Reflections on Spanish Anarchism

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Spring 1974

In the morning hours of July 18, 1936, General Francisco Franco issued the *pronunciamiento* from Las Palmas in Spanish North Africa that openly launched the struggle of Spain's reactionary military officers against the legally elected Popular Front government in Madrid.

The Franco *pronunciamiento* left little doubt that, in the event of victory by the Spanish generals, the parliamentary republic would be replaced by a clearly authoritarian state, modeled institutionally on similar regimes in Germany and Italy. The Francoist forces or "Nationalists," as they were to call themselves, exhibited all the trappings and ideologies of the fascist movements of the day: the raised open-palm salute, the appeals to a "folk-soil" philosophy of order, duty, and obedience, and the avowed commitments to smash the labor movement and end all political dissidence. To the world, the conflict initiated by the Spanish generals seemed like another of the classic struggles waged between the "forces of fascism" and the "forces of democracy" that reached such acute proportions in the thirties. What distinguished the Spanish conflict from similar struggles in Italy, Germany, and Austria, however, was the massive resistance with which the "forces of democracy" seemed to oppose to the Spanish military. Franco and his military coconspirators, despite the wide support they enjoyed among the officer cadres in the army, grossly miscalculated the popular opposition they would encounter. The so-called "Spanish Civil War" lasted nearly three years—from July 1936 to March 1939—and claimed an estimated million lives.

For the first time, so it seemed to many of us in the thirties, an entire people with dazzling courage had arrested the terrifying success of fascist movements in central and southern Europe. Scarcely three years earlier, Hitler had pocketed Germany without a shred of resistance from the massive Marxist-dominated German labor movement. Austria, two years before, had succumbed to an essentially authoritarian state after a week of futile street-fighting by Socialist workers in Vienna. Everywhere fascism seemed "on the march" and "democracy" in retreat. But Spain had seriously resisted—and continued to resist for years despite the armaments, aircraft, and troops which Franco acquired from Italy and Germany. To radicals and liberals alike, the Spanish Civil War was being waged not only on the Iberian Peninsula but in every country where "democracy" seemed threatened by the rising tide of domestic and international fascist movements. The Spanish Civil War, we were led to believe, was a struggle between a liberal republic that was valiantly and with popular support trying to defend a democratic parliamentary state against authoritarian generals—an imagery that is conveyed to this very day by most books on the subject and by that shabby cinematic documentary *To Die in Madrid*.

What so few of us knew outside Spain, however, was that the Spanish Civil War was in fact a sweeping social revolution by millions of workers and peasants who were concerned not to rescue a treacherous republican regime but to reconstruct Spanish society along revolutionary lines. We would scarcely have learned from the press that these workers and peasants viewed the Republic almost with as much animosity as they did the Francoists. Indeed, acting largely on their own initiative against "republican" ministers who were trying to betray them to the generals, they had raided arsenals and sporting-goods stores for weapons and with incredible valor had aborted military conspiracies in most of the cities and towns of Spain. We were almost totally oblivious to the fact that these workers and peasants had seized and collectivized most of the factories and land in republican-held areas, establishing a new social order based on direct control of the country's productive resources by workers' committees and peasant assemblies. While the republic's institutions lay in debris, abandoned by most of its military and police forces, the workers and peasants had created their own institutions to administer the cities in Republican Spain, formed their own armed workers' squads to patrol the streets, and established a remarkable revolutionary militia force with which to fight the Francoist forces—a voluntaristic militia in which men and women elected their own commanders and in which military rank conferred no social, material, or symbolic distinctions. Largely unknown to us at that time, the Spanish workers and peasants had made a sweeping social revolution. They had created their own revolutionary social forms to administer the country as well as to wage war against a well-trained and well-supplied army. The "Spanish Civil War" was not a political conflict between a liberal democracy and a fascist military corps but a deeply socio-economic conflict between the workers and peasants of Spain and their historic class enemies, ranging from the landowning grandees and clerical overlords inherited from the past to the rising industrial bourgeoisie and bankers of more recent times.

The revolutionary scope of this conflict was concealed from us—by "us" I refer to the many thousands of largely Communist-influenced radicals of the "red" thirties who responded to the struggle in Spain with the same fervor and agony that young people of the sixties responded to the struggle in Indochina. We need not turn to Orwell or Borkenau, radicals of obviously strong anti-Stalinist convictions, for an explanation of this fervor. Burnett Bolloten, a rather politically innocent United Press reporter who happened to be stationed in Madrid at the time, conveys his own sense of moral outrage at the misrepresentation of the Spanish conflict in the opening lines of his superbly documented study, *The Grand Camouflage*:

"Although the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July, 1936, was followed by a far-reaching social-revolution in the anti-Franco camp—more profound in some respects than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages—millions of discerning people outside of Spain were kept in ignorance, not only of its depth and range, but even of its existence, by virtue of a policy of duplicity and dissimulation of which there is no parallel in history.

Foremost in practicing this deception upon the world, and in misrepresenting in Spain itself the character of the revolution, were the Communists, who, although but an exiguous minority when the Civil War began, used so effectually the manifold opportunities which that very upheaval presented that before the close of the conflict in 1939 they became, behind a democratic frontispiece, the ruling force in the left camp."

The details of this deception could fill several large volumes. The silence that gathers around Spain, like a bad conscience, attests to the fact that the events are very much alive—as are the efforts to misrepresent them. After nearly forty years the wounds have not healed. In fact, as the

recent revival of Stalinism suggests, the disease that produced the purulence of counterrevolution in Spain still lingers on in the American left. But to deal with the Stalinist counterrevolution in Spain is beyond the scope of these remarks. It might be useful, however, to examine the revolutionary tendencies that unfolded prior to July 1936 and explore the influence they exercised on the Spanish working class and peasantry. Their collectives were not the results of virginal popular spontaneity, important as popular spontaneity was, nor were they nourished exclusively by the collectivist legacy of traditional Spanish village society. Revolutionary ideas and movements played a crucial role of their own and their influence deserves the closest examination.

The Spanish generals started a military rebellion in July 1936; the Spanish workers and peasants answered them with a social revolution—and this revolution was largely anarchist in character. I say this provocatively even though the Socialist UGT was numerically as large as the anarchosyndicalist CNT.[1] During the first few months of the military rebellion, Socialist workers in Madrid often acted as radically as anarchosyndicalist workers in Barcelona. They established their own militias, formed street patrols, and expropriated a number of strategic factories, placing them under the control of workers' committees. Similarly, Socialist peasants in Castile and Estramadura formed collectives, many of which were as libertarian as those created by anarchist peasants in Aragon and the Levant. In the opening "anarchic" phase of the revolution, so similar to the opening phases of earlier revolutions, the "masses" tried to assume direct control over society and exhibited a remarkable élan in improvising their own libertarian forms of social administration.

Looking back beyond this opening phase, however, it is fair to say that the durability of the collectives in Spain, their social scope, and the resistance they offered to the Stalinist counterrevolution, depended largely on the extent to which they were under anarchist influence. What distinguishes the Spanish Revolution from those which preceded it is not only the fact that it placed much of Spain's economy in the hands of workers' committees and peasant assemblies or that it established a democratically elected militia system. These social forms, in varying degrees, had emerged during the Paris Commune and in the early period of the Russian Revolution. What made the Spanish Revolution unique was its workers' control and collectives which had been advocated for nearly three generations by a massive libertarian movement and which became one of the most serious issues to divide the so-called "republican" camp (together with the fate of the militia system). Owing to the scope of its libertarian social forms, not only did the Spanish Revolution prove to be "more profound" (to borrow Bolloten's phrase) than the Bolshevik Revolution, but the influence of a deeply rooted anarchist ideology and the intrepidity of anarchist militants virtually produced a civil war within the civil war.

Indeed, in many respects, the revolution of 1936 marked the culmination of more than sixty years of anarchist agitation and activity in Spain. To understand this, we must go back to the early 1870s, when the Italian anarchist Giuseppi Fanelli introduced Bakunin's ideas to groups of workers and intellectuals in Madrid and Barcelona. Fanelli's encounter with young workers of the *Fomento de las Artes* in Madrid, a story told with great relish by Gerald Brenan is almost legendary: the volatile speech that the tall bearded Italian anarchist who hardly knew a word of Spanish delivered to a small but enthusiastic audience that scarcely understood his free-wheeling

[1] Both the UGT and the CNT probably numbered more than a million members each by the summer of 1936. The officious, highly bureaucratic UGT tended to overstate its membership figures. The more amorphous decentralized CNT—the more persecuted of the two labor federations—often exercised much greater influence on the Spanish working class than its membership statistics would seem to indicate.

mixture of French and Italian. By dint of sheer mimicry, tonal inflections, and a generous use of cognates, Fanelli managed to convey enough of Bakunin's ideals to gain the group's adherence and to establish the founding Spanish section of the International Working Men's Association or so-called "First International." Thereafter, the "Internationalists," as the early Spanish anarchists were known, expanded rapidly from their circles in Madrid and Barcelona to Spain as a whole, taking strong root especially in Catalonia and Andalusia. Following the definitive split between the Marxists and Bakuninists at the Hague Congress of the IWMA in September 1872, the Spanish section remained predominantly Bakuninist in its general outlook. Marxism did not become a significant movement in Spain until the turn of the century, and even after it became an appreciable force in the labor movement, it remained largely reformist until well into the thirties. During much of its early history, the strength of the Spanish Socialist Party and the UGT lay in administrative areas such as Madrid rather than in predominantly working-class cities like Barcelona.[2] Marxism tended to appeal to the highly skilled, pragmatic, rather authoritarian Castilian; anarchism, to the unskilled, idealistic Catalans and the independent, liberty-loving mountain villagers of Andalusia and the Levant. The great rural masses of Andalusian day-workers or *braceros*, who remain to this day among the most oppressed and impoverished strata of European society, tended to follow the anarchists. But their allegiances varied with the fortunes of the day. In periods of upheaval, they swelled the ranks of the Bakuninist IWMA and its successor organizations in Spain, only to leave it in equally large numbers in periods of reaction.

Yet however much the fortunes of Spanish anarchism varied from region to region and from period to period, whatever revolutionary movement existed in Spain during this sixty-year period was essentially anarchist. Even as anarchism began to ebb before Marxian social-democratic and later Bolshevik organizations after the First World War, Spanish anarchism retained its enormous influence and its revolutionary élan. Viewed from a radical standpoint, the history of the Spanish labor movement remained libertarian and often served to define the contours of the Marxist movements in Spain. "Generally speaking, a small but well-organized group of Anarchists in a Socialist area drove the Socialists to the Left," observes Brenan, "whereas in predominantly Anarchist areas, Socialists were outstandingly reformist." It was not socialism but rather anarchism that determined the metabolism of the Spanish labor movement—the great general strikes that swept repeatedly over Spain, the recurring insurrections in Barcelona and in the towns and villages of Andalusia, and the gun battles between labor militants and employer-hired thugs in the Mediterranean coastal cities.

It is essential to emphasize that Spanish anarchism was not merely a program embedded in a dense theoretical matrix. It was a way of life: partly the life of the Spanish people as it was lived in the closely knit villages of the countryside and the intense neighborhood life of the working class barrios; partly, too, the theoretical articulation of that life as projected by Bakunin's concepts of decentralization, mutual aid, and popular organs of self-management. That Spain had a long tradition of agrarian collectivism is discussed in this book and examined in some detail in Joaquin Costa's *Colectivismo Agrario en Espagna*. Inasmuch as this tradition was distinctly precapitalist, Spanish Marxism regarded it as anachronistic, in fact as "historically reactionary." Spanish socialism built its agrarian program around the Marxist tenet that the peasantry and

[2] Madrid, although with a largely Socialist labor movement, was the home of an intensely active anarchist movement. Not only were the Madrid construction workers strongly anarchosyndicalist, but at the turn of the century, many Madrid intellectuals were committed to anarchism and established a renowned theoretical tradition for the movement that lingered on long after anarchist workers had cut their ties with the Spanish intelligentsia.

its social forms could have no lasting revolutionary value until they were "proletarianized" and "industrialized." Indeed, the sooner the village decayed the better, and the more rapidly the peasantry became a hereditary proletariat, "disciplined, united, organized by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself" (Marx)—a distinctly hierarchical and authoritarian "mechanism"—the more rapidly Spain would advance to the tasks of socialism.

Spanish anarchism, by contrast, followed a decisively different approach. It sought out the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village, nourished what was living and vital in them, evoked their revolutionary potentialities as liberatory modes of mutual aid and self-management, and deployed them to vitiate the obedience, hierarchical mentality, and authoritarian outlook fostered by the factory system. Ever mindful of the "embourgeoisment" of the proletariat (a term continually on Bakunin's lips in the later years of his life), the Spanish anarchists tried to use the precapitalist traditions of the a peasantry and working class against the assimilation of the workers' outlook to an authoritarian industrial rationality. In this respect, their efforts were favored by the continuous fertilization of the Spanish proletariat by rural workers who renewed these traditions daily as they migrated to the cities. The revolutionary élan of the Barcelona proletariat—like that of the Petrograd and Parisian proletariats—was due in no small measure to the fact that these workers never solidly sedimented into a hereditary working class, totally removed from precapitalist traditions, whether of the peasant or the craftsman. Along the Mediterranean coastal cities of Spain, many workers retained a living memory of a noncapitalist culture—one in which each moment of life was not strictly regulated by the punch clock, the factory whistle, the foreman, the machine, the highly regulated work day, and the atomizing world of the large city. Spanish anarchism flourished within a tension created by these antagonistic traditions and sensibilities. Indeed, where a "Germanic proletariat" (to use another of Bakunin's cutting phrases) emerged in Spain, it drifted either toward the UGT or toward the Catholic unions. Its political outlook, reformist when not overtly conservative, often clashed with the more *déclassé* working class of Catalonia and the Mediterranean coast, leading to conflicting tendencies within the Spanish proletariat as a whole.

Ultimately, in my view, the destiny of Spanish anarchism depended upon its ability to create libertarian organizational forms that could synthesize as the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village with an industrial economy and a highly urbanized society. I speak here of no mere programmatic "alliance" between the Spanish peasantry and proletariat but more organically, of new organizational forms and sensibilities that imparted a revolutionary libertarian character to two social classes who lived in conflicting cultures. That Spain required a well-organized libertarian movement was hardly a matter of doubt among the majority of Spanish anarchists. But would this movement reflect a village society or a factory society? Where a conflict existed, could the two be melded in the same movement without violating the libertarian tenets of decentralization, mutual aid, and self-administration? In the classical era of "proletarian socialism" between 1848 and 1939, an era that stressed the "hegemony" of the industrial proletariat in all social struggles, Spanish anarchism followed a historic trajectory that revealed at once the limitations of the era itself and the creative possibilities for anarchic forms of organization.

By comparison with the cities, the Spanish villages that were committed to anarchism raised very few organizational problems. Brenan's emphasis on the braceros notwithstanding, the strength of agrarian anarchism in the south and the Levant lay in the mountain villages, not among the rural proletariat that worked the great plantations of Andalusia. In these relatively isolated villages, a fierce sense of independence and personal dignity whetted the bitter social

hatreds engendered by poverty, creating the rural "patriarchs" of anarchism whose entire families were devoted almost apostolically to "the Idea." For these sharply etched and rigorously ascetic individuals, defiance of the State, the Church, and conventional authority in general was almost a way of life. Knitted together by the local press—and at various times there were hundreds of anarchist periodicals in Spain—they formed the sinews of agrarian anarchism from the 1870s onwards and, to a large extent, the moral conscience of Spanish anarchism throughout its history.

Their agrarian collectives reflected to a remarkable extent the organizational forms which the anarchists fostered among all the villages under their influence before the 1936 revolution. The revolution in rural communities essentially enlarged the old IWMA and later CNT nuclei, membership groups, or quite simply clans of closely knit anarchist families into popular assemblies. These usually met weekly and formulated the policy decisions of the community as a whole. The assembly form comprised the organizational ideal of village anarchism from the days of the first truly Bakuninist congress of the Spanish IWMA in Córdoba in 1872, stressing the libertarian traditions of Spanish village life.[3] Where such popular assemblies were possible, their decisions were executed by a committee elected from the assembly. Apparently, the right to recall committee members was taken for granted and they certainly enjoyed no privileges, emoluments, or institutional power. Their influence was a function of their obvious dedication and capabilities. It remained a cardinal principle of Spanish anarchists never to pay their delegates, even when the CNT numbered a million members.[4] Normally, the responsibilities of elected delegates had to be discharged after working hours. Almost all the evenings of anarchist militants were occupied with meetings of one sort or another. Whether at assemblies or committees, they argued, debated, voted, and administered, and when time afforded, they read and passionately discussed "the Idea" to which they dedicated not only their leisure hours but their very lives. For the greater part of the day, they were working men and women, *obrera consciente*, who abjured smoking and drinking, avoided brothels and the bloody bull ring, purged their talk of "foul" language, and by their probity, dignity, respect for knowledge, and militancy tried to set a moral example for their entire class. They never used the word "god" in their daily conversations (*salud* was preferred over *adios*) and avoided all official contact with clerical and state authorities, indeed, to the point where they refused to legally validate their lifelong "free unions" with marital documents and never baptized or confirmed their children. One must know Catholic Spain to realize how far-

[3] I would not want to argue here, that the Spanish village formed a *paradigm* for a libertarian society. Village society differed greatly from one region of Spain to another—some areas retaining undisturbed their local democratic traditions, others ruled tyrannically by the Church, the nobility, *caciques*, and custom. Quite often, both tendencies coexisted in a very uneasy equilibrium, the democratic still vital but submerged by the authoritarian.

[4] In the case of the CNT there were exceptions to this rule. The National Secretary was paid an average worker's salary, as was the clerical staff of the National Committee and the editors and staffs of daily newspapers. But delegates to the national, regional, and local committees of the CNT were not paid and were obliged to work at their own trades except when they lost time during working hours on union business. This is not to say that there were no individuals who devoted most of their time to the dissemination of anarchist ideas. "Traveling about from place to place, on foot or mule or on the hard seats of third-class railway carriages, or even like tramps or ambulant bullfighters under the tarpaulins of goods wagons," observes Brenan, "whilst they organized new groups or carried on propagandist campaigns, these 'apostles of the idea,' as they were called, lived like mendicant friars on the hospitality of the more prosperous workers"—and, I would add, "villagers." This tradition of organizing, which refers to the 1870s, did not disappear in later decades; to the contrary, it became more systematic and perhaps more securely financed as the CNT began to compete with the UGT for the allegiance of the Spanish workers and peasants.

reaching were these self-imposed mores—and how quixotically consistent some of them were with the puritanical traditions of the country.[5]

It is appropriate to note at this point that the myth, widely disseminated by the current sociological literature on the subject, that agrarian anarchism in Spain was antitechnological in spirit and atavistically sought to restore a neolithic "Golden Age" can be quite effectively refuted by a close study of the unique educational role played by the anarchists. Indeed, it was the anarchists, with inexpensive, simply written brochures, who brought the French enlightenment and modern scientific theory to the peasantry, not the arrogant liberals or the disdainful Socialists. Together with pamphlets on Bakunin and Kropotkin, the anarchist press published simple accounts of the theories of natural and social evolution and elementary introductions to the secular culture of Europe. They tried to instruct the peasants in advanced techniques of land management and earnestly favored the use of agricultural machinery to lighten the burdens of toil and provide more leisure for self-development. Far from being an atavistic trend in Spanish society, as Hobsbawm (in his *Primitive Rebels*) and even Brenan would have us believe, I can say with certainty from a careful review of the issue that anarchism more closely approximated a radical popular enlightenment.

In their personal qualities, dedicated urban anarchists were not substantially different from their rural comrades. But in the towns and cities of Spain, these urban anarchists faced more difficult organizational problems. Their efforts to create libertarian forms of organization were favored, of course, by the fact that many Spanish workers were either former villagers or were only a generation or so removed from the countryside.[6] Yet the prospect for libertarian organization in the cities and factories could not depend upon the long tradition of village collectivism—the strong sense of community—that existed in rural anarchist areas. For within the factory itself—the realm of toil, hierarchy, industrial discipline, and brute material necessity—"community" was more a function of the bourgeois division of labor with its exploitative, even competitive connotations, than of humanistic cooperation, playfully creative work, and mutual aid. Working-class solidarity depended less upon a shared meaningful life nourished by self-fulfilling work than the common enemy—the boss—who exploded any illusion that under capitalism the worker was more than an industrial resource, an object to be coldly manipulated and ruthlessly exploited. If anarchism can be partly regarded as a revolt of the individual against the industrial system, the profound truth that lies at the heart of that revolt is that the factory routine not only blunts the sensibility of the worker to the rich feast of life; it degrades the worker's image of his or her hu-

[5] Yet here I must add that to abstain from smoking, to live by high moral standards, and especially to abjure the consumption of alcohol was very important at the time. Spain was going through her own belated industrial revolution during the period of anarchist ascendancy with all its demoralizing features. The collapse of morale among the proletariat, with rampant drunkenness and venereal diseases, and the collapse of sanitary facilities, was the foremost problem which Spanish revolutionaries had to deal with, just as black radicals today must deal with similar problems in the ghetto. On this score, the Spanish anarchists were eminently successful. Few CNT workers, much less committed anarchists, would have dared to show up drunk at meetings or misbehave overtly among their comrades. If one considers the terrible working and living conditions of the period, alcoholism was not as serious a problem in Spain as it was in England during the industrial revolution.

[6] In "black" (purely anarchistic) Saragossa, where the working class was even more firmly committed to anarchist principles than the Barcelona proletariat, Raymond Carr quite accurately emphasizes that "strikes were characterized by their scorn for economic demands and the toughness of their revolutionary solidarity: strikes for comrades in prison were more popular than strikes for better conditions."

man potentialities, of his or her capacities to take direct control of the means for administering social life.

One of the unique virtues that distinguished the Spanish anarchists from socialists was their attempt to *transform* the factory domain itself—a transformation that was to be effected in the long run by their demand for workers' self-management of production, and more immediately, by their attempt to form libertarian organizations that culminated in the formation of the syndicalist CNT. However, the extent to which workers' self-management can actually *eliminate* alienated labor and *alter* the impact of the factory system on the worker's sensibilities requires, in my view, a more probing analysis than it has hitherto received. The problem of the impact of the factory system on workers became crucial as the proletarian element in the CNT grew, while the anarchists sought to develop characteristics of initiative and self-management that were directly opposed to the characteristics inculcated by the factory system.

No sizable radical movement in modern times had seriously asked itself if organizational forms had to be developed which promoted changes in the most fundamental behavior patterns of its members. How could the libertarian movement vitiate the spirit of obedience, of hierarchical organization, of leader-and-led relationships, of authority and command instilled by capitalist industry? It is to the lasting credit of Spanish anarchism—and of anarchism generally—that it posed this question.[7] The term "integral personality" appears repeatedly in Spanish anarchist documents and tireless efforts were made to develop individuals who not only cerebrally accepted libertarian principles but tried to practice them. Accordingly, the organizational framework of the movement (as expressed in the IWMA, the CNT, and the FAI) was meant to be decentralized, to allow for the greatest degree of initiative and decision-making at the base, and to provide structural guarantees against the formation of a bureaucracy. These requirements, on the other hand, had to be balanced against the need for coordination, mobilized common action, and effective planning. The organizational history of anarchism in the cities and towns of Spain—the forms the anarchists created and those which they discarded—is largely an account of the pull between these two requirements and the extent to which one prevailed over the other. This tension was not merely a matter of experience and structural improvisation. In the long run, the outcome of the pull between decentralization and coordination depended on the ability of the most dedicated anarchists to affect the consciousness of the workers who entered anarchist influenced unions—specifically unions of a syndicalist character whose aims were not only to fight for immediate material gains but also to provide the infrastructure for a libertarian society.

Long before syndicalism became a popular term in the French labor movement of the late 1890s, it already existed in the early Spanish labor movement. The anarchist influenced Spanish Federation of the old IWMA, in my opinion, was distinctly syndicalist. At the founding congress of the Spanish Federation at Barcelona in June 1870, the "commission on the theme of the social organization of the workers" proposed a structure that would form a model for all later anar-

[7] For Marx and Engels, organizational forms to change the behavioral patterns of the proletariat were not a problem. This question could be postponed until "after the revolution." Indeed, Marx viewed the authoritarian impact of the factory ("the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself") as a positive factor in producing a disciplined, united proletariat. Engels, in an atrocious diatribe against the anarchists titled "On Authority," explicitly used the factory structure—its hierarchical forms and the obedience it demanded—to justify his commitment to authority and centralization in working-class organizations. What is of interest here is not whether Marx and Engels were "authoritarians" but the way in which they thought out the problem of proletarian organization—the extent to which the matrix for their organizational concepts was the very economy which the social revolution was meant to revolutionize.

chosyndicalist labor unions in Spain, including the CNT. The commission suggested a typical syndicalist dual structure: organization by trade and organization by locality. Local trade organizations (*Secciones de oficio*) grouped together all workers from a common enterprise and vocation into large occupational federations (*Uniones de oficio*) whose primary function was to struggle around economic grievances and working conditions. A local organization of a miscellaneous trades gathered up all those workers from different vocations whose numbers were too small to constitute effective organizations along vocational lines. Paralleling these vocational organizations, in every community and region where the IWMA was represented, the different local *Secciones* were grouped together, irrespective of trade, into local geographic bodies (*Federaciones locales*) whose function was avowedly revolutionary—the administration of social and economic life on a decentralized libertarian basis.

This dual structure forms the bedrock of all syndicalist forms of organization. In Spain, as elsewhere, the structure was knitted together by workers' committees, which originated in individual shops, factories, and agricultural communities. Gathering together in assemblies, the workers elected from their midst the committees that presided over the affairs of the vocational *Secciones de oficio* and the geographic *Federaciones locales*. They were federated into regional committees for nearly every large area of Spain. Every year, when possible, the workers elected the delegates to the annual congresses of the Spanish Federation of the IWMA, which in turn elected a national Federal Council. With the decline of the IWMA, syndicalist union federations surfaced and disappeared in different regions of Spain, especially Catalonia and Andalusia. The first was the rather considerable Workers' Federation of the 1880s. Following its suppression, Spanish anarchism contracted either to nonunion ideological groups such as the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region or to essentially regional union federations like the Catalan-based Pact of Union and Solidarity of the 1890s and Workers' Solidarity of the early 1900s. Except for the short-lived Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region, established in 1900 on the initiative of a Madrid bricklayers' union, no major national syndicalist federation appeared in Spain until the organization of the CNT in 1911. With the establishment of the CNT, Spanish syndicalism entered its most mature and decisive period. Considerably larger than its rival, the UGT, the CNT became the essential arena for anarchist agitation in Spain.

The CNT was not merely "founded"; it developed organically out of the Catalan Workers' Solidarity and its most consolidated regional federation, the Catalan federation (*Confederación Regional del Trabajo de Cataluña.*) Later, other regional federations were established from local unions in each province—many of them lingering on from the Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region—until there were eight by the early 1930s. The national organization, in effect, was a loose collection of regional federations which were broken down into local and district federations and finally into *sindicatos*, or individual unions. These *sindicatos* (earlier, they were known by the dramatic name of *sociedades de resistancia al capital*—resistance societies to capital) were established on a vocational basis and, in typical syndicalist fashion, grouped into geographic and trade federations (*federaciones locales and sindicatos de oficio*) . To coordinate this structure, the annual congresses of the CNT elected a National Committee which was expected to occupy itself primarily with correspondence, the collection of statistics, and aid to prisoners.

The statutes of the Catalan regional federation provide us with the guidelines used for the national movement as a whole. According to these statutes, the organization was committed to "direct action," rejecting all "political and religious interference." Affiliated district and local federations were to be "governed by the greatest autonomy possible, it being understood by this

that they have complete freedom in all the professional matters relating to the individual trades which integrate them." Each member was expected to pay monthly dues of ten centimes (a trifling sum) which was to be divided equally among the local organization, the Regional Confederation, the National Confederation, the union newspaper (*Solidaridad Obrera*—"Workers' Solidarity"), and the all-important special fund for "social prisoners."

By statute, the Regional Committee—the regional equivalent of the CNT's National Committee—was expected to be merely an administrative body. Although it clearly played a directive role in coordinating action, its activities were bound by policies established by the annual regional congress. In unusual situations, the Committee could consult local bodies, either by referendums or by written queries. In addition to the annual regional congresses at which the Regional Committee was elected, the Committee was obliged to call extraordinary congresses at the request of the majority of the local federations. The local federations, in turn, were given three months' notice before a regular congress so that they could "prepare the themes for discussion." Within a month before the congress, the Regional Committee was required to publish the submitted "themes" in the union newspaper, leaving sufficient time for the workers to define their attitudes toward the topics to be discussed and instruct their delegates accordingly. The delegations to the congress, whose voting power was determined by the num-ber of members they represented, were elected by general assemblies of workers convened by the local and district federations.

These statutes formed the basis for the CNT's practice up to the revolution of 1936. Although they notably lacked any provision for the recall of the committee members, the organization in its heroic period was more democratic than the statutes would seem to indicate. A throbbing vitality existed at the base of this immense organization, marked by active interest in the CNT's problems and considerable individual initiative. The workers' centers (*centros obreros*), which the anarchists had established in the days of the IWMA, were not only the local offices of the union; they were also meeting places and cultural centers where members went to exchange ideas and attend lectures. All the affairs of the local CNT were managed by committees of ordinary unpaid workers. Although the official union meetings were held only once in three months, there were "conferences of an instructive character" every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. The solidarity of the *sindicatos* was so intense that it was not always possible to maintain an isolated strike. There was always a tendency for a strike to trigger off others in its support and generate active aid by other *sindicatos*.

In any case, this is the way the CNT tried to carry on its affairs and during favorable periods actually functioned. But there were periods when repression and sudden, often crucial, turns in events made it necessary to suspend annual or regional congresses and confine important policy-making decisions to plenums of leading committees or to "congresses" that were little more than patchwork conferences. Charismatic leaders at all levels of the organization came very close to acting in a bureaucratic manner. Nor is the syndicalist structure itself immune to bureaucratic deformations. It was not very difficult for an elaborate network of committees, building up to regional and national bodies, to assume all the features of a centralized organization and circumvent the wishes of the workers' assemblies at the base.

Finally, the CNT, despite its programmatic commitment to libertarian communism and its attempt to function in a libertarian manner, was primarily a large trade union federation rather than a purely anarchist organization. Angel Pestaña, one of its most pragmatic leaders, recognized that roughly a third of the CNT membership could be regarded as anarchists. Many were

militants rather than revolutionaries; others simply joined the CNT because it was the dominant union in their area or shop. And by the 1930s, the great majority of CNT members were workers rather than peasants. Andalusians, once the largest percentage of members in the anarchist-influenced unions of the previous century, had dwindled to a minority, a fact which is not noted by such writers as Brenan and Hobsbawm who overemphasize the importance of the rural element in the anarchosyndicalist trade unions.

With the slow change in the social composition of the CNT and the growing supremacy of industrial over village values in its leadership and membership, it is my view that the confederation would have eventually turned into a fairly conventional Latin-type of trade union. The Spanish anarchists were not oblivious to these developments. Although syndicalist unions formed the major arena of anarchist activity in Europe, anarchist theorists were mindful that it would not be too difficult for reformist leaders in syndicalist unions to shift organizational control from the bottom to the top. They viewed syndicalism as a change in focus from the commune to the trade union, from all the oppressed to the industrial proletariat, from the streets to the factories, and, in emphasis at least, from insurrection to the general strike.

Malatesta, fearing the emergence of a bureaucracy in the syndicalist unions, warned that "the official is to the working class a danger only comparable to that provided by the parliamentarian; both lead to corruption and from corruption to death is but a short step." Although he was to change his attitude toward syndicalism, he accepted the movement with many reservations and never ceased to emphasize that "trade unions are, by their very nature, reformist and never revolutionary." To this warning he added that the "revolutionary spirit must be introduced, developed and maintained by the constant actions of revolutionaries who work from within their ranks as well as from outside, but it cannot be the normal, natural definition of the Trade Union's function."

Syndicalism had divided the Spanish anarchist movement without really splitting it. Indeed, until the establishment of the FAI, there was rarely a national anarchist organization to split.[8] Yet a Spanish anarchist movement held together on two levels: by means of well-known periodicals like *La Revista Blanca and Tierra y Libertad*, and in the form of small circles of dedicated anarchists, both inside and outside the syndicalist unions. Dating as far back as the 1880s these typically Hispanic groups of intimates, traditionally known as *tertulias*, met at favorite cafes to discuss ideas and plan actions. They gave themselves colorful names expressive of their high-minded ideals (*Ni Rey ni patria*) or their revolutionary spirit (*Los Rebeldes*) or quite simply their sense of fraternity (*Los Afines*) . The Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region to which I have already alluded, founded in Valencia in 1888, consciously made these *tertulias* the strands from which it tried to weave a coherent movement. Decades later, they were to reappear in the FAI as *grupos de afinidad* (affinity groups) with a more formal local and national structure.

Although Spanish anarchism did not produce an effective national movement until the founding of the FAI, the divisions between the anarchosyndicalists and anarchocommunists were highly significant. The two tendencies of Spanish anarchism worked in very different ways and were mutually disdainful of each other. The anarchosyndicalists functioned directly in the unions. They accepted key union positions and placed their emphasis on organizing, often at the expense

[8] The disappearance of Bakunin's Alliance of Social Democracy in Spain scattered the forces of Spanish anarchism into small local nuclei which related on a regional basis through conferences, periodicals, and correspondence. Several regional federations of these nuclei were formed, mainly in Catalonia and Andalusia, only to disappear as rapidly as they emerged.

of propaganda and ideological commitment. As "practical men," Catalan anarchosyndicalists such as José Rodríguez Romero and Tomás Herreros were ready to make compromises, more precisely, to form alliances with "pure-and-simple" trade unionists.

The anarchocommunists were the "fanatics over there" in the editorial offices of *Tierra y Libertad*—"purists" like Juan Barón and Francisco Cardenal, who regarded the anarchosyndicalists as deserters to reformism and held faithfully to the communist doctrines that formed the basis of the old Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region. They were not disposed to trade union activism and stressed commitment to libertarian communist principles. It was not their goal to produce a large "mass movement" of workers who wore lightly the trappings of libertarian ideals, but to help create dedicated anarchists in an authentically revolutionary movement, however small its size or influence. Once fairly influential, their terrorist tactics at the turn of the century and the ensuing repression had greatly depleted their numbers.

The founding of the FAI in the summer of 1927 was expected to unite these two tendencies. Anarchosyndicalist needs were met by requiring that every *faísta* become a member of the CNT and by making the union the principal arena of anarchist activity in Spain. The needs of the anarchocommunists were met by the very fact that an avowedly anarchist organization was established nationally, apart from the CNT, and by making the affinity group the basis for a vanguard movement avowedly dedicated to the achievement of libertarian communism.[9] *Tierra y Libertad* was adopted as the FAI's organ. But by establishing an anarchist organization for the express purpose of controlling the CNT, or at least to keep it from falling into the hands of reformists or infiltrators from the newly founded Spanish Communist Party, the anarchosyndicalists had essentially enveloped the anarchocommunists in syndicalist activity. By 1933, the FAI's control over the CNT was fairly complete. Systematic organizational work had purged the union of Communists, while its reformist leaders either left on their own accord or had defensively camouflaged themselves with revolutionary rhetoric. No illusion should exist that this success was achieved with an overly sensitive regard for democratic niceties, although the militancy of the *faístas* unquestionably attracted the greatest majority of CNT workers. But the FAI's most well-known militants—Durruti, the Ascaso brothers, García Oliver—included terrorism in their repertory of direct action. Gunplay, especially in "expropriations" and in dealing with recalcitrant employers, police agents, and blacklegs, was not frowned upon. These *atentados* almost certainly intimidated the FAI's less prominent opponents in the CNT, although "reformists" like Pestaña and Peiró did not hesitate to publicly criticize the FAI in the harshest terms.

Despite its influence in the CNT, this remarkable anarchist organization remained semisecret up to 1936 and its membership probably did not exceed 30,000. Structurally, it formed a near-model of libertarian organization. Affinity groups were small nuclei of intimate friends which

[9] I employ the word "vanguard" provocatively, despite its unpopularity in many libertarian circles today, because this term was widely used in the traditional anarchist movement. Some anarchist publications even adopted it as a name. There can be no doubt that an anarchist *obrera consciente* regarded himself or herself as an "advanced person" and part of a small *avant-garde* in society. In its most innocuous sense, the use of this term meant that such a person merely enjoyed a more advanced social consciousness than the majority of less developed workers and peasants, a distinction that had to be overcome by education. In a less innocuous sense, the word provided a rationale for elitism and manipulation, to which some anarchist leaders were no more immune than their authoritarian Socialist opponents. The word "leader," on the other hand, was eschewed for the euphemism "influential militant," although in fact the more well-known anarchist "influential militants" were certainly leaders. This self-deception was not as trifling as it may seem. It prevented the Spanish anarchists from working out the serious problems that emerged from real differences in consciousness among themselves or between themselves and the great majority of undeveloped *ceneteistas*.

generally numbered a dozen or so men and women. Wherever several of these affinity groups existed, they were coordinated by a local federation and met, when possible, in monthly assemblies. The national movement, in turn, was coordinated by a Peninsular Committee, which ostensibly exercised very little directive power. Its role was meant to be strictly administrative in typical Bakuninist fashion. Affinity groups were in fact remarkably autonomous during the early thirties and often exhibited exceptional initiative. The intimacy shared by the *faístas* in each group made the movement very difficult for police agents to infiltrate and the FAI as a whole managed to survive the most severe repression with surprisingly little damage to its organization. As time passed, however, the Peninsular Committee began to grow in prestige. Its periodic statements on events and problems often served as directives to the entire movement. Although by no means an authoritarian body, it eventually began to function as a central committee whose policy decisions, while not binding in the organization, served as more than mere suggestions. Indeed, it would have been very difficult for the Peninsular Committee to operate by fiat; the average *faísta* was a strong personality who would have readily voiced disagreement with any decision that he or she found particularly unpalatable. But the FAI increasingly became an end in itself and loyalty to the organization, particularly when it was under attack or confronted with severe difficulties, tended to mute criticism.

There can be no question that the FAI raised enormously the social consciousness of the average *ceneteista*. More than any single force apart from employer recalcitrance, it made the CNT into a revolutionary syndicalist organization, if not a truly anarchosyndicalist one. The FAI stressed a commitment to revolution and to libertarian communism and gained a considerable following within the CNT (a more dedicated following in anarchist Saragossa than in syndicalist Barcelona). But the FAI was not able to completely rid the CNT of reformist elements (the union attracted many workers by its militant fight for improved economic conditions) and the sedimentation of the CNT along hierarchical lines continued.

In its attempt to control the CNT, the FAI in fact became a victim of the less developed elements in the union. Peirats quite rightly emphasizes that the CNT took its own toll on the FAI. Just as reformists inside the union were predisposed to compromise with the bourgeoisie and the State, so the FAI was compelled to compromise with the reformists in order to retain its control over the CNT. Among the younger, less experienced *faístas*, the situation was sometimes worse. Extravagant militancy which fetishized action over theory and daring over insight rebounded, after failure, in the crudest opportunism.

In the balance: the CNT had provided a remarkably democratic arena for the most militant working class in Europe; the FAI added the leavening of a libertarian orientation and revolutionary deeds within the limits that a trade union could provide. By 1936, both organizations had created authentically libertarian structures to the extent that any strictly proletarian class movement could be truly libertarian. If only by dint of sheer rhetoric—and doubtless, considerable conviction and daring actions—they had keyed the expectations of their memberships to a revolution that would yield workers' control of the economy and syndicalist forms of social administration. This process of education and class organization, more than any single factor in Spain, produced the collectives. And to the degree that the CNT-FAI (for the two organizations became fatally coupled after July 1936) exercised the major influence in an area, the collectives proved to be generally more durable, communist and resistant to Stalinist counterrevolution than other republican-held areas of Spain.

Moreover, in the CNT-FAI areas, workers and peasants tended to show the greatest degree of popular initiative in resisting the military uprising. It was not Socialist Madrid that first took matters into its own hands and defeated its rebellious garrison: it was anarchosyndicalist Barcelona that can lay claim to this distinction among all the large cities of Spain. Madrid rose against the Montana barracks only after sound trucks broadcast the news that the army had been defeated in the streets and squares of Barcelona. And even in Madrid, perhaps the greatest initiative was shown by the local CNT organization, which enjoyed the allegiance of the city's militant construction workers.

The CNT-FAI, in effect, revealed all the possibilities of a highly organized and extremely militant working class—a "classical" proletariat, if you will, whose basic economic interests were repeatedly frustrated by a myopic intransigent bourgeoisie. It was out of such "irreconcilable" struggles that anarchosyndicalism and revolutionary Marxism had developed their entire tactical and theoretical armamentorium.

But the CNT-FAI also revealed the limitations of that type of classical struggle—and it is fair to say that the Spanish Revolution marked the end of a century-long era of so-called "proletarian revolutions" which began with the June uprising of the Parisian workers in 1848. The era has passed into history and, in my view, will never again be revived. It was marked by bitter, often uncompromising struggles between the proletariat and bourgeoisie, an era in which the working class had not been admitted into its "share" of economic life and had been virtually denied the right to form its own protective institutions. Industrial capitalism in Spain was still a relatively new phenomenon, neither affluent enough to mitigate working class unrest nor sure of its place in political life—yet still asserting an unqualified right to ruthlessly exploit its "hired hands." But this new phenomenon was already beginning to find its way if not toward traditional European liberal political forms, then toward authoritarian ones which would give it the breathing space to develop.

The economic crisis of the thirties (which radicals throughout the world viewed as the final "chronic crisis" of capitalism), coupled with the myopic policies of the Spanish liberals and ruling classes, turned the class struggle in Spain into an explosive class war. The agrarian reform policies of the early thirties republic turned out to be farcical. The liberals were more preoccupied with baiting the Church than dealing seriously with the long-range or even short-range economic problems of the peninsula. The Socialists, who joined the liberals in governing the country, were more concerned with promoting the growth of the UGT at the expense of the CNT than in improving the material conditions of the working class as a whole. The CNT, strongly influenced by volatile the *faístas* whose radical education had been acquired in the *pistolero* battles of the early twenties, exploded into repeated insurrections—uprisings which its leaders probably knew were futile, but were meant to stimulate the revolutionary spirit of the working class. These failures by all the elements of Spain in the early republican years to meet the promise of reform left no recourse but revolution and civil war. Except for the most dedicated anarchists, it was a conflict that no one really wanted. But between 1931, when the monarchy was overthrown, and 1936, when the generals rebelled, everyone was sleep-walking into the last of the great proletarian revolutions—perhaps the greatest in terms of its short-lived social programs and the initiative shown by the oppressed. The era seemed to have collected all its energies, its traditions, and its dreams for its last great confrontation—and thereafter was to disappear.

It is not surprising that the most communistic collectives in the Spanish Revolution appeared in the countryside rather than the cities, among villagers who were still influenced by archaic

collectivistic traditions and were less ensnared in a market economy than their urban cousins. The ascetic values which so greatly influenced these highly communistic collectives often reflected the extreme poverty of the areas in which they were rooted. Cooperation and mutual aid in such cases formed the preconditions for survival of the community. Elsewhere, in the more arid areas of Spain, the need for sharing water and maintaining irrigation works was an added inducement to collective farming. Here, collectivization was also a technological necessity, but one which even the republic did not interfere with. What makes these rural collectives important is not only that many of them practiced communism, but that they functioned so effectively under a system of popular self-management. This belies the notion held by so many authoritarian Marxists that economic life must be scrupulously "planned" by a highly centralized state power and the odious canard that popular collectivization, as distinguished from statist nationalization, necessarily pits collectivized enterprises against each other in competition for profits and resources.

In the cities, however, collectivization of the factories, communications systems, and transport facilities took a very different form. Initially nearly the entire economy in CNT-FAI areas had been taken over by committees elected from among the workers and were loosely coordinated by higher union committees. As time went on this system was increasingly tightened. The higher committee began to preempt the initiative to the lower although their decisions still had to be ratified by the workers of the facilities involved. The effect of this process was to tend to centralize the economy of CNT-FAI areas in the hands of the union. The extent to which this process unfolded varied greatly from industry to industry and area to area, and with the limited knowledge we have at hand, generalizations are very difficult to formulate. With the entry of the CNT-FAI into the Catalan government in 1936, the process of centralization continued and the union-controlled facilities became wedded to the state. By early 1938 a political bureaucracy had largely supplanted the authority of the workers' committees in all "republican"-held cities. Although workers' control existed in theory, it had virtually disappeared in fact.

If the commune formed the basis for the rural collectives, the committee formed the basis for the industrial collectives. Indeed, apart from the rural communes, the committee system predominated wherever the State power had collapsed—in villages and towns as well as factories and urban neighborhoods. "All had been set up in the heat of action to direct the popular response to the military coup d'état," observe Pierre Broué and Emile Témime:

"They had been appointed in an infinite number of ways. In the villages, the factories, and on the work sites, time had sometimes been taken to elect them, at least summarily, at a general meeting. At all events, care had been taken to see that all parties and unions were represented on them, even if they did not exist before the Revolution, because the Committee represented at one and the same time as the workers a whole and the sum total of their organizations: in more than one place those elected came to an understanding as to who was to represent one or another union, who would be the 'Republican' and who the 'Socialist.' Very often, in the towns, the most active elements appointed themselves. It was sometimes the electors as a whole who chose the men to sit on the Committee of each organization, but more often the members of the Committee were elected either by a vote within their own organization or were quite simply appointed by the local governing committees of the parties and unions."

The nearly forty years that separate our own time from the Spanish revolution have produced sweeping changes in Western Europe and America, changes that are also reflected in Spain's present social development. The classical proletariat that fought so desperately for the minimal means of life is giving way to a more affluent worker whose main concern is not material survival

and employment, but a more human way of life and meaningful work. The social composition of the labor force is changing as well—proportionately, more toward commercial, service, and professional vocations than unskilled labor in mass manufacturing industries. Spain, like the rest of Western Europe, is no longer predominantly an agricultural country; the majority of its people live in towns and cities, not in the relatively isolated villages that nourished rural collectivism. In a visit to working class Barcelona during the late sixties, I seemed to see as many American-style attaché cases as lunch boxes.

These changes in the goals and traits of the nonbourgeois classes in capitalist society are the products of the sweeping industrial revolution that followed the Second World War and of the relative affluence or expectations of affluence that have brought all the values of material scarcity into question They have introduced a historic tension between the irrationality of present lifeways and the utopian promise of a liberated society. The young workers of the late sixties and early seventies tend to borrow their values from relatively affluent middle-class youth, who no longer hypostasize the work ethic, puritanical mores, hierarchical obedience, and material security, but rather free time for self-development, sexual liberation in the broadest sense of the term, creative or stimulating work as distinguished from mindless labor, and an almost libidinal disdain for all authority. In Spain it is significant that privileged university students, who tended to play a reactionary role in the thirties, are among the most radical elements of society in the sixties and seventies. Together with young workers and intellectuals in all fields, they are beginning to accept in varying degrees the personalistic and utopistic goals that make the puritanical and overly institutionalized anarchosyndicalism of the CNT-FAI seem anachronistic.

The limitations of the trade union movement, even in its anarchosyndicalist form, have become manifestly clear. To see in trade unions (whether syndicalist or not) an inherent potentiality for revolutionary struggle is to assume that the interests of workers and capitalists, *merely as classes*, are intrinsically incompatible. This is demonstrably untrue if one is willing to acknowledge the obvious capacity of the system to remake or to literally create the worker in the image of a repressive industrial culture and rationality. From the family, through the school and religious institutions, the mass media, to the factory and finally trade union and "revolutionary" party, capitalist society conspires to foster obedience, hierarchy, the work ethic, and authoritarian discipline in the working class as a whole; indeed, in many of its "emancipatory" movements as well.

The factory and the class organizations that spring from it play the most the compelling role in promoting a well-regulated, almost unconscious docility in mature workers—a docility that manifests itself not so much in characterless passivity as in a pragmatic commitment to hierarchical organizations and authoritarian leaders. Workers can be very militant and exhibit strong, even powerful character traits in the most demanding social situations; but these traits can be brought as much, if not more readily, to the service of a reformist labor bureaucracy as to a libertarian revolutionary movement. They must break with the hold of bourgeois culture on their sensibilities—specifically, with the hold of the factory, the locus of the workers' very *class* existence—before they can move into that supreme form of direct action called "revolution," and further, construct a society they will *directly* control in their workshops and communities.

This amounts to saying that workers must see themselves as human beings, not as class beings; as creative personalities, not as "proletarians"; as self-affirming individuals, not as "masses." And the destiny of a liberated society must be the free commune, not the confederation of factories, however self-administered; for such a confederation takes a part of society—its economic

component—and reifies it into the totality of society. Indeed, even that economic component must be humanized precisely by our bringing an "affinity of friendship" to the work process, by diminishing the role of onerous work in the lives of the producers, indeed, by a total "transvaluation of values" (to use Nietzsche's phrase) as it applies to production and consumption as well as social and personal life.

Even though certain aspects of the libertarian revolution in Spain have lost their relevance, anarchist concepts themselves that can encompass and fully express a "post-scarcity mentality" can be much more relevant to the present than the authoritarian ideologies of the 1930s, despite the tendency of these ideologies to fill the vacuum left by the absence of meaningful libertarian alternatives and organizations. Such anarchist concepts could no longer rely in practical terms on the collectivist traditions of the countryside; these traditions are virtually gone as living forces although perhaps the memory of the old collectivist traditions lives among Spanish youth in the same sense that American youth have turned to the tribal traditions of the American Indians for cultural inspiration. With the decline of the nuclear family and in reaction to urban atomization, the commune has everywhere acquired a new relevance for young and even older people—a shared, mutually supportive way of life based on *selective* affinity rather than kinship ties. Burgeoning urbanization has posed more sharply than ever the need for decentralistic alternatives to the megalopolis; the gigantism of the city, the need for the human scale. The grotesque bureaucratization of life, which in Camus's words reduces everyone to a functionary, has placed a new value on nonauthoritarian institutions and direct action. Slowly, even amidst the setbacks of our time, a new self is being forged. Potentially, this is a libertarian self that could intervene directly in the changing and administration of society—a self that could engage in the self-discipline, self-activity, and self-management so crucial to the development of a truly free society. Here the values prized so highly by traditional anarchocommunism establish direct continuity with a contemporary form of anarchocommunism that gives consciousness and coherence to the intuitive impulses of this new sensibility.

But if these goals are to be achieved, contemporary anarchocommunism cannot remain a mere mood or tendency, wafting in the air like a cultural ambiance It must be organized—indeed, *well*-organized—if it is to effectively articulate and spread this new sensibility; it must have a coherent theory and extensive literature; it must be capable of dueling with the authoritarian movements that try to denature the intuitive libertarian impulses of our time and channel social unrest into hierarchical forms of organization. On this score, Spanish anarchism is profoundly relevant for our time, and the Spanish Revolution still provides the most valuable lessons in the problem of self-management that we can cull from the past.

To deal with these problems, perhaps I can best begin by saying that there is little, in fact, to criticize in the structural forms that the CNT and the FAI tried to establish. The CNT, almost from the outset, organized its locals as factory rather than craft unions, and the nationwide occupational federations (the *Uniones de oficio*, or "internationals" as we would call them) which emerged with the IWMA were abandoned for local federations (the *Federaciones locales*). This structure situated the factory in the community, where it really belonged if the "commune" concept was to be realistic, rather than in an easily manipulatable industrial network that easily lent itself to statist nationalization The *centros obreros*, the local federations, the careful mandating of delegates to congresses, the elimination of paid officials, the establishment of regional federations, regional committees, and even a National Committee, would all have been in conformity with libertarian principles had all of these institutions lived up their intentions. Where the CNT

structure failed most seriously was in the need to convene frequent assemblies of workers at the local level, and similarly, frequent national and regional conferences to continually reevaluate CNT policies and prevent power from collecting in the higher committees. For as frequent as meetings may have been—committees, subcommittees, and regional and national committee meetings—the regular and close communication between workers and the "influential militants" did tend to become ruptured.

Confusion developed over the crucial problem of the locus for making policy decisions. The real place for this process should have been shop assemblies, regular congresses, or when events and circumstances required rapid decisions, conferences of clearly mandated and recallable delegates elected for this purpose by the membership. The sole responsibility of the regional and national committees should have been administrative—that is, the coordination and execution of policy decisions formulated by membership meetings and conference or congress delegates.

Nevertheless, the structure of the CNT as a syndicalist union and that of the FAI as an anarchist federation was, in many respects, quite admirable. Indeed, my principal criticisms in the pages above have been not so much of the forms themselves, but of the departures the CNT and the FAI made from them. Perhaps even more significantly, I've tried to explain the social limitations of the period—including the mystique about the classical proletariat—that vitiated the realization of these structural forms.

Another issue that was a crucial problem for the FAI and which is still a source of confusion for anarchists at the present time is the problem of the "influential militant"—the more informed, experienced, "strong," and oratorically gifted individuals who tended to formulate policy at all levels of the organization.

It will never be possible to eliminate the fact that human beings have different levels of knowledge and consciousness. Our prolonged period of dependence as children, the fact that we are largely the products of an acquired culture and that experience tends to confer knowledge on the older person would lead to such differences even in the most liberated society. In hierarchical societies, the dependence of the less-informed on the more-informed is commonly a means of manipulation and power. The older, more experienced person, like the parent, has this privilege at his or her disposal and, with it, an alternative: to use knowledge, experience, and oratorical gifts as means of domination and to induce adulation—or for the goal of lovingly imparting knowledge and experience, for equalizing the relationship between teacher and taught, and always leaving the less experienced and informed individual free to make his or her decisions.

Hegel brilliantly draws the distinction between Socrates and Jesus: the former was a teacher who sought to arouse a quest for knowledge in anyone who was prepared to discuss; the latter, an oracle who pronounced for adoring disciples to interpret exegetically. The difference, as Hegel points out, lay not only in the character of the two men but in that of their "followers." Socrates' friends had been reared in a social tradition that "developed their powers in many directions. They had absorbed that democratic spirit which gives an individual a greater measure of independence and makes it impossible for any tolerably good head to depend wholly and absolutely on one person… They loved Socrates because of his virtue and his philosophy, not virtue and his philosophy because of him." The followers of Jesus, on the other hand, were submissive acolytes: "Lacking any great store of spiritual energy of their own, they had found the basis of their conviction about the teaching of Jesus principally in their friendship with him and dependence on him. They had not attained truth and freedom by their own exertions; only by laborious learning had they acquired a dim sense of them and certain formulas about them. Their ambition was to

grasp and keep this doctrine faithfully and to transmit it equally faithfully to others without any addition, without letting it acquire any variations in detail by working on it themselves."

The FAI—illegal by choice, sometimes terrorist in its tactics, and aggressively "macho" in its almost competitive daring—developed deeply personal ties within its affinity groups. Durruti's grief for the death of Francisco Ascaso revealed real love, not merely the friendship that stems from organizational collaboration. But in the FAI both friendship and love were often based on a demanding association, one that implicitly required conformity to the most "heroic" standards established by the most "daring" militants in the group. Such relationships are not likely to shatter over doctrinal disagreements or what often seem like "mere" points of theory. Eventually these relationships produce leaders and led; worse, the leaders tended to patronize the led and finally manipulate them.

To escape this process of devolution, an anarchist organization must be aware of the fact that the process can occur, and it must be vigilant against its occurrence. To be effective, the vigilance must eventually express itself in more positive terms. It cannot coexist with an adulation of violence, competitive daring, and mindless aggressiveness, not to speak of an equally mindless worship of activism and "strong characters." The organization must recognize that differences in experiences and consciousness *do* exist among its members and handle these differences with a wary consciousness—not conceal them with euphemisms like "influential militant." The taught as well as the teacher must first ask himself or herself whether domination and manipulation is being practiced—and not to deny that a systematic teaching process is taking place. Moreover, everyone must be fully aware that this teaching process is unavoidable within the movement if relationships are eventually to be equalized by imparted knowledge and the fruits of experience. To a large extent, the conclusions one arrives about the nature of this process are almost intuitively determinable by the behavior patterns that develop between comrades. Ultimately, under conditions of freedom, social intercourse, friendship, and love would be of the "free-giving" kind that Jacob Bachofen imputed to "matriarchal" society, not the demanding censorious type he associated with patriarchy. Here, the affinity group or commune would achieve the most advanced and libertarian expression of its humanity. Merely to strive for this goal among its own brothers and sisters would qualitatively distinguish it from other movements and provide the most assurable guarantee that it would remain true to its libertarian principles.

Our period, which stresses the development of the individual self as well as social self-management, stands in a highly advantageous position to assess the authentic nature of libertarian organization and relationships. A European or American civil war of the kind that wasted Spain in the thirties is no longer conceivable in an epoch that can deploy nuclear weapons, supersonic aircraft, nerve gas, and a terrifying firepower against revolutionaries. Capitalist institutions must be hollowed out by a molecular historical process of disengagement and disloyalty to a point where any popular majoritarian movement can cause them to collapse for want of support and moral authority. But the kind of development such a change will produce—whether it will occur consciously or not, whether it will have an authoritarian outcome or one based on self-management—will depend very much upon whether a conscious, well-organized libertarian movement can emerge.

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Reflections on Spanish Anarchism
Spring 1974

Published: in *Our Generation*, vol. 10, no. 1 (Spring 1974). HTML-markup: Jonas Holmgren at https://www.marxists.org/archive/bookchin/1973/09/reflections.htm