The Spanish Revolution, Past and Future: Grandeur and Poverty of Anarchism

How the Working Class Takes Over (or Doesn't), Then and Now

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Introduction: Why the Spanish Revolution Today?

> "…anarchism and revolutionary syndicalism in general lacked a vision of the problems of political orientation, without which the most powerful and most heroic revolutionary surge is condemned to failure." — Helmut Rüdiger, AIT, Ensayo critico sobre la revolucion española (1940)[1]

For many years, I had held the classical left anti-Stalinist view that after the "events" of May 1937 in Barcelona– the crushing of the left-centrist POUM[2] and the further marginalization of the anarchists by the Stalinists and by forces in the sway of the Stalinists–the revolution begun in July 1936 was essentially over. My references were classic works such as Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* and Bolloten's *The Spanish Revolution.* And "politically", this dating is correct. However, Robert Alexander's two-volume *The Anarchists in the Spanish Civil War* and Walther Bernecker's study of the industrial and agrarian collectives[3] show that the Spanish anarchists, who were the great majority of armed workers in Catalonia, who dominated considerable rural agrarian collectives in Aragon, and were also important in the Republican zones of the Levant, Extremadura and Andalucia, remained a social and military force to be reckoned with right up to the end of the Civil War in March 1939, even after losing out on the political terrain in May 1937. The eradication of the primarily anarchist social revolution occurring in July 1936, an eradication carried out by the Stalinists, Socialists, Left Republicans and Catalan nationalists, and finally completed by the fascists, was a work in progress right up until Franco's final victory.

The Spanish Revolution was, in light of this history, the richest and deepest social revolution of the 20th century. I was rather startled to find Leon Trotsky, major figure of the Russian Revolution and no friend of anarchism, saying, in 1937: "From the first day of the revolution, thanks to its specific weight in the economy of that country, and to its political and cultural level, (the Spanish proletariat) has been, not below, but above the level of the Russian proletariat at the beginning of 1917."[4] Despite all the factors (international, political, military) working for their demise, the Spanish working class and parts of the peasantry in the Republican zones arrived at the closest approximation of a self-managed society, sustained in different forms over two and a half years, ever achieved in history. Catalonia in 1936 was more broadly industrial than Russia in 1917, and the Catalan, Aragonese and Levantine peasants who formed collectives in 1936 mostly supported the revolution wholeheartedly, in contrast to the grudging support of the Russian peasants for the Bolsheviks, as the little-loved but lesser evil to the Whites.

This experience and its implications have not been fully absorbed by the contemporary revolutionary left. Currents describing themselves as anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist have emerged

[1] Helmut Rüdiger was a German anarcho-syndicalist, associated with the AIT (Associacion International de Trabajadores), who was active in Spain from 1933 to 1939.

[2] Partido Obrero de Unificacíon Marxista, denounced as "Trotskyist" by the Stalinists and their fellow travelers, and denounced as "traitors" by Trotsky and his tiny group of followers in Spain.

[3] Walther Bernecker *Colectividades y Revolucíon Social. El anarquismo en la guerra civil Espanola, 1936–1939* (from the 1978 German original; unfortunately no English translation available)

[4] Quoted from Trotsky's writings on Spain in I. Iglesias, *Léon Trotski y España (1930–1939).* (1977) Grandizo Munis, during the war a member of the very small (Trotskyist) Bolshevik-Leninist group, writing in 1948 when he was evolving away from Trotskyism, concurs: "To a certain extent the case of the Spanish organs of power was even more demonstrative than that of the Russian Revolution…the number of organs of working-class power was proportionally higher in Spain than in Russia during the first months of dual power." Munis, *Jalones de Derrota: Promesas de Victoria* (1948), pp. 291–292.

in parts of Europe and the United States in the past few decades, while hardly with the numbers and depth of the "historical" Spanish anarchists and anarcho- syndicalists from 1868 to 1939, nor above all with the same working-class and popular rootedness. For many of them, "Spain" is an historical reference (more often symbolic than seriously studied and absorbed) in the way that "Russia" has been such a reference for many Marxists. Spain was the supreme historical test for anarchism, which it failed, in the same way that Russia was, to date, the supreme test of, at least, Leninism, if not of Marxism itself.

But dealing critically with contemporary anarchism is hardly my main concern[5], except by ricochet from the failures of anarchism in Spain. The real lessons for today of the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39 are at least twofold: first, the concrete takeover of an incipiently modern industrial region, Catalonia, by workers' factory collectives, which attempted, in very difficult circumstances and under attack from all sides, to move from the initial, spontaneous local level to regional and national coordination, and a simultaneous takeover of agriculture by peasant collectives with similar attempts at coordination beyond the local. Second, and closely related to the first, the political dimension of the "military question", the defense and extension of the revolution against domestic and international counter-revolution. The revolution was lost both in the gradual destruction of the workers and peasant collectives and in the replacement of the initial armed militias and urban patrols by a traditional army and police forces. Some anarchist leaders were involved in both processes, and the eminently "pragmatic" reasons for this will be one focus of my study. Further, left-wing military theorists such as the "anarcho-Marxist" Abraham Guillén[6] have shown how politics was as much if not more important than firepower and sheer numbers in determining the outcome of different battles of the Civil War.

Finally, I am not writing about Spanish anarchism for historical edification or from some antiquarian impulse, but rather to pose the question, raised by Abad de Santillan[7] and generally ignored by most of the contemporary radical left, of how to prepare today, programmatically

[5] Take the recent, generally very good book *Black Flame. The Revolutionary Class Politics of Anarchism and Syndicalism*, by Michael Schmitt and Lucien van der Walt (vol. 1, 2009). The authors fall all over themselves not to discuss Spain in depth, preferring to "de-center" anarchism in order to talk about anarchist movements elsewhere, primarily in Latin America. Yet Spain was the only country where anarchism made a revolution, and was confronted with the problem of state power over a 2 ½ year period. As the reader will see, the following text is anything but unsympathetic to the Spanish anarchist movement. But to write a book of 345 pages in which Spain gets only a few pages here and there, and in which preoccupation with its failures is referred to as "Spanish exceptionalism" is, to put it mildly, a long exercise in changing the subject, something tantamount to a history of Marxist movements which would scant the Russian Revolution as "Russian exceptionalism."

The evasion in the Schmitt/van der Walt view is underscored by one of the best recent surveys—one among many– of anarchist theory, practice and history, by an anarcho-syndicalist militant exiled in Mexico, B. Cano Ruiz *Que es el anarchismo?* Mexico City (1985): "It is obvious that in no other country in the world did anarchism have the rootedness and influence that it had in Spain…In Spain anarchism was a mass movement integrated rated in diverse manifestations, from a workers' movement embodied in the CNT (Confederación Nacional de Trabajo) , which reached a membership of two million…the rationalist schools (of Francisco Ferrer)…the libertarian ateneos, the Libertarian Youth, Mujeres Libres (Free Women)…the FAI (Federación Anarchista Iberica), closely linked to the CNT…" (p. 322)

[6] *El error militar de las 'izquierdas': Estrategia de la Guerra Revolucionaria* (1980). Guillén as a young man fought in one of the anarchist columns in the Civil War, then spent much of the rest of his life in Latin America, where he became a theoretician of

urban guerrilla warfare.

[7] "Even in our revolutionary ranks we worked much more intensely and with more inclination preparing the insurrection than in really preparing for what we would build afterwards." Diego Abad de Santillan, CNT, *Porque perdimos la guerra* (*Why We Lost the War*)(1940)

and practically, for a takeover of a modern capitalist economy where, in contrast to Spain in 1936, shutting down a large swath of socially useless and socially noxious activity will be a top priority from day one.

I. Part One: Theses

1. The history of the origins and development of the Spanish Revolution of 1936–39, and particularly of its anarchist majority, is as complex, if not more so, than that of the Russian Revolution. It is significantly less known globally because the Russian Revolution had a much greater global projection[8], and because anarchism's defeat in Spain completed a decades-long eclipse of anarchism by the significantly more widespread impact of Soviet and other "socialisms". Spain, as late as the final loss of its last colonies to the U.S. in 1898 and even in 1936, was still a predominantly agricultural country, with pockets of industrial development mainly in Catalonia and the Basque provinces, and mining in Asturias. Nonetheless, Spain had its first general strike in 1855, and the working class was an active force in the ephemeral First Republic of 1873–74[9]. Spain was, in short, more directly influenced by developments in western Europe and at an earlier stage than Russia. Spain had a socialist party from 1879 onward with a working-class base in Asturias and Madrid, but it entered the 20th century, and indeed the revolutionary crisis of the 1930's, with a far larger anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movement, dating from 1868, especially in Catalonia and Andalucia.

2. Understanding this "anomaly" of a mass anarchist movement in both Spanish industry and agriculture in 1936, when anarchism had been largely superseded by socialism and then communism in most of western Europe (starting with nearby France and Italy), is a key, if not the key, to understanding the special contours of the Spanish Revolution[10]. Gerald Brenan's classic[11] emphasizes the historical decentralization of Spain with multiple regions in constant centrifugal opposition to the artificial centralism of Madrid, as a major factor in the ongoing appeal of anti-statist anarchism, above all where prosperous peasant smallholders were absent or weak. Socialism, in the form of the PSOE[12], was a pedestrian local copy of the more mature Second International French and German parties of northern Europe. If the historic split internationally between anarchism and Marxian socialism, in 1872, stemmed from the Marxian insistence on political activity and trade unionism, the lack of any sustained bourgeois democracy in Spain hardly provided conditions in which

[8] In 1935, Spain accounted for only 1.4% of world imports and 1.0% of world exports.

[9] The First Republic had already concretized the anarchist's "localist" orientation. As Bernecker writes, "The localist tradition of Andalucia, whose maximum expression was the "cantonalist" uprising of 1873, also in 1936–1937 prevented the linking up of committees and organs of local power which were operating without mutual coordination; the Andalucian anarchists obstinately refused to enter "legalized" municipal councils and to abandon their powerful position in spontaneously created committees." (p. 384)

[10] I give it a shot in my little book *Ubu Saved From Drowning*, pp. 93–124.
http://bthp23.com/Portugal-Spain.pdf . I also underscore uncanny echoes between Russia and Spain, the only countries in Europe where workers took power and held it for a few years.

[11] *The Spanish Labyrinth*, multiple editions from 1943 to 1974. Elsewhere, in a memoir (*Personal Record, 1920–1972*, 1974, p. 277) Brenan said of anarchism that "Probably it is only feasible in Spain, for everywhere else in Europe the seeds of social life have been destroyed."

[12] Partido Socialist Obrero de España

such reformist activity could take root. Spanish anarchism in its early decades was more propelled toward actions organized underground, such as innumerable local peasant uprisings in Andalucia, crushed in isolation, or lightning strikes against industrial firms where worker organizations had little sustained above-ground existence and few if any strike funds.

3. At the same time, anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism in Spain were quite impressive in their reach. ("Anarchism" refers to the earlier decades of Bakuninist local insurrectionism and then the demoralized individual terrorism of the early to mid-1890's, "anarcho-syndicalism" refers to the later focus on mass organization when these earlier forms showed themselves to be dead ends.) The movement placed great store in education, and had countless newspapers; it had "rationalist" schools and "ateneos", or cultural centers; it produced numerous books and pamphlets, including translations of Bakunin, Malatesta, Kropotkin and Reclus (among others). Brenan recounts peasants riding donkeys on back roads, reading anarchist literature, and Diaz del Moral's classic[13] describes illiterate peasants memorizing their favorite articles to recite them in front of enraptured audiences in remote villages. In 1918–1920, the mere arrival of the news of the Russian Revolution set off insurrections in some of these places in Andalucia, the south.

4. A survey of anarchist ideology shows common traits that persisted up to the revolution and civil war. Anarchism comes across as a rationalist theory, an extreme left version of radical Enlightenment. In part because of the break with "authoritarian" Marxism, anarchist theory shows no engagement with the post-Enlightenment development in German philosophy from Hegel through Feuerbach to Marx[14]. Marxism, arguing for a transitional "dictatorship of the proletariat", was for the anarchists a "statist" world view[15], and was indeed centralist; anarchism was decentralist and federationist. It was radically atheist, but lacked the *supersession* or *realization* of religion[16], the "heart of a heartless world" one finds in Marx. It has no notion of historical development or a strategy flowing from such development; the potential for a radical egalitarian society is always *now*, once the landowner, the priest, the police and the notary public are removed, regardless of the "development of the productive forces" which exercise Marxists. Hence anarchism did not see much use for concrete analysis of specific conditions[17], or for the critique of political economy as developed by Marx in the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*. "Anarchism has an ideal to realize", as Guy

[13] *Historia de las agitaciónes campesinas andaluzas*, 1929 and various later reprints.

[14] Or rather, when Hegel was mentioned, it was assumed that Marx, as his "successor" was also an admirer of the state.

[15] Marx and Engels were distressed that the very statist drift of Lassallean Social Democracy in Germany was taken by anarchists to be "Marxist", when in fact they

> criticized the early SPD as harshly as the anarchists, both in the "Critique of the Gotha Program" (1875) and in their private correspondence.

[16] "Mankind has long possessed a dream which it must first possess in consciousness in order to possess in reality."

[17] As one comprehensive study of the anarchist world view puts it "the analyses of the social question studied here are impoverished. Nowhere more than on this point is the anarchist affinity for abstract and moralizing reasoning so clear; one begins from metaphysical principles such as natural harmony and justice—so favored by Proudhon, and so definitively critiqued by Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy*—or from social classes as supra-historical entities, and one never finds concrete studies of the Spanish situation as varied and changing." in Jose Alvarez Junco, *La ideologia politica del anarquismo español (1868–1910)*. p. 190 (1974) (The author goes on to point out that the "Marxists" of the day were no better.)

Debord put it. Marx, by contrast, says in the *Manifesto* that communism is "not an ideal sprung from the head of some world reformer", but rather emphasizes the immanence of the new society in this one, "the real movement unfolding before our eyes". Words such as "the Idea"[18], "our ideal" and "justice" pervade anarchist ideology right through the Civil War. This echoes 18th century Enlightenment theories of Man, abstracted from any historical development or specificity. Diaz del Moral reports Andalucian peasants asking the local latifundia owner when the day of equality for all will dawn. Anarchism in Spain also had much of the ideology of the "patria chica", the excessive focus on the local that pervaded (and still pervades) much of Spanish life[19]. It was an easy step from rejection of the centralism of Madrid to rejection of the centralism of Marx. Anarchists inherited the federalism of Pi y Margall, briefly head of state in the First Republic, and disciple of Proudhon. Many anarchists looked down on socialist strikes for mere economic improvement[20], the "school" of the working class in struggle, in Marx's view. Their vision of the new society was austere.Their social centers banned alcohol, tobacco, and gambling; where they could, anarchists shut down brothels, preaching instead free love and free unions outside marriage. In some cases they shut down cafés as sites of frivolity and idleness. The anarchist Mujeres Libres (Free Women), founded in 1934, fought for full equality between the sexes but attacked "feminism" as an ideology of middle-class women. Brenan, who lived for long years in rural Andalucia and knew many anarchists, may have gone too far in characterizing them as latter-day "Lutherans", reacting against the luxury of Spanish Catholicism, but captured something of their austere rejection of the sensuous decadence of the dominant culture around them. They had an uncritical faith in science and technology which would strike most people today as overblown. Some practiced nudism, vegetarianism or ate only uncooked fruit, and studied Esperanto as the universal language of the future.

5. Despite disclaimers, many of the divisions that have split the Marxist movement, such as reform vs. revolution, recurred in different guise within the anarchist movement. After a period of ebb during the 1880's, anarchism revived, and in 1888 a split took place between labor-oriented and insurrectionist currents. A long-term division existed between a Bakunin-influenced "collectivist anarchism" and the Kropotkin-inspired "anarchist communism"[21]. A new upturn in mass struggle in the 1909 "Tragic Week" in Barcelona led to the founding of the anarcho-syndicalist CNT (Confederación Nacional de Trabajo) in 1910, focused, like many syndicalist movements in Europe at the time (Italy, France, Britain, the

[18] Anselmo Lorenzo, the grand old man of 19th century Spanish anarchism, in his memoir *El Proletariado Militante* (reprint 1974 p. 97) wrote of the "immense happiness, great hopes, the quasi-mystical veneration of the idea which animated us."

[19] As Brenan said (*Personal Memoir*, p. 303): "This was the normal pattern—every pueblo hated its neighbor, but had friendly feelings for the next pueblo but one."

[20] At the Fourth Congress of the First International (September 1869), the libertarian collectivists had opposed strikes. (in Jean Maitron, *Le mouvement anarchiste en France*. Vol. l. 1975. P. 50. Brenan wrote later (*Personal Memoir*, p. 277): "…Anarchists are the only revolutionaries who do not promise a rise in the standard of living. They offer a moral gain—self-respect and freedom."

[21] On these divisions cf. Murray Bookchin, *The Spanish Anarchists. The Heroic Years 1868–1936*, pp. 29–31 and elsewhere.

American IWW) on the strategy of the general strike to usher in the new society[22]. The CNT's influence peaked initially (prior to 1936) in 1919, in the wave of general strikes following World War I, and it created the sindicato unico (single union) to deal with the antagonism between craft and industrial workers, much like the IWW. The defeat of the general strike ("La Canadiense") in early 1919 began a downturn, and the following years of ebb were dominated by the "pistolerismo" of hundreds of tit-for-tat assassinations between employers and prominent union militants, a period ended by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–1930) and years of underground illegality and exile for the CNT. In response to this difficult situation, and also to keep the reformist wing of the movement in check, the FAI (Federacion Anarquista Iberica) was founded in 1927 by radical elements, sometimes called "anarcho-Bolsheviks". From 1917 until 1921–22, the Russian Bolsheviks had for their part courted anarcho-syndicalists in western Europe, but the experiences of the latter in the Soviet Union, and the repression of Kronstadt and of various Russian libertarians, alienated them definitively, reconfirming their suspicions of Marxist "statism" and centralism. Anarchist claims to "apoliticism" and "antipoliticism" were also belied by the electoral participation of the anarchist working-class base, when the CNT-FAI lifted the policy of abstentionism in the 1931 elections, providing the margin of victory for republican forces. Disappointed by the anti-worker and anti-peasant policies of the Republic, anarchists abstained in 1933, elections followed by the hard-right turn of the "biennio negro" (two black years). As a result, the CNT-FAI again lifted the abstention policy for the February 1936 elections—even Durruti called for a vote for the Popular Front– and anarchists provided the margin of victory for the left parties, though claiming they voted only in hopes of freeing some 9000 anarchist political prisoners[23]. After the left won, the prisoners were freed by mass break-ins by crowds at the jails, which the Republican authorities did not dare repress.

6. Thus the stage was set for the crisis of the Second Republic (1931–1939), culminating in revolution and civil war after 1936. Spain had been spared participation in World War I, which tore apart the large socialist parties of France, Italy, and Germany, giving rise after 1917 to mass Communist Parties there, and also posing a severe test for other anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist movements, where important sections and figures (Hervé in France, Kropotkin in Russia) rallied to the nationalist colors. By contrast, the Spanish Communist Party[24], having no "social patriot" majority to denounce, was a stillborn sect of a few thousand breaking away from the PSOE youth, then forced underground during the Primo de Rivera years and then with the return to legality from 1931 to 1934 practicing the sterile Third Period "social fascist" policy against the PSOE and the anarchists, thus being hardly

[22] See Rosa Luxemburg's critique of the anarcho-syndicalist general strike strategy at the beginning of her pamphlet "The Mass Strike". Between 1904 and 1911 there was a flood of translations of revolutionary syndicalists such as Pouget and Griffueles.

[23] Ironically, the estimated 1.3 million CNT votes seem to have been mainly for the as yet insignificant Communist Party, helping the PCE go from one deputy to 14 in the parliament (the Cortes).

[24] PCE, Partido Comunista de España. The communist party in Catalonia was known as the PSUC, Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña.

larger or more rooted in the working class in 1936 than it had been at its founding[25]. The CNT, despite the expulsion of thirty moderate ("Treintista") union leaders, towered over both the PSOE, to say nothing of the PCE, in both numbers and rootedness in the Catalan working class and Andalucian peasantry.

7. Gen. Francisco Franco's coup in July 1936 was aimed at ending the social chaos of the Second Republic in the form of strikes, land seizures by peasants, street battles between leftists and rightists, and parliamentary impotence. One should recall the European context of right-wing military governments throughout eastern Europe, the first fascist state, founded by Mussolini in 1922, Hitler's seizure of power in Germany in 1933, and Austrian dictator Dollfuss's bombardment of working-class housing in Vienna in 1934. The latter two especially emboldened the Spanish right and far-right, and strengthened the resolve of the PSOE, PCE and CNT-FAI on the left. The Stalinist Third International's 1934–35 "anti-fascist" turn to alliances with social democrats (yesterday's "social fascists") and "progressive bourgeois elements" led to the electoral victories of the Popular Front in Spain in February 1936 and then in France in May, followed in the latter by mass factory occupations in May-June.

8. Franco's coup was defeated by spontaneous, heavy street fighting over 3–4 days, above all in Barcelona and also in Madrid, and various forms of popular resistance in about 60% of Spanish territory. In Barcelona, the CNT and the FAI were the absolute masters of the situation, based on the armed working class. Wherever the coup triumphed, in some cases almost without resistance as in leftist bastions such as Zaragoza—the most anarchist city in Spain– and Seville (not to mention large parts of the anarchist Andalucian countryside) mass executions of militants (20,000 in Seville) followed immediately.[26]

9. It is here that we arrive at the nub of this text. The Spanish anarchists had made the revolution, beyond their wildest expectations, and did not know what to do with it. On the night of the victory in Barcelona, top leaders of the CNT-FAI, including Juan Garcia Oliver and Buenaventura Durruti, called on Luis Companys, a Catalan nationalist and head of the Generalitat, the Catalan regional government. The army had dissolved or gone over to Franco; the police had also largely disintegrated, and were being replaced by armed anarchist patrols; the bourgeois state in Catalonia at that moment was reduced to a few buildings. Companys told the CNT-FAI leaders that the power was theirs, and if they wished, he would resign and be a soldier in their army. The CNT-FAI leaders decided to leave standing the skeleton of the bourgeois state and its momentarily powerless head, Companys, and instead formed the Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias, which became for all intents and purposes the effective state power in the following months[27]. The anarchists, as they put it

[25] The PCE had 400 members when it returned to legality in 1931, and 5000 by May 1935, rising to 50,000 in June 1936. This in comparison with the anarchists' one half million to 1,000,000 members. From Rafael Cruz. *El Partido Comunista de España en la II. Republica.* (1987)

[26] The fascist uprising failed in Catalonia, the Levante, New Castile, the Basque region, Santander, Asturias and half of Extremadura. It won control of most of Andalucia, southern Extremadura, Mallorca, Old Castille, Navarre and Aragon. The anarchists were key in Catalonia, the Levante, Santander, and much of Asturias.

[27] As Bernecker puts it: "It is difficult to overestimate the importance of this decision. It was the expression of a strong "revisionist" current within the CNT, determined for months the course of the war and revolution in Catalonia and, at the same time, underscored the anarcho-syndicalists' lack of strategic conceptions…To the moral scruples about

in their own words, had to either impose a "full totalitarian dictatorship" or leave the parties supporting the Popular Front intact. They chose the latter course, and through the door of the small, powerless edifice, which they did not dissolve, came, in the following months, under the cautious management of Companys, all the forces of the counter-revolution. Everything in the anarchists' history militated against "taking power" as "authoritarian" "centralist" Marxist theory would dictate, and it hardly helped that "Marxism" in Spain at that moment was the lumbering reformist PSOE (albeit with a leftward-moving faction), the left-centrist POUM[28], and the small PCE, barely recovered from its 15 years of sectarian marginality and not yet pumped up into a mass party of the frightened middle classes by Soviet money, weapons and NKVD "advisors"[29],[30].

III. The Anarcho-syndicalists after the revolution: political, economic and military considerations

I begin this section with a thought experiment. What if the CNT-FAI, instead of leaving intact the Catalan state under Companys, had decided to "go for broke" ("ir a por el todo" was the Spanish formulation, favored by an important number of anarcho-syndicalists such as Juan Garcia Oliver) and replace the skeletal bourgeois state with full working- class power in some approximation of immediately revocable delegates in "soviets" (class-wide institutions), as the ultimate "authority", since worker control of industry and peasant collectives were already widespread?

This is of course "history as if". We know with 20–20 hindsight what really happened, and tracing in detail the destruction of the revolution by the forces of the Popular Front, led by the Communist Party and the PSUC[31] , is less our focus than the anarchist blind spots which facilitated it. (The role of the Communist Party in the internal counter-revolution is relatively well known[32]; how the anarchists were "taken", and taken in, less so.)

None other than Durruti told a Canadian radio interviewer in August 1936, commenting on the prospects in Spain outside Catalonia and in the rest of Europe: "We are alone." Grandizo Munis, on the other hand, without mentioning the debate within the CNT and the FAI, says that "the working-class organs of power should have unified on a national level and formally proclaimed

taking over all power, another consideration prompted the anarchist and union leaders to allow the government to subsist: up to that time, the radical refusal of the established (state) order had had as its consequence a total lack of preparation to intervening in its configuration and improving it, i.e. the revolutionaries lacked all practical knowledge in the affairs of government and public administration. Thus they preferred to leave government and therefore official responsibility to the Republicans and liberals, while controlling them through a new "revolutionary" organ of power." (pp. 386–387)

[28] Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, founded only in 1935, as a fusion of the Bloque Obrero-Campesino and the Izquierda Comunista. The POUM had a hard time of it, being denounced (as indicated in footnote #1) by the Communists as "Trotskyist-fascists", and by the Trotskyists as "traitors". On the POUM, cf. Felix Morrow, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* (1938), pp. 43–44.

[29] On this Soviet-sponsored turnaround in the fortunes of the PCE, see above all the classic account of Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution.*

[30] To be fair one should not omit the 50-odd members of the Bolshevik-Leninist group, orthodox Trotskyists, which included the young Grandizo Munis, who in 1948 published one of the best books on what had happened: *Promesas de Victoria, Jalones de Derrota: Critica y teoria de la revolución española (1930–1939).* (1948, 1977).

[31] Once again, the name of the Communist party in Catalonia.

[32] Again, the reader is referred to the books of Orwell and Bolloten.

the dissolution of the government…The situation… was characterized by an incomplete atomization of political power in the hands of the workers and the peasants. I use the word 'atomization" because *duality* is insufficient to give a complete picture of the real distribution of powers. Duality indicates two rival, contending powers, with a capacity and will to struggle on both sides. The bourgeois state was only in this position three months after the July days…In the meantime, the atomized power in the local government-committees was the only existing authority that was obeyed, limited solely by its lack of centralization and by the right-wing interference of the working-class bureaucracies…This great experiment of the Spanish Revolution offered the world the paradox of anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists acting as the principle agent of the Marxist conception, and negating in fact the anarchist conception."[33]

The common slogan of the Popular Front was "win the war first, then make the revolution", an argument still made by its apologists and its ideological heirs proposing similar strategies today[34]. But three objections to such a formulation immediately come to mind, recalling Rosa Luxemburg's remark that "who posits different ends also posits different means". First is the failure of the Republic to offer independence or even autonomy to Spanish Morocco (the Rif area in the north), which would have had the potential of undercutting Franco's rearguard, his base of operations, and, in the Moroccan legionaries, an important source of his best troops. Second was the failure of the Republic to conduct guerrilla warfare behind Franco's lines, appealing to the many workers and peasants who were by no means pro-fascist but who, in July 1936, happened to find themselves in the territory that fell to the coup[35]. The Moroccan question immediately illuminates the military limitations of a bourgeois republic which was not about to give up its Moroccan protectorate to save itself, especially since doing so would immediately alienate France, which controlled the larger part of Morocco[36], and from which Republican leaders vainly hoped for material aid. (Juan Garcia Oliver proposed guerrilla activity behind Franco's lines in 1938, but nothing came of it.) Third is the strategy of the "people in arms" as later theorized by Guillén, which had saved Madrid from Franco's forces (including German and Italian personnel and equipment) in November 1936, something considered little less than a military miracle. The navy was also initially almost entirely in anarchist hands, but by summer 1937 it had been taken over by the Communist Party. The Republic never used the navy throughout the war, in spite of its potential to control the Straits of Gibraltar, entrance to the Mediterranean.

The international situation, dominated by the lengthening shadows of fascism on the march, was not favorable to revolution. The bourgeois democracies, Britain and France, declared a policy of "non-intervention" and blockaded Spanish ports, a policy which, especially since Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were actively supporting Franco with aircraft, weaponry and military

[33] Munis, op. cit. pp. 294–295.

[34] Abad de Santillan (op. cit. p. 129) has an answer to such arguments: "We knew it was not possible to triumph in the revolution if we did not triumph first in the war, and we sacrificed everything for the war. *We sacrificed the revolution itself, without realizing that this sacrifice also implied sacrificing the objectives of the war.*" (my emphasis-LG)

[35] Different groups exiled in France were able, after all, to conduct guerrilla warfare in Franco's Spain until at least the early 1950's.

[36] In fact, Juan Garcia Oliver of the CNT-FAI did organize feelers to Moroccan nationalists in fall 1936, offering them independence. They did not want independence at that time, fearing absorption by either Nazi Germany or Mussolini's Italy; they asked for autonomy on the Catalan model. These efforts were squelched by the Socialist Largo Caballero, under pressure from Socialist Leon Blum, then head of state in France. Given widespread ferment and uprisings throughout North Africa at the time, as one commentator said, "One push and the whole French empire in Africa could blow sky high." See the book of Abel Paz, *La cuestión de Marruecos y la Républica Española.* (2000).

personnel, was a mockery. In 1935, the Soviet Union under Stalin had made an alliance with France for mutual security after Hitler's seizure of power, increasing Stalin's interest in maintaining the European status quo, which was threatened by revolution on France's borders. As inadequate as Soviet shipments of arms and supplies were (the common metaphor was an "eyedropper", enough to prolong the war, not enough to win it) one can hardly imagine ongoing Soviet support for a full-blown revolution led by anarchists. On the other hand, some might argue, the French working class had just staged a major strike wave, with factory occupations, in May-June 1936, mere weeks before the war. That strike wave had been stopped in its tracks by the intervention of the French Communist Party, hewing to Soviet concern not to weaken its new ally. But the fact remains that during the ensuing 2 ½ years of war, neither the French nor any other working class in the "democracies" (Britain and the U.S. for starters) took any serious action to force governments to aid Spain, or even to lift the "non-intervention" policy[37] which was blocking shipments of food and weapons at the French border.

Prior to July 1936, the Republic had alienated parts of the peasantry and the rural landless workers by its insipid efforts at land reform. In September, 1932, an Agrarian Statute was passed, establishing the Institute of Agrarian Reform (IRA) which by July 1936 had distributed very little land[38]. The spread of land seizures in the last months before the coup and the establishment of agrarian communes on expropriated land afterwards reflected highly different landholding patterns: small proprietorship and fixed terms tenancy in Galicia and the Basque provinces; sharecropping in most of Catalonia; a mixture in Aragon; small and medium property and sharecropping in the Levante; vast semi-feudal large landholdings, with millions of landless laborers, west and south of Madrid in Extremadura and in Andalucia. The CNT was strongest in Aragon, the Levant, Andalucia and Galicia.

IV. Political, Military and Economic Situation

The CNT Congress of May 1936 was held in anticipation of the outbreak of mass action at any moment. The moderate "Treintistas" were readmitted. The Congress sketched outlines for an anarchist military and drew up an agrarian program. Diego Abad de Santillan and Joan Peiró, two anarchist economists, attempted to introduce concrete preparation for a revolutionary takeover. But "one cannot consider the (idyllic program) …as a guideline for the encounter with the questions posed. In the course of the war, the word "commune" almost completely disappeared and… was replaced by the expression "collective", but the structural organization of the units of self-management also differed considerably from the model elaborated in Zaragoza. The lack of a sense of reality shown in May 1936 seems connected…above all to the lack of a well thought-out theory and to systematic projection on the macro-sociological and macroeconomic level of theories which possibly might be applicable to one isolated village."[39]

On July 17, Franco flew from the Canary Islands to Spanish Morocco, and from there launched the coup on the 19th, moving (with German help) thousands of Moroccan legionaries to key points. Faced with this situation and workers in various major cities demanding weapons, the

[37] It is true that a vast propaganda campaign by all concerned, except for the anarchists, successfully concealed the social revolution which had taken place in July 1936, turning the international perception of the war into one of "democracy versus fascism". International anarchism was too weak to counter this barrage with the truth.

[38] As of July 1936, only 110,000 peasants had received land.

[39] Bernecker, p. 89.

Madrid government on July 20th , its back to the wall, reluctantly agreed to arm the workers, whom it feared more than Franco. The rebellion failed in Catalonia, Madrid, the Levante, New Castile, the Basque region, Santander, Asturias and half of Extremadura. The rebels controlled most of Andalucia, southern Extremadura, Mallorca, Old Castile, Navarre and Aragon. The anarchists had been key in Catalonia, the Levante, Santander, and much of Asturias.

On July 24, the first militia organized at the Paseo de Gracia in Barcelona, estimated at between 2000 and 5,000 men. In next few days, 150,000 volunteered. The Durruti column left immediately, with the intention of liberating Zaragoza within the next ten days.

The most critical military question thrown up in the first year of the war, however, was that of transforming the militias into a professional army. This posed the political dimension of the war point blank. The strongest advocates of this professionalization were the Communists, who immediately set about building their 5th Regiment. By the fall of 1936, the CNT-FAI, after various reverses on the Aragon front and the failure to liberate Zaragoza, grudgingly came around to that view as well.

To understand the backdrop of these clashes, it is necessary to keep in mind the profound social and cultural revolution which, for the first few weeks after July 1936, swept Barcelona. Not only were most factories occupied and expropriated, and their owners shot or run off, with armed CNT militias replacing the army and the police, and churches burned, but on a cultural level as well, it seemed that all hierarchy in daily life had dissolved; even rich bourgeois disguised themselves in worker clothing, the formal "usted" was replaced everywhere by the informal "tu", "Señor" by "compañero", and all the bowing and scraping and toadying of the old regime was replaced overnight by forthright waiters and shopkeepers and bootblacks looking clients in the eye. "Everybody is friends with everybody in a minute" wrote Borkenau, who arrived in August. By September, he noted that "revolutionary fever is withering away." Visitors who had lived these weeks and returned mere months later already noticed a conservative change, and a few months after that, by early 1937, a further hardening.[40]

From July 1936 onward, when the CNT-FAI made its fateful decision to leave intact the Catalan Generalitat under Companys , all the parties of the Popular Front in Catalonia, especially the PSUC (Communists), but also the PSOE (Socialists) and the Esquerra Catalan (Catalan Republicans, the party of Companys) began to move against it, slowly and stealthily at first, then more deliberately. Well before the CNT decided to join the national government in Madrid, it was already participating in regional and municipal state institutions; the decision to accept four ministerial portfolios in November 1936 was simply the culmination of a process.

Virtually at the same time as the departure of the first militias for Zaragoza, on July 25 the central government in Madrid decreed the creation of a state committee to intervene in industry to "control" industrial companies and if necessary to "direct them".

In Barcelona, workers took over most large factories, all important services and transport, hotels, and large warehouses. They did not touch the banks because of long-standing anarchist contempt for money, but left them rather (and fatefully) in the hands of the socialist UGT[41],

[40] Quotes are from Borkenau's book *The Spanish Cockpit* (1937 ed.), pp. 80, 83. When he returned to Barcelona in January 1937, he found that the (p. 175) "multicolored Robin Hood style of the militia men had completely disappeared…(there was a) definite attempt at uniformity…most did not wear any political insignia…petty bourgeois have made a strong impress on the general atmosphere."

[41] Unión General de Trabajo, historically the trade union federation of the PSOE, with strong roots among Asturian miners and in Madrid; by 1937 controlled by the PCE and the PSUC.

which would soon be controlled by the Communists of the PSUC. In the port of Barcelona, longshoremen suppressed the hated middlemen who controlled access to jobs. In many places, where assemblies took over, technicians and sometimes even bosses, when willing, were integrated into them. All 745 bakeries in Barcelona were integrated into one socialized system. All of this resulted from a spontaneous popular wave, outside any organization. "Because of their contempt for the political dimension of power, the anarchists paid little attention to the institutionalization of its functions..."[42] From the beginning, on the other hand, the CP pushed for centralization and single management.

The anarchist economist Diego Abad de Santillan, now confronted, mere weeks after the May CNT Congress in Zaragoza, with a real revolution, based his organizational project on the individual enterprise. Communes, in his view, should be federated. "What was really new in Abad de Santillan's project was the proposal for a Federal Economic Council with economic and administrative functions of coordination. (His) fundamental purpose was to overcome, as anachronistic, the economic conception based on local-communalist principles and to reach 'the highest grade of coordination of all productive factors.. He felt that the anarchist conception of the economy could not be immediately put into practice, and envisioned a period of economic transition in which 'all social movements" would have the right for 'free experiments'. But he envisioned no transition period in the political sphere and argued for the immediate suppression of the state.".[43]

On July 31, the Catalan government issued an order recognizing rights for factory committees created spontaneously, and to assure salaries for workers. This was followed on August 2 with a decree on state control of all industries abandoned by their owners. The anarcho-syndicalists viewed the economic policy of the Republic in Madrid as conservative and harmful to the revolution[44]. The Catalan government, on the other hand, given the CNT's overwhelming preponderance there, was obliged to sanction much more radical legislation.

On Aug 7, a collective of 800 firms for conversion to war production (non-existent in Catalonia at the time) was created. Some months later, even bourgeois politicians such as Companys underscored the extraordinary role of the industrial workers in the spontaneous construction of a previously non-existent armaments industry. The Communists, on the other hand, pushed for control from Madrid, leading to political appointments and a proliferation of bureaucrats. In the first months in industry generally, workers' new sense of responsibility often led to increased productivity[45]. The initial anarchist error, however, was neglect of a general overview of the economy and a tolerance for too long of blind "enterprise egoism". Out of this tension, and many other "exogenous" factors, by late 1937 planning and centralized direction in the form of national firms had taken over.

In this accelerated flow of developments, virtually from day to day, it is virtually impossible to separate the political, military and economic spheres which gradually crushed the initial euphoria of July; clearly, political and economic decisions influenced military strategy, as has already

[42] Bernecker, p. 286.

[43] Ibid. p. 293.

[44] Diego Abad de Santillan's book *Porque Perdimos la Guerra* (1940; 1975) recounts in excruciating detail how Madrid again and again overrode anarchist requests for material aid and foreign currency with which to acquire it, directly affecting the outcome of specific battles, such as the fall of Irun.

[45] Foreign military specialists said that Catalan workers and technicians in the new war industries had achieved more conversion in two months than France had achieved in two years during World War I. Cf. Abad de Santillan, op. cit. p, 134.

been seen in the questions of Morocco, guerrilla warfare behind Franco's lines, and "professionalization" of the original militias. In early September 1936, Largo Caballero, the socialist politician and "the Spanish Lenin", became prime minister and minister of defense of the Republic, and moved to create a centralized military command. In this context, the Communist Party extended its influence in the war ministry. The Stalinist commander "El Campesino", after his break with the CP, said years later that the Russians had especially equipped his Fifth Regiment, which was a virtually independent force, and which attracted pro-Republican officers with its greater efficiency. On September 6th, the anarchists in Asturias accepted militarization, as did Ricardo Sanz, Durruti's successor. Militarization meant the return of hierarchy of rank, uniforms, saluting, and the end of democratic assemblies to elect commanders and to decide on strategy. Militarization began on September 29, and the first Soviet aid arrived in early October, further strengthening the PCE and the PSUC, which were growing rapidly, based on recruitment of frightened middle-class elements and land-owning peasants who feared for their property. As if to focus attention, in September 1936 Franco's forces captured Irun and San Sebastian in the north.

In September 1936 as well, the CNT, the PSUC, and the POUM entered the Catalan Generalitat, and the CNT accepted the voluntary dissolution of Central Committee of Militias, which had been the de facto government of Catalonia since the revolution. Shortly afterwards, the CNT demanded socialization of the banks, Church property, large agrarian property, large commercial and transport companies, workers control in industry and private commerce, and the management of the means of production and exchange by the unions.

From Sept. 25 to Dec. 17, Joan Fabregas, another CNT economist and proto-technocrat, accepted the post of "consejero de la Economia" for Catalonia, and during his tenure issued 25 decrees for regulation of the economy and 86 related orders. In his conception, production was to be coordinated through industrial councils constituted by the unions, and these in turn would be under a higher system of coordination, the Consejo de Economia, which not only "oriented" the economy but "regulated it" by different technical bodies. When Fabregas took over, the Catalan economy was in "disorder and chaos". On October 2 , he called on Catalan workers to halt takeovers until there were homogeneous guidelines for economic transformation, but this call was not heeded. Tension quickly arose in the Consejo de Economia between the left Republicans, the PSUC and the UGT on one hand, and the POUM, the CNT and the FAI on the other, over the collectivizations.

Reflecting the growing influence of the conservative forces, the Republic on October 7 issued a land decree tilted toward landowners, and designed to control the collectives and slow their further diffusion. By spring 1937, Communist-controlled police and military units would begin attacks on collectives. Already in October 1936, in the Aragonese comarca (county) of Monzon, the CNT and the increasingly crypto-Communist UGT had faced off in a skirmish in which thirty people were killed.

Further, on October 23, the Catalan CNT and the UGT signed an action program which made no mention of socialization. In signing, the CNT was hoping (in vain) to obtain weapons for its unarmed militias on the Aragon front, to end the Stalinist campaign of calumny against it, and finally to calm the petty bourgeoisie, as well as the peasant middle classes, which were leaving the CNT for the more moderate UGT.

The next day, CNT leader Juan Garcia Oliver, who had been head of military affairs for the Comité Central de Milicias, pushed for creation of an officer training school. Abad de Santillan,

on the other hand, was a strong opponent of militarization[46]. Camillo Berneri, an important Italian anarchist fighting in Spain, was also opposed. Militarization meant not only (as previously indicated) uniforms, ranks, and saluting, but also the appointment of political commissars.

The Catalan decree on collectivizations had been seen by the anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT as way to control them. For the moment, in the Consejo de Economia, there were anarchists, POUMistas, socialists and left Republicans. The UGT and the CNT had three delegates each; the PSUC, the POUM and the FAI two each; with one each for several other organizations. Its program was improvised in the onrush of events. For the CNT and the FAI, entry into the Consejo de Economia was yet one further step away from its "apolitical" stance.

The Consejo announced the creation of the Caixa de Credit Industrial e Comercial (CCIC), designed to supply credit to the collectives. The Caixa grew out of the experience of the first collectivizations. In these early months, a firm-centered egoism ("egoismo de empresa") had already become manifest. The Caixa was also created to circumvent the crypto-Communist UGT majority among bank employees and the dependence of most banks on their headquarters in Madrid. With a one-year delay in its creation. the CCIC was not formally opened until November 10, 1937, by which time anarchist influence generally was in serious decline, despite their large numbers. Matters were greatly complicated by the steady fall of Catalonian industrial production from July 1936 onward.

In these deliberations, the CNT had seen its initial error and wanted to avoid workers thinking of themselves as the new owners of their individual factories instead of being motivated by solidarity with other sectors of the economy. On Oct 31 1936, Fabregas issued orders developing the decree of Oct. 24 to limit spontaneous actions of workers and to control production to the extent possible. Workers' control in a firm henceforth required many documents, giving the state fuller control.

Throughout these efforts at the coordination of the Catalan economy, the long-standing anarchist "ascetic" concept of a new order was present. We have already mentioned the anarchists' contempt for money and their lack of interest in collectivizing the banks because of this. Federica Montseny, a major CNT figure, said on the other hand that the old dream of the immediate abolition of money was "infantile revolutionism". The CNT replaced the word "salario" (wage) with "asignación", but in reality this often amounted to little more than semantics.

In the rural anarchism of Andalucia, the principle of "take what you need" from the collective store gave way to a differentiated family salary based on specific needs. Ration cards were supplemented by "pocket money" for personal "vices" (wine, cigarettes) and trips outside the village. In the Catalan collectives, money was rarely suppressed. In many "anarcho-communist" collectives, individualism reimposed itself; the exit of a few small property owners led on occasion to the blow-up of the collective. "Libretas de consumo", or consumption booklets, became the common practice. Milicianos at the front sent savings to their collective, not to their families. All in all, a general lack of accounting makes a judgment on the functioning of agrarian collectives difficult.

Franco's offensive against Madrid was imminent. At the beginning of November, after highly charged internal debate, Juan Garcia Oliver and three other members of the CNT accepted ministerial portfolios in Largo Caballero's cabinet in the central government of Madrid. This followed, as indicated, prior anarchist participation in municipal and regional governments. Garcia Oliver

[46] See Alexander, op. cit. p. 267.

became Minister of Justice[47]; Juan Peiró, the "Treintista" economist, became Minister of Industry; Juan Lopez Sanchez, another Treintista, became Minister of Commerce, and Federica Montseny Minister of Health.

The four CNTistas were surprised, at their first cabinet meeting, to find the top order of business the move of the capital from besieged Madrid to Valencia. They felt, in fact, that they had been invited into the government precisely to give their cover to this obvious retreat, which they opposed. Franco expected to be attending mass in Madrid within a week, but that mass was postponed for 2 ½ years. During the ensuing battle, however, the Largo Caballero government moved its capital to Valencia.

The Battle of Madrid began on November 6. Terror bombing by the Franco forces, far from cowing the population, actually brought them into the streets in the "people in arms" strategy later theorized by Guillén. The International Brigades arrived on November 10 and played an important role, as did the anarchists of the Durruti Column. On Nov 19, however, Durruti was killed, probably by a fascist sniper. He, more than any other single figure, was "the" symbol of the libertarian revolution in Spain. A few days later, a million people marched at his commemoration in Barcelona. The battle for Madrid continued into January 1937, before stalling in a standoff, one which would be broken only in March 1939.

The statist institutionalization of the revolution proceeded apace. In December 1936, the Catalan Generalitat was reorganized with the CNT taking over the councillorship of defense. Soviet aid also peaked at that time, most of it going to its political and military supporters. The Soviet ambassador, Marcel Rosenberg, met with Largo Caballero daily, often for hours. In early 1937, the government decreed that regular municipal councils, which had been replaced by revolutionary committees, be reestablished. A plenum criticized the deficiencies of the collectives to date for poor organization, lack of technical management, extravagant economic ideas and little experience. New efforts at unity between the CNT and the UGT were broached. By the middle of January, the anarcho-syndicalists were calling for a centrally-planned economy, and on January 30, 1937, a statute aimed at concentration of all collectivized firms was passed. A further blow was the fall on February 8 of Malaga, whose anarchist commander was condemned to death under pressure from the Communist Party; he was later pardoned after an inquiry revealed the equal culpability of the CP in the debacle.

This growing tension between the PCE-PSUC and forces to its left, the POUM and the CNT-FAI, came to a head in Barcelona in May 1937[48]. For months, the Stalinist media had been inundating the Republic and the world with denunciations of the "Trotskyist-fascist" POUM; with the anarchists, on the other hand, they were forced to remain more circumspect, correctly assessing that they might well lose a direct military confrontation. May Day celebrations had been cancelled for fear of an outbreak of fighting between the CNT and the UGT. The telephone exchange in downtown Barcelona was dominated by the CNT since July 1936. The Communist police chief of Barcelona arrived there with the intention of taking over the building. The situation escalated, with the CNT, the POUM, the Friends of Durruti[49], and the Anarchist Youth

[47] Garcia Oliver's contortions about joining the central government are described in his memoir, written in exile, *El Eco de los Pasos* (1978), pp. 291–293.

[48] For a close account of events leading up to the showdown and the actual street fighting in Barcelona between May 3 and May 7, I refer the reader once again to the accounts of Orwell and Bolloten.

[49] A radical left anarchist current calling for a "new revolution" against the sellout of the CNT leaders in the Barcelona and Madrid governments.

building their barricades, facing off against the barricades of the PSUC and the UGT. (The Stalinists were also intent on the ouster of Largo Caballero as prime minister, with all his prestige, still intact, in the Spanish working class. Largo Caballero, having tired of PCE-PSUC and Soviet pressure on his government, had issued a decree on April 21 requiring his personal approval of all Commissars, and for the few further months until his orchestrated ouster, he moved closer to the CNT.) The POUM and the POUM Youth had been rapidly moving to the left and were working with the Friends of Durruti. The standoff continued on May 4, and from Valencia, Juan Garcia Oliver and Federica Montseny broadcast radio appeals to their comrades to lay down arms and return to work. The CNT daily *Solidaridad Obrera* echoed their appeal. Anarchist columns at the front, prepared to march on both Barcelona and Madrid, stopped in their tracks[50]. The Italian anarchist Camillo Berneri was murdered by the Stalinists on May 5. British destroyers appeared just off the bay, rumored to be preparing to intervene. Fighting spread to the Barcelona suburbs and other towns along the coast. It was put down by 4000 Republican Guardias de Asalto, the elite police force, arriving from Valencia. At dawn on May 7 the CNT issued another radio appeal for "normality". By May 8, the city was finally quiet, with hundreds killed and thousands wounded. The gap between the anarchists in the streets and the CNT ministers in Valencia had become unbridgeable.

Politically, the revolution begun in July 1936 was dead. There remained, however, the tasks of grinding down the industrial and agrarian collectives and dealing with the still considerable CNT-FAI regiments at the front, however professionalized they may have become[51].

The four CNT-FAI ministers left the Republican government in the wake of the events in Barcelona, and Largo Caballero resigned shortly thereafter. The anarchists were under no illusions about the trail of errors they left in their wake, as reported to the workers in a balance sheet of their activity. The ex-Minister of Commerce Juan Lopez had been blocked in his projects because of the opposition of Largo Caballero and all defenders of the status quo: "We have to recognize the uselessness of our governmental participation in the economic sphere." The CNT made a new unity overture to the UGT but it came to nothing. On May 25, 1937, the government issued a decree requiring collectivized firms to join a commercial register; they thus became legal "judicial personalities" continuous with the old firms they had replaced. "The legalization of collectivization led, through state control, to the undoing of the revolution; the final steps of this policy, which had been successfully pushed by the Communists, energetically supported and passively tolerated by the anarchists were openly visible after the crisis of May 1937..."[52] On June 18, the government required registration of all radio stations and two months later prohibited all criticism of the Soviet Union.

In late June, the CNT was also expelled from from the Generalitat, and there was a temporary ban on its daily *Solidaridad Obrera*. In August, the Stalinist General Lister began his attacks on the rural collectives in Aragon, and the POUM was pushed out of Catalan Consejo de Economia.

The Stalinist offensive in all institutions of the Republic continued unabated. In fall 1937 at the UGT Congress, the Catalan Stalinist Ruiz Ponseti, member of the PSUC, proposed the elimination of trade union delegates in all firms, attacking the "excess of the intervention of the democratic

[50] A Stalinist commander threatened to bomb the anarchist Ascaso Column if it marched on Madrid. Many of these details are taken from Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War* (1965), pp. 545–550.

[51] "Even after the days of May 1937—a defeat within the triumph—some elements of dual power were still resisting and often bases from which to reconquer the lost ground." G. Munis, op. cit. p. 292.

[52] Bernecker, p. 339.

principle in the constitution of the enterprise councils". Events were pushing the libertarians in the same direction; in September 1937, the Congress of the CNT, the FAI, and the Libertarian Youth demanded the immediate nationalization of all war industries, foreign commerce, mines and banking, as well as the municipalization of housing, public services, health and social assistance. They conceded the need for private enterprises in light industry, retail commerce and in small agrarian property. This was a real departure from the Zaragoza program and the "pure" anarchist line. As in the May events in Barcelona, the congress showed the emerging divorce between the base and the leaders of the CNT, a clear process of "oligarquization"[53]. The plenum declared: "The CNT has understood that there cannot be a prosperous economy, speaking collectively, without centralized control and coordination in its administrative aspects."

On November 20, 1937 the Generalitat issued the "decree of special interventions" giving the government an override of worker-elected factory inspectors. In response to this and other developments, the anarchists attacked in particular the "multiplication of the army of parasites" and the impenetrability of the countless commissions. On Dec 1, Ruiz Ponseti, in the Consejo de Economia, said that directors named by workers lacked the necessary technical formation and were thus unfit to assume management positions.

A further CNT Plenum met in January 1938. "The tendency to centralization and concentration of forces in the leadership of the union was patent at this plenum..."[54] It dispensed with previous assembly format and had instead a prepared agenda. In unprecedented fashion, the national committee intervened directly in all debates. "With the creation of labor inspectors, union committees of control, administrative and technical councils, people in charge of distributing work (in many cases with the power to lay off workers), and directors given full powers...the CNT was converted into a bureaucratic- centralist organization which gave up the principles of rank-and-file autonomy and responsible self-decision for a total hierarchical restructuring and economic planning. The process of centralization imposed by the war in every area did not stop at the doors of the union organization itself." Vernon Richards, English anarchist, said these decisions meant the end of "the CNT as a revolutionary organization controlled by its members." Bernecker concurred: "The abandonment...of the original anarchist economic program must be attributed on one hand to their interpretive weaknesses and a simplified conception of the economic process, which was not understood in the slightest, and on the other hand, because of the war, the unavoidable economic centralization and global planning advocated from the beginning by the Communists...the process which led from the "libertarian" economic configuration to the dirigist interventionism of the state, from the programmatic declaration of Sept 1936 to the Expanded Economic Plenum (1938) , showed the adoption of 'authoritarian' schemes of organization in industry and in the internal structure of the CNT."

This process was opposed by the Friends of Durruti. "The Friends of Durruti had an intransigent position close to the Trotskyist wing of the POUM. They called for struggle not only against the Communists of the PCE and the PSUC, against the bourgeois parties, the state, the government, etc. but also fought against the moderate line of the committees of the CNT and the FAI. They called for a new revolution."[55]

[53] Ibid. p. 298.
[54] Ibid p. 300–301.
[55] Ibid.

V. Agrarian Collectives

Nearly a year passed before the CNT created a competent agrarian organization for all Republican territory (the Federación Nacional de Campesinos). Its principles, by summer 1937, were in open contradiction with certain basic anarchist postulates. Mandatory decisions taken on a national level were incompatible with decisions coming "from below". As Bernecker puts it, "after an initial period of sacrificial solidarity, mutual aid and aid given freely with nothing in return, the unions—as also occurred in industry—in many prosperous agrarian collectives had to fight against the "neocapitalism" of the latter which did not want to help other collectives in deficit…"[56]

a) Catalonia

In Catalonia, initially, there had been only informal criteria for entry into rural collectives; the CNT repeatedly stated that small proprietors did not need fear for their property. Rent, electricity, water, medicine, hospices for elderly and infirm were free. But already in August 1936, the Catalan government created mandatory membership for independent peasants in the Catalan peasants' union, a measure aimed at creating a counterweight to CNT influence in the industrial collectives. Tenant farmers were attracted to the PSUC (once again, the CP in Catalonia) for its propaganda aimed at small peasant landowners. By January 1937, the Catalan government was trying to sabotage rural collectives. A CNT regional plenum of peasants, however, placed collectives under the control of the CNT, the UGT and the rural growers union. It recognized the use of money for the foreseeable future. There were perhaps 200 rural collectives in Catalonia, but they were not as important there as were private farms. In July 1937, the Generalitat expropriated, without indemnity, rural fincas belonging to persons who supported fascist uprising. In August 1937, following the events of May 1937, the Catalan government issued a decree providing for regulation and recognition of rural collectives, extending state control over them.

b) Aragon

Much of Aragon had initially fallen to Franco's coup. Many collectives were established there as militia columns clawed back lost territory on the way to liberate Zaragoza. The Durruti column spread collectivization, with about 450 collectives overall[57].

In mid-February 1937, the Federacion de Colectividades de Aragon was established to "coordinate the economic potential of the region". The federation drew up a standardized family rationing card, and made plans to create experimental farms, nurseries, and rural technical colleges. Comarcal (county) federations were set up to deal with radio, post, telegraphs, telephones, and means of transport. Weapons were distributed to collective members. Another federation established central warehouses. Electricity was spread to villages, and hospitals were built. One collective in April 1937 allowed individuals to abstain if they wished, as had occurred in the Levant. The collectives implemented mandatory work for those between 18 and 60, except for pregnant women or women with child care responsibilities. There were night classes in literacy. Plenary assemblies elected an executive committee, which was immediately revocable. Elections

[56] Ibid. pp. 131–133.

[57] Julian Casanova *Anarquismo y revolución en la sociedad rural aragonesa, 1936–1938* (1985) provides a more nuanced view of the Aragonese collectives. In his view, in Aragon as a whole, the respective weight of the CNT and the UGT was about equal. (p. 31). He concurs with Bernecker (p. 315) that the May 1936 Zaragoza congress arrived at its agrarian resolution "without clarifying the most elementary economic concepts." Where they later were in control, "the anarchists did not implant a model of collectivization which would resolve the problems of production and exchange." (p. 318) "Those defending the "eternal aspiration to equality" ignore numerous examples…of the marginalization social groups (women, unaffiliated peasants) and ignore the real conditions."

were held on the basis of one vote, one member, no matter how large or small the individual's initial contribution of land, tools and animals to the collective.

The CNT-FAI had in fact never spoken of "agrarian collectives" before the war. In Aragon, the CNT improvised new methods for exchange of goods without "money". These forms often varied from village to village and were often incompatible. Borkenau emphasized the ethical dimension in anarchist collectives and in the suppression of money.

In August 1937, Stalinist general Enrique Lister, as part of the Communist Party's appeal to small landowners, attacked the majority of Aragon collectives. (Communist propaganda portrayed the collectives as created by violent compulsion (!) and inefficient.) Hundreds of anarchists were arrested, members of the CNT were excluded from participation in municipal assemblies , many collectives were destroyed, and their land was re-privatized. Granaries were opened and looted for military exactions. Some collectives, however, were later reconstituted. The Communist Party later backed off from its anti-collectivization campaign; it had frightened collective members who stopped work and returned to cultivating small parcels of their own, threatening the fall harvest.

c) The Levant

On Sept 18–20 1936, the Regional Federation of Levantine Peasants (Spanish initials FRCL) met in Valencia. At that point, 13.2% of the land in the Levant had been seized, and one-third organized into collectives. In some of them, there had been total collectivization and the abolition of money.[58] All collectives had their own schools by 1938. The FRCL was the top of a pyramid of organizations, beginning with local sindicatos and collectives, moving up to the federation of each comarca (county), and thereafter to provincial federations. The FRCL had a sizeable number of accountants to coordinate efforts at a higher level. The congress also decided not to interfere with private plots if their owners did not interfere with the collectives. On October 7, however, there was a land decree tilted toward landowners, designed to control collectives and to slow their further diffusion. By the spring of 1937, the police and military would begin their attacks on collectives. Nonetheless, in 1938, there 500 to 900 collectives in the Levante, involving 40% of the population.

Separate from the Levantine collectives, in October 1936, the CNT and UGT created the CLUEA, a regional cooperative for orange exports, a major Levantine crop. The CLUEA was designed to eliminate middlemen and also raise foreign currency for the Republic. It nonetheless met with hostility from the central government. Borkenau also reported a battle between the CNT and the CP, with the latter defending rich peasants[59].

d) Elsewhere

Also in July 1937, there were armed confrontations between anarchists and communists in rural Castile. This was one clear-cut case, among many, where apparently "economic" policy was inseparable from military strategy; Daniel Guerin, in his book *Anarchism*, argues that ambivalence on collectives of the government in Valencia contributed to the defeat of the Republic; poor peasants did not see point of fighting for it.

e) National coordination

In June 1937, when the tide had turned against it in the wake of May 1937, CNT rural groups created a national organization, and held a National Plenum of Regional Peasant Organizations.

[58] Robert Alexander, op. cit. pp. 394–402.

[59] Op. cit. p. 198.

The Law for Temporary Legalization of Agrarian Collectives was passed in the same month, designed to ensure harvests over the coming year before peasants bolted from them under government pressure. In 1936–37, the Institute for Agrarian Reform gave 50 million pesetas to those collectives accepting state intervention, thus cutting out the CNT. Many people who had been expropriated in the summer of 1936 were trying to get their land back. According to Bernecker, as of August 1938 there were 2213 legalized collectives, but Robert Alexander places the number much higher[60]. All in all, three million people of an agrarian population of 17 million were involved in the collectivized rural economy. Malefakis[61] estimates that two-thirds of all cultivated land was taken over by collectives. There were, however, no collectives in the Basque Provinces, Santander and Asturias. According to Bolloten, a large part of the rural population resisted collectivization. Different collectives also had different rules. In general, however, they established schools, built many libraries and ateneos (social centers) some hospitals and senior homes. They set a formal retirement age and closed brothels.

In July, 1937, the FAI held a peninsular plenum in Valencia. It marked the end of "classical" Spanish anarchism. The plenum voted to give up the lax internal structure of "affinity groups" and replaced them with "territorial groupings".

VI. More on Politics and Military Developments

We have to some extent bracketed the military developments that were simultaneous to the political and economic events described above, in order to underscore the steady process of anarchist accommodation to the institutions of the Popular Front. We now attempt to round out this picture from the military standpoint, after the decisive political turn of May 1937.

In December 1937, Republican forces attacked Teruel and occupied it; it was unfortunately the coldest city in Spain, in the dead of winter, and, with tens of thousands of casualties on both sides, many from inadequate food and clothing in subzero temperatures, the fascists recaptured it in February 1938 . It was, again, a clear case of military strategy inseparable from politics. The ex-Communist commander El Campesino wrote many years later that anarchist troops had been purposely sacrificed to discredit them and to oust PSOE member Indalecio Prieto as Minister of Defense[62]. Also in February 1938, all collectives in Aragon were occupied by Franco's troops, completing the work of demolition begun by Gen. Enrique Lister the previous August.

On March 18, 1938, prompted by the collapse of the Aragon front, the CNT and the UGT signed a common program. It was described at the time as "Bakunin and Marx embrace in a big hug". The program was widely touted by the PCE and the PSUC as a major step forward for trade union unity; it called for nationalization (as opposed to the earlier collectivizations) and underscored respect for individualist peasants. The real goal of the PCE-PSUC, however, was to exclude unions from the government, since the CNT was still the largest union. Further

[60] Ibid. p. 325.

[61] Edward Malefakis, *Agrarian Reform and Peasant Revolution in Spain* (1970).

[62] Indalecio Prieto was the most important leader of the right wing of the PSOE, and the long-time opponent of Largo Caballero. He was hardly sympathetic to the anarchists, but also considered insufficiently docile by the Stalinists. Using military defeat and setbacks, sometimes created intentionally to discredit those in charge, was a typical PCE-PSUC strategem for replacing unwanted figures, socialist or anarchist, with more pliable people. A POUM commander, Mika Etchebehere, in her book *Ma guerre d'Espagne a moi*, describes similar episodes, such as when a POUM batallion was left in a hopeless position, without relief, during the defense of Madrid.

concessions by the CNT included the end of the federated system of "free municipalities" and the creation of more stratified entities. The pact was "the major abandonment of previous principles and ideals of in the ideological evolution of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism."[63] Shortly after the signing, the CNT and UGT did enter the cabinet of Juan Negrin[64]. But with ongoing military developments, the realization of the anarchist-socialist program passed to a very secondary plane. The CNT, the anarchist union with more than a million members, wound up affirming traditional national patriotism.

On April 5 1938, Franco's troops drove to the Mediterranean, cutting the Republic in half. On April 30, the CNT, whistling in the dark, tried somehow to deduce a confirmation of its own agrarian policy from the Negrin government's "thirteen points" of its war aims (apparently modeled on Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points)[65]. In reality, despite having more than a million members, the CNT had been eliminated from all important centers of power[66]. It had been compelled to renounce all demands for the "communalization" or "socialization" of land. Both the CP and the POUM had been for mere nationalization. The agreement reflected the Communist appeals to small and medium landholders, who had been 31% of all CP members in February 1937. Nonetheless, in May 1938, the anarchist press was still claiming that 2000 firms had adopted terms of the collectivization decree.

As Thomas puts it, "…before the spring (of 1938), Anarchist leaders had justified their acquiescence to so many humiliations before the Communists because they felt they would be able to come to terms after the war; but the disasters in Aragon had clearly suggested that the war might be lost. The crisis in the movement therefore grumbled on all the summer, even more intensely felt because members of the CNT still held positions in the government, from the Cabinet downwards."[67]

(In fact, some Republican politicians favored dragging out the losing war in the belief that the impending outbreak of World War II would oblige the Allies to intervene of the side of the Republic. Stalin, meanwhile, was losing interest in Spain as he prepared overtures to Germany, resulting in the Stalin-Hitler Pact of August 1939.)

As if to drive home the new balance of forces, in May 1938 5500 of 7000 promotions in the army were Communist Party members. In July 1938, the last major Republican offensive of the war began when its armies crossed the Ebro river in Aragon. 60% of the troops on the front were from the CNT. Since virtually the entire offensive was carried out under Communist commanders, anarchist units were left on the front for long periods without rest , while CP units were rested. (Meanwhile, behind the lines, well-armed and well-fed Assault Guards and carabineros were not

[63] Bernecker, p. 311. Borkenau (op. cit. p. 210) wrote that the "only difference with Russia is that the ruling bureaucracy belongs to three or four parties instead of one…"

[64] Negrin had taken over in May 1937 after the "events" of that month. He was also a right-wing Socialist, supported by the CP for lack of another candidate acceptable to others, but ultimately proved to be an independent figure.

[65] The thirteen points included absolute independence for Spain, expulsion of all foreign military forces; universal suffrage; no reprisals; respect for regional liberties; encouragement of capitalist properties without large trusts; agricultural reform; the rights of workers guaranteed; the "cultural, physical and moral development of the race"; the army outside politics; renunciation of war; cooperation with the League of Nations; an amnesty for all enemies. The CNT-UGT committee of collaboration approved the program, but the FAI denounced it as a return to the pre-July 1936 status quo. (Thomas, op. cit. pp. 674–675)

[66] Bernecker, p. 140.

[67] Thomas p. 675. Segundo Blanco of the CNT became Minister of Education and Health in March 1938.

sent to the front until final phase of Franco's attack on Catalonia.) On Nov 15 1938, admitting defeat, Republican troops were withdrawn back over the Ebro. It was the beginning of the end.

The final months of the war, up to Franco's final victory on March 31, 1939, involved an endgame of Republican attempts to salvage a negotiated peace settlement, attempts which were contemptuously dismissed by Franco. These months were, however, marked by one curious episode, the Casado coup against Negrin, backed militarily by Cipriano Mera, the anarchist commander of the IVth Army Group.

Colonel Segismundo Casado was commander of the Army of the Center in Madrid. He was hardly an unambiguous figure, but was opposed to Negrin's ostensible plan to fight to the bitter end, even as many people in his cabinet were already getting passports and preparing to leave for France. Casado argued with Negrin for surrender, pointing to the desperate material conditions in Madrid and in what was left of the Republican army. His real wrath was aimed at the Communists, also calling for a fight to the end, whom he had seen again and again meddle in military matters for their own advantage. On February 28, Britain and France had recognized Franco. Casado lined up support among top non-Communist military leaders, insisting that he could get a better peace from Franco than Negrin. CNT commander Cipriano Mera moved his troops to Casado's headquarters in Madrid on March 4, and a manifesto announcing the coup was broadcast that night, arguing again for a negotiated peace. On the following day, Communist commanders moved on Madrid and by March 7, most of Madrid was under their control. Heavy fighting took place on the 8th. Mera's troops captured the CP positions on the 9th. Casado's cabinet, again whistling in the dark, drew up peace terms for further negotations with Franco. These included no reprisals, respect shown for fighting forces, including officers, and twenty-five days to leave Spain for all who wished to do so. A truce was negotiated with both sides in the Casado coup returning to their positions of March 2. An estimated 5000 Republican troops on both sides had died in the melee. In the view of many anarchists, it was a case of something that should have happened in May 1937.

Casado, now in charge of negotiating surrender with Franco, tried to gain time to allow people to flee. "Franco expressed his pleasure that he was being saved 'the trouble of crushing the Communists."[68] Casado had achieved no more concessions than Negrin, and had only won time for the Republican elite, but not ordinary people, to leave Spain. On March 31, 1939, the civil war was over.

VII. How the Working Class Takes Over Today

> "There slowly formed a magnificent unity of people from all classes and all parties who understood, like us, that the revolution is something different from the struggle in the streets and that, in a real revolution, those who have the spirit and will to contribute their manual, intellectual, administrative or technical help to the common project, have nothing to lose." — Diego Abad de Santillan *Porque Perdimos la Guerra* (1940)

Our main purpose here has been to explore the consequences of the decades long "apolitical" and "antipolitical" stance of the Spanish anarchist movement. We know what resulted from their

[68] Ibid. p 751. A full account of the Casado coup is on Thomas, pp. 734–755.

decision to first allow the bourgeois state to remain standing[69] and then to join it; we cannot know what would have resulted if they had "gone for broke" instead.

Clearly the Spanish revolution suffered even more than the Russian Revolution from its international isolation. In 1917–1921, not only were there mass radical movements in thirty countries, but the main capitalist powers themselves were weakened and discredited by four years of meaningless mutual slaughter. Without the readily offered counter-revolutionary services of Social Democracy in key countries, above all Germany, the capitalists would have been lost.

We can, today, no more anticipate the concrete situation of a working-class takeover –a revolution– than did the Spanish anarchists at their somewhat idyllic May 1936 congress. Thanks, however, to the far greater interconnectedness produced by globalization, we can safely assume that such a development will not be limited to one country, at least not for long. Nonetheless, we can agree that for the moment (2013) the international radical left hardly pays more attention to Abad de Santillan's call to think more concretely about what to do in the immediate aftermath of a successful revolutionary takeover than did its counterparts more than 75 years ago.

Like the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists of that time (and, to my knowledge, today) today, no important militant current, Marxist or anarcho-syndicalist, has devoted serious energy to outlining a concrete transition out of capitalism. There is always the next meeting, the next street action, the next strike, the next riot, the next prison hunger strike, the next episode of police run amok, and these are of course real concerns. But such a typical conception of activism actually reproduces in different guise the old formulation of ill-famed reformist Edward Bernstein, in his debate with Rosa Luxemburg, that "the movement is everything , the goal is nothing." The trick is to locate the "goal" within the daily life of the movement, but this requires a rethink of priorities.

There have been very good reasons for this avoidance of a long-term vision, going back to Marx's critique of the detailed schemes drawn up by the utopian socialists, Owen, Fourier, or the St-Simonians. (We have seen the link between this early 19th century kind of abstract utopian thinking and classical anarchism in Thesis 4 of Part One above.) In the Hegel- Marx tradition of an evolving self-acting totality, the answer is already implicit in the question, and the *Manifesto* warns against (again, as previously quoted) any "idea sprung from the head of a world reformer", counterposing to it the "real movement unfolding before our eyes." And this insistence on the "immanence" of solutions, against any artificial standard imposed from outside the world historical process, is exactly correct.

Our method is therefore different[70]. We begin precisely from an immanent "inventory" of world material production and above all the material reproduction of those who are engaged in it. We include in that the reproduction of nature, such as climate change, the solution to which, like the distribution of world resources, necessarily and obviously points beyond any "localist" solutions[71], such as those which often held back the industrial and agrarian collectives in Spain. *This* is the concrete totality of the Hegel-Marx method, "acting upon itself" in the reproduction

[69] Speaking of the example of the judiciary, Abad de Santillan notes a CNT proposal to abolish lawyers. Why, he asks, was the Palace of Justice reopened? Old judges reappeared and "we put an instrument at the service of the counter-revolution which we ourselves had revalorized." (op. cit. pp. 80–81)

[70] Elaborated in "The Historical Moment that Produced Us", Insurgent Notes No. 1, 2010 (http://insurgent-notes.com) See the final section of 16 proposed points for global reconstruction, which are merely suggestions, and hardly definitive.

[71] For example, the oil workers in the Gulf will not, by themselves, decide where to ship the oil, while having as much control over their conditions of work as is possible within a global coordination.

of the world, starting with the reproduction of labor power. We look at the concrete struggles of this "labor power in contradiction with itself" that *is* capital, from the Marikana miners in South Africa to the 120,000 "incidents" (strikes, riots, confrontations over land confiscation) a year in China, to the gas and water wars against privatization in Bolivia, to the strikes and riots in Greece against European Union austerity, to the militant attempts of Egyptian workers to find a path independent of both the Islamists and the military, to the mobilization of public employees in Wisconsin, Ohio or Indiana against assaults on their wages and benefits. Most of these upsurges, often quite impressive, are actions of the class "in itself", however militant, on the way to becoming a class "for itself", namely ready to pose an alternative social order, based on a (self) recognition that their protagonists, once aware of their tasks, *are* the incipient alternative. We seek in them clues to the future convergence of a class-for-itself, as for example in the growing recognition among transport workers of their special power in shutting down "choke points", one Achilles heel of "globalization".

Spain in 1936 was a society in which the great majority of workers and peasants lived very close to the bone, and, as in the upsurges of the 1960's and 1970's (May-June 1968 in France, the wildcats in Britain from 1955 to 1972, the American wildcats ca. 1970 in auto, the Teamsters, the phone company, the post office, albeit recognizing a much transformed standard of living) democratic self-management of the existing means of production was the obvious programmatic next step.

That obviously remains central today, but the galloping decay and proliferation of socially useless and socially noxious activities (already quite in evidence in 1970) has reached a level where as many workers would be voting to abolish their own jobs as would be placing them under workers' control, in an overall strategy, with all the labor power thus freed, to radically shorten the working day. This is a fundamental point which a developing revolutionary movement must communicate to broader layers of society today. Those who labor in state and corporate bureaucracies, or the FIRE (finance- insurance- real estate) sector, or as cashiers and toll takers, or homeland security personnel, for starters, are in their ample majority wage labor proletarians, like those who produce material commodities such as cars, bread, steel, or houses but also nuclear submarines or weapons of mass destruction (e.g. drone bombers). While it is obvious that a society after the abolition of commodity production will no longer produce the latter, the important point is that, for the wage-labor work force as a whole, there is no bedrock "real" collection of use values separate from the forms currently imposed by capital, and all will be judged, and transformed, based on global needs once true production for use value, centered on the reproduction of the ultimate use value, labor power, is possible. The millions of cars and trucks produced annually may appear empirically as "use values" today, but we must consider their reality relative to the existing potential of mass transportation, both within cities and between them, to determine their true "use value" in the totality. Truth, as Hegel showed two hundred years ago, is in the whole, and the revolutionary movement has to start communicating the above realities to broader layers, above and beyond next week's demo.

The potential productivity of masses of workers, once embarked on the construction of a new world, is incredible. To return briefly to Spain: in 1936 in Catalonia, there was no war industry whatsoever. Following the July defeat of Franco's coup, 800 factories in Barcelona, transformed into industrial collectives, pooled their resources to create one, under the pressing needs of the war. According to foreign military observers, the Catalan workers in two months achieved a

greater transformation of factories for war production than France had achieved in the first two years of World War I.

Hopefully our revolution will not be burdened by the same urgent needs of civil war (though that is not to be precluded). The point is rather that tremendous energies are bottled up in capitalist social relations today that can, in the right circumstances, totally transform what are perceived as "use values", once ordinary working people see the "beach" under the "pavement", as one slogan in France in May 1968 put it.

A revolutionary organization today, to conclude, must apply this "Hegel-Marx" sense of the totality to itself. This means first of all a modest appreciation of its own true stature, in the broader global development of the "class-for-itself". It must recognize the primacy of the "real movement" and see its main goal as its own abolition as a separate grouping, once its tasks are accomplished. It must attempt to create within itself the closest possible approximation of the relations of a liberated humanity within its own internal life, which means the deepest possible involvement, above and beyond the indispensable daily tasks of militancy, with analysis of the world productive forces, and first of all of the world work force, to see the maturation of the methods of struggle. It must prioritize "internal education", starting with the history and theory of the revolutionary movement. It must attempt to embrace everything valid in contemporary culture, science and technology, and appeal to those cultural and technical strata who see the need to link their fate to that of the communist revolution. It must acquaint itself with military strategy, in the different traditions of Engels, Trotsky, Makhno, or the Cipriano Meras (a former construction worker). It must prepare, in a word, the groundwork for the takeover of production and reproduction. The better prepared in advance the movement is, the smoother and less violent that takeover will be.

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How the Working Class Takes Over (or Doesn't), Then and Now
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