928 onwards *faístas* formed mixed CNT-FAI 'action groups' in order to expand their influence within the unions and by the time of the revolution the FAI had a strong presence within the paramilitary prisoners' support committee and the CNT 'defence groups'. The readiness of *faístas* to use all necessary means to defend the CNT did much to enhance their standing among key sections of the rank-and-file.

The polemic became even more heated as a result of an anecdotal but profoundly symptomatic episode. The national committee at this time concluded its term of office and issued a report which was tantamount to a 'death certificate on the CNT'. Among the charges which Peiró had hurled at Pestaña was the following:

There is no reason to waste one's energy disavowing things done under cover of the CNT's name. This snowballs like an avalanche. It may be denied while denial is possible. But it is highly likely that someday, someone may stand in the middle of the street and scream aloud: "You deny that the CNT's name and the description 'militant of the Confederation' are being capitalised upon for the purposes of contriving this deviation, and I assert that it is the very [national] committee of the CNT which is encouraging professional unionisation and acceptance of the parity committees."

The backlash spearheaded by Peiró led to Pestaña's resignation from the national committee, and Pestaña could devise no more spectacular justification for his deviationist conduct than to proclaim publicly that the CNT was defunct. Among the many condemnations of this view, the following admission from the 'trade union cadres' of Alcoy is a clear expression of the inadmissibility of such an ignoble ploy:

Though we may not speak for the whole of the Confederation, we believe we do have the right to give the lie to a document made public in *¡Despertad!* and which bears the signature of the national committee. And we hold it to be an unheard-of affront that this committee should speak of the membership of the Confederation, especially when it says, perhaps with the covert intention of inflicting great damage upon the organisation, that the membership is all but non-existent.

We grant that the committee has every right to defend itself against any allegations made against it, but we do not believe that its members are entitled to go to the extremes of playing down our numbers, particularly as our failure to show greater signs of life could perhaps be attributed to the committee's ambiguous stance.

We invite all organisations affiliated to the CNT and the membership also to come out and give the lie to these allegations, which do not say much for those who hide behind the Confederation.

Events were very quickly to testify to the gigantic potential as a movement which the CNT always possessed, despite the dismal forecasts and prayers for the dead uttered by the defeatists.

At the end of 1929 the dictatorship collapsed. We do not intend here to dwell upon the minutiae of a political occurrence which has its own copious literature.<sup>29</sup> We are debarred from doing so by the nature of this book, which is written with the intention of giving due prominence to one of the factors unknown to the wider public yet which had a decisive impact upon these events — namely, the CNT — the CNT disdained by all of the historians of contemporary Spanish politics.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> See my bibliographical essay at the end of Volume Three for a discussion of this literature.

<sup>30</sup> Spanish historiography has clearly changed enormously since Peirats was writing, although there are still very few accounts of the history of the CNT in English.

In no other country in the world and in no other political sector could one point to an instance of comparable prodigality in terms of reorganising activity and of such a fruitful harvest. Barely months after the fall of the dictator, the CNT was on the rise again throughout the length and breadth of Spain with unheard-of vigour and thrust. Simultaneously, periodicals began to appear in every major town and city in Spain. Under Peiró's management, *Solidaridad Obrera*, regional organ of the organisation in Catalonia, wasted no time in entering the arena. Together with Pestaña<sup>31</sup> and other speakers, Peiró addressed the first meeting held in Nuevo theatre. A packed crowd crammed the theatre, spilling onto the expanses of the Paral·lel.<sup>32</sup> Pestaña opened his address with Fray Luis de León's graphic phrase: 'As we were saying only yesterday...' The Confederation, given up for dead and buried by people ranging from Martínez Anido to Pestaña himself, was the very embodiment of the legendary phoenix which rose from the its own ashes.

General Dámaso Berenguer's *Dictablanda*<sup>33</sup> pulled out all the stops to repair the crumbling dykes around the state in the face of growing popular dynamism. Demands increased for an amnesty of political prisoners, civil liberties, the freedom of expression and the right to unionise. And, much to the distaste of the government, events proceeded apace. Giving the lie to the mistaken reckoning of the Cassandras of pessimism,<sup>34</sup> the CNT demanded, insisted upon and obtained the reopening of its unions. Once the union premises were opened, the workers flooded in. And so began, almost without respite, a period of labour activism. The dictatorship had accomplished its mission to corrupt and impoverish. Nearly seven years' denial of the right to strike brought the workers to an all-out struggle for wage rises and improved working conditions. Seeing 'their hour' approach, the políticos of left and right backed the workers in their demands.

The CNT had been involved in every conspiratorial venture, with civilians and military alike. The 'Sanjuanada'<sup>35</sup> episode and José Sánchez Guerra's putsch<sup>36</sup> testify to the truth of this. All

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<sup>31</sup> Denounced as 'reformist' and 'defeatist' by his radical opponents, during 1930–1 Pestaña and his moderate anarcho-syndicalist collaborators in the 'Solidaridad' group spearheaded the reorganisation of the CNT.

<sup>32</sup> A wide avenue in downtown Barcelona that was once known as 'the poor man's Rambla' because, like La Rambla, it started at the waterfront, but whereas La Rambla led towards middle class Barcelona, the Paral·lel connected the port with the proletarian district of Sants and bisected some of the roughest streets of tenement Barcelona. During World War One, when Barcelona acquired the reputation of the 'Paris of the south', the Paral·lel was the hub of the city's nightlife, 'the Broadway of Barcelona', and typified the growing self-confidence and self-expression of the working class. For the anxious élites, meanwhile, the area around the Paral·lel was often viewed with horror, as a Dantesque crime zone, populated by the lawless *classes dangereuses*.

<sup>33</sup> Literally 'soft dictatorship'; King Alfonso XIII hoped this would be a transitional regime that would return Spanish political life to the status quo as it existed before Primo's military coup. The choice of Berenguer, who had been High Commissioner of Spain's Moroccan protectorate at the time of the military disaster at Annual, when African tribesmen inflicted over 13,000 casualties on the Spanish army, reveals as much about the mediocrity of the dwindling number of the king's supporters as it does about the poor judgement of the monarch; in fact, just as Berenguer had been unable to defend Spain's African colonies from anti-imperialists, so too was he incapable of preventing the monarchical state from being overrun by anti-monarchist forces.

<sup>34</sup> In *The Iliad*, Homer's fictional account of the war between Greece and Troy, Cassandra is a prophet who is doubted on account of her repeated pessimistic predictions.

<sup>35</sup> A failed conspiracy of an unholy coalition of forces opposed to the dictatorship, including dissident army generals, discontented monarchist politicians and the CNT and which was discovered by the authorities on St John's Day, 24 June 1926. The CNT had promised to launch a general strike against the dictatorship in return for a full amnesty of its prisoners, a free press and the right to form trade unions. In the ensuing repression hundreds of union activists were jailed.

<sup>36</sup> Led by a monarchist politician and former leader of the Conservative Party who, as minister of the interior, presided over the repression of the 1917 Assembly movement. Politically redundant after Primo de Rivera's destruction of the old dynastic parties, his anti-dictatorship schemes included a coup in Valencia in January 1929 designed to re-

those ventures had hinged upon commitments and pledges of honour with military personnel either demoted by or discontented with the dictatorship. The value of the word of the military men was seen later on. But such collaboration, though it availed little against the dictatorship, left a dangerous bequest in CNT circles.

In March 1930 the following manifesto appeared in Barcelona under the heading of *Intel·ligència Republicana* (Republican Accord).<sup>37</sup> The various republican signatures included those of a few CNT militants.<sup>38</sup>

The current disintegration of the regime, accepted by even leading conservatives, brings the political and apolitical left-wingers of Catalonia and the whole of Spain face to face with a matter of the utmost gravity. As yet nobody knows how the period initiated by the coup d'état of 13 September is going to turn out. But the distressing uncertainty weighing down upon the people has been registered internationally and we can all see how the absolute powerlessness of the government is disastrously translated into the progressive devaluation of our currency unit. Behold the legacy of the dictatorship: the indissolubly linked moral disorder and economic disarray.

Given the present state of affairs, all the measures intended to prolong the tenuous survival of what we all know is doomed to disappear — this being the talisman of a degree of political evolution now surpassed by the generality of cultured peoples — will serve only to make the crisis more acute with each passing hour and to increase the dangers of its denouement.

There is but one way for us to return to normality: through the re-establishment of the rule of law, through the introduction of democratic freedoms and when their trespassers are called to account. Those who do not see this, or who refuse to see it, base their sophistries upon the attribution to the people of a tragic, historical ineptitude and by forecasting all manner of bloody convulsions and frightful calamities, as if there could be any calamity greater than the collective debasement and slow agony of all that is dynamic in this country. Since recent prophecies that the collapse of the dictatorship would augur cataclysm proved to be no more than a laughable fiction, we address ourselves to the opinion of all men of goodwill, with all the weight which may be granted us, in order to exorcise once and for all this tired old bogey, the puerile threat of imaginary perils with which they vainly aim to endorse the

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establish the corrupt constitutional monarchy. A CNT plenum of regional committees gave sceptical backing to the movement, agreeing to launch a general strike but only after the plotters had mobilised. In the event, Sánchez Guerra's lack of energy meant that the CNT held its forces in reserve.

<sup>37</sup> Its appearance in Barcelona was no coincidence: the popular base of republicanism was largely restricted to Catalonia since the intermediate and petty bourgeois sectors that sustained the movement were socially underdeveloped elsewhere in the Spanish state. The manifesto was later published in the Catalan left-republican newspaper *L'Opinió* on 2 May 1930.

<sup>38</sup> The most important *cenetistas* (Peiró and Foix) later withdrew their signatures. The smattering of CNT signatures reflected the new contacts that developed between Catalan republicans and a number of moderate *cenetistas*, who were thrown together in the jails of the dictatorship and who had a common experience of resistance to the regime. Inspired by the ouvrieriste Catalan republicans of the 'L'Opinió' group, who were based around the newspaper of the same name, the architects of the manifesto hoped that they could reach a *modus vivendi* with the organised working class and that the CNT might become a Catalan equivalent to the British Trades Union Congress. Later in 1930 the 'L'Opinió' group joined the left republican ERC, the hegemonic political coalition in Catalonia until the civil war.

supreme peril of the present instability. Faced with the urgent necessity of defining our stance over and above the interests of party and organisation, fully aware of the import of our undertaking and confident moreover that neither facts nor men refute us, today we give primacy to our status as citizens over every other denomination and we state that we stand ready to put in the spadework necessary to ensure a new political order rooted in the supreme condition of justice, capable of thwarting the subversion of authority once and for all and of leading the country along the juridical byways indispensable to the progress of nations.

This new political order, the federal republic, may be broken down roughly into the following basic features:

1. separation of powers;
2. acknowledgement of equality of individual and social rights for every citizen;
3. acknowledgement of the full entitlement of federated groups to express their collective will either through the use of their language or through the development of their own culture;
4. freedom of thought and conscience; the separation of the church from the state;
5. agrarian reform, with the division of the *latifundios*;<sup>39</sup>
6. social reforms on a par with the most advanced capitalist states.

Let no one interpret this solemn declaration of our agreement on these basic points as any sort of weakening of our particular ideas. The harsh experience of these past few years dictates our duty to us today, an ineluctable imperative, in the sad conviction of the futility of positing any maximum programme until such times as Spain has first joined the ranks of the free peoples and a new legality has achieved compatibility between the civilised pursuit of political contest and the constant growth of public culture and public wealth. Conscious of our historic duty we issue a fervent appeal to men of goodwill in Catalonia and throughout Spain, to focus all of their endeavours upon the achievement of the democratic republic. This is our pledge, determined only by the urgency of the circumstances. Should our appeal fail to elicit the cordial echo which we hope to arouse, we shall feel ourselves absolved of our pledge. But responsibility for future developments would fall upon our shoulders.

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<sup>39</sup> These were the large estates of southern Spain, the owners of which, the *latifundistas*, constituted the traditional ruling class until the 1960s. Notoriously anti-democratic, the *latifundistas* were petrified by the Republic and its promises of agrarian reform, and they conspired against the new regime from the outset.

Jaume Aiguader,<sup>40</sup> Joan Aleu,<sup>41</sup> Gabriel Alomar,<sup>42</sup> J. Alsamora,<sup>43</sup> Amadeu Aragay,<sup>44</sup> Martí Barrera,<sup>45</sup> Amadeu Bernardo,<sup>46</sup> A. Borràs,<sup>47</sup> Vicenç Botella,<sup>48</sup> R. Caballería,<sup>49</sup> Rafael Campalans,<sup>50</sup> Joan Casanellas,<sup>51</sup> Joan Casanovas,<sup>52</sup> F. Casas Sala,<sup>53</sup> C. Com-

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<sup>40</sup> A physician from a well-to-do Barcelona republican family, he was deeply concerned with hygiene and housing, about which he wrote several influential pamphlets. He was jailed briefly during the dictatorship and his surgery in the working-class district of Sants became a meeting place for various anti-regime groups. Formerly a member of the Catalanist social-democratic USC, during the Republic he joined the ERC and became councillor and mayor of Barcelona in the years before the civil war. During the civil war he was elected to the Madrid parliament and served as minister in the central government. He went into exile in 1939.

<sup>41</sup> A USC activist.

<sup>42</sup> A USC organiser.

<sup>43</sup> Then a member of the Radical Party; he later joined the ERC.

<sup>44</sup> At the time a Radical Party activist, he later switched to the ERC, becoming its representative on Barcelona Council and in the Madrid parliament.

<sup>45</sup> A former *cenetista*, *Solidaridad Obrera* journalist and a close ally of Seguí, with whom he was deported to Maó castle in 1920. He later adopted nationalist positions and joined the ERC in 1930, becoming a deputy in the Catalan parliament in 1932, Generalitat labour minister during 1933–6 and a deputy in the Madrid parliament in 1936. As president of the Commission for Political Responsibilities during the civil war, he was responsible for punishing right-wingers who had plotted against the Republic. He went into exile in 1939, although he returned to live in Francoist Barcelona in 1950.

<sup>46</sup> A trade unionist and editor of *Treball*, the weekly paper of the dissident communist PCC; at the end of 1930 he joined the ‘L’Opinió’ group.

<sup>47</sup> A trade unionist.

<sup>48</sup> A trade unionist and PCC member.

<sup>49</sup> A Radical Party member.

<sup>50</sup> A founder member of the USC, industrial engineer, teacher and probable author of this manifesto. Before his death in 1933 he was elected to Barcelona Council and the Madrid parliament in April and June 1931 respectively; he also sat in the first Generalitat government.

<sup>51</sup> A lawyer, property owner and member of the ‘L’Opinió’ group. A prominent member on Barcelona Council during the Republic, he went into exile after the civil war, returning to Spain after Franco’s death, whereupon he was elected to the Catalan parliament on a socialist ticket.

<sup>52</sup> A member of the ‘L’Opinió’ group. After World War One he was a trade union lawyer and an ally of Seguí and Layret. Exiled during the Primo dictatorship, he was a founder-member of the ERC and became vice-president of the Generalitat in December 1931 and president of the Catalan parliament in 1933. As prime minister of the Generalitat between July and August 1936, he was a staunch opponent of the entrance of CNT- FAI representatives into the Generalitat, a stance that briefly forced him into exile until after the ‘May Days’ of 1937. He left Spain in 1938 and died in exile in 1942.

<sup>53</sup> A republican activist.

erón, Pere Comes,<sup>54</sup> Lluís Companys,<sup>55</sup> Pere Foix,<sup>56</sup> Joan Fronjosà,<sup>57</sup> Eladí Gardó,<sup>58</sup> Gelabert, Emili Granier-Barrera,<sup>59</sup> Conrad Guardiola,<sup>60</sup> Odó Hurtado,<sup>61</sup> Edmond Iglésies,<sup>62</sup> Josep Jové,<sup>63</sup> Eduard Layret,<sup>64</sup> Joan Lluhí i Vallescà,<sup>65</sup> L. Martínez, Marfull, Josep Maria Massip,<sup>66</sup> J. Mateu,<sup>67</sup> J. Mías,<sup>68</sup> Antoni Moles,<sup>69</sup> A. Montaner,<sup>70</sup> Lluís Muntanya,<sup>71</sup> J. Murtra,<sup>72</sup> J. Mussoles,<sup>73</sup> Lluís Nicolau d'Olwer,<sup>74</sup> Joan Ors,<sup>75</sup> Joan

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<sup>54</sup> A lawyer and representative of the Catalan liberal bourgeoisie, he belonged to the 'L'Opinió' group before joining the ERC and serving as minister of justice in the Generalitat from May 1936 until the end of July 1936.

<sup>55</sup> A lawyer, journalist and politician. Born into a family of large landowners, he became a left republican and a close collaborator of Layret. As lawyer for the CNT, he developed strong contacts inside the labour movement during the years of *pistolerismo* and was elected to parliament by the working-class and peasant voters of Sabadell (Barcelona province) in 1920. After flirting with the ideals of the Russian Revolution, he helped organise the Unió de Rabassaires tenant farmers' union during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and founded the ERC in 1930. On 14 April 1931 he proclaimed the Spanish Republic in Barcelona and became the first civil governor of the republican era after he was installed in office by armed *cenetistas*. Leader of the ERC in 1933, he became president of the Generalitat in 1934, the same year that the Catalan government assumed responsibility for public order and pursued the CNT relentlessly. Nevertheless, his credibility within Confederal circles was considerable, allowing him to remain as Generalitat president after the July 1936 revolution and throughout the civil war, during which time he successfully contained the revolution. Exiled in 1939, he was detained by the Gestapo and handed over to the Francoists and was executed in Barcelona's Montjuïc Castle in 1940.

<sup>56</sup> A moderate syndicalist who, like Peiró, later withdrew his signature from the manifesto under pressure from radical anarchists. During the 1920s he contributed to *Le Libertaire* in Paris and *¡Despertad!* A member of the 'Solidaridad' group, he wrote for their newspaper *Acción* and became a member of the *Solidaridad Obrera* editorial board and the CNT national committee in 1930, before clashing heavily with radical anarchists. Shortly afterwards, he left the CNT for the ERC.

<sup>57</sup> A mechanic and USC activist, he was a key figure inside the Stalinist PSUC during the civil war.

<sup>58</sup> A Radical Party member.

<sup>59</sup> A member of *Bandera Negra* (Black Flag), a radical Catalan separatist secret association, he was jailed for three years for his part in the 1925 Garraf assassination attempt on King Alfonso XIII. He later joined the USC. Exiled after 1939, in 1959 his was the first Catalan translation of *The Communist Manifesto*.

<sup>60</sup> A trade unionist.

<sup>61</sup> A member of *Acció Catalana*.

<sup>62</sup> A republican, he later joined the ERC.

<sup>63</sup> Once a *cenetista* and communist-syndicalist, he later joined the UGT.

<sup>64</sup> A republican, he later became an ERC deputy.

<sup>65</sup> A social-democrat and lawyer who formed L'Opinió and later joined the ERC. Instrumental in building ties between Madrid and Catalan republicans, he was one of the architects of this manifesto and remained active in republican politics throughout the 1930s, serving as minister for public works in the first Generalitat government in 1931 and representing the party in the Madrid parliament. He was obsessed with the idea of domesticating the CNT and converting it into a reformist, British-style union confederation. He went into exile after the civil war.

<sup>66</sup> Then a USC activist, he later joined the ERC.

<sup>67</sup> A USC member.

<sup>68</sup> A republican, he later joined the ERC.

<sup>69</sup> A republican and member of the 'L'Opinió' group.

<sup>70</sup> A Radical Party member.

<sup>71</sup> A republican, he later joined the ERC.

<sup>72</sup> A UGT organiser.

<sup>73</sup> A USC member.

<sup>74</sup> An *Acció Catalana* member and representative of the liberal wing of the Catalan bourgeoisie. He became minister of the economy in the first republican government in 1931.

<sup>75</sup> A republican and 'L'Opinió' group member.



Peiró, Joan Lluís Pujol,<sup>76</sup> Enric Bernaildo de Querós,<sup>77</sup> A. Roca,<sup>78</sup> Cosme Rofes,<sup>79</sup> Antoni Rovira,<sup>80</sup> Àngel Samblancat,<sup>81</sup> Manuel Serra,<sup>82</sup> Carlos Soldevila,<sup>83</sup> Desideri Trilles,<sup>84</sup> Tomás Tussó,<sup>85</sup> Santiago Valentí i Camp,<sup>86</sup> Abel Velilla,<sup>87</sup> Josep Viadiu,<sup>88</sup> S. Vidal,<sup>89</sup> Francesc Viladomat,<sup>90</sup> Antoni Vilalta,<sup>91</sup> Joan Vives<sup>92</sup> and Josep Xirau.<sup>93</sup> Barcelona, March 1930.<sup>94</sup>

In *Acció Social Obrera* on 12 April 1930, there appeared a note from Peiró which included the following:

Always an advocate of candour and incapable of denying a public airing of what I do in private, I placed my signature beneath a political manifesto and the reasons

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<sup>76</sup> A republican lawyer, he later joined the ERC.

<sup>77</sup> A prominent left-wing Catalan republican from the pre-dictatorship period.

<sup>78</sup> A republican.

<sup>79</sup> A USC member.

<sup>80</sup> A journalist and republican, he left the Lliga for Acció Catalana before joining the ERC.

<sup>81</sup> A journalist, lawyer, revolutionary novelist and propagandist. He briefly joined the ERC and was elected to the Madrid parliament in 1931, before moving leftwards and developing strong ties with a number of CNT leaders. During the civil war he was a member of the revolutionary committee that sat in the Barcelona Law Courts. After 1939 he was exiled in Mexico.

<sup>82</sup> A USC activist.

<sup>83</sup> A journalist and Acció Catalana member.

<sup>84</sup> An *ex-cenetista*, dock leader and supporter of the Russian Revolution. He formed a rival port union which participated in the *Comités paritarios* of the dictatorship in the 1920s and which affiliated to the UGT in 1930, a decision that prompted a series of violent, inter-union struggles on the Barcelona waterfront in the years before the civil war. After the July 1936 revolution he was assassinated in a machine-gun attack while travelling to the CNT Transport Union for peace talks with the rival union. This attack caused enormous public impact in Barcelona and was attributed to ‘uncontrollables’, although it was possibly the work of a ‘defence group’ close to the CNT Transport Union.

<sup>85</sup> A doctor, dissident communist and a close collaborator of Maurín, firstly in the BOC and later in the POUM.

<sup>86</sup> A property owner, writer, sociologist and veteran republican who had been detained during the 1909 ‘Tragic Week’. He later gravitated towards socialism.

<sup>87</sup> A republican lawyer, he later joined the ERC.

<sup>88</sup> A trade unionist and close friend of both Peiró and Seguí from the early 1920s and a highly respected figure within the anarcho-syndicalist movement. He adopted an intermediate position during the split in the CNT in the 1930s, and during 1938–9 was editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*. In exile he became acquainted with Peirats, and they left France together for Santo Domingo.

<sup>89</sup> A member of Acció Catalana.

<sup>90</sup> A USC organiser.

<sup>91</sup> A republican lawyer and member of the ‘L’Opinió’ group.

<sup>92</sup> A member of Acció Catalana.

<sup>93</sup> A law professor and founder member of the USC; he was elected parliamentary deputy for Barcelona province in 1931.

<sup>94</sup> As can be seen, the signatories from the CNT and from the labour movement were in a clear minority alongside the reformist socialists and republicans who, despite their political differences, were united in the hope that the experience of the dictatorship would subdue maximalist spirits inside the CNT and lead to a new era of collaboration between the organised labour movement and liberal/social-democratic political parties. An article published in *L’Opinió* on 25 July 1930 under the title ‘The truth about the leftist accord’ pointed out that the signatories had put their names to the manifesto in an individual capacity in the hope that this would avoid compromising the position of those inside the CNT who favoured an alliance with political groups. Ironically, the much-desired goal of unity was undermined by political intrigues, as each political party interpreted the manifesto in a different way. On balance, it seems that only the ‘L’Opinió’ group was truly committed to united action.

which prompted me to do so are obvious, because to do otherwise would have been to look for extenuating circumstances for my action, and that is not what I was aiming at. In signing the manifesto I was evidently at odds with my beliefs and I accept that my action, mistaken or not, was perpetrated in full awareness of the fact that I was striking a contradictory stance. Let me state formally that it was then and is now a purely personal act. No-one can claim that I have tried to influence anyone into following my example. This is the sort of thing in which the individual has to act spontaneously. Even so, yesterday I received warnings that my personal act is not only an obscenity and an enormous miscalculation but also implies a threat to something greater than myself. And since I had no wish to be able to cause any harm to that which I hold dear, I realised that I can choose between two courses: either withdraw my signature from the foot of the said manifesto, or plunge headlong into ostracism.

Given the reasons which prompted me to endorse it, I find no reason to withdraw my signature, particularly as the act of renunciation would not atone for any error or obscenity on my part. So the only course left to me is to pay the price of my error, if error it be, by prostrating myself.

This being so, I hereby declare that, in order to avert any sort of threat to things which, for me, remain sacred, I henceforth stand down from whatever activities I have been engaged in with the organisation in the realm of ideas and in the press, thereby becoming one of the many who follow in silence the vanguards which guide our ranks.

I boast that what I did sprang from the most honest of intentions and of the most absolute disinterest. But should there indeed be anything shameful in it, it is only fair that the appropriate moral sanction be imposed upon me. Whether this be right or wrong, I step forward to demand payment of myself. It will be up to the consciences of others to lift the punishment whenever they deem it fit and proper to do so.

This incident, so typical of Peiró's complex reasoning, was a sign of the times. Members of the Confederation and political leftists had linked arms in the common aspiration of bringing down the dictators, though the aspirations of the former with regard to revolutionary aims may have been more ambitious. Jointly they participated in conspiracy and jointly they suffered the punishment of exile. And this circumstantial camaraderie of arms which, in strict doctrinal terms, should not have induced certain CNT members to overcommit themselves, flattered the age-old illusions of the politicians about bridling the CNT or at least seeing it become just another faction embroiled in the parliamentary game. And, in so far as the CNT had the capacity to reveal its true strength, the deputies and ministers of the future showered their importuning and flattery upon the visible heads of the Confederation.<sup>95</sup>

Peiró's determination drew the following comment from the Vigo-based paper *¡Despertad!*, then under the editorship of Villaverde:

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<sup>95</sup> There is evidence that anarchists were also flattered; for instance, orthodox anarchist figures such as Felipe Alaíz and Libertad Ródenas appeared at pro-amnesty meetings with republicans before the April 1931 elections. Also, according to the *faísta* Eusebi Carbó, delegates from all the tendencies with the CNT endorsed participation in a pro-republican uprising at a November 1930 CNT plenum.

It is not for us to dwell at length upon the error. This, it strikes us, is a question of interpretation. Peiró, in interpreting the historic times in which we live, thinks to act according to the dictates of his conscience in this manner. But it may be well-nigh certain that Peiró was not in the least conscious of his denial of himself. And, if this was his reasoning, we are about to remind him of something said by Ricardo Mella<sup>96</sup> in a situation akin to the present one.

It was in the days when the Russian Revolution was still in its infancy. When I returned from a trip to Asturias, Mella inquired about several comrades. Regarding one of these, perhaps the one who was most friendly with Mella, we told him that rumour had it that he appeared to have expressed himself in favour of the unions' gaining representation in parliament to use it as a revolutionary forum.<sup>97</sup> On hearing that, Mella had this to say: "If you go back to Asturias, give him my best and tell him, if he likes, he should do as I do and withdraw from active life, for there are enough youngsters to propagate the ideas we espouse, but that he ought never to betray his past."

If that does not apply to Peiró, it comes quite close. Prompted only by the friendship which binds us to a man who has so often dignified these columns, I have these brief remarks: should friend Peiró acknowledge, with the honesty that does him credit, that his signature was an "obscurity" and an "enormous miscalculation", then let him retract it from the *Intel·ligència Republicana* manifesto. Why let the error stand, if error there be, as he himself concedes? No chastisement is possible if they who bare their breast for punishment recognise their error. But if, as a result of some overweening and inexplicable self-esteem, this error is allowed to persist and the signature is not retracted, then indeed, regret it though we may, Peiró must be disbarred for life from holding positions of responsibility inside the CNT.<sup>98</sup>

The process whereby the CNT was increasingly drawn into political events in the prelude to the fall of the monarchy and the proclamation of the Second Republic is sketched to perfection in the debate which followed the delivery of the national committee's report at the Confederation's 1931 national congress.<sup>99</sup> The majority's harsh strictures upon the contacts and commitments allegedly entered into by the committees provoked an interesting retort from Peiró, which, because of the way in which it illuminates the chief political developments of the period, we reproduce at some length below:

I have sought the floor to assert that since 1923 not one single national committee nor one single regional committee has been anything other than constantly in touch with

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<sup>96</sup> The author of a huge number of articles, essays and pamphlets on a variety of different subjects, he was perhaps the most talented Spanish anarchist theorist of the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries.

<sup>97</sup> Since this was the policy of the Communist International immediately after World War One, the person in question was clearly a recent convert to communism.

<sup>98</sup> At the first CNT meeting that he addressed after the fall of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, Peiró asked the audience for a vote of confidence, only to receive a standing ovation.

<sup>99</sup> Taken from *Memoria del congreso extraordinario celebrado en Madrid los días 11 al 16 de junio de 1931*, Barcelona 1931.

political elements, and not to install the republic but rather to end the regime of ignominy which was an affliction upon us all. When the dictatorship was set up, what the national committee assembled in Seville may have done, I know not. But what I do know is that in 1923 or at the beginning of 1924, elements from the Confederation enjoying, I think, official accreditation, met in the French town of Font Romeu with Francesc Macià<sup>100</sup> who was representing, not only his own party, but also other Spanish leftist groups. From that moment on, liaison was established with political circles, relations which have hardly ever been pronounced upon. In mid-1924, when the Catalan regional committee was resident in Mataró and the national committee in Zaragoza, there was a request from Macià that a delegation from the Confederation should journey to Paris to prepare a revolutionary uprising. In collusion with the national committee, the Catalan regional committee assigned the present speaker and one other comrade. Macià told us that, besides representing his own party, he spoke for other sectors of the left. And he asked us what conditions the Confederation would require if it were to back that revolutionary uprising aimed at instituting a federal republic. The representatives of the Confederation replied: "What may be introduced once the revolution has been effected is of little concern to us. What we are concerned about is the release of all our prisoners without any exceptions, and that collective and individual liberties should be thoroughly guaranteed. If that be given us, we have no further conditions to impose." But that was an agreement in principle. When the delegation returned, the Confederation summoned a regional plenum and at that plenum, after an account had been given of what had occurred, it was agreed almost unanimously that the Confederation should prepare to proceed to this revolutionary uprising. In July there was a national plenum, and there, again by unanimous vote, it was agreed to accept the proposal to proceed to a revolutionary uprising. And this means that from the instant that the plenum shouldered that responsibility, the responsibility was incumbent upon the entire organisation. But then we gave ourselves an interval, and this interval period was six months in length but, before that time was up, we realised that what Macià was aiming at was not a nationwide uprising but one confined to Catalonia and so the national committee convened another plenum in Barcelona. It met in October 1924 and at the plenum it was proposed by the Confederation's representatives that the pact with Macià be thrown out. But the plenum deemed fit to give itself a further interval from that date

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<sup>100</sup> Affectionately known as 'l'Avi' (Grandfather), he was a popular Catalan nationalist politician. From a bourgeois background, he joined the Spanish army and reached the rank of colonel before resigning in protest at the strength of centralist and *españolista* sentiments within the armed forces. Dissatisfied with the betrayals of the bourgeois Lliga Regionalista, in 1922 he formed Estat Català, the insurrectionist movement of Catalan republicanism that organised armed separatist paramilitary groups. When Primo de Rivera came to power he went into exile in Belgium, France and America and plotted armed attacks on the dictatorship. After failing to obtain Soviet patronage and anarchist support for an armed uprising against the dictatorship, he launched the 1926 Prats de Molló invasion of Catalonia which, while a failure, attracted considerable international attention. In 1931 he joined the ERC and when the Republic was established in April 1931 he proclaimed the 'Catalan Republic', although days later he bowed to pressure from Madrid and accepted the tutelage of the Spanish state in return for the promise of home rule. A charismatic, populist figure, capable of radical rhetoric, he enjoyed excellent relations with the moderate wing of the CNT and served as the first president of the Catalan Generalitat until his death in 1933 at the age of 74.

forward if need be. Thereafter it was the collective representatives who assumed the responsibility for maintaining an agreement with the *políticos*.

Let me turn to another episode: the understanding reached with Sánchez Guerra in 1928. I was secretary to the national committee at the time. The national committee was disinclined to associate itself with political elements but, as it turned out, the same plenum had appointed some mixed action committees, cobbled together from the anarchist groups and from Confederation members. And whereas the [national] committee fought shy of establishing contact with political elements, these action committees maintained serious connections with those political circles and with the military. And it so happened that Sánchez Guerra, then resident in Paris, sent for a comrade who was not an accredited representative and who travelled to Paris in an individual and personal capacity. Upon his return from Paris, that comrade called upon the present speaker and not upon the national committee and briefed him on all that had passed in Paris. And of course, we were told that, given the imminence of a revolutionary uprising which would proceed with or without the Confederation, we had to make up our minds. So, in view of the imminence of that revolutionary uprising, and believing that the Confederation would have to be caught up in this revolt, the national committee agreed in principle to liaise with Paris and to appoint comrade Bruno Carreras<sup>101</sup> to keep it briefed on everything that was planned. Meanwhile, since the committee could not enter into any agreement with the *políticos*, we believed we might be able to spare ourselves the responsibility by calling a national plenum and that this plenum would accept the responsibility in any case. This national plenum was convened for 29 July 1928 and it agreed, by unanimous vote, including those from the Castile delegation, to reach an understanding with the political and military elements. Now then, it was agreed there that the military and political elements would make the revolution and that we would back them up and that, if the Confederation saw an opportunity to forge ahead independently, then it would, but that if it did not, we would make no move.

As the coup went ahead in the month of January without the Confederation receiving prior notification, we found ourselves in Barcelona grappling with the problem only eight hours before the event. On the Sunday they told us: "The rising is on for tomorrow." So the national committee summoned the comrades and made the necessary preparations. Since the agreement was that the CNT would not budge until it had seen the military on the streets with their artillery pieces, whenever they came along to tell us to send our people onto the streets, we refused on the grounds that they had not complied with our requirements.

I want to acknowledge and readily acknowledge that, after having persisted with this liaison with the *políticos*, neither the FAI nor the anarchist groups can be accused of being exclusively responsible for leading the Confederation to maintain contacts with political elements. But it is a fact that they were speaking in the name of the FAI, that these comrades turned up and professed to be the FAI. But since the FAI

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<sup>101</sup> An exiled anarchist responsible for fostering contacts between the anarchist groups and the clandestine union cells.

now disowns these individuals, we must believe that the FAI is right, though we cannot offer any clear explanation of this business. As Francesc Arín<sup>102</sup> said, then the national committee was forced to establish contact with political elements through these individuals who professed to be representatives of the FAI.

There was a point when I had to send for Manuel Alfarache<sup>103</sup> and tell him: “If a nationwide revolutionary uprising is at stake here, you, as the national committee, should not tolerate any FAI committee usurping the representation of the Confederation. You have to show up there in the flesh for what concerns you.”

This brings us to the famous San Sebastián pact. When the *políticos* gathered in San Sebastián, it was at a time when the Confederation had no dealings with political elements. Even the FAI had no dealings with those people, unless it was those people who claimed to be FAI representatives. The latter did maintain relations with the military elements, but that is all. The Confederation had no part in the San Sebastián pact. The Confederation was not approached, any more than the UGT was approached. To be sure, there was one time that the UGT, like the CNT, was approached concerning a revolutionary uprising that was to have been made on the streets.

One point needs to be cleared up, because it demonstrates the stuff of which those politicians were made. The politicians were concerned not to enter into any commitment *vis-à-vis* the CNT, because they knew the CNT had reached an agreement concerning the arming of the people. Furthermore, the CNT was unwilling to enter into any written undertaking, because it maintained that fundamental aims were not being striven for.

Those who made their compact in San Sebastián took care to ensure that the Confederation was left out, although they met with the assent of the UGT and the socialist party. They wanted to make do with an extra-official or informal delegation. This revealed the manoeuvre by the politicians to embroil the Confederation in a revolutionary revolt without entering into any formal agreement. We told them from the pages of *Solidaridad Obrera* that if they took us for extras they were barking up the wrong tree, and that the revolution would have to be made with the Confederation or else it would not be made at all.

They then dispatched two representatives of the left. They sent the man who today is minister of home affairs,<sup>104</sup> plus the current director-general of state security,

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<sup>102</sup> A metalworker and veteran of the post-war struggles, he was an action group member in the early 1920s and was blacklisted by the Barcelona bourgeoisie. He later adopted moderate anarcho-syndicalist positions, joining Pestaña's 'Solidaridad' group, and in 1930 becoming CNT national secretary. Elected president of the Barcelona Transport Union in April 1931, he sided with the anti-FAI opposition during the split in the CNT and only returned to the Confederation in the spring of 1936. When the civil war began he was on a CNT propaganda tour in Andalusia, where he was detained by the Falange and assassinated.

<sup>103</sup> Born in Cádiz province, he emigrated to Barcelona in the 1920s, becoming a *cenetista*. A close ally of Pestaña and a member of his 'Solidaridad' group, he was CNT national secretary during the second half of 1930 and firmly opposed FAI influence over the unions, siding with the moderate anarcho-syndicalist wing of the movement. He went into exile in 1939 and, before his death in Mexico, he edited a newspaper, *Comunidad Ibérica*.

<sup>104</sup> A reference to Miguel Maura, the son of Antonio Maura, 'the butcher of 1909'. Once a monarchist and always a fervent Catholic, Maura junior was closely linked to capitalist interests. By 1930, convinced that the monarchy was doomed, he joined the republican camp, from where he defended conservative positions in an attempt to hold back

Galarza.<sup>105</sup> The first thing these gentlemen asked for was some agreement with myself and with Pedro Massoni.<sup>106</sup> I refused to go because I was nobody's representative, but on the insistence of comrade Massoni and of other comrades I decided to pay these gentlemen a visit to see what they wanted. And these gentlemen wanted nothing more than to make contact with the Confederation. Also, as Massoni and I represented no one, and since there was a national committee in Barcelona, we arranged for the national committee to receive us the following day. And there we explained what it was all about. Both the national committee and the regional committee spoke with the gentlemen. An understanding in principle was established, but the national committee, not regarding itself as empowered to arrive at any understanding, convened a national plenum. The interview between Maura, Galarza, Massoni and myself was on 29 October and the national plenum called to consult with the organisation was held on 15 November, during which it was agreed – with only the representatives of the Levante regional committee dissenting – that an understanding be arranged with the *políticos* to mount a revolutionary uprising.

After that, any responsibility should not be laid at the door of the [national] committee. The responsibility has to be laid at the door of all who gave their consent to the arrangement of this understanding.

For my own part, I have always reproached the *políticos* for standing in the elections because that was tantamount to wiping out the potential for revolution in economic, political and social terms or, in other words, destroying the very basis of the revolution.

I concede that all that was done constituted a deviation from the CNT's principles. But then what should the CNT have been doing during the years from 1923 to 1931 other than preparing conspiracies, revolutions and shows of strength aimed at doing away with the regime?

I am not going to imitate the bad comedian who used to cry "Long live the King!" to elicit some applause. What I am saying is that I have always had to rub shoulders with politicians, particularly in attempting to secure the release of all our prisoners and assurances of individual and collective liberties, the basis premises for the growth of the Confederation.<sup>107</sup> I have personally argued in favour of going beyond the stage

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the pace of change. As the first Minister of Home Affairs in the Second Republic, he developed a strong profile on law-and-order issues, establishing the *Guardia de asalto* (Assault Guards), a new paramilitary police force designed to preserve public order in the major towns and cities. He resigned from the government in October 1931 in opposition to legislative attempts to separate church and state. For *cenetistas*, he epitomised all that was wrong with the republic and was derided as 'The Son of Maura' – a Spanish play on words which questions Maura's family line.

<sup>105</sup> Ángel Galarza was a member of the PSOE who collaborated with Maura in establishing the Assault Guards.

<sup>106</sup> A leading anarcho-syndicalist organiser in the brickmaking sector who inspired Peirats to enter libertarian circles. Following an assassination attempt by right-wing gunmen in 1919 he experienced poor health and was paralysed in his right arm, although he was at the forefront of resistance to the dictatorship in the 1920s. In 1930 he was employed as a printer at the *Solidaridad Obrera* printshop in Barcelona, only to be sacked by the FAI-controlled Regional Committee in the spring of 1933 for supporting the moderate anarchosyndicalist opposition. He died shortly afterwards in June 1933.

<sup>107</sup> The irony here was that when the radical anarchists led the CNT after 1931 they also periodically trooped in and out of official buildings in order to discuss similar matters with the authorities.

where we are now. And I am honest enough to say, as I said back in 1924, that I did not believe that the Confederation was equipped to mount a rising of its own. I say that try as we might to mount a rising of our own, or even make the social revolution, at that time we would have failed. And I say also that, from that moment on, we had to prepare ourselves to make the revolution, something we were not equipped to do. To date all we have managed to do is to secure the release of a few comrades. I bemoan that we have achieved so little, that only a few comrades have regained their freedom.' (*One delegate says that Peiró, in his outline of the record of the CNT's conduct, has overlooked some details concerning the declarations of the civil governor of Barcelona.*)

It is true that the civil governor of Barcelona has claimed there was a three-month period of grace awarded by the CNT. There is one thing I had overlooked: when we elected people to the national committee in 1928 there was a revolutionary committee active in Barcelona and it included one representative of the Confederation. And in that committee the *políticos* told the representative of the Catalan CNT regional committee that, in the event of the revolution coming about, they sought not a three-month but a six-month period of grace from the Confederation. At the plenum of 29 June 1928, which agreed to seek an understanding with Sánchez Guerra, the regional committee's representative raised the matter of what the politicians were asking for and, right there and then, the delegate was told that he had to say on behalf of the Confederation that no way would it sign any document, because what concerned us was that the revolutionary uprising should occur, and thereafter the Confederation would act as the circumstances recommended. You know only too well that at one interview these remarks were made to us, as do the comrades from Bilbao, who were present at that interview. What we were told was that there was a certain agreement to stabilise public order during a six-month period if it should become endangered, but there was no mention of written compacts. Companys spoke very vaguely on this score.

Pestaña:

No element from committees within the organisation, whether at local, regional or even national levels, has entered into any undertaking. What there was, was a persistent pleading from the politicians for some tacit commitment to be given. That desire on their part has been evaluated into an article of truth. Had there been any truth in it, the following episode would never have come about: the Republic was proclaimed on 14 April 1931. The shoemakers of Barcelona had been involved in a dispute. The Republic was proclaimed, the bosses offered no concessions and the strike continued, without the slightest hint of anything. If any undertaking had been given, wouldn't the politicians have taken us to task over the continuance of that dispute?...



## CHAPTER THREE: The Republic of Casas Viejas

We have noted that 1930 was a year of continual political agitation. However, economic strikes with exclusively economic aims proliferated everywhere. 1930 was a year of sensational conversions to republicanism, of judicial jousting, of trials converted into political forums, of rumours and panics, of economic crises, of the flight of capital abroad, of systematic clashes between the workers or university students and the forces of order.

As the politicians sought to restrict the scope of the campaign for an amnesty, the CNT demanded freedom for every one of its thousands of prisoners. Catalonia and Andalusia were the very epitome of social ferment. In a paternalistic way, the newspapers and speechifying of the political left endorsed all agitation against the monarchy. Trade unionists and republicans shared the same platform.<sup>1</sup> General strikes with bloody repercussions were frequent. This situation culminated in the uprising of December 1930, with the revolts in Jaca<sup>2</sup> and Cuatro Vientos<sup>3</sup> and, shortly afterwards, the municipal elections which resulted in the proclamation of the Republic on 14 April 1931.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This issue became inextricably linked with the struggles inside the unions between radical anarchists and moderate anarcho-syndicalists. On balance, one cannot ignore the fact that at this time the struggle to free the social and political prisoners saw both radicals and moderates from the CNT appearing on the same platform as middle-class republicans and communists.

<sup>2</sup> This was a precipitate action by liberal-left army officers and their civilian supporters in the small Pyrenean garrison city of Jaca, who declared the Republic on 12 December 1930 (three days before an agreed military coup that was to be backed up by a general strike). Quickly isolated and defeated, the Jaca rising was routed and two days later Captain Fermín Galán and Lieutenant Angel García Hernández, two of the leaders of the Jaca rebellion, were shot following a hastily conducted military trial. This was a serious mistake for the Berenguer government since it gave the republican cause the martyrs that it had hitherto lacked.

<sup>3</sup> This revolt occurred at an airfield outside Madrid on 15 December 1930, the appointed date of the republican uprising. Interestingly, this uprising was led by the then republican-inclined General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano Serra and Ramón Franco, the first Spaniard to fly the Atlantic and was the younger brother of the future dictator, who was in many respects his exact opposite. When the rising failed, the pair made their escape by plane to Portugal.

<sup>4</sup> There is considerable evidence that CNT rank-and-filers voted for republican parties in large numbers, particularly in Barcelona, where the ERC swept home to victory in the elections. CNT militants also played a decisive role in the creation of the Republic, organising a general strike in favour of regime transition rather than in pursuit of revolutionary or insurrectionary goals. Indeed, in a number of CNT bastions it was *cenetistas* who pushed hesitant middle-class republicans forward, with the result that the much-promised amnesty was sometimes achieved through direct action; in Barcelona, for instance, *cenetistas* stormed the jail and released the political prisoners. But this was a peaceful change and the atmosphere was, on the whole, festive as the two main social classes marginalised politically by the monarchy – the urban petite bourgeoisie and the working class – looked towards a new era. The CNT did not have a policy of support for the Republic, but neither was it hostile. The moderate anarcho-syndicalist leadership – which expected the new regime to introduce wide trade union freedoms and the right to strike, agrarian reform and anti-unemployment measures – was clearly intoxicated by the peaceful collapse of the monarchy and it viewed the Republic as a political arena within which it would prove easier to organise the classless society, a position that came under immediate and fierce criticism from the radical activists close to the FAI. The suspicions of the radicals were

After the king fled and powers were transferred to the newly installed provisional government of the Republic, the latter called a halt to the festivities.<sup>5</sup>

Republicans and socialists had reached their terminus: their ideal of a bourgeois republic. Their revolution was over. Spain faced urgent problems affecting the working class. But the government offered only promises of change and laborious legal procedures. According to the liberal left, things had to be done within the law. And the laws had yet to be formatted in accordance with orthodox democratic practice. This is to say that they had to emanate from parliament, which in turn implied the holding of elections – in this instance, elections to a constituent assembly – and there had to be adequate time in which to prepare for these. There are certain things which a provisional government may not do. At best, it may legislate by decree on interim issues; it may appoint functionaries, fix their stipends and take fiscal measures to meet their budget requirements. But the agrarian reform for which half of Spain was screaming, the irrigation and industrialisation schemes, the initiation of public and private relief works: these could not be dashed off in twenty-four hours. Nor in five whole years, as we shall see. To act otherwise would have been to alarm the right, provoke financial panic, bring trade to a standstill and invite capital investment. In short, that the starving people could and must wait.

And what was the government's only reply to the people's hunger and to the poverty of proletarian hearths and homes? The Republic must be consolidated. Labour Minister Francisco Largo Caballero imposed compulsory arbitration in the shape of his famed Law of 8 April 1932,<sup>6</sup> a reproduction of the parity committees bequeathed by the dictatorship which, in turn, were an inheritance from Mussolini. The mixed juries (*jurados mixtos*) represented a camouflaged ban on the right to strike. And the Law of 8 April was an arrow aimed at the heart of the CNT and its direct action tactics.<sup>7</sup>

The bourgeois republicans wanted no disputes now which might alarm the bourgeoisie. Nor was the right to be alarmed; they had been given assurances that, barring some tampering with the symbols of monarchy, everything would remain as before. And if strikes and hunger could not be conjured out of existence by decree and if the strikes multiplied, then the Law for the

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strongest in Catalonia, where Macià attempted to bring the CNT into a coalition government, offering a cabinet post to Pestaña during 14–15 April. Fearing that a break with the traditional principles of the CNT would split the union, the moderates balked at the prospect of direct representation in a bourgeois government, although these principles were infringed by a resolution passed at a Catalan CNT regional plenum that same week, when two delegates were appointed to liaise with the Generalitat. In what was something of a honeymoon period between the CNT and the Catalan authorities, the offices of the *Sindicatos Libres* in Barcelona were closed and police files were opened.

<sup>5</sup> Conservative elements within the Madrid government were alarmed by what Maura described as the 'din' in the streets after the fall of the monarchy. In Barcelona, Companys, the first civil governor of the republican era, attempted to undercut the psychological effects of the general strike in the city and dilute the explicitly proletarian nature of the stoppage by declaring 15 April a public holiday throughout Catalonia. The call of the authorities for a return to work was echoed on 16 April by the CNT, which ordered its members to end their stoppage.

<sup>6</sup> Also secretary-general of the UGT, he did nothing to hide this during his time as labour minister in the first republican government. This law, which required all unions to register with the civil governor within forty days, was described by *Solidaridad Obrera* (25 August 1932) as a 'declaration of war without quarter on the CNT by the socialist party, its spoilt child the UGT, in alliance with the government, the security forces, the banks and the exploiters in general.' Indeed, Largo's corporatist labour legislation was designed to outlaw CNT tactics and foster the expansion of the UGT, particularly in Catalonia. Unsurprisingly, therefore, these labour laws played an important factor in turning the CNT against the Republic.

<sup>7</sup> This legislation can, as a whole, be viewed as the latest attempt to integrate the Spanish working class within an institutionalised system of industrial relations, a project that was always undermined by the perpetual material insecurity of working-class life and the perennial intransigence of the employers.

Defence of the Republic ( *Ley de defensa de la República*)<sup>8</sup> and another law, the Vagrancy Act ( *Ley de vagos y maleantes*),<sup>9</sup> plus the *ley de fugas*,<sup>10</sup> would knock sense into mischief-makers.<sup>11</sup> Maura and Largo Caballero, the champions of not alarming the bourgeois and the reactionaries, brought the Republic, the monarchist Civil Guards and the Assault Guards into confrontation with the workers.<sup>12</sup>

Another effect of the Law of 8 April, brainchild of a socialist labour minister who was at one and the same time the general secretary of the UGT, was to foment rivalry between the two union centrals which embraced the vast majority of the country's workers. In a display of petty-minded belligerence, this amounted to the ministry issuing a declaration of war against the proletariat, as the authorities took sides in the arena of trade union affairs. The representatives of the republican bourgeoisie in the government backed this policy of causing splits and inviting fratricide among the workers.

This is what lay behind the crisis the new regime had to face within a few days of its inception. This crisis was to be availed of by the forces of reaction as they lay in wait, biding their time in the barracks and in the poky clerical dens.

On 11 June the CNT's extraordinary congress began in Madrid. Above all else the congress had to face several questions of immediate necessity and resolve certain critical aspects of the internal affairs of the Confederation.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Passed in October 1931, this preventive law was based on the 1922 German Law for the Defence of Democracy and effectively abolished all the civil liberties contained within the 1931 Constitution. Although designed to defend the new regime from violent subversion by the extremes of the political spectrum, this law was deployed far more frequently against the left. In particular, this law could be used to 'politicise' and then outlaw strike actions that were essentially economic in origin; it also treated active picketing and clashes with the security forces as a direct attack on the Republic.

<sup>9</sup> Passed in 1933 and drawn up by the socialist parliamentarian and jurist Luis Jiménez de Asúa, this law allowed for the 'preventive' incarceration in concentration camps of those individuals deemed to be 'dangerous' in the opinion of the police and the judiciary. Although justified as a measure against the 'dangerous classes', the Vagrancy Act was used heavily against the CNT's activists, particularly its unemployed organisers. The great advantage of this law for its framers was that it provided legal cover for the traditional and widely discredited practice of detention without trial.

<sup>10</sup> Given that the brutal police and Spain's iniquitous economic system were both largely unreformed from the monarchist period it should be no surprise that extra-judicial assassination by the security forces endured into the republican period.

<sup>11</sup> Like previous regimes, the republican government often saw strikes, especially those of the CNT, as a 'provocation', and not as a reflection of the legitimate grievances of the working class.

<sup>12</sup> Formed to replace the Civil Guard in urban centres, the Assault Guards were an élite republican paramilitary police force, recruited from socialist and republican loyalists during the summer of 1931. Unlike the Civil Guard, which relied upon long arms, the Assault Guards quelled urban protest with truncheons and pistols, a combination which Maura hoped would minimise collateral damage and enhance the tattered image of the security forces among the lower classes. The events at Casas Viejas in January 1933 highlighted the shortcomings of this project.

<sup>13</sup> Some 511 delegates elected by 535,565 members from 219 locations across Spain attended the congress. It is likely, however, that allowing for non-payment of dues, actual CNT membership was around 800,000. Despite the myriad tensions between anarchists and anarcho-sindicalists at the congress, the two factions united in their anti-political, anti-communism to pass the 'Madrid Agreements', which barred anyone who had previously stood for election from office in the CNT. This accord was later used to expel many of the dissident communists of the BOC from the union. Meanwhile, some delegates from the orthodox Stalinists of the PCE — who unlike the BOC sought to split the CNT — were led (at gunpoint) from the congress.

The atmosphere of the congress was saturated from the outset of its first debates. The roots of the crisis went far into the past, as we have had occasion to note. It was rooted in the vexed question of loyalty to the CNT's tactics.

What was behind this corrosive crisis? On the one hand, a process of weariness, powerlessness and unarticulated disappointment. On the other, an orthodox conception of the revolutionary process. Both schools of thought were peppered with a series of factors which distorted their true motives. Quite apart from the sincerity with which the views were held, quite apart from the real import of those views, whether they trespassed against doctrinal principles or affirmed those same principles, there was at play a complex web of suspicion, self-esteem and unbridled passions.<sup>14</sup>

The birth of the Republic, together with the promises and disappointments it had brought with it, unleashed the native temperament, so prone to the exaggeration of feelings and opinions. Categorical assertions and negations are the very stuff of life for the Spaniard. Another factor is the problem of the Spaniard's prickly sensibilities. The surest way to get a Spaniard to blow their top is to take them to task for some impropriety – whether real or alleged – in mordant, wounding terms. However, perhaps for that very reason, there is nothing so alien to our behaviour as calm, collected, deliberate remonstrance. The Iberian is a creature of hyperbole, hypersensitive yet also vitriolic in the extreme. With the levelling of a single intemperate accusation, the accused becomes the very incarnation of intemperance.

The fact that we have already alluded to the CNT's extraordinary congress excuses our dwelling at length upon the prickly problem of the debate regarding the national committee's report. Another matter which provoked impassioned debate was the question of the restructuring of the CNT. A lengthy motion framed by Peiró provided the basis for the working party. On this issue, the Santander Construction Union, which was also part of that working party, proposed a counter-motion.<sup>15</sup>

Given the length of the proposition, which advocated the creation of national industrial federations (NIFs), we will limit ourselves to highlight just a few of the interventions.<sup>16</sup>

The dissenting voice of Julio Roig, author of the counter-motion:

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<sup>14</sup> The ambience at the congress was very bitter and personal and set a pattern for the development of the polemic between radicals and moderates. To be sure, the issues that divided the 'Treinta' from the radicals were never discussed in a calm fashion and the split between the two factions led towards polarisation and a mutual distortion of the position of the other. While during 1931–5 Peirats himself supported the radical position, he opposed the fury with which the campaign was directed against the moderates, as the logic of this always pointed to a split in the Confederation.

<sup>15</sup> This reflected the orthodox Bakuninist position that rejected organisation in favour of local initiative.

<sup>16</sup> This was not a new project: at the 1919 Comedia congress, Eleuterio Quintanilla, the distinguished Asturian anarchist, advocated the NIFs, a proposal that was crushed by 651,473 votes against and only 14,008 in favour. In essence the NIFs sought to avoid a repetition of the problems of the 1917–23 period, when the vertiginous expansion of the largely autonomous local CNT unions created huge difficulties in coordinating mobilisations, placing in sharp relief the fragile chain of communication between local unions and the national committee. The supporters of the NIFs reasoned that as the CNT became embroiled in several unnecessary and unwinnable strikes, membership fell away and they therefore sought to combine the combativity of old within a new national union structure. The NIFs were also viewed by their supporters as the corporatist-revolutionary tool of tomorrow that would form the basis of post-capitalist society, a view that was later adopted by Diego Abad de Santillán.

Santander: It is my belief that this motion poses a very great threat to the organisation and its principles. What are the reasons, what are the fundamental motives advanced for the creation of the NIFs? Reasons of a Marxist type, such as the current stage of development of the bourgeois economy and the measure of economic growth. We are to organise great labour concentrations against the monopolies and cartels. But if Spain is more an agricultural than an industrial nation, why proceed with the creation of NIFs? Industrially, we are very backward. There is no industrial expansion in Spain, with the exception of the public service monopolies. Some industrial concerns have come together to form industrial consortia in defence of their common interests, but we have not reached the stage when a certain type of industrialist centralises or nationalises production. And, even if this form of capitalist concentration existed, should we, who have followed a line different from the Marxist conception and have applied our philosophy to all things, should we jettison our principles and back down simply because the bourgeois economy may be developing along these lines? I think not... The NIFs do not square with the principles which illuminate our doctrine, nor with those of the socialists, nor with those of the anarchists, so they cannot set the pattern for us to follow. In Spain, this necessity does not exist. Can anyone truly doubt that NIFs will lead towards a sort of national concentration? Because when we consider that once this organisation has been established and all industries are represented in one national centre, then we would have arrived at nationalisation. That would mean a bureaucracy worming its way into our organisation... The Confederation would give birth to a bureaucracy such as exists inside the UGT, or is to be found inside the German organisations and in England. Solidarity cannot be contrived. There is something more than professional and trade improvements represented in the doctrine which informs this organisation of ours and we have to be consistent and, if we truly identify with our principles, we must stand by them. In return for improvements, we must defend the cause, which is worth more.

The speech of José Alberola:<sup>17</sup>

I challenge the resolution on the grounds that even those favourably disposed towards it have mental reservations about it and recognise the dangers which it brings into its wake... There are two very clear-cut schools of thought: one places the stress on methodology and the other emphasises the individual. Those who advocate the NIFs do so because they have lost faith in the element of purpose, and trust only in the ticking-over of the machinery. And I hold that the machine does not create strength but rather consumes it; and, this being so, let us conjure into existence a mentality hostile to anything which implies the mechanisation of the individual. Capitalist society is run through monopolies and huge corporations, because it dances

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<sup>17</sup> Born in Huesca, this veteran *cenetista* became a prominent FAI activist and spent much of the inter-war years living in various places in Catalonia, establishing himself as a leading orator, rationalist schoolteacher and journalist. During the revolution, he returned to his native Aragón and served as Cultural Councillor in the Council of Aragón. He died in exile in Mexico.

to a hierarchical tune. Let us weave a mentality inimical to that trend. Now, are we then to sidestep the pressing requirements of the economic imperative? No. But we have to see to it that, in every organisation, it is the workers themselves who provide the driving force. There are industries which have been gobbled up by the centralisation of industry. Let me quote you the example of the footwear industry where the organisation is based upon the facts, figures and statistics to which the unions have access, so that, whenever some dispute arises, the requisite background data are to hand. But no apparatus is to be set up which might restrict the union's free hand in this area, because that would lead to the emergence of officialdom. The free commune is what we aim at. Destruction of capitalism's organisation is the name of the game. Let us defend the CNT. Let us work according to its basic precepts. Let us hang on to our ideal, which will, sooner or later, overwhelm this capitalist apparatus. Let us not accept anything which smacks of statism, for all statism has an inescapable tendency to turn into a *coup de force*.

Peirósaid:

... We must shrug off this " Marxist" label. If Marxism means the primacy of the economic in society and if we workers find ourselves, day in and day out, faced with an economic reality, we shall have to agree upon one of two things: either that Marxism is economic fact or that the economic reality is Marxism. But we always find ourselves confronted by an economic reality which will make us take steps to defend ourselves from capitalism. I am not now, nor have I ever been a Marxist. I am simply a man who, in reading his Marx, accepts the acceptable and repudiates that which needs to be repudiated. I must speak from practical experience rather than from theory. I know that capitalism is becoming more concentrated. I realise, I have said and I acknowledge that without some sort of organism capable of guaranteeing permanent respect for the confederal system, all will be lost for any authoritarian. And whereas this is to acknowledge a danger, we must recognise that danger in all the workings of men, the commune itself included. If the men who are to hold sway in it, because there are men who wield moral authority... if they turn out to be authoritarians, tyrants, well that's every bit as likely to happen in the NIFs as it is in the commune. Where one finds men, one finds imperfection and danger also. Concerning the one dissenting voice, we must, if we are to be consistent, of necessity concede that the trade or industrial union is the ultimate model or archetype.

Probing deeper we find that this centralisation or tendency towards centralisation is present there also. And we find that the national committee has to intervene on broader economic issues, and if such a workload be concentrated in the hands of one committee, that committee will need to set up some sort of bureaucratic machinery to handle such problems, and so we find ourselves running the same old risk.

Why be so absolute in prejudging things? It is very clearly stated in the terms of the proposition that our goal is the destruction of capitalism which is no local phenomenon but, on the contrary, is expanding both economically and industrially and operating at national levels. If the capitalists in a given industry band together to

defend themselves, not so much as individual industrialists but as a class, it needs to be asked whether the workers are not able to band together to form the united front against the bourgeoisie.

The answer to that is categorical, as is my own answer, and perhaps that is my sin. It is my belief that, more than anything else, this whole debate is quibbling over words. There is talk of danger and it has been insinuated that we who have framed the motion have ourselves expressed reservations about it. This is not so. The misgivings which might have been expressed regarding the NIFs have not been directed against the new model but against those who advocate this organisational model.<sup>18</sup> Then we find that, even after this has been repeatedly stated, there is still this dissenting voice which recognises the thing in principle...

A declaration. The structural schema does not take the NIFs as its basis. The structure remains the same as that which the Confederation has had hitherto. With an eye to yoking the NIF to it, a structural outline has been given, along with a reminder of the Confederation's structure. The only alteration being made to the Confederation concerns its internal workings, its internal activities, the [union] committee being beefed up internally so that it may properly cope with its mission to study all of life's problems, or anyway all those affecting the proletariat. If a five-man committee cannot get on with any work because its time is taken up with studying everything of interest to the workers, whether economic, moral or social, then this is the reason, the motive in which the structure of the committees — and not the structure of the organisms — has been amalgamated and changed.

The glassworkers<sup>19</sup> and we Spaniards in this line have had our NIF for thirty years now. There are comrades present here who can bear out what I say. When we agreed at the La Comedia Theatre on the need to abolish national trades federations, although the reasons for this were not adequately demonstrated, we glassworkers established a committee even though this meant dissolving a federation which congress acknowledged as a model federation, at least in terms of its adherence to federalist principles.

Let me say that in effect we did not disband our federation, for the committee carried on precisely and absolutely with all the work which the federal committee used to do. *De facto*, we still had our federation although, in order to fit in with the dictates of a congress, we stripped it of the name federation. When the third congress of the IWA resolved to recommend the switch to National Industrial Federations (NIFs), we took it that we were empowered to set the example and we took again the name of the National Glass Federation.

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<sup>18</sup> Although some anarchists, largely from outside Catalonia, supported the NIF project, most of its opponents damned this model from a perspective of anarchist doctrinal purity and the radical anarcho-syndicalist belief in federalism and autonomy. The fierce resistance of construction unions — emblematic of all unskilled proletarian sectors — can be at least partly explained by their limited bargaining resources and by the practical reason that their employment was seasonal and insecure — in these circumstances, flexible structures were an asset.

<sup>19</sup> Peiró's views on industrial organisation, which were far more suitable to workers in stable employment, are best understood in terms of his reasonably uninterrupted experience of work as a skilled glassworker from 1923 to 1939 in a Mataró cooperative which he helped form to provide work for the many glassworkers — himself included — who had been blacklisted by the Barcelona employers.

There are comrades who may say that now the committee of the National Glass Federation has the same officers and precisely the same functions as the old committee. That is the truth. It is clearly stipulated in the proposition that the committee of an NIF is a mere liaison committee, a simple agent with no more powers than those of a mandatory one. It is restricted to the technical and economic aspects of things and has no powers beyond those mandated by the federation's affiliated unions.

One specific and recent instance will demonstrate that the construction industry needs an industrial federation. In Barcelona there is a cement factory which, for all I know, may still be on strike. What I do know is that there were 800 workers isolated there in one plant, at loggerheads with the bourgeoisie. They went ahead with their strike and the workers, CNT members, came to the point where they had to present themselves before the regional labour office, something which we workers ought never to do, and it is I, who have been labelled reformist, saying this, somebody who has never, in thirty years of struggle, sought or tolerated the resolution of disputes in government agencies.

I am delighted to tell you that it proved impossible, for certain reasons, to arrive at a resolution. Instead the negotiations broke down. But since the employers needed some sort of solution to the dispute, they delegated the vice-president of the Association of Lime, Gypsum and Cement Manufacturers to hold talks with the *sindicato único* and to open negotiations and thrash out an immediate solution to the Vallcarca strike.<sup>20</sup> Once the dispute had been settled in so far as it related to the economic demands of the workers, the team from the union and the employers' panel were to continue their negotiations to resolve all matters of a moral nature, not only as they affected the factory where the strike took place, and not only the Barcelona plants, but all the plants in all four provinces of Catalonia.

The first question then was: who could speak for the workers? We had nobody to represent them. Neither the local federation nor the regional committee could act. But there was a further problem. The employers said to us: "We do not mind conceding to whatever demands the workforce may make, but on condition that manufacturers in the rest of Spain are brought into line also." To one of these gentlemen I said: "That will be a little more difficult, in the short term at least; there is no solution, but it may very well be that after a congress has been held and an NIF has emerged from it, there will then be an agency capable of resolving this question which concerns us all."

Let us accept for the moment that the employers, by agreement with the one big union, arrived at a solution to the matter in Catalonia, but that the workers were so demanding that the bosses were unable to accede to their demands because of the competition they faced from manufacturers elsewhere in Spain. Who then is empowered to speak on the workers' behalf? The CNT's committee? On what grounds? What is missing here is a body able to come up with a solution to this question.

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<sup>20</sup> At the Fradera cement factory, south of Barcelona, where all the workforce came out for wage rises in June 1931.



These are practical considerations. The resolution does not declare that trade unionism is the end. It does not say that, and I am concerned to establish that here. Let me say that production is not the goal of individual existence but, on the contrary, the goal of individual existence is to enjoy the fruits of production. The means by which production should be organised is unionism, as I see it. The end by which the individual may be in possession fully and intensely to enjoy the fruits of production and of all the nation's assets is not trade unionism, but anarchism.

Now, if, in this proposition which is reputed to be over-long, we were to have broached not merely the topic of unionism, but the topic of anarchism, then that motion would have been a lot more lengthy. But let this be understood: I am not one of those who believe that unionism is an end. Recently, in the press, I stated that unionism is a means and that anarchism is the end. And I don't think that Peiró is so lacking in wit as to go to the lengths of retracting today that which he said only 24 hours before.

The vote on the proposition regarding the NIFs produced the following results: in favour 302,343; in opposition 90,671; abstentions 10,957.<sup>21</sup>

There is little reason for us to be detained by the constructive work of the Conservatorio congress. Great as was the mayhem created by the issue of the new organisational structure, there was an even greater furore about 'The stance of the CNT *vis-à-vis* the convening of the Constituent Cortes and the schedule of political, juridical and economic demands to be presented to the same.'

The inclusion of this item in the agenda was regarded as tactless bordering upon insolence. The motion, whose preamble we reproduce below, fell into a series of fundamental contradictions. On the one hand, it was clearly given to be understood that the demands set out were addressed to a body with which the CNT could not do battle. Nonetheless, it was even asserted that 'the Constituent Cortes is the product of a revolutionary event, an event in which we were, directly or indirectly, implicated.' It then went on to allege that 'as a matter of principle, as a matter of a belief rooted in multifarious historical experiences, we expect nothing from the Constituent Cortes.'

Had these demands been framed as a CNT objective to be pursued by its traditional methods and had all mention of the body to which they were addressed been omitted (an amendment which the working party eventually had to accept and include in the last paragraph of their proposition), then all suspicions might have been averted and conflict circumvented. Obviously, in that case, the wording of the item would have had to be redrafted. But the working party pigheadedly sought to demonstrate that the resolution was in no way inconsistent with the Confederation's direct action tactics. And, to be sure, there is no hint in the proposition that it might be implemented through irregular procedures. But in that case, why the insistence upon addressing oneself to a body which was repudiated at the beginning and the end of the motion? This obstinacy in the error had, of necessity, to stoke the fires of mistrust produced by the debate upon the national committee's report.

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<sup>21</sup> Despite this, the accord was never implemented, because the radicals — who had opposed the NIFs from the outset — would soon rise to leadership positions in the CNT. Thus, by the July 1936 revolution only a few NIFs had been established, something that would not help the Confederation face the new challenges that lay ahead of it.

This is the preamble to the proposition (the italicisations are our own):

This working party was always aware that this topic would be perhaps the most thorny issue upon which to submit to congress a full-blooded resolution giving full expression to the thoughts of the Spanish proletariat which is anxious for self-emancipation. It is possible too that there may be those who think that the issue may be sidestepped by pronouncing that “deliberation is out of place”, claiming that because the problem of the Constituent Cortes is a political one, the CNT may not concern itself with it. Nonetheless, we recognise that the historic times in which we live ought to demand our attention. Our country’s eyes are focused upon the political and social question in Spain. *Clearly, the CNT possesses the necessary means and might with which to intervene on these issues. That is the very essence of our apoliticism and – it would be more correct to say – of our anti-parliamentarianism. The Constituent Cortes is the product of a revolutionary event, an event in which we were, directly or indirectly, implicated.* When we intervened in these events we looked beyond the Confederation, concerning ourselves instead with a people that was being held in a state of subjection, a people which had to be liberated, since our far-reaching and humane precepts aim at a country wherein it will be impossible for a single person to live as a slave. Our thoughts are with the people, a people which continues to be preyed on by political parties with no programme beyond their ambition and self-interest, an uneducated people, denied even the most elementary civic education to know where it is headed or for what end. We understood that the CNT cannot let this historic moment in which we live pass by in silence, *in which a political revolution has created a Constituent Cortes to draft a new constitutional charter.* Right away we state, as a matter of principle, as a matter of belief rooted in multifarious historical experiences, *we expect nothing from a Constituent Cortes which has been incubated in the very womb of capitalist society and which is ready to defend its hegemony in the political, juridical and economic domains.* That is where we stand.

But this phenomenon spawned by the political revolution has implications of consummate importance and gravity for the CNT. We refer to the separate identities which the various regions of Spain are claiming for themselves. These regions draft their statutes and, obviously, draft them according to the temperament and political circumstances of each region: Catalonia, by tradition, will have a liberal statute; the Basque Country, on the other hand, will have a reactionary one. The shadow of Carlism, which covered Spain in infamy with its terror, has to shine until the comrades there achieve for themselves the degree of consciousness already achieved by the Catalan people. Something similar will occur in Galicia where there may, perhaps, be an insipid statute, but where the spirit of reaction must predominate. The CNT has to stand up to this eminently political phenomenon. It would be suicidal not to take up the desire of the workers of the various regions to marshal the federalist urge of their peoples so that the liberties won by and for the people may be enjoyed by all; and to avert the shameful and painful circumstance that, though Galicians, Asturians, Basques or Andalusians may all be brothers, they may be forced,

on account of inferior levels of consciousness, to live in inferior political and economic circumstances. Our federalist principles are not a denial, but an affirmation of their universalist outlook: and *vis-à-vis* the regional statutes, they will reject anything which implies different living standards and freedoms for a Spanish proletariat whose aspirations and sentiments are as one. Since our postulates are founded upon mutual aid and, at every step, we speak of a sense of humanity summarised as “all for one, and one for all”, then, of necessity, we have a logical obligation to say to the people that while not neglecting those ethnic circumstances in each region which represent their soul and their feelings, politically, economically and juridically, their statutes must be perfectly comparable one with another, taking as their basis not that which encapsulates the reactionary mentality of backward peoples, but that which is illuminated by the broadest radical concepts...

Such, then, was the preamble to the motion, the ambiguous phrasing of which, riddled with mental reservations, is easily seen. Next we give the wording of the amendment, the product of the heated and very violent debate among the delegates:

*Against the Constituent Cortes.* We stand against the Constituent Cortes just as we stand against any authority which oppresses us. We are still openly at war with the state. Our sacred and lofty mission is to educate the people to understand the need to unite with us to secure our complete emancipation by means of the social revolution. Beyond that principle which is a living part of our very being, we have no fear in recognising that we have the ineluctable duty of indicating to the people a schedule of minimum demands which they should press by building up their own revolutionary strength.

The overall impression left by this congress was one of a CNT racked by internal crisis. It was not long before the hostilities began. The so-called manifesto of the ‘Treinta’ (Thirty), in spirit if not in letter, is tantamount to a declaration of war. As a result of the publication of that document the battle of words erupted, triggering a sequel of more or less informal resignations and dismissals of moderate elements. The FAI was deeply involved in this crusade and this triggered a violent backlash by reformist elements against the alleged ‘dictatorship of the FAI’. Sebastià

Clara,<sup>22</sup> Peiró, Agustín Gibanel<sup>23</sup> and Ricardo Fornells,<sup>24</sup> all of whom had signed the ‘*Treintista Manifiesto*’, and who were on the editorial board of *Solidaridad Obrera*, were not retained when their term of office expired. By an overwhelming majority, Felipe Alaíz was appointed director of the CNT’s daily mouthpiece. Some unions in Catalonia went to the extreme of expelling leading figures from the reformist tendency. Later on, this fate befell certain unions and local federations. Those dismissed or expelled were followed by others who had resigned or voluntarily dis-associated themselves from the CNT, and this in turn led to the creation of the so-called ‘opposition unions’.<sup>25</sup> Here is the celebrated manifesto of the ‘Treinta’, followed by the names of the thirty signatories:

To the comrades, to the unions, to everybody. A superficial analysis of the situation in which our country finds itself will lead us to declare that Spain is on the brink of an intense revolutionary explosion that will be accompanied by profound collective excitement. There is no denying the importance of the hour, nor the dangers implicit in this revolutionary period, because, whether we like it or not, the force of circumstance alone will ensure that we all suffer the consequences of the upheaval. The advent of the republic has opened a parenthesis in the normal history of our country. With the monarchy toppled, the king driven off his throne, the Republic proclaimed by the concerted efforts of those groups, parties, organisations and individuals which suffered attack during the dictatorship and during the period of repression under Martínez Anido and Arlegui, it will be readily appreciated that this whole succession of events has led us to a new situation, a state of affairs different from that of the preceding fifty years or more, from the Restoration onwards.

But if the aforementioned events were the mobilising factor which induced us to destroy one political situation and usher in a new era, what has come to pass since

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<sup>22</sup> An excellent orator and journalist, he lived in Paris during 1915–7, where he was secretary for the exiled Spanish anarchist groups. Deported from France, he returned to Catalonia, and became an active CNT organiser, developing close links to the Pestaña faction. Jailed by the dictatorship after 1923, he progressively distanced himself from revolutionary anarcho-sindicalist positions, arguing in favour of ‘neutral’ (i.e. ‘economistic’) trade unionism. A convert to republicanism in the 1930s, he wrote for Companys’s daily paper *La Humanitat* and was a key figure in the ERC’s ‘workerist’ wing and presided over the Statistical Bureau of the Generalitat Labour Department. Exiled in 1939, he returned to live in Francoist Barcelona in 1945.

<sup>23</sup> Born in Aragón, he emigrated with his family to Cuba when he was young. After returning to Spain and serving in the army, he went to work in France, where he met up with anarchist exiles and participated in several of the conspiracies against the dictatorship. After the birth of the Republic he worked in the construction industry and served on the editorial board of *Solidaridad Obrera*, while also working as local correspondent in Seville. An outspoken opponent of anarchist maximalism in the 1930s, he formed part of the oppositionist, moderate anarcho-sindicalist wing of the libertarian movement and edited the newspaper *Cultura Libertaria* until his death in February 1933 at the age of 37.

<sup>24</sup> Unlike most *cenetistas*, he benefited from a formal, even traditional, education and, along with Alfarache and Gibanel, he wrote the ‘*Treintista* manifesto’. One-time president of the Food Workers’ Union, he was expelled from the CNT for supporting the *treintista* line in November 1932 and later joined Pestaña’s Partido Sindicalista. Exiled after 1939, he returned to Spain in 1941, a decision that was of much propaganda value for the Franco dictatorship.

<sup>25</sup> Formed by the *treintistas* in the summer of 1933 in an attempt to overcome their political isolation at a time when their earlier strategy had clearly floundered on republican repression, the *Sindicatos de la Oposición de la CNT* laid claim to the traditions of the CNT. Also in 1933, the SS.OO formed the FSL (‘the FAI of the Treinta’), a political and cultural body loyal to the principles of revolutionary syndicalism. The main newspapers of the SS.OO were *Cultura Libertaria* and *Sindicalismo*, with print runs of 3,900 and 6,300 respectively.

has borne out our assertion that Spain is living in truly revolutionary times. With the path paved by the flight of the king and the expatriation of the whole gilded and “blue-blooded” rabble, capital has been exported on a huge scale and the impoverishment of the country has reached new levels. The flight of the plutocrats, bankers, financiers and the gentlemen stockholders has been followed by shameful and brazen speculation which has seen a staggering depreciation in the value of the peseta and a 50 per cent devaluation in the nation’s assets.

This assault upon economic interests, calculated to produce hunger and misery for the majority of Spaniards, has been followed up by the covert conspiracy of those dressed in cassocks and gowns, who ensure their victory by lighting one candle to god and another to the devil. The power to dominate, subjugate and live from the exploitation of a people which lives on its knees is given primacy over everything. The upshot of this criminal conspiracy is an immense blockage of public credits and the consequent collapse of all industries, leading to the most protracted crisis our country has ever known. Workshops are shutting down: factories are laying off workers; public works are coming to a standstill or are no longer launched; in commerce, there has been a fall in orders; there are no outlets for agricultural produce; workers spend weeks without finding work; countless industries have cut back to a two-to-three-day week. No more than 30 per cent of the workforce is putting in a full working week. The impoverishment of the country is already a *fait accompli*. In spite of all the misfortunes which have befallen the people, the government moves with lethargy and excessive legalism.

Though every one of the ministers owes his position to the revolution, they have reneged upon it by clinging to legality in the same way that a limpet clings to a rock and they show no sign of energy except when it comes to machine-gunning the people. In the name of the Republic and its defence, they use the full repressive apparatus of the state to shed the blood of workers every day.

Now it is no longer a case of this or that village, but in every village, where the Mausers<sup>26</sup> have cut short lusty young lives. Meanwhile, the government has done nothing, nor intends to do anything, in the economic sphere. It has not expropriated the great landowners, the true bogeys of the Spanish peasant; it has not reduced, by as much as one single centimo,<sup>27</sup> the profits of those who speculate against the public interest; all monopolies remain intact as before; nothing has been done to limit the abuses of those who exploit and grow fat on the hunger, pain and misery of the people. It has struck a contemplative pose when what was required was the crushing of privilege, the destruction of injustice and the prevention of infamous thefts.

How should we wonder, then, at what has happened? On the one hand, superciliousness, speculation, tinkering with public affairs and with collective values, with that which belongs to the common person, with society’s values. On the other hand,

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<sup>26</sup> The 1896 Mauser rifle was the standard weapon of the Civil Guard.

<sup>27</sup> A hundredth part of a peseta.

leniency, tolerance shown to oppressors and exploiters who victimise the people, while the people are imprisoned, persecuted, threatened and exterminated.

And, while all this is going on, down below people are suffering, experiencing hunger and misery as the government trifles with the revolution made by the people themselves. Those who achieved positions in public office and the judiciary through the patronage of the king or the influence of his ministers are still ensconced in the bureaucracy, from where they can betray the revolution. This state of affairs, which has already led to the destruction of one regime, demonstrates that the continuation of the revolution is both inevitable and a necessity. Everyone is aware of this, from the ministers, who recognise the collapse of the economic system, to the press, which records the dissatisfaction of a people in revolt due to the offences perpetrated against them. So everything then seems to confirm the need for imminent action to save the country by saving the revolution.

An interpretation. The current situation is one of deep collective tragedy. The will of the people is to shrug off the grief which torments and kills it. There is but one option: revolution. How are we to go about it? History tells us that revolutions have always been the work of audacious minorities who have exhorted the people against the authorities. Is it enough for these minorities to rely on will-power and conspiracies to cause the destruction of the existing order and its repressive forces? Let us see. Impelled by their most aggressive elements, these minorities seek to take advantage of the element of surprise to confront the security forces and spark the violent clash that will lead us to revolution. All that is required to begin with is a little rudimentary training and a few street fighters. They entrust the success of the revolution to the bravery of a handful of individuals and to the intervention of the masses who might follow their example and rush to their assistance once they take to the streets.<sup>28</sup> There is no need to prepare anything nor to rely on anyone. All that is required is to take the streets in order to rout the enemy: the state. There is no consideration of the formidable means of defence at its disposal nor of the difficulty in destroying its resources, its economy, its courts, nor of the moral sway it holds over those who have not been smashed by its thievery and vileness, by the immorality and incompetence of its leaders and by the undermining of its institutions. Until this has been achieved, it is a waste of time to think that the state can be destroyed; it also means ignoring history and human psychology itself.

This ignorance is very much in evidence just now. There is also ignorance of revolutionary morality itself. Everything is entrusted to chance, everything awaits the unexpected miracle of holy revolution as though the revolution was some sort of panacea and not a tragic, cruel event that forges men through bodily suffering and mental anguish. It is a huge paradox that this purely demagogic concept of revolution, which has been peddled over the decades by all the political parties who have tried, often unsuccessfully, to storm the citadels of power, should earn advocates in our ranks. Nevertheless, it has reasserted itself among certain groups of militants

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<sup>28</sup> The description of the radicals as 'anarcho-bolsheviks' was not unfounded — they believed in the seizure of power and that the determined action of a small minority would arouse the majority from their slumber and unleash a profound insurrection against the state.

who fail to realise their descent into all the vices of political demagogy, vices which would induce us to hand over any successful revolution to the first political party to come along, or even to become the government ourselves, taking power and governing as if we were just another political party. Should we, must we, submit ourselves and the CNT to this disastrous concept of revolution that is merely the revolutionary gesture?

Our interpretation. In opposition to this simplistic, classical and some-what cinematic concept of the revolution, which is likely to lead to republican fascism, we juxtapose another strategy, a truly practical and comprehensible road, which will take us ineluctably to our ultimate objective.

The latter concept requires us not only to prepare for combat in the streets but also to prepare morally, for it is here where we must be strongest, most indestructible and most difficult to vanquish. The revolution is not the exclusive work of audacious minorities. It is an ongoing process, the outcome of the people *en masse*, of the working class marching towards its ultimate liberation, of the unions and the Confederation determining the rhythm, nature and date of the revolution. This is not to suggest that the revolution is merely a question of order or method, but there must be preparation before the revolution as well as sufficient scope for individual initiative, for an input from individuals. Against this chaotic, incoherent concept of revolution, we stand for an orderly, conscious and coherent model. The former is to play at riot, ambush, revolution; in practice it will achieve nothing but delay the real revolution.

So the difference is very considerable. A moment's deliberation will reveal the advantages of one approach or the other. Let each person decide which of the two interpretations to make their own.

Last words. It will be readily understood by anyone who reads this that we have not written and signed this manifesto for pleasure's sake, nor out of any whimsical desire to have our names feature at the bottom of a text which is of a doctrinal and public nature. Our attitude is unwavering: we have espoused a course which we deem necessary in the interests of the Confederation and which is reflected in the second of the revolutionary interpretations set out above.

We are most certainly revolutionaries, but we are not cultivating the myth of revolution. We seek an end to capitalism and the state, be it red, white or black, not so we may erect a new tyranny in its place, but so that the economic revolution of the working class can thwart the reintroduction of all power, whatever its persuasion. We desire a revolution born from the most profound feelings of people, as it is taking shape today. We do not want a revolution that is offered to us, perpetrated by a handful of individuals who, were they to succeed, would, however they label it, inevitably convert themselves into dictators on the morrow of their triumph. But we seek and desire the success of the revolution. Is this what the bulk of the organisation's membership also desires? This is something worth exploring, something that needs immediate clarification. The Confederation is a revolutionary organisation. It does not hanker for ambush or riot, nor is it guided by a cult of violence for its own sake or of revolution for revolution's sake. This being the case, we address ourselves

to all members, to remind them that these are grave times and we remind each of them of the responsibility they assume through their action or inaction. If today, tomorrow, the day after, or whenever, they are urged to participate in a revolutionary revolt, let them not forget that they have obligations towards the CNT, an organisation which has a right to be its own master, to monitor its own movements, act upon its own initiative and determine its own fate. And, let them not forget that the Confederation possesses its own identity and that it alone must decide how, when, and in what circumstances, it should act.

Let all be alive to the responsibilities imposed by the extraordinary times in which we live. Let them not forget that just as the act of revolution may bring success, so too in the event of failure one should go under with dignity. Let it also be remembered that any reckless attempt at revolution may lead to reaction and to the triumph of the demagogues. Let each of them now adopt whatever stance they deem most appropriate. Ours you already know. Steadfast in our purpose, we shall always and everywhere defend our position, even though we may be outnumbered by others of a different persuasion.<sup>29</sup>

Signed Joan López,<sup>30</sup> Agustín Gibanel, Ricardo Fornells, Josep Girona, Daniel Navarro, Jesús Rodríguez, Antonio Vallabriga, Ángel Pestaña, Miguel Portolés, Joaquim Roura, Joaquín Lorente, Progreso Alfarache, Antonio Peñarroya, Camil Piñón,<sup>31</sup> Joaquín Cortés,<sup>32</sup> Isidoro Gabín, Pere Massoni, Francesc Arín, Josep Cristià, Juan Dinarés, Roldán Cortada,<sup>33</sup> Sebastià Clara, Joan Peiró, Ramón Viñas, Federico Uleda, Pere Cané, Marià Prat, Espartaco Puig, Narcís Marcó, Genaro Minguet.

Barcelona, August 1931.

Meanwhile the central state authorities and those of the autonomous state of Catalonia were venting their spleen upon the CNT's Catalan sections. On 18 September 1931 the newspaper *El*

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<sup>29</sup> The signatories represented a huge range of opinion: some were trade unionists implacably opposed to the FAI and to anarchism, whereas others, such as Peiró, were FAI members. Although some of the signatories, such as Clara, later gravitated towards republican-reformist positions, the manifesto can be seen as a programme for a disciplined revolutionary syndicalist movement. What united the signatories was their exaggeration of the scale of freedom that the new republic would provide for the organised working class.

<sup>30</sup> A Murcian immigrant who arrived in Barcelona in 1911 to find work as a construction worker. An energetic *cenetista*, he spent six years in jail because of his union activities during 1920–6, before joining Pestaña's 'Solidaridad' group and editing the anarcho-syndicalist weekly *Acción* during 1930–1. A *treintista*, after the split in the CNT in 1931–2, he devoted himself to the opposition press, editing *Sindicalismo*. Probably the most important SS.OO organiser, he rejoined the CNT in spring 1936 and established *Fragua Social* in July, a Valencia-based anarcho-syndicalist daily. From November 1936 to May 1937 he served as Minister of Commerce in Largo Caballero's government.

<sup>31</sup> Born in Barcelona, he was a CNT action group member in the 1920s.

<sup>32</sup> Born in Jaén, Andalusia, he moved to Barcelona and in 1919 joined the Los Solidarios group. Exiled during the dictatorship in Paris and South America, he was deported from Argentina on account of his anarcho-syndicalist activities and returned to Barcelona in 1931, by which time he had adopted more moderate positions. An active member of the Barcelona CNT Textile Workers' Union, his sympathy for the *treintistas* led to his expulsion from the CNT in March 1933.

<sup>33</sup> Formerly a member of Pestaña's 'Solidaridad' group, he was representative of a minority trend within the *treintistas* that was based largely in the Sabadell unions and which did not return to the CNT in 1936, joining instead the UGT and becoming a leading figure in the PSUC. His assassination in April 1937 was an important factor in the growing tension before the 'May Days'.



*Luchador* carried an article by Federica Montseny<sup>34</sup> about the tragic political convulsions and those in the Confederation. Under the headline ‘The internal and external crisis of the Confederation’ (*La crisis interna y externa de la Confederación*), Montseny wrote:

Since my article “A circular and its consequences” [*Una circular y sus consecuencias*], there has been a series of developments. For one thing, the manifesto produced by a group of militants whom the bourgeois press, Macià and Companys have described as the “level-headed portion of the Confederation”. Secondly, the strike in Barcelona sparked by the unspeakable attitude of Maura’s lapdog, Civil Governor Oriol Anguera de Sojo,<sup>35</sup> towards the prisoners. Thirdly, an editorial in *Solidaridad Obrera*, a historic document that will some day bring a blush to the author’s cheeks, assuming he retains a final modicum of manliness and sense of shame. Such are the new developments in the modest term of ten or twelve days, an avalanche of events, an indication of the intensity of current times.

The immediate consequence of all this has been the instigation of violent repression targeting everyone of note in the FAI and the beginning of a crisis of dismemberment of the Confederation, a crisis in its ranks. Undoubtedly, there will be attempts to blame this crisis on the anarchists, those famed “extremists” of half-baked cliché, when really it is the political conduct of the Barcelona [union] leaders and their attitude towards the CNT’s anarchist opinion that are responsible. Such are the internal developments, the facts as we see them. Let us not speak of those same facts as viewed by the authorities, the bourgeoisie and public opinion generally, which welcome and applaud the eruption of conflict between right and left in the CNT; the conflict between those who would turn the Confederation into an appendage of the Generalitat and the ERC and those who stand for the libertarian spirit within the Confederation, who are not the FAI, political gentlemen or union careerists. Let’s focus on the view of the “real Confederation”, the one which spoke out at the Madrid congress and which speaks through the mouths of all the delegates from the provinces, villages and unions; the authentic Confederation, the Confederation of the workers who work, of men who believe, feel, struggle and make sacrifices, who die when the need arises and who live by neither liberalism nor by trade union careerism.

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<sup>34</sup> The daughter of Joan Montseny (‘Federico Urales’), at 18 she was editor of the fortnightly journal *La Revista Blanca*, the foremost anarchist publication in Spain. A prolific writer — she published at least one article in every edition of the magazine between 1923 and 1936 — she also wrote many novels. A fierce critic of the ‘Treinta’, she was the main polemicist for radical anarchist positions before the civil war. Despite her Kropotkinite convictions, she supported a vote for the leftist Popular Front alliance in the February 1936 elections and, in November 1936, became the first woman minister in Spanish political history, accepting the portfolio for Public Health in Largo Caballero’s cabinet. She was ousted from government after the ‘May Days’ of 1937 and was forced into exile in 1939, where she became one of the leading figures in the CNT in France.

<sup>35</sup> A violently anti-CNT, anti-Catalan, Catholic jurist and President of the Catalan judiciary in 1931, he was Barcelona civil governor from August to December 1931, during which time his aggressive stance on labour conflicts and social struggles did much to shatter the hopes that the grassroots of the CNT had invested in the Second Republic. He later joined the anti-republican CEDA and served as Minister of Labour from October 1934 to April 1935, when he unleashed a resolute attack on working-class positions.

This internal crisis comes at a grave and perilous time when union and unity of action are required. Divisive crises have twice before neutralised the work of the proletariat and left us defenceless and at the mercy of the public authorities and communist rabble-rousers. We have seen this internal crisis coming for some time, this process of decomposition, this slip into the political trap by an over-powerful labour movement, too big for it not to go to the heads of those who led at that moment, just as we foresaw the series of consequences triggered by the national committee's decision to abort the Barcelona general strike. The incidents in Barcelona, the murders at police headquarters,<sup>36</sup> the intransigence displayed by the civil governor upon discovering that only part of the proletariat was ready to protest, all created ample scope for a pro-capitalist, republican repression, personified in the despotic figure of the dictator-to-be, Maura. This, coming after the tragedy of Andalusia and the repression of the Andalusian peasantry,<sup>37</sup> something which has drawn no protest or show of solidarity from the rest of Spain, puts paid to all opposition and any hesitation from a government which is confident that it faces no adversary worthy of consideration.

Lastly, the commitments established between Macià and the trade union leaders before the approval of home rule in Catalonia do nothing but prescribe our vision: Catalan autonomy will be accompanied by a tolerant social policy in alliance with the "good chaps" [*buenos chicos*] of the CNT and the "turning of the screw" (Company's phrase) on the FAI and the celebrated "extremists", a label reserved for all those who stand in the way of the Confederation becoming the Barcelona version of what the UGT is in Madrid. Thereafter, once its catalanised overhauled national committee has been installed here, the CNT will, in liaison with the Generalitat and central government, ignore the rest of Spain, just as the strikes in Seville and Zaragoza have already been ignored, strikes which, incidentally, were pursued with greater honour and intelligence than the recent strike in Barcelona.<sup>38</sup>

Under these conditions, the Spanish proletariat will be divided, fragmented and rendered incapable of any concerted action, while it will be bled dry of its active elements thanks to the persecution launched against the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, thereby leaving it readily dominated and manipulated by the

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<sup>36</sup> The security forces attempted to storm the premises of the Barcelona Construction Union, located in carrer de Mercaders, in downtown Barcelona. The workers turned the premises into a fortress. The siege lasted several hours and fierce gunfire was exchanged between the occupants and the police. At the eleventh hour, the defenders made it known to the civilian authorities that they would give themselves up to the army. This they did, surrendering to a picket of troops commanded by Captain Medrano. However, the arrested individuals were taken to police headquarters, in front of which building they were machine-gunned by Assault Guards. (Note by the author.)

<sup>37</sup> Concerned with the astounding expansion of the CNT during the 'hot' summer of protest in 1931, Maura was obsessed with mobilisations and strike plans which might culminate in a revolutionary general strike. More often than not, these 'plots' did not exist beyond the authoritarian imagination of the interior minister. These suspicions culminated in Maura's claims that Doctor Pedro Vallina, an anarchist physician, was planning a revolutionary general strike, a 'plot' which, of course, provided a suitable cover for the repression of the burgeoning Andalusian labour movement.

<sup>38</sup> A reference to radical anxieties that Catalan republicans would reach an accord with moderate anarchosyndicalists to make the CNT into a reformist, Catalan union. This fear of Catalanisation prompted the CNT national committee to move to Zaragoza, where anarchist circles were unpolluted by the national question.

dog-trainers of the Interior Ministry. Every union plenum will be a public scandal; every strike, a painful spectacle of indescribable cowardice; every new day will bring some fresh disgrace and some new governmental iniquity. The consolidation of the Republic? The Republic, brazenly at the service of the bourgeoisie! The Republic moved by the deadening hand which rules through every minister and the whole free-loading parliament! The Republic, social democracy lord and master of Spain at last, and, as I said in my first article after 14 April (1931), Iberia's social and political evolution frozen for a considerable number of years! And right here, in the oasis established under the autonomy statute, in the paradise Macià promised us in good faith (assuming of course that he is capable of good faith), there will be a Confederation which will have been turned into a "helping hand" of the Consell de Cent in Catalonia,<sup>39</sup> a domesticated, governmentalised Confederation, with an olive branch policy of "harmony" between capital and labour; a labourite confederation in the English mould, a Barcelona-fabricated trade union democracy for world-wide export, for the use of humanitarian governments and the shoring up of worm-eaten bourgeois orders.

As for the FAI, the ghastly, fearsome FAI – it, in the opinion of this motley crew of ambitious imbeciles, is formed of two men who, whatever their qualities, at least possess no cowardice; yet it is the same FAI which the asses from *Mirador*,<sup>40</sup> oh citizens and people of Iberia, would have us believe to be mythological monster, a minotaur or a dragon against which no Theseus<sup>41</sup> and no Saint George<sup>42</sup> may avail. Our enemies will see to it that the screws will be turned, ensuring that the handle will be turned little by little by everyone from Maura and Companys through to the latest apprentice in the editorial office of *Solidaridad Obrera*, not forgetting the ineffable Lluhi i Vallescà and poor Mr Macià...<sup>43</sup>

18 January 1932 saw the eruption of an insurrection in the mining district of Alt Llobregat and Cardener. It was mounted by the CNT miners of Figols and Sallent. The revolutionaries abolished private property and money and introduced libertarian communism.<sup>44</sup> The central government, which had labelled CNT members as 'card-carrying bandits', crushed the revolt after five days. The repression extended into the whole of Catalonia, Levante and Andalusia. Hundreds of prisoners entered the holds of ships which were to transport them into exile. On 10 February the

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<sup>39</sup> Literally translated as the Council of the One Hundred, this is a reference to the medieval Catalan parliament (Generalitat), which was revived in 1931.

<sup>40</sup> A Catalan republican newspaper.

<sup>41</sup> A legendary hero-king of Athens responsible for slaying the Minotaur.

<sup>42</sup> Sant Jordi, the patron saint of Catalonia.

<sup>43</sup> Interestingly, *El Luchador*, the radical weekly paper owned by Montseny's father, had, until recently, displayed great illusions in Macià and the ERC (14 August 1931).

<sup>44</sup> The rising began in Figols, where miners disarmed members of the security forces, raised the CNT flag over official buildings and declared the arrival of the classless society. The movement then spread swiftly across the worker-colonies of Alt Llobregat, spurred on by starvation wages and the legacy of boss intransigence in a series of recent industrial conflicts. Despite this, there was no violence or bloodshed. When the army arrived to quell the rising, the insurgents surrendered after receiving assurances that their lives would be respected.

transatlantic liner *Buenos Aires* steamed out of Barcelona, bound for Spanish West Africa.<sup>45</sup> The deportees included Buenaventura Durruti<sup>46</sup> and Francisco Ascaso.<sup>47</sup> As the *Buenos Aires* prepared to cast off, Ascaso penned the following lines of farewell:

Dear friends: It seems that they have begun to blow the dust off the compass. We are to leave. A word pregnant with so much meaning. To leave, according to the poet, is to die a little. But for those of us who are not poets, departure has always been a symbol of life. Constantly on the move, on a perennial trek like the timeless, stateless Jews fleeing a society in which we cannot find the atmosphere conducive to life. For us, members of an exploited class, as yet without its place in the world, the trek has always been a symptom of vitality. What matter if we depart, when we know that we linger here in the souls and minds of our comrades? Anyway, it is not us they are trying to banish, but our ideas; and we may go away, but the ideas remain: they will draw us back again, and they will give us the strength to leave.

Poor bourgeoisie, which has to resort to such procedures merely to survive! It does not surprise us. It is locked in a contest with us and it is natural that it should defend itself. Let it torture, let it banish, let it murder. Nobody dies without experiencing death throes. Beasts and humans are alike in this. It is lamentable that the throes may claim victims, especially when those who succumb are comrades. But the law is ineluctable and we must accept it. May its agony be brief. Nothing can contain our joy when our thoughts turn to it, because we know that our sufferings spell the beginning of the end. Something is decaying and in the throes of death. Its death is our life, our liberation. That sort of suffering is no suffering at all. It is to live, instead,

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<sup>45</sup> While this measure was 'legal' in so far as the *Ley de defensa de la república* allowed for the deportation and internal exile of 'enemies' of the republic, many of those who were deported did not participate in the rising in any way. This highlighted the determination of the authorities to decapitate an increasingly radicalised labour movement and tilt the power struggle with the CNT in favour of the moderates.

<sup>46</sup> Son of a railwayman, he started work at 14 and joined the UGT. Active in the 1917 general strike, he was blacklisted and expelled from UGT for using direct action. Exiled in France, he became an anarchist and returned to Barcelona, where he formed the famous 'Los Solidarios' group, which entered the violent arena of post-World-War-One labour relations in Barcelona to resist the union-busting objectives of the employers and right-wing gunmen. Allegedly involved in numerous high-profile assassinations, he went into exile in 1923 and was detained in France for planning to assassinate King Alfonso XIII during a visit to Paris. Freed after an international campaign, he travelled to South America, before returning to Barcelona in 1931 and becoming active in the Barcelona Textile Union. A key figure in the opposition to the "*Treintista manifesto*", he pursued an insurrectionary line towards the republic and became identified with the radical anarchist position during the 1930s. Deported after the January 1932 insurrection (despite not participating in the events), he was, however, a key organiser of the December 1933 uprising. Active in the workers' resistance to the military rising in Barcelona in July 1936, he led the first union militia columns in the attempt to liberate Zaragoza. In the winter of 1936 he led militia forces to defend Madrid, then under severe threat from the Francoists, and lost his life defending the Spanish capital.

<sup>47</sup> Born in Aragón, where he was very active in anarchist activities, both cultural and armed, he moved to Barcelona in the early 1920s where he met Durruti, becoming his close friend and comrade in both the 'Los Solidarios' and 'Nosotros' groups. Along with Durruti and García Oliver, he was one of the celebrated 'Three Musketeers of Spanish Anarchism' and was regarded by many as the most intelligent of the triumvirate. They accompanied one another on their travels in exile in the 1920s before returning to Barcelona in 1931, when he became highly involved in the local CNT. Deported with Durruti after the Alt Llobregat uprising, he returned to become secretary of the Catalan CNT in late 1933. A fierce opponent of any accord with the UGT, he was forced to resign from his position in the Catalan CNT after issuing a note ordering a return to work following the October 1934 revolution. He was killed during the assault on the Atarazanas barracks on 20 July 1936.

a long-cherished dream; it is to be present at the materialisation and growth of an idea which has nourished our spirit and filled the emptiness of our lives.

Leaving, then, is living! That is why our greeting must be, not farewell but merely see you soon! Francisco Ascaso.<sup>48</sup>

The deportations sparked a welter of general strikes throughout Spain. The agitation centred upon the whole of the Mediterranean coastal area and some cities and villages in the hinterland.

On 14 February, the anarchist groups from Terrasa, an industrial town near Barcelona, held a meeting at which they resolved to declare a revolutionary general strike to protest at the deportations. On the night of 15–16 February, these groups, armed with handguns, hunting pieces and grenades, seized the strategic points in the city. Their first step was to lay siege to the Civil Guard barracks, where 160 men were billeted under the command of a lieutenant. Another group seized the town hall and raised the red-and-black flag. At 8 am on 16 February police reinforcements arrived from Sabadell. From that point on the fighting spread, the town hall becoming a stronghold of the revolutionaries. When ordered to surrender, they answered that they would surrender only to army personnel, which they did to a company of troops at 11 am.

In the trial which followed these incidents, the following militants were indicted: Ramón Casarramona, Antonio and José Olivares, Fernando Restoy, Manuel Rico, Tomás Solans, Miguel Hernández, Diego Navarro, Pau Castells, Benito Cadena, Francisco Galán, Joan Blanes, Delfin Badía, Lluís Fortet, Fidel Lechón, Ramón Folch, Ramón Soler, Lorenzo Tapiolas, Josep Rimbau, Josep Puig, Daniel Sánchez and 20 other comrades, including Julián Abad, who was arrested three months later.

The sentences handed down were as follows: to 4 comrades, twenty years and a day; to 6 comrades, six years and a day; 2 comrades were found not guilty; 4 had the charges dropped during the trial and the rest got twelve years and a day.

On the eve of the revolutionary insurrection of 8 December 1933 there was a great escape from Barcelona's Model Prison. Of the 58 inmates who managed to reach the streets, 12 belonged to the Terrasa group. Some of them were recaptured. Not until after the elections of February 1936 would these prisoners be freed once and for all. Following an agreement at a national plenum of CNT regional committees, a nationwide protest revolt was declared on 29 May 1932. The government slapped an official ban on the campaign but, unexpectedly, the protest was made. In Seville several detainees were gunned down in daylight in the middle of the Maria Luisa park in the *ley de fugas* ploy. Also in Seville, artillery had been used to demolish the CNT premises known as the Cornelio House.<sup>49</sup> Massacres such as Arnedo, Epila and Castilblanco<sup>50</sup> continued, thanks to the barbarous role of the Civil Guard ('the soul of Spain', to use the words of the director-general of that accursed corps, General Sanjurjo).

Early in the morning of 10 August 1932 a right-wing revolt against the government began in Madrid, with an attempt to storm the Ministry of War and the Palace of Communications.

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<sup>48</sup> Published in *El Luchador* around the time of the deportations.

<sup>49</sup> This occurred on 23 July 1931.

<sup>50</sup> These bloody confrontations were 'spontaneous' clashes between the security forces and the despairing masses of rural Spain; it is worthy of note that, where the participants were organised, they were members of the UGT agrarian workers' union, a point which highlights the enormous difficulties experienced by the socialists when it came to controlling their base.

From the outset, the government was in control of the situation. Almost simultaneously, Sanjurjo, erstwhile director of the Civil Guard and now director of the Corps of Carabineers, rose against the government in Seville, where he gained the upper hand. Faced with either the apathy or the downright collusion of the authorities with the rebels in Seville, the CNT went into action and mobilised the populace, despite the state of war declared by the renegades.<sup>51</sup> Anarchist groups stormed and set ablaze the lairs of the aristocracy, such as the Commercial Club, the New Casino and the Farmers' Centre. The rebels were taken prisoner. One of the manifestos issued by the Seville CNT at this time read:

Soldiers! Workers! Peasants! We have been caught unawares by a criminal attack of the most sinister and reactionary segment of the autocratic military caste which seeks to return Spain to the dark days of the dictatorship, when thought and the freedoms of the people were shackled and all manner of crimes perpetrated. The import and gravity of such events cannot go without comment. The only answer to this vile provocation is the revolutionary general strike and civil war in the streets and fields.

Let each home be a fortress, each rooftop a heroic bastion for civil liberties against this military coup.

Soldiers: Your rifles must not stand in the way of the will of the revolutionary tribunal which, in these moments, is the supreme authority. You must obey the word of the people!

Seize your weapons! Enter into permanent sedition and with one titanic effort destroy the military satraps!

Be bold and rout this reactionary caste of criminals. Defy the murderous Bourbon generals!

Workers! Soldiers! Rise together to do battle in the streets. The CNT summons you to the fray.

Long live the social war! Rebellion!

The revolutionary committee.<sup>52</sup>

The installation in Catalonia of an autonomous regime further complicated the social situation in that region. From the earliest days, the Catalan government was characterised by an exorbitant nationalism. The former colleagues of Layret and Seguí, the likes of Companys (a one-time legal counsel to the CNT), Martí Barrera (a one-time administrator of *Solidaridad Obrera*) and Jaume Aiguader (a one-time workers' doctor), leaders of the young party which formed the regional government, could not tolerate the coexistence of two powers in Catalonia: their ERC and the

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<sup>51</sup> This resolute and unanimous strike action effectively isolated the anti-republican conspirators and helped stabilise democracy. The important local PCE also moved against Sanjurjo, with its call for the 'revolutionary defence of the republic', a stance that was at variance with the radical, ultra-leftist 'Third Period' politics of the Comintern, which invited communist parties to focus their attack on the liberal and social-democratic defenders of capitalism. Consequently, the PCE leadership was found guilty of 'collaborationism' and of allying with 'social-fascists' and 'anarcho-fascists' in defence of bourgeois democracy and duly purged.

<sup>52</sup> From Alexandre Gilibert, *La CNT, la FAI y la revolución española*, Barcelona 1932.

might of the CNT. Josep Dencàs,<sup>53</sup> Miquel Badia<sup>54</sup> and Anguera de Sojo, instruments of Catalan policy and executors of the schemes of Maura ('he of the 108 deaths')<sup>55</sup>, tried to crush the CNT by systematically closing its unions, suspending its newspapers, using the device of *detenció gubernativa* (internment without trial)<sup>56</sup> and the terroristic policy of the police and the *escamots* (squads).<sup>57</sup> The *casals* (centres) of the ERC, the ruling Catalan republican party, were turned into clandestine dungeons where CNT workers were held and beaten. Therein lies the origin of the revolutionary uprising of 8 January 1933.

In Barcelona, the signal for the fighting was the detonation of two very powerful bombs planted underneath the central police headquarters.<sup>58</sup> The arrest of the leading lights of the revolt in its initial stages curtailed the extent of the fighting in Barcelona to isolated sniping in the Rambla (for instance, Joaquín Blanco's death at the Catering Union offices) and outside some barracks and gunfights in some of the working class districts. In Lleida an attempt was made to storm the La Panera barracks and in that operation the CNT members Burillo, Gou, Oncinas and Gesio perished. There was shooting in Terrasa as well. Libertarian communism was proclaimed in Cerdanyola-Ripollet.

The revolutionary uprising of 8 January was organised by the defence squads (*cuadros de defensa*), a spearhead body formed by action groups from the CNT and the FAI. Short of weapons, these groups banked upon the intervention of sections of the garrison which were loyal to their cause and upon the spread of the contagion to the people at large. A general strike had been entrusted to the CNT Railway Workers' Union, although they were a minority alongside the UGT's National Union of Railwaymen and the strike never even got under way. The publicity given to the planned railway strike in the very columns of the CNT daily alerted Manuel Azaña<sup>59</sup> and his

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<sup>53</sup> A former member of the Lliga who was radicalised by the experience of dictatorship, he switched from nationalism to separatism. Elected deputy to the Madrid parliament in June 1931 and to the Catalan parliament in 1932, he became Generalitat health and social security minister in January 1933. As relations deteriorated between the Generalitat and the CNT, he represented the fascist wing of Catalan nationalism and led Joventuts d'ERC-Estat Català, a radical separatist youth movement. As Generalitat interior minister in 1934, he converted the *escamots* (squads) into a parallel police force that excelled in repressing the CNT. Forced into exile by the CNT after the 1936 revolution, he surfaced in Mussolini's Italy.

<sup>54</sup> The son of peasants, he was a militant Catalan separatist who was jailed for his involvement in the 1925 Garraf plot, an attempt to blow up Alfonso XIII's train. During the republic he was Dencàs's main lieutenant and leader of the paramilitary *escamots*. Barcelona chief of police in 1934, he implemented a fierce assault on the CNT. He, along with his brother, was assassinated by a FAI action group in April 1936.

<sup>55</sup> A reference to the number of people killed by the security forces during Maura's six-month spell in office.

<sup>56</sup> This old monarchist practice – against which the republicans had long inveighed – was reintroduced to curb the rising social protest and labour conflictivity in Barcelona following the arrival of Carles Esplà as civil governor in the city in June 1931.

<sup>57</sup> This violently xenophobic Catalan militia group vented its fury against the CNT and the FAI, which it perceived as organisations made up of non-Catalan immigrants, even though the leading figures of both groups including a large number of Catalans.

<sup>58</sup> Had this bomb attack been successful it would have probably killed several leading CNT and FAI activists – including García Oliver – who were being held at this time in the basement cells of the police station.

<sup>59</sup> A leading Spanish intellectual – he obtained a doctorate in law from Madrid University at the age of 20 – who wrote a major scholarly work on the history of the Spanish military. A key figure within Acción Republicana and the anti-monarchist San Sebastián pact 1930, he was minister of war in the first republican-socialist government and was hailed as his supporters as 'the revelation of the Republic'. Premier from December 1931 until September 1933, in the course of the enquiry into the Casas Viejas events he was cleared of responsibility for the massacre but he was forever despised by anarchists and his political credibility was damaged – his party won only five seats in December 1933 elections. He then formed Izquierda Republicana with other republican factions and was jailed after

government. This time the barracks failed to open their gates to the importuning of the revolutionaries. The populace showed itself indifferent or had great reservations about welcoming the revolt.

In the Levante region, the effect of the rising was felt in Ribarroja, Bétira, Pedraba and Bugarra. In all of these villages what occurred may be broken down into the following five phases:

**Phase one.** At the agreed hour, the conspirators entered the homes of 'law-abiding' citizens likely to possess weapons. These weapons were seized and the rebels then took to the streets, exhorting the people to revolt. No blood was spilled. Citizens were set free once they had been disarmed. The social revolution abhors reprisals and imprisonment. The terrified populace stayed neutral. The mayor surrendered the keys to the town hall.

**Phase two.** With the meagre supply of weapons accumulated, siege was laid to the Civil Guard post. The mayor himself conveyed the order to surrender to the guards, who either fled or put up resistance. In the event of the latter, the battle commenced.

**Phase three.** From the town hall, now turned into a free commune, the revolutionaries proclaimed libertarian communism. The red-and-black flag was hoisted. Property records were burned in the square, before the eyes of curious onlookers. A proclamation or order was made public, announcing that money, private property and exploitative social relations have been abolished.

**Phase four.** Reinforcements of guards or police arrived. The rebels offered some resistance until they realised that the revolt had not extended to the whole of Spain and that they stood isolated in their magnificent undertaking.

**Phase five.** A disorderly withdrawal in the direction of the mountains was followed by a man-hunt mounted by the forces of repression. Slaughter without regard to age or sex provided a macabre epilogue. There were mass arrests followed by beatings and torture in police custody. The 'law-abiding' press covered up the crimes of officialdom by regaling readers with the imagined perversions of the revolutionists.<sup>60</sup> The mills of historical justice began to roll, dispatching lumps of tortured flesh to jails all over Spain.

In Andalusia, there were incidents in Arcos de la Frontera, Utrera, Málaga, La Rinconada, Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Cádiz, Alcalá de los Gazules, Medinasidonia and other townships. In Casas Viejas what occurred was monstrous.<sup>61</sup>

We are indebted to the pen of Eduardo de Guzmán,<sup>62</sup> editor of *La Tierra*<sup>63</sup> and chronicler of all the revolutionary movements of the day, for the following blood-curdling account:

Libertarian communism. For a number of hours, the workers were masters of the village and libertarian communism was proclaimed. From 7 am to 4 pm they had

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the events of October 1934, something that enhanced his standing considerably. Active in the creation of Popular Front and president of the Republic during 1936–9, he was largely politically inactive and isolated during the civil war. Having fled Spain before the fall of the Republic, he resigned as president in Paris in February 1939.

<sup>60</sup> These included bizarre claims that insurgents made the well-to-do kiss the red flag.

<sup>61</sup> For much of this information Peirats relied on Urales's *La barbarie gubernamental*, Barcelona, 1933.

<sup>62</sup> A radical republican and intrepid journalist, he was the first member of the press to enter Casas Viejas. He later also reported on the repression of the Asturian revolution in October 1934. A convert to the CNT, he edited newspapers such as *CNT* and *Frente Libertario*. Sentenced to death by a Francoist court in 1940, he received a pardon the following year and went on to publish several books on Spanish political history.

<sup>63</sup> A respected Madrid republican daily newspaper, established in December 1930. Following the emergence of the *CNT* in Madrid in the summer of 1931, *La Tierra* published many pieces by its members.



reason to believe that the revolution had triumphed in Spain. The red-and-black flag fluttered in the breeze; armed peasants were in control of the situation. And during those fleeting hours of victory it never occurred to the workers to wreak vengeance on anyone, to destroy or to molest any who might possibly have been their enemies. There were several bosses in the village, along with their families. None was offended; no demands were made of any of them — all were treated with respect: the same goes for the few shops and for the church and its priest. Libertarian communism began — like in all of the villages in which it has been proclaimed to date, without violence of any sort, without any murder, robbery or rape. Everyone was left completely at liberty. The only intention was to disarm those who might have been regarded as obstacles to the entrenchment of the successful revolution. Thus did the peasants of Casas Viejas behave. Despite their lack of learning and the hunger gnawing at their bellies. (Not that this was to prevent some dolt of a *señorito*<sup>64</sup> in Medina speaking, some days later, of some fantastic sharing out of the womenfolk which the revolutionaries supposedly intended.)

A dream evaporates. In Medina, the experiment failed. The operation was well thought out, but thwarted by a number of guards who remained in the township for several hours on their journey to Jerez. There was one minor incident, a light exchange of gunfire. Nothing. And at noon it was noticed that communications with Casas Viejas had been cut. An engineer promptly set off for the scene of the breakdown fault, with three members of the Civil Guard in tow. When they arrived they spotted some figures in the undergrowth. The guards called upon the figures to halt, and then opened fire. They managed to capture three peasants who explained what was afoot. Back they went to Medina. All the guards there were assembled. There were several pairs of Civil Guards and 10 Assault Guards. Briskly they marched as far as Banalup, where they arrived at 4 pm. Before they reached the village, they had opened fire. The revolutionaries were bewildered. How come the police had turned up and in such strength? Had the revolution failed? Dismay and confusion ran wild. The siege of the barracks was lifted: the besiegers retreated into their homes. Most of those who had been actively involved made their way into the hills: they had no stomach for more bloodshed. Their aim was to avert pointless tragedy. In came the guards, shooting. One poor inhabitant, totally unconnected with the episode, was hit by their gunfire and fell dead. The uniformed men occupied the village. Tranquillity returned. For a time, not a single shot was heard. Then the Assault Guards embarked upon house searches. In they went, rifles at the ready, pointing them at the inhabitants. They searched five homes without incident. Was anyone arrested? Very likely, though nobody knows what became of them. But when they came to the sixth house, a fresh clash erupted. On the run, “Seisdedos”, a burly, courageous old man in his seventies, had sought refuge in that shack — four miserable dry stone walls and a roof of wood and wattle — together with his sons, Pedro and Francisco, daughter-in-law Josefa Franco, nephews Curro and Perico, and his neighbours, Francisco Lago and Lago’s daughter, Manuela. An Assault Guard kicked open the door and entered with his rifle at the ready. A

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<sup>64</sup> A pejorative reference to describe young males from the upper classes.

shot rang out and the Assault Guard slumped, dead. His colleagues beat a retreat. One of them, a touch more daring, tried to gain entry via the little yard — a tiny, stone-floored courtyard — and he too vanished. He was hurt in one arm. Had he fallen while jumping or had he been shot? No matter. His colleagues were overcome by bewilderment. They had lost two men while attempting to enter this house. They fell back. Assumed positions and opened fire. “Seisdedos” returned their fire but only fired a few shots. He had to make his undoubtedly meagre amount of ammunition count. Reinforcements were summoned.

While they were on their way, terror settled over the villages. The inhabitants cowered inside their homes. Others, on succumbing to fear, fled to the hillsides. Only from the home of “Seisdedos” were the security forces coming under fire. The hours dragged by. At 9 am more guards arrived with machine-guns. Opposite the besieged house there was a knoll, topped with prickly pear trees. But then two shots rang out. And the guards, for all their swagger, threw themselves to the ground... Luckily for them, “Seisdedos” only had buckshot cartridges... The disarray of the police grew. They had been at this for several hours already. Two Assault Guards had vanished into the house and they must be dead. In addition, there were two civilians, seriously wounded; and, finally, another two corporals of the Assault Guard had been winged by bullets. On the other hand, they had yet to score any hits, except for an innocent country-dweller gunned down lower down in the village... No doubt about it, they were getting the worst of it!

How Antonio Barberán met his death. The hastily set-up machine-gun opened fire. But the hail of bullets proved ineffective. They ricocheted off the stones, causing no damage. By contrast, “Seisdedos” was sparing with his ammunition and fired only when someone offered him a target. The guards made another telephone call. They asked for some hand-grenades with which to blow up the house, something with which to destroy whoever was inside. The guards grew tired of the shooting. At midnight the firing petered out. At one point it had ceased entirely. Antonio Barberán, a 70-year-old neighbour, made avail of this circumstance to return his little grandson to his home. He asked the guards if he might venture out — they said he might. Out he came with the little lad. All of a sudden, he made to retrace his steps, as if to fetch something he had left behind. At that precise moment, a shot rang out. The terrified old man did not know which way to turn and was petrified with fear. At the top of his lungs the little grandson called out to the guards: “Don’t shoot my grandpa, he’s no anarchist!”

One of the old man’s sons, by the name of Salvador, also shouted the same thing. But it was all to no avail. A bullet felled him after a tragic pirouette. Aghast, his son and grandson saw him die. Miraculously they were spared. The sweep of the machine-gun failed to catch them. It continued to spew its shrapnel, oblivious of the grief of the son who had watched his father fall, and of the horror of the little grandson whose earliest clear and sure recollection of life must be the instant when his grandpa was to slump for ever, his heart ripped asunder by a volley from the forces of order...

Two “runaways”. Night wore on and, before the dawn, the stars bore witness to every episode in the tragic contest. Fearlessly, “Seisdedos” continued to hold out. During a lull, a youth darted out by the back. It was a grandson of “Seisdedos”, a little boy of ten. By the time the guards had made up their minds to fire, the lad had vanished from sight among the prickly pear bushes, swallowed by the darkness... Minutes later, a girl made to follow suit. She darted out by the rear. Crouching down in the darkness, she made off as fast as she could go. Bullets danced all around her; death loomed ahead, foreshadowed by every piece of lead whizzing all around her. One shot struck home and a wretched beast, a donkey hitched near the path the young girl was following in her flight, slumped. The shadows of night broke up the outlines of the receding figure of the young rebel girl. She was to be the last living creature out of the house: the others were to perish amid the rubble, burnt offerings to a stern deity who knows neither compassion nor forgiveness!

The fire. The requested grenades arrived as daybreak was approaching. From the top of the knoll, the barrage began to rain down upon the cabin. They fell with baleful noise upon the flimsy roofing of the hut. One exploded and the noise shook the entire village, adding to the panic and distress which had settled over it. But most just rolled down the roof to tumble into the pen or into the yard without going off. Those which did explode caused little damage. The procedure was anything but speedy. Something more spectacular, more decisive, something that would leave a deep impression in people’s minds was wanting. (In Spain bombs, whether those hurled by revolutionaries or those used by the security forces, seem to be rendered useless in advance.) It was then that someone came up with a diabolical idea worthy of the degenerate mind of that emperor who set his great city ablaze: burn down the hovel, burning the occupants alive or flushing them into the line of gunfire. In a trice rags were soaked in gasoline, ignited and, once ablaze, tossed onto the wood and wattle rooftop. The fiery projectile traced an arc in the air, leaving a trail of sparks behind it. Within moments, several blazing rags had landed on the roof. The roofing material promptly caught fire. The flames soon climbed higher, casting a sinister glow over the whole settlement. Meanwhile, the machine-gun raked the windows, the door and the surrounding area. Anyone fleeing the fire would be cut to ribbons by gunfire...

It was a barbarous, ghastly, tragic spectacle. The whole roof was one huge inferno. The stench of burnt straw spread through the air. Pained cries and shrieks came from the hovel. The flames rose to a considerable height — they traversed the timbers supporting the roof which was near to collapse... A man emerged from inside, crazed with terror, his clothing in flames. The bullets described a tragic silhouette around him. Before long, they struck home. He hesitated, raised his hands to his wound and rolled along the ground, dead. At that very instant, a young girl emerged. With clothing in flames over half her body, the flames licked at her virgin breast; ravaging her belly and ribs... She ran screaming, a human torch. It was not long before she collapsed beside her father, mortally wounded by a volley of bullets...

Meanwhile, the fire continued to rage. Despite the crackling from the flames as they consumed the timbers, screams of agony could be heard distinctly from those within.

The impassive machine-gun went on sweeping the vicinity of the hovel. The roof fell in with a swirl of sparks and embers. One last scream rang out – heart-rending, cutting like a knife... And a pervasive stench of burning flesh wafted through the surrounding air... “Seisdedos” had perished. And his body was consumed by that huge pyre, like the old heroes of legend and romance in the ages of barbarism when the vanquished were immolated in honour of the victor. As in those centuries of pain and bitterness, no-one thought twice about sacrificing children, daughter-in-law and little grandson of the vanquished rebel and the flames consumed their dead bodies. They were tantamount to a fiery curse hurled at those who had caused the tragedy.

The peace of the cemetery having descended, the repercussions reached even the parliamentary chambers. Azaña, who gave the go-ahead for the crackdown with the watchword: ‘No wounded, no prisoners; shoot them in the guts!’, labelled the ghastly accusation ‘fairy tales’ (*cuentos de brujas*).<sup>65</sup>

Up until the end of that year, the CNT faced the double ordeal of the most savage repression and the awful convulsions of its internal crisis. Catalonia, the barometer of the Confederation, was the scene of factional contest. In late February 1932, a regional plenum of Catalan unions had been held in Sabadell, with delegations representing 23,000 members of the Confederation. The plenum was marked by the violence of the confrontation between the two factions. This saw the beginning of the ousting of the *treintistas* from the most eminent positions of the organisation. Alexandre Gilabert<sup>66</sup> replaced Emili Mira<sup>67</sup> as regional secretary. Pestaña and Arín were ousted from the national committee. The former subsequently set up the Partido Sindicalista, which was openly committed to political action.<sup>68</sup>

The Sabadell plenum also witnessed a walkout by all the unions affiliated to the Sabadell local federation.<sup>69</sup> The pretext was ‘the dictatorship of the FAI’. The regional committee formally announced the expulsion of the Sabadell local federation from the organisation on 24 September that year. The unions expelled had a membership of more than 20,000.

Another regional plenum was held in Barcelona’s Meridiana cinema during 5–13 March 1933. This plenum ordained that the Sabadell unions be expelled once and for all. From the regional

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<sup>65</sup> It is not at all certain that Azaña uttered these words, but it cannot be denied that the government demanded that the rebellion be extinguished by all means necessary. It would seem that the Assault Guards who arrived in Casas Viejas interpreted these instructions as an invitation to apply the *ley de fugas*.

<sup>66</sup> A prominent *faïsta* and an able publicist and propagandist, he was elected secretary of the Catalan CNT during 1932–4. He wrote for the CNT press throughout the civil war. He died in exile in South America.

<sup>67</sup> A leading figure in the Sabadell unions and veteran *cenetista* who besides serving as Catalan regional secretary was, before the ascendancy of the radicals, also on the *Solidaridad Obrera* editorial board.

<sup>68</sup> Pestaña’s Partido Sindicalista was formed in April 1934 from a minority split from the FSL and represented a break with the anti-political principles of revolutionary syndicalism in so far as it was politically reformist and possessed an explicitly electoral strategy. An enthusiastic part of the Popular Front, the party won two seats in the February 1936 elections and was, thereafter, doomed to insignificance.

<sup>69</sup> In the six months since the August 1931 regional plenum the membership of the CNT in Catalonia had fallen by around 100,000 and the poisonous atmosphere that characterised this gathering did nothing to counteract that trend. The Sabadell unions were probably the best-organised of all the Catalan CNT local unions and for this reason the leaders felt that they had much to lose from the full-frontal clash with the state that was an integral part of the FAI’s insurrectionist strategy. Profoundly anti-anarchist, the Sabadell unions refused to rejoin the CNT in May 1936 with the rest of the SS.OO unions, preferring to join the UGT. Many of the Sabadell union leaders occupied key positions within the PSUC during the civil war.

committee's report we have selected the following figures regarding the state of the organisation in Catalonia:

The Catalan CNT comprises 25 county confederations and 3 provincial ones confederally connected with one another, in total, 278 unions embracing upwards of 300,000 members, including unemployed workers.<sup>70</sup>

The report adds:

The work of dislocation by the communists has also forced us to expel some unions. This has been the case in Lleida, Girona and Tarragona. In Lleida, the local federation is in the hands of the communists, although the CNT-affiliated unions are attracting more and more support each day. On the other hand, all the provincial unions have retained their affiliation to the CNT. In Tarragona, at the end of May, the local federation severed connections with the CNT. Basically, the communists have managed to pull the wool over the workers' eyes; but the workers were quick to react and at present, the local federation, which let itself be deceived by individuals from the BOC, has been dismantled and the local federation of unions affiliated to the CNT has been set up again.<sup>71</sup>

As for the proportion of CNT members lured away by Treintismo — these were a minority, but a sizeable one.<sup>72</sup> In the Levante region the dissidents included the most powerful unions such as the Metallurgical Union, the Timber Union and the Transport Union. Another Treintista stronghold was Huelva. In some regions, such as Galicia and Asturias, there was considerable sympathy with the moderates, but no breach in confederal unity.<sup>73</sup> In Seville, the official communist party had managed to make some headway among the dock workers, thereby putting into practice its resolution to win the CNT over to the Moscow camp. Basing themselves on the La Comedia congress resolutions, and impugning the resolution of the Zaragoza conference which saw the CNT part company from the Comintern line, from 1930 onwards the communist elements endeavoured to put into practice their watchword 'Rebuild the CNT'. But when such endeavours by José Bullejos<sup>74</sup> and Manuel Adame<sup>75</sup> failed, they were issued with another tar-

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<sup>70</sup> Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña, Memoria del Pleno Regional de Sindicatos Únicos de Cataluña. Celebrado en Barcelona del 5 al 13 de marzo de 1933, Barcelona, 1933.

<sup>71</sup> This is another example of anarchist anti-communism; in practice, nobody was deceived by members of the dissident-communist BOC; rather, the workers followed the BOC-led unions for a variety of local, occupational, political, personal or economic reasons.

<sup>72</sup> At the time of their formal readmission to the CNT — at the May 1936 Zaragoza Congress — the SS.OO consisted of 85 unions representing 69,621 members.

<sup>73</sup> In tactical terms, the Asturian CNT was very close to the position of the 'Treinta' and in September 1933 they openly declared their support for this, while remaining inside the CNT. That this stance should not be confused with 'reformism' is best highlighted by their role in the Asturian Revolution in October 1934.

<sup>74</sup> An Andalusian postman and trade unionist who joined the PCE in 1921, entering the party's executive committee and political bureau in the 1930s. Secretary-general at time of the August 1932 anti-republican coup attempt by General José Sanjurjo, he was removed from the party leadership for defending the republic, a line that was contrary to the maximalist official Comintern policy of 'class against class'.

<sup>75</sup> A day labourer who became CNT national secretary in the summer of 1923 before switching to the PCE in 1927. He was removed from the party leadership at the same time as Bullejos.

get — the creation of a new trade union federation, the CGTU.<sup>76</sup> To this end, they resorted to their endless refrain of a ‘united front from below’. This fresh spawn of Moscow teetered along unsteadily until the Comintern was persuaded that its new tactic was availing it little. Another strategic ploy was the attempt to take over the UGT and the FJS.<sup>77</sup> The failure of the attempt to storm the CNT brought with it a purge of the upper echelons of Spanish communism.<sup>78</sup> The upshot was that Adame, Bullejos, Etelevino Vega<sup>79</sup> and Gabriel León Trilla<sup>80</sup> were removed from the communist leadership and expelled from the party itself.

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<sup>76</sup> Established in June 1932 from the old Comité para la Reconstrucción de la CNT (Committee for the Reconstruction of the CNT), which, despite its name, was a Stalinist front aimed at splitting the CNT. Although it claimed to have 280,000 members at the time of its creation, the actual figure probably never exceeded 46,000, its influence remaining limited to Seville in the south and the northern coast. At the end of 1935 it had around 45,000 members and was absorbed by the UGT.

<sup>77</sup> Spurred on by the drive for working class unity, in April 1936 the 40,000-strong socialist youth movement, the FJS, merged with the communist youth movement, the JCI, to produce the JSU. In practice, however, the PCE effectively controlled the newly created body and this represented a serious blow to the standing of the PSOE, although the implications of this were not fully apparent until after the start of the civil war.

<sup>78</sup> While the Comintern was doubtless unhappy with the syndical resources of the PCE, the reasons for the purge of the Spanish leadership were more closely linked to the implementation of Comintern edicts.

<sup>79</sup> Another victim of the purge of the Bullejos group.

<sup>80</sup> A schoolteacher and former socialist, he was removed from the PCE leadership with the rest of the Bullejos faction after the Sanjurjo coup.

## CHAPTER FOUR: From the November elections to the October Revolution

On page 257 of his book *Histoire des républiques espagnoles*,<sup>1</sup> Víctor Alba<sup>2</sup> outlines the following resumé:

In 18 months of republican administration the provocations of the right and the dithering of the left led to the deaths of 400 persons, of whom 20 belonged to the forces of law-and-order. 3,000 persons were recorded as wounded, 9,000 arrests were made and 160 persons were deported. There were 30 general strikes and 3,600 partial strikes; 161 newspapers were suspended, four of which belonged on the right.

Meanwhile the right, with José María Gil Robles<sup>3</sup> at their head, began to gain ground. Niceto Alcalá Zamora<sup>4</sup> and Maura had resigned from government in October 1931 over legislative attempts to separate church and state and end the educational role of the Catholic orders in state schools. Even so, Alcalá Zamora accepted the position of president of the Republic on 10 December.

On 15 December 1931 Azaña assumed the premiership. The Radicals, unable to get along with the socialists, joined the ranks of the opposition. Santiago Casares Quiroga<sup>5</sup> replaced Maura in the Interior Ministry and implemented the Law for the Defence of the Republic, which effectively annulled a constitution promulgated only a few days earlier.

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<sup>1</sup> Peirats relied on this book at various stages of this work.

<sup>2</sup> A journalist and dissident communist, he was a member of the BOC and the POUM and editor during the civil war of their daily newspaper *La Batalla*. Exiled after the civil war, he was detained on a clandestine mission to Spain and jailed. He moved to the USA where he taught politics at Kent State University, Ohio, and published numerous academic studies, essays and novels. He returned to his native Catalonia after the death of Franco.

<sup>3</sup> Known to his supporters as 'el jefe' ('the chief') and popularly derided as 'the pear' owing to his rotund appearance, he was leader of the anti-republican *Acción Popular*, the largest party within the clerical-authoritarian CEDA. Widely suspected on the left of harbouring quasi-fascist intentions, following the electoral defeat of the right in the February 1936 elections his supporters defected *en masse* to the Falange and the CEDA party funds were made available to the military plotters. While he and his party played key roles in preparing the anti-republican uprising of July 1936, he was marginalised by Franco.

<sup>4</sup> The first president of the Republic, he embodied the conservative nature of the new regime. From a southern landowner family and a staunch Catholic who attended mass every day, he reflected the values of traditional Spain, which he served during his time as political secretary to the Count of Romanones and as minister of war in the last government of the Restoration monarchy. He announced his 'conversion' to republicanism in 1930 and regarded the presidency of the republic as 'a duty imposed by his conscience as a Spaniard and as a Catholic'. For his detractors, he might well have coined Adolphe Thiers's famous aphorism, 'the Republic will be conservative, or it will not be', although he did frustrate the rise of the CEDA in 1935.

<sup>5</sup> This famous left-wing republican lawyer and consumptive had a tendency to sleep during crucial moments in Spain's history, resting in Jaca when he should have informed the leaders of the 1930 republican coup to delay their uprising and, on the night of 17 July 1936, declaring famously that, despite the rumours that the military had risen, he was going to retire. He refused to arm the people and resigned from office, whereupon he fled to France.

At the beginning of 1933, with the parliament in recess, a crisis blew up owing to the furore surrounding the Casas Viejas episode. On the instigation of the president, Lerroux formed a government. It fell victim to the opposition of the socialists and survived only until the reopening of the Cortes. On 9 November, the head of state implemented phase two of his plan, which consisted of appointing Diego Martínez Barrio<sup>6</sup> as premier and decreeing the dissolution of the Cortes. Elections followed ten days later and the scale of electoral abstention made it necessary to hold a second round of elections to fill 97 vacant seats. The outcome in terms of representatives in the Cortes was as follows:

<b>The Right:</b>	
CEDA	115
Agrarians	32
Carlists	21
Renovación Española and other monarchists	23
Total	191
<b>The Centre:</b>	
Radicals	104
Lliga Catalana	24
Conservative republicans	41
Democratic liberals	9
Basque Nationalists	12
Total	190
<b>The Left:</b>	
PSOE	58
ERC	19
Acción Republicana	5
Independent socialist-radicals	1
Orthodox socialist-radicals	4
Galicianists	6
PCE	1
USC	3
Total	97

To highlight the contrast with 1931, let us remind ourselves of the results of the elections to the Constituent Cortes, on 28 June 1931:

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<sup>6</sup> An autodidact typographer and former anarchist, he was a member of the Radical Socialist Party. He became prime minister on 18 July 1936, his first actions consisting of an attempt to reach a deal with the military insurgents, whom he offered a couple of ministries and a proposal of a republican dictatorship. He resigned from government a few hours later.



<b>The Right:</b>	
Agrarians	14
Traditionalists	4
Monarchists	1
Miscellaneous rightists	19
Total	38
<b>The Centre:</b>	
Basque Nationalists	6
Lliga Catalana	3
Total	9
<b>The Left:</b>	
PSOE	113
Radicals	87
ERC	36
Acción Republicana	16
Democratic liberals	4
Radical socialists	61
Galicianists	19
Federalists	19
Independent republicans	25
Liberal republican right	27
Total	407

Some have tried to attribute the left's defeat in the November 1933 elections to the impact of female suffrage.<sup>7</sup> Indubitably, the votes of women benefited both blocs without altering the overall result. While it is true that the rural female vote was guided by the exhortations of the parish priests and the caciques, in the great capital cities the vast majority of female voters were inclined towards the left. The female vote merely added to the number of votes cast. On the other hand, the inroads made by abstentionism were common knowledge. The electoral boycott called by the CNT touched the innermost feelings of the proletariat.<sup>8</sup> The campaign in favour of abstention was intense and it was maintained throughout the election period, culminating in the monster meeting in Barcelona's Monumental bullring, at which Benito Pavón,<sup>9</sup> Domingo

<sup>7</sup> This undoubtedly had some impact on the result, although the extent to which Spanish women were influenced by the Church and therefore voted for the right was perhaps exaggerated in the 1930s, even by some republicans and socialists, who argued in favour of the continuing disenfranchisement of females. Nevertheless, the most important factors conditioning the election result were the popular frustration with the republic and the socialists' decision to stand alone.

<sup>8</sup> In a sense, the abstentionist campaign simply tapped the deep frustration and disappointment with the first two years of republican rule.

<sup>9</sup> Then a radical anarchist, he later joined the Partido Sindicalista and was elected to the Madrid parliament in February 1936.

Germinal,<sup>10</sup> Durruti and Valeriano Orobón Fernández<sup>11</sup> expatiated upon the watchword: ‘Social Revolution, Not the Ballot Box’. Fully aware of the repercussions and import of their stance, the CNT and the FAI declared at the meeting that if defeat for the left brought with it victory for the right, they would unleash the social revolution. This pledge to the people prompted the revolutionary uprising of 8 December 1933.

That uprising was most strongly felt in the villages and cities of Aragón and La Rioja. A revolutionary committee made up of selected *cenetistas*, and which included Cipriano Mera<sup>12</sup> and Dr Isaac Puente,<sup>13</sup> was set up in Zaragoza, then the base of the national committee. For several days Zaragoza witnessed fighting against the armed police and the army, which deployed impressive weaponry, including assault tanks. For many hours the city was in the hands of revolutionaries.

There were clashes at Barbastro and Alcalá de Gurrea, where the town was controlled by the revolutionaries for many a long hour. In Alcampel, Albalate de Cinca, and Villanueva de Sigüenza libertarian communism was proclaimed, as it was in Valderrobles, Beceite, Alcoriza, Mas de las Matas, Calanda and other villages in lower Aragón. The Civil Guard suffered heavy losses. In Logroño, Arnedo, Labastida, Fuenmayor, Briones, Cenicero, San Vicente de la Sonsierra, Haro, San Asensio and elsewhere, the fighting acquired great intensity.<sup>14</sup> Libertarian arrangements were introduced in most of these villages amid popular rejoicing. In Villanueva de la Serena, a sergeant from the army garrison added a heroic codicil to the uprising with his sacrifice. After having mutinied along with several of his comrades-in-arms, rather than surrender, this soldier chose to go to his death in his redoubt, which was reduced to rubble by artillery fire. In Fabero de León, when failure was evident, the rebels set about falling back in the direction of the sierras, where many of them died of starvation rather than face the *via dolorosa* of the inquisitors. The repression took a brutal turn in Bujalance where the *ley de fugas* was applied to defenceless shackled prisoners. In Barcelona there were only exchanges of gunfire in the slum districts. In l’Hospitalet, the revolutionaries seized control of the situation but were later forced to abandon the struggle when it emerged that they were isolated.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A FAI propagandist.

<sup>11</sup> Born in conservative Valladolid, this excellent linguist, translator and anarchist intellectual went into exile in 1923, first in Paris, later in Berlin, where he worked for the secretariat of the IWA and became acquainted with the leading figures of the international anarcho-sindicalist movement. A talented polemicist, tactician and orator, he returned to Spain in 1931 and organised the CNT in Madrid. A firm supporter of the Workers’ Alliance, he died shortly before the Spanish revolution, having suffered from a prolonged illness.

<sup>12</sup> A Madrid construction worker and UGT member from 1914, he formed an anarchist group inside his union in the 1920s. In 1930 he was at the forefront of the creation of the Madrid CNT local federation, becoming president of the increasingly powerful Builders’ Union in the city. Languishing in jail owing to his union activism when the July 1936 military coup began, he participated in the streetfighting that defeated the rebels in Madrid and became an important military commander during the civil war, excelling in the defence of Madrid. After the civil war he went into exile.

<sup>13</sup> A physician who switched to anarchism from republicanism, he became the main exponent of the ‘ruralist’ current within Spanish anarchism, a perspective that is fully articulated in his celebrated pamphlet *El comunismo libertario*, Valencia, n.d. Captured soon after the military rising, he was killed by the Francoists.

<sup>14</sup> As far as the authorities were concerned, the map of the insurrection highlighted a worrying expansion of anarchist influence in areas where previously there was little or none.

<sup>15</sup> Barricades were set up and there was an attempt to seize the main Council building. Clashes with the security forces continued until 14 December when the army occupied the city and moved on La Torrassa, the last centre of insurgency and the most important proletarian neighbourhood in the city.

The final toll of the whole episode has been reckoned at 87 dead, with countless numbers wounded and some 700 sentenced to jail.<sup>16</sup>

In his prison cell, Puente himself wrote the following article:

The repression in Zaragoza. The revolutionary uprising of 8 December only fully developed around Aragón, Rioja and Navarre. It may be said that in this region all resources were deployed, although owing to a variety of circumstances which may someday be clarified, they failed to achieve the desired impact. The episode took place against a background of inclement weather which marshalled all the rigours of cold, rain and snow against the undertaking. The Confederation's entire anarchist leaven, its vital and active element, rallied to unleash this revolutionary act, to galvanise into action the timorous passive element of the CNT, which mobilised in only some villages. Broken by an inheritance of fear and conformist education, the people did not allow themselves to be caught up in the revolutionary zeal which inspired the "leaders", who interpreted society's desire for renewal through their impatience and faith. Owing to a variety of adverse circumstances, support which had been counted upon failed to materialise and, as a logical consequence of this, the revolt was unable to spread beyond the scale it had initially attained. From the government's point of view, all its preventive measures failed, including its Public Order Act [*Ley de orden público*].<sup>17</sup>

Aragón knows the peace of mind of those who have done their duty. Those who have displayed the nobility and élan as they had pledged. Unlike the politicians, from Lerroux to Largo Caballero, who rely on words, the CNT, and let us not say the FAI, which is the bogey of every government, has translated the revolutionary imperative of the times by its deeds.

In Zaragoza, where, if one is to believe the press, a revolutionary uprising had been in the pipeline for a number of days, the imprisonment of activists began on the night of 8 December. Arrests in cafés and bars numbered nearly a hundred. Shortly before in a house in calle del Virtud, a meeting was interrupted at which a large number of guns and bombs were discovered. Some 16 comrades were apprehended there. They were the first to be maltreated in the corridors and cells of the police station by the uncontrolled bestiality of the Assault Guards. Upwards of 200 detainees have been sadistically mistreated and showered with all manner of kicks and blows while running the gauntlet between lines of police in a game which they sarcastically and mordantly term the "laughter tunnel" [*tubo de la risa*].<sup>18</sup> The brutal bludgeonings are recorded in the log of the prison doctor and are plain to see on the bodies of many comrades. Several of those clubbed had to be treated by the Assault Guard medics and more than one had to be taken to hospital for resuscitation. Even after two or three days, the fury of the Assault Guards had not abated and they continued to torture detainees to extract statements from them and to avenge themselves for the casualties they sustained and which were diligently hushed up by the press.

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<sup>16</sup> Murray Bookchin, an anarchist historian, described this rising as 'a total calamity' (*The Spanish Anarchists: The Heroic Years, 1868–1936*, Edinburgh, 1998, 2nd edition, p. 228).

<sup>17</sup> Drafted by Anguera de Sojo, the bogey man of the revolutionary left in Barcelona, the *Ley de Orden Público* replaced the 1931 Law for the defence of the republic. Like its predecessor, it allowed for the suppression of constitutional freedoms and martial law in the event of social unrest. Article 38 allowed the authorities to 'prohibit the formation of all types of groups on the public highway... If orders to disperse are disobeyed, after three warning signals the security forces will use the necessary force to re-establish normality. No warning is necessary if the security forces come under attack.' Highly authoritarian, this law was a major step towards transforming the republic into a 'law-and-order' state.

<sup>18</sup> This sadistic police tactic was also known as 'el pasillo' ('the passage'), for the police formed two lines through which detainees had to pass whereupon they were beaten and kicked.

They justified their rage by alleging that they had captured a document which ordered that all members of the security forces and their families were to be shot. Among the latest to have been clubbed, were those of us arrested as alleged members of the revolutionary committee, the would-be “ministers”, as they told us in jest. On the night of 16 December, the nine of us detained in the calle del Convertidos, including two women, were twice made to run the gaunt-let of the “tunnel”. One by one, we were subjected to a psychological torment which outweighed the physical pain. By order of the chief-of-police, Francisco Fernández Prados,<sup>19</sup> we were invited to “sing” and then remove any garments, such as overcoat and jacket, which might afford us protection, before being beaten with delicate cruelty until we collapsed unconscious on the ground. Care was taken to avoid blows to the head, for these are unsightly and bloody. They sought out the most sensitive parts of our bodies, such as the belly, and lashed us upon the skin from this side and that, leaving weals that still linger. The agony of such beatings, together with the psychological torment of the hours spent in the cells, with the ceaseless abuse and continual threats made to our lives, defies description. The administering of a blow did not satisfy these people – it merely excited them further, until they lost all self-control and all sense of proportion in the application of the torture.

The number of detainees cannot be established with precision. Some have been set free, uncharged. But on the basis of information collated here, probably over 450 prisoners have passed through this jail and the military prison at Castillo de la Aljafería, before being sent off to jails such as those in Pamplona, Calatayud, Caspe and Pina. There is no way of reckoning how many have been tried in Zaragoza, but I’d estimate that there were over 100. The sentences handed down by the emergency courts are quite simply exorbitant. Attacks upon the government are punished by eight years’ imprisonment, with maximum terms being doled out for possession of weapons and explosives. To date the following cases have been heard in the High Court: Antonia Banaun was sentenced to a ten-year prison term for being found in possession of a pistol; the Paseo de San Miguel case, in which one of the accused has received an eight-year prison term and a couple have been found not guilty; someone has been sentenced to two years’ imprisonment for distributing underground leaflets. In the case against alleged arsonists from Calatayud, one was given a twelve-year term and the others got ten years. In the Daroca case, 2 of the 8 accused have been sentenced to eight years, while most got eight-month terms. Fifty-six-year-old Melchor Latorre, bedridden with rheumatism, was found in possession of an old rifle which he had sworn to look after and sentenced to four months. The case brought against Agapito Lorente, José María García and José Logroño,<sup>20</sup> plus 3 women who were found with a few smuggled handguns, has resulted in the trio receiving eleven-year prison sentences, as did Lorente’s *compañera*; 2 of the young women got six months each, while the third was cleared. As for the 16 charged over the calle del Virtud meeting, 3 young men and 2 women, Isabel Aravó, the tenant of the apartment and Matilde Locertales, were sentenced to fifteen-year terms; Victoriano Logroño, a minor under the age of 18, was sentenced to seven years; another sentence of eleven years was meted out, while the rest were found not guilty. The Tauste case, involving possession of explosives, ended with 2 comrades being sentenced to eight-year terms. A *compañera* from the Food Workers’ Union, tried on a charge of distributing underground leaflets, has been found not guilty.

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<sup>19</sup> While he enjoyed the praise of leading employers in the city for his repression of the December 1933 rising, five months later he was forced to resign from his position following his failure to break the Zaragoza general strike.

<sup>20</sup> A prominent ‘action group’ member in Zaragoza, he later served in the 25th Division (ex-Durruti Column) and went on numerous missions behind Francoist lines. His mother, three brothers and younger sister were all murdered by Francoists.

The trial of those accused from Montañana on sabotage charges, has ended with 1 of them being sentenced to eight months and the others getting off. The trial of the those who were arrested in the church of San Juan de los Panetes has resulted in 4 of them being sentenced to eleven years and the other being found not guilty. Manuel Plaza has been given eight years after being found in possession of a clip of ammunition. Of the other cases yet to be heard, the most important is the one being cooked up against the CNT national committee and the alleged revolutionary committee. Numerous comrades have already been indicted for trial and, judging by the slowness being shown, it will still be some time before this takes place. They have all been tried and fined 25,000 pesetas. Among those implicated are the brothers and physicians, the Alcrudos,<sup>21</sup> comrade Durruti, who was brought here from Barcelona, and many others who were arrested in Zaragoza.

Since this trial is directed against the Confederation, it will be of burning interest and doubtless have historic repercussions. The main priority is not simply to save the comrades on trial but to ensure that the organisation comes out well, for on this occasion it may be proud of having performed its duty, living up to the expectations of the people who trusted in it.<sup>22</sup>

Among the reasons for the failure of the rising one must emphasise the brief time-span between the December uprising and the one that had taken place on 8 January of the very same year. Andalusia, Catalonia and Levante had borne the brunt of the January fighting and, still reeling from the aftermath of repression, failed to rise in December. Also, hopes of a favourable response from the socialists, or at least their rank-and-file, and from the people in general, were disappointed. That hope was based upon the right-wing lurch in national politics. All calls upon socialists, communists and republicans to join the rebellion received a cool response. The shortage of weaponry and the false diagnosis of the popular reaction must also be seen in the light of the demoralising intervention by the army. Spanish workers felt truly apprehensive about confrontations with the troops, these being the sons of the people. Such apprehension proved fatal in every subsequent revolt, including that of 18 July 1936.

On 18 December, with normality restored, Lerroux, supported by the CEDA, replaced Martínez Barrio as head of a government in which the Radicals were in the majority. Gil Robles had mapped out a three-phase plan for his party: the 'token' government of Lerroux; an 'interim' Radical-CEDA coalition government; and finally 'All Power to the Jefe'.<sup>23</sup> Phase one was to last until 4

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<sup>21</sup> A reference to Miguel José Alcrudo and Augusto Moisés Alcrudo, two brothers from Zaragoza, who switched from radical republicanism to the CNT at the end of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

<sup>22</sup> On 24 January 1934, seven individuals armed with handguns entered the emergency court in Zaragoza during the preparation of the trial of those involved in the revolutionary incidents of December 1933. Immersed in the scrutiny of the indictments, the magistrate and his secretaries were taken by surprise by the attackers who, under cover from other groups posted in the courtyards and adjoining streets, seized all papers relating to the prosecution case before making a swift getaway from the scene. (Note by the author.) Fearing such an assault by an anarchist commando, the authorities made two copies of the prosecution documentation, the second copy being lodged with the Interior Ministry in Madrid. The foresight of the authorities was matched by their incompetence, because the copies of the duplicate confessions were unsigned. The defendants refused to sign the documents, alleging that their earlier confessions had been acquired with violence and threats, and hundreds of detainees were released as a consequence. The police later 'framed' a group of *cenetistas* for the robbery of the trial documents but the case against them collapsed for lack of evidence: *Cultura Libertaria* (Vitoria), September 1986.

<sup>23</sup> Since 'jefe' ( Gil Robles's nickname) was the rough Spanish equivalent of Duce or Führer, the left not unreasonably interpreted this slogan as a call for a fascist dictatorship. These fears were heightened by Robles's visit to Austria in 1934 and his subsequent celebration of the clerical dictatorship of Engelbert Dollfuss.

October 1934, the date on which three CEDA ministers joined the Lerroux cabinet. The beginning of phase two sparked off the revolution of 6 October 1934.

Here is an outline of the work done by the Lerroux government at the behest of Gil Robles, himself the agent of the Jesuits:

From the very outset, his government embarked upon the counter-revolutionary labour demanded by the right. From that moment on, there was no peace in Spain. The regime lived not a single day of normal existence. Constitutional guarantees were constantly suspended; on occasion there was a state of alert [ *prevención* ], at other times a state of alarm and later there was a state of war.<sup>24</sup> The counter-revolution showed itself bolder than ever: enemies of the Republic were amnestied; military men with monarchist loyalties were restored to their commands; the stipends of the clergy were restored; negotiations reopened with the Vatican; the religious orders continued to teach; all of the Republic's social legislation was allowed to fall into abeyance; socialist and left-wing councils – the very councils which had proclaimed the Republic on 14 April 1931 – were dissolved and their powers handed over to enemies of the regime; the workers' organisations were venomously harassed and their press muzzled, their Casas del Pueblo<sup>25</sup> shut down and the working class besieged by hunger. Meanwhile, with the blessing of the authorities, fascist groups were organised and armed. With the blessing of the authorities and with money and weaponry supplied by Mussolini. ( Rodolfo Llopis, *Octubre del 34*)

The truth of the matter is that, in the first two years of the new regime the socialists and Azaña governed the workers, who had delivered the Republic, by means of monarchist laws; when the new constitution came into effect, they ruled through the Law for the Defence of the Republic and the Vagrancy Act, which empowered the authorities to harass the workers with venom, ban their newspapers, close down their centres and starve them into submission. Once these laws passed to the hands of the Radicals and the CEDA in the second two-year period, the socialists got their first taste of what it was like to be at the receiving end of weapons which they themselves had forged. The so-called Public Order Act which provided for emergency courts, another example of the handiwork of this hapless period, was the constitutional basis for unconstitutionality, a piece of sophistry that made it possible to turn draconian emergency legislation into standing legislation. Ousted from power by the capriciously changing winds of politicking, the PSOE now found its own flesh being cut by this double-edged sword.

Consequently, in the grip of a circumstantial crisis of extremism, the PSOE began to squirm. The events which had sealed the fate of German and Austrian social democracy<sup>26</sup> had a consider-

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<sup>24</sup> This progressive erosion of civil liberties was laid out in the Public Order Act.

<sup>25</sup> Literally 'People's Houses', these were the socialist equivalent of the anarchist *ateneos* (atheneums), of which there was a network across Spain. Built by union subscriptions, these centres provided a base for any combination of the following: union offices, meeting halls, cooperative facilities, libraries, canteens, workers' educational programmes, musical and theatre groups.

<sup>26</sup> Whereas in Germany the huge socialist movement offered no resistance to Hitler's rise to power in January 1933, the Austrian socialists launched an uprising in Vienna in February 1934 in a (belated) attempt to forestall the plans of Englebert Dollfuss for a clerical dictatorship. This led the left socialists to adopt the slogan 'Better Vienna than Berlin'.

able impact upon the stance adopted by Largo Caballero. The first, comical and clownish marches of the nascent Falangism,<sup>27</sup> plus the parades and rallies of Gil Robles's paramilitary louts, were the inspiration behind the inflammatory speechifying by the man whom the communists were beginning to regale with the title 'the Spanish Lenin'.<sup>28</sup> His invitations to proletarian unity, plus his exhortations to seize power and institute class dictatorship, began to make some headway in diffident CNT circles, particularly in Asturias and in the Central region. Though bubbling over, the energies of the Asturian CNT membership were as yet untried. The three revolts mounted by the CNT between the start of 1932 and the end of 1933 had drawn no echo from Asturias. The coincidence that Asturias was the home of the main socialist nucleus worthy of the name, and the fact that the Asturian CNT was outnumbered by the UGT, helped shape the attitude of the Confederation there.<sup>29</sup> Nor should we forget the traditional pro-alliance position of the Asturian anarcho-sindicalists. As far back as the La Comedia congress they had unrelentingly pushed for the unconditional fusion of the country's two great trade union groupings.

In the Central region, Orobón Fernández was one of the mainstays of the pro-alliance stance and we reprint his historic essay on the subject which first appeared in Madrid's *La Tierra* newspaper on 31 January 1934:<sup>30</sup>

Revolutionary alliance, yes! Factional opportunism, no! — The reality of the fascist danger in Spain seriously poses the problem of uniting the revolutionary proletariat for an undertaking more far-reaching and radical than any defensive operation. With the political solutions to the current situation boiling down to the starkly antithetical terms of fascism or social revolution, it is only logical that the working class should strive to win this contest. It is only too well aware of what is at stake.

For that reason, and not owing to any ulterior motives, Spanish workers are today united in their instinctive appreciation of the need for a class alliance capable of ending the inter-proletarian sniping between the different tendencies and of preparing the workers' front for truly historic events. It may be said that an alliance of minds is already a *fait accompli*. Nothing so gratifies a revolutionary militant as to see the labouring masses fraternise irrespective of the doctrinal divisions which have hitherto separated them into aggressive camps. However much these divisions might be justifiable in theory, they are clearly out of step with the demands of the present circumstances and nothing is so heartening as to see them come together of their own volition, full of enthusiasm and determination, in a positive revolutionary current.

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<sup>27</sup> Formed in 1933 and inspired by European fascist trends, the Falange was a tiny party before the civil war when it was led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of the former dictator, who was determined to avenge the memory of his much-maligned father.

<sup>28</sup> Although a lifelong trade union bureaucrat and despite his fragile understanding of Marxism, Largo was feted by his admirers as 'the Spanish Lenin'. This was possible due to Largo's increasingly revolutionary discourse during 1934–6 through which he articulated the radicalisation of key sections of the UGT rank-and-file and expressed his own frustration due to the failure of his labour reforms of 1931–3. Tellingly, his revolutionary words were not converted into deeds in his Madrid stronghold during the October 1934 revolution.

<sup>29</sup> It is also worth noting that the FAI had very little influence in Asturias.

<sup>30</sup> This must be considered one of the most important tactical statements to emerge from within the anarchosindicalist movement in the 1930s.

This spirited new attitude of the working class requires prompt and effective organisational expression. How? At the centre and on the periphery, at the bottom, at the top and at all levels in between; the essential thing is that it should be based upon a revolutionary platform premised on the loyalty, consistency and honesty of intent of all concerned. To embroil ourselves in protracted discussions about how to reach our aims would be a depressingly Byzantine manoeuvre. We must sincerely desire rapprochement and this is enough. These are not the times for literary jousting or demagogic obstructionism.

Combative unity, a question of life or death. The Spanish bourgeoisie has just cast aside its liberal disguise. Encouraged by the counter-revolutionary examples on offer in Europe, it is preparing to strengthen its economic and political monopoly through the totalitarian state. The accomplishment of this objective has suffered an important setback thanks to the stance adopted by the CNT during and after the last elections.

Much has been said and written, most of it superficial, it must be said, against the Confederation's electoral abstentionism. Nevertheless, the efficacy of abstentionism is proving infinitely superior to the election of 100 worker deputies, since it has provided an opportune exposé of the scale of the reaction and ushered in a revolutionary process with great prospects for the Spanish proletariat. At a moment when part of the working class was still deceived by electoral illusions, the fascist Trojan horse was revealed as it was poised to enter through the broad gate of "democratic legality", a pathway well-accounted against an unprepared and fragmented working class. We have attacked fascism in its period of incubation. Owing to our attitude of subversive sabotage and combative resolve, the gravity of the situation has been brought home and the voice of alarm sounded in the workers' camp. Most importantly of all, this led to serious talk of a united front, alliance or revolutionary unity.

Spontaneously, without regard for hackneyed, stereotyped slogans, workers of various tendencies have realised that combative class unity is a matter of life-and-death for the proletariat today. Whether we cling separately to small islands of principle or amalgamate our forces in a tactical bloc, we cannot escape the coming battle with capitalism's political extremism. The choice is clear: we must be either the anvil or the hammer; either we crush fascism unmercifully, or it will crush us without any qualm. Events are racing towards the denouement. The enemy's intention, confirmed on a daily basis by attacks, provocations and threats, leaves no room for confusion. Nor do the flirtations and the loving collaboration showered upon them by the last remaining governors of a disinte-grating democracy.

The repression decimating the CNT is nothing more than a shameful down payment on fascism proper, an eloquent display of how the "middle ground" and the legal niceties of bourgeois democracy are swiftly transformed into extremes. In the hour of battle, the "democrats" set aside their political affiliations and fall into line with the rest of their class. Let this example be a lesson to those comrades who, through insubstantial purism, retreat into the ivory towers of the theory of "ourselves alone".<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This expression appears in Catalan in the original, a reference to the extreme isolationism followed by the 'purist' anarchist leadership of the Catalan CNT.



If we are to rout an enemy which is girding up its loins to fight the proletariat, it is vital that the workers' forces form a granite bloc. The faction which turns its back on this requirement will find itself isolated and will struggle to justify its action before history. A partial proletarian victory is a thousand times more preferable than the defeat which will inescapably flow from isolation. While this partial proletarian victory will not belong to any single tendency, it will momentarily realise the minimum aspirations common to all participating parties, starting with the destruction of capitalism and the socialisation of the means of production.

To stand in the way of unity is to stand in the way of revolution. The perception of the common danger by the labouring masses has aroused strong support for unity of action. Imposed from below and in contrast to the traditional jealousies which only yesterday erected tall walls between us, this tactical improvisation has nevertheless dismayed those CNT militants who dislike the spontaneous rapprochement of sectors of the labour movement which in other circumstances have fought hard against one another. And there has been no shortage of leading comrades in confederal circles who, while we do not doubt their good faith, have declared themselves opposed to this workers' entente and have even issued pathetic appeals in defence of anarchist principles which they, mistakenly, believe are in jeopardy.

These comrades appear to have ignored the profound change in the social panorama in Spain over the last two months, a change which can be condensed into three facts. First the utter invalidation of democracy and its political expedients; second the reactionary radicalisation of the Spanish bourgeoisie, which is today clearly on the march towards fascism; and third, the theoretical and practical displacement of social democracy which, by jettisoning its baneful collaborationist policy, embraces class positions once more. These three clearly visible facts have reshaped the terrain of the class struggle, creating a new situation and peculiar tactical requirements. The concentration of the bourgeoisie in the trenches of the right spells the end of liberal tolerance and heralds a battle of blood and fire, a battle designed to extirpate every trace of workers' resistance and conquer absolute power.

The socialists have no option but to respond to the tunes coming from our opponents, a disagreeable, ominous music reminiscent of Italian penal camps [ *ergastolos* ] and Teutonic concentration camps [ *Konzentrationslager* ]. As a result, they have made an abrupt turn around which, after a lengthy separation, has brought them back into the fold of those labour organisations which never abandoned revolutionary positions. Having re-established this contact, it has been possible to speak of common ground and tactical requirements. This is to say that the front or alliance is to be erected on the revolutionary terrain which the CNT will always occupy, terrain to which the socialists, following the spectacular failure of their flirtations with bourgeois democracy, are now also drawing near.

And the motto of this possible alliance must be "revolutionary unity for revolutionary conquests", for by endorsing an alliance on this basis, the CNT will be doing no more than endorsing its classical aspirations.

I know that there will be no shortage of comrades who will raise objections such as: “But can you be so naive as to believe that the violent verbiage of the socialists will be translated into authentic revolutionary action?” Our response is that the way things are going, and with their ships of democratic collaboration sunk or at least severely holed, the socialists will only be able to choose between letting themselves be annihilated meekly, as in Germany, or saving their skins by fighting alongside the rest of the proletariat. Still others will say: “How can we forget their responsibility for the repressive laws formulated and applied in the tragic days of socialist–Azaña rule?” Though pregnant with bitter justice, the answer to that question is that the only acceptable opportunism is that which serves the cause of revolution. It is unavoidably imperative that the Spanish proletariat stands together if it wishes to defeat reaction. To stand against the revolutionary alliance of workers, whether in good faith or in bad, is to stand against the revolution.

Party-political deals, no! Earlier we stated that a sine qua non of the alliance is the honesty of conduct and intent on the part of all concerned parties. This “clean dealing”, which should be a constant feature among all who desire unity, does not seem so easy to achieve if one takes account of the deplorable oneupmanship of certain elements and their publications. We refer specifically to the Stalinists. Despite the pressing goal of workers’ unity, as yet they have not jettisoned their old partisan tactics, characterised by exaggeration, misrepresentation and the abuse of other sections of the proletariat, even those who have demonstrably outdone them in terms of revolutionary spirit and courage. Whereas in theory they advocate the “united front”, in practice, whether deliberately or not, they constitute the most fundamental impediment to that idea.

Even now, when cordiality is the common currency of relations between what they describe as the “rank-and-file”, the communist leaders and their publications vent their spleen on the persecuted CNT and, unscrupulously capitalising upon exceptional circumstances, pursue a “united front” in their own unique way: through the establishment of a third trade union organisation, aided piously by the “organ of the united front”. And they dub one of the most redoubtable mass uprisings ever recorded in Spain’s social history as a “putsch”. That the [December 1933] rising was flawed, perhaps even seriously flawed, is unquestionable, but it does not deserve the glib description of “putsch”, let alone the ambiguous innuendo directed at it in the latest editorial of *Mundo Obrero*.<sup>32</sup> To be sure, that editorial drew the indignation of even the present director of *Lucha*<sup>33</sup> which, against all our expectations, is emerging as the most refined expression of “partisan” one-upmanship. But the worst is yet to come. The fact is that, despite thundering against the “putsch”, international communist publications have credited the Spanish party [i.e. the PCE] with “what little good that attempted revolution may have boasted”. The sources of these reports are communists and Spaniards.

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<sup>32</sup> The main PCE newspaper in Spain which first appeared in 1930. By 1933 it had a print run of around 20,000.

<sup>33</sup> Probably a reference to *La Lucha*, a Madrid-based PCE daily newspaper from 1933–4, edited by the communist novelist Ramón J. Sender.

In *Rundschau*, the German publication of the *Communist International*,<sup>34</sup> on 21 December 1933, Federico Melchor Rodríguez<sup>35</sup> asserts “that the organisations of the PCE tried to place themselves at the head of the mass revolt (of December), succeeding in this aim at several points.” In the 27 December issue of the same periodical, Vicente Uribe<sup>36</sup> dares to say that “the communist party immediately intervened in the struggle” in order to correct the schemes of the “anarchist putschists”. Everybody knows that the PCE’s dissociation from the December uprising was absolute and that, as a result, the reports dispatched abroad by known communist leaders are utterly untruthful. It pains us to have to expose such squalid intrigues, but we do so to show our communist comrades how counterproductive these methods are.

Such ploys must be replaced by the strict application of the practices of “clean dealing” to which we referred above. Unity requires a basis of frankness incompatible with this malleable and questionable conception of truth. Nor should we forget that our sincere union is vital if a revolution of the proletarian bloc in Spain is to be supported by similar blocs abroad. The attitude of the PCE to date fits the motto: “May my faction thrive, even though the revolution might founder,” a damaging, immoral view. In acting thus, they overlook the fact that the volume of their rhetoric is disproportionate to their modest numbers and that proletarian unity is 90 per cent feasible simply because the CNT and UGT desire it. There is still time for them to change their ways if they, together with the highly partial organ of the “united front”, choose to do so. If they mend their ways, we shall march side by side. If not, let them remain alone in their tents, because the workers’ democracy, the authentic masses of the CNT will not, under any pretext, tolerate dirty dealing from any political party. Clean hands, upright intentions and less confusionist hoo-ha — only thus can we be friends.

The socialists too. What we have said candidly for the PCE can also be applied in large part to the socialists. Again we say that the restoration of cordial relations, candour and mutual respect between the various sections of the proletarian camp is the first practical step towards the revolutionary alliance. And that step can only be taken if everyone rejects the war of factions, while maintaining the right to objective criticism.

And it is high time that those socialists who are genuine in their convictions suppress those insidious, pamphleteering allegations about the connections between anarcho-syndicalism and the reactionary camp.<sup>37</sup> It is understandable that they should have

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<sup>34</sup> This was a weekly that was translated into various languages and distributed by the Comintern. The Spanish edition was *La Correspondencia Internacional*.

<sup>35</sup> A communist youth organiser and one-time director of *Mundo Obrero*, he was director-general of propaganda under the Negrín government during the civil war.

<sup>36</sup> A metalworker and, from the early 1930s, a prominent Stalinist, PCE politburo member and editor of *Mundo Obrero*. Minister of agriculture in the central government during the civil war, he was famous for his appeals to the antifascism of small farmers and for his drive against the agrarian revolution.

<sup>37</sup> These allegations centred on the patronage of Juan March, a strident anti-republican and millionaire smuggler known popularly as the ‘last pirate of the Mediterranean’. A high-profile anti-republican who bankrolled the CEDA and numerous other anti-republican projects, he contracted the Dragon Rapide aeroplane that flew from London to the Canary Islands to transfer General Franco to Morocco to lead the July 1936 uprising. In November 1933, at the

peddled this in what are now the happily bygone days when they themselves were the governmental administrators of the interests of the Spanish bourgeoisie and helped to shore up traditional institutions with repressive laws like today's debilitating emergency court legislation and by approving generous budgets to the forces of public order. But to mouth this absurd nonsense now, just as they did a few days ago in the Cortes, out of some desire to appear the level-headed party in the eyes of the philo-fascist majority, is to seek to strew rocks in the path of proletarian entente.

To oscillate whimsically between revolution and bourgeois legality, or to vilify a most important labour organisation for the narcissistic pleasure of making a favourable impression upon an anti-proletarian parliament, simply is not on. If Largo Caballero wants to convince us of the sincerity of his revolutionary declarations, which we are in fact ready to believe in, he need only ensure that socialist deputies abide resolutely and consistently by them. We know only too well the intrigues of Julián Besteiro,<sup>38</sup> Andrés Saborit,<sup>39</sup> Trifón Gómez<sup>40</sup> and their like against workers' unity and the revolution. What we fail to understand is why the majority of the party, which shares Largo Caballero's view, does not cut these intrigues short by enforcing the principle of rigid discipline which has been enforced in other instances. Or is it that they prefer to maintain two tactically antagonistic wings, one revolutionary and the other possibilist, with a view to adapting to "whatever may transpire", be it social revolution or the restoration of the "socialist- Azaña democracy"?

The UGT leaders wish at all costs to fit in with the status quo and its implications or, at most, to dabble in white revolution... In the municipal elections in Catalonia<sup>41</sup> they became props for a bourgeois democracy in its death throes. It is possible that this chronic invalid may enjoy a little remission before its final breath, but the working class cannot and must not waste time at its bedside. The "100 days" of Napoleonic democracy<sup>42</sup> could be more disastrous for the Spanish proletariat than the two years

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crescendo of the abstention campaign, March presented the CNT with the former printing press of *El Imparcial*, the reactionary Madrid paper that he owned. The press, which was used to publish *Solidaridad Obrera*, was viewed by many on the left as payment for the anti-socialist, anti-republican propaganda then being churned out by the CNT, while more sophisticated interpretations held that the *cenetistas* were simply the unconscious tools of reaction.

<sup>38</sup> First a republican, he became a convert to Marxism during a trip to Germany before World War One. Professor of philosophy at Madrid University, he was an important UGT and PSOE leader and theoretician, who continued the reformist line of Pablo Iglesias. Essentially a Kautskyite, his belief in the inevitability of socialism led him to reject practical attempts at revolution and he opposed attempts to affiliate the PSOE to the Comintern. Effectively ousted from the leadership by Largo Caballero in the late 1920s, he played little role in the republic besides attempting to quell the maximalism of the PSOE left. He attempted to find a compromise in the civil war but he died in a Francoist jail in 1940.

<sup>39</sup> A loyal supporter of Besteiro, he was elected to the Cortes for Oviedo in 1918 and, at various times, held important leadership positions in the PSOE and the UGT: secretary of the PSOE and editor of *El Socialista*, the party's main daily newspaper. From 1935 he edited *Democracia*, the anti-*caballerista* publication of the PSOE moderates.

<sup>40</sup> A Madrid-based trade union bureaucrat and *besteirista*, he was the UGT railway workers' union leader.

<sup>41</sup> The January 1934 council elections in Catalonia saw many of the left-moving socialists back the Front Obrer (Workers' Front), a united front with the BOC. This was a self-conscious attempt to overcome the divisions on the left that had been so damaging during the November 1933 national elections.

<sup>42</sup> A reference to the Napoleonic conquest of Spain when the country and the people were subjugated to the absolutist domination characteristic of the French ruler.

of collaboration, should that proletariat grant fresh credits of confidence to obsolete systems. The dead must be laid to rest and as much ground captured as possible. We trust that the UGT workers will be able to “unseat” the mandarins of its executive when the time comes and that revolutionary unity will be achieved, not to elevate chieftains or create petty-bourgeois ministers, but to eliminate capitalist intrigue and to launch the construction of a free new world.

The alliance platform. We come now to the most delicate facet of the matter. The first thing which has to be stated is that none of the doctrinal bases of any single movement can serve as the platform for unity. The rapprochement we seek is a tactic imposed by exceptional circumstances to which inflexible theoretical particularisms must be sacrificed. Should each tendency strive to push its own declaration of principles as the obligatory framework for alliance, that alliance would be a virtual impossibility. So some neutral terrain has to be found for the compact. To be sure, this terrain has to be so firm that it can withstand, without tremor, the weight and consequences of unity. Agreement of a tactical nature is the least difficult of agreements, since all agree on the gravity of current circumstances and only the details of how and when have to be discussed and worked out.

It is when one comes to the matter of the guidelines to follow the event that obstacles arise which are not quite so easy to pass over. Largo Caballero speaks of “the wholesale capture of public power”, the communists seek the installation of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and anarcho-syndicalists aspire to “libertarian communism” based on the rural municipality and the industrial labour organisation. While the terms may differ considerably from one another, it is noteworthy that both the socialists and the communists encapsulate their programme in exclusively tactical watchwords represented by the political terms “public power” and “dictatorship”, whereas anarcho-syndicalists offer a unique and complete social system.

These three viewpoints have to be stripped of all that is mutually refractory and incompatible. Only in this way will it be possible to discern the necessary line of convergence, the achievement and consolidation of which are prerequisites for the triumph of a proletarian revolution. Naturally, the formulae “capture of public power” and “dictatorship of the proletariat” must be set aside because they are overly partisan and inadequate expressions of the practical content of a social revolution. Today the Spanish proletariat is very distrustful of merely transferring power, and with good reason. Following the experience of 1931, it requires the fruits of its struggle to be translated into more tangible, positive, thoroughgoing transformations.

Revolutionary proletarian democracy. Given that the principal communist and socialist theoreticians concur that the end goal of both their movements is a classless, stateless and harmonious regime, one of the conditions of the alliance must, as far as is possible, assume progress in that direction. This is to say that, in the new social order, organs of coercion are not to be set up merely owing to the whim or artificial prescription of one tendency; instead, only those bodies absolutely crucial to the effective development of the revolutionary labour should be created. The entire governmental and repressive apparatus of the old system should vanish without a trace.

The crushing of the class enemy does not require the installation of an enduring dictatorship. Rather, all that is needed is the measured recourse to the “revolutionary violence” which Bakunin commended for the period of transition.

Bureaucratism and Bonapartism,<sup>43</sup> threats which are latent in every revolution, may be avoided by placing the revolution in the hands of the labouring people and by getting the great multitudes to defend and replenish it.

It is unacceptable that any tendency attempt to impose the oligarchical thesis of governing the proletarian masses from above. This brings us to a formula which we believe acceptable to all and which all tendencies must be ready to serve and acknowledge as the ultimate authority: revolutionary proletarian democracy. This corresponds roughly with the establishment of the Bavarian Soviet Republic in April 1919, wherein, before it was drowned in blood by the social democrat Gustav Noske,<sup>44</sup> it was possible for left-wing socialists like Ernst Toller<sup>45</sup> to collaborate with communists such as Eugen Levine<sup>46</sup> and anarchists like Gustav Landauer<sup>47</sup> and Erich Mühsam.<sup>48</sup> Revolutionary proletarian democracy is direct management of society by the workers, a certain bulwark against party dictatorship and a guarantee of the development of the revolution’s forces and undertakings.

In the current theoretical pronouncements of the socialist and communist parties, excessive importance is being given to the role of political apparatuses in the revolutionary process. This seems a curious attitude on the part of the official parties of historical materialism, who ought to emphasise the influence of the economy as the keystone of any effective social change. We, for all the utopianism customarily laid at our door, believe that entrenchment of the revolution depends above all upon the speedy and rational marshalling of the economy. For us, a simple political watchword seems insufficient if the fundamental problems of a revolution are to be tackled. What must be enshrined as the essential point is socialisation of the means of production and the creation of a new economy. This cannot be the handiwork of a central political authority; rather, it must be the labour of the trade union and collective bodies which, as the direct representatives of the producers, are the natural pillars of the new order. It is worth stressing in advance that, though subordinate

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<sup>43</sup> The personalist form of authoritarian rule originally identified with Napoleon Bonaparte and Napoleon III is characterised by the dictatorship of a powerful individual presiding over an uncertain and unstable balance of class forces.

<sup>44</sup> A German reformist socialist and, from 1906, parliamentarian. From 1918 until his retirement from politics in 1920, he was the most hated man in Germany, the undisputed grave-digger of the German revolution and the rally-point for forces of the old order who wished to limit the ambitions of the new Weimar Republic. In May 1919 he ordered 100,000 troops into Bavaria to crush the Soviet Republic. Detained by the Nazis in 1944, his rescue by Allied forces saved him from certain execution.

<sup>45</sup> A young German pacifist writer and author of a play about the Luddites. Despite his non-violent principles, he fought heroically against the counter-revolutionary forces sent into Bavaria.

<sup>46</sup> A leading figure in the Bavarian revolutionary experiment. He was executed in the 1919 repression.

<sup>47</sup> A literary historian and militant pacifist, who translated Kropotkin into German. A leading figure in the Bavarian Soviet Republic, he was beaten to death by counter-revolutionary troops.

<sup>48</sup> A Jewish journalist and poet, sentenced to fifteen years’ hard labour for his part in the Bavarian Soviet Republic, although he was released as part of a general amnesty in 1924. Detained by the Nazis in 1933, the following year he was murdered in Oranienburg concentration camp.

to an overall technical scheme, the management of economic tasks, both locally and nationally, falls within the purview of those worker bodies with the relevant specialisation. Thus the revolution will rest upon a network of living, purpose-built cells which will enthusiastically and competently pursue the construction of undiluted socialism.

Guidelines. It would be too pretentious to seek to anticipate and examine one by one the many issues which will arise during a revolution and prescribe *a priori* solutions for them all. For now, what matters most is that general guidelines are laid down so that these may serve as a platform of the alliance and furnish a combative and constructive norm for the united forces united. In our judgement, the following points should be stressed:

1. agreement around an unambiguously revolutionary plan which, by eschewing all collaboration with the bourgeois regime, will lead to the swift collapse of the capitalist order;
2. acceptance of revolutionary proletarian democracy, which is to say, the will of the majority of the proletariat, as the common denominator and determining factor of the new state of affairs;
3. immediate socialisation of the means of production, transportation, exchange, accommodation and finance; reabsorption of the unemployed into the productive process and the intensification of productivity to raise the labouring populace's living standards by the maximum possible degree; the introduction of a rigorously equitable distribution system; produce which ceases to be merchandise to become social assets; work being thereafter an activity open to everyone and one from which all entitlements emanate;
4. federated according to their area of interest and confederated at national level, the municipal and industrial organisations will maintain the principle of unity in the economic structure;
5. every executive organ necessary to cater for activities other than those of an economic nature will be overseen and subject to election and recall by the people.

These premisses are much more than a slogan. They represent a programme which synthesises those achievements likely to invest a revolution with a social essence. Besides being a telling exposition of the essential aspirations of the labour movement, they represent the fundamental common ground shared by all tendencies.

In any event, on these or on other premisses, we deem it necessary that a preliminary agreement must exist regarding the first steps of the revolution, along with the solemn pledge that the agreement be honoured in every detail. Given that the union of proletarian forces is crucial to the defeat of an enemy regime, it is crucial to guarantee the fruits of the revolutionary triumph and to overcome any difficulties which might arise in its initial stages, because any outbreak of hostilities between the various tendencies would seriously jeopardise the life of the revolution. For the sake of the working class such an eventuality must be made an impossibility.

Closing comments. What has been said may perhaps scandalise those who worship theoretical purism. We may perhaps be labelled as heretics for failing to pay tribute to the dogmatic rigidities fashionable in some quarters. We care nothing for that. In describing our option regarding the most important question of unity, we have been honest with ourselves. We have viewed reality without the tinted glasses of doctrinal concerns and conventions. We are dealing here with a revolution and not with an academic dissertation about this or that principle. Principles should not be articles of law, but formulae agile enough to shape reality.

Does our platform of alliance guarantee wholesale libertarian communism on the morrow of the revolution? Self-evidently, not. But what it does guarantee is a regime of proletarian democracy free of exploitation and class privileges, which affords broad access to fully-fledged libertarian society. This strikes us as more positive than pure metaphysics and theories of monopoly and revolutionary shamanism. Candour is no crime.

In February 1934 there was a national plenum of CNT regional committees. The question of the Workers' Alliance prompted stormy debates between the representatives from Catalonia, the Centre and Asturias. The Catalan regional committee adopted an anti-alliance stance for two principal reasons: first, that socialist influence in that region was non-existent; and second, out of resentment at the repression mounted by the socialists, either directly from central government, or through the ERC in the Generalitat. Nonetheless, the plenum unanimously passed the following resolution, which was an overture to the UGT:

Factors beyond our control have prevented the Confederation from addressing the working class directly as it would have wished. Assembled in national plenum, together with representatives from all of its regional committees, it has studied the political and social situation of Spain at great length, noting that both individual liberties and civil rights are currently curtailed and infringed as they were in the worst days of the monarchy. The damage caused by the ongoing repression of the republican and socialist elements which governed the country has borne out the contention of the CNT that the Republic, like every conservative and democratic regime, cannot meet the needs and aspirations of the working class.

And, given that the conduct of the Republic is leading the country to fascism, the plenum resolves to outline the position of the organisation in order to demonstrate to the working class that the CNT, in keeping with its revolutionary trajectory and mindful of the positions of the UGT, is ready, as ever, to give its all in any revolutionary upheaval designed to emancipate all, repeat, all the working class.

This being the case, the CNT calls upon the UGT to make a clear and public statement of its revolutionary aspirations. But let it be borne in mind that in speaking of revolution, that revolution should not be made in the belief that one is aiming at a simple change of authorities, as on 14 April (1931), but rather at the complete suppression of capitalism and of the state.

Signed on behalf of Andalusia, Centre, Galicia, Catalonia, Balearics, North, Asturias, Levante, Aragón, Rioja and Navarre, and the National Committee.



Barcelona, 13 February 1934.

On 23 June 1934 another national plenum of regional committees sat down to business in Madrid. The February plenum had invited the UGT to participate in a revolutionary uprising of an anti-capitalist and anti-statist nature, free of compacts or commitments of any sort. No reply to that invitation, either public or private, had been forthcoming. Going one step further, the Asturian CNT regional committee turned up at the June plenum with a compact it had signed with the UGT off its own bat. Taken to task over this by the other regional committees, Asturias defended its position in a way that contradicted the proposition to which it had subscribed at the February plenum:

It will be argued that both unions, the CNT and the UGT, will, in the face of danger and without any need for prior alliance, encounter each other in the mines, factories and workshops, where they will join forces to defeat their adversary. This argument is puerile. In social struggles, as in other wars, success goes almost always to those forces which have disposed and organised their fighting cadres in advance.

The Madrid plenum confirmed Asturias's breach of the CNT's organisational discipline in pursuit of revolutionary realism. Out of loyalty to its commitments, the Asturian CNT regional committee staked its claim to freedom of action. What follows is the text of the compact signed by the Asturian CNT — with the sole exception of the important local federation of La Felguera<sup>49</sup> — and the UGT leadership:

The signatory organisations, UGT and CNT, acknowledge that the economic and social situation of the bourgeois regime in Spain demands concentrated action by workers of all persuasions with the exclusive aim of promoting and carrying through the social revolution. To that end, each of the signatory organisations commits itself to carrying out the pledge laid down in this compact, on the following conditions:

1. The organisations bound by this compact will work in common agreement until they secure the triumph of the social revolution, establishing a regime of economic, political and social equality based upon federalist socialist principles.
2. For the sake of attaining that goal, an executive committee representative of all those groups party to this compact will be set up in Oviedo to act in concert with a national organism.
3. As a logical consequence of the first and second conditions of this compact, let it be understood that, under normal circumstances, the formation of that national committee is the indispensable premise for the launching of any action related to the objectives of this compact, in so far as operations at national level are concerned. This planned national committee will be the only one empowered to instruct the Oviedo committee as to which actions to take in connection with the broader action throughout Spain.

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<sup>49</sup> This was an anarchist stronghold and the only centre of FAI influence in Asturias.

4. Committees comprised of delegations from each of the organisations bound by this compact and from any other groups which may later accept it are to be set up in each locality throughout Asturias.
  5. All propaganda campaigns which might hinder or sour relations between the allied parties must cease, although this does not mean the abandonment of balanced and reasoned doctrinal debate by the groups which make up the revolutionary alliance and which retain their collective independence.
  6. The executive committee will draft a plan of action which, through the revolutionary exertions of the proletariat, will assure the unqualified success of the revolution in all its aspects.
  7. All accords of the executive committee are to be codicils to this present compact, binding all the organisations both in the run-up to the revolution and after its success. Let it be understood that the resolutions of the aforementioned executive committee will draw their inspiration from the contents of this compact.
  8. The commitment entered into by the signatory organisations is to end as soon as the regime outlined in clause 1 has been installed along with its own organs freely elected by the working class.
  9. Given that this compact represents an agreement by working-class organisations to coordinate their activities against the bourgeois regime and abolish it, all links with bourgeois parties must be severed in order to attain the objects prescribed by the present compact.
  10. The Asturian Socialist Federation forms part of this revolutionary alliance, having previously indicated its agreement with it.
- 28 March 1934.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> From Manuel Villar (Ignotus), *El anarquismo en la insurrección de Asturias*, Buenos Aires, 1936 (2nd edition).

## CHAPTER FIVE: 6 October 1934 in Asturias and in Catalonia

Revolution broke out in Asturias at dawn on 5 October. The participants, in order of importance, were the PSOE, the CNT and the minority PCE. The CNT in the region numbered some 22,000 organised workers. Its main strongholds were in Gijón and La Felguera. In Gijón, the CNT was the largest force, with 13,000 members. The La Felguera local federation had 4,000 members and a tradition of anarchism and belligerence.

In the run-up to the rising a confederal plenum was held in Gijón. There was a difference in attitude on the part of the La Felguera and Gijón CNT people towards the question of the alliance; the latter were passionately in favour of it. The anarchists from La Felguera questioned the revolutionary integrity of the socialists and opposed any compact or a priori commitment. Their view was that unity had to be achieved on the basis of the *fait accompli* of revolution.<sup>1</sup>

In anticipation, the socialists had imported a shipment of arms via the Asturian coast. The shipment was left in the safekeeping of the PSOE which, from the outset, displayed a tendency to assert its hegemony over the rising. As a result, and despite the provisions of the terms of the alliance pact to which the CNT had subscribed, the order for the uprising was issued by the socialists. In Oviedo a specifically socialist revolutionary committee was secretly at work, which contained no CNT representatives. Even at the most critical junctures, when the revolt was on the brink of defeat, the socialists persisted in their policy of absorption. Despite this, the CNT involved itself from the very outset, relying upon its own weaponry.

The revolution started in the mining areas, where it assumed an openly violent character. Dynamite, used by the miners against strongholds, proved a most persuasive weapon. The Civil Guard put up a hopeless fight. Once they had been overwhelmed in the majority of villages, the attack on the capital of Asturias began. Almost simultaneously with the revolutionary advance in Oviedo, the first of the government's motorised columns appeared on the borders of Asturias. The revolutionaries were forced to divide their forces to confront the threat. In the south and in the east, the push of government columns, including one led by Lieutenant Colonel José Solchaga Zena,<sup>2</sup> was contained. A third column under General Eduardo López Ochoa y Portuondo<sup>3</sup> was

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<sup>1</sup> This represented the dominant position among the anarchists as expressed most vocally by the Catalan CNT, a stance that led, in effect, to isolation rather than unity.

<sup>2</sup> A monarchist officer who was promoted during the dictatorship, he had reached the rank of general by the civil war, in which he played an important role as field commander in the assault on the north of Spain. A Franco loyalist, he was appointed Captain-General of Barcelona in 1945.

<sup>3</sup> A Freemason and republican, he opposed Primo de Rivera and the monarchy and was made Captain-General of Barcelona early on in the republic. Alcalá Zamora selected him to command the troops responsible for the repression of the Asturian Commune in the hope that he might avert a bloodbath. While López negotiated a truce with the revolutionaries in return for assurances that there would be no reprisals, hard-line officers — notably Franco — rejected all conciliation and scuppered this agreement, unleashing the Moorish mercenaries with devastating effect.

advancing from Galicia and was harried throughout its progress along the Corunha highway before being intercepted at Grado.

Another revolutionary hotbed was Gijón. As weapons were in short supply there, the CNT forces dug in around the city's outlying districts. CNT personnel made repeated but fruitless trips to secure arms from the socialist-controlled revolutionary committee in Oviedo. The shortage of weapons and ammunition and the ongoing naval bombardment led to the capture of Gijón on 10 October, despite the arrival of reinforcements from La Felguera. Thereafter, the Cantabrian coastal area was to be the Achilles heel of the revolution. Halted at Grado, General López Ochoa swung off course in the direction of Avilés and descended upon Oviedo. Under naval protection, Foreign Legion and regular troops landed on the beaches and made their way inland via El Musel.

The Oviedo revolutionary committee entrusted the capture of the city to the miners' columns but they were unable to fulfil this assignment until they had brought the valley towns under their control in their rear. However, once they had overcome this resistance, too much time had elapsed for them to launch a surprise attack on the garrison in Oviedo. For this reason, Oviedo had to be taken from the suburbs, street by street, building by building. There were serious hitches in the capture of the La Vega weapons plant and the artillery plant in Trubia. The slow progress of operations enabled the defenders of La Vega to remove most of the ammunition to the Pelayo barracks, which became the focus of resistance. The revolutionaries captured 35,000 rifles and a good few machine-guns but with scarcely any ammunition. The shells captured in the Trubia artillery plant lacked fuses.

An attempt was made to remedy these deficiencies by setting up a war industry, an endeavour in which La Felguera distinguished itself. Besides armour-plating for trucks, daily production came to include 30,000 rifle shells and machine-gun bullets. But this was not enough. The pro-government strongholds in Oviedo cathedral, which was respected by the socialists for its architectural heritage even though its spires were turned into machine-gun nests, represented a tragic nightmare for the revolutionaries, as did the civil governor's building and the Santa Clara and Pelayo barracks.

In the fighting inside Oviedo, the trucks plated with armour by the La Felguera anarchists played an outstanding role, their front and side windows bristling with red-hot machine-gun barrels.

In the light of the loss of Gijón and the advance by government troops, the revolutionary committee assumed that the revolt was doomed and issued the order for a general retreat on 11 October. The order was angrily resisted by the fighting men. From that moment onwards the CNT forces began to take a lead in the fighting. José María Martínez,<sup>4</sup> the soul of the alliance in Asturias, perished in Sotiello on 12 October while on a mission for the revolutionary committee.

Then the government aircraft began their frightful butchery. In the intervals between bombing raids, aircraft dropped the following leaflet:

Rebels of Asturias: surrender! It's the only way to save your lives. Unconditional surrender and the handing over of your weapons within 24 hours. The whole of Spain, with all her might, is pitted against you, ready to crush you without mercy, as just reprisal for your criminal lunacy.

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<sup>4</sup> From the 1910s he had been a leading organiser, tactician and propagandist in the Asturian CNT and a staunch defender of united action with the UGT.

The Generalitat of Catalonia surrendered to Spanish troops at dawn on Sunday. Companys and his accomplices are in jail awaiting the verdict of the courts. In the whole of Spain, not a single strike persists. You are alone and you are going to be victims of a defeated and failed revolution.

All the damage done to you by the bombing raids and our weaponry is but a foretaste of what will be coming your way, inevitably, if, before the sun goes down, you have not abandoned your revolt and surrendered your weapons. After that we shall pursue you until we have destroyed you, offering neither quarter nor pardon. Give yourselves up to the government of Spain! Long live the Republic!<sup>5</sup>

In spite of everything, the revolution lasted until 18 October, the date on which the provincial revolutionary committee, comprising socialists and communists,<sup>6</sup> ended the revolt with the following manifesto:

To all workers. The proletariat's glorious insurrection against the bourgeoisie began on 5 October. Having proven the suitability of the working masses for the tasks of government with our well-planned alternatives of attack and defence, we consider that a truce in the struggle is necessary and recommend that our weapons be laid down to avert greater damage to our cause. Thus, with all the revolutionary committees having consulted with the provincial revolutionary committee, it has been resolved that there should be a return to normality and we urge all of you to make an orderly and dignified return to work. Comrades, we consider our retreat as both honourable and inevitable. Revolutionary ethics have prompted us to adopt this extreme course, for while we paid a tribute of idealism and manliness on the field of war, we are fighting an unequal battle against an enemy which can call upon modern combat weaponry. This is a halt along the road, a parenthesis, an interval of recuperation after our "superhuman effort". Comrades, we would remind you of this historic dictum: "The proletariat may be beaten but it will never be defeated." Everyone must return to work and continue fighting for victory!

18 October 1934.

Though the socialists strove throughout to retain hegemony in the revolt, the economic and political achievements of the revolution varied according to which worker group was hegemonic in any given area. Nothing shows this so well as the manifestos printed in the various townships. In areas of socialist or communist influence, the approach was authoritarian. Proclamations of inflexible measures were repeated to the point of obsession. For their part, the anarchists, in keeping with the message emanating from La Felguera, proclaimed libertarian communism everywhere, heralding the abolition of private ownership and the principle of authority. Here is one manifesto which offers us a typical example of the tone given to the revolt by the socialists:

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<sup>5</sup> This pro-republican ruse was also attempted by some of the insurgent army officers in July 1936 in an attempt to confuse the masses.

<sup>6</sup> Although neither were represented directly, the CNT and the FAI were in contact with this committee, with senior figures in the organisation, including José María Martínez, acting as intermediaries.

Revolutionary committee of Mieres and municipality! Let it be known:

1. that the revolutionary committee, as interpreter of the people's will and watchdog over the interests of the revolution, stands ready to take all those measures necessary to channel the course of the rebellion. To this end we require:
2. that all who are fit to go to the front present themselves for enrolment at the recruiting offices which we have installed at the Salón Novedades and the school buildings and which are to serve as the effective headquarters for this sector;
3. that all looting will cease forthwith and any individual caught in an act of that sort will be executed;
4. that every person in possession of weapons should present themselves to the revolutionary committee. Anyone found with weapons in their home or on the streets will, unless they are registered, be very severely dealt with;
5. that anyone who may have in their possession looted goods or reserves of money, which may also be the result of hoarding, is warned to surrender them without delay. Anyone failing to do so will be treated as an enemy of the revolution;
6. all foodstuffs, as well as articles of clothing, are hereby confiscated;
7. all members of the leading committees of the labour organisations of the area are asked to present themselves before this committee forthwith, for the purpose of regulating the distribution and consumption of foodstuffs and clothing;
8. members of the workers' parties and youth sections of the district should present themselves immediately, together with their membership cards, so that the workers' militia may be constituted to maintain order and supervise the development of the revolution. The revolutionary committee.

Compare that manifesto, with its strong whiff of barrack room discipline, with the profound sense of humanity exuded by that from the Grado revolutionary committee:

To the workers and peasants of the Grado municipality. Comrades, we are creating a new society and, as in the biological world, birth is accompanied by physical and mental pain. These are natural laws which nothing and no-one can evade. It is inevitable that it should be so. Life springs from death. The agony of a dying man, his last breath, strengthens the lungs of the newborn babe and gives it life.

Let it not puzzle you, then, that the world we are shaping costs blood, pain and tears; on earth, everything is fertile. Now then, this work of giants requires the collaboration of all. The young men fight in the streets with zeal and courage worthy of their cause. They are the real heroes of this effort which is going to lift the yoke of slavery from the working class. And, as we all are heeded, those who do not fight with a rifle are asked to lend a hand in whatever tasks may be necessary.

The provisioning of the neighbourhood is complicated by the lack of rail transport which ought, as agreed, to have supplied us with what we lack. It will be a matter of

days before working life returns to normal and it is a matter of urgency for us that it should.

Yes, yes! It is a matter of urgency that we set aside our weapons; we want to demobilise our youth soon so that it may dedicate itself to the work of creation rather than destruction. It is a cruel twist that someone born to live should handle the instruments of death. It will be a matter of the few hours necessary to convince the erstwhile privileged that their privileges have gone for ever, just as the feudal *droit de seigneur* also died out in its day.

In anticipation of the difficulties we must encounter in the provision of foodstuffs, families must cooperate as far as they can during periods of economic hardship. While tightening the belt, each household will equip itself with its basic necessities. Should any family briefly have to go without some item, it ought not to insist on it. In these difficult times, labourers ought to make do with the little they have, confident that we will soon place working tools, seed and fertiliser at their disposal.

From this day forward, those classes which resist absorption into the ranks of the workers because they possess money or credit will not be able to maintain themselves in the manner to which they have been accustomed. Foodstuffs issued today and henceforth will be drawn from our warehouses. We know how to deal with the distributors if they prove to be untrustworthy and they should be warned that during these times there will be no beating about the bush.

The people in general must feel intense satisfaction with the realisation of its ideals. In no more than a few hours there will be more bread in every home and joy in every heart. Let us all be worthy of the times in which we live, raising our heads that have been bowed for centuries.

Soldiers of the ideal! Keep your rifles handy and at the ready, for there are still enemies. Thousands of our class brethren fight on in other villages. Our success ought not to make us forgetful that our will and energy are also needed by other workers confronted by greater difficulties.

Women! For the sake of your children who will henceforth enjoy a better world, help in this undertaking. Keep consumption low, keep it down to what is strictly necessary. Be you also worthy of the present hour.

Workers! Long live the social revolution!

Grado, October 1934.

We shall not linger to analyse the series of overlapping errors in the revolution of October 1934. The basic miscalculation was the failure of the rising to take place throughout the national territory. In this regard the preparatory work was a catastrophe. The revolution proper was confined to the Asturias region and part of León. In the rest of Spain, except for Catalonia, which merits a separate mention, the rising did not get beyond a simple general strike. Was that the real intention of the socialists? Does the revolution in Asturias constitute an instance of events going beyond what the socialists actually anticipated?

The alliance pact signed in Asturias between the CNT and the UGT left no room for doubt as to its revolutionary implications. The very first clause in that agreement prescribed that the objective was ‘a regime of economic, political and social equality founded upon federalist-socialist principles’. However, one has only to re-read the programme later made public in the socialist press to discover that the PSOE was not setting its sights much higher than the classical electoral programme of the republican-socialist Popular Front.

In the pamphlet cited above, Llopis had this to say:

It will not be out of place to set out here the programme of that uprising as published by Bilbao’s *El Liberal*<sup>7</sup> on 11 January 1936. The document in question went as follows:

“1. All of the lands of Spain are to be declared state property, suppressing in this way the payment of rents to private citizens, rents which, in any case, ought to be paid to the state, the municipalities or whatever other communities or public corporations to which the state may delegate its rights. In those areas where agricultural property consists of tiny holdings ( *minifundios*), the land will remain in the hands of those currently tilling it, through payment of the land tax which may be prescribed in keeping with the aforementioned economic structure. In areas where agricultural property is of a predominantly latifundist nature, the introduction of collective tillage will be sought, under the aegis of either the state, the municipalities or peasant communities established for this express purpose. Through its qualified personnel, the state will have an obligation to assume the technical management of the collective holdings.

2. The future of Spanish agriculture will hinge upon utilisation of all irrigated lands, thereby enabling a huge number of families to live off the land, far more than are presently engaged in farm work. Given the inadequacy of the allocations from the state’s ordinary budget for hydraulic works, steps will be taken to accelerate these to a degree not merely desirable but also crucial to reserve the largest possible portion of the national exchequer for usage at a prudent rate of interest. The overall aim is the realisation of said hydraulic works whereby, in the short term, employment can be provided for some thousands of workers and the settlement in the near future of a considerable mass of labourers in superb conditions. This operation might be realised by means of a consortium involving the state, the federal organ of the savings banks and the national bank, with the relevant lands covered under the provisions of item 1 of this programme being taken under state control as collateral.

3. Public education is to be radically reformed. The organisation of further education is to be overhauled in such a way that only those pupils who may have displayed a thoroughly demonstrable degree of learning in primary and secondary education and have indicated that they will benefit from a spell in the universities or specialist schools will have access to it. The realisation of this idea may be achieved by the state assuming burdens such as the upkeep of those students who, from primary school level upwards, have displayed exceptional talents. Once this has been noted by the respective teacher and the pupils tested by pedagogical councils, these children will be

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<sup>7</sup> A liberal republican daily newspaper and one of the most popular press titles in the Basque Country, it published from 1901 until 1937, when the Francoists took the city. Always a paper with very close ties to the PSOE, early in the Republic it was purchased by Prieto, the reformist socialist leader.



removed to centres of primary education where, owing to special arrangements, they will better develop their exceptional gifts. An identical procedure will be adopted at secondary level. In this way, access to university will be denied those who currently abound there with nothing to recommend them other than a privileged economic background and the only ones to enter university would be those of proven capabilities. In this way the squandering of university facilities would be averted. The appropriate quotas of graduates from all the faculties and diploma holders from the specialist schools having been established, the number of such educational establishments will have to be controlled, surplus state expenditure thus created being diverted into the establishment of trade schools to refine the technical knowledge of the workers and broaden their general culture.

4. Despite the separation of church and state and the bland secular legislation thus far approved by the Republic, there is no dissenting faith in Spain powerful enough to rival the Catholic Church and guarantee the modicum of freedom of conscience required by a civilised people. Given that the barbarously intransigent zeal of Spanish Catholics will always culminate in religious fanaticism, all the religious orders are to be dissolved and their assets confiscated. Additionally, members of those orders whose past record indicates that they pose a threat to the new institutions will be expelled from the national territory.

5. The army is to be disbanded and immediately reorganised on a streamlined basis. With the exception of those who may have shown unwavering loyalty to the regime, all generals, commanders and officers will be dismissed. Even those in the highest command posts are to be replaced in a democratic fashion by those who, since their inclusion into the ranks as troopers, have shown evidence of the required competency, in short, creating a situation whereby, to borrow Napoleon's dictum, 'every soldier carries a field marshal's baton in his knapsack'.

6. The Civil Guard is to be dismantled and all the armed corps in state service are to be reorganised along the same democratic lines as those devised for the army. Additionally, it will be an indispensable proviso for all functionaries to display sincere loyalty to the new regime. The essential core of these institutions will be supplied by militias recruited exclusively and preponderantly from the membership of the organisations which will carry out the transformation outlined in this programme.

7. All the organs of the public administration are to be thoroughly overhauled to provide greater flexibility and efficiency; there will also be a searching review of the competence of functionaries and the dismissal of those who, on account of their disaffection *vis-à-vis* the regime, might sabotage it in one fashion or another.

8. Since it is inopportune at the moment to enact socialisation in the bulk of Spanish industry, as this might simply add to its incipient weakness, the programme shall for the time being be confined to a series of measures aimed at the moral and material betterment of the industrial workers. Care will be taken to give them a sense of dignity and independence and to offer them the where-withal to monitor the functioning of those organisations on whose payroll they are listed.

9. Our taxation system is to be overhauled, the fundamental principle being an increase in the percentage tax on income from capital and on inheritance.

10. All measures deriving from the points outlined in this programme will be introduced rapidly by means of decree. When appropriate, they may then be endorsed by whatever legislative organs the populace freely chooses for itself. Given that this revolutionary programme would not win the consent of the current holder of the office of president of the Republic, he will be dismissed from office.”<sup>8</sup>

We have indicated that one of the defects of the 6 October 1934 uprising was the lack of a serious plan for nationwide coordination. Except in Asturias, the socialist leaders of the rising shunned all contact with the Confederation. The motion passed by the CNT’s national plenum of regional committees, dated 13 February of that year, drew no response from the UGT.

If the socialists really had intended to unleash a revolutionary uprising in Spain – and this has yet to be proven – the collaboration of the CNT was indispensable to their purpose, at least in those regions, such as Catalonia, Aragón, Levante and Andalusia, where the Confederation’s offensive capabilities were self-evident. Their failure to take due consideration of this presupposed that the real intention of the socialists was to unleash a simple conflict which might force the Radical- CEDA government to resign. On the other hand, keen to secure for themselves the mastery of that rising, and with an eye to the socialist aims outlined in the programme set forth above, they regarded themselves as being strong enough to snatch victory through their own efforts and through the fortuitous aid which the sporadic collaboration of the republicans and the mass of the people might bring them.

In the first case, the socialists miscalculated regarding the government’s likely response and the reaction of the security forces and the army. In the second, they faced an adventitious enough risk in terms of a revolutionary undertaking. In both cases, the socialists ascribed an exaggerated importance to the intentions and fighting ability of the ranks of Estat Català and the ERC.

From their positions in the central government, and indirectly from their positions in the Generalitat government, socialists and Catalanists had worked hand in hand in the repression directed against the Confederation in Catalonia. Consequently, the Esquerra and the PSOE were linked with the repression of the insurrections of January 1932 and of January and December 1933. The holy alliance between socialists and Catalanists inclined the CNT, even more than it was naturally, to remain aloof from any revolt of a political nature.<sup>9</sup>

The revolt of 6 October, a revolt determined by the PSOE, assumed the form in Catalonia of a nationalistic-political revolt under the aegis of the Esquerra and the Workers’ Alliance ( Aliança Obrera), a rag-bag of tiny, essentially bureaucratic or petty-bourgeois groups, commanded by parties and factions of minimal popular influence and negligible revolutionary inclinations.<sup>10</sup> For its part the Generalitat was confidently counting upon the loyalty of the police and Assault

<sup>8</sup> Rodolfo Llopis, *Octubre del 34*, Mexico-Paris, 1949, p. 32. (Note by the author.)

<sup>9</sup> In the case of Catalonia, these trends were reinforced immeasurably by the peculiarly sectarian nature of the majority Catalan FAI.

<sup>10</sup> Again, Peirats’s latent sectarianism and anti-communism get the better of his judgement here. The BOC – the architects of the unity accord – fulfilled their revolutionary responsibilities after July 1936 and in May 1937 in a manner that could not be said of several anarchist leaders. The Catalan Workers’ Alliance was made up of all leftist and workers’ groups (with the exception of the CNT and the FAI) and therefore included dissident communists, orthodox Marxists, reformist socialists and moderate anarcho-syndicalists.

Guard, and perhaps also on the support or neutrality of the commander of the army garrison whose Catalan surname was the focus of expectant speculation.<sup>11</sup>

As a further complication, the Esquerra was immersed in a deadly crusade against the CNT which began before the passage of Catalonia's Statute of Autonomy. The Esquerra, with its control over public order in Catalonia, had not lifted the order of closure against the CNT's union premises which had been in force since the December 1933 revolt. The CNT daily paper *Solidaridad Obrera* was victimised by a systematic campaign of suspensions and the imprisonment of its editorial staff, including Manuel Villar (a. k. a. Ignatus),<sup>12</sup> its managing editor. In his book *El anarquismo en la insurrección de Asturias*,<sup>13</sup> which he wrote on the prompting of the paper's editorial board, who paid for his visit to the region after October 1934, Villar had this to say:

In Catalonia *Solidaridad Obrera* was hit by its first government suspension order on 24 April 1933. Between then and 5 October 1934, just a day before the Generalitat's insurrection, the Confederation's daily newspaper was suspended on three separate occasions, one of which lasted 104 days. To this we must add the confiscation of entire print-runs on no less than 34 occasions, which resulted in a substantial loss of money on materials and wages. Between suspensions and confiscations *Solidaridad Obrera* failed to appear on 212 days; which is to say that, Catalonia's anarcho-syndicalist daily saw the light of day on only 304 out of a total of 516 days.

In Catalonia, the revolt was intermingled with the denouement of the dispute between the Generalitat and central government. A law passed by the Catalan parliament, known as the Contracts of Cultivation Bill (*Llei de contractes de conreu*), was overturned by the constitutional court owing to the pressure of the big Catalan landowners. At the root of the clash was the rivalry between the largest parties in Catalonia — the Esquerra and the Lliga. The beneficiaries of the bill, the *rabassaires*, were a class of smallholders and the main electoral constituency of the Esquerra in the countryside and indeed the most important popular base of the party. In this dispute, the Esquerra resurrected the slogan which had earlier been used during the campaign for a statute of regional autonomy: 'If they don't give it freely, we'll seize it by force' (*Si no ens el donen, ens el pendrem*).

The revolt in Catalonia began on 5 October with a general strike declared by the Workers' Alliance and enforced by the police. The previous evening those same police had rounded up as many CNT militants as they were able to catch in their homes. Among those detained was Durruti. On 6 October, the *CNT* daily newspaper was several hours late in appearing owing to the mutilations caused by censorship. As a result of that censorship, the CNT regional committee

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<sup>11</sup> This is a reference to General Domingo Batet, a veteran of the colonial wars in Cuba and Morocco and a liberal republican army officer active in the conspiracies against the dictatorship in the 1920s. Because of his loyalty to the republic, he felt compelled to comply with the order to detain Companys in October 1934. Stationed in Burgos during the July 1936 military coup, he was detained by General Mola and executed in February 1937, despite calls from many leading right-wing army officers that he be pardoned.

<sup>12</sup> An Argentinian exile and comrade of Abad de Santillán, he was a member of the 'Nervio' group that effectively supplanted 'Nosotros' within the CNT and the FAI during 1934–5. Editor of *Solidaridad Obrera* during 1933–5, he was commissioned by the Barcelona daily to write a study of the Asturian revolution.

<sup>13</sup> This classic book — which was first published in Barcelona in 1935 and which has been reprinted on several occasions — was one of Peirats's main sources for the passages and documents on the Asturian revolution.

sought recourse to a clandestine handbill to offer guidance to the Confederation's workers. This is the communiqué made public that very day:

CNT of Catalonia and the Barcelona local federation. Calling all workers and the people in general! In these moments of intense agitation, in which all popular forces are in contention, the CNT must enter the battle in a manner consistent with its revolutionary anarchist principles. The contest has begun and we stand on the threshold of events which may possibly determine the future of our people. Our attitude cannot be one of contemplation, but rather one of strong and decisive action which can end the current state of affairs. This is no time to theorise, but a time to act and to act well, a time for independent action by the revolutionary proletariat. Our libertarian principles must be upheld without even the slightest contact with those official institutions which will control the people's action for their own ends.

The revolt which broke out this morning must acquire the characteristics of a popular act through the independent actions of the proletariat, not through the supervision of the security forces. Shame on those who either accept or call for the help of the police. The CNT, which has for some time past been the target of vicious repression, must break out of the margins where it has been placed by its oppressors. We demand the right to intervene in this struggle and we will take this. We are the surest guarantee that fascism will make no progress and those who attempt to deny us this right will be facilitating fascist intrigues themselves by impeding our action. So we shall rally all our forces, preparing ourselves for the approaching struggles.

The watchwords of the CNT of Catalonia just now are:

1. immediate opening of our union buildings and the concentration of the workers on those premises;
2. display of our antifascist libertarian principles in contradistinction to all authoritarian principles;
3. activation of the district committees which shall bear the burden of issuing specific guidelines as events progress;
4. all of the region's unions are to liaise closely with this committee which will oversee the revolt by coordinating the belligerent forces.

Today more than ever we must apply ourselves to a demonstration of the revolutionary anarchist spirit which moves our unions.

For the CNT! For libertarian communism! The CNT and the Barcelona local federation.

Barcelona, 6 October 1934.<sup>14</sup>

The first to act upon the above were the militants of the Woodworkers' Union. After these had seized their union premises and forced open its doors, which had been closed and sealed, the

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<sup>14</sup> This manifesto was drawn up by Francisco Ascaso, the then secretary of the Catalan CNT regional committee, and caused a huge furore among the Asturian CNT who were still battling with the army. In the fall-out that followed Ascaso was forced to resign and, although he became a martyr after his death in July 1936, he was morally wounded by the ensuing criticisms of his behaviour and he ceased to play an important role inside the CNT.

security forces promptly appeared on the scene in violent mood and a fierce gun battle broke out between police and CNT members. The workers were forced to beat a retreat and the premises were sealed again. *À propos* of this clash, the Generalitat minister of home affairs, Dr Dencàs, issued a memo in which he exhorted the police and those armed citizens who had begun to patrol the city against ‘anarchist provocateurs in the pay of reactionaries’. At 5 pm that day uniformed forces of the Generalitat government shot their way into the editorial offices of *Solidaridad Obrera*.<sup>15</sup> The police intended to surprise a regional plenum that was then in session, but fortunately on different premises. The newspaper’s administrative offices and workshops were shut down.

As night fell, the Generalitat premier, Companys, proclaimed ‘a Catalan state within a Spanish federal republic’. A host of armed police and civilians wielding Winchesters mustered outside the Generalitat building to provide a rapturous welcome to Companys’ proclamation. But almost simultaneously the commander of the army garrison, General Domingo Batet, made a proclamation of his own, introducing martial law. The appearance of troops on the Ramblas sparked off the first exchanges of gunfire. The headquarters of the extremist nationalist faction, Estat Català-Partit Proletari,<sup>16</sup> was levelled by artillery fire. Jaume Compte,<sup>17</sup> leader of the CADCI,<sup>18</sup> perished there. Troops laid siege to the Generalitat building while desertions among its defenders increased by the minute. By the early dawn Companys issued a pathetic appeal ‘to all citizens, regardless of ideology’ to rally to the Generalitat’s defence. A few groups of *rabassaires* attempted to march on Barcelona but were intercepted by troops and disarmed. The civilian militias began to dump their weapons and their withdrawal turned into a rout. The Assault Guards surrendered or took flight, jettisoning their armaments and pulling out of the fight. When the first artillery shells began to burst against the walls of his presidential palace, Companys and his cabinet gave themselves up, with the exception of Dencàs who, having prepared an escape route in advance, scuttled away via a sewer.

The leftist elements fell apart in every town in the region. The weapons and ammunition they jettisoned were taken into safekeeping by CNT personnel. In some towns such as Granollers, the CNT militants assumed control of the rebellion, leaving their own mark upon it. This was enough to ensure that the repression would batten violently on the Confederation. *Solidaridad Obrera*, resurfacing briefly in the wake of the revolt, was closed down for a further five or six months and CNT union premises remained under lock and key.

Such, in general outline, were the events of 6 October as they affected Catalonia. The absurd contention according to which the confederal proletariat of Catalonia betrayed their brethren in Asturias melts away in the face of a truthful narration of the facts. The socialists themselves erred on the side of pusillanimity in their fief in Madrid and in the broad expanses of the Castilian meseta. The socialist stronghold in Vizcaya adopted a cautious, wait-and-see attitude.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Peirats was present in the offices at the time and was very nearly wounded by trigger-happy members of the security forces.

<sup>16</sup> A 1932 left-wing split from Macià’s separatist Estat Català party.

<sup>17</sup> A founder member of Estat Català and leader of Bandera Negra, he was involved in the 1925 Garraf plot to assassinate King Alfonso XIII. Sentenced to death, this was later commuted and he was amnestied by the Republic in 1931, whereupon he devoted himself to radical separatist politics.

<sup>18</sup> Created in 1903, this was a social, political, cultural and trade union organisation of shopworkers and bank employees with strong Catalanist inclinations. Dissolved by the dictatorship in 1923, it was resurgent in the republic and joined the UGT during the civil war.

<sup>19</sup> In Bilbao the workers were on strike but did little more than take the air and the sun.

In Asturias, however, the repression of the revolt, in spite of the guarantees of clemency and all the legalistic protestations of the praetorian invaders, became a real *via dolorosa*. Besides the mass butchery of unarmed workers by the Moors and the legionnaires, who slit human throats as if they were slaying sheep, we must add the rape of the womenfolk, robbery, pillage and arson. In Villafría and Carbayin the carnage plumbed the very depths of inhumanity. Hundreds of slaughtered miners ended up at the bottom of pit shafts and amid slag heaps. The journalist Luis de Sirval<sup>20</sup> was murdered by an officer from the Foreign Legion for daring to expose this catalogue of horrors.

In the police barracks and other points where the prisoners were concentrated, the repression reached unbelievable refinements of sadism. Scourging, kicking and the twisting of genitals was the order of the day. The technique known sarcastically as the ‘aeroplane’ (*trimotor*) earned a dismal notoriety. Subjecting a captive to the ‘aeroplane’ meant binding his hands behind his back with a rope that was then passed over a pulley suspended from the ceiling. The torturers would pull upon one end of the rope until the prisoner had been hoisted into the air, with the attendant cracking of sinews and dislocation of the shoulder blades. With the victim by now suspended a couple of feet from the floor, his legs would be forced apart and the testicles would be beaten continually until they burst. In this way prisoners were forced to confess or turn informer.

Colonel Lisardo Doval,<sup>21</sup> the special delegate of the War Ministry in Asturias, issued the following statement: ‘I stand ready to eradicate the revolutionary spawn even in the mother’s womb.’

The repression in Asturias was reminiscent of the dark days of the Spanish Inquisition, while at the same time presaging the blood-curdling crimes of Franco-Falangism. With more or less unvarying pitch, the repercussions of that repression lingered throughout 1935.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The *nom de plume* of Luis Higón Rosell, a leftist journalist. Although murdered in prison on 27 October 1934, this was not made public until January 1936, when censorship was relaxed before the February elections.

<sup>21</sup> A Civil Guard captain famed for his severity in repressing working-class groups during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. Having been punished for his involvement in the failed 1932 coup led by General Sanjurjo, he was later rehabilitated by the right, who unleashed him after the Asturian revolution.

<sup>22</sup> Overall, at least 1,300 workers were killed and some 3,000 wounded as bourgeois order was restored in Asturias, while countless others went into exile or took refuge in the hills. Trials continued throughout 1935 and by early 1936 around 30,000 workers were in jail in Spain.

## CHAPTER SIX: The end of the ‘black biennium’ and the Popular Front triumphant

The year 1936 was one of the most turbulent years in Spain’s entire political and revolutionary history. The ‘black biennium’ gave way to the caretaker government of Manuel Portela Valladares,<sup>1</sup> whose task it was to dissolve the parliament and summon new elections. These were scheduled for 16 February.

30,000 political and social prisoners were languishing in the jails and penitentiaries. The keynote of the election campaign was the condemnation of the awful carnage of the repression in Asturias and a promise that the prisoners would be returned to the bosom of their families. In anticipation of the contest at the ballot box, the left — from Acción Republicana through to the communists — came together under the umbrella of a Popular Front. Nonetheless, one question was unresolved. What stance would the CNT adopt *vis-à-vis* the elections?

In 1933 the CNT campaign against the elections sealed the defeat of the left at the ballot box. Now a key election issue was the 30,000 hostages held by the state in jails, a good many of whom were Confederation members. Would this make the anarcho-syndicalists think again? Would the humiliations of the ‘black biennium’ make the recollection of Casas Viejas pale by comparison? Would the CNT leave it up to its hundreds of thousands of members to make up their own minds on whether to vote or to abstain? Would the desire to see the prisoners walk free outweigh the duty imposed by principles?

Events in Asturias had strengthened the hand of the pro-alliance faction within the CNT. The pro-alliance current began to make headway inside Catalonia, one of the CNT regional confederations most inclined to isolationism, for the reasons already indicated. Meanwhile, under the influence of Largo Caballero, the socialist press was playing the ‘red card’ again. For the first time in many a long year Spanish socialism was publicly invoking the name of the CNT and ‘fraternity in proletarian revolution’, to cite Largo Caballero’s speech in Madrid’s Europa cinema. ‘Beware of the red card,’ read an *El Socialista* editorial which also threatened the government and extended the hand of friendship to the CNT.

On 9 January, Joan Domènech,<sup>2</sup> the secretary of the Confederation in Catalonia, issued a circular to all CNT unions, inviting them to attend a regional conference which would meet in Barcelona’s Meridiana cinema on 25 January in order to thrash out two specific issues:

1. ‘What ought to be the CNT position *vis-à-vis* alliance with institutions which, though not of like mind, have a workerist outlook?’; and

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<sup>1</sup> A prominent freemason and governor-general of Catalonia in 1935, he opposed the growth of CEDA influence and sought to plot a course between the extremities of right and left, before later supporting the military rising.

<sup>2</sup> He replaced Ascaso following the events of October 1934. A prominent figure during civil war Catalan politics, he represented the CNT in the Catalan government until May 1937.

1. 'What specific and concrete attitude should the CNT adopt regarding the elections?'

The conference was attended by 142 delegates representing 92 unions, 8 local federations, 7 county federations, the national committee and the regional prisoners' aid committee. Yet since the vast majority of the unions were still shut down, the majority of the delegations at the conference had no mandate from their respective unions.

Furthermore, the very haste with which the meeting had been scheduled gave little time for accords to be reached by the customary procedures. Most accords were thrashed out at gatherings of militants. Of necessity, this circumstance drew severe criticism from the conference organisers. There was no shortage of delegates who suggested that the regional committee had a pronounced interest in forcing delegations to adopt accords in keeping with the electoral period. Outstanding among the declarations was that of l'Hospitalet de Llobregat delegation, who favoured a vote of censure against the alleged electoral intentions of the regional committee. A resolution of a national plenum of regional committees (26 May 1935) was endorsed by one delegate as a solution to the issue in hand. That resolution ran as follows:

Whether at election times or at other times, all propaganda is to take the form of doctrinal exposition of our principles and organisational ends, while eschewing demagoguery and combating politics and political parties without distinction. Wheresoever it may be opportune, that propaganda will be abstentionist in accordance with resolutions taken by the organisation and the possible outcome of elections ought not to influence our conduct. Meetings are to be monitored by the relevant elected committees.

However, the bulk of the delegations, among whom the prevailing attitude was that the CNT's anti-election stance was more of a tactical issue than a matter of principles, managed to have the whole question debated. The debate revealed a state of ideological dithering and there were exegetes galore who expounded upon the intrinsic import of concepts such as 'apolitical' and 'anti-political'. In the end a working party was appointed to frame a resolution.

There was a curious occurrence at the conference. Before the debate was concluded, a statement was read out from the IWA, the international body to which the CNT had belonged since 1922. This document, which we reproduce below in view of its importance, reflected the disquiet in international anarcho-syndicalist circles over the inclusion of the election issue in the conference agenda. This is the text in question:

To the union conference. The IWA *vis-à-vis* the crisis of democracy, the elections and the peril of the lesser evil. During their lives, anyone might experience the occasional upset, the apparent profundity of which might disguise its truly superficial nature and result in irresolution, vacillation and self-doubt. It is hard to attribute this oscillation to anything other than a state of psychosis caused by these upsets. We already have experience of the psychosis of war. But it also comes about in time of elections when, at first and superficial glance, the very existence of this or that political regime might appear to be at stake. Currently, two countries find themselves in such circumstances. In Spain the triumph of the right in the general elections of



November 1933 brought the country to the very edge of the fascist precipice. The forthcoming elections scheduled for February have produced the collective illusion that an age of social progress might be ushered in thanks to a victory by the left. From moderate republicans through to communists, the so-called antifascist front promises to struggle against all the forces of reaction. In France, despite the parliamentary “victories” of the left, the effective rule of the right is taking the country to the edge of that same fascist precipice. The response of the left has been a similar closing of ranks on the left, with the same “leitmotif”: the supposed battle against fascism.

In France, the contest at the ballot box has rallied not just the parliamentary political parties, from the royalists to the communists, but trade union bodies like the CGT and the CGTU have also come out in favour of the anti-fascist platform. Indeed, the CGT, while bragging of its past traditions and its “Amiens Charter”<sup>3</sup> of non-intervention in politics, has drawn up a programme of socio-political demands and presented these for approval by the leftist political parties united in a “popular front”. The espousal by the latter of the CGT programme makes the CGT its slave.

In Spain the UGT, which has always been closely tied to the PSOE, remains the backbone of that party and, without it, the PSOE would quickly disintegrate. In the contest for power currently under way at the ballot box the UGT remains the great hope of the Spanish socialists. In France, as in Spain, bourgeois democracy, the Marxists and parliamentary democracy hope to restore their lost virginity with the aid of the organised working class. What should the attitude be of our union bodies, which, organised on the basis of anti-state federalism, have never sought to ally themselves with politicians nor to follow their one-sided manoeuvres that are designed to oppress the working class in whose name they insist in speaking?

Should we yield to the collective psychosis of a “new” political mobilisation, swallow the line of least resistance and opt for the lesser evil? Should we vote? Ought we to consider the “political vote”, which is a delegation of irrevocable powers until such times as the next elections arrive, a tactic acceptable today but which must be repudiated tomorrow? Or ought we, instead, to take the line that the act of voting is, of itself, the complete abdication of our prerogatives and, as such, anti-revolutionary?

“Don’t go to the polls,” proclaimed Spain’s CNT in 1933 when the republican and socialist parties were in power and the most brutal and shameless reaction prevailed in every corner of the “republic of workers”. It was not merely a declaration of war against the reactionary left which during its thirty months in power had sown terror among the revolutionary proletariat of Spain but, simultaneously a statement of principles and a constructive act of affirmation. “Don’t go to the polls,” said the CNT, “because that utterly banal act spells the ritualisation of your slavery.”

The CNT’s voice was heeded. Abstentionist propaganda was a spectacular success. The numbers who failed to vote were so enormous that they contrived to bring down the left. Today Spain is again summoned to the polls. Have things changed? No. Ought not the declaration of war on today’s left, the very same left upon whom

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<sup>3</sup> These were the anti-political principles laid down in the 1906 magna carta of revolutionary syndicalism.

the entire Spanish proletariat heaped its opprobrium only yesterday, to ring out as forcefully as ever? Can it be that the statement of principle — “to vote is to embrace slavery” — is not as accurate, as necessary, as indispensable today as it was in 1933? The answer, undeniably, is that it is. The prisoners will be liberated by the revolution, not by any so-called “republican” government. How then, is one to account for the indecision and faltering of the membership of the CNT on the eve of elections, only two years after they had vigorously explained their attitude towards that very political issue?

In various confederal bodies in Spain the issue is mooted: “Is it proper to vote? Should we vote or not? Must the casting of our votes be deemed a function of our immutable principles, or should it be construed instead as a mere tactic which may alter with the requirements of the moment? Is there a danger in abstaining in that it represents a boost to the right?” All of these questions are now hotly debated in the bosom of our Spanish union. Such indecision in “correcting the sights” must be attributed entirely to this collective psychosis which has its origins in the looming peril.

Despite the important part played at precise moments by “mass psychosis”, we feel compelled to call our comrades’ attention to a phenomenon of much greater importance.

In countries where abstention may completely invalidate the elections, “passive” abstentionism is a futile gesture unless it carries within it “dynamic” seeds. The “victorious” CNT abstentionism of November 1933 was really a “defeat” for the CNT because of its failed insurrection the following month. If that insurrection missed its mark in certain respects it was because the CNT, both during its apparently successful abstentionist campaign and indeed probably beforehand, failed to concern itself with the immediate follow-up to that victory. Thus the futility of passive abstentionism was merely exacerbated by the pointless victory and by a lack of preparation of events which ought to have invested it with a certain effectiveness. In France, where the conscious abstentionism of the revolutionary masses cannot influence the outcome of general elections and at present exerts no influence beyond the propagation of our ideas, “passive” abstentionism today is inconsequential. It serves only as a declaration of principles which, sooner or later, will have to be implemented on studied and prepared bases.

In Spain, that groundwork ought to have been in place. Every suitable opportunity ought to be seized to steer our struggle along the lines of “revolutionary direct action”. In the struggle against reaction and the state, a general expropriatory strike can and should be the prelude to such an action. A successful abstention campaign which leaves the state and its apparatus in a delicate position, as occurred in November 1933, can and should also be the prelude to such action, unless one wishes to squander the dynamic effect of a passive success. Members of the Spanish CNT have probably realised this. They fear a new pyrrhic victory. While today that success seems less certain, are they prepared to press a new advantage to the limits or will they decide to fall back upon themselves, preferring the palliatives of provisional freedom to a steadfast attitude? Are they, in this critical juncture of their existence, going to re-

tract their declaration of war against the political parties of right and left alike and, at the same time, renege upon their declaration of principles?

There are but two alternatives: either many Spanish comrades will feel that their abstentionist propaganda will not be as effective as it proved in 1933 and thus opt to let it stand as a declaration of principles or, alternatively, this propaganda will lead to a parliamentary and governmental "impasse" in the country. In the latter case the CNT should take all necessary measures to exploit that situation and undo the Gordian knot through the social revolution, because it is an open secret that there is but one exit from the struggle against fascism: the revolution. Any other outlet is an illusion pregnant with bitter disillusionment. This includes the quest for power by the left, in the expectation of securing full constitutional freedoms which, in practice, can be suspended at any time. The crisis of conscience faced by the militants and members of our Spanish union must be speedily and categorically resolved: no opportunism, no compromise, no deviation and no voting.

One false move is enough to precipitate a cataclysm. This false move has to be averted at all costs because, in addition to the Spanish revolution, the fate of the revolutionary movement the world over hinges on the attitude of the CNT.

The IWA secretariat.<sup>4</sup>

Perusal of this document made a deep impression upon the assembled delegates. Consequently, following a proposal from the Barcelona Construction Union, it was decided to reply to the IWA in the following terms:

The regional conference agrees to reply to the IWA secretariat whom it thanks for its concern for the principles and trajectory of the CNT; but let it be said that the Confederation in Catalonia has not deviated, nor plans to deviate. The inclusion of this item in the agenda is due to the concern that it should be the workers' assemblies which give the seal of approval to tactics and resolutions. Nothing more is going on and the CNT remains at the vanguard of the revolution, convinced that this is the only way to attain proletarian emancipation.

Thereafter, with only a few amendments, the following resolution was passed:

This working-party, in the belief that it voices the feelings of the Confederation, endorses wholeheartedly the apolitical principles which inform the CNT. It is crucial to ram home the message that politics are absolutely incapable of resolving the proletariat's problems, because within the capitalist system it is only possible to govern according to capitalist interests that are forever incompatible with the interests of the working class. Neither the containment of fascism nor the release of the prisoners can be achieved by going to the polls, for which reason the direct action of the proletariat alone is to be commended.

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<sup>4</sup> Eusebi Carbó, the then CNT delegate to the IWA secretariat, was the likely author of this document.

Consequently, it recommends that a non-demagogic anti-political abstentionist campaign be mounted and, as a logical and natural corollary, that the workers be shown the inefficacy of the vote, employing as evidence historical examples, such as Austria and Germany, which illustrate the correctness of our position.

The Woodworkers' Union of Barcelona, the l'Hospitalet de Llobregat Union, the National Marine Transport Union (Barcelona branch), the Commercial Workers' Union and the Liberal Professions Union (Barcelona).

On the question of alliances, the conference gave its approval to the following resolution:

Cognisant of the responsibility entrusted to us by this regional conference, we have made as conscientious a study as possible to encapsulate a formula capable of embracing the revolutionary, libertarian aspirations by which the CNT is informed.

The fervent wish to be equal to the pre-revolutionary circumstances in which the Spanish proletariat has long found itself has been manifested in the resolutions which delegates have brought with them and of which they have spoken. So this working party makes it known that the Catalan unions accept, in principle, by a huge majority and an almost unanimous agreement, the projected pact with the UGT, based on exclusively revolutionary objectives. The fundamental premises for the projected accord are as follows:

1. Acknowledgement by the UGT that the emancipation of the workers is feasible only through revolutionary action. It is understood that, on acceptance of this agreement, the UGT must cease all political and parliamentary collaboration within the bourgeois regime.
2. For the social revolution to be effective, the current social system regulating Spain's economic and political life must be destroyed.
3. The new harmonious regime spawned by the revolution will be regulated by the express wishes of the workers in public assembly with absolute freedom of expression for all.
4. For the sake of the defence of the new social regime, all forces must be united, with every tendency setting aside its sectional interests.

Since the problems raised in this resolution are of national importance, it is our view that a national conference should be convened at which all issues of concern to the Confederation can be discussed, along with the key question: "Is it realistic to propose a pact with the UGT for exclusively revolutionary aims?" In the event of an affirmative response, how should this be achieved?

Ideally the projected national conference ought to take place this coming month of April but, if the gravity of the circumstances makes this impractical, then opinion is to be sounded by means of a union referendum.

The regional conference of unions hereby notifies all autonomous organisations that, depending on their ideological and tactical inclinations, they ought to affiliate to one

or other of the two union bodies, the CNT or the UGT.<sup>5</sup> Joaquín Pujol, Badalona Textile Union; Francisco Isgleas,<sup>6</sup> the Sant Feliú de Guixols Union; Ramón Domínguez, the Blanes Union; Jacinto Toryho,<sup>7</sup> Public Entertainments of Barcelona; Mariano ‘Marianet’ Rodríguez Vázquez,<sup>8</sup> Construction of Barcelona.<sup>9</sup>

Given that feelings were running high in the country, against all expectations the elections proceeded on 16 February amid perfect normality. The CNT had mounted an anti-election campaign that was so perfunctory that it was scarcely perceptible.<sup>10</sup> The results of the ballot box favoured the left. They were as follows:

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<sup>5</sup> This policy — in effect an agreement between the CNT and the UGT to divide the labour movement between them — had severe implications for autonomous union federations such as the dissident communist FOUS, which was presented with the choice of joining either the ‘anarchist’ CNT or the ‘Marxist’ UGT. Shortly after the start of the civil war, the FOUS chose the latter path.

<sup>6</sup> An anarchist, he served as minister of defence in the Generalitat government during the civil war and became a prominent figure within the CNT. He was secretary of the Catalan CNT when the Francoists entered Catalonia.

<sup>7</sup> A radical Madrid journalist who joined the CNT and the FAI during the republic. Close to Abad de Santillán, he was a member of the ‘A’ group that joined forces with Peirats to push for the expulsion of Nosotros from the FAI following the disastrous bout of ‘revolutionary gymnastics’ in the thirties. During the civil war (from November 1936 to May 1938) he was editor of *Solidaridad Obrera*.

<sup>8</sup> Of gypsy descent, he joined the CNT in 1931 only to be jailed for a year for his part in the Barcelona general strike the following September. Released at the end of 1932, he joined the Construction Union leadership. Just a few months into the civil war, and despite the fact that he was relatively unknown outside of Catalonia, he received the backing of the Urales- Montseny clique and became secretary of the CNT national committee, a position that he held until the end of the conflict. During the civil war he was a staunch and consistent supporter of collaboration with the Republic, thereby earning the contempt of the radical wing of the organisation, which always doubted his qualifications as national secretary. Exiled at the end of the civil war, he died a few months later in a swimming accident that aroused much suspicion among his supporters.

<sup>9</sup> *Memorias de la Conferencia Regional Extraordinaria celebrada los días 25, 26 y 27 de enero de 1936*, Barcelona, 1936, p.72.

<sup>10</sup> While the CNT and the FAI did not formally call upon workers to vote, throughout the electoral period radicals (including Durruti) and moderates alike made it clear that an amnesty of socio-political prisoners could only come with a victory of the Popular Front (*Solidaridad Obrera*, 8, 17 and 24 January 1936). In effect, therefore, *cenetistas* were invited to vote. Some anarchists emphasised the dangers of a rightist victory at the polls: Peiró, who was still a member of the FAI, advised those workers who normally abstained to vote ‘against fascism’ (cited in Benjamin Martin, *The Agony of Modernization. Labor and Industrialization in Spain*, Ithaca, 1990, p. 363); Urales, a paragon of anarchist purity, warned that it would be a ‘great error’ if the republicans were to lose (*La Revista Blanca*, 3 January 1936).

<b>The Left:</b>	
Republican Left	80
Republican Union	37
PSOE	90
PCE	13
POUM	1
Partit Català Proletari	1
Syndicalist Party	2
Esquerra	38
Federalists	1
Total	263
<b>The Centre:</b>	
Progressives	6
Centrists	14
Conservative Republican Party	3
Radicals	6
Democratic Liberals	1
Lliga Catalana	13
Basque Nationalists	9
Total	52
<b>The Right:</b>	
Agrarians	13
CEDA	86
Renovación Española	11
Traditionalists	8
Independent Monarchists	3
Independent right-wingers	8
Total	129

The popular masses were swept along by the enthusiasm. Prison doors were forced open or left ajar. The ecstatic demonstrations which had marked the birth of the Republic on 14 April 1931 were repeated. This time, however, rumours were rife. What would be the attitude of the military? The intrigues in the barracks were public knowledge. Defeat at the ballot box had taken the reactionaries by surprise but now they were in the process of altering their plans.

Power was transferred to a quickly formed Popular Front government consisting entirely of republicans.<sup>11</sup>

The protagonists of the 'black biennium', the sadists behind the repression of the rebels of 6 October 1934, had been beaten at the ballot box. A Popular Front government controlled the political destinies of the nation. The experience of tragic past mistakes demanded swift action to

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<sup>11</sup> Unlike in 1931, there was no socialist representation in government, largely because of the opposition of the radicalised *caballerista* wing of the PSOE, which did not want the hands of the party to be tied by cabinet commitments.

confront the military threat that was hanging in the air. Two days before the elections, the CNT national committee had released to the public this historic communiqué:

Proletarians! On a war footing against the monarchist and fascist conspiracy! Day by day the suspicion is growing that rightist elements are ready to provoke military intervention. This is public knowledge due to the left-wing newspapers, which are constantly issuing warnings of the once secret, now blatant, intrigues being hatched by the reactionaries in the barracks and in the civilian and ecclesiastical precincts of the counter-revolution... Morocco seems to be the epicentre of the conspiracy. Insurrection has been deferred, pending the outcome of the elections. They are to implement their preventive plan if there is a leftist victory at the polls. *We are not the defenders of the Republic, but we will do unstinting battle with fascism, committing all of our forces to rout the historical executioners of the Spanish proletariat.* Furthermore, we have no hesitation in recommending that, wherever the legionnaires of tyranny launch armed insurrection, an understanding be speedily reached with antifascist groups, with vigorous precautions being taken to ensure that the defensive contribution of the masses may lead to the real social revolution and libertarian communism. Let everyone be vigilant. Should the conspirators open fire and should their fascist rebellion be defeated in its first stages, then the act of opposition must be pursued to its utmost consequences *without tolerating attempts by the liberal bourgeoisie and its Marxist allies to hold back the course of events.* Once hostilities begin in earnest, and irrespective of who initiates them, democracy will perish between two fires because it is irrelevant and has no place on the field of battle. If, on the other hand, the battle is tough, that recommendation will be redundant, for no one will stop until such time as one side or the other has been eliminated; and during the people's victory its democratic illusions would be dispelled. Should it be otherwise, the nightmare of dictatorship will annihilate us. Either fascism or social revolution. The defeat of fascism is the duty of the whole proletariat and all lovers of freedom, weapons in hand, yet the most profound preoccupation of members of this Confederation is that the revolution should be social and libertarian. If we are to be the greatest source of inspiration of the masses, if they are to initiate libertarian practices and create an unbreachable bulwark against the authoritarian instincts of the whites and the reds alike, we must display intelligence and *unity of thought and action.* From now until the reopening of parliament, if the danger persists then militants ought to meet frequently in each locality in the normal way and keep in touch with the confederal committees so that the latter are informed about the course of events.

Albeit in irregular fashion, a will to fight must be displayed. Anything is better than our remaining on the fence and our incredulity leading to our extermination and repression by the dark hordes... Let others shoulder the humiliation of failing to understand current circumstances and of having disdained their place in the coming battle. Once again: eyes peeled, comrades! It is better to move prematurely with courage than to have cause to lament our inactivity.

The National Committee. Zaragoza, 14 February 1936.

In contrast to this vigorous and, alas, prophetic stance by the CNT, let us look at the indescribable sloth of the new leftist government.

After the Popular Front government had taken office, General José Millán Astray<sup>12</sup> and General López Ochoa were removed from their posts.<sup>13</sup> The Supreme Court ruled that López Ochoa was to stand trial for his part in the repression in Asturias. As a result, there was a fresh upsurge in the agitation in military circles. The press exposed the intrigues of the hard-liners in their barracks, drawing the government's attention to them. But on 18 March the minister of war issued this memorandum by way of a reply to the exposés:

The minister of war has become aware of certain rumours regarding the state of mind of the officers and ranks of the army which are, it seems, insistently being circulated. These false and unfounded rumours undoubtedly have the effect of creating public anxiety and animosity towards the military, undermining, if not destroying, the discipline which is the army's main foundation. The minister of war is happy to state publicly that the officers and men of the Spanish army are, without exception, bound by the strictest discipline and are ready at all times to carry out their duties to the letter and, needless to say, to obey the ordinances of the legally constituted government. The fact of the matter is, and the minister of war wishes it to be known, that the government of the Republic regrets and condemns the unjust attacks to which some army officers have been subjected. The Spanish military, the epitome of selflessness and loyalty, deserves respect, affection and gratitude in recognition of those who have, in the service and defence of the fatherland and the Republic, given their own lives for the security and honour of the nation.<sup>14</sup> Aloof from politics, all members of the armed forces are loyal servants of the authorities, a guarantee of obedience to the popular will and, as such, ought to be regarded by their fellow citizens as the staunchest prop of the republican state. Only a criminally warped desire to undermine the military can account for the insults and written or verbal attacks which may have been directed at them. The government will apply the strictures of the law to those who persist in such an anti-patriotic attitude, while trusting in the equanimity of its servicemen, at every level, to lead them to scorn any act which, based on the credulity of the masses, seeks nothing more than the provocation of mischief.<sup>15</sup>

Despite this shameful declaration, the third parliament of the Republic debated and passed a draft law against retired soldiers. Directed at retired officers who received stipends from the

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<sup>12</sup> A leading *africanista* general and creator of the Spanish Legion, this militant reactionary lost an arm and an eye while defending Spain's overseas possessions. Famed for his morbid soundbites (he named the legionnaires 'the bridegrooms of death' and gave them their motto: 'Long live death!'), he introduced brutal, terrorist methods into the Legion and its hallmark became the decapitation of prisoners. He made Franco second-in-command of the Spanish Legion in 1920, whereupon they became close allies. Chief of Propaganda during the civil war, he routinely threatened problematic foreign journalists with execution and coined the celebrated Francoist slogan: 'Death to intelligence!'

<sup>13</sup> This is something of an irony, for López had attempted to prevent reprisals during the repression of the Asturian Commune.

<sup>14</sup> Given that there was no external threat to the state, this statement highlights how the republican political élite accepted an internal role for the military just as had occurred under the monarchy.

<sup>15</sup> From Luis Romero Solano, *Visperas de la guerra de España*, Mexico City, 1947. (Note by the author.)



state while conspiring against the government, the ‘Azaña law’ applied the simple sanction of depriving them of their pay. Here is what Azaña, as head of the government, had to say in the ensuing debate from the floor of the parliament:

Why should we deny, honourable deputies, that among the retired servicemen there are a few, a dozen or so, or whatever their number, who, resort to clandestine activity and intrigues against the regime? This creates a delicate situation, because these men, by virtue of their having belonged to the army and their entitlement to wear a uniform, wreak greater havoc than other individuals. Anyone seeing them in uniform and at their work knows not that they are retired officers. It is true to say that, almost to a man, officers have pledged their loyalty to the Republic. There were exceptions — certainly not dishonourable ones — which testify to a worthy consistency and loyalty to the former monarchist regime.

Eight days after the advent of the Republic, the provisional government introduced its first ordinance regarding the retirement of servicemen. Had it been our intention to dismiss those servicemen inimical to the Republic we would have done so. But that was not our intention. We were confronted by an organisational problem concerning overstaffing in the army. That problem certainly takes priority over every other one which we sought to resolve in the army. What happened then was that there were 21,000 officers in the pay of the Spanish state, a quota wholly disproportionate to our military organisation, which was the result of civil wars and overseas possessions that we no longer owned.<sup>16</sup> This problem of overstaffing has been resolved heartlessly in other countries where, even when the armies concerned have been glorious, officers were dismissed without rights similar to those awarded by the Republic. The Spanish Republic was more bountiful than those countries. It confined itself to saying: “We are so many officers over quota. Those who desire retirement are free to go, while retaining their emoluments, uniform and army paybook.” Many people retorted: “No one will go.” Later it transpired that the very opposite occurred. When the first signs appeared of disorientation in the officer corps, not a few republicans reproached me over the fact that the government did not ask any serviceman to pack his bags. Since many people, including the retired servicemen themselves, perceived the legislation on early retirement as a governmental outrage, some of them have spent their time engaging in “conspiracies” which however are little more than sordid activities.

When the left was out of government, when there were moderate governments, even one favourably disposed to a regime of force, then too a number of officers engaged in these very activities. It would be easy to call upon personal testimony in this very chamber. Now these activities have persisted but they have turned into agitation eroding the army’s prestige in the eyes of the public; they darted about, from barracks

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<sup>16</sup> During the nineteenth century — when Spain lost the bulk of its overseas colonies — the size of the army élite grew, rather than decreased, largely because at the end of the numerous civil wars that marked the political crisis of post-colonial society, the army officers on the defeated side were coopted into the army of state. Thus, by the early twentieth century, the Spanish army suffered from macrocephalia and had a low ratio of soldiers to officers. Because of the burden this large group of officers placed on state funds, many politicians sought to scale down the size of the army hierarchy and this always met with enormous hostility from the officers’ corps.

to barracks, spreading their discontent and, once, on 10 August 1932, those officers took up their guns. It strikes us as utterly scandalous that servicemen who have been retired under a law which has no equivalent in the world have failed to repay the generosity they have been shown. Broadly speaking, no one is being stripped of their rights. Let those concerned give up their plotting, and put away their guns and not go around the barracks with gossip and tittle-tattle and that will be enough to free them of any sanctions. All that is asked of them is that they behave. That is not much to ask of officers who have been allowed to keep their emoluments in full, allowed to wear uniform and retain army paybooks. They must have no truck with any organisation which is illegal by virtue of either its clandestine nature or the aims it pursues. Those not belonging to such associations need not fear.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> From Romero Solano, *op. cit.* (Note by the author.)

## CHAPTER SEVEN: From the Zaragoza Congress to 19 July 1936

On 1 May 1936 the CNT met anew in a national congress in Zaragoza, one of the most significant in its history. The congress was attended by 649 delegates representing 982 unions with a combined membership of 550,595. In the hope that some solution to the Confederation's internal crisis might be found, the moderate anarcho-syndicalist unions of the SS.OO had been invited and allowed the right to speak.<sup>1</sup> Along with the matter of the 'opposition', the agenda included highly important items relating to revolutionary activities and a critique of the risings of January and December 1933 and of October 1934. The issue of the revolutionary alliance was also to be thoroughly thrashed out. Equally, the CNT had set itself the task of defining libertarian communism. Another set of issues was that which concerned the immediate political and social situation and the stance to be adopted towards agrarian reform and unemployment.

A national plenum of regional committees held on 26 May 1935 had empowered the national committee to make overtures to the dissident unions and to invite them to a congress. Subsequently, in Levante, the SS.OO unions attended a regional plenum and an agreement was reached that would, in principle at least, allow unification. Acting upon the resolution of the national plenum of regional committees and through soundings carried out by referendum in every union in Spain, the national committee made direct contact with the SS.OO national liaison committee. A short time before the Zaragoza Congress a rally was held in Barcelona's Monumental bullring, at which speakers from both tendencies participated.

Present at the Zaragoza Congress were delegates from the SS.OO unions of Valencia and Huelva. The Catalan SS.OO also sent a delegation. In all, the SS.OO delegates had a mandate from 60,621 affiliates, so the climate of rapprochement was palpable. After listening to the allegations of the SS.OO and the ensuing debate, the congress passed the following motion:

The problem of the SS.OO acquired an organisational expression after the collapse of the monarchist-dictatorship raised issues of a social-revolutionary nature in this country. These issues led to two schools of thought concerning how to channel the CNT's revolutionary forces and the difficulty of reconciling these differences, rather than any fundamental disagreement over the basic principles of the CNT, was the main factor in the schism. The revolutionary process since then and current revolutionary circumstances have led to the disappearance of these differences of interpretation and forged a new consensus.

This being so, we maintain that, besides what has been noted, we agree with the fundamental principles and objectives of the CNT and we propose that congress resolve:

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<sup>1</sup> The rapprochement between the radical anarchists and the moderate anarcho-syndicalists began in early 1936 with a series of local meetings between opposition union leaders and activists from the CNT.

1. That the SS.OO unions cease to be an organisation outside the CNT but amalgamate with it according to established norms.
2. That this accord signify the end of the problem of the SS.OO on the basis of its adherence to the principles and tactics approved in past congresses which express the sovereign will of the union assemblies, the standard federal practice for all components of the CNT.
3. To implement these resolutions and facilitate reconciliation, we consider the following steps:
  - (a) immediately after this congress, regional congresses are to be convened in those areas where it is necessary;
  - (b) these congresses must be preceded by reunification assemblies in all districts where the split occurred. Both unions will be summoned jointly by their respective steering committees to elect union steering committees and delegates to the local federation;
  - (c) until such time as this agreement becomes a reality, the press organs of the SS.OO unions are, for as long as they exist, to be organs of the CNT and subject to its general guidance.
4. Congress resolves that this agreement be implemented within two months in the case of unions which convened assemblies to attend this congress and three months in the case of those others which have not yet met. Those unions which fail to comply with this timetable are requested to submit evidence if they do not wish to be deemed opposed to the agreement.

The working party.<sup>2</sup>

Representatives from the opposition unions of Valencia, Huelva and Catalonia were on that working party and endorsed the proposition.

With the matter of the schism in the Confederation virtually resolved, it was now time to debate one of the most essential issues: the 'review of activities'. This review, which involved an examination of the causes and outcome of the revolutionary insurrections mentioned above, had enormous implications for the Confederation's future activities and aspirations. In keeping with the precepts of freedom of criticism characteristic of the CNT, the discussion was meticulous, candid and painstaking.

As a token of the far-ranging nature of the debate, we have reproduced the contribution from the delegate from the Fishing Industry of Pasajes:

This item we are debating is one of the most important issues of this congress. It would be proper were it to lead to a radical rethink that might prevent us from repeating past mistakes. Our analysis has to look back beyond October, because the line followed in October had its roots in the past. The deplorable things which have occurred in the CNT can be traced back to the Madrid 1931 Conservatorio congress.

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<sup>2</sup> The texts from the 1936 congress are taken from *Solidaridad Obrera*, 3–24 May 1936, and they were subsequently reprinted on several occasions.

Let us begin with the telephone workers' strike. That strike implied pressing home the demands of a green proletariat, largely oblivious of its role in society, in the face of opposition from the UGT and the state. The CNT ought not to have backed it then. It was the militants of the CNT, not the telephone workers, who kept the strike going. The CNT should have at least delayed the conflict until the autumn rainstorms, so that acts of sabotage would have had greater impact, forcing the telephone company to ease up on its resistance. We have heard of the views of one section of our movement in those days, but the revolutionary signs which this faction perceived were mistaken facets of the revolution, facets of a Jacobin rather than an anarchist revolution.<sup>3</sup>

Their outlook might have been suitable for a revolution carried out by groups but not for a popular revolution. The revolution requires the convergence of a whole host of circumstances and organisational preparation. On the negative side, we had the bulk of the Castilian countryside, as yet not won over to our ideas; an Asturias which was no counterweight to socialist influence; a Basque country where we have yet to score any success; and an Andalusia and Extremadura with huge socialist strongholds. Could we have spoken of the immediacy of the revolution? What was our mission then? We had a duty not to approach things simply on the say-so of a few comrades but rather to act upon broad revolutionary considerations which might lead to an uprising of the entire Spanish people. Grandiose meetings were organised in Catalonia. Heaps of money were squandered on this series of spectacular rallies. However, Catalonia was a well-trodden ground, with an organised proletariat looking to the CNT. The effort was needed where there was no organisation, where our voice had never been heard, such as in Castile and in many other places in Spain. We lacked the acumen to manage the propaganda issue.

Along came the events of January. They were based on a railwaymen's strike, a strike which did not exist nor did it ever occur. The blame lies in part with the railwaymen, for making promises which were not carried out. But the CNT is also to blame for promising what it could not deliver, what it was in no position to deliver. It needs to be said that 8 January was a mistake, the Confederation's first revolutionary mistake. No matter what may have been said about Casas Viejas having been an epic, we can do without epics like that. For organisational reasons and for political reasons too, the railwaymen backed down. The movement which was to have been the backbone of the January revolution failed to materialise. How did it pass that the revolt broke out in opposition to an agreement by a CNT plenum? Well, it typified a superficial understanding of the revolution. In January reliance was placed on everything but the workers. January was a localised phenomenon confined to a handful of places. The notion of daring had a greater part in its preparation than more crucial factors, such as organisation and context. Victory was out of the question. It will be said that reports from the regional committees were sanguine about the possibility of making the revolution. The fact of the matter is that delegates to the plenums delighted in

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<sup>3</sup> This critique was aimed at the 'anarcho-bolshevik' tactics of the 'Nosotros' group.

pulling the wool over one another's eyes.<sup>4</sup> Does this mean that we ought to have avoided the upheavals of a different nature which occurred then? The upheavals that could not have been averted were the local ones, because the workers wanted to make up for seven years of dictatorship and improve their dire economic straits. But to be organising revolutions at the drop of a hat was quite a different matter altogether. We fell for the story that the proletariat had lived through seven years of dictatorship and had nurtured democratic illusions and that what was needed was the shock of reality to remove the veil from their eyes and bring them over to the revolutionary camp. The abstentionist campaign of 1933 was spot on, but not in so far as it was tied to a new revolution which could only have failed.

There was talk to the effect that in the event of significant abstention, the revolution would be carried out. But no account was taken of the fact that the non-voter is not necessarily a revolutionary. To refrain from voting one need only despise the government of the day. But it requires something more than that to be a revolutionary. The regional committees acknowledged that the rising could not be a success. At the time Aragón spoke of "honour" and, with our hands tied by this mistaken notion, we launched ourselves into the revolution. In Aragón it was put down by troops sent from the Centre region, where we were unable to lift a finger to prevent such a mobilisation. The whole revolutionary strategy foundered. Personalities were incidental. What counts is the organisation. Having failed in January and again in December, logic dictated that we should seek out the reason for those failures. It was around then that the desire for revolutionary workers' alliances emerged. Reactionary times were on the horizon, the defence had to be organised and agreements reached with other organisations, if we were to save ourselves. That this perfectly logical stance was beyond the comprehension of the bulk of the movement at the time will be endorsed by today. But differences of opinion erupted, a war between comrades which created a rift in the organisation. Factions emerged and an attempt was made to isolate comrades, with no appreciation of the dangers of the situation. In those circumstances the CEDA government committed itself to dismantling our revolutionary movement. Our stance had introduced doubts into the minds of socialist workers, who began to move away from their traditional outlook.

I place no credence in Largo Caballero's revolutionism. He has spent fifteen years endlessly restraining the labouring masses and he cannot resign himself to losing his place at the head of the movement. This is what is happening. Along comes October and he is unable to respond personally. What ought the response to have been? We have seen how the workers were shrugging off their customary position, turning towards revolution and beginning to talk of unity. Our mission at that point ought to have been to snatch the banner of unity away from leaders and to have held it aloft ourselves. But unfortunately that is not how it was looked at. When the intentions of the socialists were already plain and revolution was hanging over Spain, arms dumps were discovered. And yet we refused to understand that these arms would be put to some purpose. We went on attacking the socialists when what was really needed, and

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<sup>4</sup> This was a criticism of those who had organised the cycle of insurrections and is further evidence that the revolutionary opportunities during 1931-3 had been deliberately exaggerated.

would have rendered superb results, was a rapprochement between the workers of the CNT and those of the UGT. We will be told that their revolt was flying in the face of our own. We knew perfectly well what was to happen. The thoroughgoing reaction at work in socialist ranks ought to have been remembered. Attention should have been paid to the fact that the current created by us was making progress everywhere. And when the long-awaited moment came, when there was total agreement about the immediate goals of the labour movement, the CNT played dead. The CNT is not Asturias: the CNT is the sum of all its regional committees. At the least, the CNT, out of a sense of responsibility, solidarity and revolutionary consistency, ought to have declared a general strike if only by our comrades in Asturias.

The October revolt could have followed a libertarian pattern. The security forces were demoralised. In Asturias our comrades occupied a pre-eminent position which they acquired by force of arms. It will be said that October was a political revolution. But haven't we said that we anarchists must always be on the lookout for a chance to take a hand in every act of subversion, to channel it as far as possible in the direction to which we aspire?

Fishing Industry of Pasajes.

One of the most far-reaching results of this debate was the resolution which was passed concerning revolutionary alliances. It read as follows:

Since the seizure of power by General Primo de Rivera, the Spanish proletariat has been living in a condition of latent revolutionary unease. During the period of the dictatorship there were countless attempted revolts by the people, prompting the upper political echelons of the country to attempt to channel the revolutionary feelings of the workers through democracy's reformist by-ways, something which was possible because UGT labour bodies were successfully induced to associate themselves with the elections which led to the political triumph of the Republic. When the monarchy was toppled, the UGT and the party which serves as its guide became the handmaidens of republican democracy and were thus able to experience at first hand the futility of political and parliamentary collaboration. Thanks to that collaboration and the ensuing climate of division, the proletariat as a whole lost a measure of the revolutionary courage which had characterised it at other times. The Asturian episode shows that, having recovered a sense of its own revolutionary importance, the proletariat is not liable to founder in defeat. So, analysing the whole revolutionary period through which Spain has lived and is living still, this working party sees the revolutionary unification of the CNT and the UGT as an ineluctable necessity.

Considering this and having digested the sense of the broad agreements of those unions affiliated to the Confederation, we have agreed to place before congress the following motion:

Given that the overthrow of the present political and social system is the fervent wish of the working class, and given that the UGT and CNT between them embrace the entirety of Spain's organised workers, this working party believes that the CNT

ought formally and publicly to make overtures to the UGT, urging it to agree to a revolutionary pact on the following basic premises:

1. In putting its signature to the revolutionary alliance, the UGT explicitly acknowledges the failure of collaboration with the political and parliamentary system. As a logical consequence of this, it will cease to have any sort of political and parliamentary ties with the existing regime.
2. In order to make the social revolution an effective reality, the social and political system regulating the life of the country has to be utterly destroyed.
3. The new revolutionary order will be determined by the free choice of the working class.
4. The most absolute unity of action is vital to the defence of the new social order. Only through concerted defence will it be possible to defend the revolution from the attack of national and foreign capitalism.
5. Approval of the recent proposition means that, should the UGT find the pact acceptable, it falls to the national committee to establish liaison with the latter for the purpose of ensuring the smooth operation of the pact, in accordance with the foregoing agreements and those existing within the CNT regarding the revolution.

Addendum. These premises reflect the prevailing consensus within the CNT, are of a provisional nature and are aimed at reaching an understanding with the UGT which, at its own national congress, might choose further preconditions for the creation of a revolutionary Workers' Alliance (*Alianza Obrera revolucionaria*).<sup>5</sup> To this end, two national liaison committees are to be appointed which, following a study of the viewpoints of both trade union groupings, will frame a joint motion to be submitted for discussion and referendum in both unions. The result of this referendum is to be accepted as definitive, provided that it expresses the will of at least 75 per cent of those with voting rights in both trade union bodies.

One of the things to which the Zaragoza Congress devoted most attention was the general condition of the peasantry and the complex issues arising from the projected agrarian reform. The following motion established the CNT's stance on this question:

We have listened to the declarations, motions and expositions offered by the various peasants' delegations attending this extraordinary congress of the CNT. We have lived and are living the life of the soil throughout the length and breadth of Spain and we are increasingly forced to look to the revolution as the only immediate means of liberation from the values of the present social system. Due to the diversity of the Spanish countryside, the solution to the land question varies to such a degree from region to region, indeed from area to area, that it is very hard to encapsulate it in any given form of struggle. All of us, let's face it, who live on the land share the aspiration to redeem the land and to redeem ourselves. The decadence of the capitalist system,

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<sup>5</sup> This was precisely what supporters of workers' unity like the dissident communists of the BOC and the POUM and the Asturian CNT had been advocating for a long time.



which today is bankrupt because of its contradictions and its inability to solve its own economic problems, is common knowledge. Nor has it proved able to place the producer class in a position where it can consume that which it is denied through its lack of purchasing power. This situation has driven the proletariat into the arms of revolution, so much so that it leaves capitalism and its unconditional lackey, the state, quaking with fear. Just as every living thing fights against death, capitalism now adroitly seeks to conjure up defenders for itself, having exhausted all of its own reserves. It believed it just might find allies among Spain's five million starving peasants and to this end seeks to woo them with a projected agrarian reform law, the aim of which is to re-route the proletariat as a whole from progressing towards total liberation.

The CNT *vis-à-vis* the agrarian reform. It is our conviction that the agrarian reform will not be able to satisfy the aspirations of the peasantry for a number of reasons which we will demonstrate.

Though the agrarian reform may give land to the peasants, this is the best that can be expected of capitalism. Promises that the land will be untaxed are materially impossible, a vain illusion that reality will soon dispel, not least because of the fabulous sums that run into thousands of millions of pesetas which the state needs to maintain its repressive apparatuses.

As a non-productive body, the state demands indirect taxes upon production and these devalue agricultural produce, which in turn means that the peasant, who is at once producer and consumer, is doubly hit.

A faithful demonstration of what we say is the critical situation of large numbers of smallholders of Galicia, Asturias, the Basque Country, Catalonia and Levante, and, to a lesser extent, in Castile, Andalusia and Aragón, where they live under the overwhelming burden of their poverty owing to the aforementioned causes.

Then again, the handing over of the land to the peasants is not enough if it is not accompanied by all the accoutrements of modern farming, such as machinery, chemicals, irrigation works, etc., which will enable the industrialisation of agriculture and the replacement of human exertion by the driving force of machinery. This is a vital prerequisite for the conversion of the peasant into a civilised being and not an instrument of production or a beast of burden.

What attitude ought we to adopt if, in spite of everything, capitalism has its way and agrarian reform becomes a reality?

If we agree that agrarian reform is to be a *fait accompli* then, like it or not, we face a grave problem, namely how to retain control of the peasant masses and prepare them for social transformation. So, ought we accept or repudiate this reform?

In the estimation of this working party, we are obliged to find an escape from this dilemma through a collective solution both with the settlement of peasants under the conditions of the reform and also for the various modes of land use, which we might concentrate in the creation of peasant communities.

It is appropriate here to remind ourselves of an agreement from the 1931 Madrid extraordinary congress: "Should the government and the landowners show no interest in effecting a reform which may wreak profound changes in the system of landed property, CNT landworkers believe that the time would have arrived to impose a radical solution to the agrarian problem, based on precepts of strict social justice and in favour of all exploited rural producers, be they day labourers [ *braceros*], tenant farmers [ *arrendatarios*], large tenants [ *labradores*] or share croppers [ *apaceros*]."

The life or death of our peasant organisation and the success of the revolution in our country hinge on the solution we devise for this complex problem, because without the revolutionary organisation of the land workers, we cannot fulfil our aims. Consequently, let congress prescribe its attitude regarding agrarian reform by formulating the following objectives:

- (a) confiscation without compensation of holdings in excess of 50 hectares of land;
- (b) confiscation of livestock, working tools, machinery and seed found in the possession of the landowners thus expropriated;
- (c) a balance of communal assets and their surrender to agrarian unions so that they may be collectively utilised and farmed;
- (d) proportional and unfettered allocation of the usufruct of such lands to the agrarian unions for their direct, collective usage;
- (e) abolition of charges, territorial taxes and mortgage debts and claims upon properties, working tools and machinery which constitute the livelihood of their owners, provided that the latter cultivate their land for themselves, without the involvement or exploitation of other workers;
- (f) abolition of the rents in money or in kind which small tenant farmers, rabassaires or lessees, etc. are currently obliged to pay to the big landowners;
- (g) encouragement of irrigation works, road-building, rearing of livestock and poultry, reforestation and the creation of agricultural and viticultural colleges;
- (h) prompt solution of worker unemployment by reduction of working hours and parity of wages with the cost of living;
- (i) the agrarian unions to assume direct control of those lands the under-cultivation of which constitutes sabotage of the national economy.

So far as all the above is concerned, and regarding the rapid and immediate implementation of our proposals, our understanding is that the peasant movement faces two problems of crucial importance, namely:

1. its organisation; and
2. an enormous propaganda drive.

Only a sturdy peasant organisation, grouped within a national organisation, will create a viable chance of reaching a working solution to the problems of Spanish agriculture, while simultaneously preparing the peasant masses in a revolutionary sense. A huge propaganda drive in the countryside is needed to achieve these ends and we

maintain that the education of the peasantry according to our principles is the most important and the most difficult task facing anarcho-syndicalism in the rural areas. It is most important because without it the consistent development of the social revolution is not viable; it is most difficult, because of the numerous traditional obstacles, the cultural backwardness and proprietorial, selfish instincts which impede the adhesion of the peasant masses to collective purposes. The anarcho-syndicalist peasant movement can and must overcome these obstacles through clear, comprehensive and persistent propaganda and an educational, trade union drive capable of developing the habits of collective solidarity among rural workers which will prepare them to introduce a libertarian communist regime.

Zaragoza, 8 May 1936.

Finally, let us consider the motion passed titled 'The confederal concept of libertarian communism' and which was added to the CNT's programme, alongside the declaration of principles and objectives adopted at the La Comedia congress.

The most prominent militants were deeply preoccupied by the need to define the Confederation's ideological aims in an extensive programme. In the early days of the Republic the question of a programme had been discussed and its absence had been driven home by the various attempts at insurrection sponsored by the CNT. In those turbulent times the bourgeois press carried all manner of essays regarding the ideological aspirations of the Confederation. On this point, the contributions of Dr Puente deserve special mention.<sup>6</sup>

This is the lengthy motion which was accepted:<sup>7</sup>

It is no secret to any of the delegations that there are two schools of thought concerning the nature of the post-revolutionary economy and that these schools of thought are locked in a frantic battle with one another.<sup>8</sup> Without question, this pluralism of tendency can be attributed to doctrinal and philosophical considerations which have left their marks upon the thinking of our militants and have created two unmistakable schools of thought which seek to shape policy and mark out a channel for the two tendencies.

Now, were it not for the fact that the natural struggle for pre-eminence eats into the energies of the Confederation, there would be no problem with this. But this tenacious, consistent mental aspiration will, of necessity, display itself with renewed vigour within our ranks, creating, as the contest continues, grave threats to the unity which we have just sealed at this congress. It is for this reason that, in drafting the proposition, this working party, with the equanimity and awareness needed to shoulder the historical responsibility of the hour, has sought a formula which may accommodate the spirit and thinking of both currents, elaborating therein the foundations of the new life.

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<sup>6</sup> These formed the core of his pamphlet *Finalidad de la CNT: el comunismo libertario*, Barcelona, 1936, a work that was taken as a blueprint for anarchist communism and was subsequently translated into numerous languages.

<sup>7</sup> Along with Puente, the working party which produced this motion consisted of Carbó, García Oliver, López and Montseny.

<sup>8</sup> A reference to the schism between *treintismo* and *faísmo*.

So, therefore, we declare that:

1. in laying the cornerstone of this proposition, we seek to build upon these two currents — the individual and the union — with an austere sense of harmony which might allow scope for the parallel development of the two currents.
2. by way of ensuring this harmony, we accord implicit recognition of the sovereignty of the individual. With this authority, which prizes freedom above all else, we will build the various institutions that will determine and articulate social needs.

And with all society's wealth brought under social ownership, with usufruct of the instruments of production assured and with labour a duty for all those who wish to enjoy the right to consume, the anarchist principle of free agreement will regulate social contracts and agreements. So it is that the individual, the unit of legal identity, the basis of liberty and the jurisdiction of federation, will assemble the bricks and mortar of the new society.

All of us must agree that it would be absurd to structure the society of the future with mathematical precision, since there is very often a real abyss separating theory from practice. So let us not fall into the error of the politicians who offer hard and fast solutions to every problem, solutions which fail spectacularly in practice as they fail to take into account the evolution of human life itself.

We, who have a higher vision of social problems, will not do that. In sketching the norms of libertarian communism, we do not offer it as a finished programme that cannot be amended. Logically, amendments will follow depending on both the needs and experiences of the day.

Though it may perhaps appear to be venturing somewhat beyond the mandate given to us by congress, we feel the need to be specific about both our concept of revolution and the most salient features which, in our estimation, it should display.

The contention that the revolution is nothing but a violent episode through which the capitalist system is sloughed has been given undue tolerance. In fact, it is merely the phenomenon which effectively clears the way for a state of affairs which has slowly taken shape in the collective consciousness.

The revolution, therefore, has its origins in the moment when the gulf between the state of society and the individual conscience is realised, when the latter finds itself, either through instinct or through analysis, obliged to react against the former.

So, in a few words, our belief is that revolutions come about:

1. as a psychological phenomenon opposed to a given state of affairs which stands in contradiction to individual aspirations and needs;
2. as a social phenomenon, whenever that response takes collective shape and clashes with the capitalist system;
3. as organisation, whenever the need is felt to create a force capable of imposing the realisation of its biological objective.

In the external order, these factors deserve to be stressed:

- (a) breakdown of the ethic which serves as the foundation of the capitalist system;
- (b) the economic bankruptcy of that system;
- (c) failure of its political manifestations, whether the democratic system or, in its ultimate expression, state capitalism or, to all intents and purposes, authoritarian communism.

When these factors coincide at a given point and time, a violent act is needed to lead into the truly evolutionary phase of the revolution.

In the belief that we are now at the precise point when the convergence of all those factors may bring about this tantalising possibility, we deem it necessary to frame a proposition which, in broad outline, profiles the basic pillars of the future social edifice.

**Constructive conception of the revolution.** Our understanding is that our revolution should be organised on a strictly equitable basis.

The revolution cannot be based on mutual aid, on solidarity, or on the archaic notion of charity. In any case, these three formulae, which historically have sought to compensate for the deficiencies of rudimentary social models which left the individual defenceless in the face of a concept of arbitrary law, ought to be recast and refined into the new norms of social coexistence which find their clearest expression in libertarian communism. In other words, all human needs are to be met with no limitations other than those imposed by the requirements of the new economy.

Just as all roads pointing to Rome lead to the Eternal City, so all forms of labour and distribution pointing towards an egalitarian society will lead to the realisation of justice and social harmony.

In consequence, we believe that the revolution should be founded upon the social and ethical principles of libertarian communism:

1. that the needs of each human being be met with no limitations other than those imposed by the economy's capabilities;
2. that each and every human being be urged to make the greatest possible effort to meet the needs of society in accordance with their own physical and intellectual circumstances.

**Organisation of the new post-revolutionary society.** The first steps of the revolution. Once the revolution has moved beyond its violent phase, the following will be abolished: private property, the state, the principle of authority and, consequently, the classes which divide humanity into exploiters and exploited, oppressors and oppressed.

With wealth socialised, the unfettered organisations of the producers will assume charge of the direct administration of production and consumption.

Once the libertarian commune has been established in each locality, we shall set the new mechanisms of society to work. The producers of each sector or trade, organised in their unions and workplaces, will freely determine the manner in which this is to be organised.

The free commune is to confiscate whatever was formerly possessed by the bourgeoisie in the way of provisions, clothing, footwear, raw materials, work tools, etc. Such tools and raw materials pass into the hands of the producers so that the latter may administer them directly in the interests of the collectivity.

Firstly the communes will see to it that all the inhabitants of each district are housed with as many amenities as possible, with specific attention being guaranteed to health and education.

According to the fundamental principle of libertarian communism, as we have already mentioned, all able-bodied individuals must work, assisting the collectivity proportionate to their strength and capabilities. Once labour is free, work will become a true right and, in return, the commune will fulfil its obligation by meeting the needs of all.

It is necessary to explain that the initial stages of the revolution will not be easy and that each individual will need to give of their best efforts and consume only what productive capabilities can afford. Every period of construction requires sacrifice and the acceptance of individual and collective restraints geared to improving the work of social reconstruction.

**The producers' organisational plan.** The economic plan will be tailored to the most rigorous principles of social economy in all spheres and directly administered by the producers through their various organs of production, which are to be appointed at general assemblies of all organisations and which will be under their constant supervision.

In the workplace, the union, the commune, in every agency regulating the new society, the producer, the individual, will be the most fundamental unit, the cell and the cornerstone of all social, economic and moral creations.

The point of liaison within the commune and in the workplace will be the workshop and factory council, which will form agreements with other work centres.

The liaison organs between unions will be the statistical and production councils which will federate with one another until they comprise a network of all the producers within the Iberian Confederation.

In the rural context, the basic unit will be the producer in the commune, which will have usufruct of all the natural assets within its political and geographical boundaries.

The liaison body will be the cultivation council, which, composed of technical personnel and workers from the agricultural producers' associations, will be responsible for the intensification of production by selecting the most suitable lands.

These cultivation councils are to build up the same network of liaison as the workshop, factory, production and statistical councils, thereby complementing the free federation of the commune as a political jurisdiction and geographical sub-division.

For as long as Spain remains the only country to have effected its social transformation, the industrial producers' associations and the agricultural producers' associations alike are to federate at national level if, of course, they deem this proper

for the fruitful running of the economy. There will a similar federation among those services whose characteristics require this as a means of facilitating logical and necessary liaison between libertarian communes throughout the peninsula.

It is our view that the new society will eventually equip every commune with all the agricultural and industrial accoutrements required for it to be autonomous, according to the biological principle that the individual is most free when they need least from their fellow individuals.

**The libertarian communes and their operation.** We must erect the political expression of our revolution upon the triple base: individual, commune and federation. Within a scheme of activities reaching into every facet of the peninsula, the administration will be of an absolutely communal nature.

Consequently, the foundation of this administration will be the commune. These communes are to be autonomous and will be federated at regional and national levels to achieve their general goals. The right to autonomy does not preclude the duty to implement agreements regarding collective benefits.

In this way, a consumers' commune without any voluntary restrictions will undertake to adhere to whatever general norms may be agreed by majority vote after free debate. In return, those communes which reject industrialisation, the naturists and nudists, for instance, may agree upon a different model of coexistence and will be entitled to an autonomous administration released from the general commitments. Since such naturist/nudist communes (or communes of some other sort) will be unable to satisfy their own needs, however limited these needs may be, their delegates to congresses of the Iberian Confederation of Autonomous Libertarian Communes will be empowered to enter into economic contacts with other agricultural and industrial communes.

In conclusion, we propose that the commune be created as a political and administrative entity and that the commune be autonomous and confederated with other communes.

Communes are to federate at county and regional levels, and set their own geographical limits, whenever it may be found convenient to group small towns, hamlets and townlands into a single commune. Amalgamated, these communes are to make up an Iberian Confederation of Autonomous Libertarian Communes.

To handle the distribution side of production and so that the communes may be better able to support themselves, supplementary agencies designed for such purposes may be set up. For instance there might be a confederal council of production and distribution with direct representation from the national federations of production and from the annual congress of communes.

The commune's mission and internal workings: the commune will have a duty to concern itself with whatever may be of interest to the individual.

It will have to oversee organising, running and beautification of the settlement. It will see that its inhabitants are housed and that items and products are made available to them by the producers' unions or associations.

Similarly it is to concern itself with hygiene, the keeping of communal statistics and with collective requirements such as education, health services and the maintenance and improvement of local means of communication.

It will orchestrate relations with other communes and will take care to stimulate all artistic and cultural pursuits.

So that this mission may be properly fulfilled, a communal council will have to be appointed, with representatives on it from the cultivation, health, cultural, distribution and production, and statistical councils.

The procedures for choosing the communal councils are to be determined according to a system that provides for differences such as population density, taking account of the fact that metropolitan areas will be slow to decentralise politically and to form federations of communes.

None of these posts will carry any executive or bureaucratic powers. Apart from those who may perform technical or merely statistical functions, the rest will perform their role as producers coming together in session at the close of the day's work to discuss the detailed items which may not require the endorsement of communal assemblies.

Assemblies are to be summoned as often as required by communal interests, upon the request of members of the communal council or according to the wishes of the inhabitants of each commune.

Liaison and exchange of produce. As we have outlined, our organisation is federalist and guarantees the freedom of the individual within the group and the commune, as well as the freedom of the communes within the federations and the federation's rights within the confederations.

So we proceed from the individual to the collective, guaranteeing all individual rights, thereby maintaining the principle of liberty.

The inhabitants of a commune are to debate among themselves their internal problems regarding production, consumption, education, hygiene and whatever may be necessary for the moral and economic growth of the commune. Federations are to deliberate over major problems affecting a county or province and all communes are to be represented at their reunions and assemblies, thereby enabling their delegates to convey the democratic viewpoint of their respective communes.

If, say, roads have to be built to link the villages of a county or any matter arises to do with transportation and exchange of produce between agricultural and industrial counties, then naturally every commune which is implicated will have the right to have its say.

On matters of a regional nature, it is the duty of the regional federation to implement agreements which will represent the sovereign will of all the region's inhabitants. So the starting point is the individual, moving on through the commune, to the federation and right on up finally to the confederation.

Similarly, discussion of all problems of a national nature will follow a like pattern, since our organisms will be complementary. The national agency will regulate in-



ternational relations, making direct contact with the proletariat of other countries through their respective bodies, linked, like our own, to the IWA.

As far as the interchange of produce between communes is concerned, the communal councils are to liaise with the regional federations of communes and with the confederal council of production and distribution, applying for whatever they may need and any available surplus stocks.

By means of the network of liaisons established between the communes and the production and statistical councils set up by the national federations of producers, this problem will be resolved and simplified.

As for the communal aspect of this question, the producers' cards issued by the workshop and factory councils, which will entitle holders to acquire whatever they need to meet their requirements, will suffice. The producers' card constitutes the basis of exchange and will be subject to two conditions: firstly, that it is non-transferable; secondly, that a method be adopted whereby the card records the labour value in working units, a value which will be valid for the acquisition of products for a maximum period of one year.

Members of the non-active population are to be issued with consumer cards by the communal councils.

Naturally we will not prescribe a hard and fast norm. The autonomy of the communes ought to be respected, although they may, should they see fit, adopt some other arrangement for internal distribution, provided that these new procedures do not in any way trespass against the interests of other communes.

The individual's duties towards the collectivity and the notion of distributive justice. Libertarian communism is incompatible with any system of castigation, something which thus implies the disappearance of the current system of correctional justice and of the instruments of punishment (jails, penitentiaries, etc.).

In the estimation of this working party, social circumstances are the principal cause of so-called offences in the present state of affairs and consequently, once the causes underlying the offence have been removed, then, as a general rule, crime will cease to exist.

So, it is our considered opinion:

1. That man is not naturally evil and that crime is the logical outcome of the circumstance of social injustice in which we live.
2. That in supplying man's needs and also providing him with scope for rational and humane education, these causes will disappear.

Thus we understand that whenever the individual fails to perform his duties, whether morally or as a producer, popular assemblies will arrive at some harmonious and just solution to the problem.

So, libertarian communism will found its "corrective action" upon medicine and pedagogy, the sole preventive measures acknowledged by modern science. Should some individual suffer from anti-social or pathological conditions, pedagogical therapy

will cure any imbalance or lunatic inheritance and stimulate an ethical sense of social responsibility.

**The family and relations between the sexes.** It ought not to be forgotten that the family was the first civilising nucleus of the human species and that it has performed most admirable functions in the cultivation of morality and solidarity, that it has survived the evolution of the family itself, through clan, tribe, people and nation and that it is likely that it will survive for a long time to come.

The revolution ought not to employ violence against the family, except in those instances of family incompatibility, wherein the right to quit the fold is to be acknowledged and supported.

The first step in the libertarian revolution consists of ensuring that all human beings, without distinction of sex, are economically independent. Thus it is understood that both sexes are to enjoy equality of rights and duties alike and the economic inferiority between man and woman will thereby disappear.

Libertarian communism proclaims free love regulated only by the wishes of the man and the woman, with off spring being assured of the care of the collectivity and the latter being spared human aberrations through the application of eugenic-biological principles.<sup>9</sup>

Likewise, good sex education at school will lead to selective breeding according to the aims of eugenics and conscious procreation, with the intention of producing healthy and beautiful off spring.

Regarding problems of a moral nature which love may engender in the libertarian communist society, such as those arising out of amorous contretemps, the community and liberty have but two means of ensuring that human and sexual relations follow their normal course. Those males who may desire forcible or bestial love, and for whom advice regarding respect for the rights of the individual proves inadequate, will face a change of surroundings, water and air, as this is commendable in the case of many ailments. For lovesickness, which becomes an ailment when it turns into stubbornness and blindness, a change of commune will be recommended, with the sick person being removed from the surroundings which cause their torment, although it is unlikely that such cases of exasperation will occur in a context of sexual freedom.

**The religious question.** Religion, a purely subjective facet of the human being, will be acknowledged as long as it remains a matter of individual conscience, but in no instance may it be regarded as a form of public display or moral or intellectual coercion.

People are to be free to hold whatever moral notions they deem fit, but with no ceremonies.

Concerning pedagogy, art, science and the freedom to experiment. A radical approach will have to be adopted to the question of education. Firstly there will have to

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<sup>9</sup> It must be remembered that in the thirties eugenics was regarded by right and left alike as having enormous potential.

be a vigorous and systematic assault upon illiteracy. It is an obligation of restorative social justice incumbent upon the revolution that learning be restored to those who have been dispossessed of it, since just as capitalism has appropriated and arrogated society's wealth to itself, so the cities have appropriated and arrogated learning and education for themselves.

Restitution of material wealth and culture are the fundamental objectives of our revolution. How? By expropriating capitalism in the material sphere and by restoring access to all.

Consequently, our educational drive will be divided into two phases. We have an educational target to achieve in the wake of the social revolution and a general humane task before us once we have created our new society. Our immediate task is to organise elementary education among the illiterate population, consisting of, say, reading, writing, arithmetic, physical culture, hygiene, the historical processes of evolution and revolution, some theory regarding the non-existence of god, etc. This work will be done by a huge number of educated young people through a voluntary cultural service of one or two years under the supervision and guidance of the national educational federation which will be responsible for all teaching centres and the standards of professional and voluntary teaching staff immediately after the institution of libertarian communism. The national educational federation will dismiss all who may be intellectually and, especially, morally, incapable of adapting to the demands of free pedagogy. Similarly the choice of primary and secondary teachers alike will be made on the sole basis of their success in practical exercises.

Education, as a pedagogical mission prepared to educate a new humanity, is to be free, scientific and equal for both sexes and equipped with whatever it may need to cater for any branch of productive activity and human learning. Hygiene and child rearing are to be awarded special status, with woman being trained for motherhood while in school.

Similarly, special attention is to be paid to sex education, the basis of refinement of the species.

We deem it a primary function of pedagogy that it should help mould men with minds of their own — and let it be clear that we use the word “men” in the generic sense — to which end it will be necessary for the teacher to cultivate every one of the child's faculties so that the child may develop every one of its capacities to the full.

In the context of the educational system which libertarian communism is to put into practice, any schedule of punishments and rewards is to be repudiated once and for all, since those two precepts are at the root of all inequality.

Cinema, radio, educational missions — books, sketches, film strips — will be superbly effective aids to the rapid intellectual and moral transformation of present generations and to the growth in the personalities of the child and adolescent growing up under libertarian communist arrangements.

Apart from the merely educational aspect, libertarian communism will guarantee access to science, art and all manner of research compatible with the pursuit of the production of necessities, thereby ensuring that human nature will be balanced and healthy.

The aim is that in libertarian communist society, the producers are not to be divided into toilers or intellectuals, but that they may all be simultaneously toilers and intellectuals. When individuals have completed their daily work and fulfilled their mission as a producer for the community, they are to have free access to the arts and science.

There are needs of a spiritual nature which run parallel to material needs and which will become more prominent in a society in which humanity is emancipated.

Since evolution is a continuous line, the individual will always have aspirations and ambitions to get on, to outdo his parents, outstrip his fellows and improve himself.

All such drives to better oneself, to experiment, to create — be it artistically, scientifically, or in a literary way — cannot, under any circumstances, whether material or general, be cast aside by a society based upon wide freedom: it will not thwart them, as presently happens, but instead will encourage and cultivate them in the belief that humanity does not live by bread alone and that a humanity living by bread alone would be a disgrace.

It is not logical to suppose that in this new society humanity might lack the desire for leisure. Consequently, in the autonomous libertarian communes there will be days set aside for general recreation, as the assemblies may indicate by choosing and fixing symbolic dates from history and from nature. Likewise, hours will be allocated daily to exhibitions, theatrical works, the cinema, cultural lectures, which will give pleasure and amusement to all.

**Defence of the revolution.** We acknowledge the necessity to defend the advances made through the revolution because we reckon that there is more revolutionary potential in Spain than in any of the neighbouring countries. It is to be anticipated that capitalism in those countries will not passively accept the dispossession of the interests it has acquired in Spain over the years.

So, until the social revolution may have triumphed internationally, the necessary steps will be taken to defend the new regime, whether against the perils of a foreign capitalist invasion, as outlined, or against counter-revolution at home. It must also be remembered that a standing army constitutes the greatest danger to the revolution, since its influence could lead to dictatorship, which would necessarily kill off the revolution.

In time of battle, when the forces of the state may join forces, in part or in whole, with the people, these organised forces will lend a helping hand in the streets in the defeat of the bourgeoisie. Once the bourgeoisie has been overwhelmed, their role will have ended.

The people armed will be the best assurance against any attempt to restore the system destroyed from either within or without. There are thousands of workers who

have passed through the barracks and are conversant with modern military techniques.

Let each commune have its weapons and means of defence, since, until the revolution is finally consolidated, these are not going to be melted down for conversion into work tools. We commend the necessity of retaining planes, tanks, armoured vehicles, machine-guns and anti-aircraft cannon, for it is in the air that the real danger of foreign invasion resides.

Should that come to pass, the people will mobilise rapidly to stand up to the enemy, returning to their workplaces as soon as they may have accomplished their mission of defence. This general mobilisation will apply to all individuals of both sexes who are fit to fight and who may involve themselves in the fray by carrying out the multifarious missions needed in combat.

The confederal defence cadres, covering the centres of production, will be the most-valued auxiliaries in consolidating the gains of the revolution and in equipping producers for large-scale battles in its defence.

This being so, we declare:

1. The disarming of capitalism implies the surrender of weaponry to the communes, which will be responsible for ensuring that defensive means are effectively organised nationwide.

2. In the international context, we will have to mount an intensive propaganda drive among the proletariat of every country so that it may make an energetic protest, calling for sympathetic action against any attempted invasion by its government. At the same time, our Iberian Confederation of Autonomous Libertarian Communes will render material and moral assistance to all the world's exploited so that these may free themselves forever from the monstrous control of capitalism and the state.

**Last words.** Our work ends here, but before concluding we deem it our duty to stress that in this historic hour it should not be assumed that this report is something definitive that may serve as an inflexible norm in the constructive tasks of the revolutionary proletariat.

This working party's intentions are much more modest. It would be content were congress to look upon this as a broad outline of the initial plan that the producers will implement, as mankind's point of departure in its march towards full liberation.

May we improve upon our work in a spirit of intelligence, daring and ability.

Such were the deliberations of the CNT's Zaragoza Congress. Now let us turn our attention to the dizzy course of political, social and military developments in the prelude to 19 July.

To grasp the situation through which the country was passing in 1936, one has to take into account the fact that between February and mid-July there were 113 general strikes and 228 partial stoppages. In clashes with the security forces and in a variety of attacks, 1,287 people were wounded and 269 killed; 213 *attentats* were carried out, the majority of them the work of Falange

Española.<sup>10</sup> The main outrages were as follows: the attack on Jiménez de Asúa,<sup>11</sup> followed by the burning of churches and monasteries by the people;<sup>12</sup> the attack carried out on Eduardo Ortega y Gasset and his wife;<sup>13</sup> the attack on Largo Caballero's home.<sup>14</sup> In addition, fascist personnel provoked serious incidents and disturbances in Madrid's Avenida de la Castellana and Paseo de Recoletos.<sup>15</sup> In response, the CNT and the UGT declared a general strike in the capital. In the cacique-run town of Yeste the Civil Guard perpetrated a massacre, vilely slaughtering 17 peasants.<sup>16</sup>

The errors of the first biennium of republican-socialist government were being repeated. The Civil Guard was still murdering peasants and the Falange was causing provocations through its street processions and terrorist activities. And during all this time, constitutional guarantees were suspended in keeping with the emergency repressive legislation which had been enacted against the workers and which had been retained by the Popular Front government.

One of the editorial pieces in the 7 May issue of Barcelona's *Solidaridad Obrera* stated:

It will soon be three months since the leftist coalition triumphed at the polls. The masses, eager to see the prisoners freed and constitutional guarantees restored, cast their votes for the leftist candidates. Many, though not all, of the prisoners have been released, but the state of emergency and the state of alert remain in force. The press faces the ignominy of submitting its pages to the censor. So there is no freedom of expression. Of those fiery speeches and alluring promises absolutely nothing remains.

While the governing republicans fell back into their old habits, the fascist mutiny was taking shape in the barracks of the army. And most outrageously of all, this was an open secret. During a speech delivered in Cuenca, Prieto himself had this to say of General Franco:

The name of General Franco has disappeared from the candidates' list in Cuenca. I honestly congratulate myself upon that withdrawal. I have read comments by that

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<sup>10</sup> Following the Popular Front electoral victory the Falange and the civilian right embarked upon a classic strategy of tension in a bid to discredit the government and to encourage their allies in the military that a coup was necessary in order to re-establish public order.

<sup>11</sup> The attack on this PSOE deputy occurred on 12 March 1936 and left his police bodyguard dead. A young Falange member was later arrested.

<sup>12</sup> Anarchists in Cádiz attacked convents and churches in March 1936, while in early May a series of church buildings were torched in Madrid and Cuenca.

<sup>13</sup> This was a grenade attack launched by one José Nicasio Rivagorda, a Falange member, who had recently been expelled from the CNT.

<sup>14</sup> This was an attempt by falangistas to burn down the home of the UGT leader.

<sup>15</sup> These incidents, which occurred on promenades in central Madrid, were caused by falangistas who attempted to disrupt the celebrations on 14 April 1936, the fifth anniversary of the birth of the Republic, resulting in the murder of a member of the Civil Guard. Ironically, the funeral procession of the dead man was converted into a fascist protest against the Republic, before it ended in violence, with a total of six fatalities.

<sup>16</sup> In general terms, the events at Yeste went to the heart of the dilemmas of the Republic: on the one hand, it is telling that after five years of republican rule the power of the caciques in the countryside remained intact, while on the other hand, the return of the left to power aroused new hopes and aspirations among the dispossessed. The killings occurred after a series of clashes between the security forces and landless labourers. A further 30 peasants were wounded.

general in the newspapers, according to which his name was put forward as a candidate for Cuenca against his wishes and without his authority. I have no reason to question the truth of those comments, though it would have been preferable for the general to have set the record straight before what was the correct decision of the provincial electoral registration council to cancel his candidacy. I have no reason to speak as much as one syllable to the detriment of the illustrious soldier's good name. I was well-acquainted with him when he was a commanding officer. I have watched him in action in Africa, and in my view General Franco, who was then serving in the Legion under the orders of General Millán Astray, is a man of insurmountable courage and a man who remains calm under fire. That much I owe it to the truth to say. Now then, whatever our political position and our closeness to the government, we cannot deny, for to do so would be a deception, that there are numerous hotbeds of subversion among the military personnel, all of which are eager to rise up against the republican regime, not so much against what the Popular Front represents today but, because of what it augurs for the future, by virtue of its pre-eminence in the nation's political scene. Because of his youth, his talents, his personal prestige and his range of friendships within the army, General Franco is a man who, at a given moment, is most likely to place himself at the head of a revolt of that sort. I do not venture to credit General Franco with any such intent. I wholeheartedly accept his statement that he holds himself aloof from politicking. Ah, but what I cannot deny is that those elements who attempted, with or without authorisation from him, to include his name on the candidate's list in Cuenca were aiming to see him elevated into politics so that, invested with parliamentary immunity, he might fit in with the designs of his sponsors and serve as the leader of the military revolt...<sup>17</sup>

On 7 April, Alcalá Zamora was relieved of his office.<sup>18</sup> On 10 April, Azaña was appointed head of state. On 19 April, Casares Quiroga introduced his new government from the floor of parliament. In his introductory address to the Cortes, the new prime minister alluded to the question of public order with all the arrogance of expression which typified this politician:

Of other matters, what is to be said? Among those in charge there is the duty incumbent upon the government to defend the Republic by every means, even though the Republic is truly in jeopardy. Rest assured that attacks which may be mounted against the regime will not have any catastrophic effect upon it. If, in this regard, I beseech your legislative support, it is because I know that the Republic has its enemies, and I ask: for how much longer? With myself at the head of the government benches these attacks will be very short-lived. The Republic will be feared by those who fail to respect it and I tell you that henceforth there will be no mollycoddling for anyone. I cannot remain impassive in the face of attacks hatched in shadowy holes and corners. Nor can I tolerate pardoning any foes of the regime. Remember Azaña's

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<sup>17</sup> From Luis Romero Solano, *op. cit.* (Note by the author.)

<sup>18</sup> Although Alcalá Zamora had paved the way for the Popular Front electoral victory by calling for new parliamentary elections, left republican and socialist deputies were unable to forgive him for handing power to the Radicals in September 1933 and they therefore sought to remove him from office.

dictum when, addressing the enemies of the Republic, he said: “They yap? Then we must tame them.” Well, the same thing cannot be said today. Today we must say: “They yap? Then let us speedily tame them and ride roughshod over our enemies.” The government is at war with fascism...<sup>19</sup>

On 16 July, two days before the revolt, the last parliamentary session was held in the Cortes. On 13 July José Calvo Sotelo<sup>20</sup> was assassinated, apparently in reprisal for the murder of Assault Guard Lieutenant José del Castillo.<sup>21</sup> At the outset of the debate a radical rightist read out the following document, which is tantamount to a declaration of war on the government and on the nation and clearly presages what was shortly to follow:

On behalf of those who make up the National Block ( Bloque Nacional),<sup>22</sup> I declare the following: “Notwithstanding the violence which occurred in the course of the last election period and the abuses committed by the Procedural Commission (Comisión de actas)<sup>23</sup> we, the deputies of the right, believed it correct that we participate in the work of the present parliament, thereby doing our painful duty with regard to the common good, peace and national coexistence. The murder of Calvo Sotelo – who embodied the honour and hope of Spain – compels us to rethink our attitude. On the pretext of an illogical and absurd reprisal, a man who never ever advocated direct action, a man utterly alien to street violence, has been done to death. He has been punished for his parliamentary activity, which was intrepid and magnanimous and which made him the spokesman of the afflictions by which our homeland is beset. That crime, without precedent in our political history, has been possible through the climate created by incitements to violence and personal assault proffered daily in parliament upon deputies of the right. Some republicans have stated: “Where Calvo Sotelo is concerned, attack upon the individual is licit and likely.” Not for a single moment longer can we remain in the company of those who are the intellectual apologists and accessories of that act. We have no wish to deceive the country and international opinion by accepting a role in the farce of pretending that a normal civilised state exists here when, in fact, we have been living among complete anarchy since 16 February, under the sway of a monstrous subversion of all moral values which has contrived to place authority and justice in the service of violence. In so

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<sup>19</sup> Extract from the *Diario de Sesiones de las Cortes*, cited in Luis Romero Solano, *op. cit.* (Note by the author).

<sup>20</sup> Finance minister under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, following the birth of the Republic he went into exile in Portugal and then France, before returning in 1933 to occupy his seat in parliament. A convinced monarchist and staunch advocate of preventive counter-revolution, he established the first ties between Mussolini and the anti-republican conspirators in Spain. His persistent attacks on the republican system from the floor of parliament undoubtedly led to his assassination.

<sup>21</sup> Shot by *falangistas* on the evening of 12 July 1936 as he left his house in central Madrid to start work, like many Madrid Assault Guards, del Castillo was also a member of the PSOE. His comrades initially hoped to assassinate Gil Robles; however, upon finding that their main target was away from Madrid, they settled for their second choice, Calvo Sotelo, arresting him at his home and killing him in their car, before dumping his body at the gates of a cemetery.

<sup>22</sup> This consisted of the Traditionalists and Renovación Española.

<sup>23</sup> This is a reference to the decision to annul the rightist election victories in Cuenca and Granada following complaints of electoral fraud by the right. New elections were held in May and resulted in victories for Popular Front candidates, this time amid allegations of intimidation by leftists.



doing we are not deserting our positions in the struggle, nor are we furling up the banner of our ideals. Anyone desirous of saving Spain and rescuing her moral patrimony as a civilised people will find that we are the first to set out upon the path of duty and sacrifice.<sup>24</sup>

Those closing comments from the leader of the Renovación Española incontrovertibly spelled the outbreak of civil war, a war which was premeditated, as is clear from the document which we are about to reproduce:

Quirinal Hotel, Rome, 31 March 1934: The undersigned have drawn up this present document as a record of what passed during the meeting which they have had with the leader of the Italian government, Signor Mussolini,<sup>25</sup> together with Marshal Italo Balbo,<sup>26</sup> the Italian air minister. Having informed himself minutely through the replies given by each one of those present as to the current situation in Spain and the aspirations and circumstances of the army and navy and of the monarchist parties, Mussolini stated the following:

1 That he was prepared to assist the two parties in opposing the current regime in Spain with the necessary favours and wherewithal in their task of toppling that regime and substituting it for a regency which may pave the way for a complete restoration of the monarchy. This declaration naturally drew from those present expressions of esteem and gratitude.

2. That, by way of a practical and earnest proof of such intention he was ready to supply them immediately with 20,000 rifles, 20,000 hand-grenades, 200 machine-guns and a sum of 1,500,000 pesetas.

3. That such aid was merely a first instalment and would be followed up at the appropriate moment by other still larger instalments as circumstances made necessary.

The parties agreed that regarding deliveries Rafael Olazábal would act as agent of the parties and will take charge of said sums and make them available in Spain jointly to the leaders the Conde de Rodezno<sup>27</sup> and Antonio Goicoechea<sup>28</sup> for division between the two in the manner, circumstances and conditions these may agree upon. Similarly it was agreed that apropos of the division of the weapons, the aforementioned leaders would make the necessary provisions for the portion which may be allotted to each group and for its shipment to Spain.

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<sup>24</sup> Despite the emptiness of claims by Francoist propagandists that the July 1936 coup was organised in response to the assassination of Calvo Sotelo, this event was undoubtedly a key moment in the build-up to armed rebellion, convincing many who had previously been uncertain about the need for *force majeure*, with the result that civilian support for the coup was greater than might have been expected.

<sup>25</sup> Earlier sympathetic to Primo de Rivera and the king and by instinct highly suspicious of the Republic, Benito Mussolini sponsored many rightist plots in Spain after 1931, driven on by his dream of controlling the Mediterranean Sea.

<sup>26</sup> He was directly involved with many of the anti-republican conspirators.

<sup>27</sup> Tomás Domínguez de Arévalo, a pragmatic Carlist chief and, until May 1934, leader of the *Comunión Tradicionalista*. He played a key role in the anti-republican uprising of July 1936 and his services were rewarded by Franco, who made him minister of justice during the civil war.

<sup>28</sup> A prominent monarchist, he played a leading role in the July 1936 uprising.

Signed: Lieutenant-General Emilio Barrera;<sup>29</sup> Rafael de Olazábal<sup>30</sup> and Antonio Lizarza,<sup>31</sup> for *Comuni3n Tradicionalista*; Antonio Goicoechea, leader of *Renovaci3n Espa3ola*.<sup>32</sup>

During that dismally memorable parliamentary session, no less a person than Gil Robles issued the following threats in an extremely violent oration which managed to have a powerful impact upon the smaller parties:

Little remains for me to say today. Perhaps there is very little more which we may have to say in parliament. On a daily basis groups from the majority and their newspapers are involved in rabble-rousing, threats and menaces to the effect that the adversary must be crushed. Your daily works consist of killings, wounding, outrages, coercion, fines, acts of violence... Your heyday is to be the highest register of the shame of a regime, a system, a nation. We are seriously considering boycotting the Cortes, because to remain is tantamount to telling public opinion that everything is normal here, that this is part of the normal run of political systems. No. Parliament is by now a hundred leagues removed from the mood of the country. There is an abyss between the farce represented by parliament and the deep-seated tragedy of the nation. We are not prepared to continue this farce. You may continue. I know that you are going to pursue a policy of persecution, extermination and violence against all which the right stands for. You profoundly deceive yourselves. The greater the violence, the greater will be the reaction. For each of the dead another combatant will rise. You may rest assured, for it is an unwavering law of all human activity, that you who contrive the violence will be its very first victims. The dictum about revolutions being like Saturn in that they devour their own off spring may be very vulgar on account of its popularity, but it is no less true for all that. At the moment you are very much at ease, sensing the downfall of your adversary. But a day is coming when the very violence you have unleashed will rebound against you!

We have come to this Cortes although there were already many voices telling us that we had no contribution to make towards the running of existing institutions. But little by little we are being elbowed out of this legality. Gradually our endeavours come to naught. Little by little the Spanish masses are losing their illusions about anything being attainable through democracy. And don't come up with the claim that this amounts to laying the groundwork of conspiracy or creating a climate favourable to it. Not in their statements in parliament perhaps, but in the corridors,

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<sup>29</sup> Captain-general of Catalonia during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, he was fiercely anti-republican and anti-Catalan. Active in military conspiracies immediately after the fall of the monarchy, he supported the Sanjurjo coup attempt in Sevilla in August 1932 and enjoyed close contacts with Italian diplomats and Carlists. He was later promoted to the rank of general.

<sup>30</sup> A Carlist leader.

<sup>31</sup> A Carlist chief who played a key role in the July 1936 uprising.

<sup>32</sup> This document was found in the course of a house-search in Madrid after the military rising of July 1936 and its authenticity was later confirmed by rebel sources.

in conversations and in newspaper organs, dictatorial ventures is the continual topic in Izquierda Republicana ranks.<sup>33</sup>

The workers' parties are saying that they aspire towards the dictatorship of the proletariat. When you who style yourselves the sincerest advocates of democracy are, in fact, talking of dictatorship, why should you find it strange that oppressed folk are thinking of violence, not to crush you, but to free themselves of the tyranny with which you are oppressing them? You alone bear the responsibility for this shift taking place in Spain.

We have said that anyone who was not a leftist deputy or a member of the government itself would undoubtedly have been able to grasp the imminent dangers looming over the country from the words spoken by deputies Suárez de Tangil and Gil Robles on 16 July. Prompt and vigorous steps might yet have altered the course of events but the 'government at war' behaved as if nothing was wrong. This attitude survived even the events of 11 July, when a group from the Falange Española stormed the radio station in Valencia and broadcast the following announcement:

Radio Valencia here! By force of arms Falange Española has taken possession of the station. Tomorrow the operation will be repeated at every station in Spain.

A few hours before the uprising, the 'hardened old soldier' who was premier was also warned, in confidence and in the corridors of congress, that the army revolt was already a fact. In reply, the prime minister jokingly retorted:

So, you assure me, that the military is about to rise? Well, as for me, I'm retiring to sleep.

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<sup>33</sup> The shifts in opinion within Azaña's Izquierda Republicana party highlight the authoritarian drift within republican circles from 1933 onwards. Indeed, with the Republic increasingly besieged, many republicans, on the left and on the right of the political spectrum, flirted with the idea of a republican dictatorship.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: Spain in flames

On 17 July the army, spearheaded by the Legion, occupied the cities, government buildings, ports and airfields of Spanish Morocco. The slaughter of labour and leftist notables began immediately. The government issued the following explanatory note:

Thanks to the precautionary steps taken by the government, it can be stated that a vast uprising against the Republic has been thwarted. The government's action alone is enough to restore normality.

The very next day that same government was forced to concede that Seville was in the hands of General Queipo de Llano.<sup>1</sup> For their part, the socialist and communist parties issued this note:

These are difficult but not desperate times. The government is confident that it possesses the means to crush this criminal venture. Should those means prove insufficient, the Republic has the solemn promise of the Popular Front that it is ready to intervene in the struggle just as soon as its assistance is requested. The government commands and the Popular Front obeys.

On 18 July, Casares Quiroga's mistaken reading of the situation led to the resignation of his cabinet. He was replaced by Martínez Barrio, who headed a makeshift government with explicitly conciliatory objectives. Martínez Barrio attempted to form a government of national con-

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<sup>1</sup> An *africanista*, he rose through the ranks in the course of Spain's bloody colonial wars. A staunch supporter of the Republic in 1931, in July 1936 he initially posed as a republican loyalist – which confused the left in Seville – before unleashing a horrific wave of terror against anyone suspected of having republican sympathies. In the working class districts of Seville he gave his Moorish mercenaries (*regulares*) complete freedom to slay men, women and children. During the civil war he was known as the 'Radio General' for his nightly radio broadcasts in which he terrorised the population of the republican zone with bloodcurdling accounts of the wave of rape and murder that his forces had unleashed in the south. This was not idle boasting: when he took Málaga in February 1937, around 4,000 defeated republicans were shot. De facto viceroy of Andalusia, for much of the civil war he had a strong rivalry with Franco, who stripped him of his powers in the forties.

centration with General Emilio Mola<sup>2</sup> in the Ministry of War. According to Salvador Cánovas Cervantes,<sup>3</sup> Mola personally sank this option:

A phone-call from Madrid. Mola picks up the receiver. Let us listen in:

“Yes, General Mola speaking. Who is that?”

“[inaudible]”

“Who? Diego Martínez Barrio? You have my respectful attention.”

“[inaudible]”

“I am much indebted to you, Martínez Barrio, for the flattering and undeserved comments which my rank and past service have aroused from you. I intend to reply with the same courtesy and nobility you have used while speaking to me. The government which you are responsible for forming will not get off the drawing-board. Should it ever take shape, it will be short-lived, and, rather than being a remedy, it will serve only to worsen the situation.”

“[inaudible]”

“No, impossible, Martínez Barrio. You have your masses and I have mine. If I agree some deal with you we will both betray our ideals and our men. We would both deserve to be strung up.”

“[inaudible]”

“Naturally! I expected this. The battle is going to be tough, arduous and protracted. But duty calls.”

“[inaudible]”

“I have spoken my final word!”<sup>4</sup>

In Barcelona, the 19 July edition of *Solidaridad Obrera* reached the streets horribly disfigured by the censor. The editorial, entitled ‘Down with fascism!’, read: ‘Comrades: we must be thorough

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<sup>2</sup> Born in Cuba, where his father was a Civil Guard captain, he was from a military background. An *africanista*, he spent about twenty years fighting to hold on to Spanish Morocco. From March 1930 to April 1931, he was director-general of security in Spain during Berenguer’s *Dictablanda*, an experience that enhanced his belief in authority and order. He provided Alfonso XIII with a safe escort from Madrid on 14 April 1931 and was later detained and jailed for the crimes that occurred during his period as director-general of security. He was later released and demoted, although he regained his former status during the period of rightist rule between November 1933 and February 1936, when he became commander-in-chief of the Moroccan army. Following the Popular Front election victory he became known as ‘El Director’ owing to the prominent role that he played in the conspiracy that culminated in the July 1936 rising. Wisely removed from Morocco by the government, he was insensitively stationed in Pamplona, where Carlist traditions ensured that there would be significant support for the coup. During the ensuing civil war he played a high-profile role in the military campaign, leading the assault on Madrid in the winter of 1936, when he coined the expression ‘fifth column’, to describe his supporters in the city who were, he claimed, working in conjunction with his four armed columns which were attacking from without. Following the failure of the Madrid campaign, he was moved to the northern sector.

<sup>3</sup> A Madrid journalist and founder of numerous newspapers, including *La Tierra*, he was a recruit to the anarcho-syndicalist movement in the thirties.

<sup>4</sup> Cánovas Cervantes, *Proceso histórico de la revolución española*, Barcelona, 1937. Martínez Barrio later attempted to reject this version. Leaving matters of detail to one side, the evidence against him seems irrefutable. (Note by the author.)

in our action. The people must rise *en masse* like a single man to bar the way to fascism. In the face of the insolence of reactionary forces: Death to fascism!' It was completely blotted out by the censors. Another censored item had been entitled: 'Silence imposed on us!' Nonetheless, the censor's pen missed out the following communiqué from the regional committee:

CNT of Catalonia. People of Catalonia! Be vigilant and on a war footing! The time has come to act and be constructive. Months and months we have spent criticising fascism, pointing out its shortcomings and issuing hard and fast watchwords to the effect that the people must resist and rise up in arms when Spain's black reaction tries to foist its loathsome dictatorship upon us. That moment has arrived, people of Catalonia. The reaction: the military, the civilians, the clergy and big business, all working in concert, have begun their subversion aimed at installing fascism in Spain by means of military dictatorship. We, authentic representatives of the CNT in Catalonia, consistent with our revolutionary and antifascist record *par excellence*, cannot hesitate in these grave times, in these times of action.

The Catalan CNT instructs all to back the revolutionary general strike the very instant anyone revolts, while at national level the guidelines of the national committee are to be abided by. Let our position be unambiguous then and let us state that the watchword will be issued speedily. No one should obey any slogan which does not match those emanating from this committee. Calm is needed at the current moment. We must act, yes, but we must act vigorously and in unison. Let no one isolate themselves! Let contacts be tightened. It is time to be alert and prepare for action. In Seville, fascism has assumed control of the situation. There is a mutiny in Córdoba. North Africa is under their control. We, the people of Catalonia, let us be on a war footing and ready to act. There is a place for every individual in the battle against our common foe. Let there be no squandering of energy, no fratricidal struggles. Be valiant! Arm yourselves and do battle. Anyone who holds back is a traitor to the liberating cause of the people. Long live the CNT! Long live libertarian communism! Launch the revolutionary general strike against fascism.

The regional committee.

As the rumours of mutiny began to circulate, on 17 July a delegation from the Catalan CNT and the Barcelona local federation went to the Generalitat and to the civil governor to demand weapons for the people. Their plea was refused. Consequently, on that very same day *cenetistas* from the Transport Union stormed the ships *Manuel Arnús*, *Argentina*, *Uruguay* and *Marqués de Comillas* lying at anchor in Barcelona port. The arms retrieved were stored in the union's offices. A wave of panic swept over the authorities and when they got wind of the whereabouts of the weapons, they ordered the security forces to recover them without delay. The Transport Union office was surrounded by Assault Guards, but when the CNT members refused to hand over the weapons, an agreement was reached whereby a small proportion of the weapons would be surrendered, with the bulk of the haul remaining in the possession of those who, when the moment came, demonstrated that they knew how to handle them.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Around 200 rifles were seized and distributed to the union offices and district defence squads. Probably no more than a dozen weapons, all of which were apparently defective, were handed over to the authorities.

On the night of 18 July, the CNT's national committee, speaking over Union Radio in Madrid, called a revolutionary general strike, urging all its committees and members to remain in contact and mount an armed watch inside the union buildings. The national committee itself dispatched delegates with specific instructions to all the regional organisations that very night.

At dawn on 19 July, a large part of the Barcelona garrison left its barracks, whereupon it quickly occupied the strategic points in the city. Troops ensconced themselves in the Plaça d'Espanya, Plaça de la Universitat and Plaça de Catalunya and took over the main buildings such as the Hotel Colón, the Hotel Ritz and the telephone exchange, etc.<sup>6</sup> Troops from the Atarazanas and La Maestranza barracks took over the port district, from the Posts and Telegraphs depot at the bottom of La Rambla up to the Paral·lel. General Goded had seized the Captaincy-General, where Captain-General Llano de la Encomienda was removed from office and imprisoned. Such was the position in Barcelona by the early hours of Sunday morning.<sup>7</sup>

At this precise moment the popular backlash began. One of the earliest clashes took place in the so-called Passeig de Sant Pau, not far from the premises of the CNT Woodworkers' Union. Members of the union erected a formidable barricade in the middle of the Paral·lel and from there kept the troops at bay for four hours. To overcome this resistance, the military used local inhabitants, women, children and old people, as human shields. In this way the rebels were able to reach and destroy the union premises.

At 12 noon a CNT counter-attack upon the enemy's rear began and this culminated in the successful recovery of the lost positions.

At the same time decisive events were taking place in the city centre. The anarchist groups, together with Assault Guards and some Civil Guards, managed to cordon off the rebel positions in the Plaça Catalunya. The pressure on the rebels eased only when fresh rebel forces arrived from the barracks at Sant Andreu and those near the docks. These forces were under orders to establish contact with the troops already in the field, seize the civil government building and link up with the Captaincy-General and the Atarazanas barracks. The hopes of the reinforcements, composed of cavalry and artillery units, were dashed by the concerted efforts of CNT workers from Barceloneta, along with contingents of the security forces. The frantic fighting in the Avinguda Icària tipped the balance in favour of the people. In hand-to-hand fighting, military discipline was utterly destroyed. Once the soldiers encountered the populace, it was not long before they were disaffected and promptly began to feel a sense of fellowship with the people. The soldiers began to break off hostilities and to turn their weapons against their own officers.<sup>8</sup>

Numerous artillery pieces fell into the hands of the populace. Thereafter the revolutionary counter-offensive began. The strongholds in the centre of Barcelona were soon eliminated. Some batteries were drawn up facing the Captaincy-General. An ultimatum to surrender was passed to the rebel commander before opening fire. General Goded was reluctant to face the facts and replied by issuing intimidating orders. But a well-aimed salvo of artillery shells fired by improvised artillerymen sent a tremor through the building. A few moments later, the rebel leader

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<sup>6</sup> These squares and buildings were all key neurological points in Barcelona.

<sup>7</sup> The working class of Barcelona was alerted to the military uprising by the factory sirens and the klaxons of the ships moored in the harbour, a cacophony that signalled a call to arms of the urban proletariat.

<sup>8</sup> A telling anecdote concerns the streetfighting on Paral·lel, an important thoroughfare in central Barcelona. Rebel officers led the troops in their command down the street only to be brought to a halt by fierce resistance from armed workers inside the CNT Woodworkers' Union. This popular resistance seems to have broken the discipline of the troops and at a critical stage in the fighting some soldiers began to shoot their officers.

hoisted the white flag. A group of battle-hardened CNT people escorted him as far as the Generalitat palace. Surrounded by his main collaborators, Goded delivered the following lines over the air waves:

I declare before the Spanish people that fortune has deserted me. Henceforth, those who seek to continue the struggle should no longer count upon me.

Only the Atarazanas fortress held out. Even the Columbus statue had been equipped with bristling machine-gun nests, their sights pointed up La Rambla, which had become a firing range.<sup>9</sup> The loyalist air force, commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Felipe Díaz Sandino,<sup>10</sup> opened the attack with an intense aerial bombardment. Then the CNT forces went onto the attack.

Later, the secretary of the Metalworkers' Union, whose offices were located at the end of La Rambla, recalled some details of this epic. This is what Génaro Tejedor Delgado<sup>11</sup> had to say:

The glorious day when the Atarazanas barracks was captured was the exclusive achievement of the men of the CNT. The Civil Guard wanted to take part in the attack but we would not permit this. It was a matter of honour that we should avenge the victims who had been felled on the pavements of the Ramblas and the streets adjacent to the fortress. On 20 July comrade Durruti shouted to everyone: "Forward the men of the CNT!" So began the epic attack which overshadowed the capture of the Bastille by the people of Paris. As the tremendous struggle continued hour upon hour, a boy appeared, not more than 12 years old. Amid a hail of gunfire, he carried out his orders, came and went, ferrying ammunition to the fighters. When the last shot had been fired this Barcelona street urchin vanished from our side. He had accomplished his revolutionary mission and, after two days of tragedy, would surely go home and, kissing his mother's anxious brow, say to her: "I went for a bit of a stroll, Mama!" Outside the rebel stronghold comrade Ascaso met his end.

With the rising in Barcelona suffocated conclusively the CNT and the FAI descended on the barracks on 20 July like a whirlwind and quickly seized all the remaining weaponry. With the same alacrity, teams of armed men set out for every village and town in the region and thwarted the plans of the conspirators in Tarragona, Girona and Lleida. The social revolution got under way under the aegis of the CNT and the FAI, the absolute masters of social and economic life in Catalonia.

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<sup>9</sup> At the port end of La Rambla, this statue overlooked three important approach roads to the waterfront and afforded the military rebels effective control over much of the docks.

<sup>10</sup> A freemason and republican, he was a veteran of the Moroccan war who became involved in the struggle against the monarchy in the twenties and later organised a pro-republican cell in the army. At the start of the civil war he placed himself at the orders of the Generalitat and took the blame for a hastily planned and costly offensive against fascist-controlled Mallorca in the summer of 1936. Nevertheless, he was defence minister until December 1936 and in 1938 became head of the republican air force in Valencia. He went into exile at the end of the civil war.

<sup>11</sup> A veteran of the post-war years of *pistolero* and beyond, he was a stalwart of the Metalworkers' Union during the thirties.



Now let us see what happened in the region of the Centre. David Antona,<sup>12</sup> acting secretary of the national committee, which was based at this time in Madrid, provides the following testimony:

The CNT national committee's place of residence. A cramped, darkened room. We were scarcely able to move. A babble of voices, shouts, rifles, lots of rifles. The telephone constantly ringing. It's impossible to make oneself heard above the clicking of the bolts of rifles in the hands of comrades eager to learn their use, sounding their song of war. Alarming news arrives. Every one of the barracks in Madrid has risen up in arms. The same story in Toledo, Guadalajara and Alcalá de Henares. We are surrounded. Around Madrid the fascists have succeeded in throwing up a cordon of gun-metal. It's no longer just a question of the Montaña barracks which, as I write (11 am on 20 July) is being bombed by a loyalist aeroplane. Indignation swells, carrying us all away. In a single hour Madrid is consumed by its own flames. Shots ring out everywhere. Rumour has it that in the Salamanca district the fascists have captured numerous strategic positions.<sup>13</sup> I seize the phone. Bark out orders to the districts. The revolt has to be put down at all costs. The bombardment continues. Madrid resembles hell. The courage of her sons in those hours of drama deserves to be writ large in letters of gold. Some cavalry troops proceed along the Gran Vía<sup>14</sup> en route to the Montaña barracks. They are the sons of the people coming from Vicálvaro<sup>15</sup> with some artillery pieces. The crowd bars their way. They hurl themselves upon the troopers, hugging them between their arms. Many weep for joy! Cars, large numbers of cars, race past ferrying clusters of bodies clinging to their running boards. Huge columns of smoke rising over the buildings of Madrid reach to the sky... The finery is "fetched" out of the churches and monasteries. There is not a moment's ease.

The populace seems motivated by a single concern. The fever consumes us all. One might say that the whole of Madrid has mobilised. The revolutionary ardour in the people grows in direct proportion to the gravity of the situation. They seem moved by a single intelligence, a single will. No authority, one thinks, will be able to call this cyclone to heel. Those who have unleashed it will have to eat the dust of defeat. The telephone goes again. I pick up the receiver and a comrade shouts the news that the Montaña barracks has fallen. Contemptuous of death, some Assault Guards and members of the socialist youth movement, with the men of the CNT at their head, burst into the barracks, razing the entire building. This was the people's power making ready to mete out justice, the only creative, fecund justice. At that solemn hour (12 noon on 20 July 1936) an entire regime perished at the hands of the people. The

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<sup>12</sup> Interim general-secretary of the CNT during the first months of the civil war when the Confederation was first offered a place in central government. While the National Committee initially accepted this offer, Antona argued successfully that this issue had to be resolved by a plenum of CNT regional organisations. During the civil war he became civil governor of Ciudad Libre (Free City), previously known as Ciudad Real (Royal City). He was detained by Francoists at the end of the civil war.

<sup>13</sup> A bourgeois neighbourhood.

<sup>14</sup> A major thoroughfare in central Madrid.

<sup>15</sup> A working-class district in the east of Madrid.

bullets which ended the lives of army officers and commanders from the Montaña barracks killed not only men: they killed an entire society.<sup>16</sup>

A group of comrades throngs into the calle de Silva, the headquarters of the national committee. They are loaded down with rifles and machine-guns. Crazy with joy they announce: "We have risked our necks to get them and they are for the organisation!" They promptly climb into cars and off they go elsewhere in search of more rebels. Availing myself of a moment's tranquillity, I tried to gather the national committee together. We needed to swap impressions and balance our perceptions of the events which were under way and, if possible, establish contact with the other regional committees.

That fact is that the national committee boiled down to two or three members in those heady times. Most delegates had left on the night of the 18th for the various regional committees throughout Spain. Nobody knew where the others had gone. They had been caught up in the whirlwind of revolution. They were on the streets, guns blazing. They had reasoned "If fascism succeeds in getting the upper hand in Madrid, what use would the national committee be?" So, at that juncture, the best place to be was on the streets, just another face amid the people's army fighting for the social revolution. In the wake of the victory at the Montaña barracks, the remaining rebel strongholds in Madrid fell one after another. With exemplary heroism, the Madrid populace was committing itself with bared breast to the assault on the barracks, prompted by the boundless zeal which makes the great feats of history possible. Mola's advance upon Madrid was halted in the sierra. Peasants, unarmed except for a few hunting pieces, and accompanied by a few people from the CNT and the UGT who had set out from Madrid with a few dozen hand grenades, contained an entire army. The next day, once the revolt in Madrid had been brought under control, reinforcements were dispatched to the Guadarrama hills where, as mentioned above, the troops of the bloodthirsty ex-general Mola had been brought to a standstill.<sup>17</sup>

A telegram dated 30 July summed up the position in Spain in these terms:

National committee, Madrid, to national committee delegate, Barcelona. Received your telegram. We celebrate victory all Catalonia owing to our comrades unstoppable impetus. Zaragoza situation delicate. Make heroic efforts to bolster the struggle in this sector. Andalusia relatively all right. Small centres Granada and Seville. Valencia all right. Small centres Galicia, Asturias, centres in Gijón and Oviedo. Spare no effort after your victory. Redouble them dispatching necessary assistance. Madrid fine. Comrades' heroism excelling themselves. Castile's meseta in rebel hands, being fought even now. Report back. National committee.

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<sup>16</sup> This epitomises the triumphalism of all too many within the CNT and their view that the victory in the streets constituted the revolution itself.

<sup>17</sup> This account was one of a series of testimonies that appeared in the Valencia-based daily *Fragua Social* to mark the first anniversary of the popular resistance to the military rebellion and which later formed part of *De julio a julio*, Barcelona, 1937, a commemorative book published by the *Tierra y Libertad* printing house. (Note by the author.)

In Levante, the position could not have been more delicate. Between Madrid and Barcelona, two cities which were in the hands of the people, lay Valencia, whose garrison was locked inside its barracks, where it debated, sometimes with gunshots, whether it should take to the streets. On 19 July the CNT declared its revolutionary general strike which was unanimously and enthusiastically supported. Convinced of the civil governor's incompetence, the Popular Front parties established an Executive Committee of Valencia in one of his offices. The CNT instructed all the members it had mobilised to take up positions around the barracks.

According to Joan López, the following measures were proposed to the Valencian Executive Committee:

1. That steps be taken to ensure that all main communication centres along with the Union Radio broadcasting station be seized by Assault Guards, who are to be accompanied by twice their number in militants from the antifascist organisations.
2. That the people of Valencia be mobilised to cordon off the barracks and that all other strategic positions necessary to blockade these depots be seized.
3. These two steps having been taken, the military commanders should be informed of the antifascist authorities' decision to surrender their weapons to the people, so that the people may act to safeguard the situation.
4. In the event of refusal to surrender the arms to the people the barracks should be stormed forthwith.
5. On these conditions, the CNT representation agrees to participate in the Executive Committee of the Popular Front in an advisory capacity, until every one of the measures proposed by us has been put into effect. Thereafter, however, our action would move into the executive phase.

The proposal was accepted and the CNT was coopted on to the Valencian Executive Committee. But the latter soon displayed a lack of vigour. The note issued by General Mola professing loyalty to the republican cause did not exorcise the threat of revolt.

Meanwhile, for want of weapons and ammunition and with its patience exhausted, the people set about putting churches and monasteries to the torch. The dithering of the military and the government's reluctance to issue weapons to the people persisted for a fortnight. The government dispatched a delegate team which included leading politicians such as Martínez Barrio and Esplà, in an attempt to get the general strike called on the grounds that the garrison was loyal to the Republic.

The CNT steadfastly refused to consider this until the attitude of the military had been clarified. The troops remained confined to barracks. Another aim of the delegate panel was to see the Valencian Executive Committee disbanded.<sup>18</sup> But then the first rifles and handguns began to arrive from Barcelona, sent by the CNT and the FAI. Weapons were also received from the Confederation in the Centre region. On this issue Antona says:

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<sup>18</sup> This reflected the new rival form of power that had emerged alongside the waning power of the republican state.

In this connection I remember that four or five days after the revolt a delegation from the Levante regional committee came to Madrid to explain the situation in the Valencia area to the national committee. After hearing the report and given the grave implications for Madrid and for the revolution should Valencia fall into rebel hands, I sought an audience with the interior minister in my capacity as secretary of the national committee.

At our interview, we spoke at length of the situation in Valencia. The minister assured me that the Valencia garrison, if not completely loyal to us, might be regarded as a neutral factor in the struggle. I repeatedly urged him that the rifles stored in the government depot in that city should be issued to the people to guarantee the revolution. He promised me that he would telephone the local Civil Guard commander, an absolutely trustworthy fellow, and order him to issue these rifles to the CNT leadership. On the strength of these assurances, the comrades returned to Valencia. As for the rifles, either there were none, or they did not want them to be distributed. For this reason, as well as the attitude of the garrison's military commanders, who refused to speak to the authorities and workers' representatives in Valencia and prohibited anyone from approaching the barracks, the comrades from the CNT and FAI returned to Madrid. This time the national committee consulted nobody. Speedy action was needed. Valencia in rebel hands would have been the beginning of the end... It would have meant that Madrid was isolated from Catalonia and from the Levante and that the revolution would be nipped in the bud. And so the national committee handed over all the machine-guns and rifles we could to the Valencia comrades.

Two government warships had arrived in Valencia harbour. In Paterna, Sergeant Fabra mutinied against the officers in command of the engineers. But still the Valencia garrison sat on the fence, confined to its barracks. The government and its team of delegates continued to oppose arming the people. With the exception of the transport workers, the CNT and the UGT had both ordered a return to work. But the workers refused to obey the order. The decision of the CNT to proceed with the storming of the barracks clarified the situation once and for all. In this connection, López adds:

After storming the barracks, some fifteen days after the revolt had begun, Valencia and the surrounding region could breathe again and set about organising help to other comrades fighting at the fronts. The civil governor resigned. Power was now held by an Executive Committee, which became the supreme authority in the region, under the chairmanship of Colonel Arín,<sup>19</sup> who was appointed governor of Valencia. The People's Executive Committee was composed of one representative from each party and two from each trade union. Under the aegis of this committee, life in Valencia began to be organised, as also were columns of *milicianos* destined for the Teruel front. A fortnight of confusion, desperation and of dilemmas about whether to proceed with storming the barracks was put behind us. A fortnight of struggle when heroism and audacity had dallied with equivocation and collusion.

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<sup>19</sup> A pro-republican army officer.

From the aforementioned details, it follows that the government of the Republic not only failed to lift a finger to confront what was obviously a serious situation and when it did act, it simply made an already bad situation worse. The policy of the Interior Ministry, pursued through the civil governors, could not have been more counter-productive. The glaring absence of a defence plan was a constant source of embarrassment for an equivocal government which, in the majority of cases, and with the notable exceptions of Madrid and Barcelona, succeeded only in confusing public opinion, providing the enemy with time to strike and squandering anti-fascism's chance to crush the enemy straight out.

Many of those in government later atoned for their sins. But the antifascist cause lost fundamental positions which could have ensured it victory without the need for great sacrifices. The speed with which the rising had been overcome in Barcelona and Madrid ensured immediate victory in Girona, Lleida, Tarragona, Alcalá de Henares, Guadalajara, Toledo, etc. But thanks to the lack of initiative of the Popular Front government and its supporters, the Valencia situation jeopardised the initial gains and delayed the organisation of the Teruel front, one of the most important fronts in our war, along which the fascist hold on Zaragoza could be challenged.

The enemy's tactic in Zaragoza, of deploying its forces precisely where resistance was most anticipated, proved an unmitigated success. The manoeuvre was meticulously put into effect. The garrison, comprised of rebels to a man, sallied forth from its barracks and occupied the strategic points in the city. The republican disguise adopted by the military commanders was a resounding success and completely misled their adversaries. By the time that the populace and its organisation woke up to the game of the military, it was already too late. If this was not enough, the diffidence of the civil authorities towards the people did the rest. The revolutionary general strike declared by the CNT and the UGT was, owing to a lack of arms, bereft of any offensive capabilities.

Chueca states:

When we workers were ordered by our committees to withdraw into the working-class districts, not a single trooper had appeared on the streets. All that was known was that the weapons which the civil governor was reluctant to hand over to the workers had fallen into the clutches of the fascists. We have to acknowledge that we were very naive. We wasted too much time discussing matters with the civil governor. We even ended up trusting in his promises.

Could we have done more than we did? Possibly. We trusted exclusively in the civil governor's promises and we overestimated our strength. We did not anticipate that anything more forceful than the 30,000 organised workers in Zaragoza was required to meet the violence of which fascism was capable. We, the militants of the Zaragoza CNT, committed the crass error of failing to take fascism or the old Spain seriously. And when the sad, shameful reality revealed the naked truth to us, we painfully discovered that our forces were insufficient to confront the threatening danger we then faced.

In Asturias, another bulwark of the CNT and of the revolution, the vacillations of the authorities and the moderate elements in the Popular Front complicated the situation enormously. The rebels entertained no great illusions about their prospects of success in Asturias. In the document

known as the 'Mola Plan', containing the tactical guidelines of the revolt, the role of the plotters in Asturias was limited to decoy operations. Paragraph 2 of the document reads:

The troops of the Asturias military command are to keep the masses from the mining basin and from the port of El Musel at bay until such time as they can be relieved by forces from the 8th Division and the León garrison. Madrid, 25 May 1936.

The rebel troops carried out these instructions to the letter and benefited from the vacillations of officialdom and other parties. José Riera has outlined the tragic scene in dramatic terms:

And the hazy recollection of that early report! The news comes through that the order to move has been given! Our organisation's first moves, its first steps in the gargantuan drama. Intrigues, conjectures and conversations with the authorities in Gijón town hall. The local military commander gives assurances that his sympathies lie with the people. So do the officers with him... Our representatives have few illusions. By midnight the call to mobilise has gone out to all Asturias. The air rings with the screaming chorus of factory sirens and the horns of the ships anchored in the port, resembling a monstrous keening in the night or some premature distillation of all the screams of pain which will later be heard... The next day, the frantic labours of the mobilised proletariat continue. The unions meet in session. The committees gather. A body is constituted to supervise those who wield power in the province, such the civil governor, who has a deplorable record. And a serviceman of high "prestige": Colonel Antonio Aranda.<sup>20</sup> Our representatives suspect everything. The revolution's history never tells lies. In any event, events follow one upon another at a dizzying rate. From Madrid come anxious appeals. They plead for miners to be sent, since they are regarded as a decisive factor, capable of crushing the rebellion conclusively. Two expeditions set out. A third is requested. The CNT opposes this. Our argument is that only when the situation in Asturias is clarified — and in our view, it is far from clear — can we afford to weaken our defences for the sake of reinforcing other regions.

Our view prevails. And in Oviedo, our men organise squads which occupy key strategic points. 19 July! That date is wreathed in dark omens. The CNT makes up its mind once and for all to put all its cards on the table. Its line is that the time has come for the people to get its hands on all the weapons available in Oviedo. Some factions on the provincial committee oppose this. They do not believe that the moment has yet arrived. With an energy emanating from their perfect grasp of the problem, our representatives insist: "It is our fervent conviction that there is an immense chasm between the military and the revolutionary populace which has mobilised to crush this rising." (How the words spoken then by the CNT will strike a chord in many minds today!) We were not heeded. Let us say, for the sake of the truth, that the

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<sup>20</sup> Later a general, he played a leading role in the civil war. In Gijón at the start of the rising, he tricked local leftists into believing that he was loyal to the Republic and persuaded a column of miners to leave the city in order to bolster the defences of Madrid. Many of the miners were killed en route in an ambush set by the Civil Guard. Pro-British, he later fell out with Franco over the direction that Spain should follow on the international stage.

communist faction, along with comrade Javier Bueno,<sup>21</sup> director of *Avance*,<sup>22</sup> who attended the meetings, shared our thinking. And so Aranda was given a free hand. Even then, we tried again, proposing that all officers of the Oviedo garrison be called to open the barracks to the people.

The short-sightedness of the civil governor and the influence of certain elements again placed obstacles in the way of the CNT's proposals. It was at this point that Aranda, on the pretext of a stroll around the city, left our meeting, and was allowed to proceed freely on his way! At that historic instant — 4 pm on 19 July 1936 — the war in Asturias began. Aranda assembled his men and arranged for one company to set out towards Naranco.

Those troops promptly returned to barracks when they encountered the determined attitude of some Assault Guards who were still loyal. But the treason had already triumphed. Aranda was the master of the situation. The civil government building, where the provincial committee was in session, came under fire. We evacuated the building as best as we could. Those were the trickiest moments. The treachery of that despicable wretch led to the momentary collapse of our provincial committee. Each representative went their own way. Meanwhile, Aranda ordered the Civil Guard in the province to converge on the capital.

The response was speedy and majestic. The workers who broke through the devilish cordon in the city joined with those who poured out from the surrounding villages to establish a circle of steel around Oviedo. In Gijón — with some Assault Guards and Carabineers by our side — the Civil Guard and several regular army detachments which had dug in at various points in the city were quickly forced to surrender. Next began the siege of the Sappers' barracks and the Simancas barracks, which would fall to us some weeks later. Civil Guard personnel from La Felguera and Sama had surrendered within a few hours in the face of the onslaught of the workers in arms...

Events in the Basque Country came as a surprise to everybody, rebels and defenders alike. The rebels believed that the capture of Vizcaya, Alava and Guipúzcoa would be as strenuous as a military parade: the defenders believed much the same. Save in San Sebastián, Pasajes, Vitoria and a few other towns, the CNT was in the minority. The left-wing parties enjoyed considerable strength. Support for the Carlist *requetés* or the *tradicionalistas* was far from negligible. But the Basque nationalists, who had no social or revolutionary inclinations, accounted for the bulk of the popular movement. The rabid clerical influence in these towns augured poorly in the coming struggle with interests which were often inseparable from those of the Church. The proximity of Navarre, the centre of traditionalist Iberia and the breeding ground of several Carlist wars, was also a bad omen. Nonetheless, the Basque Country, with the exception of Alava, not only had misgivings about the generals' revolt but increasingly intervened in the struggle against it, cautiously at first and then with determination. In Bilbao there was no fighting to speak of. In Santander, the populace disarmed the security forces and then made short work of forcing the small garrison to surrender.

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<sup>21</sup> From the left wing of the PSOE.

<sup>22</sup> Published in Oviedo during 1931–4 and 1936–7, with a circulation of around 20,000.

According to Galo Díez:<sup>23</sup>

The same could not be said of San Sebastián. In the capital, our comrades and all the leftists were not sleeping; they took to the streets from the very outset and kept watch. The local military commander, summoned by the poor devil who was civil governor on the instigation of leftist elements, initially maintained that he was not with the rebels and, after a heated argument, he was stupidly left at large. By the time a column had been formed to leave for Mondragón to head off the rebels marching from Vitoria, the local military chief, who had been rallying the conspirators, took to the streets where he encountered a vigilant populace. Our comrades had torn up the pavement in calle Larramendi, where we had our offices, and erected a barricade with the paving stones.

When the rebels set about capturing the barricade, this was the sign for a hard-fought contest to begin. The first casualties fell outside the CNT offices and when the rebels met with stiff resistance they gave up, having lost the moment of surprise. This enabled the leftists to regroup. When the rebel soldiers, together with most of the Civil Guard, many of the Assault Guards and a few Carabineers, withdrew to the Maria Cristina Hotel and to the Gran Casino,<sup>24</sup> the people faced them with the few weapons they had gathered, boldly risking all and braving the hail of gunfire from balconies, doors and windows. After a few hours, the rebels who had not managed to escape bowed to the people's attack and they got their just deserts on the spot. Those who escaped and those led by Carrasco, who had yet to arrive, rendezvoused with other Assault Guards and Civil Guards from the Loyola barracks where they dug in.

The capture of the Loyola barracks was officially announced on 28 July. The rebel Captain Ferrer, who in 1930 had commanded the firing squad which executed the Jaca mutineers, met his death in the Loyola barracks.

In Galicia, the rising broke out on 21 July. From the outset, the people took to the streets but they had no arms. In A Corunha, the centre of the revolt, socialists, anarchists and republicans fought an unequal battle with the military until 22 July. The miners of San Finx-Noya joined the fighting, although they were armed with a few shotguns, the odd pistol and scraps of ammunition and some dynamite from the mine's store.

Claro Sendón states:<sup>25</sup>

The city was already in the clutches of the traitors. They mobilised their phalanxes to do battle with the miners and the A Corunha workers who had sided with them. The miners took the Santiago railway station by storm. They dug in there, consolidating their positions and entering the winding streets of the Santa Lucía district. They penetrated the city and its suburbs. They seized several houses in the centre and obliged the rebel troops to retreat towards the Municipal Palace... the fighting in the streets of A Corunha lasted three days, and the bloody contest claimed the bravest,

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<sup>23</sup> A veteran *cenetista* from the Basque Country.

<sup>24</sup> Both of these buildings were opulent bastions of bourgeois privilege in the city.

<sup>25</sup> A Galician *cenetista* and worker-journalist.



the best and the purest militants from the townships of Galicia. Countless comrades from young libertarians gave their precious lives outside the Civil Guard barracks when they tried to storm it unarmed. The finest men of the FAI, CNT and UGT, the most upright, most revolutionary members of the socialist and republican parties, all perished... It was there that our beloved friend Jiménez fell. He was the hero of the struggle and an exemplary fighter, who met the danger by advancing majestically, with a stick of lit dynamite stuffed under his belt, only to blow himself up along with the fascist machine-gunners and the machine-gun.

We shall complete this survey by examining the naval mutiny in El Ferrol.<sup>26</sup>

Militarily speaking, the rebels had all but lost the war on 19 July. One need only glance at a map of Spain to appreciate the critical situation facing the rebels. Antifascist Spain held two-thirds of the nation's territory. Comprising farmlands and industries, along with the bulk of the population, this antifascist zone accounted for the wealthiest part of the country. The seaboard, as well as the passable frontiers with Europe, was almost entirely under the control of 'Red Spain'. This was true also of the bulk of the navy and the merchant shipping.

The rebels controlled the Castilian meseta but, with the exception of Galicia, had no access to the sea. Worse still, the entire central-southern zone under rebel control was cut off from the revolt's initial springboard, Morocco. Mallorca was neutralised by Mahón (a stronghold), while the Canaries were separated by the ocean.

The speed with which the rebels launched their plan to join up their two chief concentrations of forces via Andalusia and Extremadura was the key to all their future military successes. The execution of this plan was made possible by the creation of intermediary staging posts.

What were those staging posts? In the first instance, Seville, followed by Cádiz, Algeciras, Jerez, etc. Córdoba and Granada were more like side-shows. In Málaga, the people got the better of the rebels and compensated for their dearth of weapons by relying on the psychological impact of fire.

The battle of Andalusia, which was eventually settled in the rebels' favour, was unquestionably a watershed in the rising. For the rebellion, the need to set up a bridge between its two major strongholds was a matter of life or death. Success in this initial endeavour brought a tangible change in the overall panorama of the contest in the space of a few weeks. General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano entered Seville surreptitiously, as Goded did in Barcelona and, by means of a *coup de main*, he became master of the city centre within a few hours. With the support of the Civil Guard and fascist *señoritos*, he forced the small garrison of Assault Guards to surrender, although, to their credit, they resisted the adventurer-general's followers almost to their last cartridge. The military and civilian authorities showed unlimited leniency. Nonetheless, even when the garrison had completely risen and with the city centre in its grasp, the rebels passed a number of genuinely uncertain hours. Despite every appearance to the contrary, the proletariat of Seville wrote the most heroic page in its history at the cost of rivers of blood. Had the people had access to the arms they needed, arms which those who governed the Republic were never willing to issue to them, they would soon have settled accounts with the 'Butcher of Seville'.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> This was Franco's birthplace in Galicia.

<sup>27</sup> A reference to Queipo de Llano.

The outlying districts of the city, as well as villages in the province, held the garrulous general at bay for many a day.

Psychological shock tactics were an important complement to military strategy during the battle for Andalusia. In particular, the airwaves and Tablada airport saved Queipo de Llano from defeat: the airwaves allowed the ghoulish general to make great capital out of his quick-witted diatribes, while the airport allowed him to receive indispensable reinforcements which enabled him to consolidate his position and then go on the offensive. The calibre of these reinforcements, which consisted of Legionnaires and Moorish troops, dealt a decisive blow to Andalusian antifascism. Quite apart from the superb quality of these men as shock troops, one also has to consider their impact upon the heavily impressionable Andalusian temperament and, indeed, upon the Spanish temperament generally.

Popular morale was deeply undermined by the general's sarcastic, scurrilous chatter over the radio waves, as he exaggerated the proverbial savagery of the Moorish troops. The rebel high command was able to reap great benefits from this psychological weapon. The Asturian campaign of October 1934, when large numbers of Moorish mercenaries had been deployed for the first time on Spanish soil, was a trial run to which the rebels always harked back. The complex of terror which these troops inspired in the average Spaniard was exploited through the crudely chauvinistic literature which developed around the Moroccan wars. The barbarity of the native-born Moroccan was deliberately exaggerated to invest the adventures of our *africanista* army (among them, in first place, General Franco himself) with some cachet of military achievement. The lines we now reproduce are from the pen of Miguel P. Cerdón<sup>28</sup> and they confirm this view:

Queipo de Llano struck the first blow by seizing the radio station... The radio station won the first battle in Andalusia for the rebels. The second was won owing to the complicity in the subversion of numerous figures in the government. When the people got wind of this treachery they hesitated somewhat, remaining on the defensive, thereby giving the rebels the opportunity to move troops from Morocco up to Seville, the base from which operations against the villages were organised, as if they were involved in simple military exercises. There was intimidation enough in the deployment of Moors, regular native troops and foreign legionnaires in Seville, not to mention the summary mass shootings of republicans, socialists, communists and anarchists. They attacked Utrera, Morón, Alcalá de Guadaira and Carmona. In these towns the enemy met with stiff resistance. The fighting in Morón lasted more than eight hours. In the end aircraft were required to break the heroic resistance. And the enemy suffered over 1,000 losses in Carmona, where they had to resort to a scorched earth policy and multiply their attacking columns threefold. Other villages fell without a shot, because at the last minute the Civil Guard sided with the Falangists and proceeded to shoot workers' leaders. The magnificent resistance put up in Triana was overwhelmed after eight days. Those who had fought so courageously either perished by the barricades or made for the province of Huelva or for Constantina which were still in our possession...

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<sup>28</sup> These lines come from a chapter on the military uprising in Andalusia ('19 de julio en Andalucía') which appeared in a collective work, *Cómo se enfrentó al fascismo en toda España*, Buenos Aires, 1938.

The Falangist Alfonso Gutiérrez de la Higuera y Velázquez, author of a purported history of the Spanish revolution, writes this on page 79:<sup>29</sup>

Huelva and its province had to be snatched yard by yard from the clutches of local Marxists who kept them in tyrannical subjection under their iron rule. A column dispatched from Seville under the command of the mayor, the marqués de Soto Hermoso,<sup>30</sup> retook the villages along the Seville–Huelva highway, until it reached the suburbs of the Huelva, where it stimulated the revolt by the Civil Guard to the cry of “Viva España!”

Now let us see Juan Rueda Ortiz’s account<sup>31</sup> of the establishment of the rebel bridgehead in Algeciras:<sup>32</sup>

At our meeting we decided to propose to Commandant Gutiérrez, the government delegate on the spot, that we remove 500 rifles and some ceremonial coastal batteries from the barracks and place them in the port to prevent the disembarkation by Legionnaires and Moorish troops which, intelligence suggested, would occur on the evening of that same day (18 July). Lethargic in the extreme, Gutiérrez allowed events to follow their course and the hours quickly passed, thereby giving the initiative to the reactionaries. At 4.30 pm, under pressure from us, he had the following exchange with the army chief of the garrison:

“I ask your excellency to transfer command of the troops to me so as to avoid the triumph of fascism on the field of Gibraltar.”

To which the Colonel replied:

“Our duty lies in helping the *fascio*, the saviour of Spain and of the race, and I instruct you to place yourself under my orders.”

Commandant Gutiérrez dispatched a unit of Civil Guards, the reactionary corps *par excellence*, to place the colonel under arrest. When they reached the rebel colonel they joined his cause and immediately, just like during Sanjurjo’s attempted coup of 10 August 1932, soldiers commanded by monarchist officers set about enforcing a state of siege in Algeciras. There followed a series of skirmishes and general protests by the populace throughout the city, first in the port, where we attempted to dig in, then in the city centre, where we awaited events with the few weapons at our disposal. Commandant Gutiérrez was taken prisoner and removed to El Hacho...

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<sup>29</sup> The work in question — *Historia de la revolución española. Tercera guerra de independencia*, Cádiz, 1940 — was actually co-written by Alfonso Gutiérrez de la Higuera y Velázquez and Luis Molins Correa and, true to their Falangist convictions, was a seamless diatribe against the left.

<sup>30</sup> This title highlights the role of aristocratic volunteers who formed cavalry units that set out to conquer collectivised land by force of arms. These same aristocrats played a leading role identifying trade union organisers to the army.

<sup>31</sup> From his chapter ‘19 de julio en Marruecos’ in the collective volume *Cómo se enfrentó al fascismo en toda España*.

<sup>32</sup> Located immediately opposite Gibraltar, this was a key strategic landing-point for the Moroccan-based rebel army.

Very early next day, Sunday 19 July, 2,800 Moroccan mercenaries disembarked and, to cries of “Long Live Fascism!”, marched on Seville, Jérez, Cádiz, and other places in Andalusia where the rebellion had met with armed resistance from the proletariat. Three companies of native *regulares* were left behind in Algeciras to hold on to the city, a key point in communications with Morocco, and of unquestionable strategic importance to the rebels.

The land army’s plan of revolt had been drawn up in consultation with the navy. By tradition, rather than *esprit de corps*, the officers and commanders of the navy are drawn from the reactionary Spanish aristocracy. Given this background, the success of the revolt in that branch of the armed services was all but a foregone conclusion.

When the rebellion began, the bulk of the fleet was in the bases at El Ferrol, Cádiz, Cartagena and Mahón. The details of the revolt where the navy was concerned were ironed out during manoeuvres held off the Canaries. At the end of the exercises, the naval officers and the army commanders on the islands held a banquet during which — to the euphoric cries of ‘Viva España!’ — the success of the ‘movement’ was toasted. Among those doing the toasting was the officer in charge of the garrisons in the Canary Islands, General Franco.

Some of the warships lying at anchor in Moroccan ports on the day of the rising began were not there by coincidence alone. This is shown by the fact that the destroyer *Churruca* was employed on 19 July to transport *regulares* to Cádiz. Shortly afterwards, the ship’s crew mutinied against their officers, who were overpowered after fierce fighting below and on deck. Those officers who refused to surrender were killed and their corpses tossed overboard.

The mutiny aboard the *Churruca* spread to the *Admiral Valdés* and the *Sánchez Barcaiztegui*, two ships which had left Melilla port for the loyalist base at Cartagena.

In the Mediterranean theatre, during the first days the fascists could count only upon a couple of gunboats and some feluccas whose landing operations were covered by the navy’s flying-boats and planes from Tablada airbase.

The rebels are wont to boast of the huge numbers of Legionnaires and *regulares* which they successfully ferried over to Spain with such slender means. About this time, foreign news agencies released the following dispatch:

Paris, 31 July 1936. Six Italian aircraft have overflown the coast of Algeria en route to Morocco. One of the aircraft crashed near Oran, four of its crew being killed and the other two injured... Feelings increased at yesterday’s session of the Foreign Trade Commission, when the minister in charge of the department, Monsieur Delbos, solemnly announced that France would refrain from all intervention in the Spanish civil war.

The bases at Mahón and Cartagena were defended, seized and consolidated by the seamen and ratings of the fleet, who quickly rid themselves of superior officers implicated in the mutiny.

The two remaining bases did not have the same fate. On 18 July the admiral in command of the San Fernando base declared a state of war. The incumbent general at Cádiz had also risen in the revolt against the government, in cahoots with Queipo de Llano. The gunships *Lauria* and *Cánovas del Castillo* were moored in the La Carraca dockyards, along with the cruiser *República*

and the training vessel *Juan Sebastián Elcano*. Between 21 and 22 July the crews of these ships revolted against their officers and then attempted to seize the base. Fierce fighting ensued. Aircraft from Seville and the coastal batteries in the hands of the fascists, reinforced by Moors and Legionnaires, put down the sailors' heroic resistance, though not before the *Lauria* was scuttled amid flames.

As for El Ferrol, the struggle there assumed epic proportions. At anchor in the inner docks was the ironclad and barely seaworthy *España*, the cruiser *Admiral Cervera*, the destroyer *Velasco*, a torpedo launch and the transport ship *Contramaestre Casado*. The twin cruisers *Canarias* and *Baleares* were nearing completion.

On 18 July the cruisers *Libertad* and *Miguel de Cervantes* set sail from the base, their crews mutinying against their officers. The crew of the *España* did not mutiny until 20 July, at precisely the moment that the officers were ordering the infantry to go ashore to assist the military which was then preparing to seize the city. The seamen, in formation on deck, turned their rifles on their officers. The crew of the *Admiral Cervera* promptly re-enacted the bold gesture of the *España* seamen. Only the destroyer *Velasco* declared openly for the fascists. Hemmed in by the two loyalist vessels, she opened up with machine-guns on the revolutionary soldiers at the very moment that the *Cervera* began the bombardment of the Captainty-General building.

About that time the rebel garrison just occupied the city, an operation concluded by the emplacement of artillery facing the dockyards which were under the control of dockers and mutinous seamen. The fighting persisted on 21 July at which point the fleet came under aerial bombardment. The first to surrender were the *Contramaestre Casado* and the defenders of the Naval Academy. The *Admiral Cervera* struck her republican colours as a result of an adroit ploy by the telegraph station, which faked an order of surrender from the Navy Ministry as the rebels had been victorious throughout Spain and that resistance was thus futile. Once in rebel hands the *Admiral Cervera* trained its guns on the *España*, forcing it to surrender. Thus was sealed the fate of the heroic sailors of El Ferrol.

There is a further episode of interest still to be related: the story of the *Jaime I*. On 17 July, this veteran naval vessel berthed in Vigo port, where her officers had secret talks with local military commanders. The next day, under orders from the navy minister, the ironclad put to sea, but just off the Portuguese coast the sailors intercepted a radio message from the rebel forces in Morocco instructing the ship's commander to make a detour towards Ceuta. Mutiny ensued immediately. Seamen and ratings locked in bloody battle with the officers on deck. Most of the officers and commanders wound up in the drink. On 21 July, the *Jaime I* put into Tangiers where it joined the rest of the loyalist fleet, ready to do battle with any ships and transports prepared to move mercenary forces across the Straits.

This is a list of the ships of war snatched from the fascists by the daring of the sons of the people:

The ironclad *Jaime I* (16,400 tons); the cruisers *Libertad* and *Miguel de Cervantes* (both 9,385 tons), and the *Méndez Núñez* (6,140 tons); the destroyers *Sánchez Barcaiztegui*, *Admiral Ferrándiz*, *José Luis Diez*, *Lepanto*, *Churruca*, *Alcalá Galiano*, *Admiral Valdés*, *Admiral Antequera*, *Admiral Miranda*, the *Gravina*, *Elcano*, *Ciscar*, *Jorge Juan* and the 2,120 ton *Ulloa*; the light destroyers *Alsedo* and *Lazaga* (1,337 tons); six type 'B' submarines of 570 tons; 5 type 'C' submarines of 914 tons and various torpedo launches, gunboats and coastguard vessels.

The vessels remaining in rebel hands were the following: the ironclad *España* (twin vessel to the *Jaime I*); the cruisers *Admiral Cervera* (*Libertad* class), *Canarias* and *Baleares* (under construction

— 10,000 tons); the destroyer *Velasco* (1,337 tons), the gunships *Dato*, *Cánovas del Castillo* and *Canalejas* (1,335 tons); the cruiser *República* (later renamed the *Navarra* — 6,450 tons) and some torpedo boats and coastguard vessels.

The *Canarias* and *Baleares* came into service between the months of September and December of 1936. A miracle of the rebels' engineering skills perhaps? No. The miracle was courtesy of Italy and Germany!

## CHAPTER NINE: The revolutionary achievement

In Barcelona, the victory had gone to the people on 20 July. Diego Abad de Santillán<sup>1</sup> has written:

By 20 July only the Atarazanas barracks was holding out against us in Barcelona, but the battle could not remain unresolved for long. The men under siege defended their lives and their positions courageously but this merely strengthened the determination to win among the belligerents on the people's side. Díaz Sandino deployed some of his aircraft to bomb the barracks. We already had the coastal batteries and the artillery pieces of the city's garrison. The fortress would be levelled to the ground if the resistance continued. But still no indication of surrender was forthcoming. At this point Ascaso, who had been firing his rifle to deadly effect, was hit in the head and killed instantly. The news spread as if wildfire and inflamed the besiegers into the final assault. That assault proceeded with irrepressible energy and our people burst into the barracks like men possessed. One of the first among them, if not the very first, was Durruti.<sup>2</sup>

The era of the revolutionary order began.

Much against our will, our account will focus upon political, economic and military developments in Catalonia. Why? Because Catalonia led the way in routing the military rebels; because it was the region with the greatest concentration of confederal and anarchist membership and, therefore, the greatest revolutionary élan; because it was the region where the frictions between the several trade unions and political factions and between the central government and the autonomous regions were at their most stark; and because Catalonia summed up all the grandeur and the misadventures of the revolution.

One of the most decisive phases of the contest ended on 20 July. With both the central and the Generalitat governments in disarray, with the people at the head of the nation's destiny and of

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<sup>1</sup> The pseudonym of Sinesio García Fernández, a prominent figure in the international anarchist movement, intellectual and translator. He was born in Spain, his family moving to Argentina when he was young. The Argentinian delegate at the founding IWA congress in Berlin in 1921, he was the architect of *trabazón* ('link') between the unions and the specific organisation. With Argentina under dictatorial rule, in 1934 he returned to Spain, where he and his comrades came to prominence in the CNT and the FAI, ousting the 'Nosotros' group from the leadership and taking over much of the movement's press. Active in the civil war, he was a member of the CCMA and, in April 1937, of the Generalitat Economic Council. The target for fierce attacks from the anarchist traditionalists, he sought reconciliation during the 1937 'May Days'. The author of several works on revolutionary economic theory, like *Peirats*, he was a historian of the labour movement and he wrote widely on working-class history.

<sup>2</sup> From Diego Abad de Santillán, *¿Por qué perdimos la guerra?*, Buenos Aires, 1940

their own, with the CNT and FAI revealed as the dominant element, the need arose to orchestrate the revolutionary order. The anarchist movement, absolutely in control of the situation, found itself confronted by one of the most important dilemmas it had ever faced. As far as Juan García Oliver<sup>3</sup> was concerned that dilemma was framed in the following terms: 'Either libertarian communism, which is tantamount to anarchist dictatorship, or democracy, which spells collaboration.'

We are not going to examine the accuracy of that assessment here. What is beyond all doubt is that the bulk of the militants reached a similar interpretation of the realities of the moment. Discordant voices among their number were like voices crying in the wilderness; the silence of others was truly enigmatic. Between those who unsuccessfully protested and those whose silence indicated their irresolution, the collaborationist thesis gained ground. It is worth pointing out also that for many months the vast majority of the Confederation's rank-and-file supporters concentrated their attention solely upon issues concerned with fighting at the battle fronts, the repression of covert fascism and the expropriation and galvanisation of the new revolutionary economy. Among the factors contributing to the collaborationist complex was the overall progress of the fighting which was far from encouraging and nearly half of Spain groaned in the clutches of fascism. The enemy's forces, having recovered from their initial misadventure and prepared for an all-out effort, were beginning to pose a serious threat.

Was this awful dilemma thrashed out thoroughly by the anarchist militants and CNT militants? Were any stones left unturned when the implications of the moment were analysed? Were all the pros and cons weighed up coolly and calmly? Were the experience and history of previous revolutions taken into account?

The dark storm clouds looming on the horizon, in the Sierra de Guadarrama, in Aragón, Levante and Andalusia, precluded any clinical analysis of the issues. The macabre spectre of war — regrettably a real threat — prevented many from thinking clearly during the 33 months of the war, and supplied more than a few with a counter-revolutionary fillip.

The fact is that the collaborationist thesis won out over the theses of 'go for broke' (*ir a por el todo*) or 'anarchist dictatorship', which in fact would not necessarily have proved fatal.

With the rising smothered in Barcelona, Companys summoned the CNT and the FAI to his office in the Generalitat. García Oliver, one of the most influential militants, answered that summons, as did some others. García Oliver has given this account of the audience:

We turned up armed to the teeth, rifles, machine-guns, hand guns. Shabby and soiled by dust and smoke. "We are the representatives of the CNT and the FAI summoned by Companys, and those with us are our escort," we told the officer in charge. Companys, visibly moved, stood to receive us. He shook our hands and would have embraced us had he not been prevented from doing so by his personal dignity, which

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<sup>3</sup> A member of the CNT from a young age, he was, with Durruti and Ascaso, one of the 'three musketeers of Spanish anarchism'. A waiter by trade, he was active in the 'Los Solidarios' and 'Nosotros' groups. A staunch supporter of paramilitary organisation within the anarchist movement, he became synonymous with the 'anarcho-bolshevik' line, which emphasised the central revolutionary role of an armed, insurrectionary vanguard. An important figure in the FAI, he was part of the minority that called for the revolution to be followed through to its logical conclusion in July 1936, arguing for a seizure of power by the CNT-FAI. Despite opposing CNT participation in the Generalitat government, he later served as minister for justice in Largo Caballero's central government and supported the militarisation of the anarchist militias. Acting under the orders of the CNT national committee, he sought an end to the fighting during the 'May Days'. He was exiled in Mexico after the civil war.



was considerably affected by what he had in mind to say to us. The introductions were brief. We sat down, each of us with his rifle between his knees. Basically what Companys said to us was this: "Above all, let me tell you that the CNT and FAI have never been treated with the respect they have deserved by virtue of their size and importance. You have always been harshly persecuted and, much to my regret, political realities dictated that I, who was once with you, later found myself with no option but to make my stand and persecute you. Today you are masters of the city and of Catalonia, because you alone have beaten the fascist military and I hope that you will not take it amiss if I remind you that the aid of the few or the many upright men of my party, of the Assault Guards and of the Mossos d'Esquadra<sup>4</sup> was not denied you." He mused for a moment then slowly continued: "But the fact is that you, who until so recently have been harshly persecuted, have today beaten the military and the fascists. Knowing what and who you are, I can only have recourse to words of great sincerity. You have won and everything is within your power. If you have no need of me, if you do not want me as president of Catalonia, say so now, and I will be just another soldier in the antifascist struggle. If, on the other hand, you believe that I, along with the men of my party, my name and my prestige, may be of use in this office in a struggle which, while resolved today in this city is yet to be decided in the rest of Spain, then you can count on me and on my word as a man and as a politician convinced that a past of shame has today been put to rest in the sincere hope that Catalonia will put itself in the vanguard of the most socially advanced countries in the world."<sup>5</sup>

In another room Companys had assembled representatives from all of Catalonia's political parties. They awaited the outcome of the meeting. The CNT and FAI representatives were ushered into this other room where, at Companys' suggestion, the basis was to be worked out of what became known as the Central Committee of Anti-fascist Militias (CCMA) which was to take charge of peacekeeping in Catalonia and organising armed operations against the rebels lording it over Zaragoza.

García Oliver concludes his account of this historic episode with the following words:

The CNT and the FAI opted for collaboration and democracy, eschewing the revolutionary totalitarianism which would have led to the strangulation of the revolution by a confederal-anarchist dictatorship. They trusted in the word of a Catalan democrat and retained and supported Companys as president of the Generalitat; they accepted the CCMA and an unfair system of proportional representation which gave the UGT and the PSOE, minority groups in Catalonia, an equal number of positions to the triumphant CNT and anarchists. This implied a sacrifice calculated to lure the dictatorially inclined parties along the path of loyal collaboration which could not be jeopardised by suicidal competition.

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<sup>4</sup> Formed in 1690, this was the traditional rural police in Catalonia and was normally armed with a pistol and truncheon. After 1934 they were integrated into the police by the autonomous Catalan authorities.

<sup>5</sup> Reports of this meeting have been widely commented upon by the participants. This version is taken from *De julio a julio* (Note by the author).

García Oliver, Aurelio Fernández,<sup>6</sup> José Asens,<sup>7</sup> Abad de Santillán and Marcos Alcón<sup>8</sup> joined the CCMA as representatives of the CNT-FAI. So did Durruti, but only fleetingly, for he was to set out shortly for Aragón.

The first ordinance from this ‘revolutionary government’ read as follows:

The CCMA of Catalonia, constituted in accordance with the decree published by the Generalitat in today’s Official Bulletin,<sup>9</sup> has taken the following decisions, observance of which is an obligation incumbent upon all citizens:

1. A revolutionary order is introduced, and all of the organisations making up the CCMA are pledged to maintain it.
2. For purposes of surveillance and vigilance, the CCMA has appointed the necessary teams to enforce rigorously all orders that might emanate from it. To this end, these teams are to carry appropriate credentials, bearing witness to their commission.
3. These teams are to be the only ones recognised by the CCMA. Anyone acting outside them is to be regarded as a rebel and will suffer such sanctions as are decided by the CCMA.
4. The night watches are to be severe with any who trespass against the revolutionary order.
5. Between 1 am and 5 am, traffic will be limited to the following categories:
  - (a) all who can produce credentials certifying membership of any of the organisations represented within the CCMA;
  - (b) persons escorted by any such individual and able to show proof of good character;
  - (c) such persons as may be able to point to force of circumstances obliging them to venture out of doors.
6. To recruit personnel for the CCMA, the member organisations are empowered to open their respective enlistment and training centres. Conditions governing said recruitment are to be detailed in an internal memorandum.
7. Despite the necessity of establishing a revolutionary order so as to grapple with fascist cells, the CCMA nevertheless hopes that it will not be necessary to impose disciplinary measures in order to secure obedience.

Almost simultaneously with the posting of this ordinance on the streets, another ordinance was being made public in Madrid. This one stated:

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<sup>6</sup> A mechanic, seasoned action group member, veteran of the ‘Los Solidarios’ and ‘Nosotros’ groups and prominent figure in the FAI, he was responsible for internal security at the start of the revolution and fulfilled this same function inside the Generalitat.

<sup>7</sup> An anarchist and Catalan regional committee member before the civil war, he played a key role in the movement during the conflict.

<sup>8</sup> A *faista* and veteran Barcelona CNT activist from the post-war pistolero struggles, he was a close ally of Durruti and was active in the movement throughout the civil war.

<sup>9</sup> The *Butlletí Oficial de la Generalitat* carried notice of all the legislation, proceedings and news of the Catalan government. That it continued to appear and that it published news of the formation of the CCMA tended to enhance the standing of the Generalitat at a time when its actual power was non-existent.

By order of the Minister of the Interior: the circulation of vehicles carrying armed individuals, whatever their nature, is strictly forbidden and any who are not equipped with special authorisation for this purpose are to be stopped and disarmed. At the same time it is ordained that armed groups may not circulate through Madrid. Those who infringe this ordinance are to be regarded as rebel trouble-makers and will inexorably incur the maximum penalties under the law.

Individuals who had refused the people arms and left their liberties undefended were beginning to cry foul. They were exasperated by the sight of the people armed, stripped of the strait-jacket of the state and masters of their own fate. Nonetheless, that very same populace continued to furnish evidence of its altruism and generosity. This is shown by the fact that just four days after the end of fighting in Barcelona the first column sallied forth en route to Zaragoza. At the head of that column, the vast majority of whom were members of the Confederation, marched Durruti.

The contemporary press carried the following item:

The CCMA, which directs the armed forces in Catalonia, has decided to dispatch the workers' shock columns to Zaragoza to attack the rebels. The CCMA determined to send 6,000 volunteers, but enthusiasm has been running very high. The number of volunteers who assembled in the Plaça de Catalunya to go to Zaragoza reached 10,000.

For his part, Abad de Santillán has written:

General fervour notwithstanding, the Durruti-Pérez Farràs<sup>10</sup> Column did not attain the projected figure, nor anything like it. Already bewilderment was beginning. The war was to be all-consuming of men, weapons, work, thought, life, everything. It was believed that the first expeditionary column had more than enough fighters and that its task would be a walk-over. The 3,000 *milicianos* left joyously, with inexpressible pride and spirit.<sup>11</sup>

If one considers the enigmatic attitude adopted by the Civil Guard, especially outside Barcelona, the people's misgivings about leaving the rearguard under-protected became understandable. This same suspicion greeted the order for a return to work. The people were reluctant to give up the streets and this resistance increased proportionately to the largely amiable calls from the authorities for disarmament.

An item in *Solidaridad Obrera* of 28 July stated:

The comrades from Roses complain to us that an entire column of men, after having travelled to Figueres to defeat fascism, has been surrounded by the Civil Guard and disarmed. After much parleying with the forces of the Popular Front and the Civil Guard, 25 rifles have been returned to them, the rest having been retained. Comrades! Under no circumstances allow yourselves to be disarmed by anybody.

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<sup>10</sup> Major Enrique Pérez-Farrás was an artillery officer, Mossos d'Esquadra captain and Catalan republican. He was named military chief of the CCMA and assigned to the Durruti Column in which he fulfilled the role of military adviser.

<sup>11</sup> From Abad de Santillán's previously cited *¿Por qué perdimos la guerra?*

Also on 28 July, the Barcelona CNT local federation ordered a return to work with the following communiqué:

At yesterday's local federation plenum it was decided that, according to the CCMA, all unions would resume work today, Tuesday. In the belief that modern production is characterised by absolute economic interdependence and in the belief that every conflict or military contingency, whether seditious or revolutionary, makes continual demands upon all the vital resources of production, we propose:

1. The immediate resumption of production by the working population, save in those industries which are not vital to the upkeep of the anti-fascist struggle. In these industries, the producers will be redeployed to other sectors more crucial to our struggle.
2. That the sub-commission of the CCMA charged with overseeing the economy examine the necessity of impounding all those industries deemed indispensable for the manufacture of military equipment for the campaign against fascism.
3. That the private firms affected contribute towards the defence of the people's liberties by agreeing to pay the wages of workers employed in these industries.
4. All *milicianos* are exempted from returning to work, their places being taken by the unemployed of each trade by arrangement with their respective unions.

Addendum: the CCMA and the supply committees [ *comités de abastos* ] shall maintain the upkeep of *milicianos* and of their families. Having consulted the CCMA about the decision of this plenum regarding the industries which ought not to resume work, it has been decided that all workers should return to work today, Tuesday. Those industries in which workers are to be redeployed for other activities will be determined later.

The Committee.

The omission from this communiqué of revolutionary guidelines for the workforce is worthy of note. The authorities took advantage of this vagueness. In the face of popular action against urban properties such as the confiscation and occupation of accommodation abandoned by the reactionary bourgeoisie and other right-wingers, the Generalitat announced a decree cutting rents by 25 per cent. Around the same time, the Madrid government fixed the discount at 50 per cent. Concerning this, *Solidaridad Obrera* commented:

Whom should one heed? *À propos* of the two decrees lately issued by the Madrid and Generalitat governments regarding the reduction of rents, the people of Barcelona are wondering whom one should heed. This mess should be straightened out. Obviously we plump for the 50 per cent as decreed by Madrid, although we are not the advocates for any decree. But we believe that, while we are about the business of tightening the landlords' belts, everyone should adhere to that which benefits them most.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 6 August 1936.

On 26 July, the FAI's peninsular committee broadcast its first manifesto over the radio and here too there is a notable omission of any incitement to socialise the economy. This is its text:

People of Barcelona! Workers of all the labour organisations and all the leftist parties united in the struggle against fascism! In these crucial times, in these historic moments for Barcelona and for Spain, the FAI, which has given generously of its blood and been the unstoppable force behind the superhuman heroism which secured victory at the cost of so many lives, also needs to make its voice heard to the multitudes who listen to the radio. Comrades! One more push and victory will be ours. We have to maintain this historic tension through which we have lived during the last seven days. Strengthened many times over by our passion and enthusiasm, we are invincible. The first anti-fascist column is closing in victorious on Zaragoza, welcomed by ecstatic cries of enthusiasm. The liberated villages add their numbers to the spirited men who have ventured out from Barcelona to take Zaragoza. The defeat of fascism in Zaragoza will sound its death knell. The fortunes of the world will be shaped by the glorious model of the revolutionary resistance and the sovereign will of the masses, who, once united by the determination to win, become transformed into all-powerful giants. Aware of the crucial times in which we live, we who are loyal towards our allies in the common struggle also require the same loyalty and responsibility from them, the same heroic determination to win which has sustained us through these grand and unforgettable days in Barcelona.

Men and women under arms in the enthusiastic people's militias, and the unknown heroes of the rearguard who maintain the fighters by preparing food and manufacturing war materials — remember Napoleon's words when he stood before the Pyramids: "Forty centuries are watching us." Similarly, the whole world hangs on our every move. Let us all ensure that we are a coordinated, invincible force exemplifying both unparalleled daring and integrity in all our endeavours. To battle, comrades! Let us trample the fascist hydra beneath our feet! 19 July marked the dawning of a new era: the peace of the past is no more. Amid rivers of blood we are moulding a new Spain. Long live the FAI, our symbol of revolution and the standard-bearer of the multitudes' craving for liberty! Long live the united struggle against fascism!

The Peninsular Committee of the FAI.

It is quite apparent that the drive to build the revolution emanated from the people, from the unions of the CNT and from their ordinary membership. The tide of requisitions, impoundments and collectivisations was a *fait accompli* foisted upon the committees which, as we have seen and will see again, were too preoccupied with maintaining the anti-fascist front by waging war on the enemy, restoring normality in the sphere of production and assuring public order.

The Barcelona workers responded to the CNT's order to resume work, but their mentality was not the same as it had been when they had downed their tools. By 26 July, five days after the cessation of the fighting, the unions began to display their spirit, their sense of responsibility and their objectives. Whole pages of the newspapers were filled by communiqués and notices. Here are some examples of this trend from the pages of *Solidaridad Obrera*:

Barcelona Water Workers' Union. The people of Barcelona are informed that they need have no fears whatsoever regarding water supplies, since this service is 100 per cent guaranteed by the workers' revolutionary committee which yesterday (25 July) assumed control of the service and which, in concert with the Generalitat, will ensure the continuity of a service which is so central to the normal running of civilian life. At the same time, all personnel of this public service are hereby notified that it is incumbent upon them to return to their respective workplaces on Monday next, 27 July, at the usual hour; all leave, vacations, etc. are cancelled until further notice. All those employees who cannot lend active service with the CCMA must appear at the earliest possible opportunity and be aware that they will be called upon to explain their absence.

The Committee.

Buses. Announcement. Given the revolutionary circumstances in which we find ourselves and following the seizure of the Barcelona General Bus Company, we urgently desire all workers belonging to this branch to furnish us with an explanation of their failure to attend for work.

The Committee. Barcelona, 25 July 1936.

A group of armed workers arrived at the Barcelona Tram company offices located in Via Sant Antoni and took control of the building; they removed personnel files kept by the company on its workers to the street, where they were burnt.

To all metalworkers at large. Given the confusion caused by the order of the higher committees to return to work in those branches where an agreement had already been thrashed out, notice is hereby given that the policy to be observed is as follows: the workers from branches that resumed work at the start of this week ought to have proceeded in the following manner:

1. Indicate to the bourgeois that, for the time being, production will remain under his management, but also subject to the approval of the committee.
2. For the time being, the working week is to consist of 44 hours. Some time during the current week, guidance will be issued regarding the definitive number of hours which should become the rule and this matter will be dealt with by all the local unions. In workplaces where the bourgeois has failed to show up, the workers are to impound the workshop and to operate it under the union's supervision. Notice is hereby given that metalworkers under arms should not return to work, for they must keep watch wheresoever their presence may be necessary, since fascism has not been destroyed. They must bear arms and, to this end, must register with the union for the formation of the necessary watches upon all the collectivised premises.

Although this is not the moment for a detailed survey of the revolution's achievements in the economic sphere, we must examine the initial revolutionary enterprise of the unions in the realm of production, from communications, public services, urban, maritime and surface transport, industry and agriculture across to banking.

Upon their return to work in accordance with the decision taken by the local federation, workers in a large number of firms discovered that senior management had deserted their posts, something which can be interpreted as either deliberate sabotage of the economy or due to the fear that the proletariat was about to settle old scores.

In the urban transport sector, the key to the restoration of normality in the life of the city, the desertion of management was absolute. The higher management of the tram, metro and bus companies has caused much bloodshed among the proletariat of the CNT Transport Union.<sup>13</sup> The revolution coincided with a tram strike, one of the most bitter and bloody conflicts in the history of the Barcelona workers: blood flowed for months due to clashes with the security forces, 'yellow' gunmen and scabs, the horrific torture in police stations, the murders in the street and prison sentences. It was understandable then why those who had caused the strike and the persecution should fear the victorious people.

The tram, metro and bus service formed a single company. The CNT Transport Union proceeded to impound the company on 19 July. The company was divided into three parts: trams, metro and buses, all of which were controlled by their respective workplace committees. The Gran Metro line was seized by the CNT and the UGT. The Generalitat created an inspectorate, a position which was nothing more than symbolic at this time. The organisational system established on the trams served as a model for all three sectors. A workplace committee was composed of a delegate from each branch, section or management. In the case of the trams, the committee was made up of seven members, each of whom was responsible for a particular area of service and directly elected by the workers.

Upon taking charge of the company, the workplace committee confiscated all the property and material, along with all bank deposits. The new administration immediately incorporated those technicians prepared to collaborate, although the employment of unnecessary bureaucratic personnel and those who commanded elevated salaries were ended. The levelling out of salaries was accompanied by new regulations concerning the working day, improved working conditions and increased social security. 3,000 workers were employed on the trams, 376 on the metro and 700 on the buses.

On 21 July the railway workers seized the MZA<sup>14</sup> and Northern lines.<sup>15</sup> Revolutionary committees were formed and militias armed with rifles and machine-guns guarded stations. The impoundments were the work of the CNT; but, once normality had been re-established and the fighting in the streets ended, the UGT was given an equal share of positions on the revolutionary station committees, whose first task was to instruct every depot in the region to impound, defend

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<sup>13</sup> This is a reference to the epic dispute in the Barcelona transport sector that turned hot and cold during 1933–6. When the conflict was at its height, during 1933–4, *cenetistas* emptied and torched trams throughout the city, even setting them in motion while engulfed in flames. Later on, in 1935, following the triumph of the employers and the dismissal of around 300 union organisers, 'action groups' launched a number of armed attacks on employers and managers. By the time of the July 1936 military coup talks on the re-employment of victimised union activists were still taking place.

<sup>14</sup> Madrid–Zaragoza–Alicante.

<sup>15</sup> Covering the northern seaboard.

and administer the rail networks. The revolutionary station committee consisted of six members: two from each union federation and one from each of their respective railway unions. These committees assumed the responsibility for organising the work and administering the service. As a purgative measure, all the station-masters were told not to show up for work until further notice. The following services were set up: the work committee, the depot and locomotive committee, the train personnel committee, the track and maintenance committee and the development and machinists' committee. The sacked station-masters cooperated in a consultative capacity. Once this was done, local services were laid on and built up gradually to cover the whole of the loyalist zone.

In the Telephone Exchange (Telefónica), which was a foreign firm,<sup>16</sup> the CNT and the UGT immediately implemented workers' control, which was extended into every aspect of the service: maintenance, communications generally, cable-laying, etc. This control also applied to banking operations. The company could not withdraw monies from the banks for wages without specific authorisation from the control committee (*comité de control*), made up of two delegates from the CNT and two from the UGT. This committee was elected in workplace assemblies.

The only function left to the powerful US corporation was the administration of income and expenditure. Workers' control was extended to every exchange in Barcelona and throughout the provinces of Catalonia. In each of the four exchanges in Barcelona there was a delegate-general supervisor, as there was in each provincial exchange. The delegate's duties were equivalent to those of exchange manager. Each of the sections into which an exchange was divided appointed a sub-delegate. The section sub-delegates met on a daily basis with the delegate-general, swapping views on the operation of services, reviewing work and examining any problems which had arisen. The delegate-general then reported back to the central committee.

Workers' control immediately forced the company to dismiss senior managers notorious for their excesses, along with the strike-breakers taken on during the 'black biennium'. The people in revolution seized the telephone exchanges on the evening of 19 July, after rebel forces had entrenched themselves in the buildings. While some 75 per cent of the installations suffered damage during the fight to secure control, within a few days all had been repaired by teams of workers; indeed, new connections were established in blood-banks, official centres and union premises.<sup>17</sup>

On 27 July, employees of shipping offices affiliated to the UGT turned up at their workplaces and seized control of the Transatlántica Company. The same thing happened with the Transmediterránea, Ibarra and Ramos companies among others. This is one of the few instances in which the UGT (in this case, its white-collar workers) stole a march on the CNT in the matter of collectivisation. The CNT's maritime workers were otherwise engaged, struggling against the military rebels on the street and in the port of Barcelona. Nonetheless, the CNT soon joined the impoundment committee. Unfortunately however, the considerable economic complications in this sector ensured that wholesale impoundment (*incautación*) gave way to partial control (*intervención*).

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<sup>16</sup> This building possessed enormous significance. Besides being an important part of the urban landscape, there was an important strike here during the first months of the Republic, a conflict which, due to the support of the government for the Telefónica management, constituted a defining event in the relations between organised labour and the new regime. The strike, which ended in defeat for the union, was the first significant setback for the newly organised CNT.

<sup>17</sup> Because exorbitant connection costs had to be met by the consumer, accounts were limited to the rich.



The central committee was made up of three members from the CNT (representing seamen, ships' engineers and ratings), three from the UGT (representing shipping agencies and ratings) and two delegates from the Generalitat.

When the rising broke out, the Transatlántica Company had several ships in service, amounting to a total of some 100,000 tons. All of these remained in the loyalist zone.

The first priority was to purge management. The managing director, the assistant director and other company bigwigs who were earning huge salaries, in some cases just as honorary board members, were discharged. The ships' padres were also sent ashore and relieved of their tasks, which consisted of saying prayers and pocketing more pay than the deckhands and stokers. Technically qualified personnel volunteered their cooperation. Upwards of 70 per cent of the maritime transport sector were CNT members. Thus, the old shipboard committees continued to perform their duties, but this time as technical supervisory committees answerable to the central committee. Payments to the company's stockholders (agents of the Jesuits) were cut off.

As for the metalworkers, from the very outset they had to grapple with enormous difficulties in so far as impoundments were concerned. The first problem concerned that of the foreign ownership of capital, something which was particularly evident with the big firms. Second, there was the problem of lost markets, at home and abroad, and the shortage of raw materials, which was further compounded by foreign currency shortages caused by the Madrid government's centralist policies. On the other hand, the context of civil war and the need for a complete overhaul of methods and production targets meant that the larger foundries were destined to be nationalised rather than collectivised.

The Belgian Consulate, for instance, let it be known to the CNT Metalworkers' Union that 80 per cent of the capital investment in the Barret company was of Belgian origin. The firm was taken under union control. The orders dwindled and consequently so did activity in the works. During the 1914–18 war, the firm had manufactured shells and grenades on behalf of the Allies and this quickly made it suitable for inclusion in the incipient war industry. At the beginning of August 1936 the control committee extended its grip over production and working conditions and also tried to bring prices under its purview.

Strict supervision was enforced in the Torres firm, one of the most important, employing some 500 workers. Section committees were set up to oversee production and the arrival and dispatch of materials and manufactured items. The Torres plant specialised in the armour-plating of trucks for use on the fronts and for this reason production was extremely hectic.

We quote the following from an editorial in *Solidaridad Obrera*:

From the first moment that normality was re-established in Barcelona, all the great industrial undertakings were faced with a series of problems. In some cases, this was because management was absent, in others because the workers did not hesitate in taking charge of the workshops and operating them with perfect control and efficiency. Among those industries is one of the most important in the metallurgical sector — the Maquinista Terrestre i Marítima Company. Ordinarily it builds steam locomotives and heavy diesel engines. The labour organisations which control the company's personnel got together and appointed a committee to discuss matters with management. This committee was formed by two members from the CNT, two from the UGT, one from the technicians' section, one member from the CADCI, and one from management. Since the CCMA later intervened in the industry to shape

it to the requirements of the day, the Generalitat has assigned an engineer to act as its representative, so that it can monitor and contribute to the tasks presently being carried out at the Maquinista Terrestre i Marítima. Apart from some 30 comrades who are serving with the militias, every one of the company's workforce has come forward to do their job. The employees at the front have been replaced by equally skilled unemployed personnel. Hitherto the Maquinista was in a thoroughly precarious financial condition. For the past two years there has been no investment, since the capitalist crisis was felt very hard in the metallurgical sector. Some 600 workers are employed in the company, plus another 350 in the Sant Andreu workshops. Now the finishing touches are being put to the construction of two locomotives for the MZA line; the manufacture of four diesel engines for the Transmediterránea Company is to begin shortly. The following sections are operating normally: foundries one and two, the copper foundry, the iron, steel and bronze smelters, marine engineering, the lathe section, the forge section, the repair workshop, the fitting, die and carpentry workshops and the chemical works, the stores and the drawing office. It is difficult to compare today's efficiency with that of yesterday, since, as is only to be expected, the workshops have lost the rhythm of their ordinary work owing to the changeover to military production.

Another big firm to be collectivised was CAMPSA.<sup>18</sup> The erstwhile council of bankers was abolished. At a general assembly, the personnel resolved to impound. A six-member central management committee was formed, advised by the section committees (*comités de sección*). The latter were made up of two members of each shift responsible for the following respective tasks: the terminal section (loading, unloading and provision of tankers), the loading section (loading trucks and tanks), the workshop section (general repairs to petrol pumps), the warehouse section (supervising and distributing supplies), the transport section (the tanker fleet) and the technical and administrative section.

The impoundment affected plants in Barcelona, Badalona, Manresa, Vic, etc. In each plant an administrative committee answerable to the parent body in Barcelona was set up. In the Barcelona plant there were 180 workers. The previous manager was dismissed and the remaining services were absorbed by the collectivised enterprise. Work was organised in two shifts and, experimentally, the following salary scale was introduced: officials: 17.50 pesetas; skilled men: 18 pesetas; assistants: 15.50 pesetas. The six-hour day was instituted.

When the rising began, the CNT Construction Union impounded the premises of the Foment Nacional del Treball<sup>19</sup> and the adjoining building, known as Casa Cambó,<sup>20</sup> which were then converted into Casa CNT- FAI, the centre of the CNT in Catalonia.

The Construction Union had 35,000 members and a huge number of militants. Sites abandoned by the bosses or entrepreneurs were impounded by the union and opened up for work. The

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<sup>18</sup> The state petroleum monopoly established during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

<sup>19</sup> An employers' association formed in 1889 to oppose free trade and to influence economic policy. By the start of the twentieth century, it had become a key protagonist in the class struggle, funding employers' resistance associations, although it underwent a decline after World War One. It later collaborated with the Francodictatorship.

<sup>20</sup> The office of the Federació Patronal Catalana, the most militant employers' association and implacable opponent of the CNT. The building was named after Francesc Cambó, the leader of the bourgeois-Catalanist Lliga party. A supporter of the monarchy, he entered government in 1917 and later welcomed the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

workers were paid out of the bank accounts of those very same employers. At first no wholesale impoundments were carried out since the building industry was, owing to the revolution, automatically dependent upon the new guidelines regarding the restructuring of the economy. Nonetheless, some branches continued as normal. The brickmakers' section was almost completely collectivised even before the rising, because of the bankruptcy of the employers and the conversion of the brickworks into cooperatives.

In public services, one of the boldest and most difficult experiments was effected by the Barcelona bakers' section. Here there were great impediments to collectivisation, the main one being bound up with production processes in this sector. In Barcelona around 3,000 sacks of flour were used each day in 745 bakeries scattered across the city. This absurd form of production placed an exaggerated burden on operating costs. So much was this the case that once the socialisation of the industry began, the bakery economic committee (CNT-UGT) knew that once the wage increase ordered by the Generalitat had been paid, the profit margin per sack of flour converted into bread would be extremely slender. Having socialised all of Barcelona's bakeries, the bakery workers found themselves having to produce and distribute the bread in antiquated, scattered and unhealthy premises. Their goal was to establish big plants with the latest modern machinery, something they largely achieved before the end of the war; in the meantime, however, they struggled to lighten the load of unnecessary production costs by utilising a small number of efficient ovens. The venture was a brilliant success, thereby frustrating the hopes of many of the former employers, whom the revolution had turned into mere workers, that collectivisation would flounder in the morass. The Barcelona bakers, the vast majority of whom were CNT members, taught the backward-looking bourgeoisie of the bakeries a fine lesson.

A communiqué from the CNT Woodworkers' Union published on 6 October 1936 briefs us about its aims and achievements:

The CNT Woodworkers' Union. We are going for broke. In an earlier article we stated that we had to go for broke and transform everything to drain the sinks of corruption. We must give the impression of stability by acknowledging that the bell has tolled for the bourgeois regime. We must restore confidence to the workers. We must tell them, and tell them we do: Woodworkers, the bosses are no more and, so that you may perceive this clearly, we present the balance sheet. The carpenter bosses ensconced in their "jugglers" den [*la guarida de "trabucaires"*], the Foment, are no more and in their place the Woodworkers' Union has installed one of its offices. The cabinet-maker scum who had their base in the Crafts School, which today is completely dismantled and destroyed, are no more, and the building and its records are in our keeping. The Packing and Upholstery Employers' Association has likewise gone, and its premises and records are in our possession. We are going for broke and we have a duty to assert and impose ourselves as a revolutionary sector. We will relocate the small employers, the rag, tag and bobtail of our industry, in great workshops. And having done so, we will control all production. In setting up our confederal workshops, we must step up the pace of our activities. We are confident that shortly we will be the only ones with the whole of production under our control. All work must be performed through the union since, whereas it is true to say that hitherto these were organs of struggle against capital, today they must regulate production.

The first Catalan peasant congress, which opened on 5 September 1936, adopted a motion on collectivisation from which we quote the following lines:

In order not to alienate smallholders from our liberating activity and lest they turn into enemies, hindrances or saboteurs of our work, we must respect their right to cultivate provided that it does not impede or hinder the growth of the collectives.

To give some idea of the mood with which the collectives began to develop in the Catalan countryside, let us choose at random the example of the collective in l'Espluga de Francoli which stipulates the following in its founding charter:

Norms by which the collectivised association of l'Espluga de Francoli is to be governed:

1. All members of the collective have the same rights and duties.
2. The collective is to be governed by majority decision reached in assembly.
3. All who seek membership in the collective are obliged to surrender to the same all goods, properties, draught animals and harness of the same and all of the fruits of this year's harvest.
4. A distribution cooperative is to be set up to provision the collective.
5. The collective will reward its component families in accordance with the number of members in each family.
6. One individual on his own is to be paid 5 pesetas. A family comprising 2 individuals will be paid 7 pesetas. Families comprising 3 individuals are to be paid 8 pesetas. Families comprising 4 individuals will be paid 10 pesetas. Families of 5 or more are to receive 12 pesetas. Families of which more than 2 members are eligible to work will receive an extra peseta per active member along with the family wage.
7. All members of the cooperative are to have access to the produce in its possession, without money, but a tally is to be kept of all that is issued. On Saturdays an account will be compiled of what has been acquired, and the difference between that and the sum of the family's entitlement will be handed over in the form of cash.
8. All members of the collective have a duty to work in accordance with their capability, age and sex.
9. Those members of the collective who may suffer illness, accident or any misadventure are to have all of their costs defrayed and will receive the utmost attention.
10. Children will go to school until the age of 14 years and individuals reaching the age of 60 will no longer be obliged to work and may devote themselves to whatsoever they choose.
11. The collective has room for every trade, skill and speciality.
12. Those who make up the collective and live in rented houses must ensure that rents are paid.

13. The collective is to set up a poultry house and will encourage the rearing of all manner of livestock.

14. Membership of the CNT or of the UGT is a prerequisite to enter the collective. The Acting Commission.

The committees adopted a moderate line towards the resolute activity of the unions and the working people.

This is a note from the Catalan CNT in which a certain disquiet shines through:

From the outset, the Confederation has endeavoured to avoid all which might cause friction with foreign powers. In keeping with the needs of the moment, our line has been that the battle was against fascism and that it was necessary to avoid at all costs anything which might provide a pretext for other nations to intervene in the current conflict in the interests of international capitalism. Yesterday this committee received a visit from a delegation from the British Consulate seeking a formula to avoid any acts by the militias which might prompt external intervention. A formula was agreed according to which we, for our part, would publish a list of British firms in Barcelona which are to be respected.<sup>21</sup> Now all comrades are to be aware that these establishments must be respected. This does not preclude the exercise of vigilance lest anyone seeks to abuse the agreement and use it as a cover to favour the conspiracy of enemy forces. Should this be the case, the responsibility will fall fully upon the British Consulate. We have already expressed our willingness to respect foreign holdings.

The Regional Committee.

Such diplomatic overtures were contemporaneous with manoeuvres by the fleets of foreign powers. Apropos of this, the CNT- FAI Information and Propaganda Service complained on 26 July of the attitude of some foreign warships moored in and around Barcelona port:

The *Dunkerque*, a French cruiser with a spy-plane on board which has been overflying Barcelona port, has been observing all the formalities ordained by international protocols, with her commanders presenting their credentials to the president of the Generalitat. However, our office gets the impression from follow-up enquiries that the French Popular Front government, made up of socialists and of communists loyal to the Moscow-affiliated Third International, has not yet sided with or against the Spanish rebellion. We gather that the French authorities are worried about the extent to which Spain's militant proletariat has overhauled the organisation of national life. We shall not pursue this point... Another of the ships is British. This ship has entered the port without seeking permission to do so. The British are acting as if this was Gibraltar... The third of the ships is a large Italian ironclad; they say that

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<sup>21</sup> There followed a list of 87 firms, companies, manufacturers, centres, banks, Anglican churches, institutes, businesses, etc., including the Ebro Water and Power Company (the famous La Canadiense), Spanish Potassium Salts and the Spanish Construction Company. (Note by the author.)

this is the reason why it has not been able to enter Barcelona port. Given the world of difference between the methods favoured by Mussolini's fascist government and the humanitarian and responsible approach taken by the Spanish proletariat in sacrificing its own blood, it is better that they keep their distance...

Diplomatic pressure, brought to bear upon the central and Generalitat governments, the CCMA and other committees, began to labour the themes of alleged 'disorder' and 'revolutionary terrorism'. There is no need to say what this pressure meant to the Spanish state, reeling from the weight of its own errors, and to those classes which aspired to claw their way back in the midst of the revolutionary whirlwind. The republican state, together with those classes and parties whose incompetence had been responsible for the military rebellion, a rebellion which brought disorder throughout Spain and the most brutal, unrestrained terrorism in recorded Spanish history, threw up its hands in horror at a series of ultimately explicable occurrences derived from the people's thirst for vengeance, whetted by the fascists' crimes. Of no significance were the people's courage, unselfishness and sacrifice in crushing the conspiracy of the military, clergy *latifundistas* and bankers in just a few hours. Of no meaning was the admirable conduct of the populace, in mobilising (with no more prompting than the watchword of their unions) the complicated machinery of industry and of the economy, without managers and, to all intents, without technicians. Of no merit was the spontaneous movement of volunteers up to the battle fronts or their defiant, improvised military ripostes to an expertly disciplined army. It took only the perpetration of a few isolated acts, acts which no one could have controlled, for the people's courage, their selflessness and their responsible outlook and organisational capabilities to be rebutted.

There were ulterior motives for working the rich seam of isolated cases of looting, the natural acts of retaliation and the alleged disorder, together with the external threat posed by foreign fleets and the urgent threat from the enemy within — the purpose was to channel events and attune minds towards a general return to normal existence under the old state structures.

From the outset this classic ploy, one which is evident in every revolution when attempts are made to limit the scale of transformation, exerted an influence on the declarations of certain committees.

Over the airwaves of Radio Barcelona, the Catalan CNT and the Barcelona local federation said this in their first address to the revolutionary populace on 25 July:

Seven days ago, the fascism lurking undercover in the institutions of the state and the higher echelons of the army rose in criminal revolt against the proletariat, strewing the streets of Barcelona and of every village in Spain with corpses. In the case of Barcelona, the battle has been hard and without quarter. The generous blood of workers has flowed in torrents, but victory has been ours. Fascism gambles its all on the roulette wheel of revolution and has lost. It has lost because, although it could count upon much of the army officers' corps, it lacked the spiritual and material cooperation of the people, who are the spirit which moves every grand undertaking. And it has lost because the proletarian organisations, with their consummate appreciation of the historic moment, set their differences and suspicions to one side and united in a close embrace of revolutionary anti-fascist unity. Although a few seats of

sedition may remain elsewhere in the nation — Zaragoza the most important of all — these are losing ground with every passing moment and it can be said that fascism has failed in Spain. With the determined assistance of other leftist sectors, the CNT and FAI have routed and broken the back of the hordes of clerical-bourgeois reaction. But, workers, victory — if it is to qualify as victory — must be endowed with a moral foundation which can dignify its standing in the world's eyes. It is ignoble, unworthy and detrimental to the interests of the labouring class to besmirch that triumph with looting and pillage, the arbitrary ransacking of homes and other irresponsible acts. The CNT and the FAI, as the authentic representatives of the anti-fascist proletariat, have resolved upon very severe measures which will be enforced without a second thought against any person or persons caught red-handed while perpetrating acts of that nature. Both organisations have laid on an extensive service of patrols which have been issued with firm and detailed orders to prevent possible abuses. Workers of the CNT, militants of the active groups of the FAI, anti-fascist proletariat of Barcelona, we are all under an obligation to make our unstinting contribution to this labour of civic order: every one of us, without exception, is implicated in the constructive endeavour upon which we have embarked. For the well-being of the proletariat and anti-fascist movement! For the revolution!

The Catalan Regional Committee of the CNT and the Local Federation of the Barcelona CNT.

A few days later, the campaign against excesses and outrages turned more shrill:

... In Barcelona there has been a series of house searches, arbitrary arrests and shootings, the majority of them carried out without due cause. The local federation suspects that the perpetrators are acting on a whim and may be in the pay of fascism, charged with sowing panic and terror and they, naturally, have nothing to do with us. This cannot continue. In those cases which can be proven, things must proceed inexorably and without leniency of any sort. To sum up: house searches carried out for personal reasons must cease and they will only be able to proceed with the endorsement of the CCMA based in Plaça del Palau, in the Naval Academy building, or of the CNT local federation, its regional committee and the regional committee of the FAI, acting in concert... Comrades: we must recognise the historic mission entrusted to us by the present revolutionary times. The priority is the fight against fascism. When the time comes, and once fascism has been routed, our organisation will determine, according to the circumstances of the moment, what we must do. May every militant and all the soldiers of the revolution be the most zealous guardians of a new order, the revolutionary order. May the revolution not drown us all in gore! Responsible avengers, yes! Assassins, never!

For its part, the FAI, in a manifesto entitled 'Forestalling something which must cease', which was made public on 30 July, announced vigorous and emphatic reprisals:

Very serious rumours have come to our notice. We are told that armed gangs, claiming to belong to the CNT, the FAI and the POUM, are carrying out house searches and perpetrating acts contrary to the anarchist spirit and to popular justice. Since these unauthorised acts of vandalism discredit our organisation, we have determined to nip this monstrous irresponsibility in the bud, not with talk, but with implacable deeds and resolve. Functioning as an off shoot of the CCMA there is an Investigations Commission [ *comité de investigación*] which will examine all complaints regarding individuals implicated in the recent fascist revolt. Apart from the Chief Inspectorate of Police, the commission is the only body entitled at the moment to order and to carry out house searches. *Whatever may be done without its authorisation constitutes an offence.* And the FAI stands ready to finish with these witless groups beyond our organisation's control, which, for who knows what reason, dishonour the people's revolutionary anti-fascist movement. We do not know who these people are, but we state emphatically that no matter where they are from, at best their actions show them to be confused souls, informed only by the avenging instinct of the people and the primitive voices which lurk in the darkest recesses of the human conscience. Having won glory during the heroic events in Barcelona with the CNT, having occupied the head of the struggle with its generous sacrifice for the lofty ideals of liberty, the FAI declares that it has nothing to do with these excesses. We are ready to bring these excesses radically and vigorously to a halt. We are the foes of all violence and imposition. All bloodshed repels us, unless it is that caused by the righteous endeavours of the people. But we declare coldly, with terrible equanimity and unflinching determination, that if the irresponsible people who are spreading terror throughout Barcelona do not stop, we shall proceed to shoot every person who is proven to have acted against the rights of the people. Every individual who may have abused powers invested in them by the CNT or the FAI will be tried before a commission composed of elements drawn from the anti-fascist front. We say what we will do, and we will do what we say. And Barcelona knows, as Spain and the whole world know, that the men of the FAI never fail to keep its promises. For the honour of the people of Barcelona, for the dignity of the CNT and of the FAI, there must be an end of these excesses. And finish them we will.

In an editorial in *Solidaridad Obrera*, the CNT's regional organ went to the nub of the question:

For two days, Barcelona was reduced to two armies, each struggling to vanquish the other, and there is nothing like the stench of gunpowder to unleash all the instincts carried within the soul of humanity. Then again, the convulsions reached a point where control was lost over those folk whose sole concern is to satisfy their selfish whims and vengeful instincts. Because of this certain actions — far fewer in number than has been claimed — occurred in Barcelona, actions which for the CNT and the other organisations which participated in the revolution are regrettable. Nonetheless, we cannot join the chorus of those who, when all is said and done, carry the responsibility for both the fascist revolt and for keeping the people in a condition of permanent destitution and ignorance for years on end. Since these eternal grumblers



are unable to do so, we are obliged to point out that looting has not been the whole story. Countless valuables discovered during searches and in burned buildings have not ended up in anyone's private possession. The organisations of the CNT and the CCMA have in safekeeping precious metals and *objets d'art* to the value of 4 million pesetas. The daily newspapers have carried reports of countless instances of such items being surrendered by workers who have no guarantee that they will have anything to eat the following week.

These claims are borne out by the following notice, published in the press on 28 July:

The comrades from the CNT and the FAI have just handed over to the CCMA the sum of 16 million pesetas, which were found in religious buildings in Vic.

On the other hand, several CNT members who had gone off the rails, including some militants of note, were shot at the scene of their crimes by order of the organisation. This is true of José Gardeñas<sup>22</sup> of the Barcelona Construction Union and of Fernández, the president of the Food Industry Union: both had life histories of revolutionary martyrdom but they were incapable of overcoming a moment of confusion and weakness.<sup>23</sup>

As for the remainder, whereas it is true to say that outrages were perpetrated – something which is inevitable in a revolution – it is no less true that the just basis of most of the executions was misrepresented. In the decisive stages of the popular victory, many individuals who had previously harmed the working class hastened to turn their coats, going out of their way to score points so that their past behaviour might be forgotten. Among them were employers, policemen, gaolers, torturers, narks and professional strike-breakers. Many of them raced for the cover provided by certain positions, hiding behind the membership cards of certain political parties. The people were implacable in settling scores. We might quote a few illustrations such as the arrest and summary execution of the right-wing gunman Sales in Barcelona and the adjudication of his colleague Feced in Alicante: both men had carried out, or helped carry out, hundreds of murders in Barcelona, including those of leading labour organisers during the attempt to destroy the CNT after World War One.

The much-cited case of Desideri Trilles<sup>24</sup> borders on this category. For years Trilles had lorded it over the hiring of dock labourers, encouraging favouritism and splits, dismissals and deploying a 'starve them into submission' policy against many families.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> He was a seasoned *faísta* and a veteran of the expropriation squads that nourished the coffers of the CNT and the FAI before the civil war.

<sup>23</sup> There was also an overlap here between individualist-anarchist values and such acts of theft.

<sup>24</sup> This is a rather partial depiction of a rival union leader. A one-time *cenetista* and former dissident communist, Trilles founded an autonomous dockers' union during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship which obtained important economic gains for its members in the regime's corporate labour courts. With the collapse of dictatorship, Trilles's union applied to join the CNT, but this proved unsuccessful because of tactical differences. Fearing reprisals, the autonomous union opted to join the UGT, a situation that led to an ongoing and frequently violent struggle for union hegemony on the Barcelona waterfront.

<sup>25</sup> With greater historical perspective, these killings can be attributed to the organisational rivalries that developed before the civil war between the UGT and the CNT.

Every faction did its bit to peddle the terrifying ‘red legend’ throughout the world. And the uninhibited zeal and partisanship of those hacks who sold out their pens to the highest bidder did much to play down the awful extent of blue terrorism and the thousands upon thousands of barbarous murders perpetrated daily by the hordes of jackals mobilised by Franco.<sup>26</sup>

Early in October 1936, the College of Lawyers in Madrid issued the following document addressed to all the civilised countries in the world:

It is the imperious duty of the governing council of the College of Lawyers to denounce the bloody cruelty unleashed by the military which has used the weapons entrusted to it by the Spanish people for their defence to effect a savage trespass against the most elementary human rights.

Civil wars have always been harsh wars as the breakdown of the bond of brotherhood is a spur to spite and hatred; but the rebel military is perpetrating acts which go beyond the most brutal feats of collective criminality and which give the impression of subhuman sentiments.

We want our outcry as jurists to find echo and help from our colleagues throughout the world and from all those who are moved by universal human fellowship.

Adversaries of fascism by dint of our deep-rooted democratic convictions, we hope that our voice reaches the cultivated and sensitive masses of the major democratic countries.

The uniqueness of public reactions in Spain ought to be studied to avoid any confusion within world opinion. The so-called Spanish fascism has nothing in common with the fascism of Italy and Germany, though this distinction should not be interpreted as a sign that the latter are less odious. But it is proper to state that Spain is faced with a military rising in defence of ancient privileges and of the most archaic and inquisitorial religious fanaticism, a last desperate endeavour to deny Spaniards the natural evolution and progress that might make of Spain a modern nation. The old monarchy ruled Spain as if she were a colony. And what is lost through ineptitude, the people’s acumen gained. And now, resorting to its traditional military skills, it seeks to reduce Spain, its last colony, to colonial status again. Even the troops being employed — Moorish *regulares* and the Foreign Legion imported from Africa — confirm this profound historical truth. Rest assured, Spain today is fighting for her

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<sup>26</sup> To be sure, the left did not perpetrate anything like the terrorist bloodletting that came so easily to the Francoist forces. Moreover, the political leadership in the republican zone attempted to control the most ardent and vengeful elements within its ranks, whereas the Francoists used terrorism aimed at civilians as a weapon in the civil war. As far as the CNT- FAI were concerned, Gabriel Jackson, a historian who cannot be accused of sympathising with the revolution, has nevertheless noted that: ‘the anarchists made a constant effort to separate active political enemies from those who were simply bourgeois by birth or ideology or economic function. Anarchist political committees wanted to know what accused monarchists or conservatives had done, not simply what they thought or how they had voted. The Durruti Column executed far fewer persons than did the Carlist and Falangist firing squads in villages of the Nationalist zone. There is no inherent contradiction involved in recognising both that the revolution included some violence and that its social and economic results over a period of roughly 18 months were approved by the majority of peasants in an area of previously very limited prosperity and educational opportunity.’ (Gabriel Jackson, ‘The Living Experience of the Spanish Civil War Collectives’, in *Newsletter of the Society for Spanish and Portuguese Historical Studies*, 1970, vol. 1, no. 2, pp. 4–11.)

liberation just as the American colonies, today great free nations, fought for theirs in the last century.

As if time had stood still, the mentality which inspires these archaic hordes is the same: the crude absolutism of Ferdinand VII<sup>27</sup> and the fanatical intolerance of the Carlist wars. The warrior bishops and clerics and the red-bonneted *requetés* have risen again. Moors come to butcher Spaniards;<sup>28</sup> they are blessed by bishops and, pharisee-style, a sacred heart is pinned to their breasts, which they are told is an amulet.

We ask for the world's moral support in the face of the wave of atavistic barbarism sweeping into Spain, under the encouragement of imperialistic ambitions. The rebels' watchword, as set out in printed orders captured by loyalist forces, is the watchword of the most impious annihilation and terror. Such instructions direct not only that the leaders and workers from the trade union organisations be killed without compassion, but also that this fate befalls the members of their families to create a terror which will devour the will to resist. We cannot include in this text the countless numbers of acts of barbarism with which the rebels are making martyrs of the citizens of Spain. Each day brings numerous scenes of ghastliness to light. Here we shall include only some which indicate the intensity of the collective crime.

In the insurgent-occupied territories those workers found in possession of a union membership card have been systematically shot. Their corpses, dumped in the streets or stacked in sinister heaps in the graveyards, have the membership card of their union pinned to a leg or an arm to indicate the reason for their execution.

In Badajoz, upon the entry of the fascist forces, 1,500 workers were massed in the bullring. Machine-guns were set up in the ringside seats and the workers were mercilessly mown down. The corpses were left in a ghastly heap in the ring. Some workers had only been wounded but no one heeded the wailing cries of their agony.

The deputy for Salamanca, a socialist lawyer of high repute, was led to the bullring, where, in a sadistic adaptation of the rituals of bullfighting, he was spiked with flaming banderillas and then dispatched with a sword.

In the city of Seville, and quite unconnected with any combat, over 9,000 workers and peasants were murdered. In the workers' barrios, regular troops, Moors and foreign legionnaires ran through the streets tossing hand-grenades through the windows of humble houses, destroying the dwellings and killing the women and children. The Moorish hordes gave themselves up freely to pillage and rape. General Queipo de Llano, in his radio talks, which are themselves indicative of the crudity and base mentality of the rebels, urges troops to rape women and, with crass irony, describes brutal scenes of this type.

In the Andalusian villages of Constantina, Carmona, Posadas, Palma del Río, Peñaflor, Alania, Cazalla, Puebla de los Infantes, Villanueva de las Minas, Pedroso,

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<sup>27</sup> It was his inopportune machinations that prompted Napoleon to invade Spain in 1808.

<sup>28</sup> This is a prime example of the chauvinism that periodically entered republican discourse during a civil war that increasingly became depicted as a struggle for national independence against Italo-German fascism, feudal army officers and their colonial army of African and non-Spanish forces.

La Campana and elsewhere, like in many settlements in Extremadura, insurgent aircraft have bombed quiet neighbourhoods, killing many women and children, even though there was no military presence in the villages. In many cases, the women were in long queues outside bakeries and it pleased the airmen to drop bombs on a throng of defenceless womenfolk. Many expectant mothers have been forced to drink a mixture of castor-oil and petroleum. A woman from Algeciras whose husband had fled to Gibraltar was forced to swallow a substantial amount of this liquid and then let go to rejoin her husband. She died the following day.

They have gunned down all the leftist deputies whom they have captured in the provinces they have seized, along with anyone else who enjoyed any reputation.

The eminent deputy and advocate Luis Rupilanchas, the favourite and quick-minded disciple of the illustrious professor Jiménez de Asúa, was shot in A Corunha.

In Logroño they shot the mayor and a local physician, who happened to be a republican. They have shot the Cortes deputy, a very intelligent lawyer, as well as his father in Valladolid, and thereafter announced over the radio with icy sarcasm that they had imposed this penalty upon him for non-attendance at his office.

The republican civil governor of A Corunha was shot, as was his wife, a most cultured lady. Similarly, they executed three parliamentary deputies and many other republicans and leftists, along with their wives and young children.

In the village of El Carpio near Córdoba, at present liberated by republican forces, the fascist captain who played the tyrant in the village for some days took 200 workers to the cemetery and, having first compelled them to dig a huge pit, had them gunned down. Then, to the sound of drum-rolls, he read a notice informing the residents that relatives of those workers were being given two hours to see them and to retrieve some of their effects before their burial. This caused scenes of grief the pathos of which is hard to put into words. But the most terrible of all was that when the workers' relatives were assembled there he gave the order to open fire on them, killing them too.

In Morón, upon liberating the city our forces came across several women whose breasts had been cut off and on a wall in the town this vile inscription could be read: "We shall perish but your wives will give birth to fascists."<sup>29</sup> Elsewhere, they had shaved the women's heads completely and forced them to dance naked in the public squares.

In Caspe (Aragón), military rebel officers shot the mother, the sister (who was married to a Civil Guard captain) and the widow, plus the four year-old daughter of the republican mayor, whom they had murdered earlier. A similar fate befell a local republican lawyer. On balconies overlooking the public square where they had made their stronghold, the rebels used the sons and wives of local leftists as parapets. In Granada, they murdered the great writer Federico García Lorca,<sup>30</sup> a poet of genius

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<sup>29</sup> Rape was a weapon that was frequently used by Francoist forces during the civil war.

<sup>30</sup> A progressive intellectual of international renown, who sought to bring culture to the people, whose homosexuality and anti-fascist beliefs outraged the élitist, traditionalist aristocracy in Andalusia.

and an outstanding playwright who was, unquestionably, the finest flower of Spain's literary youth.

In Baena (Córdoba), the records of the workers' organisations were impounded and everyone listed in them was shot. Their ghastly bloodlust went to the extreme of making victims dig their own graves, as also occurred elsewhere. Prominent local socialist activists were bound together and shot, with their families being forced to watch the crime.

As of the 29th of last month, 296 of the 375 members of the unions mentioned above had been shot. On 9 August, 30 workers were forced to work on the fortification of the town's historic castle and following 48 hours of uninterrupted work, urged on by the lash of the whip and denied of all rest, they were thrown into the pit. Even before they faced this torment, three of them had gone mad.

In El Carpio, six militants from the FAI were shut up in a petrol-doused hut and set alight; they were all burned to death.

In Castro del Rio, the most prominent workers had their throats slit like beasts.

A local socialist from Córdoba confirms that, upon their arrival there on 22 July, the rebels seized seven workers, drove them by truck to the outskirts of the town, doused them with petrol and burned them alive.

Upon entering Naval Moral de la Mata, the Moorish *regulares* committed acts of the utmost savagery, butchering residents and looting houses. The extreme rightists, having the best appointed homes, were the hardest hit. Many Catholic women, who had prayed for the fascists to arrive, were raped and killed when eventually they did.

In Zaragoza they have shot some 2,000 workers.<sup>31</sup>

They seized Doctor Alcrudo,<sup>32</sup> an unselfish man who has always devoted himself to good works, and they seized his son, a lad of 16 years — the latter was gunned down in the presence of his father whom they executed shortly after, though not before they had delighted in his grief.

Although we have not offered world opinion a complete report of the horror and barbarity of the movement against which the people of Spain are fighting to save their dignity, liberty and their very lives, we must conclude since our pen is near to breaking with bitterness and anguish from recording the unparalleled obscenity, cruelty and ungodliness of the terrorist methods of Spanish Vaticanist-fascism.

This document carried the signatures of the dean of the college, Eduardo Ortega y Gasset.<sup>33</sup> As stated in the text, the outrages listed were but a pale reflection of the reality. In the harrowing book *Doy Fe*,<sup>34</sup> Antonio Ruiz Vilaplana, the secretary of the Court of Inquiry in Burgos, the

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<sup>31</sup> The vast network of CNT unions in the city bore the brunt of this repression.

<sup>32</sup> An anarchist physician active in the December 1933 uprising (see Chapter Four).

<sup>33</sup> A prominent member of the 'Generation of 1898', he famously denounced the 'rebellion of the masses' and preferred a 'select minority'. Such views led him to support the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, although he later opposed the regime and favoured the Republic. He left Spain in 1936.

<sup>34</sup> Published in 1938 in Buenos Aires.

seat of the Francoist government, describes scenes of unbelievable barbarity and lists the places where they occurred in a manner that typifies the anti-liberal traits of Old Castile's officialdom. The book offers a reliable indication of the magnitude of the crimes perpetrated in the liberally inclined regions such as Galicia, Aragón, Andalusia, etc., when they fell under the heel of the new barbarians.

The reference in the College of Lawyers document to the orders issued by the rebels to their shock troops were published on 30 July and, just 12 days after the mutiny of the praetorian army, Spanish newspapers carried this report:

The following leaflet was found on one of the officers taken prisoner in Guadalajara:

“The primary factor in the achievement of victory is the annihilation of the enemy's morale. Thus, although the republican government may be short of troops and weapons, it is vital that we adhere to these instructions with maximum rigour:

1. To secure our rearguard we must strike terror into the enemy. To this end, whenever our columns occupy a settlement they must carry out decisive reprisals against the authorities. In the event of these not being located, the stated procedures shall be applied to any captured members of their family. An effort must be made to ensure that reprisals are as public and as impressive as possible; it shall be made known that all who resist us will suffer the same fate.

2. It is very useful to commandeer such coinage as may be discovered in official buildings and in the private homes of the loyalists. Occasionally the destruction of their homes, harvests and livestock will be particularly effective.

3. In each locality it will be very fruitful to seek information from the parish priest and other law-abiding persons regarding the opinions of the most prominent residents. Supporters of Falange Española must be absorbed into our columns as officers or NCOs, as circumstances may determine. These will be entrusted with the mission of forestalling any tendency towards softness among our troops. In the event of vacillation, resistance to orders or attempts to desert, the commanders and officers together with the civilian auxiliaries must be treated with maximum vigour on the spot. Let it be understood that mistakes are preferred to any toleration of laxity among our troops. Those who show hesitation in implementing this order will in turn be dealt with in the manner indicated.

4. For the purpose of smashing the enemy's morale and forestalling resistance, it is essential that all settlements in the rearguard are treated as if they were on the front line.

IMPORTANT. These measures must be imposed even when there are no enemy forces. Panic spread by fleeing residents will have the desired effect upon morale. Highly restricted. It has been proven that attacks upon field-hospitals and columns of evacuating wounded are the greatest source of demoralisation for a fighting force. It will be as well, then, to bear this lesson of the Great War in mind.

5. If, against every likelihood, Madrid offers us resistance then our primary objective is the destruction of electricity cables and water supply pipes. Given the present time of year, the latter course will be surprisingly effective.

6. When we enter Madrid, an event that will take place approximately on the 20th, our first move shall be to set up machine-gun nests in the church spires and other buildings which offer a wide field of fire. The guns will open up on any hostile forces which enter the field of fire, irrespective of sex. Though they might not cause fatalities, they will help to sow terror and prevent counterattacks from the civilian population.

7. Very important and restricted. Commanders are to issue no instructions for their troops to convert their ammunition into "dumdum" bullets, as the sight of this conversion being carried out will lead to objections. To create the necessary climate of opinion, commanders must display great indignation towards the enemy and protest in violent language at the horrific losses inflicted by enemy "sharpshooters" when using such ammunition. It is thought that this will be sufficient."

The authenticity of this leaflet is borne out by the fact that all of its criminal directions were implemented to the letter throughout the war. Nor can there be any question that these instructions originated with the fascists and Hitlerites.

So, having examined these mass crimes, where does this leave the outrages attributed to the 'Reds'? There was a determination to overlook the fact that the Spanish people, having been sold out and betrayed by the big landowners, the capitalists, the nobility, the clergy and the army, an army of occupation in the very land which paid its wages, had, after all, been provoked, attacked and forced to defend itself.

## CHAPTER TEN: The dilemma of revolution and war

Early in August, as the fighting receded and the confusion began to lift, the CNT and the anarchists came to life again in organisational terms.

Since the order to return to work, the union had devoted its energies towards the economic transformation of society. The committees were unduly preoccupied with strategic, diplomatic or policy considerations. Being indifferent to such circumstantial and, to some extent, purely spectral concerns, the unions were looking to more enduring gains. Time would shortly tell which of the two avenues was the better founded: that which was geared towards the summit of power and led towards the capture of political positions, or that which looked no further than the workplace. Following the first course the CNT reaped only disappointment, failure and ingratitude. Politically speaking, all the gains made by the CNT were made in a day or in a few months after the July revolution.

In late July, the CNT national committee issued its first public manifesto since the revolution:

To all members of the Confederation in Spain and to all the anarchists of the Iberian Peninsula. Greetings. Friends, this is no time for speechifying. The fascist beast is not yet entirely vanquished. Nonetheless, the CNT national committee wishes to address you in order to brief you on the progress of the war.

From the outset, our brave comrades committed themselves wholeheartedly to the service of justice and liberty. Hours before the military rising occurred, our organisations (national committee, regional committees, defence groups, etc.) responded to the growing tension with exceptional speed, mobilising all personnel under their control. At a national level, delegates were dispatched to all the regional committees. Thus the time came for us to act. And from the start we were the heroic soldiers of revolution who, although bereft of weapons, gave our lives on the sacrificial altar to the cause of liberty! In the early hours of the military-fascist revolt, our comrades' blood raised a barricade which the rebels found hard to breach. Once the rebels had been routed, our comrades, in possession of that sublime fever which makes even the most difficult of things possible and, by now, rifles also, hurled themselves like cyclones against the positions from where the fascists and the army continued to resist.

In Madrid's Montaña barracks; in Cuatro Vientos, Getafe, Alcalá de Henares, Guadalajara, the legions of the CNT and FAI basked in revolutionary glory. The heroic feats of our comrades, and the people generally, will never be eclipsed. How lightheartedly lives were gambled! There was a rush to expose one's breast to enemy gunfire, a blessed craziness which has drawn tears of emotion from us!



With what care did our brothers treat their rifles: they symbolised a whole lifetime of ardent struggle; it seemed to them to be more dream than reality!

Rivers of blood have flowed. In Madrid alone the number of our fallen comrades is incalculable. We believe that the same is true in the rest of Spain.

Catalonia, the bulwark of Spanish anarchism, has proved the decisive factor in the battle... 400 men, most of them CNT union cadres, lost their lives in a generous display of their courage. The news we have from Barcelona inclines us to believe that the defeat of the fascist coup would have been impossible without the CNT. Before surrendering, fascist desperadoes inflicted countless casualties throughout Catalonia. Yet again, the streets of Barcelona have been stained red, this time of a deeper hue. The vandalism of the fascist brutes has cost us of a fair number of militants. They, like those who fell in Madrid, Valencia, Castile, etc. are our guiding light. May the torch lit by their lives never be extinguished! May the rifles sound as long as a single fascist is left in Spain!

They sought to sow distress, revive medieval barbarism and execute all those whose liberal outlook might equip Spain for the modern world. And their brutishness, their savage hatred of the workers' organisations led them to hatch a plot of unsuspected ramifications. Had they triumphed everything would have been undone. Spain would have become a cemetery. The sword and the cross would have achieved lordship over the whole of Iberia and the darkest ages of our history — a history of fanatic monks and bloodthirsty captains — would have been upon us once more. Fortunately the horizon is becoming clearer. Latest reports suggest that the tide is turning in our favour. Defeat for fascism is but a few days away. And it will not rise again! The people in arms have eradicated it, opening a new chapter in our history! We are driving home the victory we achieved in the harsh combat of those days and we are pressing home our success throughout the peninsula!

Andalusia, where some small nuclei remain, is under siege by the loyalist army and the sizeable forces of the labour organisations. Zaragoza will fall; the honour of the Confederation and the moral welfare of the Spanish proletariat demand this. If Zaragoza must be sprayed with shrapnel then so be it! This will be done by the CNT, by Zaragoza the immortal, the Zaragoza which has always carried the standard of libertarian insurrection!

The drab expanses of Castile are also locked in combat with the rebels. We know that in some slavish places in the Castilian meseta, the priests, landowners and other birds of prey turned the peasants into human shields so that loyalist bullets might penetrate their breasts. This is proof of their insecurity and demoralisation, a prelude to their certain defeat. Very soon Burgos, Avila and other redoubts in Castile will fall. And there will be no clemency for these traitors! It is time for their liquidation, their total and absolute liquidation. The blood and the lives of those who have fallen, the anguish, horror and torture of yesterday, today, of all time, demand this... Let us fight on, let us not put away our rifles! If need be, let there be not a stone left standing in those places where resistance continues! Let us lay it all waste! Let us

destroy those who thought only of our destruction when they entered into the fray!  
“Warlike means for warlike times.”

Long live libertarian communism! Long live the immortal CNT!

The National Committee.

Madrid, 28 July 1936.

In Catalonia, the engine of revolution was racing flat-out. A plenum of the Barcelona local union federation, scheduled for 2 August, asked, in its agenda: ‘How do the unions reckon we ought to set in train the socialisation of the workplaces under our control?’ A plenum of local and provincial FAI groups held on that very day stated:

Anarchists should retain their places in the local antifascist committees using their influence to ensure that the struggle be pursued with vigour and in a radical way, guarding against any political dalliance which may lead to a betrayal of the people.

Similarly, we stress the necessity of ensuring that our activity is not reduced to just another facet of the existing battle.

The bourgeois economy and democracy have collapsed politically and socially; they have no solutions to offer us. And the workers’ organisations, particularly the CNT, as well as the anarchist movement, must prepare for a labour of economic reconstruction which will have to cover everything from collectivisation to socialisation of the land, mines and industries.

The dearth of satisfactory information about the revolutionary moment in other regions led Catalonia to insist upon a more decisive revolutionary commitment. (In fact, Valencia had just shrugged off the nightmare of the barracks by taking these by storm.) This preoccupation is evident in the following document from the Catalan CNT:

Following recent assemblies and considering the situation in the region, the Catalan CNT resolved to dispatch a delegation to Madrid to report to the national committee.

Reports have also been received from the other regions. There has been some talk about the impatience of some comrades who wish to go further than crushing fascism, but for the moment the situation in Spain as a whole is extremely delicate. In revolutionary terms, Catalonia is an oasis within Spain.

Obviously no one can foresee the changes which may follow the civil war and the conquest of that part of Spain which is still under the control of mutinous reactionaries.

Catalonia was soon to lose its status as an oasis of revolution. In early August, the central government issued a decree which ordered the mobilisation of the reservists from the draft lists for 1933, 1934 and 1935. Young Catalans met in the Olimpia Theatre to declare their refusal to return to the barracks. In a lengthy manifesto the CNT supported their stand:

The Madrid government's lack of political vision presents the workers' organisation with a difficult problem. The streets of Barcelona have been swamped by an army of young people who were reservists between 1933 and 1935. They refuse to return to barracks because they have no confidence in the officer corps and because, logically, they regard themselves as being far removed from the old barrack-style military concepts.

Unsolicited, they have turned their backs on the barracks, torn up their tunics and organised demonstrations to the cries of "Down with the army! Long live the people's militias!"

A large number of these youths are already enrolled with the militias; others are ready to enlist and to set off for Zaragoza immediately.

But what they do not want, and their attitude is a logical one considering the treachery of military figures implicated in the recent revolt, is to be subjected to military discipline and placed under the orders of their old comrades.

The problem is a delicate one which the CCMA must examine in detail and with a clear appreciation of the demands of today. The formidable effort at liberation made by the people on 19 July was no idle exercise; it was not made so that everything might continue as before. The umbilical cord which bound us to the past has broken forever. New conceptions of social obligations, human existence, of law and of liberty are in force.

We witnessed the magnificent spectacle of 10,000 young men, sons of the people, assembled in the Olimpia Theatre who freely expressed their position. They affirmed: "We do not shirk the performance of our civic and revolutionary duty. We want to go to Zaragoza to set our brothers free. We want to form militias of freedom; but we will not and cannot be uniformed soldiery. It has been demonstrated palpably that the regular army posed a threat to the people. The people's salvation and the salvation of civic liberties lies purely and solely with the militias. We shall go into the militias and into the front lines as well, but we will not return to the barracks as soldiers subject to discipline and orders!"

The CNT can neither ignore nor frustrate this lofty and resolute expression of enthusiasm. The soldiers gathered in the Olimpia Theatre yesterday even undertook to rejoin their respective corps on condition that they enter the barracks to join free, independent militias and not as automata bereft of all human personality.

And the CNT of Catalonia has to put the issue pure and simple to the Generalitat and the Madrid government alike. We cannot defend the existence nor can we comprehend the need for a regular, uniformed and compulsory army. That army ought to be supplanted by the militias, by the people armed, the sole guarantee that freedom will be defended zealously and that fresh plots will not be hatched in the shadows.

For its part the FAI plenum mentioned above outlined its position *vis-à-vis* the issue:

The FAI plenum meeting in Barcelona acknowledges the *fait accompli* of the people's militias as an ineluctable necessity of the civil war. The plenum opposes the

militarisation of the militias, although it does nonetheless acknowledge the need for organised action as an indispensable requirement in any war.

In its editorial of 6 August, *Solidaridad Obrera* broached the same problem:

The military has been the nation's incubus. They have meddled in affairs beyond their purview. Commanders and officers have made and broken governments. The history of the Juntas de Defensa<sup>1</sup> bears most reliable witness to the ambitions of those persons who aspired to climb up the chain of command. Even their founding father acknowledges that they degenerated into coteries of adventurers and cronies, and when he attempted to dignify the moronic profession of butcher, even he was persecuted by his colleagues in arms. Then again, ever since Spain lost her overseas colonies, there has been the ongoing problem of the enormous numbers of officers who gobble up the better part of the Spanish budget. On various occasions, it has been stated repeatedly from the press and in public meetings that our country boasts a number of officers far in excess of those to be found in the armies maintained by more important nations than ours and that drastic steps had to be taken. Bearing in mind this undue inflation in the regular army hitherto, we must avail ourselves of the splendid opportunity offered by the military revolt. The vast majority of the officer corps has rebelled. It is impossible to build upon the shoulders of the remaining military. The regular army must be replaced by workers' militias which are of themselves capable of meeting the requirements of the present hour.

Thereafter the CCMA, in agreement with the Generalitat's defence minister, issued a statement in which it ordered that the young men were to return immediately to barracks, where they were to be under the jurisdiction of the CCMA. A memorandum from Abad de Santillán, a member of the aforesaid committee, announced that the Barcelona militia headquarters would be installed in the former Pedralbes infantry depot, now renamed the Bakunin Barracks.<sup>2</sup> The technical staff from the old army who enjoyed the trust of the labour organisations and parties represented in the CCMA also had to present themselves at the barracks.

We have seen the popular response in Barcelona following the central government's mobilisation order. We have also seen the grounds on which the young recruits based their refusal to return to the barracks they had earlier left because of the treachery of their commanding officers and the ineptitude of government. And equally we have seen the compromise solution worked out by the CNT and the FAI in the CCMA. That solution implied the autonomy of Catalonia in military affairs. The first post-July Generalitat government featured — for the first time — a defence minister (Díaz Sandino). The suggested solution, whereby the recruits were mobilised at the barracks as *milicianos*, presented no conflict with the intentions of the Generalitat. A memorandum from the CCMA on 6 August had this to say:

The CCMA of Catalonia has determined that soldiers from the years 1933, 1935 and 1936 should report immediately to barracks and place themselves at the disposal of the local committees set up under the jurisdiction of the CCMA.

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<sup>1</sup> The army pressure group which precipitated the political crisis of 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Previously the Pedralbes army barracks stormed by, among others, Peirats on 19 July 1936.

However, since, in the next breath all available military graduates (‘... for whom the labour organisations and parties within the CCMA can vouch...’) were also summoned, the need arose to establish supervisory organs to monitor future military commanders or advisers. Those organs were dubbed the workers’ and soldiers’ councils, similar to the ones set up for similar purposes during the early stages of the Russian Revolution. Although these councils covered every armed corps, they operated in the barracks in the form of committees of soldiers and of delegates from the various organisations and parties.

Alfonso Miguel,<sup>3</sup> a veteran CNT militant and champion of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils, wrote in mid-1937:

The first workers’ and soldiers’ committees came into existence by agreement of the CNT and UGT. They were born in Barcelona. Then they were formed in Levante, in Andalusia and in the capital itself, which was demoralised by defeatism and treachery. They set about monitoring and carrying out purges. The committees assumed the unenviable task of raising morale, monitoring certain intrigues, keeping an eye on suspect officers and assisting all competent and sincere personnel. With the committees it was possible to sustain military activity and stave off the fascism within; without them, fascism would assuredly have devoured us. During the painful early months of the war, who was capable of bringing unity between the people and an army on its last legs and the armed institutions which had been demoralised by treachery and decimated in active service? The committees were not set up for symbolic reasons: their creation was determined by the need to press on with the struggle and to have the utmost confidence in the military command. The revolt had dashed all respect and killed every iota of confidence. Despite everything, it was nevertheless possible to maintain a fairly coherent direction amid the general chaos by means of a mixture of nominal and effective supervision of the decisions of the command, without which decision-making would have been impossible. The workers’ militias needed an assured leadership; they achieved this by blending their own personnel with those elected by the respective corps and military units who shared their aim: “to fight together under a single and loyal accountable leadership”. Circumstances determined their creation and as these developed, they determined that the militias be replaced. Thus a new military organisation was born: the popular and revolutionary army, moulded by an anti-militarist populace in the midst of a war against the old army.<sup>4</sup>

On 10 August a huge meeting was held in Barcelona’s Olimpia Theatre. It was the first public rally since the events of 19 July. The following speakers addressed the crowds: ‘Marianet’ Vázquez, the secretary of the Catalan CNT; Francesc Esgleas and García Oliver, on behalf of the CNT national committee; and Federica Montseny on behalf of the FAI. The proceedings were broadcast to the length and breadth of Spain. What follows is the essence of the speeches delivered:

**Vázquez:** Three days after the insurrection we displayed the constructive capacity of our organisations by ordering a return to work in all those industries whose ser-

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<sup>3</sup> A woodworker, ‘man of action’ and member of the ‘Los Solidarios’ group.

<sup>4</sup> Text taken from *De julio a julio*.

vices were indispensable to galvanise productive efforts. Later we set up a Higher Economic Council of which the CNT and FAI are part. This body has the mission of normalising and socialising production. In these difficult times, the CNT believes it inappropriate to press demands designed to gladden and to dazzle the working class. This is not the time to be asking for the 40 hour week and 15 per cent wage increases. No. Should the struggle to crush fascism and the desire to avoid the pain and misery through which the Russian Revolution passed make it necessary for us to put in extra hours at work, then so be it. We have a revolutionary duty to ensure that the people's most urgent needs are met... On the international scene, we are threatened with foreign intervention which some may welcome. We realise that a pretext for such intervention is being sought, as this would be to fascism's advantage and would unleash war. But we will not furnish a pretext for such intervention, and no one can say that we have failed to respect foreign interests... When we were approached by the consuls, we speedily set our seal upon foreign establishments lest anyone interfere with them. We have even dispatched our own guards to prevent anyone from failing to respect these foreign concerns... 19 July ended an era which must not return. Problems which have presented themselves in the present context must be solved with the noblest of intentions as present circumstances demand and without any hindrance from the petty party-political considerations typical of defeatists and demagogues. We, the CNT and FAI, will not allow the people to be disarmed on any pretext. It is better that arms are in the possession of the workers than in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

**García Oliver:** The Madrid government believes that an army with a non-revolutionary outlook can be formed to combat fascism. The army must have no other expression than that which emanates from the people's voice and it must be 100 per cent proletarian. To demonstrate this I must point out that the Assault Guards, Carabineers and Civil Guard fraternised with the toiling masses in the battle against fascism, during which they formed with them a people's army, superior, as practical experience has shown, to the classic notion of armed corps organised on the people's backs. The people's army based on the militias should be organised on the basis of a new conception. We are going to organise a revolutionary military academy where we can train specialist commanders who will not be modelled on the old officer corps, but will be mere specialists who will, in addition, follow instructions from superior officers who have proven their loyalty to the people and to the proletariat. This is the surest guarantee that fascism will not overwhelm us. We hope that Spain will share our opinion and will turn to this new weapon in the armoury of a future society. I do not mind paying homage to the spirit displayed in Catalonia by the Civil Guard, Assault Guards and Carabineers, a spirit which has led to the establishment of the workers' and soldiers' councils in the barracks. Have we thus embarked upon an experiment in the Russian style? No. There is no reason why Spain should ape Russia's example: we have what it takes to conjure into existence organs vital to the people's defence.

**Montseny:** We shall keep faith with the compact entered into with other anti-fascist sectors, but we also demand loyalty, for unless there is understanding and tolerance between our respective capabilities, we will be destroyed and this must be avoided. We are obliged to go further than we intended owing to the abandonment of a large number of industries which are vital to the economic reconstruction of the revolution. We are not assuming this jettisoned responsibility for our own advantage. We summon technicians to our side so that they may collaborate in our common endeavour, confident that this collaboration will gratify their scientific spirit and assure their basic necessities. We call upon republicans and upon all whose notions of social progress may not be the same as ours to reflect upon all such matters of greater or lesser importance in this solemn hour. We will forge ahead despite ourselves and should others fail to do so, whether through incomprehension or bad faith, then the blame will be theirs. We shall build a new world on a foundation of greater individual freedom *vis-à-vis* the collectivity, but with the collectivity closely allied with the individual against centralism, as this is a regression in every facet of life.

Also on 10 August a scheme was made public for the orchestration of control patrols (*patrols de control*) to safeguard the revolutionary order. According to the text of the scheme, these patrols 'are an explicitly revolutionary institution, sprung of the revolution itself and for the exclusive service of the same.' They comprised 700 men drawn from the various organisations of the antifascist front. Some 325 belonged to the CNT, while the rest were divided among the Esquerra, the UGT and the POUM proportionally. They were divided into 11 districts throughout Barcelona. On 13 August, a Generalitat decree formally established the Economic Council of Catalonia (*Consell d'Economia de Catalunya*).<sup>5</sup> This is the text of the decree:

The disruption with which Catalonia has to contend as a result of the revolt which erupted all over Spain requires the urgent formation of the Economic Council of Catalonia to orchestrate and normalise the economy and devise solutions to the grave problems which have arisen. It is proper that this Council is made up of delegates from the political parties and labour organisations which fought together against the fascist revolt and which must make a concerted contribution to the rebirth of the economy of our land, with the enthusiastic cooperation of the whole of the working populace. Consequently, on the recommendation of the minister of economy and public services and by agreement with the executive council, I hereby decree:

1. That the Economic Council be constituted as an organism for the orchestration of the economic life of Catalonia;
2. That after the necessary deliberations, the Economic Council will determine the appropriate norms for the restoration of economic normality throughout Catalonia.
3. The council will be made up as follows:

It will be chaired by the minister of economy and public services who will be empowered to delegate as their representative whomsoever they may choose.

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<sup>5</sup> The creation of this body can be seen as a crucial first step by the state to assert its influence over a revolutionary economic process that it had hitherto been incapable of controlling.

The members of this council will be: Martí Barrera, Vicenç Bernades<sup>6</sup> and Joan Soler i Bru<sup>7</sup> ( ERC); Ramon Peypoch (ACR); Eusebi Carbó, Joan P. Fàbregas<sup>8</sup> and Cosme Rofes (CNT); Antonio García Birlán<sup>9</sup> and Diego Abad de Santillán (FAI); Joan Fronjosà,<sup>10</sup> Joan Grijalbo<sup>11</sup> and Joan Puig<sup>12</sup> (UGT); Joan Pou (U de R); Andreu Nin (POUM); and Estanislau Ruiz i Ponseti<sup>13</sup> (PSUC)<sup>14</sup>.

Barcelona, 1 August 1936.

Lluís Companys (Premier) and Josep Tarradellas<sup>15</sup>  
(Minister of Economy and Public Services).

Another decree from around this time addressed the educational guidelines of the revolution. This is the text:

The revolutionary will of the people has abolished Catholic schools. It is time for a new schooling inspired by the rationalist principles of work and of brotherhood among men. This New Unified School must be structured in such a way as not merely to replace the school system recently abolished by the people but also to create an educational life inspired by a feeling of universal solidarity in tune with all the aspirations of human society and founded upon the abolition of all privileges.

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<sup>6</sup> A polemicist from the republican wing of the ERC.

<sup>7</sup> From the more separatist current within the ERC.

<sup>8</sup> A most curious and controversial figure. An economist, intellectual and one-time member of the bourgeois-Catalanist Lliga and Acció Catalana, he was neither an anarcho-syndicalist nor an anarchist, but this did not prevent him from joining the CNT shortly after the outbreak of the civil war. He quickly rose to prominence under the sponsorship of the Urales- Montseny family and represented the organisation in the Catalan government, where he prepared legislation that legalised and effectively contained the revolutionary collectivisations in Catalonia. Following the ‘ May Days’ of 1937 — and with the star of the CNT- FAI waning — he disappeared from public life and from the CNT, thereby confirming suspicions that he had always sought a ‘career’ from the revolution. Some of his former comrades in the CNT alleged that he had fled to England with jewels and treasure seized during his time on the Economic Council.

<sup>9</sup> Previously an anarcho-syndicalist and member of Pestaña’s ‘Solidaridad’ group during 1930–1, he underwent a radical shift towards Stirnerist-individualist positions and moved into the orbit of the Urales clan. He frequently wrote for the anarchist press under the *nom de plume* ‘Dionysios’.

<sup>10</sup> A member of the Catalan parliament for Barcelona on the USC- ERC slate in 1932, he later joined the PSUC. After the civil war he went into exile in South America.

<sup>11</sup> Leader of the UGT bank employees’ union, 1932–39. During his exile in Mexico he became an important figure in the publishing world, establishing the Grijalbo publishing house.

<sup>12</sup> A waiter in the Ritz Hotel, he served as a political commissar in the 5th Army in 1938–9. Exiled in France in 1939, he was interned in a Nazi concentration camp, escaping to join the guerrillas. In 1945 he arrived clandestinely in Barcelona and became editor of the illegal PSUC newspaper *Treball*. Detained by Franco’s secret police in 1947, he was executed in 1949.

<sup>13</sup> A professor of geometry at Barcelona University, he represented the USC in the Catalan parliament after 1932 and then the PSUC. He drew up the blue-print for the so-called ‘new economy’, something of a misnomer given that this presupposed a return to free market practices.

<sup>14</sup> Formed in Catalonia days after the start of the revolution and civil war through the merger of the various socialist and communist factions that drew inspiration from the Russian Revolution, including the Catalan Federation of the PSOE and the UGT. It quickly defined itself in terms of its implacable opposition to the revolution.

<sup>15</sup> Formerly a member of the CADCI and a founder member of the ERC, he was a prominent figure in Catalan political life throughout the 1930s, in government and as a journalist. Exiled after 1939, he became president of the Generalitat-in-exile and, following Franco’s death, first leader of the revived Generalitat.



So, on the recommendation of the cultural minister, I hereby decree:

1. That the committee of the New Unified School is herewith constituted and its functions will be:

(a) to organise, in premises allocated by the Generalitat, the New Unified School system of education, which is to replace the church school;

(b) to oversee and administer this new educational arrangement, ensuring it is thoroughly congruent with the new order installed by the people's will, drawing its inspiration from the rationalist principles of labour, so that any worker with aptitude may proceed, unhindered and eschewing all privilege, from primary schooling through to the most advanced studies in the Workers' University and in the Autonomous University of Barcelona;

(c) the committee will assist in coordinating the educational facilities of the state, of Barcelona Council and of the Generalitat.

2. The committee will be chaired by the Generalitat's cultural minister or by a delegated appointee and the following representatives of trade union bodies: Cayetano Delhom,<sup>16</sup> Josefa Uriz Pi,<sup>17</sup> Juan Hervás Soler,<sup>18</sup> Francesc Albert Marrugat<sup>19</sup> (UGT); Miguel Escorihuela Guitart,<sup>20</sup> Juan Puig Elías,<sup>21</sup> Joan P. Fàbregas and Albert Carsi<sup>22</sup> (CNT); Cassià Costal i Marinel·lo<sup>23</sup> (Cultural Council and the Generalitat Inspectorate of Education); Dr Jaume Serra Hunter<sup>24</sup> (Autonomous University of Barcelona); Joan Aleu Botxaca (the Industrial University) and Francisco A. Gali<sup>25</sup> (Fine Arts).

3. So that it might operate better, the committee will be divided into the following study groups:

(a) the primary education working party;

(b) the secondary education working party;

(c) the professional training working party;

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<sup>16</sup> The growing number of positions of responsibility that had to be filled during the early stages of the revolution facilitated the emergence of a new layer of activists from the grassroots of the union organisations. It is, therefore, more difficult to trace the antecedents of many of these activists during the pre-revolutionary period.

<sup>17</sup> An organiser in the UGT white-collar workers' union and part of the new breed of *ugetista* who rose to prominence during the civil war.

<sup>18</sup> This appears to have been the only position of responsibility occupied by this activist within the Catalan UGT during the civil war.

<sup>19</sup> Another lesser figure within the UGT.

<sup>20</sup> A rank-and-file *cenetista* thrown into the public domain by the new demands facing the union after the revolution.

<sup>21</sup> One of the foremost figures in anarchist educationalism of the 1930s and president of the teachers' section of the CNT Liberal Professions Union. He participated in the 1936 Zaragoza Congress, although his activities in the CNT were always secondary to his educational work, for which he was revered by generations of *cenetistas* and their children. He went into exile at the end of the civil war.

<sup>22</sup> An anarchist writer and publicist.

<sup>23</sup> Of the USC and later the PSUC.

<sup>24</sup> Professor of philosophy in the University of Barcelona and ERC deputy for Barcelona in the Catalan parliament. He went into exile in South America after the civil war.

<sup>25</sup> A nationalist pedagogue, he returned to Franco's Spain in 1943 and resumed his educational activities.

- (d) the higher education working party;
- (e) the technical education working party;
- (f) the artistic training working party.

4. All suggestions from the working parties are to be debated by the full committee. Their implementation will be overseen by an executive committee, made up of the chairmen of each working party.

Interim article. By way of a first emergency measure, the committee of the New Unified School will study how the premises donated by the Generalitat are to be allocated, as well as examining how the items therein, which have become the people's assets, should be disposed. It will also organise the protection of all buildings and their contents and to this end will seek the assistance of the militias.

Lluís Companys and Minister for Culture Ventura Gassol.<sup>26</sup>

Barcelona, 27 July 1936.

We are going to conclude this chapter by turning our attention to one of the most significant events of the turbulent month of August. On 15 August, the daily newspapers reported the establishment of a committee to liaise between the FAI, PSUC, UGT, and CNT.<sup>27</sup>

In Catalonia, the UGT was still virtually non-existent.<sup>28</sup> The fortunes of revolution soon brought a host of flotsam into the orbit of every party and organisation. Among them there was no shortage of those who were looking for some method of camouflaging their own political inclinations. The petty bourgeoisie — of which more anon — rallied to the organisation which they deemed would best safeguard their interests. That organisation could not but be the UGT, which, in Catalonia, had become a fief of the Stalinists, who proclaimed their 'advocacy of revolutionary order without infringement of respect for private property'.

As a result of all this, the UGT began to assume some importance in Catalonia. The make-up of the local antifascist committees, to which the CNT had unselfishly agreed, had the benefit of involving the UGT in public affairs.

What follows is the text of that initial unity agreement:

To render more effective the workers' revolutionary action against fascism and to strengthen and galvanise the unity which became real during the fighting on the 19th and 20th of last month, the liaison committee will be established, composed of two representatives from the CNT, two from the UGT, one from the FAI and one from the PSUC.

1. It is the mission of this committee to seek out such points of agreement as may exist between those bodies, submitting these for the discussion and approval of all, so that public guidelines and exhortations may be issued.

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<sup>26</sup> Real name Bonaventura Gassol i Rovira. From a peasant background, he was a radical nationalist poet and politician, switching his allegiance from the Lliga to Acció Catalana and, finally, to the ERC. Elected to the Generalitat, he played a key role in the creation of the cultural policies of successive Catalan governments during the thirties. He went into exile at the end of the civil war.

<sup>27</sup> Note that the POUM was marginalised from this committee.

<sup>28</sup> At the start of the revolution the UGT probably had no more than 100,000 members in Catalonia.

2. The creation of this liaison committee in no way infringes the independence of each of the organisations of which it is composed.
3. Should the bodies party to this compact agree on any issue, the matter having first been discussed with the organisations concerned, the liaison committee shall take care to ensure that the representatives of the various local and higher antifascist committees ( CCMA, Economic Council, etc.) espouse the points of agreement between the undersigned entities.
4. The liaison committee shall hold thrice weekly sessions plus whatever extraordinary sessions may be deemed necessary in the view of the participating organisations.
5. We propose that factory committees based on proportional representation for CNT and UGT members be formed in every workplace.
6. Implicit in the creation of this liaison committee is mutual respect from the component unions of each organisation and freedom for workers to unionise in one of the two trade union bodies.
7. For the lifetime of this liaison committee, the component organisations undertake to eschew all manner of violent attacks and criticisms. They are free to criticise one another but, in that event, the criticisms will have to be absolutely fraternal.
8. This liaison committee shall release a note to the press informing the workers and public opinion generally of the formation of the committee and of its intentions.
9. This liaison committee shall report back to the CNT national committee and to the UGT executive committee to brief them on this agreement and express the desire for an accord at national level.

Antoni Sesé<sup>29</sup> and Emilio García<sup>30</sup> (UGT); José Pérez Rubio<sup>31</sup> and Facundo Roca<sup>32</sup> (CNT); Joan Comorera<sup>33</sup> (PSUC); Pedro Herrera<sup>34</sup> (FAI).

Barcelona, 11 August 1936.

And to set the seal upon this chapter, we reprint in its entirety an article by Peiró on the political, economic and military situation. This article, published by *Solidaridad Obrera* on 15

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<sup>29</sup> A founder of the dissident communist BOC, he was expelled from the party for seeking a rapprochement with the PCE, whereupon he became involved in Stalinist politics, joining the PSUC in 1936 and becoming secretary-general of the Catalan UGT. He was assassinated during the ' May Days' of 1937.

<sup>30</sup> Secretary-general of the Catalan UGT from January to June 1936, he was an activist in the socialist metal workers' union.

<sup>31</sup> The secretary of the Barcelona metal workers' union during the early 1930s.

<sup>32</sup> A CNT Builders' Union activist.

<sup>33</sup> A reformist socialist and leader of the USC and the PSUC, he was a strident and sectarian anti-anarchist. After the civil war he went into exile in Moscow and Mexico, before returning to Spain on a clandestine political mission in 1952. Detained by Franco's secret police, he died in jail in 1958.

<sup>34</sup> A leading light in the FAI, he initially backed the collaboration of the movement with the state, serving as minister of health and social assistance in the Generalitat government from December 1936 to April 1937, although he later moved towards an opposition stance. He joined the FAI peninsular committee in 1938, before going into exile a year later.

August, was the first which Peiró had written for the CNT press since the 1931 crisis which had been resolved in May 1936 at Zaragoza:

Revolutionary interpretation of the present circumstances. Let us state unreservedly that the glorious CNT is presently honouring its history, so replete with heroism and unselfish actions. And it is in these circumstances that I return to the confederal fold, which in spirit I never left. I'm not returning for reasons of nostalgia: the years do not pass in vain and already I feel the burden of their passage. Rather, I hope to contribute to the common store to which all we workers have a duty to contribute, to propel the proletariat onwards towards the winning of superior forms of social coexistence. And the present historical moment requires the collaboration of us all, for it is a time of tragedy, but also a time for the construction of the new Spain.

In my estimation, those who believe that the time is now ripe to pursue proletarian demands of a social nature, such as reductions to the working day and increases in wages and salaries, make a fundamental miscalculation. The error originated with the Generalitat and its thoughtlessness in introducing the 40-hour working week at a time when the most serious events in Spain for many decades had rocked the nation's economy to its very foundations.

And I presume that the action of the Generalitat was intended as a spectacular gambit aimed at winning the sympathies of the Catalan proletariat. Yet it behoves us anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists to underline the indiscretion and prevent the workers from continuing to founder aboard a seemingly buoyant raft. I repeat, buoyant only in appearance, for beneath it violent tempests are hatching, raising the very dangers that we are now trying to exorcise on the battlefields with the selfless blood sacrifice of the people.

Our war for freedom is a gaping wound opened in the heart of the nation's economy, and the wound gapes wider as time passes and the needs of the battlegrounds multiply; those needs will expand in inverse proportion to the reduction of our activities and the energies expended on production. That simple reality leads me to wonder how one can possibly think of reducing our contribution to labour, if in fact the tragic circumstances of the Spanish economy are very shortly going to require an added contribution from us and that the eight-hour day be extended by one or more hours' production each day. Is it perhaps our subservience to a principle that makes us able to lose a battle which we already have under our belts? Is a penchant for comfort — a penchant quite legitimate in normal times — now about to blind us to the sacred duty that we owe to comrades who are giving their all to defend the liberty of all? In their defence of liberty, those comrades do not have a fixed knocking-off time. They struggle as they must, for as long as it takes. Why should we not do as much?

All too forgotten is Napoleon's celebrated dictum: "Wars and their successes always depend on money, because, all through time, wars have rested upon an economic foundation." Consequently our militias will be compromised unless, in their rear, there are other regiments campaigning with work-tools in hand, with the same intensity and same unselfishness as they display at the front in the battle against fascism.

It is not a question of letting this opportunity slip. The bourgeois-democratic republic must be transcended by a new socio-economic order. However, this cannot be effected hastily or blindly on the basis of appetites which, while legitimate enough, sometimes are inopportune and counter-productive. The point is to avail of this opportunity to lay down moral attitudes and to affirm these over immediate material objectives which are unrealisable in the present circumstances.

There must be an elementary manifestation of the social superiority of the proletariat as now affirmed by torrents of blood – it must take the form of absolute control in the management and administration of the world of work. We workers should assert ourselves in this new avenue of social struggle; we must digest the teachings that necessarily derive from this conquest; we need to acquire mastery over the machinery of the economy and industry and when we fully appreciate the global realities and potentialities of the new economy, then the time will have come for rewards for proletarian exertions, such as reductions to working hours, and we will finally be able to meet all of our economic needs.

For now, we should have no thoughts except for our comrades fighting at the front and we must focus exclusively on destroying fascism conclusively, something that demands a powerful and inexhaustible economy as well as the rifles of the militias.

And economies are moulded and prosper by dint of work, work, and more work.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: The CNT in the government of Catalonia

The Giral government resigned on 4 September 1936. Its place was taken by a cabinet headed by Largo Caballero. Politically speaking, the new administration comprised three right-wing socialists, three left-wing socialists, five republicans and two communists. Had the CNT been invited to join this cabinet? On this matter, all that we know is that which was revealed by subsequent events. At any rate, the opening session of the Cortes took place on 2 October. The leader of the government, Largo Caballero, delivered an address that opened thus:

You know me for a man of few words. So it will not come as a surprise if I outline the aims of the government briefly. The previous government recommended to the president of the Republic that all the parties engaged in the struggle against fascism be represented in government. The president of the Republic accepted the suggestion and honoured me with the commission to form a new government. In assuming that task, I knew the responsibility I was accepting and so I was concerned that all the political forces currently defending the Republic might be represented, from the socialists through to the Basque nationalists. I also contrived that organised proletarian sectors might be represented. The offer was accepted in principle, but later higher bodies turned it down. This is the reason why one labour grouping<sup>1</sup> has no representative in the government, but we are all convinced that it can collaborate and lend a hand with the various organisms of state.

In an interview given to a *Daily Express* reporter that was carried by the press on 30 October, Largo Caballero was reported as saying:

[B]ut there is a large segment of the populace that is not represented in the government. I refer to the mighty CNT which is the anarchists' industrial arm, just as the UGT is the industrial arm of the socialists... Two months ago, when the government was in the process of being formed we sought the CNT's collaboration, because we wanted the government to be the direct representative of all the forces struggling against the common enemy. And this is why a cabinet post has been given to the Basque nationalists who fight alongside us in that struggle. Then the CNT had no wish for a cabinet post, but now, due to the escalation of the struggle, it does and there is no opposition to the CNT's entering the government.

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<sup>1</sup> A reference to the CNT and its traditional antipolitical principles.

*The Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*<sup>2</sup> (no. 41), dated 3 September, published an article that was reprinted in *Solidaridad Obrera* on the same day that the Largo Caballero government was formed. Entitled 'The Futility of the Government', the article stated as follows:

Far from being a vital factor in the antifascist struggle, the existence of a Popular Front government is tantamount to a clumsy imitation of that same struggle.

There is no point in recalling that the Generalitat and Madrid governments did absolutely nothing in the face of the preparations for the fascist "putsch". Authority was utilised only to conceal the intrigues of the reactionary elements, intrigues of which the government was a conscious or unconscious instrument.

The war being waged in Spain is a social war. The weight of any moderating power, based upon the balance and conservation of classes, is incapable of playing a precise role in a conflict that shakes and enfeebles the very foundations of the state. So it is correct to say that in Spain the Popular Front government is merely a reflection of a compromise between the petty bourgeoisie and international capital.

Through the force of events, this compromise has no more than a passing value and will have to yield to the demands of a profound social transformation.

The plague of businessmen and conservatives presently active in the shadow of the republicans and liberals of Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid will then vanish. The notion of replacing these governments, weak guardians of the status quo of property and foreign finance, with a strong government, based upon an ideology and a "revolutionary" political organisation, can succeed only in postponing the revolution.

So it is not a question of Marxism taking power, nor of the self-curtailment of popular action through political opportunism. The "workers' state" signifies the end of revolutionary action and the origin of a new political slavery.

The Popular Front's marshalling of forces and the organisation of food supplies with a wide-ranging collectivisation are vital to the attainment of our goals. Obviously this is what counts right now. To date it has been effected in a nongovernmental, decentralised, demilitarised fashion... There is much refinement which can be brought to bear. The CNT and the UGT are deploying all their forces for the sake of such refinement, and might deploy even more. By contrast, the establishment of a coalition government, with its petty political squabbles between majorities and minorities, bureaucratic elites and the fratricidal strife which opposing tendencies bring in their wake, will jeopardise the success of our labour of liberation. That would spell the speedy collapse of our capacity for action, of our unifying resolve and the beginning of an imminent collapse before an enemy that is still quite powerful.

We hope that Spanish and foreign workers will appreciate the correctness of the decisions taken in this regard by the CNT and the FAI. The disrepute of the state is socialism's objective. Events demonstrate the bourgeois state is liquidated, strangled into submission, by economic expropriation and not due to any spontaneous

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<sup>2</sup> A Barcelona-based, cyclostyled daily publication which, from the start of the revolution, was the main official bulletin of the CNT.

inspiration of the “socialist” bourgeoisie. Russia and Spain are the living testimony to this.

The government headed by Largo Caballero was a government with a mission. For, despite appearances, despite the declarations and the whole farrago of ordinances and decrees, government did not exist in the republican zone before 4 September 1936. The republican state collapsed on 18 July before the military revolt and the revolutionary populace gave it the *coup de grâce* on 19 July. Its resurrection depended upon the aptitude for manoeuvre of the scattered remnants of government. The Giral government had been a cipher amid the masses and the unions which had operated spontaneously. The dispersed fragments of the Spanish state were the political parties, which existed more in name than in fact. Stunned by their revolutionary feats, the masses rallied to the labour organisations, which also confronted the common enemy at the front. If the government, and the precept of government, were to be salvaged, it had to be invested with prestige by slogans and a personality. The watchword could be improvised and, once the danger had passed and their role completed, the personality might be forgotten and withdrawn from circulation. The important thing was to come up with something that would enable the rebuilding of the state apparatus and allow the reins of power to be placed in the hands of a government, any government, capable of achieving the aims of disarming the people and reducing them to obedience. In short, any government that might place the revolution in a strait-jacket. In this role, Largo Caballero was a godsend. He represented a significant section of the working class and the left wing of a political party – the only political party rescued from bankruptcy thanks to the October 1934 revolution. Largo Caballero’s extremist stance inside his party, the personal prestige he enjoyed among the UGT masses and the regard in which he was held in CNT and anarchist circles marked him as the man for the job. Largo Caballero proved incapable of gauging the future shape of politics, the ebb and flow of the intrigues of the political parties, his own party included. And this ‘Spanish Lenin’ served as a bridge into the most tragic phase of the Spanish revolution. At the head of a government broadly representative of the people, Largo Caballero injected some prestige into the devastated institutions of the republic, rejuvenated the state, and carried off the hitherto impossible missions of militarising the army, disarming the rearguard and reorganising the security forces, which were placed at the service of the government. Later, he vanished from sight like a comet only to be replaced by the counter-revolution and the dictatorship of one party.

There was no shortage of watchwords: the necessity for discipline and a single command [*mando único*]<sup>3</sup> in response to the poor fortunes in the war and the overriding necessity of waging and winning the war above all else.

In the interview we quoted above, the English journalist put the following question to the leader of the government: ‘Would the CNT’s entry into the cabinet signify some revolutionary change in the government’s economic policy?’ Largo Caballero replied:

Let us first win the war and then we can talk of revolution. Of course the civil war has a social aspect to it and, naturally, during the war problems of an economic and social nature may arise. We will resolve those problems with the help of the CNT, but any solution will take second place to one objective: winning the war. At the moment, no other issue demands our attention.

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<sup>3</sup> This *mando único* became a republican-Stalinist mantra and presupposed the subordination of the fragmented authority of the local revolutionary committees, workers’ patrols and militias to that of the government.



What was the CNT's reaction to the formation of the government headed by Largo Caballero?

In mid-September, a national plenum of regional committees was held, with the CNT national committee in the chair. In a lengthy statement issued to the press, important resolutions were detailed:

The plenum of CNT regional committees has examined the circumstances of the antifascist movement in all its aspects and has reached the following conclusions: that at present no solution is possible without a more effective co-ordination of forces and the establishment of some body capable of successfully marshalling these forces to defeat fascism at the front while guaranteeing economic reconstruction in the rearguard.

Consequently, the CNT believes it necessary to participate in a national organism empowered to provide leadership in the areas of defence and in political and economic affairs. Aware of the urgent need for thoroughgoing action, the delegations present at the plenum agree that public opinion be cultivated forthwith and dialogue be initiated with republican and socialist groups to implement the following:

1. The establishment in Madrid of a National Defence Council made up of personnel from all the antifascist political groupings in the following proportions: five delegates from the UGT (Marxists), five from the CNT and four republicans. The National Defence Council will be chaired by Largo Caballero. The establishment of this national council presupposes that the position of president of the Republic would be retained by the present incumbent with the same approach to his duties as he has displayed to date.
2. A federalist approach at local, provincial, regional and national level in both political administrative and economic affairs, with the creation of defence councils at those levels and the abolition of councils, local and civil governments. Regions will be empowered to ensure proportionality of the antifascist forces within the regional defence councils and to make any necessary local adjustments.
3. Transformation of the following ministries – Foreign Relations, Public Order, War (including Air Force and Navy), Communications and Propaganda, Education, Finance, Agriculture, Industry, Transport, Trade, Supply, Public Works, Labour and Health – which are to become departments structured as the demands of the moment require.
4. Creation of a single people's militia to control public order. Creation of a war militia with compulsory service under the control of workers' and militias' councils made up of mixed UGT-CNT commissions. Simplification of command positions, these being restricted to the supervision and appointment of military experts. Establishment of a single military leadership through a Commissariat of War appointed by the National Defence Council, comprising representatives from the three sectors engaged in the antifascist struggle.
5. Establishment of a people's court and a provisional Bar Council appointed by common agreement between the National Defence Council and the anti-fascist trade union and political organisations.

6. Socialisation of the banks, with the abolition of usury and speculation and the final eradication of the national, provincial and local debit.

7. Socialisation of the assets of the Church, the landholders, big industry, big business and transportation in general, as well as firms of any size which can be proven to have backed the rebellion; control of privately owned industries and businesses, usufruct of the means of production and exchange which may have been socialised to be entrusted to the workers' unions; freedom to experiment in those villages which, by virtue of their specific circumstances, will not interfere with the normal functioning of the economy; planning in big industry and in the most important landed estates.

8 Campaign for peace through international proletarian action, an overhaul of diplomatic arrangements and the convening of an international conference of all antifascist forces aimed at forging effective solidarity.

In order that all of these points can be implemented, the working party offers the following suggestions:

1. That a delegation from the plenum brief the UGT on these resolutions and propose a national alliance with the UGT on this minimum programme.
2. That, simultaneously, the press be given a copy of what has been agreed.
3. That four large meetings be organised for Sunday next, 20 September, in Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona and Málaga, for the purpose of making these resolutions public and of involving public opinion in their implementation.
4. That the national committee be enlarged by increasing the representation of its regional committees and by initiating direct approaches to the UGT.
5. That, within ten days, a plenum of regional committees meet to consider the work of the national committee and take any necessary decisions.

The working party: Joan López (Levante); Federica Montseny (Catalonia); Aurelio Alvarez (Asturias).

Was the CNT aware of the significance of the government headed by Largo Caballero? Was the plenum's resolution designed to exorcise a future danger to the revolution? Or was the watchword of a defence council a token of the CNT's acceptance of new political realities? The rapid succession of events would seem to confirm this. The National Defence Council, though at root merely a government by another name – and perhaps because of this – was stillborn. The CNT wanted to participate in the government, but wanted also to cushion the effects of its abrupt break with its principles. There was no way that this fact could possibly have escaped the politicians and the political parties. The trial balloon was unable to pull the wool over Largo Caballero's eyes. As far as he was concerned, the nature of the proposition testified to an unmistakable hesitancy in the CNT, the prelude to a capitulation which would come sooner or later. He realised that the intention, rather than to convince him, was instead an attempt to break the new realities gently to the CNT itself and to overcome the reluctance of the diehard defenders of its historic principles.

When the ten-day period of grace allowed for the formation of the National Defence Council expired, another national plenum of regional committees assembled as arranged to reflect upon the responses to the campaign.

From this plenum, the following manifesto emerged:

The national plenum of CNT regional committees has assembled again to consider the response from the Popular Front parties and the UGT to the resolution concerning the formation of a National Defence Council which may institute the single people's militia, a single military command, and galvanise the workers' confidence in victory. By allowing the representation of every antifascist group on this supreme supervisory body with equal rights and responsibilities and by reflecting the aspirations of the streets and the *de facto* overhaul of the economic structure of society, this council may act as guarantor for the complete emancipation of the proletariat.

The establishment of this council was a necessity noisily commended by events. Today, as the plenum assembles once more to analyse the situation in Spain, particularly in terms of the military situation, it not merely has to ratify its earlier stance but notes that this stance seems solidly endorsed by the development of events and because several political groupings already share the CNT's viewpoints, leading to a favourable climate of opinion among the proletariat which must be reflected above all in the new representative organs.

**Historical responsibility.** The responsibility before history of those who fail to do all in their power to create the National Defence Council will be vast. These are decisive times and they dictate much to us. The single militia and the single command must be achieved, but there must be prior assurances between all who participate in the decision-making to provide the sacred antifascist union with an indestructible base. The future of Spain and of the world is at stake in this struggle. If we are crushed, the proletariat's last remaining stronghold will have been demolished. Fascism will enjoy absolute mastery over the destiny of all nations, and all hopes of social liberation will be dashed. In its international expansion, fascism has run up against the magnificent rampart composed of the hearts and the heroic wills of the Spanish proletariat; it is only right that here it should meet with the defeat that workers elsewhere have been unable to inflict upon it, conjuring up before history the new and grandiose example of a people breaking its chains and finding within itself the inspiration to construct a new society without masters or slaves. We hope that no one is prepared to thwart this glorious calling by adopting a suicidal blindness that could only impede our impregnable unity, the prerequisite of the people's victory.

**Development of the CNT.** Spain cannot be guided by partisan politics in what are the gravest, most decisive moments of her existence; rather, what is required is the national bloc of all who struggle at the front and in the rearguard against the tidal wave of barbarism unleashed by the fascist insurrection. The exclusion from the leadership of that struggle of a movement of the scale and significance of the CNT is tantamount to introducing bias into that leadership, depriving it of its national character and, thereby, shattering its effectiveness. Is the CNT a new movement without

roots in the masses? Most certainly not, for even the socialist press recognises our importance and the value of our plans which are based on the living reality of Spain and aim to renovate society. The CNT commits immense forces to the fray everywhere and in some regions of Spain is the decisive factor at the front and in the rearguard.<sup>4</sup> It struggles on the northern front, in Aragón, on the central fronts and on the Andalusian fronts, doing all in its power to bring victory.

**The character of the CNT.** But for this Confederation, which is denied a place in the running of Spanish life at national levels, fascism would have scored an inexorable and tremendous victory. The indomitable courage of our people was the primary factor of the victory in those zones which have been freed from fascism and it made so decisive a contribution elsewhere that it tipped the balance against the rebellious army. And at present the fronts guarded predominantly by the CNT score an uninterrupted round of successes in wresting territory from the enemy. Is this revolutionary stand of the CNT new? No, it has always been there. The CNT has gone through whole periods in the history of Spain when it found itself absolutely alone in defending the ideals of the working class. So why is there no recognition of its mettle or any acceptance of the representation it deserves in the struggle? Why must the CNT be nothing more than a body of shock-troops, without the rights which its exertions merit?

Out of touch with reality and with the existing situation. In a situation in which the workers decide, the current politics of parties, rather than workers' alliances, has failed. The supervisory organs of traditional democracy are no longer valid. New organs must be formed; they have already come into existence locally and regionally, but they must be extended into the national arena. And these new organs must rest upon the new socio-political reality which burst noisily upon the Spanish scene on 19 July.

The institutions of bourgeois democracy, along with its local, provincial and national mechanisms, do not correspond to the existing situation, nor can they represent the new spirit that animates social life. Thus the current politics fails, as it is out of touch with reality and with its ambience. The current moment demands a proletarian alliance built at grassroots level, an alliance upon which the true democracy of the producers will be erected and which will merge with the life of the people and take responsibility for social reconstruction. The politics extant is divorced from the new economic and political organs spawned by the revolution, and this divorce is the source of the confusion that hinders our victory. On one side is the central authority and, on the other, the multifarious local and regional authorities which do their own thing and which must be given national expression, rigidly coordinated by a defence council on which all antifascist factions must be represented with equal rights and obligations.

**The revolutionary alliance.** The CNT, which clearly anticipated this situation, proposed the revolutionary alliance at its Zaragoza Congress. Today it redoubles its efforts in this respect and believes that unless the CNT and the UGT come to some

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<sup>4</sup> An obvious reference to the balance of forces in Catalonia.

understanding, the revolution will go astray. It will lose its way and fail because the problem confronting us is not merely a question of armaments, but fundamentally a question of trust and mutual understanding between the rival republican and labour factions.

In recognition of this need for trust, the CNT has provided countless examples of its spirit of accommodation. It has not embarked upon the wholesale pursuit of its programme, because to do so would divide a bloc which must remain united. But it does vigorously press its claim for the right of all to share in the leadership of the struggle inside the new organs which are born not from whim but out of the categorical imperative of the circumstances, in short, the child of circumstances.

**A national purpose.** Should other groups motivated by sectarian considerations ignore the model of restraint provided by the CNT in the interests of national cohesion and pursue their postulates to the full, then the CNT publicly and solemnly washes its hands of all responsibility for the failures which may ensue. Keeping faith with its tradition, its postulates and the needs of the present time, it will continue unconditionally to commit its forces, because the struggle against fascism takes precedence over everything. And in these perilous times, when the threat of the fascist offensive hangs over Madrid, it will redouble its energy, multiply its enthusiasm and give its all for victory. But let it be understood that the salvation of a rigorous, well-aimed counter-offensive hinges on the confidence of the fighting men, of the commanders and the organs of leadership at national level, and this demands the immediate creation of a National Defence Council. In ratifying its earlier stance, one which the military situation commends and which is lent even greater forcefulness by the widespread support for a Catalan regional defence council, this CNT plenum states that it will continue to press urgently and insistently for the creation of a national council, for it is our considered opinion that to do otherwise will result in failure. Let those who stand in the way of the revolution shoulder that burden of historical responsibility.

Long live the revolutionary alliance! Long live the National Defence Council! Long live the people's victory!

The plenum of CNT regional committees: Catalonia, Aragón, Rioja and Navarre, the Centre, Andalusia and Extremadura, Levante, Asturias, León and Palencia.

Let us go back a few days and turn again to the erupting volcano, Catalonia. On 24 September, a regional CNT plenum was held in Barcelona. It was attended by 505 delegates representing some 327 unions. According to the report by 'Marianet' Vázquez, secretary of the regional committee, this plenum was summoned to study the economic problems facing the CNT and to assist the work of the Economic Council. The collectivisation of numerous industries was a healthy sign but action had to be coordinated if the wider interests of the economy as a whole were to be served. This was precisely the mission of the Economic Council. Some industries had to be eliminated and other new ones created to satisfy the needs of the war. The utmost sacrifices had to be called for, lest production fail to keep pace with consumption.

At the plenum, Joan Fàbregas, the CNT delegate on the Economic Council, had this to say:

We note with great satisfaction that wherever fascism has been unable to impose its will, in Valencia and elsewhere, economic councils have been established... When Catalonia's economic council was formed a squabble broke out between the two trade union bodies. We, as was only logical, espoused the federalist, libertarian approach: the Marxists advocated centralism and nationalisation. The collectivisation thesis carried the day, it being the most apt and practical as far as the revolution was concerned... Before 19 July there had been 65,000 jobless workers in Catalonia. There are huge "stocks" of manufactured goods which cannot be exported because of the war and as a result of the strained relations existing between Madrid and Barcelona... I must tell you of the difficulties caused by the Madrid government through its refusal to assist us in economic and financial matters, assuredly because it does not have much sympathy with the practical projects under way in Catalonia. The extraordinary leap forward in Catalonia has sparked off a squabble between the authorities there and those here, leading to a quite alarming situation in this region of ours. The Madrid government refused point-blank to help Catalonia. There has been a change of government, but still we encounter the same difficulties. We dispatched a commission to Madrid and asked the government for a credit of 800 million pesetas, as well as a further 30 million for the purchase of war materials and 150 million francs for the purchase of raw materials. As collateral we offered 1,000 million pesetas which local savings banks have deposited in the form of securities with the Bank of Spain. All of this was denied us. We cannot explain why, especially when one considers that Spain's financial circumstances are the best in the world... We suggested to the Generalitat, and it agreed, that it request the Madrid government to transfer all gold to Catalonia, the spiritual home of anti-fascist ideas, an impregnable bulwark against fascism and an area of optimum security. And we asked the Madrid government to ship here, if not all of its gold, then at least the amount Catalonia needs: 400 million gold pesetas. Again our application was turned down.

The business of the plenum was covered during 24–26 September. On 27 September the Barcelona press startled its readers with the sensational news that the CNT had joined the Generalitat. The event was covered in scrupulous detail by the newspapers of every political persuasion. For the first time in its long history of varying fortunes and struggles, the CNT had jettisoned its traditional apoliticism, signalling a new phase of 'common sense and political maturity'. The CNT's own regional organ reprinted the following congratulations from *Claridad*<sup>5</sup> in Madrid:

*Claridad* refers in a dispatch from Catalonia to the new *Generalitat Council* and stresses the importance of the CNT's acceptance of governmental responsibility, which indicates a realisation that reality is more instructive than any theoretical extremism and in no way implies abandonment of principle, but indeed the very opposite.

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<sup>5</sup> Formed in 1935 as the weekly press organ of the *caballerista* leftwing of the PSOE, it became a daily paper after the February 1936 elections, although it never attained a large readership.

For its part, the Catalan CNT faced a flood of comments occasioned by its decision to join a government dubbed 'Council' and saw fit to put the record straight. This is its note of 27 September:

CNT of Catalonia. A clarification and an appeal to all press reporters. In the new phase upon which the CNT has embarked through its intervention in the management of public affairs and the administration of popular interests, the Catalan regional committee is concerned to explain its view.

It has been the journalist's custom and stock-in-trade always to catch the news on the wing and many times something more unlikely has been achieved: the garnering and publication of news that never existed. Yesterday, the evening papers carried the news that comrades Fàbregas and Domènech had discussions with the president of the Generalitat, discussions which lasted for 20 minutes. It has to be pointed out that the comrades in question talked, not with the president, but had an audience with the minister for culture. To clarify another point to the press which should also serve as a warning, no government has been set up, but rather a new body congruent with the circumstances in which we find ourselves and which is called the Council of the Generalitat.

In his book *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, Abad de Santillán is somewhat more forthcoming in his confessions:

We knew that victory in the revolution was not possible without victory in the war and for the war's sake we sacrificed everything. We sacrificed even the revolution itself, not realising that this sacrifice also implied the sacrifice of our war aims.

And he goes on to add:

The CCMA guaranteed the supremacy of the people in arms, it guaranteed Catalonia's autonomy, the purity and legitimacy of the war, the resurrection of the Spanish pulse and soul. But we were told, and it was repeated to us endlessly, that as long as it survived and we persisted in keeping the people in power, weapons and the foreign currency needed to purchase them from abroad, as well as the raw materials for our industry, would all be denied to Catalonia. And since losing the war meant losing everything and returning to a state like the one that prevailed in the Spain of Ferdinand VII,<sup>6</sup> and convinced that our achievements could not vanish simply because of the militarised armed corps and new economic life proposed by the central government, we quit the CCMA for the Defence Council of the Generalitat and other important departments of the autonomous government.

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<sup>6</sup> As will be seen in my introduction to volume II, these 'intellectuals' were largely proletarians educated within the structures of CNT reading groups and cultural associations and the anarchist athenaeums.

The Generalitat 'Council', or government, was made up as follows:

Prime Minister and Finance – Josep Tarradellas ( ERC)

Culture – Ventura Gassol ( ERC)

Internal Security – Artemi Aiguader<sup>7</sup> ( ERC)

Economy – Joan Fàbregas (CNT) Supply—Joan Domènech(CNT)

Health and Social Services – Antonio García Birlán (CNT)

Public Services – Joan Comorera (PSUC)

Labour and Public Works – Miguel Valdés<sup>8</sup> (PSUC)

Agriculture – Josep Calvet<sup>9</sup> (U de R)

Justice and Law – Andreu Nin (POUM)

Defence – Felipe Díaz Sandino (military adviser)

Without portfolio – Rafael Closas<sup>10</sup> ( Acció Catalana)

We believe it might be of interest to reproduce, albeit only in part due to its considerable length, the political declaration of this new Generalitat government with its CNT members.

What follows is the essence of that declaration:

... The Council's immediate programme is the following:

1. Concentration of the utmost effort on the war, omitting no means that may contribute to its speedy and victorious conclusion. Single command, co-ordination of all fighting units, creation of conscript militias and a tightening of discipline.

2 Economic reconstruction of the country, to which end there shall be immediate implementation of the programme of the Economic Council created by decree on 11 August last, to wit:

(a) Regularisation of production according to consumer needs.

(b) Control of foreign trade.

(c) Collectivisation of large rural estates and respect for agricultural smallholders.

(d) Partial devaluation of urban property by means of rents, or the establishment of equivalent rates where it may not be deemed beneficial to tenants.

(e) Collectivisation of large industries, public services and transportation services.

(f) Impoundment and collectivisation of establishments abandoned by their owners.

(g) Expansion of the cooperative system in the distribution of products and, above all, utilisation of the cooperative arrangements within larger distribution firms.

(h) Control of banking transactions until such time as banking is nationalised.

(i) Workers' control over private industries.

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<sup>7</sup> An Esquerra leader and brother of the Mayor of Barcelona, he was at the forefront of the drive to curb and confront popular power in the streets of Barcelona prior to the ' May Days' of 1937.

<sup>8</sup> A PSUC leader and member of the party's central committee.

<sup>9</sup> A Catalan sharecroppers' union leader who secretly joined the PSUC in the early months of the civil war.

<sup>10</sup> A respected Catalan republican.



(j) Strenuous measures to be taken to reabsorb unemployed workers into agriculture and industry. As a boost to agricultural production, whatever workers the new organisation of agricultural labour may accommodate are to return to the countryside. New industries are to be set up and Catalonia is to be fully electrified, etc.

(k) Speedy abolition of various indirect taxes.

3. Elevation of popular culture in all its many facets under the aegis of the New Unified School which shall ensure that, regardless of the privileges which have prevailed hitherto, every talented child may progress from primary through to further education. Culture in all its forms is also to be stimulated.

The needs of the war, the effective blockade to which we find ourselves subject and the difficulties thrown up by the social transformation currently under way, impose sacrifices which the labouring masses may bear if they are convinced that they are toiling for the creation of a new society and not the enrichment of the parasite classes. We have in our grasp the invincible weapon of a populace which knows that it is fighting for the sake of a better mankind. What that populace wants now is guidance, that its endeavours and aspirations be coordinated and united. The Council, which is there to satisfy this deep-seated popular aspiration, requests the collaboration and enthusiasm which is necessary just now and which it is confident will not be denied it. Unity under the aegis of trust, loyalty and sacrifice is indispensable. Unity is victory and victory is the glory of those who will have carved it out and spells a happier future for our children.

While we build a new order of things based on social justice in the rear-guard, at the front we shall banish our enemies from the soil of Aragón, offering to the other peoples of Iberia our aid in the battle against fascism and for an improved society wherein man's exploitation of his fellow man may be eliminated for all time.

The Council undertakes to respect and to assist the endeavours of Catalonia's productive artisans. As for the peasantry, their work will be stimulated and they need not worry about the division of land that they own and work by the sweat of their brows, though the Council will ruthlessly attack *latifundismo* through the expropriation of the big landowners hostile to the regime and the abolition of all taxes and obligations that oppress the peasantry.

Of the comments that arose from within the CNT and anarchist camp itself, the following paragraphs from an article by Urales are worth singling out for attention:

To say that the CNT and the anarchists are not politicians, but now wish to become politicians to claim a share in the management of the government machine, is like saying that we libertarians are to fulfil the role played in bourgeois society by the wage-earners: that of instruments, subordinates, slaves, of toilers who keep mum and suffer in silence before death. The anarchists were political before they sought a share in the destinies of Spain, namely when they grabbed their rifles to bring their influence to bear upon those destinies. And nobody threw that in their faces then. It is only proper that we should sacrifice ourselves on behalf of a cause which is for the

good of all. But it would be very stupid for us to sacrifice ourselves for a cause that benefited only one political faction. And we anarchists have shown that we may be many things, including exceedingly trusting individuals, but never fools...

Some time ago we said: better proletarian dictatorship than bourgeois dictatorship. Now we proclaim that an accommodation with those who, while not of us, are at least close to us is preferable to the triumph of fascism; and in saying that we are not addressing ourselves to the anarchists, but to all antifascists. We would do well to take on board the common peril and the mission that history has given the Spanish people. All antifascists must be worthy of this moment. The salvation of the world's liberties lies in our hands. We must rescue them with our hearts, our loyalty and our readiness to be accommodating, remembering the lesser evil is not the struggle between state communism and libertarianism, nor even the triumph of a federal republic leading to the common and collective possession of wealth, since this would lead to the victory of fascism, and for as long as the fascist threat remains, our actions must be directed unswervingly towards defeating it. (*Solidaridad Obrera*, 29 September 1936)

The establishment of the Generalitat government was accompanied by the disbandment of the CCMA. Of the contending dual authorities represented by the Generalitat and the CCMA, victory went to the former. According to the government declaration, this was quickly followed by a war of watchwords directed against the 'uncontrollables' [*incontrolados*], a label hung on those who resisted the directions of officialdom, a disciplined force and a single command.

An ambiguous dictum of Durruti's ('We renounce everything save victory') was repeated endlessly by the enemies of the revolution and transformed into a counter-revolutionary exhortation.

During those days of frantic politicking, Durruti had been in Barcelona and Madrid, where he lobbied the government concerning the urgent needs of the Aragón front. In the Spanish capital, then besieged by the rebel forces, Durruti declared to the Madrid press:

As for my column, I am satisfied with it. *We are making war and revolution simultaneously*. Revolutionary measures are being taken not just in Barcelona, but right up to the front. Each village we conquer embarks upon a revolutionary course. A defeat of my column would be quite awful, for our retreat would not be comparable to the retreat of any army: we should have to take with us all the inhabitants of the villages through which we have passed. From the front right back to Barcelona, there are only fighters along the route we have followed. Everyone works for the war and for the revolution: this is our strength.

As for discipline, as I see it this is nothing more than honouring one's own responsibility and that of others. I am against barrack-style discipline, but equally I am against the mistaken concept of freedom to which cowards habitually appeal to dodge the issue. In war, delegates should be obeyed, otherwise it's impossible to mount any operation. In my column, all the dodges from the "Great War" have been tried — the mother on her deathbed, the partner going into labour, the ailing child, failing eyesight, etc. But I have a health team which examines each case. Anyone found lying

knows that he faces a double ration with pick and shovel. Demoralising letters wind up in the wastepaper basket.

Anyone seeking to go home because he is along as a volunteer and is volunteering to go home, I send home on foot, with a piece of my mind ringing in their ears. Things hardly ever get that far. To be frank, I'm satisfied with the comrades who follow me. [Peirats's emphasis]

And since we are on the subject of Durruti, discipline and moral coercion, it is appropriate to reproduce a few lines from an article which appeared in Madrid's *Informaciones*<sup>11</sup> on 20 August 1936:

The place does not matter. It is one of the many littering the victorious route of the people in arms defending their liberties. Moments before setting out for fresh conquests, with nearly all the fighters assembled in the village square, some *milicianos* appear before Durruti escorting five of their colleagues under arrest. Someone caught these red-handed while stealing certain items. The value of the haul was slight, but the crime was all the more repugnant in that it had taken place in the humble home where the thieves had been billeted during their stay in the settlement. Eyes sparkling with fury and voice quivering with outrage at the baseness of the act, Durruti turned on the culprits:

"Hand over your weapons!" he snapped, and in the face of the trembling which ensued after the surrender, he went on: "Stand up straight! If you have been brave enough to steal, you will have to summon up the same bravery to die!"

The phrase struck the accused like a whip lash across the face. And in a unanimous movement, as if in obedience to a single order, they held their heads high and flung out their chests in a final gallant gesture to greet their deaths.

"This time, and this time only, you are forgiven. This must never happen again, for *milicianos* are not thieves!"

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<sup>11</sup> Established in 1922, this right-wing paper was confiscated by the UGT at the start of the civil war.

## CHAPTER TWELVE: The CNT in the government of the Republic

What of developments elsewhere in Spain? Madrid was beginning to write in blood a chapter of resistance that was to electrify the world. From the north, the news was sparse and dismal. Of Asturias we know little, save for the heroic feats of the miners around Oviedo. Aragón took the centre stage.

In mid-October it became known that a regional defence council composed entirely of Confederation members had been established in Fraga.<sup>1</sup> The council was made up as follows:

- President — Joaquín Ascaso<sup>2</sup>
- Justice and Public Order — Adolfo Ballano<sup>3</sup>
- Agriculture — José Mavilla<sup>4</sup>
- Information and Propaganda — Miguel Jiménez
- Transport and Trade — Francisco Ponzán<sup>5</sup>
- Public Instruction — José Alberola
- Economy and Supply — Adolfo Aznar
- Labour — Miguel Chueca<sup>6</sup>

The council, whose foundation was in line with recent CNT regional committee plenums, was not recognised by central government. The PCE labelled it parochial and seditious. Marxist columns sabotaged it by sowing confusion in the rearguard under its jurisdiction. Throughout the liberated zone, the Aragonese peasants conducted the most revolutionary experiment, backed

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<sup>1</sup> In a sense, it was precisely the ‘anarchist dictatorship’ that which most libertarians had balked at establishing in Catalonia.

<sup>2</sup> The cousin of Francisco Ascaso and pre-war leader of the Zaragoza anarchists. He joined the CNT as a teenager and was jailed briefly during the dictatorship before going into exile. Upon his return to Spain in 1931 he led the Zaragoza construction workers’ union, excelling in unemployed struggles.

<sup>3</sup> Born in Aragón, he moved to Barcelona in the twenties, where he was fully involved in the local anarchist movement. A publicist and journalist, he displayed individualistic–illegalist traits (he was detained in 1933 for his part in an armed robbery on a bar) while remaining within the orbit of the CNT- FAI.

<sup>4</sup> A teacher from Huesca, in 1937 he was jailed by Stalinists after the destruction of the Council of Aragón.

<sup>5</sup> A teacher and CNT- FAI activist, in 1937 he established a team specialising in espionage and guerrilla warfare behind Francoist lines. During World War Two the group continued its actions, fighting the Francoists and the Nazis in occupied France alike until, in 1943, he was arrested in France; the following year he was executed by a Nazi firing squad. See Antonio Téllez Solá, *The Anarchist Pimpernel: Francisco Ponzán Vidal (1936–44)*, Hastings, 1997.

<sup>6</sup> An outstanding CNT propagandist and organiser in thirties Aragón, editing the press and establishing new unions across the region.

up by CNT columns such as 'Durruti', 'Ascaso', 'Ortiz', 'Hilario-Zamona', 'Young Eagles' (*Aguiluchos*), 'Workers' Solidarity' (*Solidaridad Obrera*) and 'Red and Black' (*Rojinegro*). Later all these units were amalgamated in three famous army divisions — the 25th, 26th and 28th. The 27th and 29th were under the sway of the two Marxist groupings, the PSUC and the POUM, respectively.

The political backbiting unleashed in the Aragonese rearguard is reflected by the first manifesto from the regional council:

Regional Defence Council of Aragón. General ordinance. With exceptional frequency protests are reaching us from the villages regarding acts perpetrated by certain columns or fractions thereof. This council feels obliged to nip these factional outrages in the bud, our object being first and foremost to ensure that the Aragonese peasants, who today feel pride at the effective contribution made to their liberation by their antifascist comrades, do not find this comradely affection turned into hatred by misplaced political conduct. And secondly, because the Regional Defence Council cannot, by virtue of the mandate conferred upon it by the vast majority of Aragón, tolerate trespasses against Aragonese rights and our unchallengeable entitlement to govern ourselves in accordance with our traditions and political and economic temperament, while never losing sight of our responsibilities in the popular antifascist struggle for liberation.

In a gravely mistaken way, which demonstrated an ignorance of the free spirit displayed by the Aragonese people through the centuries, certain column commanders of a specific political persuasion persist in conducting themselves in our region as if they were on captured terrain facing an internal and an external enemy. Consequently, these commanders impose political and social norms wholly at odds with the will of our people, who, with the consent of all their fellow-inhabitants, have prescribed social norms attuned to the transformation being carried out by the antifascist struggle in Spain.

Committees freely elected by the popular vote are deposed; men who give their lives for the revolution are disarmed; threats are issued of shootings, imprisonment and corporal punishment; and, by way of corollary, new committees are imposed, tailor-made in the image of the political creed responsible for these outrageous acts. It has been affirmed that anyone returning to contravene their orders will feel the brunt of armed force. The terror dispels the noble aspirations which sparked off the grand struggle of a people determined to rediscover the liberty that had so long been trampled underfoot by tricksters and bigwigs and conjures up counter-revolution in the service of a party with absolutist ambitions.

Another factor, every bit as serious and full of implications as the one outlined above, impels us to make public this edict-decree. Requisitions of food-stuffs, livestock and items of all sorts occur in a lunatic and unsupervised fashion, without the slightest heed being taken of the barest needs of the village. Such an absurdity can only bring ruination.

Nobody, and the columns themselves are best placed to confirm this claim, has encountered any opposition from the peasants and the general populace of Aragón to allowing the militias that which they need to prosecute the cruel struggle in which

they are engaged. Without needing to ask or demand it, the militias have had all of their needs met voluntarily. Since this incontrovertible act roundly testifies to the fervent desire of Aragón to see the swift triumph of the revolution, requisitioning has no justification, not even as a wartime measure, and it must end, both at the front and at the rear, for our people is the ally of the army of liberation.

Today Aragón should be planting but, like in other regions, there is no seed, no money and no machinery for that purpose. If these things are to be procured, we need money or tradable goods and, having neither the one nor the other, the outlook is bleak, not merely for the people of Aragón but for all Spaniards fighting for a better society. With no appreciation of the needs of tomorrow, systematic ruin will befall living, breathing villages, which will be full of hatred and bitterness.

So, watchful, as we said, lest the interests commended to us be defended with less efficiency than they deserve, we draw the attention of column commanders to, and expect of these, the following:

1. That all applications for items of basic necessity, livestock and equipment and other items be forwarded directly to this council which will comply in so far as the capabilities of the region allow. Meanwhile sporadic acts of requisitioning, whoever might be the authors, will be strenuously disowned, except in circumstances of extreme urgency which preclude adherence to the normal channels established by this council.
2. That antifascist columns must not interfere in the socio-political life of a village which is, *per se*, and by virtue of its own authority, free.

And, so that the villages and their committees know the procedures to adopt and the line to follow, we hereby decree:

1. Without prior authority from the appropriate department of this council, none of the weapons in the villages may be given up, nor shall the removal of the current committees be accepted, until such time as the council may finalise and determine new ones.
2. In so far as it lies within the power of the villages affected, they shall refuse any requisition of produce, livestock or goods that is not endorsed by the pertinent department of the council, though agreeing in cases of extreme urgency on condition that such requisitions be carried out with the signed and sealed authority of the column commander.
3. Instances in breach of these provisions are to be reported speedily to the Regional Defence Council, together with the identity of the person or persons involved.

We hope that everyone will comply with the above, thereby averting the paradoxical and dismal circumstance of a free people despising its liberty and its liberators. And the no less dismal spectacle of a people utterly ruined by the revolution of which it has always dreamed.

On behalf of the Regional Defence Council of Aragón: the president, Joaquín Ascaso.  
Fraga, October 1936.

Early in the month of November (we are putting chronological order to one side here, so as to set out the subsequent evolution of the Council of Aragón), Ascaso made a trip to Madrid to deliver the following document to the head of the central government:

*Defence Council of Aragón. Reasons for its foundation.* The abnormal circumstances in which Aragón finds itself have made us aware of the urgent necessity to create an organism to oversee social, economic and political activities in the area.

The non-existence of civil government, provincial council and all the organs capable of overseeing the activities of the three Aragonese provinces, along with the occupation of part of this region by columns, some of which are not subject to any real discipline, have given rise to a chaotic situation which threatens to bring economic ruin to this territory and the subsequent demoralisation of the rearguard. The inevitable consequence of this is the establishment of a body capable of assuming all the public tasks formerly performed by the bodies which have now disappeared, a body with a structure and a procedure attuned to the realities of the moment. Today, the creation of that body enjoys the full consent of the liberal populace of Aragón and of all the trade union and political forces fighting fascism. And this council, which must represent all these social and political sectors, seeks the endorsement of the government of the Republic in order to operate with maximum authority. To this end, we set forth, in this text, its aims and objectives.

To begin with, we have an elementary duty to place on record that this council was established from a pronounced sense of solidarity with the common struggle of today and with the reconstruction work which lies ahead. Therefore it must express wholeheartedly its absolute identification with the government of the Republic and its staunch determination to ensure compliance with every ordinance which may emanate from it.

The structure of the council has been worked out by agreement with all the Popular Front parties and the trade union bodies. The council will take charge of:

1. The duties and powers pertaining to civil governors and provincial councils.
2. Those duties and powers delegated to it by central government.
3. Those tasks imposed by the abnormal circumstances through which the region is passing and which it can best accomplish.

The council shall have as its specific objectives:

1. The maintenance of public order, taking every measure to prevent abuses and unlawful acts by irresponsible groups.
2. To aid the economic reconstruction of industry and agriculture throughout the liberated zone.
3. To improve, with all possible means, the effectiveness of the forces fighting for the liberty of the peoples of Spain.

To this last end, a delegate from the council will be appointed to the high command of the Aragón front.

This council will control a special force to exercise due vigilance over public order, without this precluding its deployment on the fronts should the need arise.

Once normality has been restored in Aragón, the council intends to submit both its own conduct and the socio-political future of the people for approval by plebiscite

With the aforementioned objectives and with the greatest respect for the government of the Republic, this council, in accordance with the wishes of the Aragonese people and in close concert with the official representatives of its sister regions, will campaign for social justice and liberty against the fascist treachery.

On behalf of the antifascist forces represented on the Aragón Defence Council: the President, Joaquín Ascaso.

Madrid, 31 October 1936.

Following protracted negotiations, the council was not officially recognised until 17 December, and then it was conditional upon a broadening of its base. This is how it was eventually constituted:

President – Joaquín Ascaso (CNT)  
Information and Propaganda – Evanisto Viñuales (CNT)  
Public Order – Adolfo Ballano (CNT)  
Agriculture – Adolfo Arnal (CNT)  
Labour – Miguel Chueca (CNT)  
Transport and Communications – Luis Montoliu (CNT)  
Economy and Supply – Evelio Martínez (CNT)  
Justice – Ignacio Mantecón (Republican Left)  
Finance – Jesús Gracia (Republican Left)  
Culture – Manuel Latorre (UGT)  
Public Works – José Ruiz Borao (UGT)  
Health and Social Services – José Duque (PCE)  
Industry and Trade – Custodio Peñarrocha (PCE)  
Secretary-General – Benito Pavón (Syndicalist Party)

Around this time the press carried reports of the foundation of the Asturian Regional Council, which was made up as follows:

War and Trade – PSOE  
Industry and Social Services – CNT  
Labour – FAI



Health – JJ.LL

Finance and Justice – JSU

Public Works and Propaganda – Republican Left

Agriculture and Public Instruction – PCE

Communications and Naval Affairs – Republican Union

On 2 October, as the new central government was making its maiden address to parliament, the home-rule statute for the Basque Country was approved:

With Alava, Guipúzcoa and Navarre in the enemy's hands and its armies threatening the very borders of Vizcaya, the people's representatives gathered in Guernica, the ancient political capital, elected me president of the Basques on 7 October 1936. Europe's most ancient people thereafter had a prime minister aged 32 years, as if to show that nations are not as ancient as their years when faith and hope keep them young.<sup>7</sup>

In the Basque government, José Antonio Aguirre<sup>8</sup> shared power with five centrist nationalists, a left-wing nationalist, three socialists, a member of the PCE and a representative of the Republican Left. The CNT's repeated applications for inclusion in the Basque cabinet were never heeded.

October 22 saw a reshuffle in Barcelona's city council. The militants Vicente Pérez Combina,<sup>9</sup> Antonio Muñoz,<sup>10</sup> Jaume Aragó,<sup>11</sup> Juan Puig Elías, Vicente Barriendos,<sup>12</sup> Jaume Magriñá,<sup>13</sup> Majín Cabruja,<sup>14</sup> Ponciano Alonso<sup>15</sup> and Alexandre Gilabert were included to represent the CNT. The newspapers on 2 October reported the inclusion of seven CNT councillors in Alicante city council.

On 25 October, the basis for an agreement on unity of action between the CNT, the UGT, the FAI and the PSUC in Catalonia was made public. These are the fundamental articles of the pact:

*Pact agreed by the undersigned organisations as the basis for immediate concerted action:*

1. We formally undertake to comply with the resolutions and decisions of the Generalitat, bringing all our influence and organisational resources to bear to facilitate their implementation.
2. We support collectivisation of the means of production, which is to say, the uncompensated expropriation of the capitalists and the transfer of ownership to the

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<sup>7</sup> José Antonio Aguirre, *De Guernica a Nueva York pasando por Berlin*, Buenos Aires, 1944.

<sup>8</sup> A bourgeois-nationalist leader, hostile to the CNT.

<sup>9</sup> Veteran *cenetista* and *faísta* and close ally of Durruti.

<sup>10</sup> A shoemaker and one-time treasurer to the Barcelona CNT local federation.

<sup>11</sup> A Barcelona *cenetista*.

<sup>12</sup> Secretary to the Barcelona CNT local federation.

<sup>13</sup> A longstanding Barcelona CNT activist.

<sup>14</sup> A Barcelona FAI activist.

<sup>15</sup> Active in the CNT Transport Union, FAI and JJ.LL, he was a propagandist and later member of the dissident anarchist Amigos de Durruti, which called upon the CNT- FAI to break with democratic collaboration and embark upon a new revolutionary offensive.

collective. We support collectivisation of everything which may be essential to the interests of the war. Our understanding is that this collectivisation will fail to produce the desired results unless overseen and orchestrated by a body genuinely representative of the collectivity which, in this instance, can be none other than the Generalitat, on which all social forces are represented. With regard to small industry, we do not advocate collectivisation here except in cases of rebellion by owners or of urgent war needs. Wheresoever small industry may be collectivised for reasons of war, the expropriated owners are to be compensated in such a way as to ensure their livelihoods, by means of their personal or professional contribution in the collectivised sector.

In the event of collectivisation of foreign undertakings, a compensation formula shall be agreed which is equal to the total capital.

3. We are in agreement with the general municipalisation of housing and of small urban properties. The municipalities will be empowered to fix rents in those properties exempted from municipalisation.

4. We are agreed upon the marshalling of the utmost effort to contribute to complete victory in the war, and to this end advocate a single command to orchestrate the actions of all fighting units, the introduction of conscripted militias converted into a great people's army and the strengthening of discipline, all of which is to be complemented by the creation of a great war industry to meet the needs of the same. The format of said industry shall be determined by agreement between the labour organisations CNT and UGT and the Finance, Economy and Defence Ministries of the Generalitat.

5. Production must match consumer requirements as determined by the war situation in which we find ourselves.

6. Bearing in mind the importance of foreign trade, it is our opinion that it should be closely monitored and regulated by organs set up by the Generalitat.

7. Land ownership is vested in the corporation and we guarantee the rights of individual tillage of those who are unprepared to work it collectively. The sale, exchange and acquisition of produce will be effected by the farming unions.

8. We recommend the adaptation of cooperatives to the collective arrangement, though this ought not to lead to the elimination of the small trader, since that might be economically inadvisable until such time as the distributive organisation has been perfected.

9. We recommend nationalisation of banking and worker supervision of banking operations under the auspices of the finance minister of the Generalitat and based on staff committees.

10. We agree with worker supervision in private industry, without this implying coercion of small industry.

11. We believe that the entire financial and fiscal policy of the Generalitat should be geared exclusively to the primary objective of winning the war.

12. Elevation of popular culture in all of its multifarious facets under the aegis of the New Unified School.

13. We advocate the creation of a basis for political, economic and military cooperation with the government of Spain when all the organisations that we represent have a place in it.

14. We recommend freedom of unionisation and concerted action to stamp out all coercion.

15. We agree upon common action to stamp out the harmful activities of uncontrollable groups which, either from misunderstanding or from malice, threaten the implementation of this programme.

Antoni Sesé and Rafael Vidiella,<sup>16</sup> UGT regional committee; Felipe García,<sup>17</sup> PSUC; Manuel Escorza<sup>18</sup> and Dionisio Eroles,<sup>19</sup> CNT regional committee; Pedro Herrera, FAI. 22 October 1936.

To seal the points of this programme, a monster rally was held on 27 October in the Monumental bullring and it was addressed by Sesé, Montseny, Comorera and 'Marianet'. The Soviet consul, Vladimir Antonov Ovseenko,<sup>20</sup> also said a few words to the public.

A few days later a decree on the 'Collectivisations of Industry and Trade and the Monitoring of Private Undertakings', about which we will say more later, was published.

As background to the political event that was soon to ensue, we cite the substance of an address given on *Radio CNT-FAI* by Peiró on 23 October. The words of this long-standing militant offer an obvious example of the political evolution upon which the confederal and anarchists movements had embarked:

... And when living amid a bloody civil war, having embarked upon a social revolution that promises emancipation and redemption from our shameful past, it would be most disastrous were we to forget that success in the war and the revolution do not depend on this or that political and trade union faction. Rather, our triumph hinges on the entire people, which, welcoming this horrible convulsion as if it were a new Jordan redeeming them from their past of ignominy, has seized their weapons to crush once and for all everything in Spain which held us in the condition of a primitive, atavistic people.

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<sup>16</sup> A printer and trade unionist, he was frequently blacklisted, which led him to travel widely throughout Spain. Active in the CNT during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, he later joined the PSOE and the UGT, supporting the *caballerista* wing. In July 1936 he was an enthusiastic founder member of the PSUC. During the civil war he was responsible for internal security and sat in the Catalan government. Elected president of the Catalan UGT in 1937, he went into exile in 1939.

<sup>17</sup> A PSUC central committee member.

<sup>18</sup> A veteran figure from the CNT-FAI and leading anarchist youth organiser, during the civil war he organised security for the CNT and established private jails for the organisation's enemies.

<sup>19</sup> A seasoned action group member and activist in the 'Nosotros' group before the civil war, after May 1937 he became secretary of the Catalan CRT.

<sup>20</sup> Son of an aristocrat, he was a close ally of Trotsky and a participant in the 1917 revolution. He remained in Spain until 1938 and played an active role in the 1937 'May Days'. Upon his return to Moscow he was accused and found guilty of 'Trotskyism' and executed.

Being disposed to call a spade a spade, I wish to stress that those who talk about immediately installing certain daring socio-economic transformations are good friends whose *bona fides* I do not question. But they are friends who forget that the capitalist system, no matter where, has international ramifications and that our success in this war is very much dependent upon the warmth, fellowship and support which may reach us from abroad. And these friends also forget that the peoples of Iberia, just like the peoples who make up other countries, comprise a mosaic of temperaments and psychologies and are peoples whose mentalities bespeak a spiritual difference whose roots we can discover, if we do but look for them, in ethical, moral, economic considerations.

In 1931, the republicans and socialists were unable to plot the path required by the revolution and it will be hard for them to plot it today, because the beat of revolution and war signals that the time for politics has gone and we are now embarked upon the cycle of socio-economic transformations.

But, comrade anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists from all the lands of Iberia: if the republicans and socialists lack the moral authority to plot the way ahead for our revolution, we accept this responsibility because even now the CNT and the FAI have given ample proof of their lofty sense of deliberation, equanimity and boundless generosity, spiritual values essential in the brains which are to oversee a new world. The war's end will lead to a transitional arrangement, and will do so because there is no other more rational, more logical or more just course, because our sense of justice on this occasion cannot be dis severed from the straight and narrow path of the law of rewards. If we all make our contribution to success in the war, then it is only fair that we all should share in the fruits of the revolution. What does compromise matter, if compromise be now the only way to triumph?

In my own view, my brothers of all the peoples of Iberia, the transitional arrangement best suited to the circumstances created by the war and the revolution is a socialist federal republic. I would ask anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist comrades not to be shocked by the label "socialist". We are all socialists, those who use that name as well as the anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists. What cannot be claimed is that we are all federalists. And what matters now is that in any socialist or socialistic republic there be acceptance of the federalist precepts which allow people the freedom to govern themselves in the broadest sense of the term, since in those federalist precepts we may, each and every one of us, find the necessary scope to try out our political, economic and social ideas, allowing for experiments ranging from bourgeois democracy through to libertarian communism.

Why this transitional regime you ask me? My answer is that, having agreed to cooperate with other proletarian factions whose socio-economic views differ from ours, it would be neither fair nor noble if, at the conclusion of a common endeavour, we were to try to impose our beliefs through violence, just as we anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists would deem it unfair and ignoble of others to attempt to foist theirs upon us by the same means. That is an ineluctable moral consideration.

On the other hand, when the war ends in victory, the people will find itself faced with the continued existence of private ownership and the capitalist system. It follows that there will be a lot of industrial firms built on foreign capital and still extant, and the most elementary instinct of self-preservation will prompt us not to trespass against these private interests, since this would bring international interference in Spanish public affairs, if not an armed attack by those capitalist powers with interests in our country.

The socialist federal republic, comrade anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists, must be founded upon the basis of complete freedom for the municipalities, and the interconnecting links between these will be economic federalism, from which the most fulsome and lofty moral and economic fellowship will ensue. The interests of all the municipalities may even be amalgamated should circumstances so require. Consequently, with the municipalities of this socialist federal republic being completely free, each one of them will also be free to espouse whichever socialist tendency best suits its aspirations and prospects. What does it matter to us anarchists and revolutionary syndicalists that in the villages in which we form the minority we might face a regime of bourgeois democracy or a socialism of the statist variety, just so long as we can exercise the right to live in a socio-economic style more consonant with our aspirations, perhaps even outright libertarian communism? Why should we care, if this be the case, especially since we would still have the hope that the excellence of our system will win over villages beyond our ideological influence?

The socialist federal republic can embrace this diversity of attitudes and systems, because its doctrinal outlook starts from the principle that the primary foundation of the coexistence of peoples lies in their economic relations and, to a greater degree than whim or any sentimental bond of human fellowship, such relations are determined by the collective needs that impel people to seek each other out and build up relationships with one another. And it follows from this that the diversity of economic and social systems does not imply any impediment to the unity of the relationships.

Clearly, the coexistence of peoples also rests upon other foundations of moral and intellectual interplay: but the primary foundation, I insist, is the economic relationships, since these precede any intercourse or a moral, scientific, artistic or literary nature.

What matters, and what presently takes priority over everything else, is that we and others are capable of compromise on a basis of mutual understanding. And if the Spanish proletariat can but show this spirit of compromise, which is, in any case, required by the uniquely historic times in which we live, then the socialist federal republic will have to suffice for us all as our starting-point for the constructive revolutionary tasks.

The war of collectivisation which has been initiated will be able to proceed, though a portion of it will have to be reviewed and amended in so far as it is not consonant with any collectivist precept nor principle of socialisation; it may turn out that new, daring and unforeseeable ventures of a socio-economic nature (or if one prefers, of

an economic-industrial nature) come to pass: but what is certain, and what will take precedence over everything, is that insurmountable convulsion that reality will force upon us. Woe to those who may attempt to overcome it by violence, for they will have the immeasurable responsibility for having aborted everything. And the triumph of the people in this criminal war, this war in which the people squanders its blood in torrents, this cannot be frustrated by anyone, no matter how sublime their intentions. Imagine what should become of the sod of Iberia were fascism by some chance to be triumphant. It would be one immense cemetery. Victory for the villainous hordes would set Spain – now only beginning to achieve dignity – back perhaps a whole century.

No matter how great may be the lack of perception of the potential of this unique hour in our history, and no matter how great may be what is to an extent the natural lack of understanding in the proletarian multitudes, nothing must ease fascism's triumph, as this is synonymous with humiliation, indignity, slavery and death.

At 10.30 pm on 4 November, the prime minister issued a memorandum reporting a reshuffle of his cabinet and the inclusion of four ministers from the CNT. The text of that memorandum was as follows:

Being of the opinion that at the present moment all of the forces fighting against fascism ought to have a share in the responsibilities of government and be directly represented in positions of authority, the prime minister has advised the head of state to broaden the government by giving representation to the CNT. Having gained the acceptance of his excellency the president of the Republic, the prime minister immediately reshuffled his Council of Ministers. The political outlook and the programme of the newly reformed government shall remain as they have been hitherto. The formation of the government is as follows:

Premier and War Minister – Francisco Largo Caballero (PSOE)

Minister of State – Julio Alvarez del Vayo<sup>21</sup> (PSOE)

Naval and Air Minister – Indalecio Prieto (PSOE)

Finance – Juan Negrín<sup>22</sup> (PSOE)

Public Instruction – Jesús Hernández<sup>23</sup> (PCE)

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<sup>21</sup> A leading intellectual supporter of the *caballerista* wing of the PSOE, he became pro-Stalinist, favouring the fusion of socialist and communist youth movements. From September 1936 to May 1937 and from April 1938 to March 1939 he was Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. In exile he led the pro-Stalinist wing of the PSOE, before flirting with Maoism.

<sup>22</sup> A physician, university lecturer and moderate socialist, he took the decision to send Spain's gold reserves to Moscow in September–October 1936. An acceptable face for the west, he became prime minister during 1937–9, during which time Soviet influence grew massively in Spain. Following the 'May Days' of 1937 he covered up Stalinist terror in the republican zone. He went into exile at the end of the civil war.

<sup>23</sup> Son of peasants, he joined the PCE in 1921, learning to read and write during a five-year spell in jail. In 1931 he studied in the Leninist School in Moscow, joining the PCE Politburo a year later and becoming chief editor of *Mundo Obrero*. His opposition to Largo Caballero provoked the ministerial crisis in May 1937 and the creation of the Negrín government. A commissar in the republican army 1938, when the civil war ended he went into exile in the USSR and

Justice — Juan García Oliver (CNT)  
Interior — Ángel Galarza (PSOE)  
Agriculture — Vicente Uribe (PCE)  
Labour — Anastasio de Gracia<sup>24</sup> (PSOE)  
Public Works — Julio Just<sup>25</sup> (Republican)  
Communications — Bernardo Giner de los Ríos<sup>26</sup> (Republican)  
Industry—Joan Peiró(CNT)  
Trade — Joan López (CNT)  
Health — Federica Montseny (CNT)  
Propaganda — Carles Esplà (Republican)  
Ministers without portfolio — José Giral<sup>27</sup> (Republican) Manuel Irujo<sup>28</sup> (PNV) Jaume Aiguader ( ERC)

In point of fact, the ministries allotted to the CNT numbered only two, for industry and trade had been two branches of a single department. As for health, it had always been classified simply as a general inspectorate [*dirección general*]. So the portfolios awarded to the CNT were only justice and industry with trade. By contrast, look at the importance of the reshuffle where the PSOE, the PCE and parties within the orthodox communist orbit were concerned. Then again, with the CNT ministers so heavily outnumbered, there was no ground for high hopes as to effectiveness and influence.

Nonetheless, the CNT press promptly surrendered to an over-inflated optimism. In its edition of 4 November, Barcelona's *Solidaridad Obrera* carried the following commentary:

The entry of the CNT into the central government represents one of the most momentous events in this country's political history. As a matter of principle and conviction, the CNT has at all times been anti-statist and hostile to all forms of government. Circumstances beyond our control have, however, transformed the nature of the government and the Spanish state. At present, the government has ceased to be an oppressive, anti-working class force, just as the state no longer preserves class divisions in society. And with the CNT's entry into them, both will oppress the people even less. The labour organisations will curtail the functions of state to the orchestration of the country's economic and social affairs. And the government will have no preoccupation other than the proper management of the war and wider coordination of the work of revolution. Our comrades shall present the government with the collective and majority decisions of the toiling masses as agreed at huge general

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then Mexico. Expelled from the PCE in 1943, he wrote *La Grande Trahison* in which he detailed Soviet machinations against the POUM and the murder of Nin.

<sup>24</sup> A moderate socialist and supporter of Prieto.

<sup>25</sup> A left republican.

<sup>26</sup> A moderate republican.

<sup>27</sup> A left republican.

<sup>28</sup> A bourgeois nationalist, he later denounced the murder of Andreu Nin by Stalinists.

assemblies. They will espouse no personal or whimsical objectives but rather the decisions freely reached by the hundreds of thousands of workers organised in the CNT. There is a historical necessity hanging over everything. And the CNT accepts that historical necessity in order to serve the country, with the emphasis on winning the war promptly so to avoid the disfigurement of the popular revolution. We have absolute confidence that the comrades chosen to represent the CNT in the government will be able to accomplish the mission entrusted to them. In them we should not see the individual personalities but the organisation which they represent. They are neither governors nor statesmen, but warriors and revolutionaries in the service of antifascism, a cause which requires our support if it is to achieve a speedy and complete triumph.

Were all of the militants of the same mind? Did this new stance by the CNT enjoy the support of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists internationally? Excepting some vocal minorities which expressed their protests in their press organs and through committees, gatherings, plenums and assemblies, the dismal truth is that the bulk of the membership was in thrall to a certain fatalism which was itself a direct consequence of the tragic realities of the war.

As far as international anarchism is concerned, its diatribes against governmental anarchism reached violent extremes. There was no shortage, however, of reasoned argument or of friendly voices which grasped the mentality of the people involved in these tragic circumstances and which had the virtue of hardening the deep, unflinching convictions with which they were grappling. One of the firmest, most sincere and most generous-minded rebukes came from Sébastien Faure.

This famous French anarchist visited Spain during the early months of the revolution. Some of his lectures received a huge welcome. Amid the ensuing criticisms and stormy debates following the decision of the CNT to participate in the government, Faure spelled out his position in the French libertarian press as follows:

My thoughts are with our friends in Spain, and particularly with García Oliver and Montseny. I have in mind the recent Paris conference at which these two representatives of the CNT- FAI offered explanations and disclosed information. Both have had recourse to their magnificent powers of eloquence to enlighten us in certain particulars and to explain the range of circumstances which, they claim, have, so to speak, obliged them perforce to accept the offer of ministerial participation. With the liveliest of attention I read and re-read the verbatim text of everything that they said in the latest issue of *Le Libertaire*. However faithful and accurate it may be, the translation of their words fails to convey to the reader the undertones of ardour and honesty emanating irrepressibly from their speeches. But the text is available and that is the essential point. It would be an injustice not to acknowledge that tragic events, dramatic circumstances and the numerous and often contradictory needs of action have obliged our friends to make extreme decisions which, through what is in part a natural bias, have gradually, but with increasingly implacable logic, compelled them to occupy government posts and to shoulder the responsibility which is consequent upon these.



I am not sitting in judgement. I find the practice of any such judgement repugnant and I ask the friends of the CNT-FAI who approved the move of our comrades García Oliver and Montseny, and those two comrades themselves, not to construe what I say as condemnation, as this would be unjustified and improper. My nature, plus my experience of beings and things, inclines me towards indulgence and, borrowing the words of Madame Staël, let me say “To understand all is to forgive all.”

I understand perfectly the drama which has been played out in Spain for a year past: beset by incessant dangers and thousands of adverse circumstances, compelled to fight upon two fronts — the war and the revolution — in short, faced with this exceedingly tough, bitter and difficult battle. As I say, I understand how our dear comrades may have committed some error. I do not imagine that anyone is sufficiently self-assured to avoid mistakes. So I shall take great care not to cast the first stone at anyone, especially since the commission of an error does not imply the gravity of culpability; it is only human. Blame comes into it only when one persists in the error; this means that culpability begins when we cling to it, when we refuse to acknowledge the error of our ways.

Well now, I hope that our brothers from across the Pyrenees will permit me to tell them, in an amicable and brotherly way that, as I see it, they have — thoughtlessly I am sure — committed a serious error in not turning down the perfidious offer made to them of a minister’s portfolio. This is the initial error which brought all of the others in its wake. That painful surrender (I choose to believe that entry into the government was looked upon by them as a sacrifice forced upon them by the circumstances) was the source of all the errors which followed. This is what I was getting at earlier when I wrote that, by means of a natural bias, our friends had accepted the posts, functions and responsibility and were gradually caught up and irresistibly obliged to conduct themselves in the manner of those who, upon assuming a ministerial post, turn into yet another of the essential cogs of the state.

For a politician who belongs to a political faction to agree to join a cabinet of ministers, that this should be his ambition, that he should seek this honour and pursue these advantages is only too natural. Such a man plays his card, takes his “chance” and rushes headlong down the path indicated, and will take great care not to let the opportunity slip. But that an anarcho-syndicalist or an anarchist should accept a ministerial post is a very different matter. Upon his banners in huge letters, the anarcho-syndicalist has inscribed: “Death to the state”. The anarchist has written on his in fiery letters: “Death to authority”. Both are linked by a clear and specific programme founded upon clear and specific principles. Nothing and no one compels them to espouse those principles. With total independence and full knowledge of cause, and in a thoughtful way, they have subscribed to these principles; they have championed, propagated and espoused this programme.

That being the case, my contention is that the anarcho-syndicalists cannot link up with those whose mission is to guide the chariot of state, since they are convinced that this chariot, “this famed chariot”, absolutely has to be destroyed. And I say that

anarchists have a duty to repudiate every authoritarian position so that they are thoroughly persuaded of the necessity of destroying all authority.

There will be no shortage of people who may protest that, in reasoning thus, I am taking account only of principles, and that, many a time, circumstances, the facts, that which is vulgarly described as “reality”, contradicts principles and makes it necessary for those who take love of and respect for principles to lengths of religiosity to set these aside temporarily, only to revert to their former standpoint just as soon as fresh “realities” make such a reversion possible. I understand the objection and this is my reply.

First. One of two things: if reality contradicts principles then it is because the latter are false, and in this case we should waste no time in jettisoning them; we ought to have the decency to admit their falseness publicly and we should have the integrity to expend as much zeal and activity upon refuting them as we did upon their defence. And similarly we should, without delay, begin the search for more solid, more accurate, and more infallible principles.

If, on the other hand, the principles upon which our ideology and tactics rest retain all of their consistency, no matter what the facts may be, and are as valuable today as they were yesterday, then in this case, we ought to keep faith with them. To depart — albeit in exceptional circumstances and briefly — from the line of conduct marked out for us by our principles is to commit an error and an act of dangerous imprudence. To persist in that error is tantamount to committing a fault, the consequences of which lead gradually to temporary abandonment of principles and, driven from one concession to another, to the definitive abandonment of them. Once again this is the mechanism, the bias which can take us to great lengths.

Second. If we attempt to draw and apply the precious lessons contained within the experiment attempted by our Catalan comrades, we see that far from compromising the firmness of our principles and weakening and destroying their correctness, what is actually demonstrated is the correctness and robustness of our principles. The CNT and FAI are still powerful in Spain. They still enjoy considerable prestige and an influence over the proletariat of city and countryside, the power of which no one would reasonably dispute.

Do our friends from Spain and abroad believe that the ministerial experience of which I speak has bolstered their power, prestige and influence? Or do they take the contrary view, that these have been undermined?

For the sake of impartiality, let us set aside everything which does not come under the heading of the facts: and let us stick, in so far as this may be possible, solely to objective reality; let us open our eyes, and, above every other consideration, let us look no further than reality. For my own part (and I know, having been told as much, that there are many who share my view) I have to say that the CNT and FAI have not profited by one iota from this experiment with ministerial portfolios. Indeed, to my mind, they have lost much. Let us not indulge in exaggeration. Let us not speak of renegades and betrayals; it is not a question of these, but rather of a tactic and a

deed whose practical consequences we are examining. So let us proceed by way of looking at the evidence.

To begin with, it is beyond question that, whereas effective participation in central authority has had the approval of the majority within the unions and in the groups affiliated to the FAI, that decision has in many places encountered the opposition of a fairly substantial minority. Thus, there has been no unanimity. The internal unity which obtained in each of these organisations has not broken down, nor has there been any split, but it is shaky. The close bond which has united the CNT-FAI for years past has not snapped, but it has been loosened. Two schools of opinion have come into existence and the moral authority, not to say the material vigour of the great union confederation and the anarchist federation alike, has incontrovertibly borne the brunt of the clash between those two contending schools of thought.

Second, and conversely, those political parties called upon to act in a ministerial capacity alongside the delegates from the mass of workers and peasants have palpably increased their influence: they have strengthened the positions they previously held and captured new ones. And on the basis of official implementation of the reformist and collaborationist techniques which are second nature to them, they have countered and gradually threatened the spirit of revolutionary class struggle and the method of direct action which logically derive from that spirit.

Third, the mentality and usages to which the federalist organisation of the CNT and the FAI had logically directed and automatically acclimatised the labouring masses have been noticeably impaired as a result of the introduction of their most prominent representatives into the essentially centralised councils of government.

The axis of the action to be carried into effect — the axis of the battle to be fought and the decisions to be taken and imposed, and even the responsibilities to be asserted — has ipso facto and logically and automatically been dislocated. The impulse no longer emanates from the base but from the upper echelon; guidelines do not emanate from the masses but from the leadership.

I think that these facts cannot be denied and that they are more than enough to show that far from having aided the Spanish libertarian movement, participation at ministerial level has worked to its detriment in every respect. Again let me say that I am not questioning the personal intentions of friends who, under the lash of dramatic circumstances, the exceptional nature of which is not unknown to me, have sought to be of service to the cause to which they have given body and soul. I cast no aspersions upon their integrity, but I shall demonstrate, by means of the very error into which they have fallen and of the consequences thereof, the intangible robustness of the principles upon which our ideology and our tactics are founded. I want further to bring to the attention of anarcho-syndicalists and anarchists everywhere the viability of those principles, the necessity of keeping faith with them, and the many grave perils implicit from them whatever the circumstances may be. In short, and above all, I believe that, from the foregoing observations, we have to draw the precious lessons destined to spare us the false manoeuvres whose upshot would be to slow

and to impair our progress towards our desired end, and even to induce us to turn our backs upon our goal.

Resolutely, anarchists have waged a battle without quarter against everything and against everybody; they are resolved to press on with it, unstinting, until victory is achieved. This struggle implies, on the one hand, what needs doing, come what may; and, on the other, that which ought never to be done, under any circumstances. I am not unaware that it is not always feasible to do what necessarily should be done; but I know that there are things which it is absolutely essential ought never to be done.

The Spanish experiment can and ought to be a lesson to us. This experiment ought to put us on our guard against the danger of concessions and alliances, even though these may be strictly conditional and of limited duration to boot. To say that all concessions weaken those who make them and strengthen those who are on the receiving end of them is to speak an incontrovertible truth. To claim that any compact, however temporary, agreed between anarchists and a political party is both theoretically and practically anti-anarchist reflects the degree to which anarchists have always been the victims, a truth borne out by experience, by history and by simple logic. In the course of their dalliance with authoritarians, the loyalty and integrity of the anarchists are continually fouled by the perfidy and wiles of their temporary and circumstantial allies.

Does this mean that I am advocating the ivory tower or complete isolation? Not at all! Why should one? Because anarchism long ago ceased to be a purely idealistic movement of merely philosophical and sheer sentimental speculation. Anarchism is a social and historical movement with deep roots in the soil of reality. Its growth and dynamism are closely bound up with the contingencies surrounding it — and it ought to make its contribution to their development, so that it may forge as far ahead as possible with its own progress and gains.

The objectives of anarchism are the right ones: its principles are rigid and inflexible; its sphere of action is immense and, by virtue of its very plasticity, it can and ought to take account of the various requirements imposed by the sinuous course of events.

None of this ivory tower nonsense, then. No isolation. Instead, vigilance, circumspection, extreme caution before setting foot, no matter who the company may be, upon a path which may not strictly be ours.

I do not want to conclude these observations without stressing the high regard and friendship which I still retain, in spite of everything, for our brothers of the CNT and FAI. As I see it, the best way of proving this profound esteem and this unalterable affection to them is not to keep a gag upon our misgivings and our reservations; much less should we prove our friendship by giving them our approval and our applause without faithfully and frankly giving expression to what we think, eschewing both attenuation and exaggeration. And this is what I have done. It could not be otherwise. Shall I overlook the prodigious effort made by our friends and the wondrous achievements which have flowed from their bold initiative and their steadfast and energetic action? Shall I forget the heroic militants, known and unknown, fallen on the soil of Iberia in the name of the revolution and of liberty? Shall I forget the furi-

ous attacks, infamous accusations and countless unspeakable persecutions of which they were the victims? Am I to forget the debt owed to them by the international libertarian movement?

Comrades: let us not forget these splendid examples of daring initiatives, of dangers braved, of intrepid action and heroic struggle which the CNT and the FAI have set before us. Let us not forget that for the past twelve months they have been fighting for our liberation. Let us cherish them, let us stand by them and let them, in this exceptional hour, feel the support, backing, defence and encouragement of our ardour and affection.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> This piece by Sébastien Faure appeared in Spanish in *La pendiente fatal*, Montevideo, (1937) and was based on an earlier article in *Le Libertaire*, the celebrated Parisian anarchist newspaper.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: Politics and revolution

The month of November 1936 stands out as one of the most heroic milestones of the civil war. Having mustered all of his assault forces around the Spanish capital, the enemy made a supreme effort to overrun its defences. When the government quit the capital (on 6 November), the populace of Madrid rallied to the defence of their beloved city to a chorus of 'Long live Madrid without government!' For the fascists, the capture of Madrid spelled military and diplomatic success, and would have had a tremendous impact upon morale. In the defenders' camp, the position was as delicate as could be; heroism and a genuine disregard for one's survival compensated for inadequacies in respect of weapon supply, effective plans and sturdy defences. Such was the situation in Madrid when Durruti arrived at the head of part of his militia column. Scarcely had these troops detrained when, at the urgent request of the high command and without the opportunity for a moment's rest, they had to invest positions in the Moncloa and West Park (Parque del Oeste) which were under threat from Moorish troops. The desperately unequal fighting lasted from 13 November to 20 November, on which latter date Durruti lost his life, as did a high percentage of the brave souls who accompanied him.

On 17 November, Durruti penned what were to prove his last words:

I have come from the land of Aragón to win this fight which today is a question of life or death, not merely for the Spanish proletariat but for the world as a whole. Everything hinges upon Madrid and I will not attempt to disguise my delight at finding myself face to face with the enemy, if only because it ennobles the struggle. Before taking my leave of Catalonia, I asked that those involved in the struggle be conscientious. I am not referring to the poor in spirit and those who are lacking in vigour. I mean those of us committed to pressing onwards. Rifles are of no avail if there is no determination, no ingenuity in their use. There is no question other than that of preventing the fascists from entering Madrid, but they must be repulsed soon, for Spain must be retaken. I am happy in Madrid, I make no bones about that; it delights me to see her now with the composure of a serious-minded person who is alive to their responsibilities.

On the evening of 20 November, Durruti set out to inspect the lines in his sector of the University City. Near to the front and in a sector under fire from enemy positions, the car in which he was travelling crossed the path of some *milicianos*. Durruti ordered the driver to pull up and climbed out to head them off, in the belief that they were abandoning the lines. At that very instant, a heavy burst of gunfire began. As Durruti scurried back towards the car — which was only a few metres away — he was brought down before he could utter a word. Driven to the field

hospital of the Catalan militias, he died a short time later of irremediable wounds. A bullet had punctured his breast, ripping his heart apart.

The news caused great emotion on every front and throughout the ranks of antifascist Spain. The corpse's progress along the highway to Barcelona was marked by a general display of mourning. The funeral in the Catalan capital was an event without parallel in the history of popular demonstrations; it was the largest, most spontaneous and most heartfelt display by the people of Catalonia.<sup>1</sup>

In the light of the bitterness of factional and party political contentions, the hypothesis that his death might have been some Machiavellian attentat designed to dispose of one of the few men with popular revolutionary influence could not, at first, be ruled out. Durruti's life, replete with revolutionary episodes, had provided the inspiration for writers and biographers even before the rising by the military. His record during the revolution and the war had made of him a colossus with the imperishably brilliant aura of heroism. The people's very sentimentality fed the belief in an assassination — a muddle-headed hypothesis, given the circumstances of his death. Even the rebel radio stations seized upon this, for the very understandable purpose of sowing confusion and undermining morale. Quick to thwart what was taken to be a sinister plot, the CNT and the FAI released the following note to the public on 21 November:<sup>2</sup>

Workers! The snipers of what has come to be known as the "Fifth Column" have floated the fallacious and ruinous rumour that our comrade Durruti has been vilely murdered by an act of treachery. We caution all comrades against this foul slander. It is a base manoeuvre calculated to smash the proletariat's redoubtable unity of action and thought, which is the most efficacious weapon against fascism. Comrades! Durruti did not perish through any act of treachery. He fell in the fray, as have so many other fighters for freedom. He died a hero's death, while carrying out his duty. Let us be unanimous in rejecting this despicable innuendo circulated by the fascists for the purpose of undermining our indestructible unity. Reject it without euphemism and in its entirety. Pay no heed to irresponsible types who peddle fratricidal rumours. They are the revolution's greatest enemy.

The CNT national committee; the FAI peninsular committee.

Durruti's kit-bag was opened and an inventory made of his possessions; they consisted of one change of clothes, a pair of hand-guns, a set of binoculars and some sunglasses.

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, this was the largest funeral in Barcelona's history and the streets were so crowded that it took hours for the funeral procession to weave its way through the city. According to a group of British parliamentarians who witnessed the procession, a crowd of 500,000 was on the streets to pay their last respects to Durruti, although other estimates were far higher.

<sup>2</sup> Durruti's death was immediately enveloped in claim and counter-claim. Some Stalinists argued that he was murdered by anarchists who rejected the increasingly 'authoritarian' discipline that Durruti aimed to introduce into the militias; in a more extreme version, it has been claimed that Durruti was on the brink of joining the PCE and, in order to save the credibility of the anarchist movement, the militia leader was assassinated by his erstwhile comrades. Meanwhile, some anarchists held the view that Durruti was murdered by a Stalinist sniper, thereby removing the key anarchist military figure within the Republican camp. It is most likely that Durruti was killed by a Francoist sharpshooter; it is also likely that, since Durruti's appearance made him indistinguishable from the other members of his group at the time of his shooting and indeed from thousands of other militia members, the sniper had no idea of his target, making this a fairly random shooting at the front.

Thus was Madrid saved in her darkest hour; by the blood and very lives of her heroes. For all the zealotry of their mercenary cannon-fodder and its most up-to-date military equipment, the most eminent generals on the rebel side found their schemes frustrated. For months, for years indeed, the cities of rebel Spain were decked out in bunting, with musicians and brass bands waiting in the wings, in expectation of the much-yearned-for event which was not to come to pass until the end of the war.

On 2 December, Madrid's Defence Junta<sup>3</sup> was organised with the following line-up:

- Chairman – General José Miaja<sup>4</sup>
- Secretary – Máximo de Dios<sup>5</sup> (PSOE)
- Public Order – Santiago Carrillo<sup>6</sup> (JSU-PCE)
- Evacuation – Enrique Giménez (Republican)
- Supplies – Pablo Yagüe (UGT-PCE)
- Militias delegate – Isidoro Diéguez (PCE)
- Transport – Amor Nuño (CNT)
- Propaganda and Press – José Carreño España (Republican)
- War Industries – Mariano García (JJ.LL)
- Public Services – Francisco Caminero (trade unionist)

On 12 December, the press carried the following item:

In accordance with the defence junta, the militia command and representatives of the Popular Front in the same have deemed it vitally necessary that a regular army be formed in order to prosecute the war effectively. In compliance with the government decree of militarisation of the militias, all of the militia groups and battalions of the various organisations are to be restructured into full-scale units of battalion and brigade strength.

Consequently, all forces currently in the various barracks in Madrid as incomplete battalions or remnants of other battalions are to be reorganised by the militia command into units of full strength. These are the only units which will be recognised in matters of payment and rationing, and those which refuse to comply with said conditions will be denied the services of the paymaster's office and of the service corps.

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<sup>3</sup> Fearing the occupation of Madrid, the government was transferred to Valencia and this body, which assumed responsibility for defending the city from the advancing forces of reaction, became the *de facto* government of the city. The CNT happily entered the Defence Junta under the slogan 'Long live Madrid without government!'

<sup>4</sup> A conservative but republican loyalist, he was appointed head of the Defence Junta by Largo Caballero, becoming a symbol of the city's resistance to fascism largely thanks to PCE propaganda. He was very close to the PCE; there were many – including Largo Caballero – who later claimed that he was a member of the party.

<sup>5</sup> According to some sources, a PCE member.

<sup>6</sup> A former socialist youth leader who became the longest-serving general secretary of the PCE, surviving the power struggles in exile and returning to Spain to lead the party after the death of Franco.



For his part, on 24 December, General Miaja had the following notice posted in Madrid:

I hereby proclaim:

1. From 15.00 hours all checkpoints and watches in position both on the approaches to the capital and also within its precincts shall be withdrawn until such time as the organisation of the rearguard militias may be complete. The office fulfilled by said posts shall pass, from that hour onwards, to the Security and Assault Guards.
2. The militia command will proceed to complete the organisation of the rear-guard militias into brigades in compliance with the orders issued from their superiors and in accordance with the instructions from the high command.
3. It is strictly forbidden to circulate within the city boundaries while bearing long arms, this being the exclusive right of regular forces under the orders of officers accountable to the combat units to which they belong.
4. There is to be no further mounting of checkpoints or watches upon communications and guard upon buildings and barracks other than those instances expressly authorised by the High Command of Defence Forces and by the General Inspectorate of Security. Other armed groups which may take it upon themselves to act as sentries or watches without their having been entrusted with an official mission are to be regarded as insubordinate and liable to the appropriate punishment under the code of military justice.
5. All matters relating to public order are to be attended to by the Delegation of Public Order, by means of those agencies at their disposal, which shall be charged to oversee the enforcement of this proclamation.
6. Such infringements as may occur are to be tried by the judicial authorities by the most summary procedures.

General Miaja, Chairman of the Defence Junta of Madrid, General-in-Command of the Madrid Defence Forces.

Two days later there was a skirmish in one Madrid barrio which left the Defence Junta's supply delegate seriously wounded. The socialist, communist and dissident-communist organs levelled serious charges against the CNT, holding it directly responsible for the incident. A number of CNT members were hauled before summary courts. The daily newspaper *CNT*, which rallied to the defence of the accused, was suspended. The Centre regional committee of the CNT set out this version of events in the following terms:

Availing of the fact that one of their militants was the victim, the republican-Stalinist press seeks to spread disarray and confusion.

The episode in which comrade Yagüe was injured came to pass thus. Comrade Yagüe left Madrid on a mission entrusted to him by the Defence Junta connected with provisions. On the road from Aragón, as it reached the Libertarian Atheneum, his car was stopped by individuals who comprise the watch on the said premises. As is normal practice in such matters, one of these comrades asked to see his papers. Whereupon

he was informed that comrade Yagüe was a delegate from the Defence Junta. Our comrade replied that this was not enough, merely to say that he was a delegate, that he was not known to him and would have to produce papers which were the *sine qua non* of any departure from Madrid. Then comrade Yagüe showed him a card, red in colour, but he refused to give this up for inspection by the man in charge of the watch. Our comrade intimated to him that this too was insufficient, since he had a card which would not be enough to get him out of Madrid without the prior permission of the competent authorities, the only ones empowered to endorse that sort of documentation. Then Yagüe replied in an overbearing manner that he could not tolerate his being held up like this, with trivialities of this sort, and he ordered his driver to proceed. As is agreed procedure among the comrades of the watch, one shot was fired into the air to intimidate the passengers and get the car to stop: but, far from doing so, the car accelerated away and it was at this point that the other two comrades fired two shots at the aforementioned vehicle; unfortunately, one shot wounded comrade Yagüe.

Their communiqué concluded with this cautionary note:

We are prepared to honourably reinforce our bonds of fraternity with all anti-fascists; but with regard to the violent situation into which some wish to push us, we will respond accordingly and we will not, after the wounding of comrade Yagüe, ever again allow comrades from our organisation to appear on the streets of Madrid, done to death by those who light the flames of uncontrollable passions. Of late, three CNT militants have turned up dead on the pavements of the capital.

During their summary trial, the answers given by the accused to the twenty-odd questions dealt with in the charge demonstrated their innocence. In light of this, the prosecution dropped the charges.

Turning to Levante, there were serious incidents there in October. The CNT forces garrisoning the Teruel Front made an expedition into their own rearguard for the purpose of purging it of parasites who were placing revolutionary interests in jeopardy. The ‘Iron Column’ (*Columna de Hierro*),<sup>7</sup> staunch in its confederal and anarchist convictions, forced its way into Valencia and clashed bloodily with rearguard troops. After things had cooled down and in the face of slander campaigns by official communist and government organs, the column in question issued this declaration:

The “Iron Column” is made up of elements from the FAI and the CNT and others who, while members of no organisation, identify with the ideas and procedure of the anarchists. In the aftermath of our action in Valencia and the commentaries upon this by certain sectors, we are faced with the unavoidable necessity of explaining our conduct to the public so that no one may try to score party-political points at our expense.

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<sup>7</sup> The Iron Column was characterised by its ardent revolutionism and became the most vocal and militant of all the militias which opposed militarisation of the popular forces.

All the men ranked under the banner of the “Iron Column” are currently struggling against clerical-militaristic reaction on the Teruel Front. But as anarchists, we are as concerned with the problems of the rearguard as we are with those at the front. Thus, when we saw that in Valencia things were not proceeding as we might have wished, when we discovered that the rearguard, far from offering us reassurance, was a source of concern and doubt to us, we resolved to intervene, to which end we dispatched the following requests to the organisations concerned:

1. The Civil Guard be completely disarmed and disbanded.
2. The immediate dispatch to the front of all of the armed corps in the service of the state ( Assault Guards, Carabineers, Security Guards, etc.).
3. Complete destruction of the records and files of all capitalist, statist institutions.

We base these requests upon two considerations: the revolutionary and the ideological. As anarchists and as revolutionaries, our understanding was that there was a danger in the existence of the Civil Guard, a clearly reactionary corps which, through time and particularly during this upheaval, has so clearly displayed its mentality and its methods.

To us, the Civil Guard was hateful and we had no wish to set eyes on it, because we had more than enough reasons to be mistrustful of it. We first asked for it to be disarmed and, when this did not happen, we disarmed it ourselves.

We asked that all of the armed corps be moved up to the front lines, for men and weaponry are in short supply there and, given the present state of affairs, their presence in the city was, and is, a source of nuisance rather than a necessity. In this matter we have been half successful and we will not rest until it has been a complete success.

Lastly, we asked for the destruction of all documents which symbolised a past of tyranny and oppression which was an offence to our free consciousness. We destroyed the papers and thought about seizing those buildings, such as the Law Courts (*Audiencia*), which were formerly employed to consign revolutionaries to imprisonment and which, today, now that we are on the threshold of the libertarian society, have no further reason to exist. These aims brought us to Valencia and, using those methods which seemed to us most apt, we sought to attain them.

Furthermore, during our stay in Valencia, we observed that, whereas negotiations to purchase arms were falling through for lack of hard cash, in many establishments there was a huge quantity of gold and other precious metals, and it was this that induced us to confiscate the gold, silver and platinum of some jewellers, which we then surrendered to the organisation.

The whole of the above is what we did. Now let us look at what we did not do.

We are accused of looting establishments, and that is a lie.

We challenge anyone to produce to us the receipts we issued and to show that items were commandeered out of a whim or some desire to create mischief rather than prompted by the needs of our men. We are accused of murdering folk out of sheer

thuggery and that is a foul slander. What have we done to merit such comment? What crimes have we committed? The charge seems to derive from an unfortunate accident in which a socialist comrade died, something which we are the first to deplore and condemn. This had absolutely nothing to do with us. It was demonstrated on the very night that it happened that no member of our column had any hand in it. It has never occurred to us to attack the socialists nor any other antifascist grouping, much less to do so in the underhand manner in which this comrade was attacked. But this does not mean that we forswear our goals which are the sole motive behind our struggle, though we realise that internecine conflict would be criminal at a time when we are confronted by a redoubtable enemy to whose destruction our every effort must be bent.

We believe that what we have said will clarify our action. We are revolutionaries and have conducted ourselves as such, with correctness and nobility. Only a cretin could see bad intentions and frivolity in our behaviour.

Our position, in these decisive times for the future of Spain, is clear and unmistakable. With all of our manpower, with all of our energy, with all of our enthusiasm, we will struggle until vile fascism is crushed forever. We fight to carry through the social revolution. We march towards anarchy. Consequently, now and later, we will defend everything that tends to make for a freer life and to smash the yokes which oppress us, to sweep away the vestiges of the past.

We say to all workers, all revolutionaries, all anarchists: on the front or in the rear-guard, wherever you may be, struggle against all the enemies of your liberties, destroy fascism. But likewise take care lest, from the fruits of your endeavours, a dictatorial regime is installed which would be the continuation, with all its vices and shortcomings, of the whole state of affairs which we are trying to eradicate. With weapons now, and later with work tools, learn to live without tyrants, learn to fend for yourselves, as this is the only path towards freedom. This is the credo of the "Iron Column" and clearly and plainly does it expound it.

Comrades, death to fascism!

Long live the social revolution!

Long live anarchy!

On 26 November 1936 the first step was taken in the direction of alliance at the highest levels of the two great labour bodies. Since May the same year, when a confederal congress passed a motion endorsing revolutionary alliance, all efforts to reach a national agreement between the two historical organisations of the Spanish proletariat had foundered. The compact thrashed out in Catalonia between the CNT, UGT, FAI and PSUC was more or less forced upon them by circumstance. The Catalan UGT was an appendix of the Stalinists and a haven for the reactionary petty bourgeoisie. The Catalan *entente* was something of an embarrassment. In effect it endorsed the credentials of improvised unions embracing all whose interests had been harmed by the revolution and whose sole enemy was not fascism but the CNT. The compact was rather in the order of a grant of immunity from attack to reactionaries posing as proletarians. As a building

block in any vast nationwide alliance between the UGT and the CNT it was also a failure. The Stalinists never desired the unity of the two great unions. This would have spelled political death for them. Hence they frustrated it, preferring a UGT which was divided and torn to one united with the CNT.

Then again Largo Caballero, the undisputed leader of the UGT and for a time an object of veneration to workers under Stalinist influence, displayed a lack of vision unforgivable in a labour leader of such long standing. He was unable to anticipate the course of future developments either within the UGT or inside his own party. One day Largo Caballero was forced to announce that a progressive rapprochement in the direction of anarchism would not embarrass him; this was a retreat from the line he had always espoused. However, the caution and the sloth with which he proceeded on the question of revolutionary unity with the CNT smoothed the way for communist infiltration into his own union cadres. That is to say, he surrendered the UGT to his political foes.

On 26 November representatives from the CNT and from the UGT signed a document in which the opening of negotiations with a view to unity was hinted at. The document is a foretaste of what was to come later and what proved to be too late:

Having met to consider jointly their approach to the various issues facing the working class and simultaneously to indicate the norms which they esteem vital if any immediate solution to these is to be reached, the representatives of the CNT national committee and the UGT executive commission are unanimous in agreeing to address themselves to all trade union bodies to insist upon the utmost cordiality in relations, with mutual guarantees of the right of each worker to unionise in whichever organisation may best express his feelings and ideals, and observing also the right of each union to orient its activity as befits its class precepts.

The fundamental problems affect the people in general and most especially the proletariat, problems whose implications must be obvious to all and which include – to name but some – war, confiscations, collectivisations, the land, transport, industry, the economy, the municipalities, trade, etc.

We have listed those which constitute the essence of social life. When the working, democratic class of Spain is confronted by its age-old foe, aided and abetted by international fascism, it cannot be tolerated that anyone should try to increase his prestige or build up his numerical strength by violent assault upon those of kindred mentality. The CNT and UGT are as one in specifying that it be understood that, should discussions be initiated between both organisations of the proletariat for the purpose of seeking a solution to the aforementioned problems, it is de rigueur that the workers enlisted in both unions should show each other the tolerance and respect which is their due as human beings. It would be impossible for our efforts on behalf of unity to produce good results if, parallel with our discussions, there were to be clashes between the forces whom we represent. This argument is of a logic so overwhelming that, in our view, it needs no further explanation. Consequently this public bulletin concludes by recommending to the workers and steering committees and the responsible committees of the UGT and of the CNT that they take every step to prevent arguments and friction between workers, and that all have

their sights fixed upon the battlefield which heralds a new age of fraternity such as the people have never before experienced.

Let no one forget that at the present time only the unity of the proletariat can lead us to victory. The representatives of the UGT and of the CNT will very shortly spell out their thinking with regard to the issues of most pressing urgency, and until that moment comes they require the following of the bodies which they represent: discipline in the performance of their duty, obedience to the norms laid down by the lawful government of the Republic, this being the only way of obtaining the victory which we seek and will secure.

On behalf of the CNT national committee: "Marianet" Vázquez (secretary); Macario Royo<sup>8</sup> (Aragón); Galo Díez (the North); Claro Sendón (Levante); Manuel Báez (Catalonia); Manuel Amil (the Centre); Avelino Entrialgo<sup>9</sup> (Asturias). On behalf of the UGT executive commission: José Díaz Alor<sup>10</sup> (vice-chair); Pascual Tomás<sup>11</sup> (vice-secretary); Felipe Pretel<sup>12</sup> (treasurer); Carlos Hernández<sup>13</sup>, Manuel Lois<sup>14</sup>, Mariano Muñoz<sup>15</sup>, Amaro del Rosal<sup>16</sup> and Ricardo Zabalza<sup>17</sup> (commission members). Valencia, 26 November 1936.<sup>18</sup>

In the Apolo Theatre in Valencia on 27 November, Peiró, the minister for industry, delivered an address on the theme 'We must win the war.' The speaker's assertions drew some protests from the public:

I know that what I have to say tonight must be unpalatable. It is one of my misfortunes that unpalatable duties have always fallen to my lot. I wish to voice an opinion and I stand by it, although I know that speaking the truth loses one many friends. In order to save the economy and the revolution, we must bring the war to a speedy end. It is imperative that each of us grasp the realities of the moment, for these require discipline at the front and in the rearguard. Although, luckily, things are changing today, it is an incontrovertible fact that among the men who daily gamble their lives in the trenches there lingers an indiscipline which prolongs the war and wastes lives unnecessarily. As I said, fortunately this is changing. But it is vital that you who are indiscipline's greatest friends come to realise that now what is needed is war discipline. There must be an end to decisions taken in isolation,

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<sup>8</sup> A veteran of the pre-war insurrectionary struggles, anarchist propagandist and organiser.

<sup>9</sup> A leading Asturian anarchist, *faísta* and staunch supporter of the workers' alliance strategy. During the war he sat on the Gijón 'War Committee'.

<sup>10</sup> A left-socialist and *caballerista*.

<sup>11</sup> A supporter of Largo Caballero.

<sup>12</sup> A left-wing socialist, UGT treasurer and national executive member, who joined the PCE during the civil war.

<sup>13</sup> A left-socialist and *caballerista* loyalist.

<sup>14</sup> Apro-PCEUGT leader.

<sup>15</sup> A left-socialist and *caballerista* loyalist.

<sup>16</sup> A left-wing socialist, UGT executive member and bank workers' union leader who joined the PCE. A worker-journalist, he later wrote a study of the Spanish workers' movement: *La violencia, enfermedad del anarquismo. Antecedentes e historia del movimiento sindical socialista en España*, Barcelona, 1976.

<sup>17</sup> A left-socialist and leader of the FNTT.

<sup>18</sup> This agreement was described by the socialists as a 'pact of non-aggression'.

of events such as I have experienced in Mataró when one individual, supported by other comrades, sought to extract a ticket of leave by force from the war committee. Look at what happened only last night. 700 Catalan comrades passed through here en route to Cartagena. There dinner was laid on for them. But today they passed through again on the return journey without anyone hindering them, on the pretext that in Cartagena lodgings had not been reserved for them in the finest hotels. Another instance is what is happening in Valencia. The government issues an order and then this is counter-manded by the watchwords of the local committees. For the sake of ordering everything, everything is disorganised. Either the government is surplus to requirements, or the committees are.

At this point, the speaker was interrupted by the audience, and there was a moment's confusion in the hall. The chairman of the meeting asked that the speaker's thesis be given a hearing. Peiró went on:

What are these voices trying to say? That the committees are surplus to requirements?

Again shouting broke out, a mixture of 'Yes!' and 'No!' The speaker noticeably altered the tone of his address:

The committees are not surplus. What is needed is that they should be auxiliaries of the government. In Catalonia this problem has already been resolved. At local level, the town councils have been replaced by councils containing representatives of the UGT, the CNT, the communists, etc. In Catalonia, the councils collaborate with the Generalitat. Here nothing is redundant, comrades, because we have to spare a thought also for pressing on with the revolution later. But the work must be useful. We say: first the war, and then the revolution. But if we run up against the sort of interference I am critical of, both will be lost. We CNT members have not joined the government in order to represent this wave of indiscipline but quite the contrary, in order to insist upon discipline and a unified command. Yes, a unified command. That on the central front there should be six high commands, each one independent of the others, is intolerable. There can be one in the centre, another in the north and another in the south, but they must all be subject to a central high command. As I say, it was we of the Confederation who went along to the government and told it that if we want to avoid the spilling of blood, then on each front there must be someone who issues the orders and someone who obeys. Indeed, in the war we must not see anarchists; what we must see is soldiers who shoulder the responsibility, although an eye may have to be kept at all times on what is being ordered. That is why I said earlier that the committees are not surplus to requirements. But command is both necessary and vital to the prompt winning of the war. Must we make sacrifices? That much we knew already. But, comrades, what greater sacrifice can you want than anarchists participating in the government and in corporations? A further sacrifice is necessary? Let us thereby spare our brothers pain and bloodshed, and we will

make the social revolution possible all the sooner. Won't that make up for all the sacrifices?

On 4 December, at a meeting held in the same city, the ministers García Oliver and Montseny participated. García Oliver had this to say:

Concerned to win the war? Well, irrespective of ideology, creed or organisation, workers must employ the methods the enemy uses in order to win and, above all, discipline and unity. With discipline and efficient military organisation we will undoubtedly win. Discipline in the fighter and in the worker, discipline in everything, as this is the key to success.

Montseny stated:

Recently I spent several days in Catalonia and I realised something very important. I have to be, perhaps, a little harsh in what I have to say. Those who do not feel the war at first hand are living in a revolutionary cloud-cuckoo-land. They hold the industries and workshops in their hands, they have eradicated the bourgeois, they live peacefully and in a factory, instead of one bourgeois, there are seven or eight. This is intolerable. Nonetheless, I do not forget the comrades who are toiling 10, 12 or 14 hours in the arms plants in Catalonia and who are dying at the rate of one or two a day in painful circumstances.

In point of fact instances along the lines of the item reproduced below were not so isolated that they should so frequently have been passed over in silence when speeches came to be made:

Puebla de Híjar. The Investigation Section of this district makes known the following: after the mobilisation of comrades from this sector of Aragón a few days ago in order to protect the Madrid fronts, the Aragón regional committee made the decision to mobilise 1,000 men for secondment to the Durruti Column. Outcome: instead of the 1,000 which had been sought, some 6,000 turned up; thus the remainder, which is to say 5,000, are awaiting weapons and ready for the fray.

Thejunta.<sup>19</sup>

In the above-quoted address, Peiró repeated Napoleon's celebrated dictum: 'To win a war, one needs money, money and more money.' While the government pitted confederal ministers against the people and against their own CNT, what was it doing with the Bank of Spain's gold reserves, gold which spelled foreign currency, i.e. raw materials for the war industries centralised in Catalonia, and weapons for the sons of the people who selflessly volunteered to offer their lives and who were left waiting for rifles which never came?

In his book *Por qué perdimos la guerra*, Abad de Santillán says:

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<sup>19</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 27 November 1936.



And a few weeks later the gold did leave Madrid, but not for Catalonia but rather for Russia. Upwards of 500 tons of the stuff fell into Stalin's hands and it was used to lose our war and bolster the front of worldwide fascist counter-revolution. And it set out for Russia without the government's knowledge, but on the say-so of one or two ministers who were under orders from the Kremlin, most notably the famous Dr Negrín.

According to published sources, at the outset of events the Bank of Spain possessed a total of 2,258,569,908 pesetas in gold — that is 2,577,871 worth in ingots, some 393,183,080 in Spanish currency and 1,862,808,957 in foreign currency (twice the reserves of the Bank of Italy). In addition, there were 12 million pounds sterling on deposit with the Bank of France. Government currency, or rather the bank's paper money in existence in the loyalist zone, was backed 100 per cent by this gold, something that had no equivalent anywhere in the world. In addition, enormous capital sums were unearthed by the revolutionary people in the churches and other reactionary dens. Then again, because the people had put a huge amount of the bank's paper money and state securities to the torch, the government's debt was substantially lessened. Existing reserves on their own were enough to defray the costs of a protracted war, hold out against any blockade, including the non-intervention blockade, arm the people adequately and sustain a formidable propaganda campaign abroad. However, far from exploring such fine and promising possibilities, the government was so inept that by a few months into the war, Franco's peseta, which was simply a piece of paper, had come to be worth twice as much as the government peseta.

To what was all this due? First, to the fact that the government, wary of events underway in Catalonia, the key to communications in Europe, was never inclined to make the gold accessible to the people. Indeed, it used the gold as a weapon to obstruct the revolution. Second, from the outset the government shipping and government aircraft were used to transport veritable cargoes of foreign currency which was deposited with various banks in France and Britain. Third, the Largo Caballero government negotiated an agreement with the Russian ambassador, Rosenberg, under which the USSR undertook to send tanks, planes and munitions and to set up an international expeditionary force (the International Brigades) in return for depositing in Russia the sum of 500 million pesetas in gold.

The rebel radio denounced the clauses of this agreement to the political and financial worlds.

On 2 December 1936 the press carried a decree in which it was pointed out that the rebels' newly issued paper money had no gold reserves backing it up, and that the gold and silver reserves of the Bank of Spain, all of them in the hands of the lawful government, would only be used to validate legitimate bills and not the fascist currency issue. On the same day, the under-secretary of the Finance Ministry told journalists that the Bank of Spain possessed so much gold that it could more than adequately cover the available money supply.

In memoirs published by the former Russian general W. G. Krivitsky in *The Saturday Evening Post*, Philadelphia, the following claim is made:

Arthur Stashevsky<sup>20</sup> was making every effort to ensure that control of the Republic's finances was in Soviet hands, by peddling the line that political strength grows from an economic base. He was fond of Spain and of the Spaniards. He was in love with

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<sup>20</sup> Stalin's trade envoy to Spain.

his mission for he thought he was reliving his experiences in the Russian Revolution 20 years before. In Negrín, the finance minister, he unearthed a collaborator who willingly fell in line with his financial schemes. Madrid found it all but impossible to purchase arms freely on the world market, in no matter what country. The Spanish Republic had deposited a considerable portion of its gold reserves in the Paris banks, in the hope of importing war materials from France, but an insurmountable problem cropped up: the French banks refused to release the gold which was part of the national assets because Franco was threatening to take steps against them in the event of victory. Such complications made the Kremlin throw caution to the wind. Stashevsky offered to send the Spanish gold to Soviet Russia and, in exchange, to supply guns and munitions to Madrid. Through the good offices of Negrín, the agreement was thrashed out with the Largo Caballero government. Be that as it may, abroad the rumour broke of the existence of this arrangement. The foreign press accused Largo Caballero of having mortgaged a portion of the nation's gold reserves in return for Soviet aid... On 3 December, as arrangements were being made for shipment of the gold, Moscow officially denied that any such agreement had been reached, just as it consistently denied all news regarding the Soviet intervention in Spain. Privately, between ourselves, we used ironically to call Stashevsky "the richest man in the world" on account of the control he wielded over the Spanish Treasury.

Notwithstanding the secrecy with which the operation was carried out — a secrecy which Abad de Santillán says kept most of the members of the cabinet, including the confederal ministers, in the dark — the Salamanca transmitters made a great song and dance about it. Barcelona's *Solidaridad Obrera*, apparently better informed than the ministers themselves, carried this report in its issue of 15 January 1937.

Our gold reserves abroad. Who gave the go-ahead to the hare-brained idea of sending gold reserves out of the country? This is going to be one of the most blameworthy acts committed by the men who have been in government since after 19 July. There will have to be much debate and inquiry *apropos* of what came to pass in that unhappy period leading up to the formation of the National Government of Defence. The days leading up to that are filled with vagueness, mysteries and inexplicable errors and one such, the one that will have the most deplorable consequences for the future, is the error relating to the dispatch abroad of our gold reserves.

In adopting such a step, nobody could doubt that, in the event of our being unfortunate enough to lose this war, we would have done nothing except to have guaranteed and placed within the reach of our opponents gold reserves which ought to have been deployed, down to the last peseta, in the defence of the revolution rather than yielded up. Nor can it be a secret that these millions in precious metals would constitute an invitation to the covetousness of the great powers. When it comes to helping oneself to someone else's money, we already know how that money is squandered all over Europe. Diplomacy devises adverse credits and balances in trade plus a whole series of farragoes that justify this plunder. At the end of the dictatorship, Calvo Sotelo sent 100 million in gold pesetas to the Bank of France as surety for certain operations which were subsequently cancelled, and as yet nobody has been able

to explain why those reserves have never been returned to the vaults of the Bank of Spain. Proof of our contention is the attitude adopted by the representatives of the fascist powers on the Non-Intervention Committee.<sup>21</sup> Following the sequestration of the gold deposited abroad by the “government of the revolution”, and such was the deceit behind their requests that the money belonging to Spain be left in France’s account, that Russia’s representative, Maisky, leapt to the defence of our interests and energetically challenged proposals that a temporary embargo be imposed on foreign currency sent abroad for any purpose other than the purchase of equipment or food-stuffs, arguing instead that this currency must be stored in a place of safety. Maisky’s comments provoked an angry reaction from the various delegates, including some from the democracies, and for more than three hours he endured the controversy over snatching away our gold. Such is the logical consequence of the ineptitude and lack of foresight of folk who ought not to have been given the responsibility for governing Spain.

In expectation of fresh instructions from their governments, the Non-Intervention Committee suspended the debate on the issue of the seizure of the Bank of Spain’s gold. It is to resume within a few days, in the hope of working out some way of imposing controls on currency which has been snatched from us in such grave times. Let us hope that Spanish opinion will protest at this instance of such manifest culpability.

Some days later, on 20 January, a dispatch from the republican news agency *Cosmos* had this to say:

With the early morning well advanced, the following communiqué was issued under the heading “Spain’s gold is in Spain”: “*Apropos* of recent discussions in the Non-Intervention Committee, at the irregularity of which the Republic’s ambassador in London has protested, the foreign press has carried reports that are devoid of all substance. A portion of the Spanish press has accepted these at face value and, holding them to be valid, has based upon them all manner of variously intended comments.

For the sake of its peace of mind, it is only right that public opinion should be informed that an embargo upon Spanish gold abroad is impossible, for the simple reason that no such deposits exist. The quantities of gold which have left Spain have done so for the purpose of making immediate payments and certainly not to build up any deposit abroad. Despite such operations, after six months of war, Spain still holds fourth place in the ranking of the countries with the largest gold reserves, and

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<sup>21</sup> This committee was entrusted with imposing the Non-Intervention Pact, a French diplomatic initiative aimed at imposing an arms embargo on Spain. Non-Interventionism was the preferred policy of the western democracies, which hoped to localise the civil war and prevent a general war in Europe. For all the apparent neutrality of this accord, the Non-Intervention Pact served the interests of the Francoists in several ways. First, it gave the military plotters the same status under international law as the democratically elected Republican government. Second, it denied the government of the Republic its legal right to purchase weaponry on international arms markets. Third, Nazi Germany and fascist Italy, although signatories to the pact, blatantly contravened the terms of the agreement, a transgression ignored by the other members of the Non-Intervention Committee.

that gold, along with her silver, acts as guarantor for the circulation of legitimate bills, unfranked bills which the Bank of Spain retains in its possession under the care of the government of the Republic.

This government communiqué failed to throw the spies of international finance off the scent, and in spite of it the shipments of gold to Russia continued, the practice being maintained by Negrín and Prieto. The Bank of England, however, proceeded to freeze the government's sizeable sterling assets. For France's part, the government demanded payment in gold for any merchandise shipped to Spain and goods which the Republic sold to France were likewise paid for with gold, but at a quarter of the agreed price! Meanwhile, France paid generously and open-handedly in gold for the pyrites supplied by Franco.

Given these circumstances, the devaluation of the republican peseta was no surprise. Its loudly trumpeted gold collateral was frozen in the banks of Paris and London, on its way to Mexico or (the lion's share) en route to Odessa. Regarding this latter destination, let us turn again to what Krivitsky had to say:

Previously I had seen in the Moscow newspapers a list of high-ranking civil servants who had been awarded the Order of the Red Flag. Among the names were some that I knew well. It occurred to me to ask Abram Sloutski<sup>22</sup> what service of such high merit they had performed, that they were being awarded such coveted decorations. He replied that the men dignified thus had been the leaders of a special team of 30 outstanding and trusted agents who, during the month of December, had been sent to Odessa to work as stevedores.

A huge quantity of gold had reached Odessa from Spain. Stalin trusted no one except the most highly placed officials of his secret police in the task of unloading the precious metal, for fear that word might leak out. He commissioned Yezhov personally to select the men for the job. The whole operation was carried out amid the most extraordinary secrecy that this was the first that I had heard of it.

A comrade of mine who had been a member of this extraordinary expedition described the scene in Odessa to me. The whole area adjacent to the wharves had been evacuated and cordoned off by detachments of special troops. Across the vacated area between the wharf and the railway tracks, the highest ranking officials in the secret police had carried the crates of gold on their shoulders. Day after day they unloaded the gold and packed it into freight vans which were then shipped to Moscow under escort.

As we were crossing the vastness of Red Square, he tried to give me some indication of the quantity of gold which they had unloaded in Odessa. He pointed out to me an expanse of several acres all around us and said: "If all the crates of gold that we stacked in the warehouses in Odessa were laid end to end in this square, they would cover it from one end to the other."

The treasure which Stalin obtained in Spain assuredly amounted to several hundred million dollars, perhaps as many as 500 million.

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<sup>22</sup> A Soviet secret police chief in Spain.

At this point in time, when the urgent necessity of a single command and discipline was being trumpeted from government quarters and the people and their 'revolutionary spree' were being sniped at, the most disgraceful and abject campaign of the entire war was being prepared by the most vocal political parties. To see these dismal developments in action, we will have to turn our attention once again to Catalonia.

Immediately after the formation of the Generalitat government, the party-political intrigues began. We have already pointed out that the anarchist Stalinist entente of 23 October worked to the exclusive advantage of the PSUC, which conducted itself in Catalonia according to the directives of the Soviet Consul. Russian policy had begun to make its presence felt in Spain. Russians and Russophiles were infiltrating every agency and department of the state through the Trojan horse of war aid. Thanks to this aid (for which 50 tonnes of gold had been given as surety), to the psychological impact of the Soviet policy and the covert activities of countless Russian agents, it also proved possible for the strength of the PCE to grow.

As early as mid-August the PCE had let slip its intentions. The French press around that time carried some remarks made by the director of *Mundo Obrero*, in which he said:

As for the anarchists, they prefer the rearguard to the firing line. Their intentions are none too clear, but the Spanish people and all the official organisations will stand up to them. We want no truck with the libertarian communists. The day after victory they will be put in their place. Until then, it is impossible for us to pick a quarrel with people who are presently fighting alongside us.

The Catalan CNT regional committee replied to these brazen allegations in a communiqué which stated:

In the first battle won by the people over the rebels — a battle that might be described as decisive by virtue of its repercussions and implication — on the morning of 19 July in Barceloneta, it was the anarchists, together with some like-minded combat groups and Assault Guards, who knocked out the artillery that was advancing along Avinguda Icària. They won and captured the cannon which later bombarded rebel bastions. On the Parallel, in the central thoroughfares, in the Ritz and Colón hotels and the Telephone Exchange, who was it that held the line? It was the militants of the CNT, the FAI and the JJ.LL who roamed the countryside purging it of religious vermin. Let us turn to the battle fronts. Let us examine the lines. We will soon come across our comrades fighting unflinchingly in the front lines. Let us turn to Valencia. Who was it who took the initiative in the storming of the barracks? By what right does anyone dare to call them cowards? On what authority does anybody say that they prefer the rearguard?

To begin their campaign for hegemony the Stalinists needed to build up a party and a grass-roots organisation. To this end they needed to win over the sympathy of the petty bourgeoisie. It was towards this class (which the revolution did not trespass against) that their first siren songs were directed. In this they were helped by the deep-rooted conservatism of the petty-bourgeois

parties. By opting for antifascist collaboration, the CNT itself necessarily helped their case, directly or indirectly. On 15 November 1936, *Solidaridad Obrera* of Barcelona spelled out the CNT's position on this delicate issue. These are a few excerpts from the editorial on that day:

The most original facet of the revolution we are shaping is the role being taken by the petty bourgeoisie. In leaving that institution in place, it has been borne very much in mind that in Spain, and especially in Catalonia, the petty bourgeoisie is an extension of the proletariat. The petty bourgeois is customarily a worker who contributes his own effort and personal labour, thereby conjuring into existence a modest economy which, in this region of ours, has managed to make a certain progress. Small business, small industry, like small property, are the result of the endeavours made, in the majority of cases, by family circles.

In elaborating its revolutionary code, the CNT, which has at all times drawn its inspiration from the reality of the economic circumstances created by individual and collective labour, stood by the necessity of respecting small business and small industry and the modest property-owner. This attitude on the part of our union grouping has been most enthusiastically taken up by the other proletarian unions.

In those countries where an attempt has been made to introduce wholesale the communist form of economics they ran up against this great obstacle, which we in Catalonia have managed to skirt around, from the very outset. Had an attempt been made to introduce undiluted communism in Spain, the difficulties would have been insurmountable. The very individual temperament of the Iberian people, which, properly channelled, can be a progressive factor of incalculable importance, would have ensured counter-productive results had an attempt been made to stamp it out by moving on from the bourgeois capitalist regime to the communist arrangement without account being taken of the real features of the country's energy. The CNT, cognisant of the importance of recruiting the petty bourgeoisie to the camp of the proletarian revolution, did not hesitate to defend the continued existence of this class. In addition, we are convinced that the retention of small property, small business and small industry will aid the development of the communist regime. The distribution of products will be all the more efficient. Intercourse will acquire an unsuspected easiness; and, furthermore, the move from the bourgeois super-capitalist regime to a communist one will be made without bloody havoc, in a harmonious fashion, without upsetting the life of the country which, in the brief span of a few weeks, has had to carry out an economic and social revolution of great intensity. With social contention at an end, with big industry in the hands of the unions and banking turned, through nationalisation, into a public service, whatever impediments were in the way of the free initiative of the modest businessman or industrialist will likewise have evaporated...

... Bearing in mind the characteristics of the small businessman's problem and with the benefit of hindsight, a new culture and a new education will help to resolve it once and for all; we accept, as a basic element in the revolution, a programme of economic reconstruction that respects the petty bourgeoisie, small property, small

industry and small business until such time as the new revolutionary economy has resolved all of the problems of today.

This modest bourgeois social stratum, which at the start of the proletarian revolution felt itself seriously jeopardised, heaved a sigh of relief upon realising that we are understanding, respectful and ready to guarantee the security of its interests. And how has the petty bourgeoisie repaid our generosity? As far as the distribution and sale of food products is concerned, we must recognise that its attitude has been abysmal. Should things continue on their present course, it will be necessary to adopt vigorous measures capable of putting an end to the abuses and wayward practices which have been indulged in.

The notice published yesterday in *Solidaridad Obrera*, in which the CNT control committee at El Born, the collectivised central fruit and vegetable market, spells out the problem with the utmost clarity leaves no room for doubts. Our comrades, by agreement with the central supply committee and with the Generalitat's minister of supplies, published a number of lists, such as the one we carried yesterday, specifying the wholesale prices at which food products are on sale, with the profit margin allowed the retailer.

Despite the fact that the publication of those lists exposed the abuses, the retail traders have revealed a shameless lack of scruples, creating a serious hindrance to the revolution and one that we must end, whatever it may cost!

In a tendentious communiqué, one union-political organisation has sought to fudge the clarity with which our comrades have acted on this issue and misrepresent the truth. We have had to tackle this head-on and contact public opinion in order to expose these farceurs, who would shield unscrupulous speculators.

These unscrupulous types seek to conceal the fact that the prices at which foodstuffs are sold to retailers at the collectivised El Born market are exactly the same as those which obtained in previous years. The agricultural workers themselves, victims of capitalist exploitation, have lamented to us the fact that, since retail sale is daylight robbery, they have to accept the same prices as before the war while watching unscrupulous speculators, who deserve to be subjected to the public wrath, line their pockets.

In its issue of 15 December, *Solidaridad Obrera* carried a leader written by its staff member José Albajes,<sup>23</sup> entitled 'Facets of the Revolution. The petty bourgeoisie and the working class'. In it, Albajes had this to say:

From the very outset of the revolutionary upheaval it was we anarchists who advocated respect for the interests of the petty bourgeoisie. Our editorials bear this out, for the experience of the Russian movement had to bring us libertarians some advantage. But the revolution has broached a problem of the utmost gravity: should it be unionised? Frankly we think not. And we make such a categorical statement on the

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<sup>23</sup> From the 'collaborationist' wing of the CNT, he was drafted onto *Solidaridad Obrera* by Jacinto Toroyho.

basis of our lived experience. The petty bourgeois has the usufruct of a small industry or even a small business. In order to pursue such activity they incontestably need collaborators, workers or employees. Numbers are irrelevant, which is to say there may be four or there may be twenty. The fact is, believing that its class interests need to be protected, the petty bourgeoisie frequently affiliates to unions, the UGT for the most part, whereas the workers or employees in its service belong to the CNT. Let us imagine that tomorrow a demand for improvements or some other human petition is to be submitted; to whom is it submitted? To the boss who belongs to the UGT or to that labour union agency? The confusion must be cleared up without delay. In our view, anyone who has in his service one or more employees cannot, nor should not, belong to any union body, neither the CNT nor the UGT, since they are part of an exploiter class. They can only belong, should they so desire, to a trade organisation, but never, and this has to be shouted from the rooftops, never, to a labour union. The confusion which reigns on this matter cannot last for a moment longer and the CNT and UGT alike should issue a public statement to this effect before the disease becomes incurable. There is no place for anyone other than producers in the labour unions, and there is never a place for exploiters, be they small or large. This at least is our understanding and we state it with all of the candour that typifies us.

To sum up all of the foregoing, it can be deduced that the CNT had just realised that it had lost the contest to win over the petty bourgeoisie. In its error, which went back to the earliest moments of the revolution, to the specific instant when it opted for collaboration with President Companys, the CNT had glided into an uninterrupted avalanche of concessions. It was hard to get off this slippery slope. It had to do battle on terrain utterly different from its own, and against the consensus of the confederal and anarchist rank-and-file which, dragging its feet reluctantly, let itself be carried along by committees, councillors and ministers to the oily, slippery slopes of politics. The CNT — heroic and invincible in the union, the factory and the streets — was easy prey in the salons and corridors of the ministries. Its own representatives in both governments never left off spiking it with *banderillas*.

The CNT had accepted the challenge by leaving to its adversary the choice of weapons and of terrain. As a result, its roar on 4 August ('Reciprocate, gentlemen, or suffer the consequences!') was to be followed by other roars, each more stentorian but more impotent too. And the battle to get the CNT into the government was very soon followed by the battle to winkle it out again. This manoeuvre was accomplished under Russian guidance. The operation began methodically in Catalonia. The pretext was thin — the attitude of one political party — and the mechanics thinner still — a government crisis.

The POUM, in its mouthpiece *La Batalla* of 15 November, spelled out its line on Soviet international policy:

Later, there was a change in attitude in the Soviet government, a change which we revolutionary Marxists cannot be content to welcome and praise of itself but which we need rather to interpret and explain to the working class. To what was this change due? Did Stalin perhaps realise the mistake he had made over two and a half months earlier and seek to set it right? That there was an error is proved by the simple



existence of the correction, the change. But the most important real factor that dictated the change is Stalin's realisation that Franco, with the undisguised assistance of Hitler and Mussolini, might snatch victory in the civil war, thereby bolstering the political and strategic positions of the Hitlerite fascism which Stalin considers his mortal enemy. The correction of the error has not sprung from the desire to be of service to the Spanish revolution, an event which Lenin would not for a single instant have declared himself neutral towards; rather, it stems from a preoccupation with foreign policy, an instinct of self-preservation in the international balance of power. In short, what really interests Stalin is not the fate of the Spanish or international proletariat, but the defence of the Soviet government in accordance with the policy of alliance established by some states against others.

A furore from the pro-Moscow press was to be expected. The floodgates opened to a torrent of the most toadying adjectives. The polemic assumed facets without parallel in the usages and customs of diplomacy: stepping outside the conventions according to which certain protests and demands are customarily made, the Soviet consul himself publicly chose sides. This, taken from *Solidaridad Obrera*, is the statement released to the press by the Soviet consulate on 27 November 1936:

One of the ploys of the press which is in the pocket of international fascism consists of the calumny that it is the Soviet Union's accredited representatives to the government who in fact mould the foreign policy of the Spanish Republic. The ends pursued by the lackeys of fascism in propagating such an innuendo are only too clear. They seek, first of all, to undermine the prestige abroad of the government of Spain; second, to weaken the feeling of brotherly solidarity daily waxing stronger between the peoples of Spain and the peoples of the Soviet Union, the chief moral foundation of the antifascist struggle; third, to support and reinforce the trend towards disorganisation and undermining of the united front on the part of sundry uncontrollable and irresponsible groups. And I note that among the organs of the Catalan press there is one rag which assumes the task of assisting this fascist campaign. In its issue of 24 November *La Batalla* attempts to provide grist to the mills of the aforementioned fascist insinuations. The Soviet Consulate in Barcelona contemptuously repudiates the deplorable concoctions of this rag. On behalf of the Consul of the USSR in Barcelona.

Only in a country which is looked upon as a colony of one's own can the diplomatic corps engage in public polemic. And only when confident of the utmost immunity can a foreign diplomat issue crude accusations, and slander in the most unworthy fashion the subjects of a purportedly sovereign nation.

The slander campaign against a weak political grouping was timed to coincide with muted attacks upon the CNT itself, a more formidable enemy which had to be undermined before there could even be any thought of more ambitious undertakings. The offensive was launched on the pretext of the lack of activity on the battlefield in Aragón, a front which had been brought to a standstill because of the obstruction we have already indicated on the part of the government. On 10 December, *Solidaridad Obrera* retaliated with the following item:

*La Humanitat*<sup>24</sup> recently carried an item which was reprinted by *Mundo Obrero* with comment and this headline: “A burning question — how come there is no attack mounted on the Aragón front?”

Only supine ignorance or superlative malice could have inspired the articles in the Barcelona daily and the mouthpiece of the PCE. And in saying that, we are cognisant of the gravity of what we say... We could explain to them the reasons for the “forced inactivity” of our *milicianos*, so eager for the fray ... and many other exceedingly juicy and startling points to boot. But we think it better that these questions be put to their representatives in the government, to Largo Caballero, say, or Uribe, Hernández or Díaz, all of whom must be perfectly familiar with the answer. Nonetheless, it is important that we make it clear that the tactic is not a novel one, for Trotsky employed it against Makhno in circumstances akin to those we are experiencing in Spain.

This is how things stood when, on 13 December, the head of the Generalitat informed the press that a crisis had erupted in its cabinet. On that subject, the Catalan CNT regional committee made the following declaration on 15 December:

The Catalan CNT to the People. Yesterday’s press carried an item revealing the battle between two sectors of the UGT, the POUM and the PSUC, conducted by their representatives in the Generalitat, a savage battle in which the aim of each is to exclude the other from the positions it holds in the said body.

The CNT, cognisant of the responsibility weighing upon both actions and words in these historic times, has said nothing publicly, in the hope that this conflict may be harmoniously resolved. Giving priority to the interests of the revolution over its organisational interests, the CNT has, in many interventions over the past two weeks, managed to get them to agree by convincing them that there is more to unite than to divide them, and that the cause of the proletariat requires mutual concessions so that the utter crushing of fascism may be possible in the near future.

The present times are times of decision for the proletariat. The liberty and destiny of Spain and of all peoples hangs in the balance and no one can fail to realise that the routing of fascism in this country spells the beginning of the end for international fascism.

The CNT, as it has been doing from the first instant that the fascist peril loomed, is demonstrating that it commits its all to the struggle against reaction: it has sacrificed its best people, its most cherished norms, even welcoming into our ranks the very people who had previously opened up bitter divisions.

The compact which all antifascist organisations set our seals to in setting up the Council of the Generalitat (in which, so as not to be exacting, we did not even insist upon a level of representation consistent with our incontrovertible hegemony) was an honour-bound undertaking. Setting aside all tactical divergences, personal

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<sup>24</sup> Companys’s daily newspaper, which reflected his political line.

ambitions and pettiness, we unanimously told the people that until such time as the war ends with the definitive crushing of fascism, all of the sectors represented on the Generalitat must remain united. Loyal to its undertaking, the CNT continues to honour that agreement, because it always honours its word and it says to the people that every one of the groupings represented on the Generalitat ought to go on working together.

Not for an instant longer can we continue in the perilous situation where everything hangs fire because of the problem outlined earlier. In these times any party-political squabbling is suicidal and there must be but one preoccupation: the defeat of fascism. And to this end, there is but one watchword: maintain the antifascist bloc.

From sun-up to sundown we must have but one obsession: to work intensely lest the blood of those who fall at the front be shed in vain and so that as few of them as possible may fall.

If, in spite of everything, one sector ignores the common interests of the proletariat and seeks to oust another, then the CNT solemnly declares that it will not be failing in its duty, that it never has and never will quit any of the places of danger or responsibility.

Let us all be worthy of the people that we represent, and let us not forget that Catalonia and history would esteem as traitors any who may quit their posts before attaining the goals which unite us.

For the routing of fascism!

For the emancipation of the workers!

For the freedom and the unity of peoples!

The Catalan CNT.

Two days later the crisis was patched up and the following cabinet announced:

Health and Social Services – Pedro Herrera (CNT)

Public Services – Juan Domènech (CNT)

Defence – Francesc Isgleas (CNT)

Economy – Diego Abad de Santillán (CNT)

Supply – Juan Comorera (UGT)

Labour – Miguel Valdés (UGT)

Justice – Rafael Vidiella (UGT)

Finance – Josep Tarradellas (ERC)

Internal Security – Artemi Aiguader (ERC)

Public Instruction – Antoni Maria Sbert<sup>25</sup> (ERC)

Agriculture – Josep Calvet (U de R)

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<sup>25</sup> A leading figure within the ERC during the republican era.

The CNT peddled the line that since the Esquerra was here as watchdog over the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, this was a cabinet with no political-party presence. The fact of the matter is that if ever there was a political government, this was it.

The Stalinists, with the Supply Ministry in their grasp, indulged in an unworthy policy of speculation with the people's hunger and of discrediting the CNT, which they brazenly saddled with the responsibility for the shortage of flour in Barcelona.

The Stalinists so contrived that for the first time bread became scarce; they floated rumours in the queues and organised demonstrations by women who set about storming the collectivised bakeries and parading through the streets chanting political slogans of Soviet manufacture. This offensive, together with other, equally craven endeavours, was designed to prepare the ground for when Russian ships docked loaded with food supplies 'courtesy' (read 'paid for with gold by the ton') of the Russian workers for their Spanish brethren.

CNT- FAI demonstration in July 1936, or soon after.

**The author:** José Peirats in 1955, after completing *La CNT en la revolución española*, when he was editor of the exile CNT paper in Toulouse.

**Mateo Morral:** On 31 May 1906, Morral, a young employee of Francisco Ferrer's publishing house, made an unsuccessful attempt to kill King Alfonso XIII and his bride, Princess Victoria Eugenia, on their wedding day. The attempt failed and Morral fled, committing suicide two days later on 2 June.

**Francisco Ferrer i Guardia:** Anarchist, publisher and founder of La Escuela Moderna. The school sought to educate the working class in a rational, secular and non-coercive setting. Ferrer was framed for the events of the Tragic Week of July 1909 and was executed by firing squad on 13 October 1909.

**El paredón (the wall):** Barcelona's Montjuic fortress was a place for the torture and execution of revolutionaries. The scene depicts the execution of anarchists in the wake of the Tragic Week of July 1909 in Barcelona.

**Manuel Buenacasa:** CNT activist and historian of the Spanish workers.

**Salvador Seguí ('El Noi del Sucre'):** The leading figure in the Catalan trade union movement. movement during and after World War One. He was assassinated by gunmen in the pay of the Barcelona bourgeoisie.

**Anarchists in exile:** Francisco Ascaso and Buenaventura Durruti and their partners in Brussels in 1929, following their expulsion from France. From left to right: Bertha Favert, Ascaso, Emilienne Morin and Durruti. Together with García Oliver, the men formed a clandestine affinity group during their time in exile dedicated to building up the workers' movement and giving drive to their combativity. They smuggled arms and ammunition, assassinated the murderers hired by the employers, carried out robberies to support striking workers and financed libertarian publishing groups.

**The birth of the Second Republic:** Crowds gathering in the Puerta del Sol, Madrid, 14 April 1931, celebrating the proclamation of the Second Republic.

**Angel Pestaña:** One-time national secretary of the CNT, who called for intervention in the political arena.

**Manuel Azaña (left) and Francesc Macià,** who together represented the high hopes of the liberal bourgeoisie under the Second Republic.

French anarchists **Louis Lecoïn** (left centre) and **Pierre Odéon** (right centre) on a visit to Barcelona's Poble Espanyol, May 1931; they are flanked by (left to right) Miguel García Vivancos, García Oliver, Ascaso and Durruti.

**Republican justice:** Labour activists are arrested by the paramilitary Assault Guards, Zaragoza, 1931.

**Landless agricultural labourers detained by the Civil Guard, Castilblanco, 1932.** After Alcalá Zamora became president in December 1931, working-class discontent with the impotent bourgeois Republic boiled over into violent confrontation with a cycle of insurrections which began the very next month.

**Republican repression:** Assault Guards and Civil Guards quell the revolutionary uprising at Casas Viejas, January 1933. On the morning of 11 January 1933, unaware that the rising had been crushed elsewhere throughout the peninsula, the anarchists of Casas Viejas in Andalusia called on the township's mayor to inform him that libertarian communism had been declared and that his services were no longer required. The final death toll was 22, all shot in cold blood. Premier Azaña's orders were: 'No wounded, no prisoners, shoot them in the gut.'

**Friend of the CNT?: Lluís Companys i Jover (left and right).** An artful and skilful Catalan politician, and the defence lawyer for many CNT activists, he knew the anarchist leaders of old. Turning their political inexperience to his own advantage, he was able to recover political power and reassert the authority of the Generalitat on the streets of the Catalan capital.

**Anarchist arsenal:** Weapons seized by the authorities from anarchist insurgents in Asturian uprising, 1934.

An Asturian miner with some of the dynamite used to great effect in the struggle with the army in October 1934.

**José María Martínez:** A leading Asturian anarchist, murdered by governmental forces following the revolution of 1934.

**Republican repression:** Miners and their wives are detained by the Civil Guard in Asturias, October 1934.

**Republican repression:** The Civil Guard makes arrests following an attempt to declare libertarian communism in rural Catalonia, probably January 1932.

**'To the barricades!':** A Barcelona street scene on 19 July 1936.

**Anarchist martyr:** Francisco Ascaso, veteran CNT and anarchist militant, killed in street fighting outside the Atarazanas barracks, Barcelona, 20 July 1936.

**Francisco Ascaso (left):** Chatting with his brother, Joaquín (right) hours before his death. Joaquín subsequently became president of the Regional Defence Council of Aragón.

**Mariano Rodríguez Vázquez (“Marianet”):** A gypsy construction worker who became national secretary of the CNT in 1936. Vázquez was a supporter of CNT participation in the government.

**Dual power in Barcelona:** Diego Abad de Santillán from the CNT with Lluís Companys, president of the Generalitat (right). A philosophy student in Madrid, de Santillán had become caught up in the revolutionary events of 1917 and anarchism. Amnestied in 1918, he returned to his adopted homeland, Argentina, where he became involved in the Argentinian anarchist paper *La Protesta* and the Argentinian anarcho-syndicalist union FORA. Santillán joined the FAI in mid-1933, on his return from Argentina. He developed an obsession with the need for economic planning and formulating a scientific approach to anarchism. It was Santillán who pushed for the CNT’s participation in the Militias Committee and the waiving of libertarian communism as an immediate objective.

Popular barricades in the Paralelo, Barcelona, Sunday 19 July 1936.

**The people armed:** The Durruti Column marching through Barcelona en route for the Aragón Front.

**‘To Aragón!’:** An anti-fascist militia column departing for the front, Barcelona, July 1936.

**To Aragón:** Anarchist militiamen preparing for the Aragón front, summer, 1936.

**Durruti:** Ènterviewed by Pierre van Paasen of the *Toronto Star* – ‘I do not expect any help for a libertarian revolution from any government in the world... We expect no help, not even from our own government, in the last analysis.’ ‘But’, interjected van Paasen, ‘You will be sitting on a pile of ruins.’ Durruti answered: ‘We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a time. For, you must not forget, we can also build. It is we the workers who built these palaces and cities here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers, can build others to take their place. And better ones! We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth; there is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie might blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world here, in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.’

**A fragile alliance:** Joan Puig Elias (centre) with (to his left) Josep Taradellas ( ERC) and Joan Comorera (PSUC).

**Anarchists in the national government:** Federica Montseny (centre), the Minister of Health, and Juan García Oliver (right), the Minister of Justice.

**Federica Montseny:** The first female minister in Spanish history. She can be characterised by her contradictory attitudes and her influential personality.

**Francisco Ascaso:** In Barcelona, 19 July 1936. Aragónese anarchist, he worked as a baker and waiter and was a member of 'Los Solidarios' group with Durruti, Aurelio Fernández, García Oliver, Gregorio Jover and Ricardo Sanz. He died on the barricades on 20 July 1936.

**To the Aragón front:** Members of the departing García Oliver militia column outside the Bakunin barracks, Barcelona, 28 August 1936.

**At the barricades:** Workers fighting to put down the military coup.

19–20 July 1936.

**Juan García Oliver:** The first ever, and hopefully last, 'anarchist' minister of justice believed in the need for governmental collaboration.

**Buenaventura Durruti:** Aragón front, August 1936. Shortly after this photograph was taken he went with his militia column to help defend Madrid and was killed in his car by a stray bullet.

**'Milicianas':** Militia women at the front.

**United in the rearguard?:** The mass meeting organised by the CNT, the FAI, the UGT and the PSUC in Barcelona's Plaça Monumental, 25 October 1936. By excluding the POUM, the 'unity accord' which followed was a prelude to further attacks on the revolution.

**Federica Montseny:** Addressing the mass meeting of 25 October 1936.

**International solidarity:** The Swiss medical mission's mobile medical operating theatre at the Catalan Regional Committee headquarters of the CNT (casa CNT- FAI), originally the Banco de Cambio. The translation, press and radio service also operated from here. The Swiss mission consisted of 5 doctors and 8 medical orderlies. (26 October 1936)

**Power in the streets:** A CNT- FAI rally in Barcelona.

**The people armed:** A CNT- FAI militia force prepares to leave the Bakunin barracks, Barcelona, 28 August 1936.

**War production:** One of a number of improvised armoured cars produced by workers of Barcelona's Hispano-Suiza car plant.

**Revolutionary Aragón I:** Agrarian collective workers threshing grain. The collectives came into being spontaneously because there was a large minority who were active, strong and guided by an ideal which had continued since the 1870s, when started by Bakunin. According to Gaston Leval there were 'six, seven, eight millions' of collectivists and the efficiency with which an enterprise worked far exceeded that of the private sector.

**Revolutionary Aragón II:** Threshing on another collective. Within Spanish anarchism there were two complementary aspects: the characteristic motivation peculiar to anarchists and at the same time, the mentality and aspirations of those who worked on the land – to live better and at the same time to break the mould in which they were cast.

Water tankers, July 1936.

**Collectivised workshop:** Leatherworkers and harnessmakers, May 1937.

**The people armed:** Militia women at the Madrid front.

**Identity check:** *Miliciana* controlling outskirts of Madrid.

**People's warship:** The battleship *Jaime I* seized by its crew, July 1936.



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Consequences of the Confederation's collaboration

Through the preceding chapters we have been able to grasp the surprising transformation wrought in the profile of the CNT from the point of view of its principles and tactics. Given the ideological record of the CNT as laid down and ratified at its congresses, a record of anti-governmentalism and hostility to participation in governments and parliaments and enthusiasm for direct action and its own solutions to the problem of a revolutionary transformation of society, its transformation after 20 July 1936 was grave indeed. The stages in that transformation were as follows: on 20 July 1936 the CNT, victorious throughout Catalonia, chose to collaborate with the political parties of the petty bourgeoisie rather than press on towards the attainment of its cherished final aims. The Generalitat and its president were confirmed in their positions. A revolutionary government, the CCMA, was immediately set up. With the exception of the Lliga Catalana, which was declared hostile, every force within Catalan politics was represented in this government or committee, creating a duality of authority which was fated, in time, to be resolved in favour of the Generalitat.

With collaboration as their premise, events were to go promptly against the CNT. Once the premise had been accepted, the consequences were necessarily logical. The Madrid government decreed the mobilisation of draftees at the start of August. This was a direct snub to the sovereign power won by the people upon routing the rebel military, when it fraternised with the troops, stormed the barracks and abolished the army and its traditional barrack-style discipline. The CNT's initial response to this ordinance, as later to other kindred ordinances, was a blank rejection of the government's orders, whereupon compromise solutions were worked out, generally equidistant from the pretensions of the government and from revolutionary extremes. Such formulas boiled down to a period of grace and nothing more, and, alongside the hybrid agencies and solutions worked out on the libertarians' initiative, the state was to cling steadfastly to its positions, confident that with the passage of time it could gain the upper hand.

In contrast to the Confederation's line on 'volunteer militias', the state was to maintain its own line about a 'regular army'. And if it momentarily feigned the actions of one who gives way out of powerlessness, it nonetheless did not retreat a single step. In so far as it was able, the government was to rebuild, alongside the militias, the old-style military formations. Stalinists and socialists were to form regiments, the former on the express instructions of watchwords emanating from the USSR. The mentality of the Stalinists is graphically illustrated by this dispatch dating from 31 August 1936:

At nine o'clock tonight, a militia group known as 'Steel' (*Acero*),<sup>1</sup> and organised by the communists, set off from the communist centre located in calle Francos Ro-

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<sup>1</sup> Recruited from metalworkers, the 'Steel' battalion was the first militia to be militarised and, after adopting the formula of the People's Army, provided the basis for the famous 5th Regiment. It later became the 5th Army Corps. From the outset it was dominated by the communists and was given privileged access to Russian weaponry.

dríguez. The militia marched to the Presidential Palace, and thence to the Puerta del Sol where it made its entrance to the strains of the national anthem and paraded in grand martial style. This militia has its own band of musicians, as well as a sapper team, and comprises 400 men armed with carbines, in addition to a machine-gunner section. Eight beautiful girls were assigned to this splendid militia, which they will accompany to the battlefields. From the Puerta del Sol, they marched through the streets of Madrid, to a chorus of cheering throughout. They arrived in front of the War Ministry and General Castelló took a few minutes away from his work to review the militia, whose members wear blue overalls and brand-new belts.

There were then two governments in Catalonia – the Generalitat and the CCMA. The continued existence of the Generalitat was a hindrance to the other government. Then again, there was also the army, which the central government, in concert with all of the political denominations (except the CNT) was striving to build up, and the militias, which had sprung to life spontaneously in the revolution. Wherever the government was unable to forestall the survival of popular organs, it espoused the tactic of accepting the duality.

With regard to public order, the revolution gave rise to guards, checkpoints and civilian rear-guard patrols which obeyed the directives of the various factions. Such spontaneous agencies were enough, more than enough, for the maintenance of so-called public order. Nonetheless, the state had seen fit not to disband a single one of its numerous armed corps, not even the Civil Guard of ill fame, now renamed the ‘ National Republican Guard’. Along with that corps, and alongside the militias or the people under arms, the government retained its Investigation and Supervision Corps, its Assault Guards and its Carabineers. So, in addition to the rear-guard militias, there were five rear-guard corps, four of which belonged to the government, and this despite the fact that the front lines were crying out for men and equipment. In the middle of October 1936 the ‘ Iron Column’ demonstrated violently against this tragic absurdity.

The government preferred to see the front lines under strength rather than yield up as much as one of its positions in the rear-guard of the populace. There was a persistent series of stratagems designed to disarm the people. When defamation, innuendo and slander directed against the popular forces failed to achieve the yearned-for disbandment of the armed non-state forces, recourse was had to the most curious legal ploys. For instance, on 20 September, the Largo Caballero government issued the following decree:

As a matter of urgency in the present upheaval, the services for the maintenance of order in the rear-guard require proper regulation. Such services must be efficiently provided by persons who are not only loyal to the regime but also identified with the struggle it is waging in order to defeat the rebels. This function has been partially fulfilled by groups of militias which grasped that necessity and which have worked in concert with the police and security forces to that end. But since their function is not specific and given that there is no coordinated organization among the various groups which perform it, it was hard to preclude infiltration by the regime’s enemy whose sole intention was to hamper such important work and bring into disrepute the organisations which had been carrying it out. In consideration of all this, the Ministry of the Interior has deemed it vital that all of the initiatives implemented by

the political parties and labour unions be amalgamated within a single organisation of an interim nature which may ensure a degree of order which is indispensable to the peace of mind of the civilian population in the rearguard. By agreement with the Council of Ministers and on the instigation of the Interior Ministry, I hereby prescribe as follows:

1. That the minister of the interior be authorised to organise in Spain a corps of an interim nature charged with cooperating with such corps as already exist in respect of the maintenance of public order in the rearguard. This corps to be called the ‘Rearguard Watch Militias’ (Milicias de Vigilancia de la Retaguardia – MVR), and of necessity its personnel will be drawn from the militias presently organised by the various unions and political parties fighting against the rebels.
2. The strength of the aforesaid MVR, their organisation and their precise duties will be prescribed by an appropriate ordinance which will be issued by order of the minister.
3. Those who, not being members of the MVR, attempt to carry out functions peculiar to the same, will be regarded as acting mischievously, unless they are from the Investigation and Surveillance Forces (Cuerpos de investigación y vigilancia), the Security Corps (Cuerpos de seguridad), Assault Guard, National Republican Guard and Carabineers.
4. Such persons as may belong to these militias have a preferential right to join the MVR, provided that they fulfil the other conditions necessary for membership.
5. The funds necessary for the upkeep of these forces are to be made available by the Ministry of Finance.

The intentions behind this decree are quite clear. On the pretext of granting official recognition to the popular militias, the latter were turned into a fifth mercenary corps at the disposal of the government. The decree makes ample provision for their possible absorption (article 4) at a more or less speedy rate by the traditional agencies of the state, so that subsequently these may proceed with moral authority and the utmost rigour (article 3) against any citizen bearing arms but not under the control of the government nor respectful of government discipline.

As for Catalonia, despite the region’s revolutionary ascendancy, things followed the same pattern. The avalanche of slander directed against the armed populace of the rearguard, against the union militias and the district defence committees was unending; so was the campaign against ‘uncontrollables’ and the eternal chant of ‘all weapons to the front’. And the Generalitat, seemingly a token government, retained the entirety of its pre-war repressive machinery: the police, Assault Guards, Mossos d’Esquadra and National Republican Guard.

The following example will suffice to show the slightness of the indentation made upon these corps in the Catalan rearguard by the events of the revolution. At the end of July 1936, our aircraft dropped over Zaragoza leaflets which went along these lines:

Soldiers of Zaragoza! Do not open fire on your brothers. When you sight the Catalan militias on the streets of Zaragoza execute your commanders and defect with your weapons to the camp of your comrades from the CNT and the FAI. You soldiers

who have listened in a daze to the orders of General Cabanellas,<sup>2</sup> listen to us: the Spanish proletariat has risen on a war footing against the murderers who command you. We realise that you have been the victims of deception. Your commanders are the embodiment of Spain's black reaction. The officers who give your orders are the defenders of the big estates ( *latifundios*) which condemn the Spanish peasantry to death by hunger. Do not waver. Turn your guns against your leaders. Revolt this very day.

One such harangue that was addressed in identical terms to the Civil Guard in Zaragoza was published in *Solidaridad Obrera*, along with the signatures of some members of the National Republican Guard from Barcelona. On 5 August, the press carried certain declarations by the Generalitat minister for home affairs, in the course of which he stated:

In a number of newspapers recently a letter was published in which two Civil Guards wrote, on behalf of the 19th Tercio,<sup>3</sup> to urge their Zaragoza colleagues to commit acts incompatible with the regulations and spirit of that institution whose chief epithet is that of *Benemérita* ('meritorious'). No sooner did the aforementioned Tercio of Civil Guards discover this than they appeared spontaneously before their colonel to register their protest against those using their names without their consent or permission. At the same time they reiterated to their colonel their fidelity, along with the loyalty of the others, together with the staunchest, most cordial discipline which keeps them united with their officers out of loyalty, duty and affection. The home affairs minister, to whom the sincerity of this display is evident, having had the pleasure also of hearing them personally, hopes that the falsehood of that report and the attitude of the *Benemérita*, consonant as ever with the spirit of its regulations, may be clearly understood.

Developments in May 1937 were to demonstrate the presence of similarly anti-popular prejudices in the ranks of the Assault Guards also. The outcome of this tug of war between the Generalitat, the CCMA and the CNT- FAI on the issue of public order was that the control patrols were set up. The organisation of the patrols did not preclude the retention of large uniformed bodies of men at the exclusive disposition of the Generalitat. This duality was allowed to persist because it furnished a bridgehead for forthcoming offensives designed to snatch control of the streets away from the people and thus to strangle the popular revolution. But most deplorable of all was the continued retreat on the part of the revolutionary organisations towards increasingly precarious and hardly defensible positions.

The new state of affairs thrown up by the revolution has created new needs which simply must be attended to with the utmost urgency. One of the questions which any successful revolution has to resolve is the maintenance of the revolutionary order

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<sup>2</sup> A liberal, freemason and friend of Alcalá Zamora and Lerroux, Miguel Cabanellas tricked the left in Zaragoza into believing that he was loyal to the Republic before backing the July 1936 coup and initiating a bloody purge of democratic politicians and labour leaders in Aragón.

<sup>3</sup> The term given to a Civil Guard division.

without which the victorious movement itself would not have been possible. This, which becomes a necessity in every place where the revolution has triumphed, is a need much more pressingly felt in great conurbations like Barcelona. One of the obligations incumbent upon the organisations which make up the antifascist front is the obligation to rebuild economic and social life anew upon the ruins of all that the revolution has destroyed. Indubitably, before there can be a commitment to construction it is vital that victory first be organised and all of the opportunities flowing from it guaranteed. The maintenance of the revolutionary order which precludes any possible misadventure and simultaneously renders impossible any attempted fascist resurrection is fundamental before embarking upon the constructive stage. From this necessity has sprung the creation of the control patrols. These patrols are a patently revolutionary institution, born of the revolution itself and exclusively at its disposal...<sup>4</sup>

Turning back to the process of militarisation, the reader will recall the decree issued by the central government at the start of August which mobilised draftees. They will also recall the resultant popular protests and the consequent espousal of an antimilitarist stance by the Catalan CNT regional committee. Within the space of a few days the Confederation was retreating from its dogmatic stand and accepting mobilisation under the auspices of the Generalitat and the CCMA (6 August 1936). The compromise formula involved the creation of workers' and soldiers' councils which were to have been applicable to the armed corps and patrols in the rearguard. Following this, at the end of September, the CNT abandoned yet another of its basic precepts, and not merely a revolutionary, but an ideological one at that. It agreed to join the Generalitat Council (for 'Council' read 'government') and to the dissolution of the CCMA.<sup>5</sup>

In the political manifesto of the new government, with its CNT participants (see Chapter Eleven), one can read:

The immediate programme of the council is the following:

(a) Deployment of maximum effort in the war, sparing nothing which may contribute towards a speedy and victorious end of the same. Unified command, coordination of all combat units, creation of conscripted militias and a tightening of discipline.

Offered in exchange for this were collectivisation of large rural estates and respect for small farmholdings, collectivisation of the big firms abandoned by their owners, workers' control over privately owned industries, etc. This is to say that the offer fell a long way short of what the people had already taken unto themselves without waiting for any decrees.

Militarisation of the militias was implicitly and explicitly accepted by this declaration. On 30 October an editorial in *Solidaridad Obrera* had this to say:

The Generalitat has embarked upon a series of measures which will, incontrovertibly, have an impact upon the course of events. Mobilisation has been decreed for all

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<sup>4</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 10 August 1936.

<sup>5</sup> In a remark characteristic of the rank reformism of certain anarchists, García Oliver declared: 'The CCMA has been dissolved because the Generalitat now represents us all.'

citizens who are of an age for military service. And, as expeditiously as the present situation requires, the draftees for 1932, 1933, 1934 and 1935 have just been called up. In addition, the council has seen fit to invest those formations in the Catalan antifascist zone with military overtones. The militarisation of combatants may be distasteful to those idealists who postulate the noxiousness of units which act in accordance with arbitrary orders. But the course of events on the battlefields makes it commendable that militia members should adhere to instructions devised with the instrumentation of war tactics. One of the quintessential aspects of war is the military code. The revolution has smashed to smithereens the lengthy code worked out by Alfonso's brasshats and entirely abolished the phenomenon of barrack-drilled masses consonant with a servility which the capitalist regime instituted for economic reasons. We are not familiar with the contents of the new military code worked out by those individuals whom the antifascist organisations have appointed to positions of responsibility. In our estimation, the code which the revolution needs at the present juncture in the war must be of clearly revolutionary derivation. Militia members have to be looked upon as protagonists in the grandiose epic with which the Spanish proletariat is regaling the whole world. Most certainly we believe that the war has to be taken seriously. Immediately prior to the formation of this council which embraces every antifascist grouping, we discovered an infinity of things which did not in the least fit in with the contingencies highlighted by the present moment. We must continue along the course astutely plotted for us following the appearance of decrees concerned with needs which cannot be sidestepped, unless one wishes to risk a conclusion which would leave us in the wilderness for a very, very lengthy period of time. Let the comrades appointed not forget the sabotage which may be carried out in connection with the mobilisation order. Persons who, in these grave times for the revolution, do not undertake to lend a hand in the work being done by the people, have to be classified as deserters and must pay a penalty befitting high treason.

It took only a few hours for the reality of the reactionary intent behind all this to get *Solidaridad Obrera* to jettison its euphoric, optimistic tone. Another of the paper's editorials the following day (31 October) opined:

Recently the press has published the decree providing for the militarisation of the militias of Catalonia, in keeping with the lead given by the Ministry of War in Madrid. Calmly and at length we have perused the decree on the militarisation of the militias and the military ordinances to this end. From the provisions contained in the decree as well as from the dispositions referred to earlier, we have drawn the conclusion that rudimentary grasp of the problem exists, along with an increasingly pronounced tendency to restrict the sights of the revolution, channelling the forces unleashed by it inside the old moulds of the system which spawned the military revolt of 19 July.

It is one thing for us all to recognise, as we all do, the need to regulate the militias and furnish a stern basis for the fighting men's sense of responsibility, even going so far as to enforce rigorous penalties on those who attempt to quit the field of battle;

however, attempts to recreate the discipline that was destroyed by the army rebellion is a different matter altogether.

Article 2 of the decree, which enforces the existing code of military justice until such time as a new code for the militias may be devised, has made the most lamentable impression. Above all, it is evident that there is an absolute lack of any grasp of reality or any clear appreciation of what has occurred. In the view of many antifascists of liberal outlook, the revolution is not yet a *fait accompli*. There is still a vulgar mentality which, loyal to the position they occupied prior to 19 July, tends almost unwittingly to reconstruct what existed then and has been destroyed by the inexorable revolutionary process. Such conduct merely succeeds in demoralising the multitude, diminishing their élan and converting the vast revolutionary multitudes who have volunteered to face death in the people's militia army into a flock of scared and unenthusiastic folk who fight on even though they have lost the vigour and strength which only great social upheavals produce in the collective soul.

No. Militarisation of the militias, mobilisation of the proletariat and of all the antifascist population cannot and must not mean the resurrection of the old army. Let us devise new solutions, a new concept of duty and honour, far-removed from the rigid, aristocratic code which, were it something solid, might serve to manure the land. Instead, the people's heroism has endorsed new concepts of struggle and of life which we can raise to the heights of moral codes, to the stature of implacable and inexorable laws of war.

With the reader's consent, we will leap ahead to December 1936 in order to gauge the speed with which things were changing, all grist to the reactionary mills of the state.

From 4 November on, the government included four ministers from the CNT. In its edition of 5 November, *Solidaridad Obrera* carried the following article, signed by one Domínguez Navascal:

Spawned in the fever of revolution, the committees of the armed corps have not been designed to seize command of their units, but rather, observing all of the formalities, have only been concerned with what has been deemed truly necessary and with monitoring the activities of those who wield command and ensuring that those who carry out the orders do not trespass against revolutionary norms. In principle, this healthy activity on the part of the committee was regarded as indispensable, and those who always thought along revolutionary lines would not have failed somehow to perform a duty which, had it not been performed, would find us in dire straits today.

But now, when we still cannot be sure of the mettle of half of those "reliable" persons who have "ensconced" themselves in commanding positions, an attempt is under way to eradicate the work of revolutionary agencies.

In proceeding directly towards the establishment of a unified command, the committees of the armed corps and, banded together, the workers' and soldiers' councils, cannot be viewed as anything other than keen and dependable collaborators, because, in one way or another, their sole mission is to ensure that the organisms

which they monitor do not deviate by as much as a single iota from the revolutionary trajectory upon which we have embarked. But it appears to be the case that people who style themselves revolutionaries and who, undeservedly no doubt, hold office and feel their prerogatives jeopardised, are resentful of this “interference” as they describe that which is only proper and are straining with all of their might to get a free hand in their decision-making. And this state of affairs cannot go on. When we finish off the fascists, we will see whether we can leave those who occupy official positions with a free hand in their intrigues. For the present, what we cannot tolerate is that anyone — no matter who they may be — should permit themselves the luxury of dispensing with a control that we, the lower orders, the ones who in the last analysis have made and are making this revolution, are obliged to mount.

It is a matter of much regret to us that agencies which were under an obligation to share that task with us have stepped aside without any acceptable excuse, but that alone is enough to give the lie to their would-be displays of revolutionism. We are revolutionaries. With deeds we demonstrate it: we have little stomach for wasting time on preaching that which we do not believe. We will hammer that point home, so that public opinion may be well informed and may appreciate who it is that is playing a straight game.

In Chapter Ten, when we first broached the matter of the workers’ and soldiers’ councils, we reprinted a part of the declarations by militant Alfonso Miguel who made such a contribution to the formation of those bodies. We will turn now to the second part of his deposition, this part also being taken from the book *De Julio a Julio* published in Barcelona in 1937 by *Tierra y Libertad* publishers. What Miguel has to say brings out new facets of the evolution of the CNT leadership’s thinking in the face of the realities of the war and the revolution.

Circumstances are in the saddle. Eschewing Byzantine scruples and outmoded prejudices, the Spanish people fell in line with the dialectic of history. The intervention — whether direct or indirect — of world capitalism forced a heroic option upon us: the option of forging an army suited to defence and offence. Naturally enough, as soon as the chaotic activity of the earliest moments ceased and organisation of the war was able to proceed in an orderly manner, those organs which had acted as our saviours ought to have faded away so as to leave the new organisational forces room to operate. We entered a higher stage determined by the greater problem of overcoming an enemy of great (thanks to help from abroad) material power. The militias came to an end, being converted into regular units, while the workers’ and soldiers’ councils automatically ceased to exist; the former were replaced by a new body: the army; the latter by a new agency basically charged with the same functions — the War Commissariat. At every level, the commissars perform, in organisational and in legal terms, their functions with admirable zeal through the simple, enthusiastic men who were elected by the Corps of Carabineers, Assault Guards, National Republican Guards and small military units. They did so all together in fraternal concert with the representatives appointed by the UGT and the CNT, representatives drawn from the factory and the field. The people, united by a common class interest, were



able to keep morale high and make an immeasurable sacrifice on the fronts. Without that fervently revolutionary unity, forged in the grandiose heat of 19 July could it — unarmed — have withstood an armed, disciplined, well-led enemy? Could the unity and zeal for battle of everyone, militias and armed institutions alike, have been maintained without the moral and organ-isational bond of the workers' and soldier's committees? We simply have to concede at all times the revolutionary and realistic premise of effecting at each stage the necessary transformations required for victory eschewing all prejudice, with a cool head and with intelligent audacity.

How could it have been possible — this talk about 'organs which had acted as our saviours and which ought to have faded away so as to leave the new organisational forces room to operate'? Where were these 'new forces' which took over from the workers' and soldiers' councils? Was it the army, which took the place of the militias? Was it the Security Corps and Corps of Carabineers, obedient to the Ministry of the Interior? Or was it the Commissariat, a body of Soviet provenance, an espionage and propaganda agency at the service of the parties which monopolised power? The only 'new' thing from an anarchist's lips was this cult of opportunism, this absence of 'Byzantine scruples' and 'outmoded prejudices' and above all else, this obedience to the 'dialectic of history', a rank borrowing from Stalino- Marxism.

There is no denying that the situation on the fronts was going from bad to worse. Badajoz, Toledo, Irún and San Sebastián had fallen into enemy hands. But it is equally certain that all of the fronts, including Madrid, were for many months under the charge of the people and its militias. It is a baseless exaggeration to attribute the natural 'chaos' of the early months of the war to ineptitude on the part of the people. To blame the initial reverses on the incompetence of the militias is to ignore the superior attack capability of the rebel army as a result of meticulous preparation, especially since the rebels had had time and opportunity enough to hatch their plans under the protective aegis of the republic's governments and the parties of the Popular Front, who were the only ones inept and incompetent to watch over the interests of the nation. Was it not the people and its intuition and heroism that after all were the only things capable of rescuing half of Spain from the fascist jackboot in the space of 48 hours? Was it not the loss of the other half of Spain due to the cowardice of the government and its officials, the provincial governors? Did the rapid progress of the Catalan militias from Barcelona to the very gates of Zaragoza and Huesca not constitute a victory for the people? Wasn't it the government's doing that the fabulous assets of the Bank of Spain were frozen in the early months, when it was still possible to purchase weapons abroad? Was it not also the government which assented to the Non-Intervention Committee? Did not the central authorities blithely deny all possible aid to the fronts where their control was not complete? And was not the government the first to evacuate Madrid and make a present of a munitions plant (in the form of Toledo) to the enemy? And to top it all, wasn't it the government which set about making war in the rearguard, concerning itself with the defence of the state and the state's institutions, the reorganisation of the police corps and re-establishing the paraphernalia of the courts, in preference to giving serious attention to the needs of the war?

As far as public order goes, then, in the rear, the only area with which the various governments which followed one another throughout the war were really preoccupied, government plans were

implemented at the end of December 1936 with the acquiescence of the leaders of the various parties and organisations. On 28 December news agencies released the following dispatch:

Valencia, 28. The *Gaceta* has published a decree from the Interior Ministry establishing a National Security Council in the capital, which is to be chaired by the interior minister with the director-general of security as vice-secretary. There are to be two councillors representing the UGT, two representing the CNT, plus another five councillors, one from each political party and organisation affiliated to the antifascist front; a commander from the Security Corps; a representative elected from the ranks of the Security Corps; an inspector chosen by vote by those of similar rank; a commander elected by the vote of all commanders, and an agent chosen by vote from among all the agents of that group.

The functions of the national council have been prescribed, and these include the choice of uniform, weaponry and future training for the various forces, the staffing of units of the corps, their arming and the distribution of personnel, etc.

In each provincial capital there is to be a provincial security council comprising one representative from each union grouping and chaired by the civil governor and, in the case of inter-provincial councils, by a special government delegate. The Security Corps alone will be entrusted with functions relating to the maintenance of public order and vigilance. This corps will be divided into two groups: the uniformed and the non-uniformed. The former is to be subdivided into three sections: rural security, urban security and front-line security.

The latter is to be subdivided into three further subsections: frontiers, judicial security and special investigations. The rural security branch is to have charge of keeping watch on highways, roads and countryside and in villages and cities with populations of less than 20,000.

The urban security branch will take charge of everything having to do with public disorder wheresoever it may arise. The frontier security branch will have charge of the supervision and investigation of frontiers, railway services and everything having to do with the entry and departure of foreigners. Judicial security is to devote itself to the tackling of crimes and criminals of an ordinary nature. The special investigations branch will have charge of everything connected with gatherings, public demonstrations and activities inimical to the regime and whatever missions of this nature may be entrusted to them by their comrades. Next are laid down the age and conditions of membership of the corps. For membership of the frontiers branch a knowledge of two languages other than Castilian will be indispensable. The manner in which command is to be shared out is also prescribed, as is the establishment of professional training centres.

The corps of the National Republican Guard, Security, Assault Guards and workers' patrols are thereby dissolved. A number of interim provisions appear at the foot of the decree. The first of these prescribes that the forces which are disbanded under this article and which are serving on the war fronts are to retain their current titles, organisation and commanders until such time as they resume their proper duties.

Should they so desire, all suspended personnel will apply within 15 days for entry into the Security Corps, specifying the branch or section of which they seek membership. Such applications are to be forwarded to the interior minister, who will pronounce upon them, having first submitted them to the provincial and national councils for scrutiny and investigation.

For the duration of the government's stay in Valencia, that city is to be the place of residence of the national council. In Madrid a provincial security council is to be set up, under the chairmanship of the chairman of the Madrid Defence Council.

The decree is to be applicable throughout the territory, excepting as specified under the Statutes of Catalonia and the Basque Country, where these jurisdictions are to be implemented in accordance with the provisions of said statutes.

It is easy to appreciate that the single corps in mind was an agency at the exclusive disposal of the government and serving those interests defended by the state. The political and labour union representatives, and especially the latter, were swamped by an overwhelming majority of government agents and of the corps itself, who owed obedience to the government. Thus the people under arms was erased utterly from public life. In the wake of this ordinance a mad race ensued on the part of the different parties and organisations to plant as many of their members as possible in the ranks of this new policing organisation. And thereafter the 'comrade councillor' and 'comrade minister' would be joined by a 'comrade Assault Guard' who was in reality an armed agent at the disposal of the General-Directorate of Security or of the Ministry of the Interior.

The events of May 1937 were to demolish the last remaining hopes placed in the revolutionary content of the new corps.

Given this whole series of events, a question is in order: did this ideological transformation in the CNT, the dynamo of the revolution, come about without reservations, internal frictions and resistance on the part of libertarian militants?

We have already seen how, on the economic plane, militant anarchism forged ahead, undaunted, with its work of transforming the economy. It is not to be doubted — for to do so would be to display ignorance of the psychology of the libertarian rank-and-file of the CNT — that a muffled contest, occasionally erupting at plenums and assemblies and manifest in some press organs, broke out as soon as the backsliding began. In this connection, the body of opinion hostile to any possible deviation in tactics and principles was able to count throughout upon spirited champions. Among these, one might cite the Valencia daily *Nosotros*,<sup>6</sup> in its initial incarnation a newspaper orientated and sustained financially by the 'Iron Column'; up until the beginning of autumn 1936 there was also Barcelona's *Tierra y Libertad*,<sup>7</sup> and up until May 1937 the valiant *Acracia*<sup>8</sup> of Lleida. For as long as it survived, *Ideas*<sup>9</sup> of l'Hospitalet de Llobregat stood

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<sup>6</sup> A Valencia-based anarchist paper and the unofficial organ of the 'Iron Column'.

<sup>7</sup> In early autumn 1936 there was a change in the editorial line of *Tierra y Libertad* owing to the fact that 'collaborationists' from within the CNT- FAI constituted a majority on its editorial committee.

<sup>8</sup> A Lleida-based anarchist newspaper run by Félix Lorenzo Páramo and which appeared intermittently in the years 1933–4 and 1936–7; it was a daily publication during the revolution. Peirats wrote for the paper and took it in an oppositionist direction, criticising the governmentalism of the CNT- FAI leadership. The paper ceased to publish after the 'May Days' of 1937.

<sup>9</sup> The paper of the anarchist movement in Lower Llobregat, just to the south of Barcelona.

firm. Tortosa's *Ciudad y Campo*<sup>10</sup> had a fine record and, from spring 1937, right up to the end of the war, the burden of opposition was borne by *Ruta*,<sup>11</sup> the regional organ of the Catalan JJ.LL.

Below we reprint one of the editorials of *Acracia*, entitled 'Word Games' (*La sofística de los términos*).

We do not make war just for the sake of making war. Were our movement compelled to be encapsulated by one blunt adjective that adjective would not be "warlike", but "revolutionary".

There is yet time for us to express ourselves in the most readily understood form possible. Definite facts and definite ideas must be given their proper names. There must be an end to this mistake of double entendres which complicate the dictionary. And the fact is that frequently a play on words is followed up by the *fait accompli*. "War" has been so loudly trumpeted as a synonym for "revolution" that we have been induced to invest in this war with all of the bellicose accoutrements that were always odious to us: the regular army and discipline. The same thing has happened with discipline in the proper sense. There have been comrades aplenty who, despite their *bona fides*, have flirted with the term and spoken to us of discipline while painting this in colours diametrically opposed to freedom. This, far from rendering discipline more humane, is a bestialisation of freedom. It is not so very long ago that an attempt was made in our circles to peddle a version of discipline implying order and responsibility comparable with anarchy. Such an endeavour always called to our minds the idea of "good government" or "tutelary authority", as opposed to despotic or blatantly authoritarian government. And just as it has not been possible to sort governments into good ones and bad ones — since in fact there are, rather, only bad ones and worse ones — we have come to learn with the passage of time that all discipline is a tributary of regimentation.

We aver that all wars are inauspicious. Were it our belief that we are making a war, we should be the first to desert. The fact is that war never erupts to the advantage of those who inflict and suffer its ravages. We are not fighting here to advance anyone's private interests, though there will be no shortage of bigwigs who will seek to commandeer the fruits of our struggle and gamble on the ups and downs of our successes and our reverses, turning our rearguard into a stockjobbers' lot.

Our fight is against privilege and not for the nation, a fight for liberty and not for the fatherland, a fight for anarchy and not for the Republic. We risk our lives for the collective good and not for a privileged caste. While one of us remains standing, the social revolution, which is the driving force behind our liberation movement, will never want for defenders and combatants, whether they use pen, fist, word or rifle.

We do not make war; war is always made for the purposes of someone else, and fought out between the brethren who are poor in spirit. We make revolution for the benefit of all human beings and against the cliques who are hangovers from parasitism and self-centredness. And as we are making revolution, not one square

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<sup>10</sup> The main anarchist and CNT paper in Tortosa in 1937.

<sup>11</sup> Appearing from 1936 to 1938, this was also an important exile publication during the Franco dictatorship.

metre of reconquered ground must be subtracted from the process of transformation, despite the froglike croaking of those whose lack of spirit and mettle inclines them to dabble in the stagnant waters of politicking.

Analysis of the Confederation's organisational life after the eruption of the revolutionary upheaval is a difficult undertaking. Not only is there a dearth of internal documentation, but there is also the issue of the reliability of the publicity surrounding what were not implemented resolutions.

Nonetheless, we will make an attempt to follow the traces left behind by means of the sparse internal documentation which we have been able to consult.

It is apparent that a local plenum of the Barcelona CNT was held in the immediate wake of the victory over the military rebels. The resolution made public from this plenum recommended a resumption of work by those firms and public services regarded as being of crucial importance – lighting, food distribution, inter-city communications, etc. This is highlighted by the following announcement made by the Food Union, dated 24 July:

The Food Union, which has set up warehouses in the Via Laietana, supplies the provisions for the whole population of Barcelona. All seeking to procure food-stuffs must line up outside the warehouse doors in orderly queues. Opposite the warehouse are the vehicles from the people's kitchens which have been set up in the union centres, atheneums and churches. The police also have to apply to the Food Union. Without the endorsement of the union, nothing may be removed from the warehouse. The unions in the county have undertaken to ship foodstuffs to Barcelona. There is food for everyone in Barcelona now.

So were born the so-called 'supply committees' (*comités de abastos*), set up by the union in every ward and district of the regional capital.

The following communiqué from the Mercantile Union is from the same date:

Now that fascism has been overcome once and for all in the city, all commercial comrades affiliated to the CNT should link up so that the distribution of merchandise, whether from the Foodstuffs Division or from the Clothing Division, may proceed as normal and so that the comrades fighting under arms, as well as those who have returned to their work, may lack for absolutely nothing. It is also a matter of the utmost necessity that the comrades keep a strict check on our city's consumption so that we may organise production in accordance with the country's requirements.

The supply committees of the wards and districts were a spontaneous creation of the unions. The latter anticipated the general guidelines of the organisation. The people's kitchens and public canteens, set up and supplied on the basis of requisitions made of the shops and warehouses, were operational from the very outset. The supply of country produce was assured by agreement with the peasantry and with the inhabitants of adjacent townships.

Turning again to the first Barcelona local federation plenum, we do not know if the issue of collaboration with political groups, particularly the aforementioned proposal from the Generalitat's president, was broached and debated. Thereafter, another local federation plenum was held on 27 July, at which a return to work was agreed upon in accordance with the CCMA, save in those industries not regarded as vital for the pursuance of the struggle.

A further local federation plenum was arranged for 2 August. A proposed agenda contained these specific items:

Fourth. Necessity of some control on the part of the organisation over our armed membership.

(a) What is the feeling of the unions as to how said militias should be paid, for there are official funds available for their payment?

(b) What are the circumstances of the jobless comrades active in these militias? Fifth. How do the unions feel that we should handle those socialised production sites which are presently under our control?

Sixth. To what extent can the organisation accept an influx of new members in the large numbers in which they have been arriving?

Seventh. How do the unions feel that work geared to a solution of the unemployment problem should be handled? Are the jobless to step into the places vacated by the comrades on active service, or is there a case for giving them a subsidy?

At the end of July a regional plenum of local and county committees was held in Barcelona. The public announcement of the terms of reference of this plenum stated:

In the light of the report by our delegation, the national committee has elected to convene a national plenum of regional committees as a matter of the utmost urgency. We have received, together with the summons for today, Sunday, the following agenda: report from the national committee; report from the regional committees; the suitability or otherwise of participating in the national antifascist committee; the appointment of new editorial staff to *CNT*, and designation of the general secretary of the national committee.

A further plenum of local and county committees was held in Barcelona on 10 August. The terms of reference emanating from that plenum had to do with the questions of information and propaganda. However, on 11 August the CNT-UGTFAI-PSUC Liaison Committee was set up. Likewise, the scheme for the control patrols became known.

21 August saw a regional plenum of anarchist groups affiliated to the FAI in Barcelona. The plenum went ahead on this, the second attempt to convene it. It had not been able to proceed on 16 August on account of the paucity of delegations. On 17 August, the plenum was reconvened for 21 August. The agenda was confined to a lengthy report from the 'FAI committees', in whose name the plenum had been convened. This report touched upon the following: the setting up of the CNT-UGTFAI-PSUC Liaison Committee and the workers' and soldiers' councils; the conduct of the Economic Council and approval of the organisational plan worked out between the

commissions of the CCMA and the Generalitat's administrative services; Barcelona Council's proposal for involvement in the municipal commissions; report from the FAI delegates in the CCMA on the work done by said committee and the situation on the various war fronts; internal business of the specific organisation; propaganda, organisation and general business.

The report which was carried on this important plenum by the *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI* leads the informed reader to the following conclusions:

First (and this the committees themselves acknowledged in convening the plenum): that the interval of five days between the date of the convening and the actual holding of the plenum was very little, even given the earlier issuance of the summons. Second: that the sole purpose of the plenum was to report upon complex administrative business and to secure approval for it. And third: that the invited groups attended the plenum simply in order to report upon their conduct. Confirmation of this may be found in this extract from the minutes:

Concerning item (b) it is announced that the council of workers', soldiers and kindred corps in Catalonia is composed of the CNT and the UGT in the following ratio: the central committee will comprise four delegates from the CNT and three from the UGT. On the committees of each corps of guards there will be two delegates from the CNT and one from the UGT. Following a brief discussion on the question of whether the FAI should belong to that organisation, the plenum concluded that this was not necessary.

The comrade secretary continued his report, moving on to item (c), the Economic Council. After explaining the motives behind its formation and outlining which organisations are represented on it, on the very same basis as the CCMA, the plenum expressed its endorsement of the conduct of the FAI committees and a document representing the programme behind their action was given a reading.

Another of the basic issues on which the groups had to pronounce was the question related to intervention in the municipal commissions. The plan devised by Barcelona Council provided for the involvement of labour union and civilian forces in the commissions of the various municipal departments (Supply, Public Services, Urban Transport, Town Planning and Public Works, City Cleaning, Construction of Workers' Homes, Cultural Affairs, Social Assistance, etc.). In point of fact, this was paving the way for direct involvement of the municipalities without noticeable alterations to the structure of functions and powers of those organisms, as came to pass later, on 22 October.

The anomalies indicated were already setting the pattern for the future development of two great organisations hitherto characterised by a punctilious enthusiasm for a functional internal federalism.

In the CNT and among militant anarchists there had been a tradition of the most scrupulous respect for the deliberations and decisions of the assemblies, the grassroots of the federalist organisation.<sup>12</sup> Those who held administrative office had been merely the mandataries of those decisions. The regular motions adopted by the national congresses spelled out to the Confederation and its representative committees ineluctable obligations of a basic and general nature

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<sup>12</sup> This was generally true, but the fact that the May 1931 Madrid congress accords concerning the NIFs remained a dead letter might tend to suggest that this was not an inexorable law of the movement.

incumbent upon every affiliated member regardless of locality or region. And the forming of such general motions was the direct responsibility of all of the unions by means of motions adopted at their respective general assemblies. Similarly, the regional or local congresses would establish the guidelines of requirement and problems that obtained only at regional or local levels. In both instances, sovereignty resided always with assemblies of workers, whether in their unions or in their groups.

This sense of rigorous, everyday federalist procedure was abruptly amended from the very outset of the revolutionary phase. This we have seen and we will encounter it again. This amendment of the norms of the organisation was explained away by reference to the exceptional turn of events, which required a greater agility in decisions and resolutions, which is to say a necessary departure from the circuitous procedures of federalist practice which operated from the bottom upwards.

On 2 September, a regional peasant congress was convened. The appropriate regional committee stated in its summons that 'given that circumstances require that we act with speed, we have decided to schedule it for 5 September', i.e. three days thence. Nonetheless, the agenda upon which the peasants, or rather their delegates to the congress (since regular consultation is not practicable in such a short interval), were to have to pronounce, was most important. Also, according to the dispatch from the regional committee, it included questions such as the following:

- ... 4. What is the union's feeling about the manner in which the collectivisation of large rural holdings ought to be implemented?
5. How ought the exchange and acquisition of produce to be regularised through the mediation of the unions?
6. What possibilities are there of reconciling the industrial worker with the countryside?
7. What should be our stand *vis-à-vis* the other peasant organisations? Is there any chance of arriving at an amalgamation of rural organisations?
8. Is it held that the establishment of a regional peasant's liaison committee is necessary? If so, how ought it to be structured and where should it have its seat?

The most important thing to emerge from the congress was the proposition accepted on item no. 4 which, after a brief preamble, stated the following:

1. In proceeding to establish collectivisation of the land, then, lest the small property-owners for a single instant have misgivings about our liberating labour and, consequently, lest they turn into the foes, obstructors and saboteurs of our work, there will be respect for the principle of their entitlement to till whatever land they are able to work by their own efforts, provided that this does not hinder or impede the due development of those groups which favour collectivisation.

It is our conviction that what might be obtained through compulsion can be attained through the example provided by agrarian collectivisation, particularly through its impact on the structure of farming. We foresee that by introducing machinery, chemistry and technology to the land, productivity will be increased for less effort, thereby



offering a more dignified existence to the workers and raising their moral and spiritual circumstances.

2. All confiscated lands are to be overseen and administered by the union, and, in cultivating them in a collective manner, the latter will ensure that this redounds directly to the benefit of the unions and, thereafter, of the workers generally.

3. Likewise, the union will wield control of the whole of production as well as of the procurement of materials for those smallholders who may temporarily persist with the direct cultivation as mentioned earlier.

4. The inter-union liaison of collectivised groups will provide some means of marshalling peasants and of transferring surplus labour in given areas to those where land may be plentiful and labour in short supply. It is hoped that this will tend towards equality between all workers.

5. The unions of each village will seek to observe within their respective bounds, and to reconcile with the views of the other peasants of the village, the libertarian norms which govern the unions of the CNT, keeping to the following guidelines in this respect:

(a) Should it prove possible in the village to introduce collectivisation without risking the difficulties which we have indicated, they ought to introduce it comprehensively and without delay.

(b) Should the bulk of the local peasants differ from this view, or should there be anyone dissenting, the unions are to respect the cultivation by the smallholders in the described manner and will proceed to impound large estates and assets belonging to rebel personnel; these also will be collectivised.

(c) Should the needs of their villages so require, unions are empowered to permit the small tenant farmers to go on farming, in the same manner as prescribed for smallholders, for the minimum period required to prepare for definitive collectivisation, provided always that the land for collectivisation may have been duly prepared.

The liberation of the peasants will be completed by the installation of collectivised farms wherein all of the advances which modern stockbreeding has to offer will be availed of. In addition, electrification, town planning and cleansing of the most isolated rural settlements, together with irrigation, clearances and drainage, in short, an infinity of improvements which, by making for every prospect of success in every new installation, will lead all of the peasants by persuasive means towards the noblest aspirations enshrined in the postulates of the CNT.

To conclude this proposition and by way of a faithful interpretation of the federalism which the Confederation has always espoused, this working party believes it opportune to reserve for each peasant locality the fullest freedom in the choice of the form and timing of the implementation of the accords above.

In mid-September, a national plenum of regional committees was held in Madrid, out of which it was agreed to proceed with the creation of a National Defence Council. On 12 September, the following communiqué was released to the public through the *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI* in Barcelona:

Industrial workers and peasants, conscious of the responsibility of the times in which we live, the delegates from the local and county federations of the trade union organisation and anarchist groups have assembled in the meeting hall of CNT- FAI House. With enthusiasm and sights fixed high, the delegates discussed the problems affecting the revolution. There will have been few plenums that awakened so much interest. With its meetings, the organisation keeps directly in touch with the workers, with those workers who watch over the well-being of all.

Was the business of a National Defence Council discussed at this mixed plenum? The abruptness with which it was summoned and the discretion observed with regard to whatever decisions were reached conceal that from us. For its part, the regional committee of the Catalan CNT issued a summons on 18 September for a plenum of local and county committees to meet the following day to deal with the structure of the region, the setting up of the regional peasants' committee and a report from the delegates who had attended the national plenum of regional committees. On 19 September, the proposition drawn up by the national plenum of regional committees on the 'Economic reconstruction and defence of the revolution' was made public. It suggested to the parties and organisations that the current system of government be supplanted by a National Defence Council.

In Chapter Eleven we alluded to the regional plenum of the Catalan CNT, which met on 24 September. It was the most important of all the meetings held up until then and some 327 unions were represented at it. Glancing again at the outline given in the aforementioned chapter (the report from the secretary of the Catalan regional committee and from the CNT representative on the Economic Council), the clear-cut economic character of that plenum is obvious. This is confirmed by the following resolution which was passed on the subject of the 'family wage' (*salario familiar*):

It has been demonstrated of late that the Catalan economy cannot possibly hold out if it continues with the present practice of paying out the equivalent of their wages to the families of those comrades who are fighting on the fronts. A fair segment of the Catalan peasantry finds itself without the economic wherewithal to acquire the food items needed for its subsistence. In many of the collectives that have been set up the workers have discovered capital which has enabled them to draw their respective wages and indeed to raise these in such a fashion that they are considerably out of proportion to the other wages in Catalonia. Whether on account of the scarcity of provisions or because of the selfish mentality of the shopkeepers, the prices of consumer goods have inflated considerably since the start of the fight against fascism. In addition, there are collectives already in existence and others in the planning stages, in industry and in agriculture alike, which do not have the capital to enable them to pay an adequate wage. It also has to be considered that there is a rather high percentage of parasitic folk who live and consume without producing a thing. Lastly, let us point out that should things go on as they have hitherto, there is a danger that capital may be exhausted in those industries and farmsteads which have been working and that, as a result, there may not even be sufficient to pay wages, or to acquire raw materials, whereas on the other hand the rich collectivised industries mentioned earlier are amassing private capital.

For all of these reasons, and others which we might indicate, this working party takes the line that, for considerations of morality, justice and organisational responsibility, standardisation of wages has to be accepted:

1. A standard rate for individuals without commitments is X pesetas a week.
2. Taking the individual rate of pay as a basis, a wage scale for families must be established:

head of a family or leading producer: individual rate of pay;

second producer: 50 per cent of the base rate;

third producer: 15 per cent of the base rate;

others: 10 per cent of the base rate.

As can be seen, depending on whether a family has one, two or three producers, it has the appropriate percentage above the base rate of pay, with the aforementioned 10 per cent being allotted for family members who cannot be regarded as producers due to illness, old age, etc.

Technicians are a special case which will be dealt with and resolved with the utmost delicacy within the sections and unions, and it is to be hoped that in these personnel there may be found a sense of responsibility and affection towards a populace fighting to build a new world. All citizens fit to produce will have to produce, for with the collectivisation and impounding of private capital no one will be able to withdraw from banking establishments any sums whatsoever, excepting only the audit committees.

The costs of foodstuffs will be standardised throughout the region, with the Economic Council assuming charge of this regularisation, in such a way that the needs of all — food, rents, etc. — may be met within the economic margins that the standardised wage allows. That this task may be carried out, we need to make a thoroughgoing study so as to determine the base rate and scale of pay, a task which we undertake to complete and submit before the unions within the compass of one week.

We mentioned elsewhere that this plenum lasted for two days and that just a day after it was wound up, on 27 September, the press carried the sensational news of the CNT's entry into the Generalitat government.

Did the plenum concern itself with the political issue, or, to be more specific, with the necessity of intervening in the government?<sup>13</sup>

The published reports suggest not. In any event it can be stated that the Plenum had to confine itself to endorsing a *fait accompli*. This is evident from the following comment, published on 28 September by the oft-quoted *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*:

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<sup>13</sup> In the report of the CNT national committee to the IWA Paris congress of December 1937, it was claimed that the agreement to enter the Generalitat government was taken in a regional plenum of Catalan local and county committees held in August 1936 and that the decision to join the central government was made at a national plenum of regional committees held on 28 September: *Informe de la delegación de la CNT al congreso extraordinario de la AIT y resoluciones del mismo*, Barcelona, n.d.

The business of the regional plenum of the Catalan CNT was not yet completed when its chief accords were put into practice and appeared as the most radical and most broadly constructive expressions of the manifesto released to the public by the new Generalitat Council. Regulation of production in accordance with consumer needs, collectivisation of rural property and respect for agrarian smallholdings, collectivisation of large industries, public services and transport services, intensification of the cooperative arrangement in the distribution of produce, the return to the countryside of those workers whom the new organisation of agricultural labour may be able to accommodate, the creation of new industries, the wholesale electrification of Catalonia, etc., such was the substance of the themes debated in the recent gathering in the Olimpia, upon which the delegates reached unanimous agreements. The presence of our comrades Fàbregas, Domènech and García Birlán in the new [Generalitat] Council, and the collaborationist sincerity of the other members, will guarantee that we have entered upon a period of efficient and regenerative constructiveness.

The entry into the government and the drafting of the political programme in tune with the accords that had just been reached, both within the compass of barely 24 hours, confirm the trespass against federalist procedures.

On 2 October, a regional plenum of the CNT and of the FAI was scheduled for 8 October; it was to be a plenum of a pedagogical nature. Representatives from the anarchist groups and from the unions were invited to take part in the deliberations. The plenum met in the América cinema. There were 163 delegates present from the unions and 24 from the groups, representing a total membership of 360,977. Unexpectedly, some 15 delegates from the atheneums and cultural groups, representing 2,270 affiliates, turned up at the plenum and were admitted as non-voting participants (*con carácter informativo*). ‘Marianet’, secretary of the Catalan CNT regional committee, explained that the assembly was in keeping with the programme outlined in the Olimpia regional plenum, at which economic reconstruction had been dealt with. The chief purpose of this plenum was to explore the cultural question. The CNT-FAI delegate on the CENU argued that the New Unified School system was based upon the following maxim: ‘The teacher must never commit the crime of warping the child’s mind by foisting preconceptions upon it.’ It was added that it had been decided that the rationalist schools maintained by the union organisations would continue to operate, even those that were neither confessional nor dogmatic.

On 22 October the representatives of the CNT, UGT, FAI and PSUC signed the celebrated pact of unity and scheduled a monster rally for 25 October in the Monumental bullring. Also on 22 October, a plenum of local and county federations assembled; the only thing it agreed was to schedule a plenum of the Catalan CNT for 26 October. The summons made public on 24 October indicated that the agenda would consist of an examination of the compact with the UGT, guidelines on the municipal councils and the resignation of the outgoing secretary of the regional committee and the appointment of a replacement.

*Solidaridad Obrera* of 27 October carried the following item about the plenum:

Yesterday morning the plenum got down to business. The plenum was attended by 580 delegates representing 400 unions. Comrade Vázquez, secretary of the regional committee, speaking on behalf of the same, gave a detailed exposition of all the issues currently confronting the Confederation, internally as well as in the area of

relations with the other antifascist organisations. In his report he stressed that at all times maximum agreement has been sought between all of the revolutionary organisations, with a view to maintaining a cordiality which grows daily more necessary, and in so far as it has lain within our power we have also sought to secure the utmost preponderance for our viewpoints. Once this extensive and deliberate report had been completed, several delegations expressed their opinions and no significant disagreement came to light, since the organisation recognises that it is unrealistic to insist upon strict observance of confederal norms in the present context. Nonetheless, the majority of the delegates expressed their logical desire that, wherever possible, there shall be consultation with the organisation at its base, namely, the unions, asking that the committees seek recourse to their powers only in extreme cases.

One of the most noteworthy things about this plenum is the zeal with which the Confederation watches out for the purity of its basic principles and the norms consonant with these. Laudable and heartening, too, is the candour which it requires of all its members, regardless of how high may be the position they occupy. Such conduct on the part of our union and revolutionary cadres is the finest guarantee for the future of the Spanish proletariat. Without anticipating the results of the plenum, we can congratulate ourselves on this discovery and that despite all of the social convulsions, the Catalan Confederation remains true to its ideological mettle and federalist norms while also maintaining an awareness of the requirements of the moment.

Following a reasoned contribution from the FAI peninsular committee and a critical analysis of the compact with the UGT by the l'Hospitalet de Llobregat union, motions began to be made in favour of winding up this interesting and fruitful debate. As a logical consequence of the direction which the whole debate had taken, and after some prior and judicious comments, the following proposition from the Barcelona Construction Union was approved: "Given that all of the delegations which have spoken accept the pact, in so far as it meets our objectives and our congress and plenum accords, since all that has been added are trivialities about principles, we move that the chair ask the plenum whether it accepts it or not. In the event of acceptance, let the regional committee communicate this to the CNT and let it be made applicable to the whole of Spain." Approved unanimously.

Session five. In this session the thorniest and most important problem of the entire agenda was to have been raised, namely, the resignation of the secretary of the regional committee. From the way the debates have gone, it could already be deduced that the resignation would not be accepted, just as it was equally clear that comrade Vázquez would happily continue as secretary. What we had anticipated was confirmed before the session was far advanced.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN: The collectivisations

Neither the bourgeoisie, nor the big landowners, bankers and businessmen, knew how to free themselves of Spain's feudal remnants. The 1914–8 war led to a boom in industry, trade and banking, but the bourgeoisie always lacked the initiative and goodwill needed to spread its profits around the nation as a whole. It was content simply to pocket them and indeed displayed a ferocious intransigence in the face of the demands of the workers. In any event, capital found a haven in the finances of the state, one of the most lucrative of Spanish investments.<sup>1</sup>

The greater the political and economic difficulties, the more banking deals boomed. Investors grew rich, as production declined with the crisis of foreign trade and the prices of staple goods soared.

Year by year the bureaucracy expanded, and with it there was an expansion also in the budget, tax changes etc. This made it easy for foreign capital to find a foothold and led to the heyday of the monopolies, the government's very own business interests. Banking was the monopoly of three or four families, or of agents of the Jesuits.

The United States established a bridgehead in the shape of the Telephone Company. Britain and Canada had established a presence in the middle years of the nineteenth century and controlled electric power firms, naval shipyards, mines and transport facilities, etc. Belgium, Switzerland and France placed their investments with tram, gas and other companies. Germany favoured the chemical industries.<sup>2</sup>

To all intents and purposes, only small businesses and small industries were in Spanish hands. The more important major industries and commercial undertakings were in foreign hands, especially British ones. British capital had found a foothold in the Bilbao mining zone either independently or in conjunction with native investment. England owned the Rio Tinto copper mines. In adjacent areas, Rio Tinto controlled mines of another sort, and iron and steel foundries. The chief investor here was the Rothschild family and among its Spanish holdings were railway services and the Almadén mercury mines.

The British had sizeable holdings in the aluminium industry and in locomotive construction. The Sociedad Española de Construcción Naval and Vickers-Armstrong were one and the same, and the Société Minière et Métallurgique of Peñarroya hardly requires any introduction. The

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<sup>1</sup> Indeed, during the Restoration monarchy many industrialists acquired feudal titles for reasons of social status and vanity, while in political terms the bourgeoisie was largely happy to accept the hegemony of the old agrarian elite in return for the protection that the state afforded on the 'social question'. Meanwhile, the short-sighted bourgeoisie, which enriched itself during World War One, failed to invest its profits in new plant and machinery and made no attempt to restructure Spain's backward industrial structure in advance of the accelerated competition for markets that followed the war. In short, right up until the late 1960s, the Spanish bourgeoisie lacked any real scope for independent or decisive political and economic action.

<sup>2</sup> Constrained by the legacy of combined and uneven development, the most capital intensive and the most lucrative sectors of the Spanish economy fell under the domination of foreign capital.

latter firm had a monopoly on a huge number of Spanish industries connected with lead.<sup>3</sup> It was estimated that the Jesuits had capital invested in Spanish businesses to the tune of 6,000 million pesetas. And in the midst of the swirling millions swam home-grown sharks of the calibre of Romanones,<sup>4</sup> Cambó and March.

With regard to agriculture, a vital sector in the Spanish context, the overall wealth of the soil of the Spanish mainland (excluding the Balearic and Canary Islands) was divided up as follows:<sup>5</sup>

	<b>(hectares)</b>
Land producing an annual harvest	15,729,839
Land left fallow	5,400,000
Total of cultivated lands	21,129,839
Pasture, grazing and mountains	23,642,514
Total of productive lands	44,772,353
Total Spanish land surface	50,510,210

Let us take a detailed look at the number of hectares in possession of the main Spanish latifundistas:

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<sup>3</sup> This information on the penetration of foreign capital came from Rudolf Rocker, *Extranjeros en España*, Buenos Aires, 1938.

<sup>4</sup> Alvaro de Figueroa y de Torres, the Conde de Romanones, was a former confidant of Alfonso XIII, one-time leader of the Liberal party and Prime Minister during the Restoration monarchy and one of the largest landowners in Spain. Prior to the civil war, he became a prominent figure within and financier of the conspiracies against the Republic.

<sup>5</sup> Agustín Nogués Sardá, *Los problemas de la producción agrícola española*, Buenos Aires, 1943.

<b>Owner</b>	<b>Estates (hectares)</b>
Duque de Medinaceli <sup>a</sup>	79,147
Duque de Peñaranda	51,016
Duque de Villahermosa	47,213
Duque de Alba <sup>b</sup>	34,455
Marqués de la Romana	29,095
Marqués de Comillas <sup>c</sup>	23,720
Duque de Fernán-Núñez <sup>d</sup>	17,733
Duque de Arión <sup>e</sup>	17,687
Duque del Infantado <sup>f</sup>	17,171
Conde de Romanones	15,132
Conde de Torres-Arias	13,644
Conde de Sástago	12,629
Marqués de Mirabel	12,570
Duque de Lerma	11,879

<sup>a</sup> The biggest landowner of the 1930s, Luis Jesús Fernández de Córdoba was primarily concerned with hunting on his numerous estates across the south of Spain.

<sup>b</sup> Jacobo Stuart Fitzjames y Falcó, the Duke of Berwick, united two economic systems, owning vast tracts of land in the south of Spain, especially in Cádiz province, and sitting on the boards of several leading businesses and financial institutions, including the Banco de España. A staunch supporter of Alfonso XIII, he was a minister in the monarchist dictatorship that immediately preceded the Republic. Owing to his Anglophile stance, he was selected as Franco's representative in London during the civil war, later becoming ambassador.

<sup>c</sup> With extensive interests in Moroccan mines and shipping, Claudio López y Bru, the Conde de Güell, was a prime example of the feudalised bourgeoisie. Director of La Transatlántica shipping company and a close friend of the War Minister, he won a lucrative contract for the evacuation of the remnants of Spain's defeated army after the 1897–8 Spanish-American war in highly controversial and scandalous circumstances; more controversially still, his company also acquired a similar deal with the United States government for the repatriation of wounded Spanish troops. His interests in Moroccan mines help explain the widespread popular opposition to Spain's military adventures in North Africa leading up to the Tragic Week in 1909, not least because it was Comillas's ships which transported working-class conscripts to an uncertain fate on colonial battlefields. During World War One he emerged as a leading financier and his close ties to the Jesuits aroused suspicions that he was, in fact, little more than the manager for the Order's economic concerns.

<sup>d</sup> A long-established family of absentee landlords.

<sup>e</sup> Another old grandee family.

<sup>f</sup> Having profited greatly from his investments during World War One, he became president of Ferrocarriles Andaluces (Andalusian Railways) and an executive board member of the Banco de España. He was later a loyal Francoist.

In republican electoral propaganda pride of place was given to a solution to this unfair distribution of the national territory, which was the source of *caciquismo* in the majority of provinces. Out of the republican promises sprang the so-called Agrarian Reform Bill of 1931 which was never fully implemented, and which the peasants were able to outdo by means of direct action on 19 July 1936.

Cánovas Cervantes has this to say on the subject:

The Agrarian Reform Bill was conceived at the cost of indemnifying the aristocracy for its lost estates. Only seigneurial lands were expropriated, but when the time came



to establish what lands belonged to them, it proved extremely difficult to specify the properties which originated thus. The intention was also to confiscate the lands of the *grandees* of Spain. Lest there be any trespass against the interests of Romanones and so that he might retain possession of all of the immense estates he had acquired through his usurious chicanery, his pals in the Republic availed of the specious proviso that estates would be confiscated only from those members of the Spanish nobility who had been invested in the presence of the king, and since Romanones apparently had not fulfilled the requirements of that ceremony, his holdings were thus excepted from the terms of the Agrarian Reform Bill by means of this artful procedure. But the need did not arise, for in the course of the debate even that provision was thrown out.

## **Land distribution in 27 Spanish provinces**

In the 27 Spanish provinces covered by the figures given in the statistics above out of a total of 19,672,950 hectares, 47.39 per cent was divided among 1,395,048 property owners, who owned holdings of between 1 and 50 hectares; 29.37 per cent belonged to just 43,119 owners holding between 50 and 500 hectares each; and 25.24 per cent was owned by 6,790 landowners who, between them, owned upwards of 4 million hectares. A fair distribution of the land? Some 3.46 per cent of landowners possessed 52.51 per cent of the land.

When General Sanjurjo's coup attempt of 10 August 1932 came to pass, the Aznar government, faced with the pressure of public opinion, and with the above law still awaiting debate in the Cortes, launched a more radical policy, designed to "disarm the enemies of the Republic" by threatening the feudal aristocracy and introducing into the law a provision by means of which the rural properties of persons found culpable of the revolt against the regime were expropriated without compensation. It was up to the courts to determine who these proscribed persons were, and, if there was any feudal landlord among them, he would be punished. Nevertheless, the rest would be left free to enjoy their possessions.

But with the passage of time, it emerged from the trials that those found guilty of the subversive revolt against the Republic possessed little in the way of estates. The feudal aristocracy carefully concealed its complicity in the planning of the coup and in the end it proved impossible to establish culpability, whether individual or collective. In any event that was something which the Republic's authorities did not have much interest in discovering.

Since the Agrarian Reform Bill was governed by the principle of compensation for expropriated estates, the scope of the law was limited by the need to purchase estates for parcelling out. The law made budget provisions for an annual sum of 50 million pesetas. Advance upon this proved impossible. For instance, if we take the base cost of each settlement as 10,000 pesetas — although there were actually many that cost over 25,000 pesetas — this meant that on an annual budget of 50 million pesetas, only 5,000 settlements could be made each year. Since the number of peasants throughout

Spain who required settlement was as high as 5 million, simple arithmetic will tell the reader the number of years it would have taken to find a solution to a problem that urgently required solving. Poverty and the mental and material impoverishment of our peasants required that the Republic dispense with any preliminary academic discussion of the interests of the powerful classes and that it legislate by decree a reform of the sort that was effected across Europe many years ago, with Spain as a dismal exception.<sup>6</sup>

The Spanish workers got to grips with this economic situation on 19 July 1936. Let us look at the manner in which they did so.

With the military revolt crushed in the major cities and districts, the workers and peasants set about expropriating the factories, firms and estates. Many such expropriations were prompted by the fact that managers and owners had fled abroad or into the rebel zone. The confiscations led to the birth of a new economic system which came to be known generically as 'collectivism'.

The basis of this system was that the workers in concert ran the abandoned or impounded factories, firms and estates. Employers prepared to lend a helping hand were awarded status equal to that of any other collectivist, or indeed – in the case of the small property owners and artisans – were allowed to run their industry for themselves, or farm whatever land they could farm with the labour of their own unaided family, on condition that no waged labour was employed.<sup>7</sup>

To a certain degree, the collectivist arrangement was compatible with the existence of private undertakings which, by virtue of the fact that they belonged to foreign nationals, continued as before, albeit under strict union supervision. Certain nationalised firms or firms under municipal control, under the auspices of the state and city authorities, and especially those geared to the requirements of the war, constituted a separate case.

Collectivism assumed an infinite diversity of forms from village to village, and even in the different firms collectivised in the cities. As in every work of man, there was an element of improvisation and of the exceptional wartime conditions experienced by the country (i.e. the war against fascism) and the arrangements had their flaws as well as their good points. To concern ourselves at length with these variations would require a substantial tome. We shall confine ourselves below to recording the most outstanding examples by means of a faithful marshalling of the testimony of the collectivists themselves.

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<sup>6</sup> Cánovas Cervantes, *Proceso histórico de la Revolución española*, pp.147–8.

<sup>7</sup> In preparing this chapter on the agrarian collectivisations, I used the following sources: reports published in the libertarian press from this period; bulletins, such as the one published daily by the Information and Propaganda Service of the Casa CNT- FAI in Barcelona; selected books and pamphlets; some of the published minutes or resolutions approved by the assemblies of the collectives; and finally, some of the answers to a long questionnaire which I sent out to ex-collectivists exiled in France. Notwithstanding their importance as the key element of the revolution of 19 July, there is an absence of systematic studies of the agrarian collectives by experts on political economy. We have only been able to consult a fraction of the documentation owing to the disinterest of the CNT in establishing a serious body of information, a historic responsibility that was lessened by the dramatic obsession of the war and the brutality with which the conflict came to a conclusion. The military isolation of the Northern zones and the occupation of Andalusia (the most powerful area of CNT influence after Catalonia) from the very beginning of the war frustrated potentially interesting experiences or ensured that important achievements went unknown. (Note by the author.)

## The revolution in the Catalan countryside

**Barcelona's Agricultural Collective.** In June 1938 this possessed between 900 and 1,000 hectares of land. All land was irrigated through the diversion of streams and through the creation of many pump-driven wells. Produce was distributed through outlets scattered over a variety of markets.

The work was organised by district: Sants, Armonía del Palomar, Pla Martí and Sarrià. The collective was administered by an enterprise council, together with the district-level technical commissions. Smallholders were incorporated into the collective. Livestock dipping pens were set up at district level and the old stables were replaced by spacious quarters housing 300 draught animals. A six-day week was worked, plus Sunday mornings.

Manpower lost due to mobilisation was made up by evacuees from those areas which had fallen into enemy hands. Some 600 evacuees from Aragón, all of them collectivists of great experience, were assimilated. Collective members who had been mobilised had the difference in their pay credited to them.

**Vilaboi (Barcelona).** The collective was formed with the lands of the big estate owners who had run away or been expropriated. There were some 250 *mojadas*<sup>8</sup> of collectivised land and 200 collectivists.

The collective was set up in February 1937, with 12 horses and an equal number of carts. At that time it had a fund of between 500 and 600 pesetas, the sum total of contributions by individual members. They awarded themselves pay of 60 céntimos per day. Once the artichoke crop had been gathered in, they were able to guarantee themselves a weekly wage of between 70 and 85 pesetas. The first sums saved were spent on the purchase of mules, construction of roomy buildings, procurement of irrigation pumps and the purchase of fertiliser and seed. By the end of 1938 the collective consisted of 500 members with a weekly income of 150 pesetas.

They accommodated 100 evacuees and their families, who enjoyed equal rights and obligations to the rest. Upwards of 200 members of the collective served at the front. Their families were subsidised. The collective boasted a comprehensive and free medical and pharmaceutical service. They opened up a barn purchased from the Barcelona Council for 3,200 pesetas, which housed 20 dairy cows, 200 pigs, 27 breeding cows and large numbers of farmyard animals. Annual production consisted of 70,000 kilos of wheat; 37,000 kilos of kidney beans; 300,000 kilos of potatoes; 500,000 kilos of mixed fruit and around 3 million kilos of green vegetables.

**Viladecans (Barcelona).** Produce included peaches, pears, plums, apples and other fruits, along with potatoes, beans, cabbages, broccoli and lettuce. The farms 'Torre del Calderón' (30 *mojadas* in extent) and 'Torre Roig' were expropriated. The latter building was given up to the Generalitat to be used as a school site. Another of the buildings seized was the 'Torre de Sant Gabriel', which was converted into an experimental farm and also housed the collective's offices.

Work was organised in four zones: in each of these, a comrade served as technical director. These delegates, together with the administrative council, regulated the work and saw to it that what was agreed in assemblies was put into effect. The collectivists had freely chosen to be such.

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<sup>8</sup> A *mojada* (or *mujada* in Catalan) is a traditional land measure in Catalonia. In keeping with prevailing local practices during the period prior to the creation of a strong central state in Spain, the size of this measure varied in size from province to province. In Barcelona province one *mojada* was equal to 49 square decametres, i.e. 0.49 of a hectare or 1.21 acres.

Only five or six individuals worked for the bourgeois. By the end of 1937 the collective was working 270 *mojadas* of irrigated land, plus another 400 of rain-fed land.

They had a tractor, a harvester, 7 breeding cows, 30 pigs and 40 mules. They built a poultry house. The yearly turnover was in excess of 2 million pesetas. Liquid profits were expended on improvements for the collective and its producers and contributions were also made to war needs. They did not overlook their 60 comrades serving on the front lines.

**Lleida.** When the collective was founded, its first members pooled whatever they had in their homes — crops, draught animals, tools, land, hens, etc. By the end of 1937 the collective comprised 100 families, of whom some 60 were from Lleida while the rest originated from the invaded zones. All in all, there were some 400 people.

They possessed 300 hectares; some 600 arable *jornales*<sup>9</sup>. The collective produced fodder alfalfa and was able to feed a large number of steers, cows, pigs and domestic livestock. In the middle of the chase, there was an outbuilding of some 300 square metres for the breeding of rabbits. There were 10 pairs of mules for use as draught animals or transport. There was a lorry for long-distance transportation. The collectivists were assured of their supply of green vegetables in large quantities, while the surplus was exported. The harvest promised the collectivists some 250,000 kilos of cereals and 1,000 *cuarteras* of maize<sup>10</sup>.

The collective had prescribed a family wage along the following lines: a single man earned 50 pesetas and was paid 25 of them in ready cash, the remainder being held back to cover his meals in the canteen. A married man without children earned 60 pesetas and one with children 70 pesetas. Each family was allotted 4 pesetas for every eight hours' work done by a second family member. A cooperative functioned whereby the collectivists could obtain whatever they needed by producing a consumption notebook. At the end of the week, each family was issued with the difference between its earnings and what it had consumed. They were free to consume garden produce without restrictions. Goods could be obtained at less than market prices.

**Pla de Cabra.** 2,000 inhabitants, some of whom were employed in the Martí Llopart textile plant. The collective was set up in June 1937 by some 270 individuals. They farmed some 5,000 hectares of land. The productivity of the land rose by 75 per cent. There was no fixed working day and the family wage arrangement applied. Each collectivist received 5 pesetas a day, plus 2 pesetas for each member of his family, regardless of age. They produced cereals, vegetables, grapes, almonds and hazelnuts. Produce surplus to requirements was sold off to or exchanged with outsiders. There was a henhouse with 500 hens for egg production. There were 15 cows and a bull. The church was turned into a makeshift warehouse. Collective stalls selling foodstuffs, vegetables, salted fish and beef were set up. They lacked agricultural machinery. The textile plant which the workers had collectivised experienced a period of crisis for lack of raw materials and chemical ingredients. The workers belonged to the CNT and to the UGT.

**L'Hospitalet de Llobregat.** The land farmed by the collective extended to 15 square kilometres. There were upwards of 1,000 collectivists, male and female. Some 90,000 pesetas were paid out weekly as wages. The 1937 kidney bean harvest brought in 555,000 kilos. The farmland was divided up into 38 zones, of which 35 were irrigated and the remainder rain-fed scrub. From the outset 7,000 pesetas were paid out each week as expenditure upon general improvements in the construction of new ventures. In 10 months, machinery to the value of 180,000 pesetas

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<sup>9</sup> A *jornal* was a land measure which varied in size from province to province.

<sup>10</sup> One *cuartera* was equal to 2 bushels.

was purchased, including a truck to ship produce. Here is a very illuminating breakdown of the accounts:

**September 1936 to  
August 1937 | Income (pesetas) | Expenditure (pesetas) |**

First quarter	432,710.34	416,973.09
Second quarter	910,756.81	794,628.51
Third quarter	1,653,045.20	1,312,305.10
Fourth quarter	2,007,992.80	1,643,773.05
Total	5,004,505.15	4,167,679.75

The collective dispatched some eight wagonloads of artichokes (valued at 30,000 pesetas) to the fronts, as well as several truckloads of garden produce. It also showed solidarity with other, more needy collectives. Each quarter a general assembly would convene to study what had been achieved and to set new targets. In advance of these assemblies the administrative council used to submit a detailed statement of accounts to the collectivists.

The administrative council was made up of 5 comrades assisted by 2 delegates from each zone: 1 trade union delegate and 1 technician. The technical delegates met every fortnight to examine what work was required. On the basis of information from the technical delegates, the administrative council prescribed what was to be shipped daily to the markets in l’Hospitalet and Barcelona.

The collectivists hatched a scheme for cutting channels into the banks of the Llobregat River so as to place the township out of reach of the frequent floods. With the exception of about 60 collectivists, they all belonged to the CNT. There was complete collectivisation of the land. Solidarity and exchange with other collectives were practised.

**Amposta.** 10,000 inhabitants. From the start of the revolt, the lands in this rice-growing area passed into the hands of the farmers, the bulk of whom belonged to the CNT.

By the start of 1937, most of the 1,200 local farmers belonged to the collective. To help them in their work, they had 14 tractors, 15 threshing machines and 70 horses. The land was taken under municipal ownership. People were free to farm in an individual capacity, on condition that they exploited no one else’s labour.

The September 1936 harvest brought in 36 million kilos of unthreshed rice. Each 100 kilos was refined down to 60 kilos. A poultry house with all of the latest technological advances had been set up. Its value was reckoned at some 200,000 pesetas. There was breeding of pigs, cows and sheep (for wool), and the collective boasted 60 dairy cows. The construction industry had been collectivised also. The industry boasted a mosaic plant and brick kiln. The entertainments sector and some others were collectivised. The number of schools increased to 15 and schooling was compulsory. Six classes were set up to cater for adults and there was a school meals service and an arts and trades school plus an important public library.

Produce to the value of 50,000 pesetas was sent up to the lines. The village contributed more than 300 *milicianos* to the war against fascism. It also catered for 162 refugees drawn from all of the occupied territories. A consumers’ cooperative had been set up in the former church. Much of the town obtained its provisions from the cooperative, whose sales amounted to 12,000 pesetas a week. The township looked after some 45 people of advanced years.

The town lived amid a sort of communal arrangement and its achievements included a purification works for drinking water and the opening of a sanatorium and a hospital. Town property was taken into municipal ownership and made available to residents for a token rent. The salt works had been taken over by the municipality.

Although the CNT held the upper hand, it shared the responsibility for administering the township with the UGT. The municipality convened a public assembly on an annual basis; residents would turn out for this to determine the best way to use what funds the municipality had at its disposal.

**Orrriols.** This is a tiny hamlet in Girona province. When the revolt broke out, 23 families out of the village's 44 inhabitants (most of them sharecroppers) pooled their land as well as their livestock and tools and formed a collective. At the beginning of 1937, the collective was governed according to the following statutes:

Foreword. 1. All of the collective's associates will see to it that they never forget the following: with the founding of the collective, the economic disparities spawned by inequalities have been done away with.

2. The collective is one great family of producers which respects the absolute autonomy of each family in matters of consumption.

The immediate objective of the collective implies the following undertakings on the part of its members:

1 Once the issues and problems arising in the collective have been considered and resolved in free debate, the agreements are to be implemented by all with the most rigorous discipline.

2. Under the humane and anarchistic emblem of "One for all and all for one", the members of the collective shall strive to guarantee the economic and social betterment of all, regardless of family or age. The collective will maintain a common fund which shall be used (in so far as this may be possible) to meet the needs of the great collectivised family.

Expenses of a private nature will also be defrayed by the common fund, provided that they are compatible with the norm of the social ethic proper to the collective. Expenditure of a personal nature is at all times to be explained. Should any collective member, prompted by some unhealthy egoism, seek to abuse that which is the common heritage, the council has an obligation to bring this instance to the knowledge of the assembly so that the latter, as the only sovereign body, may determine the appropriate sanction in each instance;

3. The collective's common fund will, from the moment of its members' first expenditure, initiate the following weekly family wage: for married men, 5 pesetas; for married women, 3 pesetas; for single men over 15 years, 8 pesetas; for boys of between 12 and 15 years, 3 pesetas; for boys between 8 and 12 years, 1 peseta; for girls over the age of 15, 3 pesetas.

At the end of each financial year, once all the needs of the collective's members have been attended to, the cash surplus of the year completed shall be deployed on the following:

- (a) Improvements to and repairs of accommodation.
- (b) Purchase of agricultural machinery.
- (c) Encouragement and expansion of livestock production.
- (d) Establishment of a poultry house.
- (e) Promotion of a higher degree of culture in the people by means of a promotion that will be accessible to all intellects, availing of theatre, cinema, lectures, radio and the press, together with pamphlets popularising science and morals.

The collective will spare no efforts to maintain relations of moral and material solidarity with all of the workers of the world, regardless of class or colour.

The doors of the collective will remain open to welcome into its bosom any peasant co-citizens who, once having been persuaded of the advantages offered by the collective, wish to join the great family.

**Seròs.** 3,000 inhabitants. Farmland: 300 hectares irrigated land. The Aragón and Catalonia canal watered a further 1,000 hectares given over to market gardening and a variety of fruit plantations. In the rain-fed area, olives, almonds and cereals were grown. When the revolt broke out, an anti-fascist front was formed around the CNT, the JSU and the POUM.

The town council was made up of 9 councillors. When the POUM was eliminated, the composition of the council was 3 delegates from the CNT, 3 from the PSUC and 3 from the ERC. The mayoral position fell to the CNT.

The Confederation impounded a huge expanse of lands which had been the property of reactionary landlords. The offices of the large landowners, the cinema, a factory and an oil press were also taken over. The electricity station, housing and transport were taken under municipal ownership.

On the CNT's instigation, a collective embracing every branch of production was formed. It comprised 360 members. The family wage applied. The collectivists had free access to medical advice, a pharmaceutical service, housing, electric lighting, firewood and vegetable produce. Other items could be purchased at modest prices in the stores of the cooperative.

Single men used the collective kitchens and laundries. Whenever they chose to marry, it was the collective which met the costs of settling them. A very well-stocked cooperative dispensed those items that were not rationed to the bulk of the non-collectivist populace at reasonable prices. At all times there was freedom to join or to leave the collective.

There was hardly any friction over the settling of scores for or against those who opted to leave the community. Those who defaulted upon their social obligations were first cautioned and, in the event of repetition, their case came up for consideration by the assembly. The assembly alone was empowered to opt for expulsion.

The collective's school, under the supervision of a qualified teacher, was at the disposal of all residents. There were commercial dealings with other collectives on the basis of barter. The value of produce was agreed by general consent. Rarely was money the basis for intercourse. The collective was affiliated to the regional federation of collectives and was based on solidarity and mutual aid. Man's exploitation of his fellow man was abolished utterly.

When, on 27 March 1938, the village had to be evacuated due to the invasion by the Falangist barbarians, the collective had very little money in its coffers but could boast 1,200 head of sheep, 100 pigs, a very well-appointed barn, some 30 cows, 36 working horses, a threshing machine and 15 tons of soda for making soap. The collective possessed its own bakery upon which a large portion of the town relied at times for its supplies. There was also a barber's shop, carpentry shop, a saddlery, a basket shop, and a dressmaker's workshop.

**El Masroig (Tarragona).** Population 1,800. The bulk of the farmland was not irrigated. Produce: grapes, almonds and olive oil. When the revolt broke out an anti-fascist committee was set up; it comprised 5 members from the CNT and 2 from the ERC. In mid-August 1936 some CNT personnel, some republicans and others of no party affiliation founded a peasant commune. Eventually it came to include 40 families. Work was organised on the basis of teams. A family wage was paid in labour vouchers which could be exchanged against products in the consumer cooperative. Only single men with no dependants were paid an individual wage. Products that were hard to come by were rationed, except those for the sick.

The obligation to work applied to all persons of both sexes from the age of 15 upwards. Any mother of several small children was excused this duty. Admission to the collective was authorised by general assembly. It was not a problem if the applicant had nothing to contribute to the community. The assembly was also empowered to expel bad collectivists. The commune had at its disposal a doctor who received an annual emolument to tend all the collective members free of charge. His stipend also covered the costs of medications.

Schoolteacher Torres Trobó ran the school and was also the bookkeeper to the collective. Only in circumstances of *force majeure* was exchange with money practised: the bartering of produce was preferred and to that end the natural worth of the products was estimated. There was never any great problem with this. When the war took a disastrous turn, the inhabitants were forced to quit the town. By that time, the collective was operating at full capacity.

**Montblanc (Tarragona).** Population 6,000. Its economic life depended on agriculture and a flourishing trade. There were approximately 5,000 hectares of farmland (250 hectares irrigated and 350 rain-fed). The rest was occupied by small streams, low hills and woods. There were textile mills, and plants turning out alcohol, footwear, leather and rubber goods. Farm produce included wine, cereals, olive oil, vegetables, potatoes, and fresh and dried fruits.

20 July 1936 saw the formation of the local anti-fascist front with the local political parties, the CNT and the UGT. The town council was not set up until December of the same year. It was made up of two delegates from each party or organisation. The anti-fascist committee took over all urban and rural property, as well as the alcohol plant. Urban property was taken under municipal ownership. The shoe, rubber and textile factories were collectivised. The collectivisations were spear-headed by the CNT with only minor assistance from the socialists.

The farming collective was set up in August 1936. It was made up of 50 families, of which 10 belonged to the UGT and the rest to the CNT. The collectivised lands were split up into five sectors, in each of which there was a delegate, who also worked just like everyone else. There were daily meetings of the junta in which the five delegates who organised the work decided what was to be done the following day. In the mornings the collective's peasants went out to the plot, where they were briefed by their delegates, who chose the comrades they needed for the tasks entrusted to them. There were always more than enough volunteers for nighttime irrigation jobs. These volunteers would rest during the daytime. Some made do with a few short hours of rest before getting back in harness like the rest.



Wine and olive oil were shipped to the cooperative agricultural union (which had been in existence for 20 years). The rest of the produce was stored in the collective stores.

Wages were paid on a family basis. The collective issued its own money, which enabled collectivists to purchase items and goods in the stores of the distributive cooperative. Wine, olive oil, potatoes, cereal, flour and dried vegetables were distributed in large quantities on application by the families. The consumer paid whatever they could for these products. The collective changed the currency of the collectivists for the state's currency on request from the collectivists who needed this service.

There was no fixed working day. Normally the collectivists had to labour six days a week, from sun-up to sundown. No great heed was taken of holidays. Whenever any product ran short the collective would obtain supplies and it would be shared out among the collectivists on the basis of family rationing. Whenever the collective's own products became scarce they were distributed in the same way, with preference always being given to children, the infirm and the aged. All persons who were able-bodied were eligible for work. Mothers with household duties were exempted from the obligation to work. Any who had no such duties would present themselves for work during their free time and always of their own volition and they showed up in greater numbers for those field occupations proper to womenfolk.

When the collective was formed, each collectivist contributed their land, livestock and tools. As the lands donated by the collectivists were not very big, the procedure adopted was that the plots of each member would be swapped for other plots of the same size belonging to sharecroppers, smallholders and tenant farmers who refused to join the collective. When such exchanges were made, care was always taken to favour the person making the exchange so as to avoid disputes. Those who joined the collective later also abided by this formula. The collective also admitted the landless, on the same conditions as everyone else.

When confiscations were carried out, as a matter of principle there was no individual material benefit or gain of any sort. As a result, the collectivists chose to pool what they possessed themselves — produce, seeds and fertilisers — in proportion with the family involved. It was all right if some were unable to contribute. During the period leading up to the first harvest, no collectivist received any pay. All work was acknowledged with labour vouchers. Once the harvest had been gathered in, steps were taken to settle the account of each family as well as the contributions they had made upon joining. Once this debt had been cleared, the collective was free to develop under its own steam.

When the collective came into existence an inventory of material contributions — tools, livestock, land, etc. — was drawn up. These assets were evaluated in case any collectivist later decided to leave the collective. If such a situation arose, their contributions were returned to them or, failing that, were kept in return for an agreed price. Of the lands they had made over to the collective, they were granted that portion which they as a family were capable of working. There was also a proportional division of the harvest in accordance with the number of days worked. In the event of the death of a collectivist, his relations and the interests of those relations were looked after by the collective. There was no instance of immorality deserving of punishment.

Medical and health services were laid on by the municipality, which also met schooling needs and general cultural requirements. Barter was practised. The produce concerned in these exchanges were evaluated according to their current trading prices. Deals closed with the municipality operated on the basis of fixed prices, and state currency was used. External trade patterns varied from case to case and was based on money exchanges and barter. The Catalan peasants'

committee (CNT) coordinated federative liaisons. The collective had a lot of influence inside the local agricultural union. Organisationally, the collective was subject to ordinances emanating from the CNT-affiliated local federation.

Some of the collective's land contained vines that had seen better days, and these had to be uprooted. The land was then made ready for fresh seed. Breaking with the tradition of ploughing with one or two mules, a deep tilth was preferred and the results of this were felt in the ensuing harvests, which were generous. Two tractors, which would have been superb for breaking down the soil, were voluntarily sent off to the front. As a result, the productivity of the collectivised land rose considerably in comparison with the average levels of non-collectivised lands. There was a noticeable build-up from harvest to harvest. With a view to large-scale work, a threshing machine was acquired. Some 3 hectares of rain-fed scrubland was turned into fertile soil and horticulture was intensified so as to meet the needs of the town and some sectors of the front. As an indispensable complement to this agricultural activity, a livestock farm which included pigs and domestic animals was set up also.

Those who shunned the collective had a hard time getting by, owing to the absence of day labourers whom they needed at specific times of the year to help them perform certain tasks. They had difficulty obtaining organic fertilisers and insecticides. This forced these 'loners' [*individualistas*] into a sort of mutual aid between families for certain tasks, such as sowing or bringing in the harvest. Despite this, their harvests were very disappointing, owing to the lack of attention during the growing period. In some cases those who resisted the collective preferred to abandon their land and their animals rather than seek help.

**La Granadela (Lleida).** Population approximately 2,000. Economic characteristics: rain-fed agriculture (olive oil, cereals, almonds). There was little industry save for a flour mill and an oil press. The collective was formed in September 1936 on the basis of CNT personnel only. The collective comprised 31 families and 15 single men. In all there were 159 persons; 38 were under the age of 14 years and 15 were over the age of 60 and were, therefore, not required to work. Collective labour was organised on the basis of teams of between up to 10 persons who were briefly joined by the womenfolk at harvest times.

The agricultural commission was made up of four members plus the delegates from the work teams, who were appointed at general assembly and whose mission was to orchestrate and direct the work. They gathered at night to work out the production plan for the following day. The collective included, and was served by, a barber, 2 bricklayers, a carpenter, a smith, a cattle drover, a shepherd, a farmer, 2 market gardeners, 2 stablehands, a driver, a baker, a farming and livestock expert, a tailor (with 2 assistants) and a schoolmaster. The administration of produce was in the hands of the administrative council. Work each day was from sun-up to sundown. There was no payment. Each produced in accordance with their ability and consumed in accordance with their needs.

As time passed, it was stipulated that each collectivist had to have a minimum amount of money for their personal needs, and so each individual was allotted 2 pesetas a week. The distribution of foodstuffs and other items was handled by the cooperative and no money changed hands. The individual simply applied to the store for what they needed. Rationing was introduced for scarce items. When it came to rationing, priority was given to children, the aged and the infirm. All youths under 14 years attended a school, which was located in an old fort which had been a Civil Guard barracks. Night classes were organised for adults and the collective boasted a fine library. Men over the age of 60 were entitled to retire. Pregnant women enjoyed the same dis-

pensation. The infirm were tended with great care and the collective paid the medical expenses of all its members, who were registered with the CNT's people's hospital in Barcelona. The collective paid no taxes of any sort, nor did it seek legal recognition from any authority. There was free and uncomplicated exchange of produce with private individuals, collectives and municipalities. These are the statutes by which the collective was governed:

The CNT workers' cultural association of this town, meeting in general assembly and having read the statutes set out beneath attuned to a collective lifestyle and labour in concert, hereby approves the following:

1. The object of this collective is to govern itself in a free and independent manner, to work the confiscated land which, along with any land contributed by comrades, will be worked collectively.
2. This collective will defend and promote both the materials and intellectual interests of all the comrades who belong to it. Likewise it will provide medical and surgical assistance to the infirm.
3. Within the collective all comrades of both sexes from 18 years upwards are represented.
4. So that it may experience the fullest possible growth, this collective will be divided into different sections, such as supply, construction, agriculture, poultry breeding, horticulture, statistics, livestock farming and catering. New sections may be added when necessary.
5. The collective agrees to welcome all comrades who desire admission to its ranks, whether they have something to contribute or not, on the understanding that, if they later choose to do so, they must leave in the same circumstances in which they joined.
  - (a) Should they join with debts, such debts are to be paid by the collective; alternatively, should they be in the black, that sum will be added to the collective's funds. Should they for any reason choose not to continue, then upon leaving they will have to repay what the collective made over to them, or retrieve what they put in, in a prudential fashion, provided that adequate funds are available or that this does not represent any economic upset to the collective.
  - (b) The collective understands that there are three ways of paying any debts accrued by its members, namely:
    - (i) Following an examination by a commission appointed for that purpose.
    - (ii) Those debts which are the inevitable outcome of work.
    - (iii) Any debts deemed to be the outcome of usury or the debts of those persons who directly or indirectly assisted fascism will not be cleared.
6. All collectivists must contribute all their machinery, equipment, cereals, field produce and liquid cash.
7. For the time being food will have to be procured for those comrades who live alone. Those who so wish may make use of the kitchens.

8. The collective will issue the necessary funds to cover the expenses of any comrade who may have to leave the district for reasons of *force majeure*.
9. The collective will establish a subsidy of 2 pesetas a week for all producers over the age of 18 years and of 1 peseta for those over 15 years old.
10. The collective will make retirement accessible to those of its members who reach the age of 70 years and supply all of their needs.
11. A special dispensation will be granted to those who, for reasons of ill-health, find themselves compelled to retire earlier than the prescribed age.
12. Anything which is not provided for in the present statute may be agreed later in an extraordinary assembly. La Granadela Town Hall, 7 October 1936.

## The revolution in the Aragonese countryside

Aragón has an area of some 47,391 square kilometres. Before the war its population stood at 1 million inhabitants. Three-quarters of the land area of Aragón was located in the loyalist zone. Nearly 600 villages, only kilometres from the lines, carried out one of the boldest socio-economic experiments ever. The agrarian collectivism glimpsed in the works of Joaquín Costa<sup>11</sup> was here a practical experiment from the outset. Some 450 collectives embraced upwards of 433,000 workers freed of the impediments of landlords, Civil Guards and the tax collector. Since Costa was one of the most impassioned mentors of agrarian collectivism, we shall open our description with the township in which the great man of jurisprudence lived out his great vision of Spain's historic destiny.

**Graus.** Alardo Prats,<sup>12</sup> a socialist with a mind open to the realities of his day and a man with a soul that thrilled to the pulse of revolutionary accomplishments, has bequeathed the following deposition to posterity:

Under the collective regime, even the outward appearances of the township have changed in Graus. Realisation of this produces a startling, stunning effect in one's mind. And the observer's mind frames the question: is it possible that in the space of 11 months that which had been naught but a dream for the labouring masses of this country can have crystallised into a happy reality?

A street broad and clean. Traders work in concert in the cooperatives. The shops and public establishments proclaim the new era of collectivism with their displays. The barbers, carpenters, locksmiths, transport workers and shoemakers are all bound together by the strong economic bonds of common interests, by shared labour and by the closest fraternity.

The best thing of all, they tell me, is that, with the *caciques* out of the way and with their influence over the destinies of the village reduced to zero, it has been possible to

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<sup>11</sup> A nineteenth century reformer, lawyer and critic of the corrupt and centralising Restoration monarchy. Deeply preoccupied with Spain's agricultural crisis, his *Colectivismo agrario en España* (1898) proposed the establishment of model farms and cooperatives as a means of enhancing rural productivity.

<sup>12</sup> A respected socialist publicist.

eliminate professional competition and rivalry which, under the old individualistic system, embittered everything. Take the tailors for instance. Here they could not see eye to eye. The same went for the physicians, the barber, the teachers and the doctors. Let us not mention the rivalries between the various traders. All those poisons have been removed through the implementation of collectivist norms. Those who hitherto had antagonistic interests now work together like brothers. In the assemblies one finds the representatives of the various associations arguing the same lines, without suspicion or envy. The same goes for the peasants, the shepherds, the blacksmiths, the doctors. They all work and they all eat, and each has their needs fulfilled in equal measure.

The collective runs a forge, a food depot, a restaurant, a blacksmith's shop, a machine workshop and a mill. All of the village's material, moral and economic interests are embraced in full by the collective. The work is shared. Each association, meeting in assembly, assigns it to each collectivist. One might expect these assemblies to be talking shops, but there is very little talking done, because each person is aware of their obligations and does not shirk them.

Men over 60 years of age are excused from the obligation to work. At the beginning, these men in the twilight of their lives yielded to the audacity of the young people who, for the most part, determined the collectivist norms. They were afraid that they might be overwhelmed with work beyond their years, but they soon revised this view, as the aged did not have to work. This was one of the first rules that the collective laid down. They had laboured enough for a lifetime under the scourge and despotism of the *caciques*. Despite a life of labour and of only the most minimal rewards, the old people would not accept leisure and, in an assembly, the old folk agreed to work on through fear that they would be a burden upon the other collectivists, in order to help lift the people out of their degradation and to spearhead production among the other adjacent villages. The old folk of Graus could not bring themselves to look upon their years and physical weaknesses as impediments to winning the war. Then Graus's old folk formed an authentic, touching shock brigade. The people dubbed this the 'International Brigade'.

In ranks the old people marched out into the fields and established work competitions. The elderly lived as if in a dream, and were the staunchest advocates of the collective.

"When things are handled right", I was told by one of these venerable workers, stooped over the furrows of a riverside vegetable garden, "they look well. And here, under the collective arrangement, things looking well are all one can see."

Indeed one need only have eyes to see and ears to hear. The surprising progress made by the collective can be readily appreciated. Every Saturday, the collectivists go to the collective's central fund, sign their names and collect their money. In the collective's cooperatives they can obtain the items they need in order to get by. The greater the saving the greater the purchasing power of the residents.

When collectivists marry, they are given a week's leave on full pay and, because accommodation is being collectivised, they receive a house, which is furnished by

the appropriate cooperative. The furniture can be paid off on easy terms over a period of time. All of the collective's services stand ready to meet their requirements and all of the associations representing the various branches of production stand united. From the cradle to the grave the collective looks after its members and safeguards their rights and duties as determined democratically in assemblies. The collectivist has it all within their grasp: bread, work, and the opportunity for self-improvement and self-betterment.

Children are the objects of very particular solicitude and ongoing attention on the part of the collective. They do no work until the age of 14 years on any pretext or excuse. The exploitation of children by their relatives has ended — previously poverty in the home often forced them to quit school prematurely. Mothers, and above all expectant mothers, are also well cared for, above all in the nursing period, when they are excused all work.

The young women work in the fields, in the offices or in workshops where they sew and manufacture garments for the fighting men. All of Graus is a hive of hard-working, unselfish folk governed by the siren's wails marking out the times to work and the times for the residents to rest.

It may perhaps be inferred from all of the features I have listed that an Arcadian regime of the nature of the one we are studying cannot last. Nobody gives any credence to such a critical reaction. For all of this, though a lot, is but a small sample.

The regime in question, its mode of life, its coexistence and disciplined economics, is a perfectly attuned technical system. I have spent several hours studying the set-up of the office from which the multifarious aspects of the life of the collective are governed. Through stringent statistical procedures, there is thorough research into every branch of the local economy, its volume, growth and potential for growth. Whenever the collective's general secretary, comrade Portella, escorted me to the statistical department and picked up a file so as to give me a briefing on the progress of tasks and the production figures for the whole town, I all but fainted. The smoothest operating state body, with the most competent officials at its disposal, might well feel satisfied were it able to boast some compatibility with the organisation of the Graus collective. I venture to recommend any who may greet this claim with scepticism that they examine the absolute accuracy of it on the spot.

Everything is systematically organised. Each branch of production has its file containing the precise facts about growth and potential, accurate up to the hour. In this way waste is eliminated and everything attains the optimum degree of reliable order. But for this stringent systemisation in every department would it have been possible to carry out the gigantic rebuilding projects carried out by the Graus collective? Of course not.

Thanks to it, adjacent to the town there has emerged a model farm for pigs, housing some 2,000 beasts of various ages and breeds. It is common knowledge that in Aragón, as in many other places in Spain, the pig is one of the staples of the family economy. Pig butchering is a household institution of the most ancient ancestry.

By the time the winter comes, every resident of Graus will have a pig as one of his basic possessions. The piggery has been set up in accordance with the requirements of the most up-to-date establishments. There are showers for the animals and farming occurs in compliance with the demands of scientific stock-raising. I asked the comrades who run the piggery, and the ones who built it, where they had taken their model from. They informed me that, when the venture was launched they examined and discussed at length a number of different models before eventually plumping for a North American one, based on the piggeries in Chicago.

Elsewhere, on the outskirts of town, another building for poultry has been set up and equipped with the most satisfactory organisation and experimental laboratory. It occupies a huge site, the entire compass of a former orchard and garden. The most varied species of domestic fowl have the run of the departments of the poultry house.<sup>13</sup> Nearly 10,000 birds are expected to be in full production by next autumn. At the moment the building's coops hold 6,000 birds. Everything is brand new and splendid. All of the installations have been made in accordance with the most exacting requirements of technology. The director of the poultry house has invented a new incubator with a capacity in excess of any others known. Thousands of tiny chicks teem in the heated compartments. Hundreds of ducks, geese, chickens and hens, all painstakingly classified. Like the piggery, the poultry house is like something from the movies and people come from all of Aragón to take note of the model. Graus is a place of pilgrimage for Aragonese workers and an academy of the economic reconstruction of our homeland.

All of the creative potential inside its residents has been unveiled. It has a magnificent school — which bears the name of Costa — and a library with a catalogue that lists the latest works on the widest range of topics drawn from all intellectual disciplines. The collective also boasts a printing works and a bookshop.

An arts and trades school has been set up in which over 60 young people from the locality pursue their studies and practise the various techniques of the crafts and trades. In the same building as the school of fine arts and crafts, a museum of pictorial art, sculpture and woodcarving has been set up, which also contains splendid objects of artistic and historical value.

Graus makes great efforts to meet the needs of a colony of refugee children who, together with their teachers, have taken up residence in a grand palace complete with extensive gardens. It pampers and tends nearly 100 male and female children drawn from the war zones of Madrid, Aragón and other areas close to the fascist lines. It caters for over 50 refugees.

Of all the villages in Aragón, Graus yields to none in its endeavours to meet the demands of the war. It has repaired roads, it studies the feasibility of working local areas rich in coal and pyrites deposits, its industries operate flat out on the basis of perfectly regular economic foundations, it has erected a modern mill, it has ac-

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<sup>13</sup> Paradoxically, when we recall the adherence to vegetarianism that characterised important sections of the anarchist movement, the revolution of 1936 allowed many of the rural dispossessed to eat meat for the very first time in their lives.

quired new farm machinery, it has industrialised livestock production and, all in all, transformed the town's life according to collectivist norms and is well on the way to transforming the life of all of the country of the same name. It has made the revolution.

"To be sure," they told me, "undoubtedly the confusion implicit in the overhauling of the state in the wake of its collapse of 18 July has prevented the collection of taxes, but the collective has guarded the payments due from the people of Graus in the event that payment is necessary later. As can be seen, we think of everything."

Among the displays of Graus's communal establishments, the eye is caught by a huge plaque with pretentious gold lettering that proclaims the presence in that spot of a bank. The bank is not in operation. Its officials are busily working away in the collective. All dealings with the outside world are handled through a communal fund which enjoys unlimited credit. The fact is that in the earliest days of the war and the revolution some of the bank's documentation was put to the torch by gangs of juvenile vandals.

Subsequently some firms and factories which had commercial dealings with the residents of Graus called in money owed to them by town residents who are numbered among the collectivists. The justice of their claims was established and the collective, through its assembly, issued strict instructions which, while assuredly not revolutionary, nonetheless reveal the spirit of honour and integrity of the collectivists of Graus.

All collectivists stand by the written undertakings of any member of the collective. In a number of instances everyone's good name has thus been endorsed. Any collectivists whose debts are called in will repay his debt gradually, without extortionate repayments. Such is the stuff of which the collectivists of this splendid town are made. Out of its 700 residents, all but 170 are members of the collective.

Many collectives in Aragón are like this. However justice requires that we state that none can rival Graus's high levels of perfection. Others, such as the collectives of Binéfar, Benabarre, Barbastro, Aínsa, Esplús, Angüés, Ontiñena, Alcañiz, Híjar, Puebla de Híjar, La Naja, Pollaruelo de Monegros, Fraga, Monzón and many more, can vie with Graus for the orderly and prosperous nature of their operation. There are some 350 villages where every facet of production and economic life has been collectivised wholesale. Elsewhere there is a mixed regime of communes and "loners" [*individualistas*]. Farming and livestock collectives preponderate. Aragón's heavy industry is confined, in the loyalist zone, to the sugar plants in Monzón and Puebla de Híjar, where, under the workers' supervision, there has been normal progress with drives that have boosted production.

The same thing has happened with the olive presses where production has continued absolutely normally under the collective arrangement, as it has also in the small industries exploiting agricultural and livestock assets.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> From Alardo Prats, *Vanguardia y retaguardia de Aragón*, Barcelona 1937. (Note by the author.) This important study was later reprinted in Santiago de Chile (1937) and Buenos Aires (1938).



**Monzón (Huesca).** Population 6,000. Farmland here consisted of 12,000 hectares irrigated by the old canal and a remaining area of up to 15,000 hectares watered by the Aragón-Catalonia Canal. There was a sugar refinery, flour mill and a number of plants manufacturing soap and olive presses. Produce: sugar beet, kidney beans, beans, wheat, barley, alfalfa and vegetables. There was a farming and general trades collective founded by the CNT. The sugar refinery has been socialised. The UGT socialised the construction industry. Some 85 families and a number of single men made up the collective, 450 persons in all. Production was organised in strips and by working teams. Produce was stored in the special premises of the collective. The surplus was swapped with the aid of the county federation of collectives. There was no specified working day and, depending on the time of year, 9, 10 or more hours were put in each day. In other pursuits, although there were no set hours of work, a certain regularity was obtained. The family wage was instituted along the following lines: for the unmarried, 5 pesetas (local money); for the married, 9 pesetas plus 3.50 pesetas for each under-age child; children above the age of 14 years but living in the family home got 4 pesetas. The retail cooperative was split up into the following departments: butchery, bakery, textiles, footwear, cereals, etc. Rationed items were issued on production of a family ration book. Married women performed only seasonal or emergency tasks. Single women worked in the workshops, in the cooperative and elsewhere.

The collective expanded normally. There was never any shortage of food, clothing or footwear – in short, life's essentials were in ample supply. Its lands were the best worked. Machinery was phasing out horsepower and human exertions. 'Individualists' continued to work as before the revolution, although, with the end of the middlemen, they had to procure supplies from the council and encountered many problems. They were treated with indulgence. In tight spots they were lent threshing machinery and were even supplied with certain items. Collectives were also organised in other villages in the county, laying the basis for a county federation of collectives, based in Binéfar. The collectivists would bring their surplus produce to the federation's stores, taking whatever they needed in return without a thought for credit or deficit. The federation had also set up a hospital.

**Alcolea de Cinca.** Population 2,000. The farmland amounted to some 9,000 hectares of rain-fed soil and 1,100 hectares of irrigated land. Produce: vegetables, fruit, forage and cereals. During the early days of the revolt, the CNT, together with the Izquierda Republicana, convened a general assembly of the entire town, at which the work of the council was wound up. It was agreed that all assets and means of production be socialised, with the exception of those property owners who undertook to go into production on their own account without recourse to waged labour. Nonetheless, when it came to the task of collectivisation, the CNT found itself obliged to strike out on its own. An agricultural commune was formed and was joined by 2 blacksmiths, 2 carpenters and the workers from the 3 existing barbers' shops. The collective set up some small bleachworks, a piggery with 32 breeding boars and a cattle farm with 80 cows. It also possessed 300 sheep. In time the collective bought a threshing machine, a tractor and a truck outright.

The collective functioned without misadventure up until 28 July 1937, when it was broken up by the 'Komsomol' battalion of the 27th [Karl Marx] Division. A number of collectivists were jailed. The collective was reconstituted. In the end the collective comprised 40 families. The work was organised by zones and squads under the expert supervision of the relevant labour delegates. The delegates put in a full day's labour and swapped impressions after work. When necessary, general assemblies were held. Products were at the disposal of members, with any surplus being set aside for barter against items which were not to hand. The collective's cooperative took charge

of the general provisioning of the town and its bakery kept the whole township supplied. They worked as many hours as were deemed necessary, not less than 10 or 12 hours daily. In the beginning, the collectivists received no pay: they produced and consumed according to their abilities and needs. Later they received a wage, paid in vouchers, by way of an incentive. State currency enjoyed scarcely any circulation among the membership. When wages were paid, they were paid individually.

Upon joining the collective (a right freely granted to every resident) the applicant was obliged to surrender all of their assets in terms of lands, produce, equipment and draught animals. If they later chose to leave, these contributions were acknowledged as their belongings. A fundamental duty of the collective was the provision of educational facilities for children and health care. Nearly all of its dealings took place without money changing hands and, for a while, many suppliers of industrial goods from Lleida accepted this, but they later they refused to barter. Yet following a set of circumstances which led to currency depreciation, they changed their minds again and came to give barter preference over commercial buying and selling. The collective never paid state taxes; instead it held it a sacred duty to make contributions directly to the lines, to the soldiers fighting against the invader. There were frequent shipments of foodstuffs.

**Peñalba.** Population 1,500. The CNT had been a presence in the town since 1931. Economic profile: agriculture, livestock farming, artisan trades and small business. The rain-fed soil produced wheat, oats, rye, vines and a small amount of olive oil. Honey was also produced and there were great flocks of sheep. When the revolt broke out, the town council was replaced by a revolutionary committee. Direct delegates from every branch of production sat on this committee. The work was organised by teams and team delegates. From the very outset the collective practised the swapping of produce with other towns on the banks of the Cinca River, as well as with the Durruti Column, which they helped provision from the very beginning of the campaign. Initially the collective embraced all of the town's inhabitants. Later, when the Council of Aragón was brought down, the collective was reorganised.<sup>15</sup> By that point, it had 500 members. The rest reclaimed their individual possessions, their lands, livestock and equipment. A commission comprising collectivists and 'individualists' saw to it that the distribution was a fair one.

The agricultural section was run by several work teams who shared the business of tending cereal crops and vines. At the same time one of their members was a delegate to the collective's administrative council. A transport section was set up, complete with garage, as were three workshops for the repair of all manner of farm machinery. The construction and carpentry sections were very important. The collective also made provision for the working rehabilitation of its war wounded. Schools and workshops for the manufacture of clothing were formed, with a view to training young people in trades and in the facts of economic life. The garment and footwear trades had hitherto not existed in the town. Another innovation was the introduction of dairy farming. Two threshing machines were brought in from Barcelona, as was a movie projector which was set up in the church. All produce collected was stored in the various granaries and an exact estimate of internal requirements was made, while the remainder was set aside for trading with adjacent villages and counties. When it came to shearing the enormous flocks, it had been the custom to avail of the services of professionals from Teruel. The difficulties caused by the war

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<sup>15</sup> The popularity of the Aragonese collectives is further attested by the fact that when the reconstructed republican state destroyed the Council of Aragón in August 1937 the village collectives were allowed to exist in many areas.

forced the collectivists to try their hand at this sort of work, and they managed perfectly well to satisfy the needs of adjoining villages. The collective paid a lot of attention to public works and to providing all residents without exception with habitable accommodation.

Money was abolished outright. Later the family wage was introduced, again on the basis of a descending scale in proportion with family size. Every day, families were entitled to claim their allotted ration of foodstuffs or goods to the amount of their stipulated rate of pay. No one was permitted to acquire the following day anything which, for whatever reason, they had not obtained before. This experiment resulted in certain abuses on the part of a number of ill-suited collectivists, who either acquired goods that were surplus to their real needs on a daily basis, only to let them go off, or who stopped acquiring their everyday provisions, preferring to amass money instead. To the majority it seemed more risky to do what could be done to dispense with such frugality than to be vigilant against unnecessary accumulation of goods. Consequently, it was agreed that the portion of pay not used upon day one could be carried into the following day and, at the end of the year, if the individual concerned had failed to put their savings to some use, they could take equivalent items from the cooperative and even to apply for goods of their choice from the city. Otherwise, they would lose their savings. In this way the collectivists believed it might be possible to avert the emergence of *nouveaux riches*.

Supplies of water and firewood, barber's services, as well as admission to the cinema and the theatre were not deducted from wages. Nor was any charge made for the medical and health services. The grain needed for domestic animals was likewise free of charge. Later a collectivised poultry house was launched and to this end an incubator was acquired.

As for rationing, preference was given to the very young, the elderly and to the sick. The collectivists had a duty to work from the age of 14 or 16 onwards. For women, work was optional: nonetheless a huge number of women helped out with the work for which they had any aptitude. All recently married couples were awarded a gift of furniture by the collective. The doctor, nurse, chemist and veterinary belonged to the collective and had the same rights and duties as the other collectivists. The doctor sat on the administrative council as head of the health section. The pharmacy was another of the off shoots of the cooperative. For exceptional cases, there was a contract with a clinic in Lleida.

In the beginning there was more or less direct barter, although later this was orchestrated through the county federation of collectives and, later still, by the Council of Aragón. To begin with, products were valued according to their pre-19 July 1936 prices. But in the centres of industry the cost of living soon soared while farming produce experienced no increase. As a result, all trade with official agencies, or even with a certain category of firms or groups which were ideologically different, brought glaring disadvantages in its wake.

The collective survived Stalinist repression in the summer of 1937, thanks to the mettle of its supporters. With its membership diminished and stripped of its best lands by the fascist owners,

who recovered them through connivance with Lister's divisions,<sup>16</sup> the collective beavered away until the Aragonese front eventually collapsed.

**Lagunarrota (Huesca).** A village of 600 inhabitants. Agriculture: wheat, barley, olive oil and almonds. Prior to the Franco revolt there had been only five big landlords. In the early days a council was formed, based on the CNT and the UGT. The agricultural commune was formed at the start of August 1936. Initially the UGT was involved, but later, from May 1937 onwards, the collective was reduced to 23 CNT families, or some 100 individuals. Some 80 hectares of land were confiscated from the big landlords by the collectivists. Work was organised on the basis of eight teams, each one headed by a delegate. There were no set limits to the working day. All of those over the age of 14 years were eligible for work, and this brought with it access to all rights and duties. Money was non-existent. In an individual or a family capacity, the collectivists possessed a record book in which were noted the number of days worked and goods consumed. There was a consumer cooperative. Some items, such as bread and green vegetables, were available without rationing. Each producer was permitted half a kilo of meat and a litre of wine.

Admission to the collective was conditional upon surrender of all of the assets of the applicant. If they later left, all that had been donated was returned. In the event of the defector having spent over a year in the collective there was a 15 per cent deduction from this. All of the expenses of the collectivists, as well as medical and educational services, were covered by the collective, which practised barter through the agency of the county federation of collectives. Despite pressures and threats from tax officials, no state taxes were ever paid.

**Alcañiz (Teruel).** Population 8,000. As soon as the revolt broke out the big landlords were expropriated and their lands collectivised. This collectivisation was extended to transport and, initially, the UGT collaborated in this. Urban property was taken into municipal ownership. The collective possessed 2 cinemas, 9 olive oil presses, 3 flour mills and an electricity generating station. The agricultural section comprised 500 workers. The nine-hour working day was introduced and the individual wage was set at 10 pesetas. The cooperative set up shop inside the church, which was crammed with all sorts of items: footwear, soap, canned goods, salamis, textiles, sugar, flour. Money came in the form of vouchers. The municipal council was reshuffled on the basis of 6 representatives from the CNT and 6 from the UGT.

**Calanda (Teruel).** Population 4,500. Farming and livestock were the chief occupations and the only industries being ancillary to these, namely, 3 flour mills, a brick yard and a pottery and mosaic plant. There were 12 olive oil presses in operation during the season. Chemicals were extracted from grapeseed oil. Local produce included wheat, peaches, apples, olive oil and wool.

Among the main victims of expropriation were Joaquin Fortón, the Count de Monzón and the Marquis of Monte-Guerrero; Miguel Sancho Izquierdo and his brothers; the firms of Matutano, Casanova, Sauras, Crespo, Gasca, Lusarreta and various others of minor importance. The collectivisation was all but total. Nonetheless, the collectivists and the 'individualists' (small-time traders for the most part) lived in perfect harmony. The lands were divided up into zones and

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<sup>16</sup> Formerly a quarryman and activist inside the Stalinist PCE, Enrique Jesús Lister became the most celebrated republican military commander during the civil war. Having participated in the defence of Madrid and Toledo early on in the civil war, he went on to lead several major campaigns against the Francoists, including those at Jarama, Guadalajara and Teruel. In 1939 he left Spain for Moscow, where, under the *nom de guerre* of 'Lisyin', he became a general in the Red Army. During 1946–7 he organised guerrilla operations in Spain against the dictatorship, before immersing himself in the power struggles taking place within the exiled Spanish Stalinist movement in Eastern Europe.

were worked by the peasants in teams of 10, each of which had a delegate. The collective came to accommodate 3,500 members. It was equipped with tractors and threshing machines. Due to a manpower shortage, work was intensive. Upwards of 500 young people were away at the battle fronts, mostly with the 26th Division (formerly the Durruti Column). The council was made up of elements from the CNT and the anarchist youth movement, the latter being extremely active, setting up public baths and a superb library, as well as a rationalist school catering for 1,233 children, which was located in a former monastery. The collective paid the expenses of the more advanced pupils who were sent on to the high school at Caspe. Money was abolished and replaced by a form of voucher system. Many necessities and services were supplied free of charge. There was barter with other towns and with some Barcelona textile factories, whereby olive oil was exchanged for products that were needed from other areas.

**Alcoriza (Teruel).** Population 4,000 – 3,700 of whom were members of the collective. Agriculture: wheat, olive oil and vegetables. The collective set up a sausage factory in a former monastery, as well as a shoe factory which achieved high production. The tailor's workshop managed to meet the village's needs. There was a cinema, a library and a school able to accommodate 600 children. There were 12 teachers (1 for every 50 pupils). Produce was distributed by means of vouchers or consumer tickets and certain items were allotted on a points basis. From the outset there was active trade and barter which successfully raised the town's living standards, just as the health of the neighbourhood was also improved.

**Mas de las Matas.** Population 2,300. There was a collective with 2,000 members. The remaining 300 inhabitants also did their shopping in the collective's stores, where they had accounts and through which they marketed their produce. Membership of the collective was optional and no pressure was brought to bear on opponents of the collectivist arrangement. Some proprietors, who had been allowed to hold onto their properties by central government, voluntarily donated their factories and plunged into the new arrangement like so many more collectivists.

**Oliete (Teruel).** Population 2,200, almost all of them smallholders. The collectivisation involved the vast majority of the populace. The collectivised land was split up into zones and the workers into work teams. The main wealth of the town was in the form of olive oil which was the hub of a very busy commercial life. Money was used only in such commercial dealings and in trading. The church was adapted as a goods depot. On the same site a pasta factory had been started up. Among the collective's ventures was the discovery and working of a coal seam. The collective committee functioned as a municipal council. The former council building was converted by the anarchist youth into an athenaeum, with a school and library. Relations between collectivists and "individualists" were normal and were governed by the following agreement:

1. The committee, in accordance with the organisations, hereby resolves: all comrades who may be unhappy within the collective are free to withdraw and to work their properties on an individual basis, but let it be known that nobody will be able to have more land than they can work by their own unaided efforts, though they may aid one another provided this does not assume an exploitative form.

The "individualist" comrades will abstain from engaging in acts against the collective and, should they do so, they will be adjudged as counter-revolutionaries.

2. The collectivist comrades are to respect the individualists. The militant comrades from the two unions, the CNT and the UGT, being of the opinion that their postulates are collectivist, will do all they can to profit the collective.

3. Relations which ought to obtain between the collectivists and “individualists”: the commune’s cooperative is to open an account for each individualist to the value of those items which he may surrender. In this way, “individualists” can procure their needs from the cooperative, but only when the collective’s needs have been first met.

Livestock belonging to the “individualists” will be able to graze throughout the municipal jurisdiction, while respecting plantations as usual and the number of head of livestock which each individualist will be able to have shall be set at a maximum of 25. There is also incumbent upon them an obligation to respect the pastures.

4. Since one of the most interesting questions is vigilance with regard to the economy, the livestock belonging to the “individualists” is to be checked by 2 members of the municipal council, 1 from the UGT and 1 from the CNT.

These same members are to punish any pilferage or sabotage detected among the fruits derived from the land tilled by the “individualists”.

5. Purging of the organisations. The task of purging the two organisations is to be carried out by 4 comrades from the UGT and 4 from the CNT acting in concert and appointed by the assembly.

## **The Federation of Aragonese Agricultural Collectives**

In mid-February 1937, 500 delegates attended a congress in Caspe at which it was agreed to set up the Federation of Collectives of the Aragón Region. What follows is the full text of the statutes which were approved:

Code of Conduct.

1. Under the name of the Federation of Agricultural Collectives there is hereby constituted in Aragón an association which is to have as its mission the defence of the collective interests of the workers organised in the same.

2. This Federation will be empowered as follows:

(a) To publicise widely the advantages of a collectivism with its roots in mutual aid.

(b) To oversee the experimental stations which may be set up in those districts where the quality of the soil is such as to favour the planting of all sorts of seeds.

(c) To cater for young people who may feel inclined to seek technical training, by means of establishing technical schools specialising in this field.

(d) To organise teams of experts to examine the best method of rendering the work put into various field tasks more productive.

(e) To seek commercial growth outside the region while at all times retaining the conditions of mutual exchange.

(f) It will also concern itself with the management of commercial dealings with the outside world by monitoring, through statistics, the surplus production of the region,

and, this being so, will have at its disposal a fighting fund to meet the requirements of the federated collectives, provided these are in harmony with the Aragón Regional Defence Council.

3. In the cultural field, the Federation will:

(a) Make provision to the collectives of all factors which, at the same time as providing diversion, may also aid the development of the culture of the individual in the broad sense of the word.

(b) Improve and shape the peasant's new circumstances by means of lectures, cinema, theatre and whatever propaganda methods may be feasible.

4. So that all which has been prescribed may be properly managed, the Federation will appoint a regional committee of collectives, which shall include the following posts: general secretary, recording secretary, auditor, treasurer and two directors.

5. The general secretary will be in charge of the guidance of the committee, the secretarial stamp and the handling of any reports which the collectives may submit. The recording secretary will keep a record of the number of meetings held by the Federation's committee and, in the absence of the general secretary, they are to act temporarily in their stead. The auditor will take charge of the Federation's finances, opening current accounts with the deposits handed over by the county committees. In normal circumstances the auditor will assist the treasurer in the disbursement of funds. The treasurer will be the person entrusted with the care of the Federation's funds and paying out disbursements endorsed with the signatures of the secretary and auditor, and bearing the secretarial stamp. The directors will make up the various commissions needed for the internal functioning of the Federation: propaganda, statistics, technical advice, etc.

6. In keeping with federative procedures, the Federation will organise as many county federations as it deems necessary for the proper running of the collectives, which will maintain cordial relations with the municipal councils and with the Aragón Regional Defence Council.

7. A ration card will be introduced so that collectivists may have their provisions assured.

8. The Federation of agricultural collectives and ancillary bodies will hold its ordinary congress at intervals of six months, in addition to whatever extraordinary ones may be deemed appropriate.

9. Half of the committee will be replaced at each ordinary congress.

10. The committee will reside in Caspe.

11. All collectives formed after the creation of this regional federation will, to secure admission to the latter, have to secure the consent in general assembly of the inhabitants of the collective making application, sending a copy of the minutes to the regional committee for its records and approval.

12. For applications to have any validity, the collectives will pledge to abide by what is prescribed in these statutes.

13. These statutes are to be printed and distributed in an identity card to all federated collectivists.

Here are some of the propositions approved at the same congress:

Proposition on item 4. Following a sitting by the working party appointed by congress to frame a proposition on the subject of the federation of agricultural collectives, and after a full exchange of views, we have framed the following proposition which we submit for congress's consideration:

1. That the federation be set up to coordinate the economic potential of the region and that it be geared towards solidarity in accordance with the norms of autonomy and federalism to which we subscribe.

The internal structure of the federation must abide by the following norms:

(a) The collectives must federate at county level.

(b) A regional committee of collectives will be set up to ensure cohesion and liaison between the area committees.

The federation's internal structure. 1. The collectives will compile accurate figures on production and consumption and these shall be passed on to the appropriate county committee, which will in turn submit the figures for its county to the regional committee, this being the only way of instituting authentic human solidarity.

Money. 1. The circulation of money within the collectives must be abolished and replaced by the ration book, with the collective retaining within its power the exact quantity needed to meet its internal requirements.

2. So that the regional committee may be in a position to attend to the provisioning of the collectives in the matter of imported produce, the collectives or county committees will supply to the regional committee amounts consonant with the wealth of each locality or county, so that a regional fund may be set up.

Proposition on item 5. This working party places before congress what it believes ought to be one feature of the new system of organisation for administration of the land.

We find the municipality acceptable because, hereinafter, it will serve to oversee the assets of the village.

As collectivists federated by county, we intend to do away with the local boundaries of the territory we cultivate and, to this end, we believe it necessary that congress will give its assent to the following points.

1. Assuming that the collectives have been formed into county federations, the view will be that the local jurisdictions of these administrative bodies shall have no boundaries, as a result of which fields, work tools, agricultural machinery and anything to do with raw materials for these shall in equal measure be at the disposal of those collectives which may have need of them.



2. Should some collectives find themselves with a surplus of manpower or have no employment for that surplus of producers because it is not the season for their labours, the surplus will be able to be deployed under the supervision of the county committees in those collectives which may be overwhelmed with work.

Proposition on item 9. This issue must be resolved in a manner consonant with federalist principles.

1. Local councils are to have a separate and wholly legal foundation; they will be set up by the anti-fascist organisations and their jurisdiction will be recognised by the Aragón Defence Council.

(a) The administrative juntas of the collectives are to have a function separate from that of the local and county councils.

(b) In as far as the unions are allowed to prescribe and to oversee the functions of both organisms, the unions shall be allowed to appoint a single comrade without this implying any obligation to meddle with the functions of those organisms.

2. When smallholders are aloof from the collective out of choice, they will not be entitled to receive anything from it and they must provide for themselves.

(a) Those labour organisations in existence at the time of seizure and which agree to form communes will proceed to seize all rural and urban properties as well as any other assets of rebel personnel. Furthermore, all lands which have hitherto not been worked by their owner and those which were leased out or made over to sharecropping are to be confiscated by the collective.

(b) Smallholders who dissociate themselves from the collective are not entitled to farm any land which they cannot work by their own unaided efforts and it must be made clear that there will be no entitlement to any benefit from the new society.

(c) It must be understood that smallholders are at all times accountable for their property and that they must avoid causing upset to the collective order.

(d) While small property will be respected, deeds will not be registered, for our view is that this tends to the disappearance of the selfishness of proprietorship.

(e) The junta of the collective will concern itself only with that which pertains to it.

Extract from the minutes of a peasants' assembly held in Barbastro:

... Comrade Subía, an uncultured peasant, asked the landworkers present: "Tell me, comrades, what has individual working of the land bestowed upon you?" As of one voice the crowd replied: "Hunger, work and misery." He also spoke about onions, vinadas<sup>17</sup> and other things, bringing to the assembly a note of hilarity and ingenuousness regarding his trials and his struggles. Subía continued: "True, the peasant produced wine, but he also drank wine and this was the pattern always. Furthermore, by working collectively and availing of machinery, nations abroad have set us a living example. This is seen in the way that wheat in these countries is sold very

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<sup>17</sup> A measure for large quantities of wine.

cheaply. Here, on the other hand, because of our sterile individualism it cannot be sold at less than 50 pesetas per 100 kilos.”

Comrade Siu took the floor. He argued in favour of a petty bourgeoisie, with the big landlords being expropriated and their estates collectivised immediately. He deemed it right and necessary that the expropriated lands be converted for use as experimental farms. “It is my belief”, he said, “that the peasants will realise their errors unaided and will slowly and gradually flood into the collectives.”

He regarded it as dangerous, for the time being, to proceed with wholesale collectivisation. Spain is a country of petty bourgeoisie and to seek to coerce that sentiment might be of fatal consequences for the proper progress of the revolution. What happened in Russia? Did not Lenin have to devise his New Economic Policy?<sup>18</sup> Why? Because the peasant has a backward-looking, reactionary mentality and we do not know whether or not he will be able to accept being deprived of his own in this way by blows and knocks, even though the whole fruits of the village lands may be for him.

Acín, a comrade whose startling vitality seemed to thrive on toil, asked permission to speak. He spoke most forcefully, with passion and eloquence. Among other things, he said: “We have had the shameful, almost degrading, spectacle of comrades who are members of committees coming along to us to establish whether the lands of this or that bourgeois, located in such and such municipality, are the property of this village or the other one. Such squabbling is ill-suited to the times in which we are living. Anything which is in a municipality belongs to that municipality just as every municipality belongs to the region and the region to Spain, and Spain to the workers. It is my belief that, for the time being, such matters should not even be touched upon. The fundamentally important thing is the collectivisation of all land, the establishment of intercourse and the orchestration of the new economy. To this end, the engineers, technicians and agronomists will say what must be planted in this or that plot in accordance with its productive capacity. If the land around Barbastro is suited only to vines, then vines will be planted; if suited to wheat, then wheat it will be. However hard they may work, a peasant needs the help of a relation or friend. That is why I believe individualism to be pointless. How is this problem to be solved and bourgeois-type selfishness eradicated? By collectivising the land and seeing to it that everything is under control. The land should be worked by the peasants and its fruits ought to be for everyone in general. As I see it, this is the fairest, most equitable arrangement. No longer is there the poor peasant and the rich one. That being so, why not collectivise the land? There are peasants who know only ancient ploughs and unusable equipment, and if the land is collectivised then they will have machinery, they will have less work to do and their yield will be much increased.

The chairman, Mavilla, summed up the opinion of the general assembly: “It must be the people, by themselves and for themselves, that plot their own course. The people

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<sup>18</sup> This represented a retreat from agrarian revolution and the limited return of private capitalism in the countryside.

want collectivisation. Nonetheless we have no wish to coerce anyone into anything. No dictatorship can stand fast against the people.”

The assembly agreed unanimously. Mavilla spoke for a second time to say: “The peasantry is compelled to implement socialisation, but the decision of whether to collectivise or not must be our decision, it must be the result of our convictions.” (José and Cosme Sampériz, Barbastro, 27 August 1936. Published in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 1 September 1936.)

## The revolution in the Levante region

**Vila Joiosa (Alicante).** Normal population 9,000 inhabitants but, due to evacuations from the theatres of war, this number has swollen to 14,000. As in all the large towns, there were a number of industries here, but the prevalent one was the fishing industry, which accounted for a quarter of the work force, although if we take into account the ship’s engineers, netmakers, various trades and transport workers ancillary to the industry, the total number of workers involved might be reckoned at 4,000. The CNT was the major organisation but got along perfectly with the UGT.

Two months after the revolt, the workers of the fishing industry plumped for expropriation and decided to implement socialisation in short stages. Upon making this decision in September 1936, the workers found their industry under-equipped in every respect. With the exception of four or five craft, the rest were short of everything.

According to a lengthy study by Mariano Cardona Rosell<sup>19</sup> published in June 1937 in Barcelona’s *Solidaridad Obrera*, the industry forced retirement upon elderly fishermen and made it obligatory to help the families of those serving in the war. Likewise, a pension and subsidy were introduced for fishermen who retired prior to socialisation and also for widows of former fishermen. The industry voluntarily collected a levy which was then paid over to the council, whose task it was to make provision against unemployment. This levy consisted of a 3 per cent charge on the first 1,000 pesetas of net monthly turnover. In this way, between 25,000 and 50,000 pesetas a year were raised. The industry assumed responsibility for the medical and pharmaceutical services to members and their families. There was comprehensive cover, including not merely the general practitioner but also the specialists, analysts, etc. All medicines were free of charge and the sick received full pay.

The industry devoted almost the whole of its profits to helping other local industries gripped by crisis. This solidarity took the form of a free gift or interest-free loan. Within the space of nine months, sums to the total value of 500,000 pesetas had been disbursed and entire fishing catches were donated to school colonies, the militias and the army. Residents of the municipality were sold the fish at cost price. State taxes were paid.

The Fishermen’s Union was the municipality’s chief economic support. Except for statistical purposes the productivity of each boat was not reckoned separately. The amounts of the various catches were added together to make an overall production figure for the industry’s entire workforce. The system of payment was as follows: the ordinary worker was entitled to one share from production, the technician to a one-and-a-half share and the apprentice to a three-quarter share

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<sup>19</sup> A gifted economics analyst within the CNT.

— equivalent to 50, 75 and 37.50 pesetas, respectively. Nonetheless, around this time, there was a proposal to introduce the family wage.

Between 14 September 1936 and the end of May 1937, the sale of fish and various materials realised 5,056,924.40 pesetas. Some 4,355,827.18 pesetas were paid out in wages and in payment of bills for gas oil, gasoline, lubricants, health costs, retirement pensions and to the council by way of taxes. This left some 701,097 pesetas, 205,649 of which were invested in health and pensions and a further 1,680,062 being paid out in taxes to the council, to the state and so on. The 5 million pesetas realised from sales of fish did not include the value of fish donated free of charge to workers, school colonies, the social services and the battle fronts.

Unemployment was fought by means of payments to peasant victims of drought and by launching public utility ventures on which the unemployed were given work. An unemployed worker who fell ill would receive full pay. Retirement was made compulsory at the age of 65 or even earlier if circumstances recommended it. Until such time as the family wage could be introduced the pension was increased in accordance with the number of the dependants of the pensioner. The retired fisherman was entitled to fish and to sell his catch to the industry at the normal rate while receiving from the industry, free of charge, his nets and his craft.

Living costs reached 2 pesetas per person per day. Water, accommodation and lighting were no drain on this, for they were supplied free of charge to inhabitants with insufficient resources.

A health centre was established in a spacious chalet which accommodated the following agencies: a first-aid post, a clinical consulting room (medical and surgical), a surgical hospital and maternity ward with operating theatre and pre-op room, electrotherapy room, etc. There were 20 permanent beds and room for more, plus a radiology centre, a laboratory for chemical and biological analysis, a dental surgery, a vet's office, an ophthalmic consulting room and a specialist room for ear, nose and throat, digestive tract, obstetrics, gynaecology, syphilology, venereology, respiration and circulation, general surgery and traumatology.

On a set day each week specialists would arrive from the provincial capital, as they did in the event of emergencies. In order to be entitled to health services one had to produce a health card or a certificate from the social service department. Every industry, from fishing through to spinning, was issued with a number of medical cards each month. Any resident was able to secure one at a bargain price as befitted their resources. There were four types, the lowest at 2.50 pesetas, and the greatest at 10 pesetas monthly. Destitute families received them free of charge. The service was always the same for all.

There were public canteens where one could eat free of charge or at a fixed rate and the food was adequate and plentiful. Two local councillors, not always the same two, were obliged to take their meals there. The menu offered a two-course meal with dessert and as much bread as one wanted. Visitors could eat there at the rate of 1 peseta a day or for nothing, depending on their circumstances.

The barbers' establishments had been collectivised, as had the bakeries. There was general collectivisation of the timber trade also. The entertainment sector had been taken under municipal control. Transport services were assured by a huge CNT-UGT collective subject to the prescriptions of their national federations. The chocolate industry ranked, perhaps, third in order of importance. It was socialised by the CNT and the UGT and employed some 200 workers spread over about 16 plants. Here there were three categories of pay: 9.50, 7.50 and 6.50 pesetas, plus a special rate for women, and increments for large families. The working day was seven hours long and there was a 46-hour week. There were facilities for social services, retirement,

sickness, etc. They also made a contribution at a fixed rate to the department of social services and a voluntary one to the economic department. Provision had been made for the introduction of the family wage. As for peasants, they opted for either collectivisation or municipalisation of the land. The rope-works was the second most important industry. It gave employment to some 400 workers belonging to the CNT and UGT and modelled its organisation on the lines of their fishermen colleagues.

**Cervera del Mestre (Castelló).** Population 5,000. Rain-fed farming was practised and produce included olive oil, almonds, carob beans, vines and cereals. The collective was made up of some 80 families and was set up with the consent of an open assembly held in the town square. The bulk of the membership belonged to the CNT. About this time the UGT came into existence locally but held aloof from the atmosphere of revolution. The expanse of farmland confiscated was split into four sectors with work teams, each of which were headed by a delegate, in charge of the various sectors. The collective also included two barber shops and a carpentry shop. There was no set limit to the working day and wages stood at 3.50 pesetas for men, 2.50 for women and 1.50 for minors. A cooperative was set up to cater for the supply of foodstuffs, clothing and other items which were purchased with local currency.

Admission to the collective was contingent upon donation of all the goods possessed by the applicant. There was never any instance of immorality such as might have made it necessary to expel anyone. Dealing with other collectives took place on the basis of barter. State currency was used only in the purchase of textiles and other items that were not readily available. A deep-sunk well, the work of the collective, resolved the problem of the water shortage from which the whole town had previously suffered. It also served to irrigate the gardens of the collective which kept the latter in the vegetables it needed. The collective survived until the area was invaded by the Francoist barbarians.

**Sant Mateu (Castelló).** Population 5,300. Farming: olive oil, wheat, maize and some garden produce. There were olive presses, flour mills, textile and a plant making mosaics and artificial stone.

When the revolt erupted, the local revolutionary committee, comprised of all the left-wing parties and organisations, impounded the assets and farmlands of reactionary elements. Thereafter, in a general assembly of the whole town, a working party was appointed to lay down the guidelines for a future collective. However, because of discrepancies between the CNT and the UGT within that working party, two collectives were formed, one for each trade union grouping. The CNT collective embraced 25 families. The work delegates for the various sectors and teams were appointed from among the comrades with the greatest technical competence. These same delegates made up the administrative commission. No set working hours were established.

To begin with and in view of the scarcity of funds, a communal kitchen was set up for the collectivists. Later the family wage was introduced on the following lines: 3 pesetas a day for a head of family, 2 pesetas a day for his spouse, 3 pesetas for a single man and 1.50 pesetas for the under-16s. From then on the family's purchases were made at the cooperative with vouchers equivalent to the family income. Articles which were hard to obtain were rationed, with due consideration given to family requirements. The produce of the collective could readily be acquired. The only people exempted from the obligation to work were the elderly and the very young. Single men without family commitments would join the collective and be looked after by the female comrades in charge of laundry and kitchen services. The only condition upon admission was that one had to agree with the statutes and place one's possessions in a common pool. After one year

of communal life those who wished to leave were free to do so, although there was only one instance of this.

Only the general assembly was empowered to expel members on grounds of immorality and this could only occur in the presence of those concerned. However, the occasion never arose to avail of this power. In the eventuality of illness and the necessity of medical care, it was the collective which bore the costs. Children attended the government school which was run by a qualified schoolmaster who fulfilled his duties to the satisfaction of the collectivists.

Trading links were established with Barcelona, Terrasa and some villages in Aragón. The peasants' regional committee of Levante supplied them with seed and fertilisers. Trade was conducted on the basis of pre-19 July 1936 values.

**Llombai (Valencia).** Population 3,000. Produce: oranges, table grapes, wines, vegetables, cereals, olive oil and carob beans. There was a flour mill, also an olive press, and soap and spirits were manufactured. The rural commune had been formed in August 1936. Only the CNT was involved in the collectivisation. The collective comprised 135 families, a total of 650 individuals. Work was organised on the basis of 3 squads with 1 delegate per squad. Seven hours of work was usual and 5 pesetas per day was paid for each individual over the age of 14 years. Foodstuffs were distributed by a subsidised store according to family size. The prices of goods were set by the administrative council. The sick, the elderly and the very young got priority for rationed items. The only stipulation for admission was that one had to be a good anti-fascist and an upstanding person, and pool all of one's possessions except those of a purely personal nature. If anyone chose to withdraw, their possessions were returned, account being taken always of the difference in value between one date and the other. There was never any report of immoral practices such as might have made expulsion commendable. The collective saw to all medical and health services. A school equipped with modern materials and run by two qualified comrades was also set up.

In economic matters, barter was practised with produce being evaluated in terms of currency. The collective was affiliated to the county and to the regional federations.

**Ademuz (Valencia).** Population 5,000. Farmland: 300–400 hectares irrigated by the Turia River, plus some 1,000 hectares rain-fed. Produce: cereals, vines, sugar beet, apples and vegetables.

In September 1936, the CNT and the UGT, which had been working and struggling in concert, founded the collective which was joined by some 500 families, 300 from the CNT and 200 from the UGT. Work was divided up among teams of 10 or more people, according to the nature of the plot to be tilled. Every night the group of delegates would come together to organise the following day's tasks. Every Saturday there was a general labour assembly where all of the workers could freely discuss future projects. All produce was deposited with the cooperative's storehouses.

For the acquisition of scarce produce the family ration book was introduced, with its record of the number of individuals that family contained. Footwear and clothing could be obtained upon production of vouchers. No money was used within the collective, nor even in local dealings. Nonetheless, money was issued to persons who, in exceptional circumstances, might need to journey to the capital. All collectivists of both sexes, in good health and aged between 15 and 60 years, had a duty to work in accordance with their strength and ability. An exception to this rule was made for married women with household duties.

Applicants for admission to the collective had to make a signed declaration of their assets. They might surrender these, use them up or put them to use. If they chose to quit the collective,

their belongings were returned to them in full as per this inventory, or else their value in paper money. No instance of immorality meriting expulsion was ever recorded.

Educational and medical health facilities were provided by the collective at all times.

According to the requirements at the time, produce was either bartered or exchanged by means of purchase and sale. The collective introduced improvements to the economic life of the town, setting up all sorts of workshops (smithy, cobbler's workshop, tailor's shop, seamstress workshop, etc.) which had hitherto been non-existent.

**Utiel (Valencia).** The peasant collective here embraced a number of activities which included the manufacture of alcohol and olive oil. The Confederation, which was the power behind the venture, had a membership of 2,700. The collective comprised 600 families. It drew its inspiration from the purest principles of libertarian communism and its example inspired the conversion of many who had previously been bitterly opposed to that system. The community in Utiel performed a magnificent feat in provisioning the front, especially in Madrid, in the dark days of the fascist offensive. On one single occasion it dispatched a shipment of 1,490 litres of olive. The French beans, wheat, rice, etc. shipped to the lines amounted to thousands of kilos and on one single occasion 3,750 kilos of potatoes were sent. These were free gifts.

The collective catered for the needs of 500 evacuee families, laying on all sorts of services and providing clothing, food, and shelter, etc. All of this was done without any sort of government assistance.

**Sueca (Valencia).** This riverbank township was noted for two agricultural products of great importance on the home market as well as for export — rice and oranges. Collectivisation here was a resounding success under the guidance of peasants affiliated to the CNT and the UGT.

Heart of the rice growing La Ribera region, where the estates belonged to the Marquis de Peñafiel. With the confiscation of 3,665 *hanegadas*<sup>20</sup> of paddy-fields, 320 *hanegadas* of market gardens and 115 *hanegadas* of orange groves, a collective of some 225 families was set up. 850,559 kilos of rice were brought in from the lagoons. The collective's cut-price store contains 140,000 worth of goods. The orange crop brought in approximately 34,000 kilos.

All of the needs of every collectivist are catered for, even the medical services and medicaments. There is a large herd of truly exemplary cows and pig breeding stations. The farm works flat out. There is a smithy, a cart repair workshop, a tools and equipment section, a mill for grinding fodder, plus threshing machines and tractor. There is a corral full of well-fed mules.<sup>21</sup>

One of the most unusual ventures was the setting up in October 1936 of an orange growers' cooperative with the following frameworks:

For the purpose of exploiting orange production the "Peoples' Orange Cooperative of Sueca" is hereby constituted. It is to embrace the labourer who, by personal toil, contributes to the production of wealth and the small proprietor who engages personally

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<sup>20</sup> A traditional land measure which varied in size from region to region, although normally 1 *hanegada* was equal to 0.64 hectare or 1.58 acres.

<sup>21</sup> José Pros in *Solidaridad Obrera*, Barcelona, 4 March 1938.

in the tilling of their holding, the object being to maximise production, marshal all efforts, rationalise the methods of cultivation, eliminate the middleman and effect a fairer, more humane distribution of profits consonant with the social orientation of the present times. The objectives of the cooperative are as follows:

1. In agricultural terms:

(a) To ensure rational and scientific exploitation of the holdings currently under cultivation, either by means of direct communal cultivation of farms or by means of the supervision and inspection of individually owned properties.

(b) To see to the planting of the choicest and most suitable varieties, availing of foreign experiences through direct liaison with overseas experts.

(c) To direct and conduct the campaign against blights on agricultural produce by using the most up-to-date methods.

2. In commercial terms:

(a) To handle the sale and export of the area's orange production directly, eliminating the middlemen, making direct contacts with consumer markets and conducting a protracted examination of their needs and requirements with a view to catering to the same.

(b) To see to the eradication of all flawed fruit in order to attain optimum quality and prestige in the eyes of the foreign market, thereby building up an exclusive local trademark.

(c) To ensure that fruit is prepared, classified and presented in the most suitable fashion for export.

3. In social terms:

(a) To seek a fairer distribution of the proceeds from the orange business by reducing and ultimately eliminating man's exploitation of his fellow man.

(b) With the portion of the profits set aside for this purpose, to take direct charge of the implementation of all manner of ventures aimed at the social betterment of the proletariat.

(c) To make advances to small proprietors to help them cultivate their holdings and obtain fertiliser.

1. Membership of this cooperative will be available on application to all rural workers resident in the area, and will be obligatory for all proprietors of farms confiscated and given over to orange production.

2. All lands within the municipal boundaries dedicated to orange production are to be automatically regarded as part of the cooperative. Fresh plantations may not be made without authorisation from the steering committee, which is to prescribe the variety which is to be planted.

3. Holdings given over to orange growing must be categorised under the following headings:



- (a) lands confiscated from their former owners for cultivation under a collective arrangement;
  - (b) privately owned lands tilled by their current owners.
4. The cooperative's steering committee is to be empowered to order the seizure of all lands given over to orange cultivation and falling within the following categories:
- (a) lands abandoned by their owners, by which is meant those who may not be personally present within the area and attending to cultivation;
  - (b) lands belonging to persons manifestly deserving the descriptions of "counter-revolutionary" and "enemy of the regime".
  - (c) when a landowner has amassed an excessive area of land, both here and elsewhere, beyond the maximum limit broadly ordained in advance by the committee. In such cases, the surplus alone is to be confiscated.
5. Confiscated holdings are to be cultivated collectively by all of the peasant membership of the cooperative, in accordance with the norms which may be laid down by the steering committee which is to oversee their cultivation.
6. The cash proceeds from the crops obtained from collectively worked holdings will be administered by the committee which, once having seen to all expenses incurred by those holdings, will distribute the remainder as follows:
- (a) 10 per cent to reserve funds;
  - (b) 20 per cent for the social betterment of the proletariat;
  - (c) 70 per cent for sharing out among the worker-members of the cooperative, in proportion to the work they may have donated to the cooperative.
7. Workers who carry out the tasks of cultivation on collectively worked lands will receive a daily wage determined by the steering committee, account being taken of current circumstances and in accordance with the relevant organisms.
8. Privately owned lands are to be worked by their current owners at their own expense and on their own initiative, though they will nonetheless conform with whatever prescriptions may be laid down by the steering committee apropos of the placement of labour, the hours of work and rates of pay. Through its expert agents, the committee will be empowered to inspect cultivation in order to detect flaws and correct the same.
9. Work in privately owned holdings given over to orange growing is to be performed only by the member-workers of the cooperative in conformity with the rotation laid down by the committee.
10. The gross cash value of crops obtained from privately cultivated holdings is to be distributed as follows:
- (a) 20 per cent is to be shared out as profits among the labourers who participated in cultivation and harvesting in proportion with the amount of work done;
  - (b) 80 per cent shall be allotted as the proprietor's profits and to cover the costs of every form of cultivation.

11. The commercial exploitation of produce obtained from all of the holdings under the supervision of the cooperative, whether in communal or private ownership, will be reserved exclusively for the steering committee. Dispensing with middlemen and speculators, the commercial organs of the steering committee are to prepare and deliver the fruit for sale, liaise with consumers, deliver and export crops and receive and distribute payment in accordance with the prescriptions set out above.

12. The cooperative will be governed by the following agencies:

(a) The general assembly of the entire membership of the cooperative. This assembly will enjoy supreme authority and will hold a regular session each year to audit the accounts submitted by the committee and to elect the committee for the following year. Extraordinary meetings are also to be convened by the committee on its own initiative or on application by 100 members. In either instance, eight days' advance notice must be given and at the first gathering a quorum of one-third of the membership must be in attendance. Should this quorum not be met, fresh arrangements must be made to assemble two days thence, when decisions may be taken regardless of the number who show up. At extraordinary sessions the only business which may be dealt with is that specifically listed in the summons.

(b) The steering committee will comprise 6 worker directors and 3 employers<sup>22</sup> chosen separately by each category at the ordinary general assembly. Their term of office will be one year, after which every post will be reallocated. The committee will be empowered to coopt as speaking but non-voting members whatever technical and consultative personnel it may deem suitable. It will act as the representative of the general assembly and will wield all powers not expressly denied it.

Addendum. In commercial dealings, this cooperative is empowered to federate with other settlements in the orange-growing region on the stipulated conditions.

Conclusions approved by the Levante regional peasant congress (November 1937):

The situation of the peasant economy is such as to recommend that the organisation, constitution and operatives of the collectives be tackled as a matter of the utmost urgency; that government approval be secured for their statutes; that they be administered by means of the most simple book-keeping methods possible within the rigours of the law, so as to place clearly on record the austerity of their membership while simultaneously affording a ready indication of their economic circumstances; the shortage of capital resources for the technical administration of the collectives; the ineluctable need for a statistical office that will reflect the collectives' capacities for production and consumption; the reference of all such problems back to the technical directors; uniformity, though not centralisation, of statutes and an accounting system which, springing from the collectives, will culminate in harmony and coordination at the national level.

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<sup>22</sup> It is worth remembering that not all employers fled their factories after the revolution. This was especially true of those industrialists who were politically-connected to the republican movement.

The upshot of all this is that the secretariat of the regional peasant federation of Levante is to attempt to find a solution by setting up an advisory and statistical section which will undertake the difficult task of orchestrating an agricultural economic plan, beginning with the constitution and operation of the collectives before moving on to the matter of agricultural production and that, unless some grave and unforeseen eventuality intervenes, will likely be a focus of everyone's admiration sometime in the coming year.

As of today, the situation is as follows:

*Collectives.* Some 340 of these are lawfully constituted and in operation. Of these, 60 have already opened their accounts in conformity with the legal requirement and registered their assets and liabilities. There are only two inspectors assigned to this task, which is as difficult as it is costly, for it involves reconstructing the entire economy of the collective as a prelude to auditing it and registering it legally. Travelling from village to village, these inspectors have been leaving in their wake accounts for the collectives that are clear and in keeping with the law.

*Future plans.* Pending the approval of the Labour Ministry, there are at present 75 collectives whose legal recognition will be somewhat tardy as a result of the removal of the ministry to Barcelona, which makes it necessary for endorsement to be sought there on a weekly basis.

*Industrial collectives.* Availing of the statutes we have prescribed for the peasant collectives and their constitution and functioning, a fair number of industries, whose legal position was anything but clear, have formed economic collectives with a view to running their industry along the lines of the example given by the peasantry. Some 15 industrial collectives find themselves in this position and the number is rising substantially with each day that passes.

*Statutes and collectives.* A model charter must be devised for all existing collectives and for those in the process of formation, as this will avert the almighty confusion that would ensue if each collective had a different charter, a state of diversity that would effectively isolate collectives from one another and run the risk of a conflict with the ministry of labour. This charter might not represent the final goals of the Confederation, but must be an acceptable alternative to the current social legislation.

*Accounting secretaryship and statistical records.* Another factor of the utmost importance to the life of the collectives is accounting. The lack of qualified personnel to perform this function, as well as that of the technical-administrative secretaryship and statistician, means that a uniform, simple and accessible system of accounting will be sought. A similar requirement exists with regard to the duties of secretarial office and, as far as statistics (a primary factor in any scheme of social economics) are concerned, the tasks there require that a uniform plan be devised without delay. Once the foregoing had been achieved by the 'advisory' and 'accounting' sections, the next problem was the personnel shortage and to fill this gap those two sections, together with the 'propaganda' section, laid on technical training courses, in administration and accounting. In the very near future these will supply us with a ready

supply of comrades equipped to fill the positions of secretary and accountant with the collectives of the county and the province.

*Records of distraint. De facto*, the unions and the collectives had a fair number of deeds of distraint concerning rural buildings, some buildings located on confiscated land and some industries ancillary to agriculture. But that such confiscations and records of them existed was no acknowledgement of lawful and juridical ownership as prescribed under the Decree of 7 October 1936<sup>23</sup> and so many bosses who applied to the police, the governor or who had recourse under the Agrarian Reform Bill, etc. recovered their properties and left our organisations bereft of the wherewithal necessary for the pursuit of their agricultural economy. And let us not talk about official support, for, from the moment the land was not seized in accordance with the aforesaid decree, the game was up. The statistical section set about remedying this state of affairs by drawing up deeds of distraint for all of the villages in the region, as well as the corresponding applications for confirmation, and in this way properties in more than 200 villages in the province and nearly all of those in the region have been “lawfully” distrained.

The Ordinance of 8 June 1937. By means of this ordinance from the Ministry of Agriculture, provision was made for recognition of the collectives and the confiscations made during the farming year of 1937. By the close of that agricultural year on 31 October last, those collectives which had not been constituted lawfully were dissolved and those lands under cultivation that had not been distrained in conformity with the prescriptions of the Decree of 7 October would be returned to their proprietors. In order to get around this serious problem, the advisory board recommended to the Regional Council of Agricultural Economy that application be made to the minister of agriculture for a one-year postponement of the said ordinance. This proposal was accepted by the Regional Council of Agricultural Economy, by the plenum of local and county committees and by the national plenum of peasant regional committees and forwarded to the minister of agriculture who promised the postponement. This matter has not been forgotten and it is a rare day when some effort is not made to achieve our aim.

*County committees of collectives.* Economic life requires the formation of organs with adequate legal jurisdiction to exercise functions, give and accept undertakings, conduct and pursue trade, etc., and this can only be achieved through legislation of the collectives with the latter organised into county, provincial and regional federations, culminating in a national confederation of collectives. To this end, three county federations have been set up already; as many again are in the process of being formed and a plan to do the same for the remainder of this Region is already under way.

*Reports.* Every day there take place around 50 consultations of a legal and economic nature, on issues so different and various that to list them would make the report interminable.

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<sup>23</sup> Drawn up by the PCE agriculture minister, Vicente Uribe, this measure gave judicial expression to the new property relations and simultaneously bolstered the authority of the state over the land. In practice, the decree offered new protection for small owners and was bitterly opposed by both the CNT and the FNTT.

*The future.* We must remain steadfast in the face of the campaigns of our adversaries against the collectives; we must adhere to the federation's norms as outlined by the advisory and statistical section, multiplying our efforts and implementing the plan for the organisation of the agricultural economy, for if we do all of this, soon – very soon – we will be able to show the world what our collectives are about, and the potential of the peasants of the CNT in Levante.

## **The revolution in the Castilian countryside**

**Cuenca.** In mid-March 1937 the members of the CNT and the UGT published the following guidelines public regarding the question of collectivisation of the land:

In view of the persistent disagreements arising in the villages between members of the UGT and the CNT concerning problems created by the revolution, the responsible elements of both organisations in this province have met to examine and resolve those problems. We hereby agree to give joint endorsement to the following guidelines for the prosecution of work in the villages in which both organisations have members:

1. Impounded lands and industries will be exploited “collectively”.
2. The collective is to be made up of the producers of each township, regardless of the trade union to which they may belong, and will appoint an administration council whose functions are:
  - (a) to direct labour and administer production in accordance with the guidelines laid down in the assemblies of the collective and by the statutes of the same;
  - (b) to negotiate the exchange of products with other localities and provinces;
  - (c) to see that the decisions arrived at in assemblies are implemented by all collectivists.
3. The administration council will comprise a limited number of individuals elected in assembly by the collective and an equal number of appointees for each organisation.
4. To qualify for membership of the collective one need only be a worker, as confirmed by the membership card of either the UGT or the CNT.
5. Any small proprietors who seek to join the collective must place at its disposal whatsoever goods they possess, for which they will be issued with a receipt.
6. On work. Exercising its faculties in respect of the direction of production, the administration council, in accordance with decisions taken in the collective's assemblies, will determine the work targets and duration of working days in accordance with the needs of each season, stage or other factors which may require extension or diminution of the working day.
7. No one will be exempted from work unless disbarred on grounds of infirmity or accident.

8. Work will be handled by teams, the size of which is to be determined by the demands of the task and by agreement between the workers and the elected delegates in the work sites.

9. All of the delegates will assemble on a daily basis with the administration council in order to trade views and to improve working practices.

10. Availing of all of their powers of persuasion, the delegates shall see to it that work proceeds with optimum efficiency. They must display empathy and morality and teach their comrades those tasks for which they may have had no prior training.

11. Delegates are not to be empowered to inflict any sanction upon any comrade. Any irregularities they might observe must be brought to the attention of the council for transmission by the latter to the assembly, which is responsible for resolving such matters.

12. Any delegate or member of the administration council who exceeds their powers will be suspended from office forthwith and a report submitted to the assembly which will resolve the matter.

13. On consumption. Under collectivism the wage system does not exist, as it is an unfair and inadequate and humiliating formula for rewarding labour. Consequently, producers will enjoy an advance equal to their present wage and will receive no more than 28 centimos in addition to that pay for each child under the age of 15 years under the care of the collective. This will have to be arranged by means of the labour card.

14. Exchange of produce between area and area will be effected through the agency of the cooperative, in that it will be the cooperatives which handle distribution in concert with the collective.

15. Upon setting up of the collective, those farms or industries seized by one of the two organisations become the property of the collective, such properties being divisible only in the unlikely event of disagreement between the UGT and the CNT, in which case their shares would be in proportion.

16. Profits over and above monies paid out in expenses and allowances are to be split up as follows: 25 per cent for education, 25 per cent for the purchase and improvement of tools and the remaining 50 per cent for the benefit of all the collectivists.

17. Instances of illness among collective members are to be regarded as days worked.

Rights and duties of every collectivist:

1. From the moment of entry into the collective, and even though the latter may have been founded a long time previously, the collectivist will have the same rights and duties as the rest.

2. The old and those convalescing from illness are to be excepted, or at any rate deployed for the lighter tasks, and no collectivist can be asked to work beyond their physical ability.

3. Relations between collectivists should at all times be governed by mutual respect and it should be borne in mind that the collective was set up with the express purpose

of working in harmony for the welfare of all. Consequently, any collectivist who attempts to ride roughshod over their neighbour, or who seeks to usurp benefits to which they are not entitled, will initially be sanctioned. If, however, there is a repetition, the guilty party will be expelled with the loss of any rights they might have acquired and without entitlement to reclaim any benefit from whatever they placed at the disposal of the collective.

4. The family members of collectivists, who share in the benefits of the collective, are expected to participate such tasks on behalf of the collective that they are capable of performing.

Addendum. Anything not covered in these provisions can be decided in the collective's general assemblies.

**Almagro (Ciudad Real).** We reproduce the following figures from *Campo Libre* (October 1937), the organ of the peasants of Castile:

Almagro is a town in the heart of La Mancha, a town of considerable boundaries and large population, with cobbled streets and exquisite wine. It boasts bodegas capable of accommodating up to 650,000 litres and expanses of reddish soil in which cereals need no fertiliser. The collective set up by our comrades in Almagro possesses unique revolutionary features.

The vicissitudes they have had to weather from its origins up to the present day are pretty well those which every economic organisation has weathered. An initially lyrical enthusiasm, collision with the slow-grinding cogs of government, though in this instance it was smoothed over thanks to the diligence of the responsible committees; it ran up against the ignorance of some and clashed with the selfishness of others and a thousand petty problems which constitute the certificate of achievement of those who endeavour to reach their destination. The Almagro collective has yet to attain its ultimate goal, but it is striding along the right road, pressing forward and sweeping obstacles aside with ingenuity.

The statistics set out below are borrowed from the statement which has just been published by the collective. According to the inventory of assessment, the initial productive assets, in terms of chattels, equipment and produce, were as follows:

	<b>Value (pesetas):</b>
Mules	68,080
Pigs	19,750
Sheep	70,000
Tools	140,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>298,330</b>

Produce:	
Barley	3,400 fanegas <sup>a</sup>
Wine	8,000 litres
Rye	680 kilos
Peas	80 fanegas
Wheat	1,700 fanegas
Millet	35 fanegas
Carob beans	160 fanegas
Chickpeas	4 fanegas
Lentils	70 fanegas
Broad beans	20 fanegas

<sup>a</sup> The *fanega* was a grain measure, equivalent to 1.58 bushels.

The collective entered its second year with the following economic potential

Cash in hand	4,335.74
Mules	91,150.00
Pigs	26,700.00
Sheep	74,000.00
Work tools	150,405.00
Carts	4,969.00
Timber	5,125.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>356,684.74</b>



Produce in hand:	
Wine	33,073 litres
Olive oil	26,426 litres
Barley	5,955 fanegas
Wheat	900 fanegas
Rye	139 fanegas
Peas	310 fanegas
Broad beans	160 fanegas
Chickpeas	20 fanegas
Carob beans	335 fanegas
Maize	73 fanegas
Lentils	30 fanegas

This is worth a total of 158,726 pesetas, which when added to the total for livestock and equipment gives us an overall figure of 515,410 pesetas. So the difference between the initial assets of 1 September 1936, the date of the foundation of the collective, and what it possesses today amounts to a sum of 116,127 pesetas.

Again, according to the aforementioned statement, the cash turnover during the year 1937 was as follows (pesetas):

Income	375,576.84
Expenditure	371,242.10
Balance	4,334.74

In this outline, without even going into details, one thing is immediately striking: the savings. These are not savings for their own sake, about which we need say nothing, but savings by way of forward planning and credit available to the brethren outside.

The comrades who make up the administrative junta of the collective find themselves in the position of people with a fine sense of distance and who place their all at the service of their obligation and, furthermore, seek to conform scrupulously to Confederal norms. Were flattery the reward of good anarchists, there are lots of good things we might say of each of them. Nonetheless, and because only rarely can this be said of all of the members of a responsible committee — and for the benefit of those who must grapple with corrupt committees — let it be clearly stated that none of the four “brasshats” here smokes or drinks wine.

Parallel with what has happened in cities where the names of streets, squares and parks have been replaced by other more deserving of commemoration, so too the Almagro Collective has renamed its properties in keeping with the homage that every

revolutionary owes to the heroes and symbols which light their way. Accordingly, confiscated villas formerly known by meaningless names are today known as “Durruti”, “Ascaso”, “FAI”, “CNT”, “Ukrania”, “Urales”, “Montseny”, “Isaac Puente”, and “Germinal”.

The splendid anarchist theory, whereby each contributes according to his abilities, had at best led to a family reward in money or in kind in mathematical proportion with the number of individuals in the family; this was a regimented ration measured in scoopfuls. For their families the collectivists of Almagro have all the bread, olive oil and potatoes they need each day without any limit whatever.

The amounts of such goods consumed in a year by the families of 300 workers (to take a median figure) stand at nearly 55,000 litres of olive oil, 30,000 kilograms of potatoes and bread to the tune of 110,000 pesetas. In addition, during their day’s work, the workers had free access to wine, and consumed some 113,000 litres of it.

The energy of a village is measured in its consumption. Lest this report become interminable we will say nothing of the three great stores, the carpentry workshop set up in what was hitherto the church, nothing about the Villa Durruti and the Villa Montseny; nothing of their plan to install a children’s home in the former; nothing of the good relations with the UGT and other political parties, especially the Republican Union; nothing of its “Acapulk” model oil press and, finally, nothing of the importance of the organisation in municipal life, where we hold 6 out of the 15 seats on the council.

**Belvis del Jarama.** The following report on this Castilian village is taken from the 30 October 1937 edition of Barcelona’s *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*:

On the banks of the Jarama and within the municipal boundaries of Paracuellos the Belvis del Jarama collective has a farm which consists of irrigated and rain-fed land. Pilar Rodríguez Torres, the former owner from Granada, sought to turn part of this land over to market gardening. To this end she brought in a number of irrigation workers from Andalusia. Down in Andalusia, these peasants had been CNT members. They came to Castile and affiliated to Madrid’s General Trades Union.<sup>24</sup> Some 14 or 15 anarchists came to Belvis, a number that was more than sufficient.

Along came the day of the revolt in July 1936, and the farm’s 75 workers seized it, thanks to the activity and revolutionary vision of this handful of comrades. The seizure took place towards the end of July 1936.

Comrades Mariano Urias and Roque Antequera, both of them members of the FNNT, the UGT landworkers’ union, had words of high praise for our militants and saluted their lucid vision of the problem of working-class unity and of the Spanish revolution.

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<sup>24</sup> These General Trades Unions (Sindicato de Oficios Varios) would organise all *cenetistas* involved in marginal economic sectors where there were insufficient workers to form a significant labour union. Equally, in small localities, or in places where the CNT was in its infancy, all local workers would be grouped in these unions.

A branch of the FNTT had been set up after the birth of the Republic and at present it boasts some 200 members. Our Belvis comrades organised a Confederal union in March 1936 and by March 1937 they had absorbed some 60 workers from Paracuellos.

The collective is made up of comrades from both trade union groupings united in a brotherhood which renders their union affiliation irrelevant. They are workers who know their trade and are class-conscious.

The collective came into operation just as soon as the lands had been confiscated and involved the 75 workers who had hitherto worked there. At the present time there are 140 collectivists with their families; of these, 20 are from the CNT and the remainder are from the UGT. Here are the necessary figures.

The year's harvest: wheat – 5,000 *fanegas*; barley – 4,000 *fanegas*; oats – 200 *fanegas*; carob beans – 150 *fanegas*; maize – 800 *fanegas*; kidney beans – approx. 100 *fanegas*; potatoes – 113,000 kilos; melons – 250,000 kilos (bringing in 300,000 pesetas); green beans – 19,000 kilos.

Collectivised livestock: 25 pairs of mules (100 teams have been acquired for 30,000 pesetas); 10 teams of oxen, 5 of them purchased for 7,250 pesetas; 20 milk cows, 9 of them bought at 11,300 pesetas; 650 sheep, 100 of them bought for 7,000 pesetas; 82 goats; and 35 hens. Adding everything up, it transpires that some 55,550 pesetas have been spent on the purchase of livestock.

In respect of machinery, they own two harvesters, one of which cost them 4,600 pesetas. Note what is possible through collective action.

They have founded a rationalist school which accommodates 60 children. They have a smithy, carpentry shop and brickworks. The collectivists receive health care from the doctor at Paracuellos, whose bills are met by the collective. Usually the collectivists receive 8 pesetas pay per day, in addition to garden produce of which they are entitled to as much as they need. During harvest time they received 10 pesetas in addition to their keep.

Our UGT comrades are represented on the council with the same number of posts as ourselves. It is enormously to the credit of the UGT comrades that they have been able to shrug off partisan feelings and to recognise ability wherever it may lie. At first they applied to the Institute for Agrarian Reform (IRA)<sup>25</sup> but came to be persuaded that the question of supply is better attended to by the regional federation of peasants.

### **Perales de Tajuña.**

Perales de Tajuña lies in a fertile valley. No one who has not seen it will be able to appreciate the regularity of the layout of its chief thoroughfare, which forms part of the main Madrid–Valencia highway, and the fantastic unevenness of the little lanes

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<sup>25</sup> This was the body responsible for drawing up and instituting the planned reform of Spain's agrarian structure prior to the civil war and whose role was strengthened by the Decree of 7 October 1936.

which intersect with the highway. The farmlands are merely a gash in the plateau. One of its satellites is, thus, a village from the Castilian plains.

25 November 1936 saw the founding of a General Trades Union affiliated to the Confederation. It was found necessary on 11 August to set up a peasant union. At present the General Trades Union boasts 435 members, with a further 262 in the peasant union.

To begin with, our comrades tried to work out a collectivist plan in concert with the UGT, but the peasants belonging to our union had to make do with launching their own collective while undertaking, as the record shows, to amalgamate with the UGT one.

The Perales collective was founded on 9 February and got under way in the wake of a scrupulous piece of research by a commission of 20 comrades who framed their conclusions which were put to an assembly for approval. Shortly after the collective began operations, the war fronts opened up in the vicinity of the village. Despite the obstacles placed in their way at first, the people of Perales, our people, began by evacuating themselves from their homes in order to place these at the disposal of the area command.

To the quartermaster's section they supplied 8,000 rations of bread (they had four ovens working solely to meet this commitment), 4,500 kilograms of meat, 10,000 litres of table oil, 30,000 kilograms of soap, 5,000 sheaves of fire-wood, and 57 sacks of flour; they supplied 16 comrades who worked on military supply lines for two months. They have supplied the hospital belonging to the Artillery Corps with 500 dozen eggs and whatever milk, sugar, meat and potatoes it needed.

Unaided they have seen to the needs of the International Red Aid hospital, even though they realise that others will make capital out of this contribution. They see to the upkeep of convalescent troops and those whose state of health disbars them from any war service. In addition to this, they have supplied the quartermaster section with 6,453 litres of wine and foodstuffs as well as straw and oats for the pack animals. Thus do the CNT's collectivists conduct themselves whenever their help is needed in the winning of the war.

Perales is a village of small proprietors. To borrow a phrase from the local peasantry, there are no stinking-rich workers. The most prosperous households of the place scarcely boasted a pair of mules. A few, perhaps two or three households, had two teams of mules. The lands under cultivation by the collectivists of Perales were donated voluntarily by those who were formerly small proprietors. The Perales collective is the best in the area and, since it embraces all of the ancillary industries to be found in the area, it cannot be considered merely as a peasant collective. They have mainly rain-fed soil, with some irrigated soil under cultivation, along with olive groves and vines.

The current year's crop has realised 3,756 *fanegas* of wheat; 7,900 of barley; 150 of broad beans; 450 of lentils, 150 of rye; 6,650 of oats; 3,000 kilos of melons; 80,000 of tomatoes; approximately 65,000 litres of wine; 50,000 kilos of peppers; 700,000 of onions; 12,000 of fruit; 5,670 kilos of potatoes (a poor crop) and more than 450,000 of

green vegetables have been harvested. So much for the strictly agricultural side of things. They have 2 grape oil factories operating at full production and from these they have derived 100,000 kilograms; 2 soap factories have turned out more than 150,000 kilos. The press has produced upwards of 30,000 kilos for consumption, and there is a magnificent tomato canning plant through which they will obtain over 50,000 1.5 kilo cans. This winter, with the hens and other small livestock our comrades had in their individual farmyards, they have set up 2 livestock stations in which they have 1,400 poultry, 54 dairy cows, 80 pigs, 300 sheep and 80 goats. Of equipment, machinery and other necessities, they have an adequate amount: 140 mules, 80 carts, shovels and other tools.

The control and management of the collective are in the hands of an administrative council composed of 5 delegates: statistics and inspection; agriculture and livestock; industry; trade and commerce. They have collectivised everything, omitting not a single detail. For instance there is the carpentry shop, smithy, forge, barber shop and even a bar, and a discount store where the collectivists can obtain what they need, as may half of the evacuee population.

The basis of the wage is the family, as must be inevitable in a well-organised collective. It is a bit on the meagre side, but this is a time of war! The head of the family receives 3 pesetas; his spouse, 2 pesetas, plus 1 peseta for each underage child; once they come of age at 14 years, these get 2 pesetas. Single men, bachelors get 4 pesetas; unmarried women 2.75 pesetas and widows with children get an increment of 0.25 pesetas per child. In addition to this every collectivist is housed rent-free and the collective provides medical care.

They are ready to launch two brickworks and a siphon plant for which they are procuring the raw materials, and there is still time for them to work out some agreement in Madrid. It looks like a rough winter ahead. They will be cold in the capital but the people of Perales have already made provision to help out so far as they can and have stockpiled 3,000,000 kilos of extracted grape oil to be dispatched to the people of Madrid as a fuel. (*Boletín de Información CNTFAI*, Barcelona, 6 November 1937).

### **Brihuega.**

The confederal and anarchist organisation is not of recent foundation in Brihuega. The CNT antedates the UGT in this town. Our organisation was founded in 1934 whereas the UGT only came into existence here in May 1936, just two months before the rebel revolt. The parties of the right have always enjoyed considerable influence and Brihuega returned a deputy of that persuasion to the Cortes.

In April 1936 there was fighting in the streets outside the town hall. When the fascist rebellion broke out, workers' militias were set up to defend the town against any reactionary venture. The revolutionary and libertarian disposition of the workers of this district was made manifest in the profound change of social life which took effect after the routing of the bourgeoisie. All of the town's industrial and agricultural

undertakings passed into the hands of the producers. The initiative for the seizures came from the CNT but the UGT marched with us, in perfect unison.

The most important achievement has been the creation of an agricultural and industrial model of collective embracing 125 families with a total membership of 600. The collective sees to all of the tasks of agricultural production and ancillary tasks. Produce includes wheat, barley, oats, chickpeas, beans, potatoes, lentils, olives, honey, nuts and other sorts of fruit. Sheep are reared and there is a textile mill. The collective has organised a discount store where all manner of produce is on sale at reduced prices.

The bulk of the township's lands is worked by the collective. Small proprietors work part of the land. The collective has been in existence since September 1936. Each week 6,000 pesetas are paid out in wages to the collectives. The cash turnover between May and this October has amounted to 200,000 pesetas. This new organisation of free producers embraces the town's store. The livestock industry has not been collectivised.

On 9 March 1937 the Italian divisions took Brihuega. For nine days the town was in fascist hands. Loyalist forces drove out the enemy and with him went some small proprietors and traders. The latter had been hostile to the collectives from the very outset.

When the revolt began, the provisions for the town were organised through the municipal cooperative. Despite the destruction caused by the rebels, the collective was quickly rebuilt in an exemplary fashion once Brihuega had been liberated.

Among the archives of the collective may be found a list of the farms impounded from the whole townland. The seizures represent assets to the value of 2,334,287.50 pesetas. The value of the lands stands at 947,450 pesetas; that of woodland — 128,550 pesetas; machinery — 123,725 pesetas; household goods — 3,846 pesetas; equipment and work tools — 11,131 pesetas; draught animals — 44,400 pesetas; breeding stock — 53,142 pesetas; shops in Monte Redondo — 5,092 pesetas; merchandise in hand — 191,267 pesetas. The assets of the collective stand at 3,864,752.50 pesetas.

When it embarked upon operations, the collective had absolutely no money but it did have at its disposal the wheat crop previously impounded from the Monte Redondo farms, and farms at Monte Redondo, Monte Doñabuena, Monte Abascal, Finca Santa Clara, Monte Cabanolla and Finca Parasucios. Some farms had been abandoned by their former owners, and naturally ownership of these lands passed into the hands of the collective. Small proprietors are a tiny fraction of the collective; the great bulk of its members are former farm labourers.

The municipal territory comprises 1,295 hectares of rain-fed soil, 40 hectares of olive groves, 1,000 hectares of high ground, 260 hectares of low hills, 43 hectares of irrigated lands and 23 hectares of market gardens. The collective possesses a flour mill, an electricity station, a textile mill and a chocolate factory. It has three oil presses but these have been destroyed by rebel aircraft.

The relative strengths of the anti-fascist movements as of November 1936 were as follows: PCE — 80 members; CNT — 140; UGT — 80; FAI — 17; and JJ. LL — 43.

The PSOE is non-existent, as is Izquierda Republicana. The wages of the collectivists stand at 5 pesetas per married couple, plus 0.75 pesetas for each child. They are paid even for days when they do not work. Many of the children have been evacuated following the heavy fighting in and around the town and because of the proximity of the battle fronts. Perfect cordiality exists between the CNT and the UGT. The PCE is steadfast in its defence of the small proprietor.<sup>26</sup>

The town council is composed of 10 members; 5 from the CNT and 5 from the UGT. The chairman belongs to the CNT. The provisioning of the town is handled by the office of the supply councillor and distribution is handled by means of ration cards. The wheat crop has been sold to the CNT-UGT Bakers' Consortium of Madrid which has thus far shipped out 100,000 kilos of wheat. There is approximately 200,000 kilos available.

Brihuega is the residence of the CNT's county federation of that name. The area of land liberated from the fascists in the county as a whole stands at 37,007 hectares. Of these lands, the holdings at Alcarria, Atanzón, Barrio Pedro, Brihuega, Balconete, Caspueñas, Fuente de Alcarria, Hita, Romancos, Tomellos de Tajuña, Torre del Burgo, Torija, Valhermoso de Tajuña and Valdegrudos have been collectivised. In other words, 19,777 hectares of rain-fed soil, 2,372 hectares of olive groves, 139 hectares of vineyards, 8,476 hectares of hill country, 1,006 hectares of irrigated lands, 177 hectares of gardens, 5,248 hectares of pasture, 209 hectares of riverside woodland and 81 hectares of fruit trees have been seized. The total land seized in the county amounts to 37,385 hectares.

À *propos* of the war, in March 1937, members of the CNT branch, particularly its seasoned militants, participated in the operations that checked the Italian offensive. Such is the way of life of the peasants of the town in which the great battle of Alcarria was decided. The new life has breathed joy and prosperity back into lands once under the yoke of feudalism. ( *Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*, Barcelona, 11 December 1937.)

### **Torija (Guadalajara).**

The village has a population of only 180. Its assets consist of 2,713 hectares of land, almost 2,000 of them rain-fed soil and for the most part these were in the hands of large landowners. Politically, the village was a fief of Count de Romanones.

The Civil Guard detachment — six men — did not turn on the workers when the uprising began, so there was no need for fighting. But nor was any change carried out in the village during the early months of the revolution. War brought the transformation. When, after the battles of Trijueque and Brihuega some proprietors sided with the fascists, their properties were impounded after the Italian divisions had been repulsed. The seizure of the land was carried out jointly by the UGT and the CNT. In

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<sup>26</sup> That this was often little more than a tactical position can be seen in the support shown by the PCE for those collectives (i.e. non-libertarian ones) which were prepared to accept the authority of the IRA.

this way the belongings of the fascists came into the hands of the workers. The bulk of the small proprietors were not inimical towards the Republic: they have displayed their loyalty and continue to work their lands as before. Using the confiscated lands, a UGT–CNT peasant collective encompassing 30 families was set up.

The collective's organisation may be simple in form but in terms of results it is also effective. Before, the peasants would work only a few months out of the year and were left destitute the rest of the time. Today they work all the year round and throughout the year the peasants receive their allotted pay of 5 pesetas each day. There is no family wage. During the sowing season, peasants get 8 pesetas and at harvest times 10 pesetas.

The area of land under cultivation has been larger than when the farms were worked under the private ownership agreement and 3,300 *fanegas* of wheat were harvested, along with 1,300 *fanegas* of barley, 600 *fanegas* of oats and 1,000 kilos of potatoes. Since the collective has been in existence only since March of this year and is younger than many others elsewhere, production has not been able to match what it would have been in normal circumstances.

500 sheep, 3 dairy cows and 14 mules have been impounded from other farms. One small proprietor voluntarily donated his land and joined the collective.

Work is organised by a committee of three delegates: 1 for field work plus a smithy and an administrator. To launch its work, the collective was awarded a 7,000 peseta loan by the CNT, plus 25,000 pesetas by the IRA. At the end of October, which is to say seven months after its foundation, the collective repaid the loan to the IRA in the form of 99,242 kilos of wheat valued at 32,590 pesetas. In addition to this, 1,400 *fanegas* of wheat remained for sowing, more than enough to meet the needs of the collectivists.

The collective is prospering. Its members feel the healthy optimism of the new way of life and have great plans for improving their communal endeavours. (*Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*, Barcelona, 16 December 1937)

## The revolution in industry

**Catalan Textile Industry.** One of the industries that best typified Catalonia was textiles, which were concentrated in Barcelona, Badalona, Sabadell and Terrasa. In Barcelona alone the CNT had upwards of 40,000 workers in this sector, and controlled more than 70 per cent of the 230,000 textile workers in the region.<sup>27</sup>

The first phase of the revolution in the textile industry took the shape of the control committees. A document published by the CNT Manufacturing and Textile Union of Badalona in September 1936 set out their functions as follows:

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<sup>27</sup> Earlier editions of this book put this figure at 23,000 (a clear misprint), not least because the Barcelona Textile Workers' Union had between 30,000 and 35,000 members during the years immediately before the civil war.



Mission of the control committees at the present juncture:

1. To be informed as to the precise value of our labour and the relationship which exists between production and consumption, so as to be in a position to prescribe the equivalent return for future exchange.

2. To know the amount of tax imposed upon industry and trade by the state, so as to be in a position to determine the surcharge upon the production costs, including the costs of raw materials and technical administrative services. This is the mission of the control committee: to investigate difficulties, to oversee all concerns, make a study of all resources, be aware of all dishonest practices, of the precise qualitative and quantitative worth of the materials employed in production in order to determine the production of the future with certainty. To this end, a central control and economic committee has been set up in Badalona to oversee textile manufacturing and areas ancillary to this industry.

1. In keeping with the general guidelines laid down by the Manufacturing and Textile Union, this committee has full powers to arrive at the best possible organisation of industry by liaising with the various control agencies of every factory and workshop. This committee will at all times be appointed by the union, under whose supervision and auspices it is to act and it will be made up of as many members as may prove necessary for it to perform its functions.

2. In each factory or workshop there is to be created a control committee comprising of as many workers and technicians as the central junta and the workers may deem necessary. This committee will compile and supply to the central control committee any figures the latter may seek.

3. The control committee of each factory will be aware of the precise economic circumstances of the establishment and oversee everything bearing upon production so as to be able to determine with precision the true value of produce released for sale.

4. They shall supervise the provenance and nature of orders or applications and the raw material costs. They shall also keep a check on the successive transactions with produce prior to its reaching the market place, as well as on the sale price and the cash realised by the deal.

5. The control committee must be aware of the following:

(a) the nature of machinery and its value in pesetas;

(b) the weekly consumption of raw materials;

(c) specialised production and the weekly figures for the same;

(d) the provenance of the various raw materials necessary to the industry and the prices of getting these to the factory;

6. The retail outlets for manufactured articles and the sale price of these articles.

7. The weekly and monthly wages bill.

8. The personnel employed in the factor and offices, together with their specialisations and monthly pay.

9. Expenditure by the factory and offices on all sorts of taxes.
10. The stocks of raw materials and manufactured goods.
11. The general economic standing of the establishment, its assets and debits.
12. Weekly and monthly reports on the general expenses of the factory and office, revenue and the entry and exit of raw materials and manufactured goods.
13. Weekly accounting of loss of output due to accident or illness.
14. Weekly or monthly accounting of all instances not covered by these dispositions.

Once the control committees have completed their first phase, they will consider the performance of technical and administrative functions, taking responsibility for the organisation and management of work and determining the production pattern best suited to the collective. At this point, the Central Economic Committee of Manufacturing and Textiles will assume the functions of supreme agency for the textile industry, regulating the acquisition of raw materials and the sale or trading of all products, for which purposes this committee will reach an accommodation with the local supply committee.

*Factory committees.* These committees will preserve order in the factories, ensuring that all workers meet with their responsibilities. It will also see to it that work is performed in the optimum health and safety conditions. The factory committee will attend to all of the workers' complaints and will seek to make arrangements with the control committee to ensure that so far as possible the workers' wishes are met in full. Should no arrangement be possible between them, this will be brought to the attention of the section junta so that a satisfactory solution can be worked out.

The factory committee will also ensure that the workers respect one another and the work of control committees in the workplace, since they are made up of all workers and labour on their behalf. The factory committees will see to it that all workers are unionised and keep their dues and record books up to date. They will also ensure that mutual societies attend suitably to workers in the event of illness or accident. A delegate from the factory committee will attend the plenary sittings of the control committee and whenever the factory committee comes together in its entirety there will be a delegate from the control committee in attendance, the purpose being to ensure that at all times both committees are in step. The factory committees will be relieved every six months.

*Subscription delegates.* These delegates have as their function the collection of dues from the workers as a whole and there will be as many of them as may be deemed appropriate to ensure reliable and speedy dues collection. These posts are to be reallocated each month. The mission of the delegate is to respect all members, ensuring that dues payment is made easy for them. All male and female workers are obliged to pay dues each week, handing the sum of their contribution to the subscriptions delegate.

**The North.** We know little about the economic achievements in the loyalist zone in the north, except for some vague testimony which we place on record in this chapter — viz. the manifesto

concerning control of industries in Asturias and two notes about collectivisation in the fishing industry in Gijón and Laredo. Doubtless the wartime circumstances there were not such as to permit unfettered expansion of popular initiative.

In the north, the war was all-consuming, with a severity that bordered upon the epic. The primacy of the military side of things, the isolation and the blockade have erased clues precious to the history of the revolution.

The following notes reflect both the burden of those harsh realities and, despite all of the difficulties, the *fait accompli* of the spontaneous feats realised:

Manifiesto concerning control of industries in Asturias, León and Palencia. The UGT provisional secretariat and the CNT regional committee representing Asturias, León and Palencia, having met on this day, agree to implement the following items of agreement:

1. The industrial control committees will be made up of member unions of either union grouping whose ranks embrace at least 10 per cent of the workers organised at the moment of the control committee's foundation. There will be equal representation. The chairmanship will fall to the majority union and will carry a casting vote.
2. Election is to be democratic, so there will have to be observance of the provisions contained in the previous paragraph. The purpose of this is to prevent anyone they may dislike being foisted upon the workers. From their union or unions they will choose the people in whom they have the greatest trust. These positions will preferably be filled by affiliates whose union membership antedates 19 July 1936. The UGT and the CNT undertake to hold joint assemblies for the purpose of dealing with industrial questions.
3. The control committees will be set up according to the following guidelines:
  - (a) by industry in the factories and workshops;
  - (b) by site in the mines and construction sector;
  - (c) by district, in the case of railways;
  - (d) by activity in the ports and by ship at sea;
  - (e) by commercial centre in the case of trade, printing works and small industries;
  - (f) by production and sale cooperatives in the countryside;
  - (g) in instances for which provision has not been made in accordance with the particular characteristics of a given industry, by norms to be prescribed by the relevant unions of the CNT and the UGT.
4. The control committees are joint CNT-UGT control committees. They undertake to familiarise their membership with the role of these control committees, a role that is not one of *direction, let alone absorption of the functions of the technical managerial and administrative cadres*. Their principal function is to collaborate with management by every kind of initiative and suggestion, to ensure that production is carried out to the letter and to report upon the organisation and level of production, as well as any anomalies which might affect it. The same specified obligations will also be

incumbent upon the management, administration and technical cadres on behalf of the control committees.

5. Posts on the control committees are *absolutely without remuneration and voluntary*. Comrades elevated to these committees ought to look upon their work as an additional task, work in trust for the mass of their colleagues in the workshop, pit etc., which should be done outside the normal working hours and after the completion of a normal working day. This commits the CNT and the UGT to an open campaign against nascent bureaucratism which, if left unchecked, would lead the most class-conscious elements of the working class and the class as a whole into dangerous territory. Exemptions will only be made for those industries where, by virtue of their high capacity, committee tasks will necessarily be very demanding.

6. The CNT and UGT pledge themselves not to recognise those unions which, prior to last 16 July were of a “yellow” or *pro-employer nature*. Former members of these unions will only be admitted into our ranks in an *individual* capacity and after a thorough scrutiny of the conduct of the applicant. Persons so recruited *cannot, under any circumstances, be raised to positions of responsibility whether of a supervisory or administrative nature*. Each union is to supply the other with a list of blackballed persons that must be scrupulously observed. The CNT and UGT will stand by the right to rehabilitation, incorporating into the revolutionary arena those misguided persons who, for one reason or another, were outside of the class unions and who belonged to unions in the services of the bourgeoisie. But this will be *at all times under strict control, and closely monitored by the unionised class*.

7. The CNT and the UGT undertake not to accept into their ranks persons whose applications for admission may have been refused or who were expelled from either union as undesirables on the grounds that of their hostility towards the working class and democracy.

8. The CNT and UGT advocate voluntary unionisation of the workers; they condemn coercive methods of unionisation and defend the workers’ freedom to enrol in the union grouping which best conforms with their personal views, provided that the change does not mean default upon the accords of the organisation that they leave.

9. The CNT and UGT undertake to galvanise their work with two immediate objectives: *to win the war and to organise the revolution which is under way*.

10. Any difference which might emerge between the unions will be resolved by a joint commission of responsible comrades from the UGT provincial secretariat and the CNT, it being understood that joint inspection visits will be made to ensure that these points of agreement are implemented throughout the region.

Addendum. These accords will be published in the newspapers of the two organisations for the space of eight days without prejudice to the circulation of orders to the various member unions.

Gijón, January 1937.

On behalf of the CNT, the secretary, Silverio Tuñón; on behalf of the UGT provincial secretariat, the secretary, Valdés.<sup>28</sup>

**The fishing industry in Gijón.** In the early stages local monitors were set up; these operated with full autonomy, handing over the fishing catch to the supply committees without demanding anything in return. These monitors were set up on the basis of a control committee which operated under the supervision of the Fishing Industry Union, whose decisions and duties were determined by general assemblies.

As soon as the fishing fleets returned to dock, their catch would be distributed. First of all, the hospitals and orphanages were supplied; then the rest was shared out among the civilian population and the militias.

During the early months of the revolt, the wage system ceased to exist for the fishermen, as it did also for the workers in other industries. Each worker was issued with a consumer card which recorded the number of their dependants, occupation, address, etc. The fishermen handed over their catches in return for these cards which entitled them to prescribed rations.

Local cooperatives took the place of the supply committees that were initially set up. Exchange became increasingly efficient. A cooperative council was set up to operate at provincial level and cater for the needs of all the cooperatives through the Board of Trade. Even so, the populace were wary of this innovation.

In November 1936, Amador Fernández<sup>29</sup> published a series of articles in *Avance*,<sup>30</sup> in which he defended the rights of the small trader and the petty bourgeoisie and triggered fiery arguments between *cenetistas* and *ugetistas*.

The military blockade was partly eased thanks to the contribution of the fishing industry, whose fleet continually defied the dangers of the sea. The rebels were having difficulty making progress overland. Their plan was to break the people's resolve with the weapon of hunger. Lots of fishing boats were sunk; others were seized, and escorted into El Ferrol where the crews were shot.

**The fishing industry in Asturias.** This was the region's second biggest resource. Both the deep-sea fleet and the inshore fleet were socialised from the outset. The same fate befell the markets, ice plants and canneries (the most important ones in Spain) as well as retail outlets and wholesale markets. Everything fell under the purview of the unions and later under the supervision of the Fisheries Board, which had branches in every port along the Asturian coast where there were fisheries and canneries.<sup>31</sup>

#### **The fishing industry in Laredo.**

The fishing industry which, up until shortly before the civil war, was engulfed by continual incidents involving "big-timers" and "small-timers", has been socialised by the maritime workers who have set up an economic committee comprised of 6 members of the CNT and another 6 from the UGT. In seizing the entire fishing fleet

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<sup>28</sup> The emphasis appears in the original text.

<sup>29</sup> A socialist militant.

<sup>30</sup> An Oviedo-based PSOE paper.

<sup>31</sup> This information was based on a piece by Solano Palacio in the July 1938 issue of *Timón*.

they rid themselves of the shipowners and abolished class differences between the fishermen to boot.<sup>32</sup>

The days of old when the lion's share was carried off by the shipowners and the middlemen are no more. Now, once overheads have been deducted, some 45 per cent of the proceeds from the fishing catch is allocated towards improving the industry, the remainder being divided equally among all the seamen. The middleman who once would have bought up the catch in order to sell it in Bilbao, Santander etc. is no more, for the economic committee itself takes charge of exporting and selling it.

Although the workers have controlled the industry for only a short period, and despite this being the worst fishing season of the year, last week each worker was allocated 64 pesetas and an allowance of fish after deductions were made for overheads and improvements in the industry. This roundly gives the lie to those who believed that the workers would be incapable of resolving their problems in the absence of the bosses.

The CNT and UGT intend, and will shortly put into effect, the municipalisation of accommodation, the land and electrical energy, a social transformation which will bring to the people of Laredo the desired objective of all socialists, be they Marxists or anarchists. At last, Laredo is beginning to sample a new world which, let there be no doubt, will act as a stimulus upon the local *milicianos* who, when they come to rest from the fatigues of the front, will realise that the work of revolution is under way in the rearguard.

It is heartening to find that in villages where the cultural level of the workers is infinitely below that of workers living in the capital, they have implemented decisions reflecting our cherished ideals with such a clear perception of things. By contrast, how lamentable is the inertia displayed by the capital's workers.

Marching together in perfect harmony on all matters relating to the betterment of the workers' lives, the UGT and the CNT will create in Laredo a social feat capable of generating rays of liberty, equality and justice which will radiate upon villages and major cities alike. How do the workers and leaders of the UGT in Vizcaya feel about what we have just described? Might they some day awaken from their lethargy? (From the *Servicio de Prensa de las JJ.LL de Bilbao*, January 1937.)

**The wood industry in Barcelona.** The Woodworkers' Union of Barcelona was perhaps among the most daring – and original – in the matter of collectivisation. We have not the space to trace at any great length the revolutionary work done by this confederal union. It was one of the few to display consistency in tackling the issue of socialisation. The originality of this union consists in its opposition to the notion of collectivised firms on the grounds that these might degenerate into economic redoubts remote from the needs, pace and overall interests of the revolution. The work of the 'socialised wood industry' came to embrace the entire process of production from the lumber camps, together with their sawmills and transports, through to the confederal workshops and retail outlets. Production centres were equipped with recreational

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<sup>32</sup> In many respects, this epitomised the anarcho-sindicalist view of workplace revolution.

facilities, swimming pools, libraries, professional training departments, schools, etc. A number of exhibitions were mounted which were displays of organisational ability. There was a scheme for a school of arts and crafts, but the tragic dénouement of the war put paid to that.

The lines which follow are a bitter criticism of the deviationism of enterprise-centred collectivism and a vindication of the role of unionism in the production process:

Instead of proceeding with genuine seizure, instead of giving full satisfaction to the people, the employers are compelled to meet the weekly wages bill and pay is increased while working hours are cut. And this in the middle of a war!

With all assets having been seized by the Generalitat, borrowing occurred on the basis of imaginary inventories, fabulous loans that must be repaid today when we consider the many squandered millions and the economic disarray.

While the Woodworkers' Union has managed to keep to them to a minimum in the works under its control, an enormous number of parasitical bureaucrats has been conjured into existence. There are too many control committees which contribute nothing to production, and this they are not entitled to do.

From the very outset we opposed the continuation of this waste, deploying all of our resources to boost the industry. For how much longer must we persist with this wastefulness whereby the Generalitat's cow is milked every day in the form of monies paid to insolvent workshops and through mortgages, despite the fact that these can never be paid due to insolvency? Why do the control committees allow such operations to proceed to the enormous detriment of the economy?

Things have reached such a point that we intend to launch practical ventures in order to demonstrate our capacity for production and for rescuing the economy while simultaneously eliminating the bourgeoisie and its complicated machinery of middlemen and its system of budgets and gratuities. We were unable to collectivise the industry because we recognised that the wood industry had been relegated to a secondary position in the initial stages of the revolution and it was and remains our belief that many sections of our union will have to be eliminated.

We could not collectivise because there was a misunderstanding and from the outset there was a reluctance to grant the unions recognition. Well, we may rest assured that had things been handled differently, with a lot fewer millions, all of the industries would have been placed on a sound footing by today, for we must ensure that in Catalonia as elsewhere there is growth in our national industry and that it has its own reserves. Machinery must be adapted to the needs of the moment, with an eye to the future.

We of the Woodworkers' Union, broadly sensible to our responsibilities and appreciative of the times, did not seek only to proceed with the revolution: we sought to galvanise it by bearing in mind our economy, the people's economy. To this end, we gathered together all of the small proprietors, including those insolvent small employers devoid of the wherewithal to get by. We took charge of the minuscule workshops with their tiny numbers of operatives, regardless of their union affiliation, viewing them only as inactive workers and thus a drain upon the economy.

Well now, relying upon our own monies and contributions from the workers, we have turned these workshops into confederal workshops of 200 or more operatives, the likes of which Barcelona has never seen before and which have very few equals in the rest of Spain. Ours was a titanic struggle: we had to contend with the indifference of the people, who, upon seeing the magnitude of our undertaking, labelled us madmen!

Our first steps were taken amid boundless bewilderment, for the industrialists who had to supply us with our raw materials withheld them from us; their confidence was shaken by what was done in the early moments of the revolution and they reckoned that we would commandeer and impound their products. But our first triumph was when we delivered our first payments on the agreed date, handing over monies to the value of 300,000 pesetas! We said that this was our first triumph because, by paying up and honouring our word, we secured limitless credit in the whole of Catalonia. Be it noted that we had to campaign fiercely to persuade the traders and suffered their sharp practices towards us, since the control committees reckoned that we would not pay up. Rather than bluntly refusing to supply us with what we had ordered, they inflated the prices of their raw materials to a scandalous extent in order to put us off buying them. But we stood by our word. The dignity and solvency of the Woodworkers' Union was at stake, and even though we knew that they were swindling us, we bought, and bought at the price set by the control committees, which are a thousand times more materialistic than the bourgeoisie.

We could have followed the easier option by collectivising the leading workshops; but we left those workshops which had the wherewithal to proceed with their industry as long as their resources might permit and we collectivised only those acknowledged as uneconomic and unproductive.

It is a misconception to argue that we do not accept the Collectivisation Decree.<sup>33</sup> Quite the contrary: we accept it. It is simply that in practical terms we interpret it differently. The easy option, the logical one in some eyes, would have been to collectivise the huge cooperatives. But this would have meant that only the industries capable of standing on their own two feet would be guaranteed survival; it would mean washing our hands of the poorer ones which have no resources, leading to the creation of two classes: the *nouveaux riches* and the eternally poor. Such inequality cannot be countenanced!

We accept the collectivisation of all industries but provided that there be a common treasury with equitable shares for all. What we do not accept is that there should be poor collectives and rich collectives.<sup>34</sup> This is the real crux of the collectivisation problem: either all branches of production be collectivised across the board or the

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<sup>33</sup> Passed by the Generalitat on 24 October 1936, the *Decret de Col·lectivitzacions i Control Obrer* (Collectivisation and Workers' Control Decree) legalised the revolutionary seizures of workplaces after 19 July 1936 and established a bureaucratic apparatus around the collectivised economy. This signalled the start of a process which saw the collectives contained and ultimately undermined, as the formal power of the state was extended over the revolutionary economy.

<sup>34</sup> The initiatives pursued in the wood industry were essential in order to end the inequalities between rich and poor collectives, something which the POUM described as 'trade union capitalism', which it identified as the greatest



option be granted to carry out practical experiments, which is no more than the wood industry has been doing. (*Boletín de Información CNT-FAI*, Barcelona, 25 December 1936.)<sup>35</sup>

**Valencia local plenum.** Prompted by the current enthusiasm for economic reconstruction, in December 1936 a local plenum of workers was held in Valencia. This is one of the propositions which was passed:

Norms for socialisation. The current civil war situation confronts the workers and their unions with heavy responsibilities, particularly the responsibility for adapting our industries to the requirements of the war.

We counteract the industrial disarray caused by the upheaval of the subversive revolt by means of local supervision. This new control has brought to light contradictions of an economic and trade union order not just in different areas, but within the same industry and between factories in the same locality. Such difficulties suggest that even the most perfect structures at local levels are not enough to guarantee the continuity of our industries.

For these reasons we acknowledge the need for the socialisation of industries being implemented on a nationwide scale. Notwithstanding this, and for the purpose of performing the task allotted to us by the plenum, we will spell out our views concerning the form that the socialisation of an industry ought to assume.

In examining the socialisation of our industries we come across factories in the light manufacturing sector which, on account of their low productivity, do not permit the technical assistance needed for consistent output. Moreover, the employers in these factories frequently guard the secrets of routine production and have not bothered to train technical staff. The idiosyncrasy of the majority of these manufacturers, shaped by a lack of technical and commercial training, has prevented them from taking their role to its logical extreme: industrial concentration, technical superiority and rational administration.

Much of their dynamism was wasted on a deadly competitiveness – had this energy been deployed in organising production, it might have led to the setting up of a modern industry. Whatever, the military rising has torn asunder the law of supply and demand that regulated the bourgeois economy, which is now in the grip of a moral

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shortcoming of the economic revolution. More recently, this has been described by Antoni Castells as ‘proletarian neo-capitalism’ (*Les col·lectivitzacions a Barcelona, 1936–1939*, Barcelona, 1993, pp. 49–57).

<sup>35</sup> The improvisation needed to face up to the problem of the reactivation of industrial production following the economic chaos caused by the military rebellion revealed certain mistakes which no amount of good will could conceal. One such inexcusable error was the failure to form NIFs after the agreement of the CNT congress of June 1931. Ideological squabbles, which should not have been allowed to have affected internal unity or the constructive problems of the revolution, limited our freedom of manoeuvre at the moment of truth, highlighting a certain technical incompetence and a psychological lack of preparation. Also enormously prejudicial was the traditional hostility of the anarcho-sindicalist organisation towards cooperativism in production, which, when influenced by a generous ideology such as anarchism, might have created the conditions for a far-reaching experiment in economic self-management. (Note by the author.)

depression, bereft of an agency capable of charting a way out of this predicament and generally incapacitated by the revolution.

Our survey suggests that the socialisation we propose will have to amend the shortcomings of the system and the organisational profile within each and every industry. In proceeding with the socialisation of an industry there will have to be a marshalling of all of the endeavours of the various sectors which make up that branch of industry in the general and organisational field, thereby averting competition and problems of a trade union nature which might place obstacles in the way of the proper organisation of the socialised industry.

The organisational model of socialised industry: factory, section and industry councils. The factory council will have to comprise a technician, an administrative worker and a worker from each of the component sections of the factory. The factory council is to be nominated at a plenary session of the factory's workforce.

The section council will oversee the administration of the various factories in accordance with general needs. It will research the manufacture of new articles and seek a market for the same. It will study and pronounce upon manufacturing plans, examining new manufacturing methods which it will introduce technically into the factories. It will set up technical and trade schools. The section council will be appointed by the section in general assembly.

The industry council will establish liaison between the various sections at local, regional and national levels. It will examine the periodicity of work schemes for the industry as a whole. It will fix the value of production by agreement with the section councils. It will examine the moral and economic betterment of the industry's members. It will liaise with other industries through the Economic Council and will act as the agency that monitors and regulates the industries and the economy. The industry council is to be appointed in an assembly of all those involved in the industry.

The socialisation of an industry will have to be prefaced by a thorough scrutiny of the economic circumstances of the said industry. To this end, each of the industry's sections must submit a scheme for socialisation to the Economic Council, specifying the productive capacities of the industry to be socialised with the utmost clarity and precision, along with the number of workers involved, the provenance of the raw materials used, the market where production is consumed, and the economic potential for growth.

**Cinemas and theatres (Barcelona).** The following schemes were approved by a general assembly of the CNT Public Entertainments Union in Barcelona held in August 1936:

Socialisation of the public entertainments sector (cinema section):

1. Wages are to be uniform for every category of work in the cinematographic industry sector.
2. The takings from every outlet in Barcelona and surrounding districts will be deposited daily in the funds of the economic committee, which will be known as the Economic Committee of Cinemas.

3. Payments will be made on one day each week by the Economic Committee in its social centre, the day and hour of such payments being announced by means of posters in the cinemas and on the payments window of the appropriate section.
4. Profits taken during the week are to be divided up among all personnel at a given percentage rate, the resultant coefficient being multiplied by a given percentage to produce the appropriate weekly pay for each worker.
5. The union is to be treated as another staffworker receiving the same percentage payment as the highest paid person on the site.
6. In each of the sites where they may work, substitute workers will be paid in accordance with the number of hours worked, although this figure is not to exceed the maximum of 36 hours a week. The coefficient to be applied is to be the same as the one obtained for permanent staff.
7. The different job categories will receive the following percentage payments: union: 100 per cent; operators: 100 per cent; box office staff: 90 per cent; temporary box office staff: 50 per cent; lavatory attendants: 65 per cent; temporary lavatory attendants: 33 per cent; projectionists: 90 per cent; commissionaires: 80 per cent; watchmen: 95 per cent; ushers: 90 per cent; caretakers: 90 per cent; cleaners: 50 per cent; electricians: 100 per cent. Duty electrician serving three sites: 100 per cent; musicians (18 per cinema): 100 per cent each; travelling 18-man orchestra: 10 per cent each; maestros (6 established and 1 substitute): 100 per cent each; 2 variety acts in the halls: 100 per cent; 2 stagehands and casual worker per hall: 100 per cent each; scriptwriters: 1 per cent of the gross takings of the box office on each site.
8. The complement of workers of each category in all of the sites will be as follows: projectionists: 3 per projection room; box office: 1½ per site; wash-room attendants: 1½ per site; commissionaires: 2 per site; watchmen: 2 per site; caretakers and ushers: as many as at present employed, plus 2 regular shift workers per site; cleaners: as many as at present; electricians in special sites: 1½ per site; electricians over 3 sites will receive 33 per cent from each site; supply electrician serving 3 sites, likewise. Musicians: 18 per orchestra on 6 sites; maestro: 1 per orchestra on 6 sites; rotating orchestra and manager for the 6 sites. Variety acts: 2 serving 2 sites; stagehands: 2 plus 1 casual per site covering 2 sites.
9. Former owners may be incorporated like any other employee. They are to have no authority over the personnel and will liaise directly with the economic committee. The committee will listen to any entrepreneurs' initiatives which might benefit the socialised system.
10. The opening and closing times of shows in all of the cinemas of Barcelona and the surrounding area are to be standardised. In the months of June, July and August they will begin at 4 pm and end at 1 am, while for the rest of the year, they will begin at 3.30 pm and end at 12.30 am. The box office will open a quarter hour before the show starts and will close at 12 midnight in summer and at 11.30 pm in winter.
11. For cinemas the working day will be 5 to 10 hours long, save for female cleaners who will work a 3-hour day and enjoy a day off each week.

12. Each premises will have its complement of staff and these will not be liable to transfer unless they apply for a change and then only if the union committee of their respective section gives consent.

13. Sanctions imposed for what are deemed serious shortcomings in the performance of duties will be brought to the attention of the appropriate union committee by the committee of each premises. The union must, within the compass of three days, summon a general assembly of its section and any sanctions imposed must be approved by three-quarters of those present at the assembly. The person concerned will be able to appeal against the imposed sanction to the general assembly of the industry and, ultimately, to the Barcelona local federation.

14. The commissionaires and other workers from the theatres and concert halls covered in union and professional terms by the cinema, theatre and concert section will be paid the same weekly wage as their counterparts in the cinema. In the event that the share-out prescribed in their trade fails to attain the figure reached in the case of the cinemas, the fund of the economic committee of this section will advance them the shortfall and, should they exceed the figure, the surplus will be made over the funds of the section committee so that it may be deposited with the fund of the union's central committee.

15. There is to be a subsidy for illness, invalidity, old age and unemployment:

(a) for illness: full pay;

(b) for invalidity: a sliding scale according to the number of dependants, the top of the scale being 70 per cent of full pay;

(c) for old age: as for the previous provision;

(d) unemployment: full pay until such time as the appropriate section finds the person employment in their own speciality. These subsidies will be made effective whenever the union's financial means permit;

16. The Public Entertainments Union of Barcelona and District is to establish a clinic for its members.

17. An educational group called the Public Entertainments Education Group is also to be established.

18. There shall be a considerable reduction in the rents of all cinema premises in the Barcelona area under the regulation of the Generalitat.

19. With the exception of social welfare changes, there shall be movement towards the abolition of all taxes and tariffs; in the interim they will be cut to a minimum. The Generalitat will regulate and oversee the reduction of what taxes and surcharges may survive for the time being and shall proceed to abolish those which may be deemed necessary.

20. There will be twice yearly holidays with pay. The winter break shall consist of 15 uninterrupted days and in the summer there will be another uninterrupted break of one month's duration;

21. For box-office purposes, cinemas shall be divided into four categories. Within each category, box office prices will be standardised. The same prices shall obtain on Sundays and holidays as on working days, with the sole exception that there will be 2 shows in the evening and 1 at night. Premises showing newsreels, documentaries and reportage are to continue with their current working arrangements.

22. An economic committee is to be set up which will regulate the economic side of the cinemas. This committee shall comprise a chairman, secretary, vice-chairman, vice-secretary, accountant, treasurer, assistant treasurer and 3 spokespersons who make up the allocations sections, another 3 making up the programming control section, 2 from the box office control and another 2, the treasurer and his assistant making up the propaganda control section. The treasurer and his assistant will be elected in a general assembly of all categories working in the cinemas, while the other committee is to be drawn from the relevant sections. The chairman shall be elected in the manner which the first general assembly of the Economic Committee of Cinemas may prescribe. The mandate of each of the members of the committee will be of two years' duration, with the possibility of re-election for a further two-year term. These posts shall carry the same weekly pay as received by workers of the same category. The delegate who represents the writers' and composers' section is to be paid an amount equal to the highest paid member of the committee except for a 1 per cent deduction for author's royalties.

23. The sections are to retain the same trade union structure which they have had up to the present, wielding control over their members in their places of work and running their respective labour exchanges [ *bolsas de trabajo* ].

24. In each cinema there is to be a local committee which will have charge of everything relating to the workers. For working purposes this committee will liaise directly with the corresponding trade union committees and, on the question of supplies to the cinema, with the economic committee's allocations section.

25. Foreign and home-produced films are to be taken in direct observance of the agreed provisions which may be arranged between the distributor companies and the Economic Committee of the Cinemas, under the auspices of the Commissariat of Entertainments of Catalonia.<sup>36</sup>

26. No film is to be passed which displays a markedly reactionary tenor or a tendency to belittle the precepts of liberty and humanity which motivate the CNT. So that this clause may be made effective, the Economic Committee will be in continual liaison with the official agencies for the censoring of films.

27. All premises which may have been abandoned by their respective owners are to be run directly by the union. On every premises the Economic Committee of Cinemas is to have a representative who will be paid at the weekly rate appropriate to the category of employment to which they may belong.

28. Four premises are to be set aside for film premières — the Coliseo, the Fémina, the Urquinaona and the Astoria. Box office prices shall be the same in them all.

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<sup>36</sup> This was a Generalitat body.

29. For all of the job categories that make up the cinema industry there will be a maximum salary scale, the sum of which will not exceed 175 pesetas a week.

30. Such profits as may be left with the committee's fund shall be deposited in toto with the union's general fund for use in meeting the moral and economic needs of the union.

31. The overall wages bill will be footed by the Economic Committee of Cinemas and each Monday of every week the workers are to be issued with their pay in their respective workplaces.

32. All premises which may hereinafter open in the Barcelona area for use as cinemas are to be wholly incorporated into the socialisation scheme instituted by the union. All staff, irrespective of their job category, must be served by the labour exchanges of the relevant section.

33. Incomes derived from advertising or window displays are for the exclusive use of the union and such profits as may be obtained shall be deposited with the funds of the Economic Committee of Cinemas.

34. Owners of weekend cinemas and other cinemas of meagre intrinsic income are to be paid the percentage pay which the Economic Committee may prescribe in accordance with the real value of the premises and the economic development thereof.

35. Cinema premises, exactly as they exist at present, shall be completely dependent upon the union for their normal operation and all bona fide claims against them which may emerge are to be settled by the Economic Committee of Cinemas. Compensation which the union agreed to pay will be made whenever the economic resources of the committee so permit.

The working party. Barcelona, 6 August 1936.

Socialisation of the theatre. The dream of all theatre people has come true. In view of the complex organisation of the theatre, it has been a difficult task to reconcile economically all of the pursuits which go to make up the world of entertainment. Nevertheless, cognisant of the historical and social import of the present times and prompted by a lofty social spirit, rough edges have been smoothed, holes filled in and links tightened. Based on uniform minimum pay and a degree of fraternity which was hitherto dormant, the miracle has been achieved whereby the great theatre family has committed itself to a thorough-going overhaul of theatre life by embarking on a socialisation programme without capitalists.

Actors, operatives, scene shifters, electricians, prop men, variety artistes, opera singers are all working to help the theatre to flourish. Once suffocated in the shares of sponsorship, capital and the old boy network, theatre may have been a dead thing, but the workers of the theatre have marshalled all their efforts to bring it back to life.

The Public Entertainments Union, its work orchestrated by its economic committee, seeks to provide reassurance to all and restore to the city its normal appearance of a hive of activity that was destroyed by freedom-hating fascists.

It is a question of spiritual as well as economic overhaul. From being a bourgeois amusement it is to assume an educational mantle. All obscenity, vulgarity and grossness is to be banished from the theatre. The theatre feels a pride in its duty and will itself tear away anything that confused the stageboards with the merchant's counters or the brothel's pay-desk. Obviously, in this, its first inklings of life, it will not be able to achieve its task in full. The theatres must be opened up, it is vital that peace be restored to the city. Time is at a premium and it is not possible to lay on the full range of entertainments which the rules of catharsis require be offered to the people. It is not possible within the space of a few hours to get troupes together, rehearse shows and put them on with the sort of respect that is the public's due. It might be discovered that some popular name is missing from the cast list but it has not been possible to find work for everybody. In the light of the meagre pay allotted to all theatricals, the economic committee has admitted to the troupes only the names of those who have no other paid employment.

It also has to be borne in mind that the companies of artistes which begin their task on Saturday next, are not finalised. There will be personnel changes, leading to the mobility which show business life demands.

Fundamental to the new reform is the successful elimination of everything offensive to the interests and liberties of the people. For this reason the claque, ticket touts, advance booking, backhanders and complimentary tickets are henceforth banished from the theatres. All services are to be free of charge in every theatre.

As a sample of what has been achieved, let it be borne in mind that everyone, from the highest paid stars like Hipólit Lázaro,<sup>37</sup> Marcos Redondo<sup>38</sup> and Enric Borràs<sup>39</sup> down to the worker who serves in the lowliest capacity, has been allotted expenses from the common fund made up of the takings from all of the theatres.

This endeavour deserves the sympathy and support of the people of Barcelona. The people are the exclusive impresario. For this very reason, that it is the people who are in command and who show no favouritism in their decisions, all complimentary entrances are abolished. All spectators will pay a small charge, but pay something they shall.

The theatres opening their doors tomorrow are the Novedades (Castilian musicals), the Barcelona (Castilian comedy), the Poliorama (Catalan comedy), the Romea (Catalan comedy), the Gran Español (Catalan vaudeville), the Apolo (melodrama), the Cómico (revue) and the Circo Barcelonés (variety). Opera will be back at the Tivoli

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<sup>37</sup> A celebrated Catalan tenor from the period, who performed in opera across the world.

<sup>38</sup> A popular musical-hall singer both before and after the civil war.

<sup>39</sup> An institution in the Catalan stage world. He frequently played the leading male role in tragic rural dramas, which were very popular in the years before the civil war. From August 1936 until the fall of Barcelona in early 1939, he appeared continuously in Barcelona's Poliorama theatre.

from next week. Owing to current circumstances, theatres will be performing only in the evenings, beginning at 5.30 pm.

Not having the resources to pay for press advertising, the economic committee finds itself compelled to dispense with this important advertising medium until such time as it may be able to afford its services. On these grounds, the committee beseeches the press and its readers to do what they can to spread the word about the reopening of Barcelona's theatres.

Half of the total takings from Saturday's box offices is to be donated to the fund opened for the victims of the fascist revolt. The people ought to support this theatre campaign, which is being implemented across the board in Spain for the first time ever and which makes a reality of the dream of a socialised theatre.

**The clothing industry ( Barcelona).** A proposition approved by the personnel of this union meeting in its assembly of 2 August 1936 reads:

Structure of the order of work. Let the following be understood: every individual who is unskilled in any task will be regarded as an apprentice for the learning period and will not be able to achieve recognition as a worker prior to graduation from the trainee worker stage. Any individual performing work in keeping with the rules which that craft requires has to be regarded as a journeyman in that trade or speciality; any individual equipped with a corpus of theoretical and practical expertise must be regarded as a technician. Workers are to be graded into four categories: 1. technicians; 2. journeymen; 3. trainee workers; 4. apprentices.

The technical section will be entrusted with the task of setting up standards and inspection, accounting standards, deployment of equipment and regulation of sale.

The mission of the journeyman section and its moral responsibility will be the performance of that work for which it is suitably skilled, so that this work may be performed in accordance with the rules of the trade. The trainee worker and apprentice section shall have as its primary responsibility self-improvement in the school that is to be established, as we explain below.

Working hours. Taking the line that work should above all be a fundamental obligation and that in every respect it should be the highest contribution to the individual's sense of dignity, each worker will work according to their abilities. The basic working day will be six hours of intensive labour. Should this have to be extended or reduced in given circumstances, this shall be decided by agreement of the assembly and, in any case, this measure should be applied generally. Given that self-improvement of the individual in the moral and professional sense should be based solely upon the school, and that the school alone can round off our education, experts with the requisite pedagogical abilities will run a class of two hours every day where everyone, regardless of skill level, may attend. In view of the numerous anatomical disorders to which the workers of this industry are prey, a genuine blot upon society, the collective workshop is to be equipped with a medical section responsible for building



up medical files through periodic checkups and for laying down the requisite health regulations in the workplace.

With regard to all other social preventive measures of the collective, the confederal guidelines issued by the congresses shall be observed. With regard to pay, this will be determined by decisions emanating from an assembly. Established rates of pay shall provide the basis for calculation of the costs of manufactured or ready-made garments.

Oversight and accounting. Given that, on the basis of intensive labour, every working day begun should be a full working day, the monitoring of attendance for work can be recorded automatically and mechanically. This is especially true in the matter of the wages bill. The calculation of wages may be carried out by means of graph tables, with the operation reduced to the simple enactment of two rules.

For the issue of payments, the payroll office will introduce current account books and each worker, instead of being paid periodically, will go to the accounts section whenever it may be convenient for them to do so and will be able to withdraw whatever amount they may choose from their accumulated pay. In this way the circulation of money will be concentrated in the accounts section.

Sales costing. This will be based upon the number of hours worked and the wages established and the amount of cloth and other materials used. The merchandise may be of infinite variety but the budgetary quality will have to be graded, which is to say, divided into four grades. This means that the price of garments will depend upon whether the garments are of a quality comparable to first, second, third or fourth class.

Supplies. With regard to progress in the introduction of the collective workshop, what resources can we call upon? What sort of finance is necessary? To decide this, the working party believes that we must appoint a panel with the task of probing the likelihood of securing a loan to meet these needs, whether through the good offices of our Confederation, through those of some banking agency, or through our own resources.

Barcelona, 7 August 1936.

**Unión Naval de Levante (Valencia).** This company was run by a factory committee made up of two delegates from the various sections of the works — shipyards, workshops and dry dock. This factory committee which represented the 21 sections comprising the industry in question had appointed a workers' committee to handle administrative, technical and economic matters; the latter consisted of a chairman, a secretary and five committee men who, together with a technical director and a workshop director, made up a total of nine people of acknowledged competence.

In August 1937, a year after it had been seized, the Unión Naval de Levante employed some 1,400 workers, who were roughly balanced between the CNT and the UGT in equal numbers. The seven members of the workers' committee were replaced every six months. The works had been taken over in August 1936, when the Unión Naval de Levante had a deficit of 3,518,647.56

pesetas. The Barcelona yards — the Nuevo Vulcano works — had also been seized. The Tarragona works had paid back its debt to the state. In the Valencia yard at that time there had been three ships under construction: the Mexican gunboat *Durango*, a CAMPSA petrol tanker and another ship. The first was delivered by the workers' committee in 1936 and the deal incurred a loss of 74,880 pesetas. The other two ships had not been completed because the yard had to devote itself to repairing damage caused in the theatres of war. By the end of 1936 the deficit had grown to 3,839,649.27 pesetas. It was during the first five months of 1937 that there was a financial recovery and on 31 May 1937 the total surplus stood at 1,041,421.88 pesetas.

**Distributive trade (Valencia).** At the beginning of 1937 in Valencia a Federation of Distributive Workers was formed to handle agricultural produce. The federation was an amalgamation of the following entities: on the CNT side, the Transport Union, the Mercantile Union and the Levante regional peasant federation, and on the UGT side, the Commerce Union and the FNTT.

The new agency began by changing sales practices and by eliminating the abuses of middlemen, some of whom had huge daily turnovers. For instance, old practices which allowed victuallers with an average daily turnover of 40 cases of provisions to enjoy a steady daily income of 50 pesetas thanks to the exploitation of consumers were prohibited. The first to suffer was the retailer, the next to suffer were small families of consumers.

Sharp practice and fraud in the weight and quality of merchandise was similarly eradicated. Qualified experts toured all of the villages of the Levante region contacting the producers and union bodies directly, dealing a crushing blow to the middlemen.

Another aim was to keep the prices of basic foodstuffs (fruits and vegetables) low. On the so-called 'free market', where there were no controls, produce was sold by supposed farmers (who were in reality middlemen) at much higher prices. For instance:

	<b>Free market price (pesetas per kilo)</b>	<b>Controlled market price (pesetas per kilo)</b>
Potatoes	1.25	0.70
Kidney beans	1.75	1.25

Some of the produce offered on the free market had been diverted surreptitiously from the controlled market and had its price inflated. The so-called rights of the victualler were slashed by 25 per cent.

The overall plan of this venture tended towards the goal of wholesale socialisation, the supervision of all produce entering Valencia on behalf of the consumer and the abolition of all the free markets, which were in reality the focus of speculation. To this end, there were plans to centralise all retailers in great premises where they would dispatch produce at a fixed price; there was also a plan to equip Valencia with a huge market.

**Barcelona construction industry.**

*Joint UGT-CNT agreement on collectivisation in the Barcelona construction industry.* Reacting to the needs of the revolutionary times in which we live, and to the desire for unity of the construction industry's workers, the respective unions — in acknowledgement of the mood of the masses — have arrived at specific agreements which

will be the point of departure for the realisation of the great joint venture that we intend to put into effect. In accordance with the agreements of the joint meeting of the two unions held on 5 January, a liaison committee has been formed, comprising the following comrades: Vilaró, Raft, Soler, Mas and González for the UGT Building Union, and Gavín, Subirana, Durán, Martínez and Lombás for the CNT Construction Union. Both unions, through the agency of their liaison committee, endorse the following agreements.

1. To proceed jointly with wholesale collectivisation of the Barcelona construction industry in keeping with the Decree on Collectives and the ordinance of 28 November 1936, published in the *Diari Oficial de la Generalitat de Catalunya* of 1 December of that year.

2. For the time being, and until such times as the Industrial Unions may be formed, the concentration will affect the following sections: architects, surveyors, draughtsmen, heating engineers, bricklayers and labourers (in construction firms), tilers and pavers (including the tile factories) insulators and waterproofers (including those in manufacturing depots), stone and marble workers (polishers and quarrymen), artificial stone workers (including those in factories), paperhangers (including those in retail outlets), stucco plasterers, heating workers (plumbing firms), hodsmen (brickwork employees included), ceramic workers, stonemasons (quarrymen as well), painters, plasterers, roofers, pavers, scaffolders and workers with reinforced concrete. All of those sections which, once the Industrial Union comes into existence, may be incorporated into the Construction Industrial Union, such as the woodworkers' section, the Lamplighters' Section etc., are to be embraced by the concentration or on an equal footing with the foregoing.

3. In accordance with the aforementioned collectivisations decree, the General Industry Council is to be made up of both trade union groupings in proportion to the number of members affiliated to each of them. This same proportionality will be observed also in the sections.

4. Within the amalgamation of the broader industry, there is to be respect for the right of free unionisation. Each union will retain its own membership card and personality and doctrinal matters will be eliminated utterly, given that this organisation is independent of trade union matters.

5. The mission of the liaison committee is as follows: to submit a proposal to the Economic Council for collectivisation in accordance with the second article of this agreement; to see to the speedy legalisation of that collectivisation and of the General Industry Council; to accelerate the municipalisation of urban property; to smooth over any frictions which may exist or arise between sections until such time as the General Industry Council is set up and the collectivestarts to operate normally; to strive with a spirit of loyalty and cordiality to create the conditions which may, with time, make possible the formation of one single union grouping, the proletariat's ultimate ambition. A matter of immediate concern to the committee shall be to ensure that no individual, prompted more by ignorance than by malice, may impede the implementation of the agreements reached by both organisations.

6. The liaison committee assumes legal responsibility, as plenipotentiary representative of the unions, for achieving legal registration of the Construction Industry Association. All agreements, decisions and activities of this committee will be made known to the respective sections.

The UGT Builders' Union and the CNT Construction Union, both of Barcelona, believe that they must remain true to their basic principles while simultaneously looking beyond their particular interests in order to reach firm agreements which prioritise the antifascist cause and the general welfare of our industry's workers.

The CNT Construction Union and the UGT Builders' Union.

Barcelona, 11 January 1937.

### **The takeover of the power industry of Catalonia.**

When the revolt erupted we shouldered the burden of our responsibility and, abiding by the watchword that if we were to triumph then the life of the country could not be brought to a standstill, several comrades assumed the reins of the various services. These companies would also have their watchwords. The first was that, for the duration of abnormal circumstances, all of the workers in their employ had to remain in their houses, for the employers could not be accountable for their personal safety. Our response to this statement was to argue that the workers had a quite different watchword and, this being so, that we would continue to report for duty. Then we began to issue orders by way of mobilising an industry whose complexity was no secret to us. Our first decision? To order that all employees were to resume work within 48 hours.

Our workers reported for duty, but desertions began from the managerial echelons. Some, doubtless believing themselves to possess indispensable skills, did report, but their passive attitude was so manifest, and so far from "clever", that they gave themselves away as saboteurs and this led to our decision to take control of all the companies. This step was the logical one in any case, since, if we were on the road to proletarian revolution, to accept dual management by ourselves and by the representatives of capitalism was an absurdity.

This decision was communicated to the company management and a document was drawn up which they signed, in which it was recognised that, until such time as was felt opportune, there should be no talk of those interests which might be regarded as infringed by our attitude. As things stood at that time, we wanted to have sole responsibility for the service, and we were prepared to leave all consideration of issues which had to be dealt with at inter-government level until a more propitious occasion.

From Brussels, SOFINA<sup>40</sup> issued an order informing all foreign employees of the companies under its control that anyone who continued to report for duty as normal would be regarded as acting against the interests of SOFINA and would thus

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<sup>40</sup> The Société Financière de Transports et Entreprises Industrielles (Transports and Industrial Enterprises Finance Company) was a multinational company with extensive interests in Spain.

incur not merely the penalty of dismissal but would also have their names added to an international blacklist. This was tantamount to making life impossible for the unemployed in all those places where there were firms controlled by that powerful financial consortium. In a single morning more than 80 foreigners, ranging from the managing director to more humble employees, quit their positions. There were some who displayed an interest in working alongside us. These foreigners were, and remain, with the revolution in spirit, and they form part of an international column that will soon come to Spain to fight alongside our brothers and which grows by leaps and bounds each day, because it comprises the hearts of all of the world's oppressed, which beat to the triumphant rhythm of our revolution.

Some of them returned the next day with tears in their eyes; they were unable to work on. Under sustained pressure from SOFINA, our continual enemy, the consuls of their respective countries had instructed them to quit Spanish soil without delay. The fact that the technical management pulled out completely in under four hours added further to the responsibility on our shoulders. Added to this, something even more serious occurred.

Management had always taken great care to keep the Spanish workforce far removed from the organisation and operation of the companies. Undaunted, we took charge of the industry and instituted a series of transitional arrangements which, while inadequate in that they relied upon technicians who were ignorant of their social responsibility, nonetheless served the short-term purpose of maintaining the continuity of services. Thus, thanks to effective control by the labouring masses and by a handful of technicians whose conduct had earned them our trust, services were assured .

There was lighting, and industries were operational, but this was not the best of our gifts to Catalonia. We provided something else: a first disappointment to the world of finance and those poor millionaires who thought that, after the disarray in which they had left us, the whole company complex was doomed to collapse in failure. We know that SOFINA has tried to lodge a claim with the government through diplomatic channels. Everything has been surrounded by a spectacular wall of silence. To date we have not been able to establish the circumstances in which we find ourselves. All we know is that SOFINA told the government of Catalonia that, unless its interests were safeguarded, it would not merely boycott our revolution, but would go further and place all of its industrial resources at the disposal of the rebels. This may go some way towards explaining the apparent lethargy which leads many to believe that the Light and Power Union is the union which has made least progress within the revolution. Many have still been reluctant to acknowledge that this industry is the key to the movement in view of its position *vis-à-vis* international capital. It is not possible to move as fast or as far as we should all like. We have accomplished the work which ought to have been carried out long ago in the industry and we have made remarkable strides in just a few months. For the moment our aim is to unify the industry in Catalonia, a unification which, without any outlay, promises a considerable expansion in its financial yield and a further huge increase in its hydraulic reserves. Progress is being made towards improving utilisation of all the generating

stations fed by the river currents. To give some idea of what this means, in the year since we have taken charge of the industry — from 19 July 1936 to 19 July 1937 — and comparing this year with 1928–9, the year of the worst drought that we have experienced to date, self-management has shown a surplus of hydraulic reserves equivalent to some 46 million kilowatt hours. All of this is the result of our intervention — and without technicians, at that — and the effort put into unifying services, which has facilitated optimum use of river-based generators. In the five months of the revolution, our reserves have doubled and today our yield has produced a surplus of around 100 million kilowatt hours which can be deployed towards the expansion of our industry or the establishment of new ones.<sup>41</sup>

### **Barcelona glass industry.**

All of the factories of the old bosses have been collectivised. 90 per cent of the factories in the whole of Spain are in Catalonia, but 50 per cent of the markets are in fascist territory. Hence the marketing crisis. Even prior to the revolt, there were materials stockpiled to the tune of 9 to 10 million pesetas. Some factories have ground to a halt. A number of negotiations have been held with foreign nations, such as Mexico and the USSR, which have raised hopes about commercial intercourse. Previously the factories situated in Spain were not sufficient to meet the needs of the home market and 8 million pesetas a year were squandered on imports from abroad. This augurs well for the future.

With overhauled organisation and modern machinery we should be able to get the industry on a sound footing.

Specialities: tableware, bottleware, lamps, perfume containers, pharmaceutical ware, glassware, cut glass and thermometers. Plans for the future: amalgamation on the basis of strict uniformity of production quotas, pay rates and general working conditions to ensure that labour costs are entirely the same in every plant, whether dis-trained by the union or run along cooperative lines; standardisation of the market prices of glassware and crystal with a view to protecting their real value: appointment of commissioners to examine the nature of and avert overproduction and to discover ways of placing jobless comrades in those factories still working.

Prior to the rising there was savage competition between the employers and the cooperatives set up by the “victimised” [*seleccionados*], workers dismissed for trade union activities, a struggle which brought the industry to the brink of chaos. At the time earnings stood at between 42 and 100 pesetas. An attempt has been made to reach some accommodation with the cooperatives regarding production and sales quotas. A regional plenum has been held to this end.

The sheet glass section. The 100 firms which existed have been reduced to 29. These are known as branches [*sucursales*] and all are numbered. Wages have been increased and the six-hour day introduced. As many hours are put in as the needs of war demand. All of the unemployed operatives have been taken on, raising the numbers

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<sup>41</sup> *Solidaridad Obrera*, 5 January 1937.

employed to 1,000 from the original figure of 600. The industry's circumstances, hitherto ruinous, are now excellent. Despite improvements in pay and the expansion of the workforce, we have not sought any assistance from the Generalitat. Quite the opposite: in fact the Generalitat owes us 300,000 pesetas. All serviceable machinery has been utilised, for there were some tools dating back to the sixteenth century. Former employers are employed in a clerical capacity, earning 100 pesetas weekly. For the future, we cherish the hope of amalgamating all of the industries into one. We have eliminated all competition, an achievement which is re-enacted in Levante in the hope of orchestrating production and trading at regulated prices and, ultimately, eliminating the stigma of the peseta. The industry has assets of some 10 million pesetas in machinery.<sup>42</sup>

**Wages in Levante.** The following proposition concerning the introduction of the family wage was passed at the regional plenum of the Levante regional committee of the CNT, held in early November 1936:

In presenting this motion, the working party begins by congratulating the Confederation for the perceptive vision which guides its decisions on the social question, particularly with regard to the matter of wages. And there is all the more reason for congratulation when we bear in mind that these decisions have been taken at critical moments in which the Spanish proletariat has had to grapple with the harsh reality of a military revolt which obliges us to adjust our ideological viewpoints so far as is possible.

We are traditional enemies of the wage system. At all times we have shown it to be the prostitution of labour and the motive behind the increasing deprivation facing the proletariat. But we also know that this is not the time to impose our principles and our tactics to the letter. However, whereas that may be impossible for us, we can humanise the wage system in such a way that all of its unfairness and outrageousness may be stripped away, organising it so that while it may not wholly reflect our conception of social justice, it may afford a glimpse of the sense of justice and equity which the historic times in which we live require of us.

This is why, although the unions represented at this plenum may not — with but few exceptions — support the immediate abolition of the wage system, there is also an immense majority opposed to the standardisation of wages as this would be a gross injustice in moral terms and an outright absurdity in social terms, for it is common knowledge that the prices of basic foodstuffs are not the same in every part of the region of Levante.

The majority resolution which the unions bring to this plenum is that the so-called family wage be introduced. Many unions do not use that precise phrase, declaring themselves instead to favour a standardisation of wages in order to meet the various physiological, intellectual and artistic needs of the individual and his family.

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<sup>42</sup> Adapted from a report in *Solidaridad Obrera*, 20 January 1937.

To enumerate the reasons behind this proposition which the working party submits for the approval of the plenum would be a protracted business, we might even say a futile exercise; we do want to indicate a few, however. First of all, today, when the economy in that part of the country under our control is in a state of collapse, owing to the paralysis of activities caused by social warfare, coupled with the cutting off of supplies of raw materials and foodstuffs from the zone affected by the revolt, our understanding is that it is a disgraceful injustice that there should be citizens who, for a number of unacceptable reasons, enjoy a splendid salary which allows them to indulge themselves in a gluttonous orgy of consumption far beyond the imagination and purchasing power of the majority of citizens.

Secondly, we cannot countenance the alleged superiority of intellectual workers for, while it may be true that it cost them more to acquire their scientific know-how than it costs the manual worker to learn a trade, we realise that this is a legacy of the economic conditions that prevailed in the regime which has been eliminated from Spain since 19 July.

Only in some exceptional instances can we countenance the excessive outlay on the pursuit of the intellectual profession over manual work, but this could easily be overlooked if the extraordinary costs which intellectual workers are forced to incur in certain instances were to be defrayed by the collective and turned to the advantage of the latter. In this way the physician who needs a costly piece of X-ray equipment would be on a par with the weaver who needs a no less expensive piece of equipment in the shape of the latest loom.

In view of all of the above considerations and in the belief that it encapsulates the majority feeling among the workers represented at the plenum, this working party proposes:

1. The introduction of the family wage throughout the length and breadth of the Levante region, working on the basis of the individual as consumer, without regard to race, profession or sex.
2. To regulate this agreement and record the size of the family and age of the family members, let the family ration book be introduced under the aegis of the union organisation and validation of the local economic council.
3. The economic import of the wage is to be indicated by the local economic councils in accordance with the prices of consumer goods in the locality.
4. The basis of the family wage shall be prescribed with reference to the needs of an individual who should normally be the head of the family. Prior to this prescription, the wage is to be increased by 50 per cent for the first family member over the age of 16 years, by 25 per cent for each member of the family above that age, by 25 per cent for the first dependent under the age of 16 years and by 15 per cent for each dependent under that age. For instance, assuming that the wage of the head of the family is set at 10 pesetas, in a family made up of three adult members and two minors, the family wage would be worked out like this: 10 pesetas for the head of family, 5 pesetas for the first adult and 2.50 pesetas for the remaining adult, plus 2.50 pesetas for a dependent under the age of 16 years and 1.50 pesetas for the next



one under the age of 16 years. The family's overall family wage would stand at 21.50 pesetas.

5. This decision will have to be implemented by regional committee in the wake of the establishment of a regional economic council and with prior agreement from the UGT in order to preclude differences of opinion that might create serious problems for the anti-fascist and libertarian causes.

6. To this latter end, an intensive propaganda campaign must be organised and targeted at those areas under Marxist influence so that the interests of the workers from the other union grouping can be directed to this problem.

7. The foregoing points imply that those villages presently living under a socialised arrangement and, having abolished money as a means of exchange, use payment in kind in its place, will be left free to persist with this arrangement until such time as this issue may be resolved for the region as a whole.

## **Appendix to Chapter Fifteen: The Collectivisations Decree**

Although the Decree on Collectivisation of Industries and Businesses and Control of Private Firms merely set a legal seal on a situation created by the workers, we reprint it by virtue of the fact that it is a historic document. It was promulgated by the Generalitat on 24 October 1936 following a protracted draft process, during which the representatives of the labour organisations, Marxist parties and those representing the petite bourgeoisie clashed fairly violently inside the Catalan government. Each of these parties and organisations stood for a different perception and outlook on the revolutionary movement. The following parties and organisations had a hand in the framing of the decree: the CNT, the UGT and the Stalinist PSUC, the anti-Stalinist, revolutionary Marxists of the POUM, the ERC and Acció Catalana (both representing the petty bourgeoisie and middle class).

This is the text of the Decree:

The criminal military uprising of 19 July has produced an extraordinary upheaval in the nation's economy. It is incumbent upon the Generalitat Council to repair the damage done to Catalonia's industry and trade by the treachery of those who attempted to impose a dictatorship on our country. Such has been the intensity of the popular backlash produced by the military rising that it has given rise to a far-reaching socio-economic transformation, which is currently being consolidated in Catalonia. The concentration of wealth in the hands of an ever more restricted group of individuals, a group which had no hesitation in unleashing a savage war in defence of its privileges, has been accompanied by the immiseration of the working class. The people's victory will spell the end of capitalism.

What is required at present is the organisation of production in such a way as to ensure that the sole beneficiary is the collectivity and the workers who will shape the new social order. Any income that does not emanate from labour must therefore be abolished.

The socio-economic organisation of big industry must be based on collectivised production. The Generalitat Council anticipates the replacement of individual ownership by collective ownership and by means of the collectivisation of the assets of large enterprises or, in other words, the collectivisation of capital. Meanwhile, private ownership of consumer goods and of small industry are to be retained.

The revolutionary exertions of the armed working class, which rose up to crush fascism, raise the need for such a change in the traditional social and economic structure. One of the fundamental problems posed by this new situation concerns the organisation of labour, which must regulate the sources of wealth and arrange for it to be distributed in accordance with social needs.

After 19 July, the blatantly fascist bourgeoisie deserted its posts. The majority have fled the country, while a minority has vanished. The industrial concerns affected by this could not go on without management and the workers resolved to assume control of them, setting up workers' control committees. The Generalitat Council had to endorse and to channel [*encauzar*] the spontaneous labour of the workers in their factories.<sup>43</sup>

By virtue of the circumstances in which some of the enterprises found themselves, in order to safeguard their interests the workers were obliged to seize their workplaces, thereby making necessary the collectivisation of their industries. The Economic Council seeks to express the wishes of the working class and fulfil the programme outlined above by guiding Catalonia's economic life in accordance with the workers' wishes.

But the collectivisation of industry will have little meaning unless it gave some fillip to its growth and dynamism. To this end, the Economic Council has taken it upon itself to examine the classic guidelines for the establishment of an Industrial and Commercial Credit Fund to provide financial assistance to the collectivised firms and marshal our industry into huge concentrations which may guarantee productivity and improve our external trade. The necessary research is being conducted so that a research and technical consultancy agency may be set up to make our industry more efficient and progressive.

In the light of the above considerations, and in view of the report from the Economic Council, the Minister of Economy hereby decrees:

1. In accordance with the norms hereby prescribed in this present decree, Catalonia's industrial and commercial enterprises are categorised as:
  - (a) collectivised enterprises, wherein the responsibility for management falls to the workforce represented by a factory committee [*comité de empresa*];
  - (b) private enterprises, wherein the management is the responsibility of the owner or director, assisted and monitored by the workers' control committee.

### **I. Collectivised enterprises**

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<sup>43</sup> This is to make a virtue out of the 'dual power' that existed between the old state apparatus and the new revolutionary power constituted by the factory and neighbourhood committees that came to prominence after July 1936.

2. Collectivisation will be obligatory for industrial and commercial enterprises that employed more than 100 workers as of 30 June 1936, as well as those which, while employing a smaller workforce, have owners who have been declared rebels or have abandoned the firm. Notwithstanding, firms with a workforce of less than 100 are liable to collectivisation with the agreement of the majority of the workers and the owner or owners. Firms with more than 50 workers and less than 100 are also liable to collectivisation provided that three-quarters of the workforce give their consent.

The Economic Council is also empowered to schedule the collectivisation of other industries which, by virtue of their importance to the national economy or for other reasons, need to be removed from private hands.

3. For the purposes of the foregoing article the Popular Tribunals alone are empowered to pronounce persons rebels.<sup>44</sup>

4. For the purposes of calculating the total workforce of the firm, any individual who figures on its payroll will be deemed a worker, regardless of their role and regardless of whether that individual is involved in intellectual or manual labour.

5. All of the assets and liabilities of the former enterprise are to be passed on to the collectivised firm.<sup>45</sup>

6. For the purposes of collectivisation, enterprises consisting of separate production and sales establishments and others which may possess a range of establishments and plants shall continue to form one composite organisation and will be broken up only with the express authorisation of the Minister of Economy of Catalonia.

7. Former owners or directors may be coopted on to the staff of the collectivised enterprise and assigned to positions where their administrative or technical aptitudes can best be utilised.

8. At the moment of collectivisation, it will not be licit to dismiss any worker from the firm, though they may be redeployed in the same capacity should circumstances so require.

9. In those firms where the interests of foreigners are involved, the factory committees and control committees in each instance shall bring this to the attention of the Economic Council, which will assemble all interested parties or their representatives to deal with the affair and make provision for due safeguarding of those interests.

## **II. Concerning the factory committees**

10. Managerial administration of the collectivised enterprises will be in the charge of a factory committee appointed in a general assembly of the workforce. The assembly will determine the number of workers of which the factory committee is to comprise and this shall not be less than 5 nor more than 15 and ought to incorporate the following services: production, administration, technical services and commercial

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<sup>44</sup> A further example of the reconstitution of state authority and its projection into social life.

<sup>45</sup> This acceptance of the debts of the old capitalist management reflects the Popular Frontist inspiration of the decree and underlines the willingness of the signatories to reach a *modus vivendi* with the middle classes, both at home and abroad, by not offending either foreign or domestic debtors. In short, this was hardly a revolutionary break with the past.

intercourse. When appropriate the various union groupings to which the workforce belongs shall have proportional representation on the factory committee.

The posts will carry a term of two years with half being reallocated each year. Posts on the factory committee will be subject to re-election.

11. The factory committees will assume the functions and responsibilities of the erstwhile administrative councils in the limited liability companies and their management.

They shall be answerable for their conduct to the workers of their own firm from the appropriate General Industry Council.

12. In performance of their duties, the factory committee will ensure that the production process conforms to the overall plan prescribed by the General Industry Council, matching its efforts to the principles regulating the growth of the sector to which it belongs. Similarly when it comes to establishing profit margins, fixing general conditions of sale, procuring raw materials, and in matters concerning the rules for paying for materials, creating liquid capital or reserve funds or profit-sharing, the dispositions of the General Industry Council must be observed.

In social terms, they shall conduct themselves in such a way as to adhere strictly to the norms established in this sphere, while suggesting whatever others they may deem advisable. They shall take the necessary steps to ensure the physical and moral well-being of the workers, devoting themselves to intense cultural and educational activity and encouraging the formation of clubs, recreational centres, sports and cultural groups, etc.

13. The factory committee of industries seized prior to the publication of this present decree, and those of industries which may be collectivised subsequent to it will, within the term of 15 days, dispatch to the general secretary of the Economic Council their founding charter in accordance with a model available from the corresponding offices.

14. To attend to the running of the enterprise in a permanent way its council will appoint a director to whom it will delegate all or part of the functions incumbent upon the said council.

In enterprises with a workforce of more than 500 or in which capital exceeds 1 million pesetas or which make or involve materials connected with the nation's defences, the appointment of the director will be subject to the approval of the Economic Council.

15. It shall be compulsory for every collectivised enterprise to have an auditor from the Generalitat, who is to be a member of the factory committee nominated by the Economic Council in agreement with the workers.

16. The legal representative of the enterprise will be the director whose signature is to be endorsed by signatures of two members of the factory committee. Appointments are to be communicated to the Economic Council, which will vouch for them in dealings with banks or other agencies.

17. The factory committees are to keep minutes of their meetings and are to send a certified copy of any agreements they reach to the general councils of their respective industries, which are entitled to intervene as appropriate.

18. It will be an obligation upon the committees to pay heed to demands or suggestions put to them by the workers and the records shall show petitions received by them so that, should the need arise, these may be brought to the attention of the General Industry Council.

19. At the end of each financial year, it will be the duty of the factory committees to give an account of their work to their workers collected in general assembly. Similarly, the factory committees are to submit a copy of their balance sheet and of a half-yearly or annual report, along with details of the circumstances of the firm and of forward planning, to the General Industry Council.

20. In the event of manifest incompetence or reluctance to abide by the norms prescribed by the latter, it will be possible for the factory committees to be removed individually or in toto from their positions by a general assembly of the workers and by the general council of their respective industries.

Once removal has been agreed by the general council of any given industry, assembly of workers are entitled to register an appeal to the Economic Council, whose decision will be final.

### **III. Concerning the control committees in the private sector**

21. In uncollectivised industries or businesses it will be compulsory to form a workers' committee of control, on which all services — producers, technicians and administrative personnel — which make up the firm are to be represented. The number of individuals of which this committee is to comprise is to be determined freely by the workers, and each union grouping should have representation proportional to its respective strength in numbers among the workforce.

22. Within the purview of the control committee will lie:

(a) the supervision of working conditions, that is to say strict adherence to the conditions in force regarding pay, working hours, social securities, health and safety, etc., as well as strict factory discipline. All of the notices and notifications which the firm's manager might communicate to the workforce are to be channelled through this committee;

(b) administrative supervision, the monitoring of income and expenditure, whether in cash or through the bank, ensuring that these operations are necessary to business and at the same time participating in all other operations of a commercial nature;

(c) supervision of production, consisting of a close liaison with the employer for the purpose of perfecting the production process. The workers' committees of control will seek to be on the best possible terms with technical personnel in order to ensure that work proceeds smoothly.

23. Employers are to be obliged to submit to the workers' committees of control their balance sheets and yearly reports which will be forwarded to the general council of the relevant industry.

#### **IV. Concerning the General Industry Councils**

24. The General Industry Councils are to be made up as follows: 4 technicians appointed by the Economic Council; 4 representatives from the factory committee; 8 delegations from the various union groupings, the size of which will be proportional to the number of members in each union. The ratio of union representation is to be fixed according to the method which the unions agree upon. These councils are to be chaired by the appropriate agent of the Economic Council of Catalonia.

25. The General Councils of Industry will formulate general work programmes for their respective industry, advise factory committees as to their functions, regulate the overall production of the industry, standardise costs to avoid competition, examine marketing requirements and the potential of domestic and foreign markets as well as monitoring the overall progress of the industry, in each instance prescribing the parameters and rate of production for each class of article. They will also suggest that factories be closed down or built up, in accordance with the needs of the industry and the consumer, or indeed propose that certain factories be amalgamated. Other areas of concern are the reform of certain working methods, credit and distributive practices, proposing adjustments to tariffs and commercial treaties, organising clearing houses for sales and for the procurement of equipment and raw materials and preparing technical and statistical research with a view to substituting materials from abroad with domestic alternatives. In addition, the General Industry Councils will be empowered to examine and adopt whatever measures they deem necessary or of interest to the better performance of their work.

26. Such decisions as the General Councils of Industry may adopt are to be executive and binding. No factory committee nor private firm is permitted to shirk from their implementation for any reason unless on grounds which are justified in full. They will only be able to appeal these decisions to the Minister for the Economy whose decision, taken in consultation with the Economic Council, will be final.

27. At all times the General Councils of Industry are to liaise with the Economic Council of Catalonia, to whose guidelines they will adhere. Whenever issues arise which necessitate concerted action, both agencies shall seek to resolve them.

28. The General Industry Councils is bound to remit to the Economic Council of Catalonia a briefing document analysing the overall progress of the industry in question and setting out suggested programmes for action.

#### **V. Concerning the Industrial Associations**

29. For the purposes of promoting the establishment and organisation of the General Industry Councils, the Economic Council will, within 15 days of the date of promulgation of this present decree, frame a proposal providing for the classification of various industries and the amalgamation of the same in accordance with the particular specialisations into which each of them is to be broken down.

30. In the aforementioned amalgamation, the emphasis will be on raw materials and the whole range of industrial operations, including the sale or industrial exchange

of the product and the need for technical standardisation. As far as may be possible, stability will be secured through pursuing comprehensive integration.

31. Alongside the grading for the purposes of industrial amalgamation, the Economic Council will propose the code of regulations by which these amalgamations are to be instituted and governed.

## **VI. Industrial obligations**

32. In every instance of collectivisation or socialisation of an enterprise, regardless of whether it is native- or foreign-owned, and whatever its importance, a balance sheet shall be drawn up so as to serve as an inventory of the situation based on the audited accounts of the firm, including a detailed and costed listing of the assets, premises and furniture of all sorts in its possession.

33. Once inventories have been drawn up in accordance with the provisions of the previous article, they are to be reviewed by a commission made up of technicians and accountants appointed by the Economic Council and under the chairmanship of the *chargé d'affaires* [*ponente*] responsible for that particular aspect of the firm; the commission shall report to and be subject to the approval of the Economic Council.

34. Once having scrutinised the aforementioned report, the Economic Council of Catalonia will be empowered to order a second review, devising a final draft and submitting the agreed text to the Generalitat's Minister for the Economy for approval, if should this be deemed appropriate. There is to be no possibility of appeal against the latter's decision.

35. Once the social assets of the inventory have been established and the liabilities worked out, then, in the event of an unfavourable balance, the final figure is to be registered with the Generalitat's Economic Council so that the usufructuaries may be determined along with the compensation which may apply.

36. For the purposes of such compensation, a separate estimate shall be made of the amount of foreign investment or share holdings, the holdings of popular savings and loans institutions as well as credit agencies and of the holdings of private individuals or other national undertakings. In each instance, the findings are to be released by the Economic Council, with the proviso that all such holdings will have to antedate 19 July last.

37. The compensation referred to in article 35 is to have full acknowledgement from the Generalitat. Its value will be calculated in national currency.

38. The compensation referred to in article 36 is to be subject to further confirmation of the amount of compensation awarded.

39. In the cases of small industries and businesses which have been collectivised since the publication of this decree, the Economic Council will provide reasonable compensation. To this end, the Economic Council is ready to receive petitions and gather information from interested parties until 30 November next.

The prime minister, Josep Tarradellas.

The minister for the economy, Joan Fàbregas.

Barcelona, 24 October 1936.

## A chronology of José Peirats's major writings

<b>1908</b>	Peirats is born on March 15.		
<b>1927</b>	He publishes his first article 'La Palabra Ladrillero, sinónimo de Perversión' ("Brickmaker", synonym for perversion'), in <i>El Boletín del Ladrillero</i> , newspaper of the CNT Brickmakers' Union.		
<b>1929</b>	<i>La Venus Desnuda (Naked Venus)</i> , a short story, is serialised in <i>El</i>		

*Boletín0 del Ladrillero.* |||



1932	<i>Revivir (Rebirth)</i> , a social drama in three acts, l'Hospitalet de Llobregat: n.p. 90 pp.		
1933	<i>Glosas Anárquicas (Anarchic Notes)</i> , Badalona: Vértice, 32 pp.		
1934	<i>Lo que podría ser un Cinema Social (The Potential of Social Cinema)</i> , Barcelona: La Revista Blanca. (He writes for the cream of Barcelona's anarchist press, including <i>Solidaridad Obrera</i> , <i>Tierra y Libertad</i> and <i>FAL</i> .)		
1936-9	He is editor of <i>Acracia</i> (Lleida) and <i>Ruta</i> , the newspaper of the Catalan anarchist youth movement. He produced <i>Frente y Retaguardia</i> of the <i>Roja y Negra</i> Column and contributed to numerous other anarchist publications.		
1938	<i>Los Intelectuales en la Revolución (Intellectuals and the Revolution)</i> , Barcelona: Tierra y Libertad, 80 pp.		
1946	<i>15 Conferencias Breves (15 Short Talks)</i> , México: CNT de España (Panama section), 92 pp.		
1948	He is editor of <i>Ruta</i> in Paris and Toulouse.		
1948	<i>Lo que podría ser un Cinema Social</i> (2nd edition), Toulouse: El Mundo al día.	393	
1950	<i>Estampas del Exilio en América (Scenes of Exile in America)</i> , Paris: Ediciones CNT, 160 pp.		
1951-3	<i>La CNT en la Revolución Española</i>		

1956.) |||

1952	He is editor of <i>Cenit</i> and <i>Ruta</i> in Toulouse.		
1952-9	He publishes a weekly 'Chronicle' in <i>Cenit</i> .		
1953	He is editor of CNT.		
1956	<i>La Undécima Cruzada</i> ( <i>The Eleventh Crusade</i> ), Toulouse: CNT, 92 pp.		
1958	<i>El diablo</i> ( <i>The Devil</i> ), a comedy in one act, Toulouse: CNT.		
1959	<i>El lobo</i> ( <i>The Wolf</i> ), an unpublished one act play.		
1961	<i>La Sión Hispánica</i> ( <i>The Hispanic Zion</i> ), Toulouse: Cenit, 32 pp.		
1962	<i>Breve Storia del Sindacalismo Libertario Spagnolo</i> ( <i>A Short History of Spanish Libertarian Syndicalism</i> ), Genoa: Edizioni RL, 225 pp.		
1964	<i>Los Anarquistas en la Crisis Política Española</i> ( <i>The Anarchists in Spain's Political Crisis</i> ), Buenos Aires: Alfa, 416 pp. <i>La Práctica Federalista como verdadera afirmación de Principios</i> ( <i>Federalist Practice as a Genuine Affirmation of Principles</i> ), Paris: n.p., 34 pp.		
1966	<i>Determinismo y Voluntarismo</i> ( <i>Determinism and Voluntarism</i> ), Caracas: n.p., 94 pp.	395	
1967	<i>Examen Crítico-Constructivo del Movimiento Lib-</i>		

*History and Prospects*), Valencia: CNT, 18 pp. *Diccionario del Anarquismo (Dictionary of Anarchism)*, Barcelona: Dopesa, 94 pp. *El Atentado (The Assassination Attempt)*, unpublished novel, 25 pp. ||

<p><b>1978</b></p>	<p><i>Emma Goldman. Anarquista de ambos mundos (Emma Goldman: An Anarchist from Two Worlds)</i>, Madrid: Campo Abierto, 312 pp. <i>Figuras del Movimiento Libertario Español (Figures of the Spanish Libertarian Movement)</i>, Barcelona: Picazo, 312 pp.</p>	
<p><b>1979</b></p>	<p><i>Mecanismo Orgánico de la Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (Organic Mechanism of the National Confederation of Labour)</i>, Santa María de Barbera: Brot, 175 pp. <i>¡Con todo! (All the same!)</i>, unpublished novel, 54 pp.</p>	
<p><b>1980</b></p>	<p><i>El Líder (The leader)</i>, unpublished novel, 27 pp. <i>La Parada (The Stop)</i>, unpublished novel, 24 pp.</p>	
<p><b>1981</b></p>	<p><i>Las tentaciones de Mosén Antón (The Temptations of Mosén Antón)</i>,</p>	

unpublished novel, 36 pp. ||

<p><b>1982</b></p>	<p><i>Arréboles del Exilio (The Reddish Clouds of Exile)</i>, unpublished novel, 27 pp.</p>	
<p><b>1983</b></p>	<p><i>Emma Goldman. Una mujer en la tormenta del siglo (Emma Goldman: A Woman in the Torment of the Century)</i>, Barcelona: Laia, 314 pp. (2nd edition of <i>Emma Goldman. Anarquista de ambos Mundos</i>).</p>	

*Antología Anarquista (Anarchist Anthology)*, unpublished collection, 200 pp. ||

<p><b>1987</b></p>	<p>‘Isaac Puente. Anarquista y Médico Rural’ (‘Isaac Puente. Anarchist and Rural Physician’, prologue to <i>Independencia, Libertad y Soberanía Nacional (Independence, Freedom and National Sovereignty)</i> by Isaac Puente, Vitoria: n.p., 10 pp.</p>	
<p><b>1988-9</b></p>	<p><i>La CNT en la Revolución Española</i>, Cali (Colombia): La Cuchilla/ Móstoles (Madrid): Madre Tierra, 3 vols. <i>Les Anarchistes Espagnols. Révolution de 1936 et luttés de toujours (The Spanish Anarchists. The Revolution of 1936 and the Everyday Struggle)</i>, Toulouse: Régreves-Silena, 334 pp.</p>	
<p><b>1989</b></p>	<p>Peirats dies on August 20.</p>	
<p><b>1990</b></p>	<p>‘Una experiencia histórica del pensamiento libertario. Memorias y selección de artículos breves’ (‘An historic experience of libertarian thought. Memoirs and a selection of short articles’), <i>Anthropos Suplementos</i>, 18, 1990. <i>Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution</i>, London: Freedom Press</p>	
<p><b>1991</b></p>	<p><i>La Semana Trágica y otros relatos (The Tragic Week and Other Stories)</i>, Móstoles: Madre Tierra, 1991</p>	

This list, which makes no claim to be exhaustive, is partly based on 'Cronología de la bibliografía de José Peirats', *Anthropos*, 102, pp. 35–6.

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