

# **ANARCHIST ORGANISATION**

**THE HISTORY OF THE F.A.I.**

**JUAN GÓMEZ CASAS**

translated by  
**ABE BLUESTEIN**



Montreal·Buffalo



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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Anarchist Federation of Iberia (F.A.I.) was an unusual organization. Born in 1927 during the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in spite of the watchful eyes of the police and security forces, it appeared strong, vigorous, and ready for action when the dictatorship fell in 1930-31.

With a membership estimated at five to thirty thousand during the Republic and the Revolution and Civil War, the F.A.I. exercised great influence in the National Confederation of Labour (C.N.T.), which had a membership of a half-million in 1931 and a million and a half at the start of the Civil War. Opponents of the F.A.I. accused it of "seizing power" in the C.N.T., although there was no central power to seize. The C.N.T. was so decentralized that all resolutions and policies had to start in the local unions and work their way up through local, provincial, regional, and national federations.

It did not seem to matter that on occasion some anarchist spokesman spoke in the name of the F.A.I. even though he did not belong to it, or that some members of the F.A.I. preferred to work in the C.N.T. rather than in their ideological-specific organization. Nor did the C.N.T., with its far greater membership, mind sharing equal "billing" with the much smaller F.A.I.

The anarchist militants in the C.N.T. and those in the F.A.I. found themselves agreeing on most issues—including the precedent-breaking collaboration with the Republican government, due to the exceptional circumstances of the Civil War—in spite of severe criticism by the Libertarian Youth, a minority of anarchists in the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., and anarchists abroad. The F.A.I. was an expression of spirit and dedication to the goal of libertarian communism, and all who fought for this ideal felt at one with the F.A.I., even if they did not hold an F.A.I. membership card or belong to one of its groups.

I personally witnessed the fundamentally free democratic spirit of the Spanish libertarian movement when I was in Barcelona during the

Revolution and Civil War in 1937 after the May Days, a week of fighting against the communists, who were trying to destroy the Revolution. At a conference of local unions in Barcelona, the leadership sought and obtained the support of the unions to continue to collaborate with the government of Catalonia after the May Days. However, the unions refused to withhold financial support for the Libertarian Youth, who opposed the policy of collaboration vigorously in their publications. And the unions also refused to call upon the transit workers not to distribute these opposition publications in the public transit system, or the milk drivers to stop distributing the Libertarian Youth papers together with the daily milk.

And then I saw a Libertarian Youth conference which was prepared to vote almost unanimously to condemn without debate the policy of government collaboration. However, the chairman insisted that supporters of collaboration be given a chance to speak and be heard. I saw six young men go to the platform and argue earnestly and eloquently for their viewpoint. There were no interruptions, no booing. The vote remained almost unanimous in favour of opposing collaboration.

Approximately one thousand representatives attended each conference.

In this book, Juan Gómez Casas tells the story of an anarchist organization which left its mark on the history of Spain in the twelve short years of its existence, from 1927 to 1939. In the post-Franco years, the C.N.T. and other libertarian organizations have resumed their activities. Although they have reaffirmed their adherence to classical anarchism, namely anti-statism and anti-government, they have not come to a clear conclusion that collaboration with government under the exceptional circumstance of revolution and civil war was a mistake that should never again be repeated.

I believe that this work will be of great interest to all who want to strengthen the foundations of freedom everywhere. With this translation of Juan Gómez Casas' work, I hope that I have contributed somewhat to the cause of libertarian communism in the English-speaking world.

I cannot close without expressing my sincere appreciation to my friend Louis Frank for making available to me his English translation of Casas' book. We met in Spain during the Revolution and Civil War. We both worked for the C.N.T.-F.A.I. at that time, and I was not surprised to learn in 1984 that we were both still supporting the same movement and the same ideals.

Abe Bluestein

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Juan Gómez Casas

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## INTRODUCTION

I do not intend to present a definitive history of an organization as famous and as controversial as was the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) from the moment of its founding in 1927 until its disappearance from Spanish public life in 1939 at the end of the Civil War. Such a history would have to cover, at least in summary form, the F.A.I.'s roots in the Alliance of Social Democracy in Spain, which in turn gave rise to the International Working Men's Association in Spain during the last century.

My work will include a brief sketch of the theory developed by anarchist groups following the breakup of the International in Spain. It will also record the creation of the National Confederation of Labour (C.N.T.) in 1910 and its development during the second decade of this century until the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera.

I will try to follow the activities of the anarchist groups during the period of terrorism\* and their return to the underground existence forced on them by the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The National Federation of Anarchist Groups was the immediate predecessor of the F.A.I.

Little is actually known about this specific anarchist organization. To state it more precisely, there are not many documentary sources to

\* After World War I, the reactionary employer organization in Barcelona violated its pretension to nationalism and autonomy for Catalonia by joining with the reactionary central government of Madrid to fight the C.N.T., which had become strong and had won many victories for the workers during the war. The government and the employers tried to fight the unions with terror, killing union militants on the streets, in their homes, at union meetings. The unions responded in kind, killing leading reactionaries in government, business, and even the Church. Hundreds were assassinated on both sides until the C.N.T. was forced underground after several years.—*transl. note*

support the facts that *are* known about it. The C.N.T.-F.A.I. archives, which were brought out of Spain at the end of the Civil War and placed in the Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, have been opened to the public, but access to them is not easy. My work will be an approximate history of the F.A.I. Undoubtedly, other works now being prepared on the same subject will have a larger number of supporting documents.

However, this work is written with an inner understanding. Although I identify with the subject, my history is more accurate than those of writers who pretend to be objective but who are in fact very subjective. Many writers start with *a priori* positions that are distorted either deliberately or out of ignorance, or else they pretend to be scientific and detached. This is the case with the majority of Anglo-Saxon writers who have dealt with the Spanish Civil War. They thought they could write about the better known developments with some objectivity, but hardly *tried* to penetrate the hidden depths of the conflict, the identity of political groups, or the depth of the revolutionary process. Such historians fall into a lamentable dilettantism, as Noam Chomsky has characterized the majority of liberal Americans who have written about the Civil War. Here are some examples.

Drieu la Rochelle, upon seeing what anarchosyndicalism accomplished during a visit to Barcelona after July 1936, asserted that such revolutionary dynamism could only be a transformation of the religious reform that was suppressed in Spain into a belated manifestation of Protestantism. Such an interpretation is folklore, however attractive. It was echoed immediately by Spanish and foreign authors, including Brennan, Woodcock, Joll, Becarud, and Lapouge. These authors offered other colourful versions of anarchism as well, such as the rural thrust of anarchism, its aversion to technological progress, and a certain nostalgia for the bucolic past that could never be brought back. Hobsbaum affirmed, in the final chapter on the Andalusian peasant insurrections in his book *Primitive Rebels*,\* that if communist ideology, instead of Bakuninism, had influenced the Andalusian peasants in the past century, the propertied classes would have had to make more compromises. Ineffable ingenuity on the part of a reputable writer playing with historical fiction.

Similar attitudes can be observed among some Spanish authors: a history professor who reviews books in several weeklies said recently

\* E. J. Hobsbaum wrote an account of the uprising by peasants in 1933 in Casas Viejas, a small, poor village in Andalusia. The uprising, led by a sixty-year-old anarchist, was crushed, and all who were involved, including little children, were brutally killed. Hobsbaum's approach was that of a Marxist.—*transl. note*

that the roots of Spanish anarchism may be found in great part in, among other things, the lack of culture in Spain and the large number of illiterate peons controlled by the anarchists. Evidently, this type of Spanish social philosophy was easily understood by the illiterate masses. However, the professor could not ignore a study by Victor Manuel Arbela, published in *Revista del Trabajo*, Nos. 30 and 31, 1970, that 103 newspapers and periodicals were published by the anarchists between 1869 and 1923, a remarkable figure for an illiterate movement, and undoubtedly double the number of publications issued by all other Spanish organizations.

Many similar themes are repeated again and again. Writers constantly affirm in all seriousness that the First International was created by Marx and Engels, and that the first Workers' Congress held by the First International in Spain more than a hundred years ago, with anarchism predominating, was a failure because it did not succeed in creating a workers' party of the Marxist type, as if an anarchist conception of the world could come from Marxist policy. And there are those who characterize the International in Spain and its course of action as a "Bakuninist error." They reproach the International for its abstention from politics and its rejection of alliances, without recognizing that the International represented something entirely new, a radical separation from all bourgeois values and their parties. In the second place, the International was forced underground for seven years by Sagasta almost as soon as it was born.\* He charged it with advocating a criminal philosophy. Writers do not always take into account that when the International became legal again, the government musical chairs of alternating parties was going on, supported by local *caciques* (political bosses in rural areas) with their direct connections to the great men of Madrid. Even if political action had been in the programme of the Spanish Regional Federation (F.R.E.), which it was not, it would have been absolutely impossible because there was no way to move along such lines.

In our day, if we accept the well-informed analysis of John Brademas in his book *Anarchosindicalism and Revolution in Spain, 1936-37*, supported by a large number of documents and interviews with many militants,

\* Drought and famine in Andalusia in the late 1870's and early 1880's created a spirit of desperation among starving agricultural workers. Strikes broke out in many villages, resulting in violent persecution by the authorities and retaliatory violence by the strikers, who were organized in anarchist unions. Killings took place on both sides. The Sagasta government, supposedly liberal, suppressed the unions, forcing the movement to go underground.—*transl. note*

the relations of the C.N.T. and its supporters since its founding, and especially the later relations between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., were distorted by extraordinary manipulations. Following the example of Brademas, other writers have gathered protagonists' direct testimony of the history of the libertarian labour movement, along with a great deal of documentation; they then, unfortunately, use it to support their *a priori* conclusions. Clever distortions of history are thus being presented to support certain ideologies. In some instances, it is not a matter of expressing particular opinions, but simply of diletantism and ignorance. In other cases, the distortion is, in my opinion, a matter of deliberate adulteration.

This has been the case, for example, in dealing with the C.N.T.-F.A.I. relationship, and the confusion in describing the C.N.T. and its components. It is then repeated in treating the history of the First International. In the case of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., the play with words is epic. The C.N.T. is presented at one and the same time as pure syndicalism and as anarchosyndicalism, a contradiction in terms since pure syndicalism is nothing but a blank continent on which we can put whatever we want, whereas anarchosyndicalism constitutes a joining together of the ideals of anarchism and workers' syndicates. There are times when anarchosyndicalism and anarchism may be in disagreement. However, the preferred version of disagreement is usually presented as the C.N.T. viewpoint as opposed to the anarchist, and, after the appearance of the F.A.I. in 1927, the C.N.T. versus the F.A.I. viewpoint. There are innumerable instances where the above-mentioned "specialists" commit the error of regarding the roots and tendencies in the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. as in opposition to each other. Let us examine briefly some of these incongruities.

The F.A.I. was the specific organization of the anarchists who "seized power" within the C.N.T. in crucial situations, according to the diletantes. This vulgar conception of taking power underscores their ignorance because no one *can* take or exercise power in an organization such as the C.N.T. This ignorance is ingenious when the "specialists" speak of the F.A.I.'s interference in the C.N.T. The C.N.T., they say, would have been a pure, simple workers' organization had not the anarchists deliriously sought maximum goals.

José Campos, in *El Movimiento Libertario Español* (published by Ruedo Iberico), states:

The attack on the F.A.I. was at bottom a deliberate attack on the character of the C.N.T., its anarchism and anti-governmentalism. The attack began with the communists and was followed by Pestana and others. Pestana



imagined a pure C.N.T. as a united central organization whose members would keep their political opinions outside the unions. This was the position of syndicalism in France as defined by the Amiens Charter. The great difference lay in the understanding that trade-union action would arise from the autonomous labour response to immediate situations from day to day. Pestana and his Syndicalist Party, gestating for a long time, tried to communicate their ideology to the unions from the outside through their party. This was Marxism, possibilism (fighting for the possible, for immediate reforms), governmentalism (working through the government)—anything except what the C.N.T. stands for. Those who were against the F.A.I. later were also trying to accomplish the same ends. They were profoundly anti-anarchist, against a revolutionary C.N.T., the only type of movement that could have arisen from the tradition of the First International.

Mentioning specific writers who speak of the differences between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., describing them as opposition between CNTism and FAIism, the author states that they offer a fantasy C.N.T. that suits their taste, falsified and cut off from its historic roots: "The C.N.T. as Spanish reaction would want it to be."

In reality, our specialists ignore the close blood relationship between the C.N.T. and anarchism, similar to that of the Spanish Regional Federation (F.R.E.) of 1869 and the Alliance of Social Democracy. An anarchist majority supported the programme in the congresses of both periods. It cannot therefore be denied that both the F.R.E. and the C.N.T. were overwhelmingly anarchist. They expelled undesirable elements that went against the fibre of their beings: authoritarian groups that arose in different guises from time to time. In 1934, the C.N.T. expelled as incompatible an excrescence that had arisen some years before, during the obscure period of the de Rivera dictatorship. This excrescence, which is cited by the "specialists," described itself as syndicalism and wanted to make over the entire C.N.T. in its image. However, this element was nothing but political syndicalism, something that had nothing to do with programmes adopted by the regular congresses of the C.N.T.

Political syndicalism finally adopted its natural form, the Syndicalist Party, and the problem was settled for good. The Congress of Reunification at Saragossa clarified things. The new Syndicalist Party won two seats in 1936, in the face of the general indifference of the C.N.T. The confusion was now cleared up: syndicalism meant political syndicalism, the Syndicalist Party. The C.N.T. continued to be what it had always been: the dynamic expression of Spanish anarchosyndicalism.

It is my intention to write a short history of the F.A.I., and for this we will have to go back to the Alliance of Social Democracy, whose

seed was planted by Fanelli during his trip to Spain in 1868.\* This Alliance also had its ups and downs, its detractors and defenders. The detractors were particularly virulent. Some of them, of famous name, could both do scientific work and write political pamphlets of the lowest level at the same time. History is not only the history of class struggle, but also at times a struggle within classes. These struggles were often coloured with blind passion. The weapons used in the fight for domination were falsehood, calumny, and intrigue. Without that deformed and profoundly corrupting, or magnificent character, as the case may be, history would still be incomprehensible. We would still be examining economic and historic facts in search of rational explanations. Returning to the subject with which we are now concerned, we will examine briefly the story of the Alliance in Spain because of its analogy to the modern F.A.I.

As the reader will see, the Alliance of Social Democracy was in existence in the last century before and after the time of the Spanish Regional Federation (F.R.E.), the Spanish section of the First International. I must point out that even before it was organized formally, the Alliance's programme and point of view were the inspiration of F.R.E. The establishment of F.R.E. following the visit of Fanelli was most important because it not only gave life and revolutionary content to a movement of organized and internationalist masses, such as F.R.E., but it planted anarchism in Spain. I have pointed out elsewhere the sociological, political, and historical reasons that favoured its introduction and development. At this time, I shall only say that it was an extraordinarily small anarchist organization in terms of membership. However, it was large in its personal values and revolutionary virtues, and it left a profound heritage that inspired anarchism and anarchosyndicalism in Spain during the nineteenth century and the first third of the twentieth century.

The modern F.A.I., born in 1927, the subject of our study, is not something absolutely new or original. It is part of a historic tradition that assumed different forms during the course of seventy years, and different names. It split into opposing factions at various times, but

\* Giuseppi Fanelli (1827-1877) was an Italian anarchist and follower of Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian anarchist and the main opponent of Karl Marx in the First International. Fanelli went to Spain in 1868 at Bakunin's instigation. He stayed in Barcelona and Madrid for several months and established anarchist sections of the International Working Men's Association (the First International) in both cities.—*transl. note*

was always present in Spain's social struggles. Unlike the Alliance, the F.A.I. did not create any type of labour movement. It was created by men who were active in anarchist groups and belonged almost without exception to the C.N.T.

As I have already said, I am not attempting an exhaustive history of the F.A.I., but rather a useful guide. I believe it will merit serious consideration. If it does, I have accomplished my purpose.



## Chapter One

### ANTECEDENTS OF THE ALLIANCE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN SPAIN

Fanelli's work in Spain was legendary, Max Nettlau tells us. He refers to *La Révolte* of Paris (May 4, 1893), for example, which describes Fanelli as

...fervent, persuasive, who was in Spain for a short time in Bakunin's time, travelled around the country, found men one at a time who were willing to listen to him, to be convinced, and to come to anarchism under his guidance. He brought together a generation of men who made the Spanish anarchist movement one of the most compact in Europe and one of the most prepared for social struggles.

Fanelli's activities in Spain are very well known through various works, and especially the universally known history of the International in Spain by Anselmo Lorenzo. This organization had between fifty and seventy thousand members in a short time and at various periods. All this work flowed from the programme of the Bakuninist Alliance, operating in a pre-working-class movement at a time of utopian socialism, federal republicanism, and Proudhonism. However, I will not stop at this period, since it has been analyzed many times.

Before starting the historical sketch of the Alliance of Social Democracy in Spain, we must describe briefly the general antecedents of the Bakuninist alliance in Geneva, and then establish its relations with the Spanish Alliance groups.

Bakunin had created the Alliance of International Brothers in 1864. The Russian revolutionary was in Italy at the time, and received an invitation from Karl Marx to join the International. However, Bakunin

preferred to create a secret revolutionary group, not against the principles of the International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.), as Clara E. Lida contends, but rather independent of them and, in Bakunin's view, complementary to the International in certain ways. In view of the difficulties of that period, Bakunin believed that secret groups of convinced and absolutely trustworthy men were safer and more effective. They would be able to place themselves at the head of developments at critical moments, but only to inspire and to clarify the issues.

Bakunin had belonged to the Italian Masons in his youth "in order to extend his contacts with the more progressive groups on the peninsula and strengthen his own secret organization." Lida follows this quotation with the following statement by Bakunin: "Freemasonry could serve as a disguise or passport for me; but to look to it for a regular occupation would be as foolish as seeking comfort in wine." Between 1864 and 1866, Bakunin was in contact with various other secret societies. In 1866, he started another secret organization, the International Brotherhood, with members in several countries.

In the next two years, Bakunin was active in the League for Peace and Freedom, an international association formed by such men as John Stuart Mill, Garibaldi, Victor Hugo, Louis Blanc, and Herzen. The League was essentially pacifist and sought to unite Europe under the banner of a republican government. Bakunin, who belonged to the International, proposed at the League's congress at Brussels in 1868 that it join the International and extend a formal invitation along the following lines: "The delegates of the International believe that there is no need for the League for Peace in view of the work of the International. They invite the League to join the International and its members to join one of its sections." But at its next congress, the League for Peace and Freedom came out "explicitly and vehemently against the economic and social equality of classes and individuals." Immediately after that, the Russian revolutionary organized the International Alliance of Social Democracy with his friends and a small faction that had split off from the League.

In September 1869 the International Alliance requested membership in the International Working Men's Association. At the same time, however, they organized a secret alliance. The strategy of this organization, which Lida incorrectly believed to be a hierarchy, is reflected in this passage quoted by her:

The Alliance has a double goal: a) to spread an understanding among the masses of politics, social economy, and, above all, philosophical problems. It will carry on an active propaganda by means of publications, leaflets, and

books, and through open organizations which it will help to start; b) it will try to attract into its membership men of intelligence, energetic, discreet, of good will, sincere and dedicated to our ideals for the purpose of forming an invisible network of revolutionaries throughout Europe who will be devoted and strong, thanks to this alliance.

In December 1868 the General Council of the I.W.M.A., a Marxist island in the International, rejected the request for admission by the International Alliance, which had grown in influence and strength, but would permit it to affiliate as a simple section, providing it accepted the statutes of the International. The Alliance accepted these conditions, and in the spring of 1869 the International Alliance was dissolved and joined the International as the Geneva section. However, here is a key fact: Fanelli came to Spain with the impression that the General Council in London had accepted the original proposal of the Alliance to affiliate with the I.W.M.A. More than two months elapsed before it was known in Geneva that the Council in London had turned down the first approach by the Alliance. In addition, because of lack of contact between Fanelli and his comrades in Geneva, he did not know about the second stage of the process, namely, public dissolution of the International Alliance. Fanelli therefore gave the statutes of the Alliance and the I.W.M.A. to his first contacts in Madrid and Barcelona, along with a series of articles, doctrinal works, and other material. If this is so, Lida's assertion that what seemed to be acceptable in September 1868 could be interpreted four months later as spreading the message of the Alliance at the expense of the I.W.M.A., or "as a Bakuninist betrayal of international labour unity," is strange and confusing.

When Fanelli returned to Switzerland at the beginning of 1869, Bakunin announced the dissolution of the Secret Alliance. However, the Secret Alliance was not terminated, at least not until the final congress at The Hague. Guillaume interprets this action as a tactic to avoid possible accusations from the Marxist General Council in London and to accomplish a reorganization of the body in more favourable circumstances.

The first Spaniards to have contact with Bakunin were Rafael Farga Pellicer and Gaspar Santinon, undoubtedly through Fanelli. There is a letter dated August 1, 1869, from Farga Pellicer to Bakunin, written from Barcelona on the eve of the Basel congress. Farga Pellicer was, at that time, secretary of the Federal Centre of Workers' Societies of Barcelona, which became affiliated with the International soon after. F.R.E. was parallel to the Federal Centre at that time, and the internationalist militants were moving it gradually toward the I.W.M.A.,

as Farga explained in his letter to Bakunin. Farga's affiliation with the Geneva Alliance can be seen in the following passage in his letter: "At next Sunday's session I will tell my friends in the International (Barcelona section) about your letter and your wish that the more democratic socialists and radicals join the Alliance. As for myself, I accept completely everything in the little book that you sent me."

In August 1869, shortly before the Basel congress of the International, Bakunin's influence reached its zenith, dominating the congress and arousing Marx's fears. Farga Pellicer and Gaspar Santinon, who had come to Basel as delegates of the Federal Centre of Workers' Societies, took the occasion to see a great deal of Bakunin and share his ideas and ideals.

Returning to the subject of the Geneva Alliance, it was organized as a section on June 26, 1869, in expectation of being admitted to the International. The decision of the General Council in London reached Geneva on July 28, 1869, and was signed by P.G. Eccarius, general secretary of the Council. As soon as it was established, the section printed 200 Alliance membership cards for its members. The famous, controversial cards contained the statutes of the International, the resolutions of its congresses, and the programme of the Geneva Alliance of Social Democracy, and an internal publication similar to the publications of other sections. Farga Pellicer was expressing his agreement with this pamphlet in his letter quoted above. Tomas Gonzalez Morago, founder of the International in Madrid, together with Lorenzo and the other founding members, also received a membership letter and pamphlet from the Geneva International. All available records confirm that the correspondence of the Geneva Alliance, or, concretely, Bakunin, was conducted above all with Farga, Santinon, Alerini, and other Alliance members in Barcelona, and very little correspondence was conducted with the Madrid members.

The collective pamphlet by Lafargne, Marx, Engels, and Utine on the activities of the Alliance, titled "The Democratic Alliance and the International Working Men's Association," is full of passages describing the Alliance as a mysterious body, scheming and hierarchical, which directed its members from a centre, or summit, in Geneva. Nothing could be further from the truth. Here's what Max Nettlau says of this libel:

Almost everything in the 1873 pamphlet is false or biased. The correspondence of the Marxist chiefs with, at that time, their sub-chief F.A. Sorge in New York, published in 1906, permits us to see the atmosphere of hatred, vanity, and superficiality in which this pamphlet was created, despite its pretense



to being a report of an investigatory commission named by the Hague Congress of 1872.

The aims of the Alliance are described above. Farga Pellicer attended one of the meetings of the Alliance in Geneva. Decisions were taken there as a section of the I.W.M.A. that they would support at Basel. He knew the internal atmosphere of the Geneva Alliance. It was as Nettlau stated:

Bakunin and the men whom he took into this intimate circle were wanted for two principal purposes: to inspire new forces into the local movement with local secret actions and prepare them for international actions. The idea was to have dedicated friends at various levels in the local, provincial, regional, and international movements. There was no formal organization, but rather agreement to work in this way. When Farga Pellicer returned to Barcelona he had accepted Bakunin's ideas and methods.

Gaspar Santinon, a doctor who had done his medical studies at the University of Vienna, met Bakunin at the same time after he had, in the words of Nettlau quoting Guillaume, "made a trip to Germany and Belgium to gather information on various technical questions in anticipation of an eventual armed uprising by the workers of Catalonia."

I must point out in this regard that the Geneva Alliance to which Bakunin and his friends belonged was not actually an international organization with valid resolutions and directives that had to be followed by its members in all countries. It was not a compulsory or authoritarian body. It could hardly be so, since there was no formal organization. The Alliance tried to establish a relationship among active and dynamic elements in various countries capable of stimulating local or regional situations or revolutionary movements that would try to transform the social order. As we shall see, the Alliance of Social Democracy in Spain acted independently and was prompted by purely local situations. The copious correspondence between Bakunin and his friends (not nearly as much, however, as between Marx and his friends) was at all times motivated by the idea of offering advice, persuading, and clarifying. It was never written in a spirit of command, because that was not his style, nor would it have been accepted as such by his associates.

## Fanelli in Madrid and Barcelona

We now take up the thread of our story of the fortunes of the Alliance in Spain after our brief introduction to Fanelli.

Bakunin's interest in Spain had grown during the summer of 1868. The September revolution that dethroned Queen Isabel II had strong echoes in European revolutionary circles. The Geneva section of the International published a manifesto offering the hope that "...the Spanish people will proclaim a Republic based on the Federation of autonomous provinces, the only form of government that can offer the way to a social organization that will assure justice and offer guarantees of popular liberty..." The October 21 manifesto ended in this spirit:

Workers, strike while the iron is hot, unite for the revolution to make yourselves invincible. And when you have the strength, destroy everything hostile, all who are opposed to popular justice, things, institutions, rather than people. May your revolution be the beacon and the beginning of the emancipation of all the oppressed in the world.

These hopes were not confirmed by events. However, from that time on the Iberian Peninsula, and especially Spain, acquired a decisive importance in Bakunin's eyes.

That was when Fanelli set out for Spain. He was in Geneva on October 8, and left to go to Italy. However, he went first to Spain. Fanelli's all-important trip was full of petty, irritating misadventures that made the stay of the Italian Alliance representative in Spain unhappy, primarily because of a lack of funds. Several friends had undertaken to provide funds for the trip but failed to do so for various reasons. Fanelli, a man of dignity and extraordinary scruples, found himself in delicate situations a number of times. He was hurt to such an extent that although he was given credit for starting anarchism in Spain, he withdrew from Bakunin for a period of time. He then withdrew in silence, leaving hardly a trace of his existence.

Fanelli made contact with Elias Reclus and Rey, both members of the Bakunin brotherhood, in Barcelona. Reclus, brother of the great French geographer and anarchist publicist Elias Reclus, introduced Fanelli to his republican and radical friends, among them Fernando Garridi. This led to a series of episodes that separated Elias from Fanelli and Bakunin. He accused Bakunin's representative of using his friends and acquaintances to spread anarchism and the programme of the Alliance in Spain. This seemed to be an act of disloyalty to Elias. Fanelli did not share these scruples, and, considering the question objectively, it

was logical that he would present his own viewpoint rather than that of republicanism, which he did not share. Fanelli was introduced by some of the republicans to Tomas Gonzalez Morago, a real find for the Italian Alliance representative. Morago, in turn, introduced Fanelli to Lorenzo and the Madrid group which started the International there.

## The Founding Nucleus in Madrid

All these facts are very well known today, particularly after the wide distribution in Spain of *El Proletariado Militante*. Let us note only that Morago invited Lorenzo and Cano to a meeting with Fanelli, who had the mission, according to Morago, of "creating an organized nucleus of the Spanish Section of the Workers' International." Lorenzo and Cano, in agreement with Morago "through their reading of some of Proudhon's works, an extract of Fourier's works, and Pi y Margalls' socialist campaign in his paper *La Discusion*, plus our commentary on some of these works, found themselves fully prepared for the great undertaking they were trying to start." Fanelli's convincing and impassioned talk to his youthful, electrified audience is also well known. To underscore the general nature of Fanelli's youthful audience, we reproduce a commentary at the bottom of a photograph of the founding nucleus of the I.W.M.A. in Madrid attributed to Lorenzo by Nettlau:

...enthusiastic young people, republicans who learned their revolutionary fervor from Rivero, the practice of justice from Orense, the greatness of progressive evolution from Castelar, the grand ideals of humanity from Pi y Margall, ready to give their lives for the revolution, as some of them proved on the bloody 22nd of July in front of San Gil Barracks. Some of them were patrons of the arts, some members of secret societies fighting against absolutism, some precursors of the battalion of militiamen organized by Anton Martin. These were the young workers who received the anarchist doctrine directly from Fanelli, as well as the mission to organize the I.W.M.A. in Spain.

His mission fulfilled, Fanelli went to Barcelona, leaving behind

copies of the statutes of the International, the program and statutes of the Alliance of Social Democracy, the rules of several Swiss workers' societies, several labour publications, organs of the International, among them issues of *Kolokol* containing some of Bakunin's speeches.

These two quotations are most important for our study because they permit us to determine two essential questions: 1) Fanelli came to establish, and did establish, a section of the International; 2) he implanted into it the spirit of the Alliance of Social Democracy. This took place, undoubtedly, in the three or four meetings that the founding group held, and in private conversations that Fanelli had with some of them, particularly Lorenzo. It should be remembered at this time that Fanelli, when he left his comrades in Geneva, knew that the Geneva Alliance had requested admission to the I.W.M.A. He did not know that the General Council had refused them or that they were then admitted as the Geneva section after accepting the conditions laid down by the General Council in London. It should also be noted in our analysis that Bakunin had a preponderant role at the Brussels congress of the International in 1868.

Much has been said about Fanelli's supposed mistake of emphasizing the statutes of the Alliance with the young people in Madrid. Nettlau points out that the "error" is understandable because Fanelli was offering them the only programme he had at hand, that of the Alliance. Apart from its general statutes and the resolutions voted by its congresses, the International had no programme. Bakunin believed that Fanelli had committed an error in this, Nettlau states, because he wanted Fanelli to work as he had in the Jura. Bakunin felt that the Alliance programme should be reserved for those closest to the organization, the most energetic and trusted revolutionaries. However, the comrades in Spain were such that no error had been committed, nothing had occurred.

These quotations have clear implications: they make it clear that Bakunin had no intention of creating an I.W.M.A. in Spain for his own aims, as was claimed by Marxists in their documents at that time. They also demonstrate that Fanelli did not commit that error, as they maintained. It was absolutely logical that the Italian Alliance representative would expound his own ideas in the ideological area to his young friends in Spain. On the other hand, the general statutes of the I.W.M.A., as well as the very long introduction written by Marx, contained the first guidelines for the internal regulation of the International, and, secondly, a retrospective account of the founding of the I.W.M.A. with a very general analysis. There was nothing like a programme in the statutes or the proclamation, with the possible exception of the general statutes, to which we will refer directly. On the other hand, there were clear parallels between the resolutions in the general statutes and certain points in the Alliance programme. Since the programme of the Alliance

of Social Democracy created by Bakunin will be the animating spirit of the International in Spain, we must reproduce it here.

- I. The Alliance wants the definitive and complete abolition of classes, and economic and social equality of individuals of both sexes. To achieve this goal, it wants the abolition of individual property and the right of inheritance so that, in the future, each may enjoy the product of his labour in accordance with the decisions of the congresses of the I.W.M.A. The land and the instruments of labour, like any other type of capital, shall be the collective property of the entire society to be used only by the workers, through their agricultural and industrial associations.
- II. It wants equal opportunity for all children of both sexes to develop from birth, in nutrition and food, in instruction and education, in all aspects of science, industry, and the arts, convinced that this will result in economic and social equality at first, followed by intellectual equality as well. All alleged inequality will disappear as the historical consequence of the false and iniquitous organization of society until now.
- III. The enemy of all despotism, it does not recognize the State in any form. It rejects all revolutionary action whose goal is not the immediate and direct triumph of the cause of the workers against capital. It wants all political states and authorities reduced to simple administration of public services in their respective countries, establishing a universal union of free associations, agricultural as well as industrial.
- IV. Since the true solution to the social question can be achieved only on the basis of international solidarity of workers of all countries, the Alliance rejects so-called patriotism and rivalry among nations.
- V. The Alliance declares itself to be atheistic. It wants the abolition of religion, the substitution of science for faith and of human justice for divine justice.

If the Alliance programme is studied together with the introductory “whereas” paragraphs of the I.W.M.A., which were drawn up by the Paris workers and which Marx accepted as a concession to ethical and voluntary socialism, which speak of truth, justice, and morality, it will not be difficult to demonstrate that the first four “whereas” paragraphs of the I.W.M.A. are implicit in the Alliance programme. The Alliance programme, which came later, reflects and deepens them. Let us take a look at these four “whereas’s”:

That the emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves;

That the efforts of the workers to win their emancipation must not lead to new privileges, but to the establishment of the same rights and obligations for all;

That the subjection of labour to capital is the source of all political, moral, and material slavery;

That the economic emancipation of the workers is the paramount objective, and the entire political movement must be subordinated to it.

It is clear that points I and III of the Alliance programme develop the four introductory "whereas" paragraphs of the I.W.M.A. statutes.

The Alliance programme, a basic Bakunin synthesis, was distributed by Fanelli. It offered both a dynamic revolutionary vision of the world and a coherent ideology for the working class. It was accepted by the two functioning nuclei of the International in Spain, in Madrid, and a little later in Barcelona, which was established by Fanelli along similar lines.

On January 24, the original group created the provisional founding nucleus of the International, composed of three commissions of seven members, to take care of the various activities of the nucleus. Dissension arose in the initial group among the masons, the members of the secret society, and the republicans. The nucleus elected a committee for unification in July, and in September accepted the statutes of the provisional central organizing section in Spain. On December 24, the section addressed a manifesto to the workers of Spain. Finally, Francisco Mora conceived the idea of a congress, and the Madrid section set the date for February 14, 1870. But the International had spread throughout Spain, and the Barcelona and Palma de Mallorca sections opposed the wish of the Madrid group to hold the congress in Madrid. A vote among the various sections of the International selected Barcelona as the seat of the congress. It was finally held on June 19, in the Teatro del Circo in Barcelona. More sections were making their appearance throughout the country.

The progress of these new, dynamic groups in spreading the ideas of the Alliance was amazing. We said elsewhere,

In less than a year and a half, from the time of the founding of the nuclei in Madrid and Barcelona until the congress, the development of anarchist ideology was tremendous. All of the great themes were present at the congress, developed in compact, exhaustive synthesis, approached with precision and clarity and, above all, with integrity. No diletantism. The innumerable presentations in the movement's literature, in the labour press, in propaganda leaflets, in speeches, conferences, talks at congresses and committees by Farga Pellicer, Gaspar Sentinon, Trinidad Soriano, Meneses, Garcia Vinas, Tomas, Lorenzo, Gonzalez Morago, Borrell, Mora, and others, encompass

an astonishing display of all the themes of anarchism: the condition of labour, the nature and essence of authority and the State, the 'institutions of the middle class' (government and parliament), the analysis of parties, the theory of ends and means. . . All of this done with unequalled efficiency and competence. This ideological sophistication was decisive in the outcome of the Barcelona congress and what followed.

One of the passages in Rafael Farga Pellicer's talk that opened the First Labour Congress reflects the rapid progress of anarchism in the foundations of the Spanish section of the International:

The State is the guardian and defender of privilege which the Church blesses and deifies. The only thing left for us, poor victims of the current social disorder, when we have it, is our wages, the current form of our slavery. . . We want the rule of capital, the State, and the Church to end, so that we can build anarchism on its ruins, the free federation of free workers' associations.

But Farga Pellicer's first words are an affirmation that all who had gathered there had come to "reaffirm the great work of the International Working Men's Association." This means that the Alliance programme was one and the same as the newborn Spanish section of the International, or F.R.E.

One may ask, what was the role of the Spanish Alliance of Social Democracy in this process of radicalization? The answer is surprising: it simply did not exist. All of the arrangements for the organization of the congress were made by the local sections of the I.W.M.A. through the mail. The Spanish Alliance as such appeared on the scene shortly before the Barcelona congress, according to available records.

Lorenzo's report on this is curious. He had left Madrid as part of the delegation to the Labour Congress, together with Enrique Borrell, Francisco Mora, and Tomas Gonzalez Morago. All were members of the secret Alliance in Madrid and very active members of the International in the capital. An I.W.M.A. representative from Toledo tells us of the enthusiasm with which he was received at the station and taken by the Madrid delegation to the Workers' Club on Mercaders Street. There he saw and met personally the Alliance members from Madrid and Barcelona. They had maintained an active correspondence on questions related to the I.W.M.A. rather than the Alliance. Lorenzo informs us:

With Farga and the group of the Alliance of Social Democracy, who had a clear grasp of the ideal and perfect understanding of their resources and means, they formed a whole that harmonized the present and the future. There was Herran, Soriano, Sentinon, Vinas, Ruis, Hugas, Menendez, not

all fully committed to the principles. However, the Spanish proletariat owes them the glory for having established the ideals, the positive goals that remain fixed and unchanging. They have always been the beacon for the most rational, most radical, most advanced workers of all countries.

The aim of the Alliance was to maintain a close militant contact among all convinced revolutionaries. The Alliance groups acted on the local level, influencing the local sections of the International, which they had organized at their base. It need hardly be said, but in most localities the supporters of the Alliance of Social Democracy proceeded to organize sections of the International before they organized sections of the Alliance. Starting with a solid theoretical base, they felt secure. The goal was the International. Perhaps for this reason, the Alliance was never a structured organization in Spain, with local, regional, and national bodies, but rather a number of groups. There is no record of active correspondence among Alliance groups. The inspiring ideal of anarchism gave cohesion to all the groups scattered throughout the country. This came from a common orientation and understanding of problems.

This does not mean that there were not different interpretations, as we shall see. The disputes almost always concerned the F.R.E., the I.W.M.A. affiliate. There were similar differences of opinion later with many members of the F.A.I. It can be said without hesitation that the Alliance had no other aim than to assure the defence and growth of the essential work of the first nuclei in Madrid and Barcelona: the F.R.E., or Spanish section of the I.W.M.A. The F.R.E. adopted the programme of the Alliance of Social Democracy developed by Bakunin, and the workers' organization was able to continue to develop without the assistance of the Spanish Alliance, thanks to its initial impulse. The C.N.T. was able to come out of the confused period under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship in the same way, without the need for the F.A.I. However, the specific, informal organization of mature men, who never passed the buck, showed their effectiveness in maintaining and defending their ideas in difficult situations, which they faced constantly.

### **The Marxist "Alliance"**

I now offer a brief synthesis of internal and external developments since the Basel congress of the International and the organizational congress of F.R.E., the conference that followed at Valencia, the London conference called by the General Council of the International, the F.R.E. congress of Saragossa in May 1872, and, finally, the expulsion of the



pro-Marxist group in Madrid. The congress at Basel, where Bakunin's ideas triumphed over those of Marx, represented by Eccarius, was the peak of anarchist influence in the International. Even before the conclusion of the congress, the fear of seeing Bakunin's influence increase prompted Marx to confide to Engels, "This European Russian wants to become the master of the International." And then: "He better watch out or he will be excommunicated."<sup>1</sup>

In the meantime, the International was developing in Spain. Sagasta made his first attack against it in May 1871. Part of the General Council went to Lisbon, leaving only Borrell and Angel Mora in Madrid. Contact with Portuguese workers by Morago, Francisca Mora, and Lorenzo gave birth to an Alliance group and a nucleus of the International. Then, a key man, José Mesa, joined the Local Federation of the International in Madrid. With the return of Lorenzo and Mora from Lisbon—Morago remaining there—a conference was held in Valencia in September 1871. A new Federal Council was elected, composed of Lorenzo as secretary, Francisco and Angel Mora, Paulino Iglesias, José Mesa, and Pagés. This group also started to publish *La Emancipación*. The Valencia conference elected Anselmo Lorenzo as delegate to the London conference called by the General Council.

The scenario for a new episode in the conflict between Marx and Bakunin, or rather between Marxism and anarchism, was now developing. In reality, the annual congress provided by the statutes of the I.W.M.A. was to have been held in Paris, but the rise of the Paris Commune and its repression had made that impossible.

After some correspondence between the General Council and the sections, it was agreed to hold a conference in London in September 1871. I will say here only that the famous resolution IX on political action by the working class, as well as questions concerning the Bakuninist Alliance, were introduced unexpectedly. The few delegates who attended the conference therefore had no concrete mandates on these fundamental questions. In addition, the statutes of the I.W.M.A. did not give a conference the authority to make decisions. The fantastic character of this plot of the Marxist "Alliance" is reflected in the composition of the conference: six Belgian workers, two Swiss, one Spaniard, Lorenzo, and thirteen delegates from the General Council. These thirteen, representing themselves, plus the two Swiss supporters of Marx, constituted a prefabricated majority against the six Belgian delegates and the Spanish

<sup>1</sup> Confidential communication in *The First International*, Vol. II, pp. 168-174, Spanish edition, edited by Jacques Fremont.

delegate, who represented numerically strong sections. The Jura Federation and the Italian Section were not present, nor was Bakunin. They were not invited, although a question concerning them was on the agenda of the conference. Molnar, author of a work on the First International, affirmed that the conference was an extension of the General Council. This was the way they concocted an agreement to establish a labour party as an instrument of the political struggle of the working class. To no one's surprise, there was furious reaction to this resolution when the Belgian delegation returned. The Jura Federation shared this indignation. The struggle of the sections against the authoritarian General Council in London began, as well as fighting and splits within some of the sections. Lorenzo returned from London and informed his comrades on the Council what had happened. José Mesa, the intelligent and well-prepared editor of *La Emancipación*, who was in correspondence with Engels, was in favour of the political thesis, and the London conference prompted him to act. He published the London resolutions in the November 26 issue of *La Emancipación* without comment. Mesa first won Mora over to his point of view, and gradually won over other young people recently recruited.

In the meantime, all these young people, including Mesa and the Mora brothers, namely, all the members of the Federal Council of the International and the editorial council of *La Emancipación*, joined to form part of the Alliance of Social Democracy in Madrid. Tomas Gonzalez Morago, who had recently returned from Lisbon, opposed this development. He broadcast the transformation that had taken place in the publication and the Federal Council, and started a new publication, *El Condenado*, through which he conducted a struggle without quarter against the authoritarians in London. The decisive factor undoubtedly was the arrival of Paul Lafargue in Spain around Christmas, 1871. A refugee from the Paris Commune and Marx's son-in-law, Lafargue, a former Proudhonian, was now a most bitter supporter of a labour political party. Engels, Mesa, and Lafargue were the decisive men in the Marxist intrigue in Spain. Lafargue learned about the secret Alliance with little effort, and informed Engels. That is when the interest of the London General Council was aroused. Until then, they had practically ignored F.R.E. and questions about Spain.

Lafargue worked subtly. He had *La Emancipación* publish *The Communist Manifesto* and proposed publication of the anti-Proudhon book *Poverty of Philosophy*. Nor were Mesa and his friends sleeping. Certain documents of the Federal Council began to reflect the manipulations of the pro-Marxist group. While Morago fought the battle alone against this

group, the Barcelona Alliance group delayed their own work. The Alliance was going to be denounced when the opportunity arose. But Lafargue believed that the International in Spain could not be captured without first beating or neutralizing the Alliance. When Sagasta threatened to dissolve the International because of the debates in Parliament, the Federal Council, dominated by the hidden Marxists, with Lorenzo's innocent collaboration—he was not able to grasp their plotting—proposed the creation of secret groups of “Defenders of the International” in all regions, with the Marxist Alliance groups taking over little by little. The entry of a great many members compelled them to modify their plan to the point where the persecution stopped. “But the Alliance understood the secret goal of the plan and defeated it” (Marxist Alliance statement).

Later, the supporters of the Alliance spelled it out in *Questions of the Alliance*, page 4:

The trip... was undertaken to establish a secret society called “Defenders of the International.” They intended to influence the region through the new organization of which they were the central committee. They stated as their justification: to gain greater unity of action and faster response to the general situation, the Federal Council—which they were—should also be the Central Committee of the Defenders. They were careful in pursuing this goal because they knew that the Alliance had always opposed every type of deceitful or reactionary move aimed at dominating them. The Defenders expected to gain control of the Alliance because it would be easy to create more Defenders groups than existing Alliance groups. Since the Defenders controlled the central committee and the Alliance groups were in the minority, the Alliance would be absorbed by the groups and dominated by them.

Mora went to the east and Lorenzo went to Andalusia on this mission. In 1905, Lorenzo explained the plan to Guillaume and gave the same explanation in *El Proletariado Militante* that the mission had been successful and that the Alliance had converted itself into groups of Defenders of the International in many localities. He agreed with this development.

The Marxist “Alliance” evidently played their cards cleverly. Nettlau offers this important judgement:

It seems to me that on one side there were determined men fighting to make the International a springboard for their political careers as labour spokesmen, a labour party; and on the other side were the men of the Alliance, honest, anti-political revolutionaries. However, they were not united in their tactics; they had their natural disagreements and guarded the autonomy of their groups and as individuals. This did not permit strong united action. Either they had to achieve understanding and join together

in a common effort, or they had to undergo a purification, the elimination of the non-constructive elements. In a word, there was a crisis in the Alliance in April 1872 about which little is known.

## **Tomas Gonzalez Morago and the Local Federation of the International in Madrid**

However, there was no overthrow of the republican State at that time, no dissolution of the International, no need for the Defenders. A struggle did break out between the local federation of the International in Madrid and the editors of *La Emancipación*, who were also members of the Federal Council. The underhanded Marxist manipulation of the pages of *La Emancipación* had created antagonism between the editors and the local body of the International. We have here a curious and illustrative situation: the secret Marxists were, in addition to being the editors of the paper and members of the Federal Council, the Madrid section of the Alliance from which Gonzalez Morago had resigned because he could not mediate between its different components. It was precisely this local federation which, inspired by Morago, decreed the expulsion of the editors of *La Emancipación*. Let us see why, apart from the tensions described above.

While Mora and Lorenzo were in the provinces on the mission of the Defenders, Mesa and the other members of *La Emancipación* accepted an invitation of the Federal Republican Party to enter into talks. Declaring that this decision was contrary to the policies and practices of the F.R.E., the Madrid local federation expelled the *La Emancipación* group on March 27, 1872. It is paradoxical to note that the Madrid local federation of the International expelled the pro-Marxist *La Emancipación* group, who were part of the Alliance. This would indicate that sections of the International had reached a degree of maturity.

The situation was very complicated up to the congress of Saragossa held June 4-11, 1872. The Catalan Alliance group decided to dissolve before the congress started. However, when the Federal Council, composed of the pro-Marxists, tried to propose dissolution of the Alliance, the proposal was defeated. "This suggests, I think," says Nettlau, "that they did not want to have anything to do with the seven." In *Cuestión de la Alianza*, the authors state:

The Barcelona Alliance decided to dissolve itself before the Saragossa congress...and completed the dissolution formally the week after the congress. Later, at the Hague congress, September 3, 1872, Marselau said that the members of the Alliance decided to dissolve the Alliance at the Saragossa

congress 'because a number of the local federations were already solidly based.' In addition, the change in the political regime enabled the International to work in the open.

Convincing enough reasons, but apparently not to Nettlau. However, the image of a scheming Alliance with a centralized brain of Bakuninist tendency guided from Geneva, the image propagated by the Marxist group, was recognized to be utter nonsense. There were different tendencies in the Alliance, and this was incompatible with a rigid central idea. Lafargue, who attended the Saragossa congress, stated that

The opinions of the Alliance people on changes to be introduced in the organization of the Spanish section of the International were far from united. There was a radical tendency in the Alliance—Morago, Soriano, and P. Castro—and a moderate tendency represented principally by Francisco Tomas (Palma) and G. Albages (Barcelona).

Nettlau states that a proposal tending to leave the structures of F.R.E. as they were, sponsored by Montoro, Martinez, Lorenzo, and Lafargue, represented a defeat for Morago, Castro, Soriano, Pinto, and the others "because there were two currents in the Alliance, the more industrialized, organized current in Barcelona, and the more autonomist and passionate current in Andalusia. Perhaps this contributed to their voluntary dissolution."

This will confirm Marselau's interpretation at the Hague congress that the Alliance and its programme were finally a part of the structure and sections of F.R.E. This should be borne in mind when we study the F.A.I. and the C.N.T. Although all shared the general orientation of means and goals, there were always different tendencies, different ways of judging particular situations in the life of the organization. So the Alliance was dissolved, at least at the national level.

When Anselmo Lorenzo, after his resignation from the Federal Council and his trip to France and return in 1874, found his old comrades of the International and the Alliance again, they told him that in reality the Alliance had never existed. The truth is that there are no clear indications that the Alliance did exist. There was an osmosis of the Alliance into the International, and the former Alliance militants became the groups of militants of the International. The militant would appear in future labour struggles, in anarchosyndicalism, the model figure for his strength, his mind, his steady nerves.

The news of the dissolution of the Alliance in Spain saddened Bakunin. He intensified his letter-writing to Alliance members whom he trusted,

among them—perhaps ten or twelve in all Spain—those who were members of the Geneva Alliance. He tried to get the Spaniards to reverse their decision. In all his correspondence, Bakunin exhorted, advised, pleaded, asked, insisted on the fundamental revolutionary role of the Alliance in the International. The Russian revolutionary distinguished perfectly between the two organizations. He insisted that Fanelli was in error when he presented the Alliance programme as the basis for creation of the International in Spain. This is how Bakunin summarized the role of the Alliance:

It is a secret society in the bosom of the International to give it a revolutionary force, to transform it and all of the popular masses outside the organization into an organized force able to annihilate the political-clerical-bourgeois reaction, to destroy all the economic, juridical, religious and political institutions of the States.

Bakunin also wrote a letter to Morago, but indirectly. He sent it through a friend from Barcelona, which shows that Morago, practically isolated and without contacts abroad, is carrying on a limited struggle with the means at his disposal.

Let us now consider briefly the Saragossa congress. The seven members of the Federal Council from Madrid were there, six of them pro-Marxists: Mora, Mesa, Pages, Calleja, Pauly, Iglesias, and, separately, Lorenzo. The congress listened to both sides, the Madrid Local Federation and the six mentioned above, and they agreed to a compromise solution that settled nothing. The new Federal Council excluded the pro-Marxists, including only Lorenzo from the previous body. The new Federal Council set itself up in Valencia. Lorenzo, regarded by his new comrades on the Federal Council as too complacent with the editors of *La Emancipación*, had problems and resigned from the Council. The Saragossa congress supported a circular from the Belgian Federation of the International in its attack on the London General Council, which, according to their interpretation, should serve as a secretariat for correspondence and co-ordination of the various sections. The Belgian Federation severely attacked the authoritarian whims of the General Council. Lafargue's counter-attack was not expected.

Marx's son-in-law proceeded to denounce the Spanish Alliance publicly in *La Liberté* in Brussels in May; on June 2, 1872, the same denunciation appeared in *La Emancipación* signed by its group of editors. They named the members of the Alliance known to them without hiding their identities and asked for dissolution of the Alliance, which had already

been dissolved.\* The members of *La Emancipación* were expelled from the Various Trades Section on June 3, and from the Madrid Local Federation on June 9. The expelled group organized the *New Madrid Federation*, or *The Nine*, the number who were expelled. The Federal Council in Valencia did not recognize the New Federation, but the General Council in London extended immediate recognition, acting beyond the powers provided by the statutes.

What reasons did the *La Emancipación* group give to justify the denunciation? As I have already stated, the alleged hierarchical and scheming character of the Alliance, with two or three classes of membership and acting on orders from the centre in Geneva. The July 27 issue of *La Emancipación* stated:

We paid no attention to this until recently because we believed in good faith that the Alliance's sole aim was to resist the break-up of the International in Spain due to the persecutions. We saw the Alliance as the fraternal grouping of its most active members.

However, these men, who pretended not to know anything about the real nature of the Alliance, stated in the August 10 issue of *La Emancipación*:

We are the Central Committee, named by all the Alliance groups in Spain at the Federal Council at Valencia in September 1871 with special powers because of the political situation. We have the record of this election. Its members were elected to the Central Committee.

This myth probably applied to the groups of the Defenders of the International which they had initiated. However, if they were the Central Committee of the Alliance, how could they be ignorant of its hidden character? Mora writes on August 17, 1872:

We did not oppose the programme of the Alliance, nor its conduct in Spain, until just before we left the organization. We opposed its later conduct, its hierarchical organization about which we received certain confirmation in actions of the Alliance in Switzerland, Italy, England, and other countries.

That is to say, they were persuaded of the "hierarchical organization of the Alliance in Spain, not by their own direct observation, but by what

\* This action was part of the vicious naming of members of an organization under attack by the government, although it had dissolved itself voluntarily because it felt that F.R.E. no longer needed the Alliance.—*transl. note*

they were told about the conduct of the organization in the abovementioned countries." Nettlau adds, "Observations that are either a bunch of lies or enormous fabrications spread by Lafargue." There is no trace or shadow of hierarchical organization in a letter from Bakunin to Mora (April 5). On the contrary, Bakunin advises "direct" relations between Spanish and Italian comrades. And there is no evidence, even from Marx, of any activity by the Alliance in England. From that time on, there was no lack of insults and falsehoods of every sort.

Let us now go on to the chapter on denunciations. In Madrid, they denounced Luis Catillon, Anselmo Lorenzo, and Jesus Busquiel, in addition to nine of their own. Enrique Simaucas, Francisco Oliva, and T.G. Morago had withdrawn previously, but they stated that Morago maintained a relationship with other sections. Seven were denounced in Valencia, among them Peregrin Montoro, Vicente Rosell, Franco Martinez, Miguel Nacher, and Severino Albarracin. Thirteen were denounced in Barcelona, including Garcia Vinas, Gaspar Santinon, Farga Pellicer, Alerini, Garcia Menesis, José Paramias, Gabriel Albages, Francisco Albages, Balash, Rius, and Clemente Bove. Ten were named in Malaga, among them Trinidad Soriano, Marselau, and Enrique Munou Vale. A number of Alliance members were named in Cadiz, eleven in Palma de Mallorca, among them Francisco Tomas, and five in Cordoba. They also named those who belonged to the Alliance in Geneva: Francisco Cordoba y Lopez, Gaspar Santinon, José Garcia Vinas, José Rubau Donadeu, Trinidad Soriana, and T.G. Morago. This was not the full list. Nor was it all the Alliance members in Barcelona. In solidarity with their comrades, those who had not been denounced published their names in the August 4th issue of *La Federación*, along with the Alliance statutes and programme. They asked the affiliates of the International whether they had undermined its principles by their conduct. In an eight-page pamphlet, *The Question of the Alliance*, they affirmed the Spanish character of the society and ridiculed the fable of orders from abroad.

These developments should be read in the general framework of the tensions toward the General Council in London, since the London conference, and even the 1869 congress of Basel. The hostility of the rank and file of the International's sections, especially the Jura Federation and the Belgian and Italian sections, influenced the Spanish section of the International. Abad de Santillan regarded the public denunciation of the Alliance as "a measure of shock and surprise to keep the anti-Marxist delegates away from the Hague congress." This much is certain: Marx made most careful preparations for the famous congress at the



Hague and the entire Marxist "Alliance" was fully synchronized to a predetermined line, which we will demonstrate. However, the issue was deeper than that. Lafargue, Marx's first activist in the peninsula, tried to neutralize the anarchist influence in the Spanish section of the International by discrediting the Alliance in Spain. Then he proposed to start a labour party, but his effort failed. As de Santillan stated, he devoted all his free time to provocations and secret investigations. As soon as he arrived in Spain, he met with Pi y Margall and proposed the creation of a labour party, but the famous federalist would have nothing to do with his proposals.

The International came out strengthened from this first attempt to split it. As was to be expected, the F.R.E. named Rafael Farga Pellicer, Alerini, Nicolas Alonso Marselau, and Tomas Gonzalez Morago as its delegates to the Hague congress. They were, and had been from the beginning, all notorious Alliance spokesmen, the foundation and backbone of the International in Spain. The Alliance supported the creation of the F.R.E. from its earliest days.

The New Federation created a fake Federal Council, which pretended to speak in the name of the International. They were able to organize small sections in Gracia, Denia, Valencia, Acala de Henares, Badalona, Lerida, and Pont de Vilumurat, as well as a number of private individuals. The shady Federal Council of Nine set up an office in Valencia. They held a congress in Toledo on May 25, 1873, which was attended by representatives of only six sections. The organization held nine meetings in February and March 1873. They produced a body of unclear literature.

The New Federation in Madrid stated, in a report to the Marxist Federal Council, whose members were obscure and unknown, from the province of Levante: "The results achieved by the New Federation were not as good as we would have liked, but we must bear in mind that from the beginning of the struggle against the separatists in Spain, the supporters of the International had very few members, while they had a great many." In other words, the New Federation, with a total of nine members, was the International, and the others, the F.R.E., were the "separatists."

The New Federation of Madrid and its appendage, the Federal Council, dissolved shortly after the Toledo congress of May 1873. According to F. Mora, the organizations maintained silence about the developments in 1873 "because they did not want to become involved with their guilt or come out in public disagreement with former comrades." This is not surprising in view of the public denunciation of the members of the Alliance by these men.

While the International went underground soon after, where they carried on for eight difficult years, the followers of Lafargue and Engels dissolved and waited for better times. They did not stop dreaming about a labour party. It was not possible then because they were underground and because of the universal practice in Spain of *caciquism*, local political bossism, and the autocracy growing out of the continuity of power through two alternating political parties. Pablo Iglesias writes, in *La Espana Moderna* (No. 101, May 1897), referring to the Socialist Party: "Although it was founded in 1878 [evidently a typographical error, according to Arbeloa, since it was born in 1879] by a handful of workers, it can be said that it was not known and gave no real signs of life until 1886."

All these developments leading to the split of the Nine were continued into the Hague congress. Let us now look at this prearranged congress and see what the drive to dominate the International led them to do. Marx's victory at the Hague congress, according to Jung, Marx's friend and secretary of the International for some years, "was achieved by faking credentials and resorting to the most contemptible measures. They were able to have the majority of the International dominated by a minority, a minority who knew how to obtain credentials from non-existent organizations." Having refused to give Jung a role at the congress, Marx and Engels tried to persuade him not to attend. In spite of everything they had done, they were not sure how it would come out. Jung agreed, with the understanding that Marx and Engels would remain in London. However, Jung attended the anti-authoritarian congress at Brussels, as did Eccarius, who had been an intimate of Marx. This did not fail to give some moral satisfaction to the Internationalists who had been mocked and deceived at the Hague.

Once he had accomplished his aim of expelling Bakunin from the International and getting a resolution in favour of political struggle and a labour party, Marx lost all interest in the International. At his initiative, the headquarters of the International was transferred to New York, where it died quietly and officially in 1876.

Let us return now to the Alliance. In spite of all that was said, did it really disappear at the congress in Saragossa, especially after the public denunciation by the Nine? No, according to Lorenzo and his Catalan comrades. When they returned to Spain, Nettlau states, traces of the Alliance were weak, but he believes that it lasted until 1881, when the International went underground and was transformed into the Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region on September 23, 1881. The Alliance then became "Balkanized," constantly reduced to smaller localities and

concentrating on the specific problems of each local federation. When it went underground, the F.R.E. lost some of its previous characteristics and assumed more and more the specific character of the Alliance. The International was gradually transformed into a great underground Alliance with indestructible groups of militants in all localities. We have the record of F.R.E.'s seven underground years to support this hypothesis. The first evidence is the change of structure. In place of a national congress, there were regional congresses whose resolutions were summarized by the Federal Council. The statutes of the Federation had to undergo qualitative change. The new statutes include the following: "The International Working Men's Association having been proscribed by the Spanish government, no other remedy remains for the affiliates in the region than a secret revolutionary movement to work for the complete social emancipation of the proletariat." This is the spirit of the Alliance translated into the organization of the Alliance. Lorenzo also underscored the qualitative transition from the *scientific strike* to *revolutionary action*, although he recognized certain dangers arising in emergency situations: the delegation of functions to representative organizations.

The regional conferences of 1875 and 1876 agreed to create revolutionary propaganda and action groups and a whole conspiratorial apparatus, starting with local groups. After the Cordoba congress of 1873, the delegates to the regional congresses were recorded by their initials. By 1876, the number of affiliated sections was drastically reduced. The reports of the Federal Commission in 1877 revealed widespread, cruel repression. Forty deported International militants died on Barabac Island (the Philippines). After a while, the International believed that it could respond with political blows and alerted the sections to be ready for revolutionary action. In spite of these conditions, F.R.E. delegates attended the anti-authoritarian congresses at Verviers and Gante. In 1878, the Catalan Regional Conference ratified

the resolutions adopted by the 1876 and 1877 regional conferences regarding the course of action to be followed to derive the greatest possible advantage from the first insurrectionary movement that arises. They called upon the Federal Commission and the Revolutionary Committee to act with all possible vigour. The conferences of Valencia, Murcia, and western Andalusia adopted similar resolutions.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> A. Lorenzo, *El Proletariado Militante*, Ed. Zero, Madrid, 1974, p. 398.

However, western Andalusia voted unanimously in favour of *propaganda by deed* and *reprisals*. In other words, the absorption of the Alliance into F.R.E. took different forms in each region, reflecting their special circumstances and the character of the people.

The International, of necessity, languished in the underground, and various weaknesses became apparent. The tremendous effort to keep the International going during the underground period and the sacrifice of its militants during that period enabled it to go public and legal with the new political period inaugurated by the liberals of Sagasta. During this time in the underground, traces of the Alliance became gradually weaker and disappeared. I believe their members were gradually transformed exclusively into militants of the regional federations. Finally, with the spirit of the Alliance as the yeast, they formed the solid cadres of militants who joined anarchism with the International. We spoke about this in the history of modern anarchosindicalism: the militant is the essential ingredient of the organization.

Although the spirit of the Alliance was expressed in different ways, it was never lost, as Lorenzo himself pointed out at various desperate times. The programme of the Alliance, its content, was anarchism, and it flourished in the new Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region, which lasted until 1888. It advanced to the very limits of insurrection and propaganda by deed. These were pre-existing tendencies, especially in rural Andalusia, which led to systematic repression and a return to the underground. The clearest example of this is the interesting, mysterious question of the Black Hand and the insurrectionary groups of lower Andalusia which aroused the spirit of the Alliance. It was a time when theory flourished and organization decayed. We have here the socialist contests of the last two decades of the century. This is the period of sharp, violent confrontations between the economic conceptions of anarchist communism and collectivism.

After a period of dispersion, the Workers' Federation of the Spanish Region disappeared, to be replaced by the Anarchist Organization of the Spanish Region. The clear anarchist name of the new organization showed the desire to underscore the essential at a time when mass organization had disappeared. This organization then changed, in 1890, into the Solidarity and Assistance Pact, which was itself dissolved in 1896 because of repressive legislation against anarchism and broke into many nuclei and autonomous workers' societies. A study of the causes of this atomization would make most interesting history. The scattered remains of F.R.E. gave rise to Solidaridad Obrera in Catalonia in 1907, the immediate antecedent of the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo,

1910 (National Confederation of Labour—C.N.T.). This led to a new high tide of organization, whose profound roots are probably to be found in French revolutionary syndicalism. Both movements had the same roots in Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin.

As we proceed, I shall deal with the central theme of our work: the history of the phenomenon called the F.A.I. and its antecedents. This entity also derives from the Alliance of Social Democracy, or its brief, dynamic programme.



## Chapter Two

### THE C.N.T. AND ANARCHISM UP TO THE PRIMO DE RIVERA DICTATORSHIP

The disbanding of the International became the occasion for a series of theoretical debates in the numerous magazines and periodicals published between 1888 and 1910, when the C.N.T. was born.<sup>1</sup> These different

<sup>1</sup> The following anarchist publications appeared in Spain from 1888 to the end of the century: *La Alarma*, Seville; *La Anarquía*, Madrid; *Arieta Anarquista*, Barcelona; *La Bandera Roja*, Madrid; *Ciencia Social*, Barcelona; *El Combate*, Bilbao; *El Comunista*, Saragossa; *La conquista del pan*, Barcelona; *La Controversia*, Valencia; *El Corsario*, La Coruña; *La Cuestión Social*, Valencia; *Fraternidad*, Gijón; *La Idea Libre*, Madrid; *El Invencible*, Barcelona; *El Productor*, Barcelona; *El Proletariado*, San Feliu de Guixols; *La Protesta*, Valladolid; *Ravachol*, Sabadell; *El Rebelde*, Saragossa; *La Revancha*, Reus; *La Revista Blanca*, Madrid; *El Revolucionario*, Gracia, Barcelona; *La Revolución Social*, Barcelona; *La Solidaridad*, Seville; *Suplemento a la Revista Blanca*, Madrid; *Tierra y Libertad*, Gracia, Barcelona; *El Trabajo*, Cadíz; *La Tribuna Libre*, Seville; *La Unión Obrera*, San Martín de Provensals; *La Víctima del Trabajo*, Valencia—a total of thirty-four publications that existed simultaneously or in succession in a period of twelve years and embraced the entire peninsula.

Between 1900 and 1910, the year of the founding of the C.N.T., twenty-seven additional anarchist publications made their appearance: *La Acción*, La Coruña; *Adelante*, Santander; *La Alarma*, Reus; *Al Paso*, Seville; *Anti-Cristo*, La Línea de la Concepción; *La Defensa del Obrero*, Gijón; *¡Despertad!*, Madrid; *La Federación*, Madrid; *Humanidad*, Alcoy; *Humanidad*, Toledo; *Humanidad Libre*, Jumilla; *Humanidad Libre*, Valencia; *La Huelga General*, Madrid; *La Justicia Obrera*, Haro; *El Libertario*, Madrid; *El Mismo*, Barcelona; *El Obrero*, Badajoz; *El Obrero de Río Tinto*; *La Organización*, Gijón; *Páginas Libres*, Seville; *Progreso*, Madrid; *El Proletario*, Madrid; *La Protesta*, Madrid; *La Protesta*, edited in Sabadell, Valladolid, and Cadíz, in succession; *Rebelión*, Madrid; *Revista Pálida*, Madrid; and *La Voz del Obrero*, Villafranca del Panadés. Some of these publications appeared in succession, especially those in the same locality, although a number were published simultaneously.

publications reached the farthest corners of the country and helped carry on the spirit of the First International and the Alliance of Social Democracy. Many workers' societies, acting in isolation in their own localities or at the regional or national level, found ideological support in these anarchist publications, in spite of periods of confusion such as that created by Alexander Lerroux\* in Catalonia at the start of this century. The demagoguery of the radical republicans, led by Lerroux, came to an end in 1909 after the Tragic Week.\*\* The influence of the radical republicans then disappeared quickly in Catalonia.

Certain changes took place in labour organizations at the beginning of the century. Thanks to the influence of French revolutionary syndicalism, the word "society" was replaced by a new idea, syndicalism, and the term "workers' society" by the union "Sindicato." José Prat and Anselmo Lorenzo were the bridge of transition in Spain between the doctrines of the International and the sharper, more complete formulations of revolutionary syndicalism. They did this through the translation of many pamphlets from French and Italian. These two veterans of the International introduced to Spain the literature of French revolutionary syndicalism. However, Anselmo Lorenzo pointed out that these currents did not bring a new idea to the Spanish proletariat, but rather "helped correct, add to, and systematize what we Spanish anarchists had inspired in and given to the French. The discussions between *Acracia* and *El Productor* in Spain and *La Révolte* in France gave a revolutionary impulse to the resistance societies (trade unions)..." Lorenzo dealt with this problem in his essay "Toward Emancipation."

\* Alexander Lerroux was the leader of the Radical Republican Party in Catalonia. He was a demagogue who sought the votes of the workers and middle-class democrats on the basis of opposing the Catholic Church. He opposed the right-wing Catalan Lliga (league) supported by the wealthier classes during the first decade of this century, only to become one of the leaders and even premier of the reactionary government during the Republic before the outbreak of the Civil War and Revolution in Spain.—*transl. note*

\*\* The Tragic Week, July 26-August 1, 1909, began as a protest in Barcelona against the military draft, but the Radical Republicans turned the rioting against the Catholic Church. Eighty churches and religious institutions were destroyed. Eight policemen and an estimated 600 civilians were killed during the week of rioting. Five civilians were executed, the most famous of whom, Francisco Ferrer, was railroaded and convicted in a trial that lasted one day with no defence permitted. Ferrer's execution was demanded by the Catholic Church because it feared the Modern School that he had established, with its libertarian secular education, which had spread rapidly throughout Spain. Lerroux's influence dropped sharply after the Tragic Week.—*transl. note*



Santillan made the point that although not a few anarchists were sympathetic to the new tendencies, the convictions of the old anarchists remained strong and they refused to believe that syndicalism was enough to achieve the transformation of society. Anarchists criticized syndicalism for a number of its limitations: that it did not address itself to all people but only to the workers, which reduced the intellectual and philosophical horizons of its doctrine; for its pretension to self-sufficiency in solving all the problems of transition to the new society. The anarchists saw syndicalism and the unions as only one means among many to reach their goal. The syndicalist aim of reorganizing all of social life as a panacea for the unions was unacceptable to the anarchists. They upheld the possibility of other approaches, such as the free organization of certain economic activities. They also foresaw the need for non-economic solutions such as political and human relations in general, including residential communities where human beings would develop other aspects of their lives. However, this did not prevent the gradual identification of the Spanish libertarian labour movement with the words "syndicalism" and "union."

On August 3, 1907, the workers' societies in Barcelona decided to form a local federation which they called Solidaridad Obrera (Labour Solidarity). After a series of economic demands seeking a reduction in working hours, Solidaridad Obrera declared its ultimate goal to be the complete emancipation of the workers from the capitalist system, which would be replaced by the workers' organization transformed into a social labour regime. This general statement of Solidaridad Obrera's goal was a carry-over from the goals of the First International. In October 1907 the organization started a publication with its own name, *Solidaridad Obrera*, whose collaborators included Anselmo Lorenzo, Ricardo Mella, José Prat, and A. Loreda, among many. At that time, a call was made in Merida to organize a labour federation that would embrace all workers in the entire region.

It did not take long for the example of Barcelona to spread throughout Catalonia. A regional congress was held September 6-8, 1908, at which the Catalan Regional Workers' Solidarity was established. The congress represented 130 groups and followed a line of moderation, raising demands of an immediate nature. The influence of the International predominated at the meeting, asserting an anti-authoritarian line and independence from political parties. However, regional delegations came from the Socialist Party and the Radical Republicans. Andalusia, the most important centre of the "societies" outside Catalonia, registered Solidaridad Obrera groups immediately and with great enthusiasm from

Montilla, Espejo, Rambla, Fernan Nunez, Montemayor, and other towns and villages.

### Creation of the C.N.T.

The next step, once the great revolutionary tension of the Tragic Week had settled down, was creation of the C.N.T. on October 31 and November 1, 1910. Francisco Ferrer, founder of the Modern School, was executed because of the Tragic Week. The Modern School was very important for the practice of anarchism in the following years, serving as the model for thousands of schools throughout the country started by community centres, unions, and anarchist groups.

The founding congress of the C.N.T. was called by the Catalanian Regional Solidaridad Obrera. Three options were discussed at the congress: join the established U.G.T. (socialist controlled General Union of Workers), adopt the name C.G.T. (General Confederation of Labour, the same name as the French labour organization), or create a National Confederation. This was what the Spanish working class wanted, in the opinion of the majority of the delegations. The congress issued a proclamation of grand theoretical statements which boil down to: syndicalism is not defined as an end in itself but rather as a means of struggle and resistance in the war between the classes; the goal is expropriation of the owner classes and control of production by the workers as soon as the unions or workers' associations are strong enough in numbers and sufficiently prepared with knowledge and understanding. There were long debates on the subject of workers' emancipation, delegates being sharply critical of "high-living politicians" and emphasizing that the emancipation of workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves.

We come now to an important point: who participated in the creation of the C.N.T.? In the first place, the revolutionary-syndicalist and anarchist groups and societies were the most important nuclei in the congress and in Solidaridad Obrera of Catalonia. They were descendants of First International members who had been scattered for more than two decades. There was also a socialist current, unorthodox Marxist, led by Fabra Rivas, and, finally, a certain presence of radical republicanism, weakened since the fall of Lerrouxism in Barcelona.

The situation was similar to that of the first labour congress in 1870 in that various political and other groups were working with the anarchists. The congress listened to philosophies and tendencies and probably avoided extensive theoretical declarations for that reason. They limited themselves

to a general orientation similar to revolutionary syndicalism, French style. Fabra Rivas, who favoured revolutionary syndicalism, sponsored the idea of attending the regional congress of Solidaridad Obrera, before the creation of the C.N.T. Fabra Rivas was close to Jean Jaures in Paris and worked with *L'humanité* (the socialist daily in Paris). He shared the nonconforming attitude of the great French socialist with his most scrupulous respect for the autonomy of the trade-union movement. This contrasted sharply with Paul Guesde's hatred of the independent labour movement. Guesde was a rigid authoritarian who had earned the title "sergeant of French socialism."

However, certain events took place that quickly radicalized the C.N.T. beyond the goals set at the first congress. The second congress took place at the Bellas Artes (Fine Arts) Hall in Barcelona September 8-10, 1911, with delegations representing 30,000 workers from all parts of Spain.

Five hundred C.N.T. militants were arrested in Barcelona for calling a general strike in support of a miners' strike in Bilbao, a textile workers' strike in Sabadell and Tarrasa, and events in Morocco. The general strike was crushed by the arrests. Although the strike spread to localities in the north and to Saragossa, Valencia, and Seville, the C.N.T. was forced to go underground, and it did not emerge until 1914. This experience, which would have most important consequences, inspired Manuel Buenacasa to write the following thoughtful commentary: "Now we shall see how the new organization of the Spanish working class conducts itself, as a starter."

The effect of this activity was to eliminate the less secure elements and increase the radical mood as libertarian elements assumed positions of greater responsibility. José Negre, Francisco Miranda, and Francisco Jordan took turns as secretary of the National Committee up to 1914. The underground period after 1911 had the same effect on the C.N.T. as did the illegality decreed by General Serrano in 1874; a notable radicalization of the organization with the subsequent elimination of timid or moderate elements.

The anarchist press fulfilled a most important role at that time. They made up for the vacuum created at times by their forced illegality.

Lorenzo, who had lived through the first period of the International, saw very clearly what was happening and wrote about it in a work called *Inventory' of 1911*:

The Barcelona congress of the C.N.T. was an example of syndicalist vigour and vitality in its aspirations rather than its day-to-day activities. The C.N.T. would have been held down by the weight of the routine responsibilities

of the old societies (unions, fraternal bodies). However, the more-or-less legal blow by the authorities killed off the lethargy of immediate conflicts and troubles, and when it came out into the open again it was free of the old patterns and doubly ready to move forward.

Problems were examined as pure ideas, which was doubly effective. In the underground union, demands for wages or recognition gave way to deeper ideological concerns. Once again, the movement freed itself gradually from its original collective bargaining. The masons, protestants, or members of secret societies of the earlier period corresponded to the radicals of the republican movement, now quite innocuous, and to the earlier currents of socialist humanism and parliamentarianism of Fabria Rivas or Recansens and Mercades, the last editor of *Justicia Social* in Reus, an organ of populist libertarian socialism.

The underground period ended in 1914, the start of the First World War. This was a key date for the C. N. T. because a number of important militants appeared on the scene at that time: Quintanilla, Sierra, Segui, Pestana, Manuel Buenacasa, Negre, Carbo, Gallego, Crespo, and others. Hundreds of delegates, representing thousands of anarchists and anarchosyndicalists, attended the 1919 congress at the Comedia in Madrid. We will return to this subject later.

We will now look at the important role of anarchist written and spoken propaganda, especially the tremendous impact of anarchist journals in the fields of Andalusia. These began a slow process of fermentation that reached a climax in the so-called Bolshevik triennial, 1917 to 1920. Forty-two anarchist periodicals or reviews appeared from 1910 to 1923, in addition to those that survived from the earlier period. This press, and the militants who began to appear in great numbers in the urban centres and the Andalusian countryside, were the carriers of anarchist propaganda throughout the country.

Juan Diaz del Moral, a notary from Bujalance, gives us an impressive picture of these activities in his *History of Peasant Agitations in Andalusia*. In 1909, Diaz del Moral tells us, libertarian propaganda was neither fervent nor abundant, and it did not catch on in the Andalusian countryside. However, in 1910, when there was a liberal reaction against the Maura-La Cierra government, they started to listen again. The period 1910 to the Bolshevik Triennial (1917-1920) was extraordinarily interesting: the key to the 1918-1920 uprising is to be found there. The villages and towns of the anarchist vanguard in the earlier period were rising and organizing; they were strengthening themselves internally and spreading out to new towns and villages, overcoming republican and socialist organizations and absorbing their most active elements.

The movement was very slow; they converted two or three in one year, several others the following year. The European war slowed the movement but it continued to develop quietly, ignored by the masses and the propertied classes. However, when the Russian hurricane galvanized the masses, del Moral tells us, the general staffs were already organized. "All this was the work of tenacious propaganda, never discouraged, carried on for long years thanks to the workers in some of the peasant villages and the constancy and strong convictions of the agitators."

Militants and agitators from all parts of Spain, continued the Bujalance notary, including the most famous in the anarchosyndicalist army, carried on their teaching continuously, and, as a general rule, without interference. They stayed in the villages for long periods of time, teaching the rebels and strengthening their convictions. The agitator made few personal demands. When he reached a village he stayed at the house of a worker and lived as the worker did. He held conferences and addressed meetings, generally without compensation. The workers' federation paid the expenses of the propaganda trip, which were always very modest, according to Diaz del Moral.

The National Federation of Agricultural Workers was created in 1913. It was affiliated with the C.N.T., and the many anarchist groups in the region worked with it. The older trade-union societies were in a weak condition at the start of the European war. The anarchist groups had grown. They maintained their bonds between the groups, and their determination.<sup>2</sup> Diaz del Moral states that they tried to organize a regional federation inspired by the example of the Catalans, and even designated Cordoba or Bujalance as the headquarters for it. The Andalusians wanted to create a regional anarchist federation but were not able to organize a congress.

The great commotion in 1918 in Cordoba and throughout Andalusia had been prepared gradually by the syndicalist and anarchist propaganda, which now assumed another character: anarchosyndicalist. In addition

<sup>2</sup> Diaz del Moral lists the groups in the various villages: El Solitario, in Morente; Pro-Prensa y Solidaridad, in Bujalance; Solidaridad Obrera, in Montemayor; Solidaridad y Trabajo, in Montilla; Germinal, in Baena; Los Afines, in Bujalance, Los de la Tea, in Caneta; Queremos ser Libres, in Montilla; Los Iconoclastas and Los Incansables, in Cordoba; Grupo Alas, in Castro del Rio; Los Amigos, in Espejo; Germinal in Rambla; La Senda del Porvenir, in El Carpio; Paso a la Verdad, in Fernan Nunes. These were the organized groups up to 1915. Between 1915 and 1917, the following groups were organized: Acracia, Los Aparecidos, and later Los Afines, in Palma del Rio; Via Libre, in Penarroya; El Despertar and Pro-Cultura, in Pueblo-Nuevo del Terrible; Ni Rey ni Patria, in Cuenca; and Los Rebeldes, in Montilla.

to the periodicals mentioned above, there now appeared a new, very efficient propaganda tool, the leaflet or pamphlet, which was so cheap—ten or fifteen centimos—that “even some of those who could not read bought them,” according to Diaz del Moral. Sanchez Rosa, a self-taught propagandist with a good reputation in the region, was an excellent creator of this type of literature. After 1918, he was joined by hundreds of new propagandists. Diaz del Moral has left us pictures of Andalusian peasant agitation that are classics: a group of supporters of the new anarchist ideas and dreams, meeting under the flickering light of a candle, listening to the reading of anarchist newspapers or pamphlets, filled with fervent rapture. Since the majority were illiterate, the responsibility to read this literature fell to those who had the good fortune to be able to read. However, even the illiterates were moved at times to own their own papers and pamphlets in which they found printed characters and symbols that spelled out the hope for the coming redemption.

### Anarchosyndicalism and Anarchism

I have pointed out the distinction between anarchism and syndicalism. We will see that the anarchist movement found itself cut off from the labour movement in almost all European countries after the disappearance of the First International and the initial success of the social democratic parties in elections. The rise of nationalism and imperialism in 1875 was also a decisive factor. These developments helped increase the anarchists' fear of syndicalism and to isolate them in a gilded tower of ideological purism. We shall also see that a consistent relationship was established between the two ideas in Spain which placed anarchism in the moving torrent of the organized labour movement and contributed to the creation of the modern idea of anarchosyndicalism, labour unions inspired by the ideals of anarchism. We saw that the historical circumstances when the C.N.T. was born, and its extraordinarily long period of birth until the 1911 congress, were decisive in shaping this development. One of the concrete results was the calling of an International Congress Against War by the Union Centre at Ferrol, May 31, 1915.

Peter Kropotkin's support of the allies in a manifesto signed by sixteen militants of international anarchism started a great polemic in Spain in anarchist and anarchosyndicalist channels. Two of the clearest-thinking and most outstanding anarchists, Ricardo Mella and Quintanilla, supported the pro-ally point of view in *Accion Libertaria*, in Gijon, in *Cultura y Accion*, in Saragossa, and in *Porvenir Obrero*, in Palma de

Mallorca. But the neutralist and anti-war position was supported by the great mass of C. N. T. and anarchist militants in the pages of *Tierra y Libertad*, in Barcelona, and *Regeneración*, in Sabadell. Among the more outstanding figures on this side were José Prat, Anselmo Lorenzo, and Eusebio Carbo. It should be noted that some of the outstanding people on both sides of the debate were unquestionably anarchists, all militants in the C.N.T. This shows that differing interpretations were constantly emerging from the anarchist and anarchosyndicalist camps, not of a doctrinal nature but over concrete situations and issues. This observation will help me later in discussing those historians who seek to establish arbitrary classifications.

In any event, the overwhelming majority of the C.N.T. members and the anarchists supported the anti-war position. This led to the disappearance of *Accion Libertaria*, in Gijon, a fine ideological paper in which Ricardo Mella wrote, and the decline of this most original and brilliant theoretician in Spanish anarchism. The pacifist congress at El Ferrol, which was attended by outstanding anarchist militants from South America but not by such international figures as Sebastian Faure and Errico Malatesta, in spite of their announced participation, came out in support of the anti-war position.

We cannot go into great detail about the activities and positions of anarchosyndicalism during this period except to establish the impact and conduct of the anarchists in the movement under specific circumstances. The congress of Sans in 1918 offers an example of this conduct. It confirms what I have said regarding the diversity of positions in anarchism and anarchosyndicalism, without rejecting their common guidelines of principles and goals. The Sans congress created industrial unions (*sindicatos unicos*). This gave rise to two opposing tendencies: the supporters of the classical type of craft organization inherited from the First International and defended by the piano workers, the braziers, and makers of tin plate; and the supporters of industrial unions organized on an industry-wide basis. The first group insisted that internal autonomy and the right of self-determination in the classical craft unions must be maintained. They were afraid that the new type of organization would tend to centralize and monopolize. Salvador Segui and Emilio Mira, among many others, supported the new organization, and news of this was said to be a victory for the syndicalist tendency in the C.N.T.

Now the confusion of terms begins. The Sans congress put forth limited goals, concerned with the internal structure of the unions, but the results did not satisfy any side at the congress. Manuel Buenacasa

reported the following: "Although anarchists were nineteen-twentieths of the Assembly, the congress did not pass a clear statement of libertarian principles, though many spoke against the State." And further: "Come what may, the Sans congress was a most powerful stimulant for organizing activities. Although the congress spoke little of ideas, they propagated ideas constantly, and the libertarian workers' organizations increased their membership." After the Sans congress, the C.N.T. ratified the National Committee named by the local federation of Barcelona in a national referendum. The members of the National Committee were Manuel Buenacasa, Evelio Boal, Vicente Gil, Jose Ripoll, and Andres Miguel. Buenacasa adds in his history: "The five constituted an anarchist group, and they oriented the Confederation with their ideas toward the next congress in Madrid."

A national anarchist conference was held in Barcelona in the winter of 1918. Manuel Buenacasa, whose history of that period is invaluable, points out that the regions of Spain were represented at the conference by the most outstanding anarchist militants. Eusebio Carbo represented the Levante; Eleuterio Quintanilla, Asturias; Tomas Herreros, Catalonia; Sanchez Rosa and Dr. Vallina, Andalusia; Galo Diez, the north, and Jose Suarez, Galicia; he does not remember the names of representatives from Castille and Aragon. All of these militants, and others who worked with them, were active in the Confederation. They debated, Buenacasa tells us, the problem of intervention by the anarchists in the labour movement, and they carried on the discussion in the presence of a member of the National Committee of the C.N.T., undoubtedly himself. The Confederal Committee was probably not far from the idea of calling such a conference, as Buenacasa points out:

And the Assembly, having listened to the explanations and desires of the Confederation, decided to recommend to all libertarian workers in Spain that they enter and participate directly and immediately in the labour unions. Until then, many anarchists remained on the sidelines of the labour movement. Many were members but did not attend meetings or assume positions of responsibility.

Buenacasa thought that the results of the Barcelona conference were quite favourable: "Some months later, all the unions in the C.N.T. were infused with the anarchist spirit and idea. Inspired by this spirit and this idea, which was accepted voluntarily by hundreds of thousands of workers, the unions fought with a dignity and enthusiasm not equalled until then and never surpassed."



There is no doubt as to the voluntary choice affirmed by Buenacasa. They had the option of reformism and parliamentarism offered by the Socialist Party of Spain (P.S.O.E.) and the General Union of Workers (U.G.T.). On the other hand, there was the dynamic, anarchist impulse within the Confederation at that time, the famous wave of propaganda nationally which was received with enthusiasm in every region. Barcelona mobilized the following spokesmen: Antonio Martinez, Felix Monteagulo, Francisco Miranda, Andres Miguel, Manuel Buenacasa, and Emilio Mira. They went to Aragon, the centre, the north, Galicia, where they were supported by Zenon Canudo, Mauro Bajatierra, Galo Diez, Eleuterio Quintanilla, and Constancio Romero. Manuel Buenacasa and Mira went to Valencia, where Carbo joined them. From there they went to the Levante and to Andalusia where, in turn, they were reinforced with additional militants such as Jose Ruiz, Pablo Mairal, Juan Almela, Roque Garcia, and the tireless Jose Sanchez Rosa. This group of propagandists was further strengthened in Seville by Salvador Seguí, who, together with Sebastian Oliva and Gallego Crespo, travelled through the western part of Andalusia. Romanones suspended constitutional guarantees after a warning by the civil governors. The editors of *Solidaridad Obrera* were arrested, except for Pestana. Buenacasa, the members of the Regional Committee of Catalonia, and most of the propagandists mobilized for the national campaign were locked up. Three weeks later, the formidable general strike broke out at the "Canadiense," the Anglo-Canadian power and light company of Barcelona.<sup>3</sup> The new C.N.T. industrial union demonstrated its effectiveness for the first time. Soon after, the second congress of the confederation was held at the Comedia Theatre in Madrid, in 1919. However, the exaltation of the so-called Bolshevik Triennial had started with formidable power in Andalusia and in centres all over the country.

<sup>3</sup> The strike began as a sit-in protest by clerical workers against a wage cut by the "Canadiense," who fired eight of its office workers. The strong C.N.T. *sindicato unico* (industrial union) stopped working in support of the clerical workers. Repressive measures by the government led to the spread of the strike to other industries and to transportation. The entire city of Barcelona and neighbouring towns were closed down. Three thousand workers were arrested and held in the notorious Montjuich Fortress, where Francisco Ferrer had been executed ten years before. The strike lasted forty-two days, ending in March 1919 after the central government intervened. Many unions won wage increases and the eight-hour day.

## The Congress at the Comedia Theatre and the Start of Terrorism

The confederal congress at the Comedia Theatre became involved with the issues arising from the great Canadiense strike: acceptance by the C.N.T. of a controversial Mixed Commission, a type of arbitration. This divided the anarchosyndicalists and the anarchists as a breach of the traditional tactics of direct action. The employer lockout in support of the Canadiense also divided them: the Catalonia regional organization accepted the lockout, confident that the unions would be able to hold out. However, the C.N.T. National Committee recommended opposition and resistance to the lockout. This would have led to a revolutionary situation. Buenacasa championed this point of view; he regarded it as feasible because he felt that the situation in Andalusia was ripe and they were more ready for the decision to expropriate than even Catalonia. Levante, Aragon, and Rioja also supported this position. The arguments of the delegate, undoubtedly Buenacasa, were heard but not accepted because they were regarded as too optimistic.

The lockout was accepted, although the following argument was considered before the decision was reached: "Passive resistance will lead to defeat; hunger will do us more harm than guns; we can win if we counter-attack with energy; we will be defeated if we resist with resignation; today we are strong, tomorrow we will be weak." This prophecy was confirmed. The triumph of the employer lockout contributed to the disorganization of the C.N.T., which had just had an outstanding success with its strike against the Canadiense. However, the organization was governed by majority decisions, demonstrating once again that, in a time of crisis, an organization that is consistent in its principles and aims can disagree internally in its evaluation of concrete situations, affecting the very life of the organization.

There were a great many delegates from all regions of the country at the confederal congress at the Comedia Theatre. The anarchist influence took over completely in the C.N.T. at that time. A detailed examination of the ideological commitment of the delegations reveals that more than ninety per cent of them were anarchist or anarchosyndicalist even though there were disagreements on some of the resolutions adopted at the congress. Buenacasa's history suffers certain gaps of information but is nevertheless inestimably valuable because of his personal acquaintance

with a majority of the people. Buenacasa cites militants among the almost 450 delegates who were typical for their regions.<sup>4</sup>

We must also add Andres Nin, a delegate from Catalonia, and Hilario Arlandis, from Levante, who represented a Bolshevik element at the 1919 congress. In addition, Ernesto Marcen and Jesus Cejuela, Asturian delegates, were socialists, supporters of the state, and parliamentarians. The first two were soon to play a major rôle for a brief period in the C.N.T. with useful implications for the purposes of our study, as we shall see.

On day-to-day matters, the congress reflected a diversity of opinions. In summary, the congress rejected the proposal of fusion with the U.G.T. They called instead for the U.G.T. to join the C.N.T. within three months or face condemnation as "yellow" unions. The congress rejected the Asturian proposal for the creation of industrial federations and confirmed the structure of a single, all-inclusive union in a community or an industry within a community (*sindicato unico*). Another resolution confirmed that the C.N.T. of Spain was the firm defender of the principles of the First International supported by Bakunin and that it join the Communist International provisionally because of its revolutionary character, until the C.N.T. of Spain organizes and calls a universal labour congress that establishes the foundation on which a true Workers' International will be governed. In a clear analysis of the situation in Russia, Quintanilla warned that the revolution started there would not follow the route of the anarchosyndicalist C.N.T., and this was soon confirmed. To protect its own health, the congress proceeded to adopt the following declaration of principles:

The delegates declare, taking into account that the tendency of the majority in workers' organizations in all countries aim for the complete, total, and

<sup>4</sup> Bernardo Pascual, Juan Fernandez, Galo Diez, and Juan Ortega, for the north; for Galicia, Cayetano Gastriz, German Barreiro, Jose Suarez, and Josela Lopez; for Andalusia, Juan Guerrero, Sebastian Oliva, Jose Chacon, Antonio Jurado, Juan S. Carrion, Roque Garcia, Armodio Garcia, and the famous Cordon. Levante was represented by Juan Rueda, Eusebio Carbo, Juan Gallego Crespo, Diego Parra, Jose Miro, and Emilio Molina. Among the Catalan delegates were Jose Canela, Saturnino Meca, Pedro Rico, Emilio Mira, Ricardo Fornells, David Rey, Simon Piera, Jose Mascarell, Angel Pestana, Salvador Segui, Felix Monteagudo, and Juan Peiro. Among the Aragon delegates there were included Zenon Canudo, Ramon Acin, and Antonio Callejo. Eleuterio Quintanilla, Jose Maria Martinez, Avelino Gonzalez, Aquilino Moral, and others were part of the Asturian delegation, and Mauro Bajatierra Lopez, Pascual, Gamez, Parera, and Evaristo Sirvente were among the delegates from the two Castilles.

absolute liberation of humanity in the moral, economic, and political order,  
and

Considering that this goal cannot be achieved while the land and the instruments  
of labour, production, and exchange are not socialized and the all-absorbing  
power of the state does not disappear, therefore

Proposes

That the congress, in agreement with the principles of the First Workingmen's  
International, declares that the goal of the National Confederation of Labour  
(C.N.T.) is Anarchist Communism.

This resolution was approved unanimously and cleared up any doubts  
about the ideological commitments of the C.N.T. to that point. These  
resolutions remained in force until the next congress, which was not  
held until the coming of the Republic in 1931. The Confederation had  
gone through the dramatic events of terrorism and the Primo de Rivera  
dictatorship, which caused serious distortions to Spanish anarchosynd-  
icalism. It gave rise to reformist tendencies within the C.N.T. As the  
struggle of the guerrillas intensified, the communists, very few in  
number but active, tried to drive them out of the organization. The  
few scattered communists made themselves felt in 1920, when the  
terror started in Catalonia. The C.N.T. reached its high-water mark  
as an organization in the region at this time. Terrorism began to cut  
it down immediately, putting it in a very delicate situation. I have  
already quoted the historical passage by Buenacasa in connection with  
this situation and the problems arising from this struggle without  
quarter by cadres of the confederation against employer and government  
terrorism: "The best of our cadres are faced with this dilemma: to kill  
or be killed, to flee or to wind up in prison. The violent ones defend  
themselves and kill; the stoics die, as do the brave, who are assassinated  
in betrayal; the cowards or prudent flee and escape; the most active  
who don't worry about what will happen to them waste away in jail."

In this situation, the Bolshevik elements—Nin, Maurin, and others  
not yet active in the organization and therefore not known to the  
police—succeeded temporarily in capturing control of the representative  
organs of the C.N.T. in Catalonia and even the National Committee.  
They launched a manifesto in the name of the Confederation which was  
published in *Acción Social Obrera* of San Felin de Guixols, in which they  
labelled the anarchists "cowards" and "dogmatic." However, more than  
100 militants were murdered, 500 were wounded, and thousands were  
imprisoned and tried. The manifesto had an important influence on the  
C.N.T.'s history. The first attack on the anarchists from within the  
Confederation came from a few communists who had infiltrated the

organization and whose actions were very insidious. The attack attempted to orient the C.N.T. toward Moscow—the main enemy, practically the only one, was anarchism, which was the bone and muscle of the C.N.T. The task was too much for the forces available to the supporters of the Third International. But the attack on anarchism and the C.N.T. was a harbinger of future attacks on the F.A.I., beginning in 1927. The strategy consisted of discrediting anarchism in the eyes of the C.N.T. masses with the purpose of replacing it with the Bolshevik vanguard directed from Moscow. Thus, we see that the earliest antecedents of the myth that the F.A.I. is a foreign, pernicious body within the C.N.T. were the communist elements, who had wormed their way into the structure of the confederation. We will prove this as we approach the middle years of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. The precedent was then used by the political syndicalists, who prepared their nest for reformism under the favourable conditions of the dictatorship, when it was impossible to hold regular meetings of the organization.

At a plenum held in Lerida in 1921, while the C.N.T. was in disarray in Catalonia, a group of Bolsheviks was designated to represent the Spanish C.N.T. in Russia: Andres Nin, Jesus Ibanez, Joaquin Maurin, and Hilario Arlandis, together with the French anarchist Gaston Leval. A later plenum held in Logorno in August withdrew the representation and the delegation went to Russia without any mandate, according to Buenacasa. The restoration of constitutional guarantees by the Spanish government, in April 1922, permitted the anarchosyndicalists to meet in Saragossa on June 11 to study the situation. Militants such as Segui, Pestana, Galo Diez, Salvador Quemades, Cano Ruiz, Paulino Diez, Avelino Gonzalez, Felipe Alaiz, Jose Viadiu, and forty-two delegates from the regions attended. They adopted the famous political pronouncement which greatly pleased the bourgeois and leftist press because they thought the C.N.T. was renouncing its anti-State and anti-parliamentary postulates. In actuality, it was a declaration of a political conception in the Aristotelian sense, as a general human conception, oriented toward direct action and not weakened by the paralyzing factors of Statist politics. The conference at Saragossa ratified the resolutions of Logorno, confirmed the withdrawal of the C.N.T. from the Third International and the entrance in principle into the new International Working Men's Association, with its headquarters in Berlin from 1920 until Hitler came to power in 1933.

We now draw a new lesson: the C.N.T. as such had a sufficiently strong ideological foundation to correct errors and maintain its course. It could neutralize or expel bodies that were foreign to the nature of

the organization. It was the anarchist character of the C.N.T. that closed the door to the partisans of Moscow even though there was no specific organization of anarchists at that time.

Once again, terrorism led to the radicalization of the organization. A new type of militant appeared on the scene, especially prepared for revolutionary action. C.N.T. men of action appeared between 1918 and 1923 whose names would be on everyone's tongue for years. I am referring to a key period. The Ascaso brothers, Durruti, Garcia Oliver, Sanz, Suberviela, Vandellos, Archs, Alcon, Marcelino del Campo, Escartin, Manuel Sancho, Pina, Mateu, Casanellas, and others were only part of a generation of militants who risked all in the struggle without quarter. Many fell, like Vandellos and Ramon Archs, who were part of the C.N.T. defense groups that kept the organization afloat in the face of the employer-government offensive. Almost all of them teenagers and anarchists, they came on the scene simultaneously in different regions of the country. In the first period of the terror, in Barcelona, the struggle was carried on by Catalans, as shown by a simple reading of the names of the fallen at that time. But Aragon and other regions quickly supplied men of great character to the C.N.T. in Catalonia in their most desperate moment: the Ascaso brothers, Durruti, Suberviela, Chueca, Torres Escartin, and so on. Almost all these men formed anarchist groups for effective action.

Between 1920 and 1921, a feeling developed that a national anarchist federation of resolute courageous individuals was needed. A conference was held in Saragossa early in 1921 with the following groups present: Via Libre (Free Way), El Comunista (The Communist), Los Justicieros (Fighters for Justice), Voluntad (Free Will), and Impulso (Impulse). They agreed to send a delegation to the south, the centre, and the east to check out their feelings about such an undertaking. Durruti, who was to be the most famous anarchist militant, was in Saragossa at the time, and was commissioned to make the trip—the first time that he assumed an important responsibility in the movement. He left Saragossa in February 1921, together with his comrade Juliana Lopez.

Durruti was able to convince the militants in Andalusia that the groups should work together and coordinate their activities on a region-wide basis. The arrival of Durruti and his comrade in Madrid coincided with the attack on Dato by Mateu, Nicolau, and Casanellas, part of the Metal Workers' group in the C.N.T. defense committee in Barcelona. They were therefore unable to establish contact with comrades in the Central Region.

When they arrived in Barcelona, Domingo Ascaso gave him a picture of the terrible situation there: the flower of the militants in jail, the central government hesitant, but the battle continuing against the *pistoleros* ("gunmen" or murderers) in the pay of the employers. Under such conditions it was not possible to consider the proposal of the anarchist groups in Saragossa. The relationship between the specific anarchist groups and the C.N.T. became clear in 1922, when official Catalan gunmen went to Saragossa and the anarchosyndicalist organization held Count Coello and the Archbishop of Saragossa, Cardinal Soldevila, responsible. Allende Salazar then resigned and Alfonso XIII named Maura to succeed him. He was also unable to restore the reputation of the monarchy, which deteriorated further because of repression against the workers and the increase of killings "in the act of escaping." Sanchez Guerra then formed a government. Before he was able to restore constitutional guarantees, the local authorities decided to go on the offensive. They sped up the trials against the supposed authors of the *attentats* (assassinations) against Bernal and the journalist Gutierrez. The C.N.T. unions did not dare call a general strike in support of the accused because they were afraid the workers would not respond. The anarchist groups decided to assume responsibility for such a mobilization.

At a meeting of the local Federation of Saragossa, Durruti, who was also a member of the Justicieros group, proposed that the call for the strike be made by the anarchist groups, not by the C.N.T. In case of failure, the C.N.T. would be able to charge the groups with "adventurism," and if it succeeded, the respect it inspired would strengthen the C.N.T. in the eyes of the workers. The proposition was accepted, the general strike mobilized the working class, and on April 19, those accused of Bernal's murder were pronounced innocent. On April 22, Sanchez Guerra restored constitutional guarantees. The famous Saragossa conference, mentioned earlier, was held soon after.

## Creation of the National Federation of Anarchist Groups

### *New Communist Attempt*

The Justicieros group, composed of Durruti, Francisco Ascaso, Torres Escartin, Gregorio Suberviela, and Marcelino del Campo, went to Barcelona one day before the attack on Angel Pestana.\* The decision to

\* Angel Pestana was a leader in the C.N.T. and editor of the C.N.T. daily *Solidaridad Obrera*. As such, he was a target for assassination by the *pistoleros*, gunmen

go was based on letters received by Francisco Ascaso from his brother Domingo in Barcelona stating that the calm in the city was deceptive and that the employer murderers had the support of the recently created company unions, so-called "free unions." Domingo Ascaso wanted his brother to know that the anarchist groups were preparing for a new offensive against the labour movement at any moment. "...This new battle will be decisive, and many of our comrades will fall, but the battle is unavoidable." Domingo advised his brother to remain in Saragossa until the situation in Barcelona was clear. However, this warning was precisely the reason that the entire Justicieros group went to Barcelona. The five men began a new life in Barcelona under a new name, Crisol (Crucible), in August 1922, according to Abel Paz.

After the attack against Pestana, Martinez Anido's career as Civil Governor of Barcelona began to pale. However, the company unions supported by him, the Church, and the bourgeoisie, intensified the battle. Only a number of the Catalan intellectuals who were committed to autonomy under the leadership of Macia supported the embattled anarchosindicalists. One of the bulwarks of the movement was the Woodworkers' Union in Barcelona. Durruti and his friends found other young militants in this union and they joined together to form the famous *Solidarios* group.<sup>5</sup>

Abel Paz's statement illuminates the anarchist-C.N.T. relationship very clearly: "These militants came together with a triple aim: to face the employer gunmen (*pistoleros*), to maintain the union structures of the C.N.T., to organize an anarchist federation that would bring together all groups with a similar ideology throughout the peninsula." And immediately after: "In their eyes the problem of organization had the highest priority and was an indispensable condition for the triumph of the revolution." The group, one of many in Barcelona at the time, had a publication, *Crisol*. Francisco Ascaso was its administrator.

The reign of Arlegni and Martinez Anido finally came to an end. Sanchez Guerra, President of the Royal Council, heard that they were

hired by the employers' association. They killed hundreds of C. N. T. militants and spokesmen during the early twenties with encouragement and active assistance from the central government in Madrid.—*transl. note*

<sup>5</sup> The members of this famous group, according to Abel Paz, were Francisco Ascaso, waiter; Durruti, mechanic; Torres Escartin, pastry cook; Juan Garcia Oliver, waiter; Aurelio Fernandez, mechanic; Ricardo Sanz, textile worker; Alfonso Miguel, cabinetmaker; Gregorio Suberviela, mechanic; Eusebio Brau, foundry worker; Marcelino Manuel Campos, carpenter; Garcia Vivancos, chauffeur; Antonio del Toto, labourer.



preparing a St. Bartholomew's night massacre of syndicalists and ordered their resignation. He turned over the government of the province temporarily to the president of the Barcelona Tribunal. After constitutional guarantees were restored, life returned to normal throughout Catalonia and the Solidarios group called an anarchist plenum for the Catalonia-Baleares region. Many groups attended and a national commission of anarchist relations was created, forerunner of the F.A.I. The meeting, held at Montjuich, was attended by some fifty militants, among whom were Pestana, Herreros, Picos, Urales, and Juan Manuel Molina. The national commission included the latter, as provisional secretary, and also Manuel Molet and Jeremias Roig. This was the commission which, with changing members, maintained the organized movement in Spain until 1927, when the F.A.I. was established. The congress asserted that the truce in Catalonia was a temporary one because the repression was not a mere whim of Martinez Anido but the result of class struggle.

Curiously, the regional congress foresaw the danger of a new dictatorship. It called for an acceleration of the revolutionary process through a campaign of agitation in the industrial and rural areas. The commission of anarchist relations extended these plans peninsula-wide, supported by the following publications: *Crisol* (Crucible), *Fragua Social* (Social Forge), and *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Liberty). As Paz tells us, the congress revised anarchist anti-militarist tactics that resulted in desertions by many young militants who had to flee the country. They decided that young people should remain in the army and form revolutionary nuclei or "anti-militarist committees" working with anarchist groups in the locality. They created a special bulletin for this work, *Hijos de Pueblo* (Sons of the People). The commission of anarchist relations had three members from the Solidarios group: Francisco Ascaso, Aurelio Fernandez, and Buenaventura Durruti. The first was secretary-general, the second was responsible for military questions, and the third was responsible for providing weapons and armaments. The anti-militarist committees multiplied inside the army, and Aurelio Fernandez was in contact with corporals, sergeants, and officers who were won over to the revolutionary cause. (This penetration by anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism into the ranks of lower officers in the army was demonstrated during the revolutionary July days at the time of the uprising.)

### *The Communists Again*

The Communists were the first to attack the ideological foundations of the C.N.T., trying to substitute their own philosophy. Communist activities became a factor in the reaffirmation of anarchism within the C.N.T.

Starting in 1922, Oscar Perez Solis and his friends decided not to give up trying to push the C.N.T. into the Red Trade Union International.

They created Communist Union Groups (G.S.C.) in Bilbao, cells that would lead to the creation of Revolutionary Union Committees (C.S.R.) that would conduct the opposition within the organization.

Joaquin Maurin attacked again in 1923. In *Syndicalism Yesterday and Today*, he states that "the entrance of the anarchists into the workers' organizations is a phenomenon of the highest importance," and that syndicalism provides harmony between Marxism and anarchism. But on August 26, 1923, *Solidaridad Obrera*, in Barcelona, published an article "as proof of its impartiality" entitled "The C.N.T. and the Decomposition of Anarchosyndicalism." The anarchists who led the trade union showed an evident lack of understanding of the class struggle, Maurin stated. He believed that the revolutionary union committees (C.S.R.), composed of communists and syndicalists, were gaining ground and would succeed in rescuing the C. N. T. from the clouds of anarchist philosophy. In actuality, such communist-syndicalist action was a myth because the so-called straight syndicalists always attacked the communist presence in the C.N.T. In general, men such as Maurin, and later Bullejos and Oscar Perez Solis, alluded to the anarchist influence in the unions, that is, to the close relationship of anarchism and syndicalism, calling it "anarchosyndicalism." The struggle of the communists within the C.N.T. at that time was a struggle against anarchosyndicalism. At least they were using correct, adequate terms, not resorting to confused, contradictory terminology.

After an ominous attack that cost the lives of Salvador Segui and his comrade, Padronas, in March 1923, the Via Libre Group of Saragossa called a national anarchist congress for Madrid in April, at which representatives from all regions made important decisions. The National Federation of Anarchist Groups was established, with headquarters in Barcelona in the office of *Solidaridad Obrera*, another step toward the establishment of the F.A.I. For its part, the C.N.T. increased its activities after the Saragossa conference, as we have seen. This, in turn, gave rise to the idea of holding an extraordinary congress. Regional congresses were held during the spring and summer of 1923, in preparation for a national congress. The first of these, held in the region of Aragon, Rioja, and Navarre, ratified the libertarian agreements of the National Confederation of Labour. Similar support was forthcoming from the other regions of the C. N. T.

A number of very important strikes took place in 1923. The most important of these was a public transportation strike in Barcelona, during which the owners asked for the help of the authorities. The dictatorship of Primo de Rivera was proclaimed at this time, on September 13, 1923, and a military directorate was set up. The situation led to new methods within anarchism and anarchosyndicalism.



## Chapter Three

# ANARCHISM AND ANARCHOSYNDICALISM DURING THE PRIMO DE RIVERA DICTATORSHIP AND UP TO THE SECOND REPUBLIC

The seizure of power by the military in September 1923 placed the anarchosyndicalists and anarchists in a difficult situation:

If the seizure of power is not directed against the workers, against their liberties, against the improvements and benefits, the economic and moral demands that they have won little by little, our attitude will be very different than if all of the advances won over many years of struggle are attacked and not respected. If this happens, we cannot remain quiet. (*Solidaridad Obrera*, 18 Sept. 1923)

The C.N.T. called an unsuccessful general strike in Barcelona on September 14. The above declaration is the key to the many complex events that took place in the movement in 1923-24, all of which culminated in illegal status for the C.N.T., anarchism, and all its publications. When Primo de Rivera named Martinez Anido Sub-Secretary of the Interior, and Arlegui Director General of Public Order, on September 24 and 27 respectively, it was clear that the future of the libertarians had been decided. The C.N.T. unsuccessfully called for a united front with the U.G.T. The Socialist Party decided to collaborate with the new regime. Caballero was named Counsellor of State and declared that he regarded socialist and U.G.T. representation in the new regime a political advance. The presence in government of the inveterate enemies of the C.N.T. and anarchism did not mean that they would be closed down immediately, but rather the start of a policy

of government pressure. *Solidaridad Obrera* was able to continue publishing, albeit with many censored pages, until May 1924, when it was suspended and the organization made illegal. To manacle and destroy anarcho-syndicalism, the dictatorship used for the first time a decree of March 30, 1923, that required unions to abide by rules and regulations, statutes and acts, and to maintain membership records and books of accounts as a condition for legal existence.

According to Article 3, the membership records were required to list the name, trade and home address of each member, the dates of joining and resigning from the organization, and his responsibilities and duties in the organization. All the members had to be informed by letter within three days "not only of the directives but also of the names of the tax collector, the janitor, and the porter."

I offer an observation at this time about the research and documents that Antonio Elorza has gathered for this study.\* He has done a most valuable job of collecting and organizing material, for which I am in his debt, as surely will be future historians and essayists. He has performed invaluable work as an investigator. However, I must at the same time seriously disagree with Elorza on a number of points. I believe—and I am sorry if I am wrong—that his work is coloured by a partisan conception, that reality is distorted to fit his *a priori* propositions:

- 1) He affirms that the C.N.T. is the product of three currents coming together: communist, anarchist, syndicalist. This is a gross misunderstanding of the actual situation.
- 2) He emphasizes the amorphous character of anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism because their organizations do not have a centralized hierarchy such as is found in other political groups.
- 3) He sees syndicalism as neutral, dry, sterile, the way Pestana pictured it as the representative current in the C.N.T., in spite of all historical evidence to the contrary.
- 4) Finally, he depicts anarchism as conspiratorial and anarchists as forming secret associations "to seize power" in the C.N.T., a portrayal that other historians and writers with similar *a priori* opinions have nurtured.

Elorza, like other writers before him, uses a tremendous mass of documentation to reach conclusions contradictory to the evidence. Elorza's

\* Antonio Elorza was active in the C. N. T. during the Civil War. He was a follower of Angel Pestana, supported the idea of "pure and simple" syndicalism (trade-unionism), and was part of the *Treintistas* (The Thirty) in the fight against the F.A.I. Elorza is the author of a book on anarcho-syndicalism under the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera. He also edited a book of Pestana's writings, to which he wrote the prologue. As well, he wrote two articles, in 1970 and 1972, for *La Revista de Trabajos* (Labour Review).—*transl. note*

first error is to place anarchism in opposition to C.N.T.ism (anarchosyndicalism). This is what the communists quoted by him did and later the syndicalists of Pestana's school of thought. There is also arbitrary and confusing use of the terms "anarchosyndicalism" and "syndicalism." Various militants are treated in this confusing manner, sometimes as anarchists, at other times as anarchosyndicalists or syndicalists. Peiro is a typical example, described variously as syndicalist, anarchosyndicalist, and anarchist. Elorza presents Peiro in 1923-25 as a syndicalist, although Peiro defines himself as an anarchosyndicalist, and even an anarchist in his later debates with Pestana. Viadiu, Carbo, and many others receive similar treatment.

The truth is that Elorza did not understand that there could be more or less moderate positions within the general framework of anarchosyndicalism and anarchism, differences about actual situations, not principles. This is the case with the famous struggle between the advocates of legality and the advocates of illegality for the C.N.T. in the 1923-24 period. Many anarchist and anarchosyndicalist militants were in favour of going illegal, while others wanted to remain legal. It is therefore incorrect to state that all the "anarchists" as a bloc were in favour of illegality and all the "syndicalists" were against. The position of the C.N.T. under the dictatorship was difficult. It was impossible to carry on an open debate. The enormous difficulties carried over from the previous period of terrorism contributed to poisoning attitudes so that certain problems could not be treated in a constructive manner but were reduced to personality conflicts.

The moment finally came to submit the anarchosyndicalists of the C.N.T. to the test of "government pressure." Martinez Anido, Sub-Secretary of the Interior, directed the Civil Governor of Barcelona, General Lossada, to order all syndicates, "naturally of an anarchist and syndicalist character," to present their books and accounts within eight days and to close down those that failed to do so. The orders were issued every two weeks, and reinforced with internal complementary orders by Anido himself. He started by persecuting all those who collected and received the dues, classifying such activity as fraud. The reaction of the local federation of Barcelona was to firmly reject putting the organization at the service of government or police agencies and to go underground. The local federation informed the workers and the unions not to play the game of the bourgeoisie "and the enemies of the proletariat." General Lossada played such games: he gave guarantees, under specific conditions, to the transport, metal, and textile workers' unions that they would be able to open their doors again. The transport

and metalworkers' unions presented their books and then tried to attract C.N.T. members to their organizations. On the other hand, two national committees were arrested and dissolved on December 25, 1923, and June 2, 1924, one chaired by Vallina in Seville, the other by Jose Gracian in Saragossa. The former had fulfilled all the requirements to remain legal.

Returning to Barcelona, the attitude of the pro-legal unions, which was supported by reputable militants such as Peiro and Pestana, was opposed bitterly by opponents of legalization.

The internal problems of the anarchosyndicalists and anarchists hurt the movement, creating many antagonisms. Pestana and Peiro expressed their attitudes on obscure aspects of the organization, such as extra-union activities, holdups, and expropriations, and extra limitations on the power of committees. The daily actions of active militants were the issue, not questions of principle. Their concern was well founded, because Pestana himself had carried out a number of unauthorized acts and would do so again during the underground period of the dictatorship. The situation, unfortunately, lent itself to such behaviour. The previous period of terrorism had produced a similar situation.

The confusion of that period became apparent with the appearance of *Lucha Obrera* (Workers' Struggle), created as a substitute for *Solidaridad Obrera*, which, by agreement of the organization, opposed legalization and ceased publishing. The new paper was supported by the metal workers' union, which accepted the conditions for legality imposed by the government. Its editorial board included Joaquin Maurin and Hilario Arlandis on one side, and three anarchists, Antonio Amador, Jose Viadiu, and Felipe Alaiz, the latter two the editors of the closed-down daily *Solidaridad Obrera*. Jose Viadiu published particularly virulent articles in *Lucha Obrera* against certain activities not in harmony with the spirit of the C.N.T. and against the trend toward underground status. There are many such examples of disagreement among the anarchists at that time. Viadiu also emphasized that the C.N.T. was not and could not be anarchist because it was anarchosyndicalist, in accord with its basic philosophy and the sovereign decisions of all its regular assemblies. In addition to the many complex problems at that time, they also were unable to consider certain theoretical and organizational problems fully and openly. Viadiu supported his point of view with the arguments of Luigi Fabbri and Errico Malatesta, eminent Italian libertarian theoreticians whose opinion of workers' organizations and syndicalism would soon be refuted, as we shall see, by D. Abad de Santillan. Peiro and Pestana, among others, shared this opinion of Viadiu, and both supported the



content, the internal organizational structure, and the goals of the C.N.T. for its anarchosyndicalist character.

The situation within the organization was extremely complicated and chaotic. The disagreements in Barcelona were brought to a regional plenum at Mataro on December 8, under pressure from the unions in the provinces and the region. The plenum dealt with 1) the reorganization of the regional committee, which was set up in Mataro with G. Esgleas and Adrian Arnio; 2) the continuation of *Solidaridad Obrera*; and 3) calling a new plenum at Granollers to deal with the problem of Barcelona. Opinion at the plenum favoured reopening the unions, the Federation, and the newspaper. At the Granoller plenum on December 30 it was agreed, among other things, that all union committees in Barcelona resign to pave the way for the election of new committees. The issue of orientation and control of the confederal organ, *Solidaridad Obrera*, brought about the confrontation, typified by Pestana on one side and Buenacasa on the other. Buenacasa stated that the daily must be guided by the meetings of the organization, the last of which had been held at the Comedia Theatre in Madrid in 1919. This meant that it was anarchosyndicalist with the goal of libertarian communism. The declaration of the Comedia congress had never been challenged. Buenacasa declared that he represented the woodworkers' union. On January 14, 1924, the metal workers' union changed its committee and its orientation, voting to go underground.

Germinal Esgleas, secretary of the Catalan Regional Committee, pointed out an intelligent alternative for the organization in a series of articles: maintain open (legal) unions but go underground if there is an increase of repression.

I can only summarize what happened during this entire period by saying that the unions tried to operate in the open and then went underground, and that many militants were arrested in the region and throughout the country. Buenacasa, Monteagudo, and Adrian Arno were arrested in Barcelona. Elorza points out that with the arrest of Buenacasa and Monteagudo, the "anarchist" editors of *Solidaridad Obrera*, there was a tendency toward the "syndicalist" thesis, supported at this time by Peiro and Pestana. Their positions, however, were not in opposition to the resolutions adopted at the Comedia congress. Therefore, they were not "syndicalists." While Peiro concerned himself with questions of organization, Elorza tells us, "Pestana was trying to establish the foundations for an alliance of workers' organizations before the dictatorship was stabilized," which indicates an intention to create the future "Patriotic Union." I point this out because Pestana's vision of political syndicalism began to incubate at this time. Government pressure finally became

intolerable and many persecuted militants went to France. They organized themselves into the Federation of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups, including a liaison committee.

The meeting at which the Federation of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups was born was held at Lyons in early 1924. The group published a notice in *Solidaridad Obrera* on February 8. I cite a passage from Elorza in connection with this which constitutes the basis of our study: the notice named the groups that established the committee (composed of two secretaries and a treasurer)—“Prometeo” (Prometheus), “Amor y Libertad” (Love and Liberty), and “Fructidor” (Fruitful, Fertile). In addition, they set up a publications committee for their publication *Liberion*, as well as a library commission, composed of three comrades. They also announced their first aim: “We will go wherever we are called to fight against the royal tyranny. No obstacles can hold us back because, in addition to our youth, we have the burning fire of our ideal of justice and liberty. We will destroy all who stand in our way.” Nine months later, this spirit led to the attempted invasion of Vera de Bidasoa, over the frontier between France and Spain.

Elorza also points out that Peiro tried to hold back the radical positions of anarchosyndicalism and anarchism. History teaches that extremist attitudes are always reinforced when those in power refuse to recognize voices of dissent. One fact is without question at this point: Peiro represented a moderate attitude within anarchosyndicalism.

In any event, the attack which resulted in the death of a judge in Barcelona on May 28, 1924, ended the question of whether the unions should be legal or go underground. The unions were declared illegal, *Solidaridad Obrera* was suspended, and arrests increased. The problem was resolved: the only possible option was to go underground. What had happened so many times during the period of the International now happened again. The authorities showed the working class the only option that they had: oppression.

*Solidaridad Obrera* would not appear again until 1930. Many anarchist periodicals disappeared throughout the country, but the weekly *Accion Social Obrera* of San Feliu de Guixols continued to publish until the end of the dictatorship. *El Trabajo*, from Manresa, and *Vida Obrera*, (Workers' Life), in Canet de Mar, did not last long. On the other hand, *La Revista Blanca*, 1923, *Generacion Consciente*, in Alcou, and *La Revista Nueva*, edited by “Dionysios” in Barcelona, were able to publish. These publications were theoretical in character and were not regarded as inflammatory by the dictatorship. *La Revista Blanca* played an important role at this time, and its influence was considerable. In the general disorganization of anarchosyndicalism, it helped polarize the issues. Both

*La Novel Ideal*, edited by Urales, and *La Revista Blanca* contained little propaganda.

The Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups in France established a publishing house in Paris, the International Library. It edited *Revista Internacional Anarquista* (International Anarchist Review) and small books. *Tiempos Nuevos* (New Times) appeared in 1925. Later, *Accion* succeeded *Revista Internacional Anarquista*.

Other Spanish-language papers published abroad were *Cultura Obrera*,\* in New York, edited by Esteve for many years, and *La Protesta*, published by Argentine anarchists in Buenos Aires and edited by Santillan. Elorza states, correctly, that their influence on underground Spanish anarcho-syndicalist circles was greater than that of the anarchist exiles in France in 1926-27. As we shall see in the next chapter, Arango and Santillan defended their position in favour of anarchist influence in the unions, although we note that they were not teaching anything new to the comrades in Spain, nothing that had not been said or done before. Anarcho-syndicalist C.N.T. was, in the final analysis, a realization of Santillan's ideas between 1924 and 1926. Just as the anarchist communists and anarchist collectivists had a period of theoretical development after the breakup of F.R.E., the period 1924 to 1927 was another period of theoretical or, even better, tactical clarification. The polemics were so sharp on the part of the Argentine group (really Spanish exiles) that Peiro's positions were made to look reformist or "syndicalist," as Elorza notes frequently, although Peiro never abandoned the theoretical boundaries of anarcho-syndicalism. His innate moderation made him look like a "white" in Santillan's steely, implacable analysis.

## Existence Underground, Crisis, and Theoretical/Tactical Debates

After the dissolution of the National Committees of, first, Seville and then Saragossa, through the arrest of their members, a new National Committee was established in Barcelona in spite of conditions described as follows: "Think what our situation will be: hundreds of prisoners, our unions closed down, forbidden to collect dues, and the comrades who disregard the danger hunted down like vermin; the only thing they are suspected of is trying to open up the jails, or, worse, the cemetery" (*La Protesta*, 31 Oct. 1984, cited by Elorza). This situation

\* *Cultura Proletaria* is the correct title.—*transl. note*

fostered the proclamation by the Anarchist Liaison Committee, which continued to develop throughout the country, illustrating the compatibility of the anarchists' union work and their specific activities outside the unions. The manifesto stated, among other things: "The Revolution is coming. We anarchists must try to have an influential role in it, to push it ahead as much as we can." These activities were opposed by Pestana and, to a lesser extent, by Peiro.

This situation, and the tension that existed regularly between political émigrés outside the country and the underground militants within the country, led to sharp disagreement between the Anarchist Relations Committee in Lyons, France, and the National Committee of the C.N.T. in Spain. The Lyons committee wanted to organize a *coup d'état* against the directorate, together with the groups and the C.N.T. National Committee in Spain. They raised money to buy arms. They had theatrical benefits with the Spanish Theatrical Lyrical Group, presenting revolutionary dramatic plays. The anarchist groups in exile held a congress on November 2 at which they studied the situation. A misunderstanding between the comrades in exile and those in Spain seemed to give the green light for the disastrous episode of Vera de Bidasoa in November 1924. Carbo, then secretary of the C.N.T. National Committee, tried to stop them at the frontier, but he was too late. The conspirators were caught by government forces and all three were executed. Some C.N.T. militants tried to capture the Ataranzanas barracks, but they failed. The defeat resulted in the execution of two of the participants.

At the same time that Angel Pestana took charge of the underground C.N.T. National Committee, the congress of anarchist groups in Lyons in June 1925 agreed to create the Federation of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups in France. It seems that there were thirty-eight delegates at this meeting, including Fernandel of the Anarchist International group and Orobon Fernandez, director of *Tiempos Nuevos* (New Times). The congress examined the revolutionary failure of November 1924. There were strong disagreements (again, among anarchists) between those who favoured and those who opposed alliances to further the revolution. The majority supported an alliance, agreeing to join with other, non-anarchist forces to destroy the military dictatorship and the monarchy, providing these forces were progressive supporters of full economic and political liberty and that they were truly representative groups or parties, and not individuals who had no backing but who would benefit personally from an alliance with the anarchists. The groups in Spain, which were dispersed and not in contact with each other, also started to reorganize themselves. In the meantime, the

C.N.T. Catalonia regional committee, seated in Sabadell, had a new authorized organ, *Solidaridad Proletaria*, under the control of Peiro and Pestana, who now also held control within the organization, control which had previously been in the hands of the more radical section. This was a time of great pontificating and preaching but very little discussion in the unions because it was impossible to hold meetings. For the most part the voices that *were* heard expressed a single theme that was hardly representative of the movement. The authorized voice of the C. N. T. and its various tendencies would not be heard again until the congress at the Conservatory in Madrid in 1931.

Buenacasa edited *El Productor* (The Producer) in Blanes, and he carried on a vigorous debate with Pestana.

I spoke previously of the reorganization of the anarchist groups. This was brought to a head finally in 1925 on a regional scale in Catalonia, as well as nationally. The central force of this reorganization was the "Sun and Life" group, organized seemingly to arrange excursions on a regional basis, and included anarchist groups in Manresa, Sabadell, Tarrasa, and Alto Llobregat, as well as in Barcelona. The groups used family excursions as a way to maintain relations. They were able to organize the Catalan Regional Committee of Anarchist Groups, as well as a provisional National Committee. However, the new regional committee was broken up by the authorities almost as soon as it was formed, and another committee had to be named. Among those arrested were Magrina and Labrador, who later committed suicide. A regional plenum of groups was held in Rubi, near Tarrasa, and a Regional Committee of Anarchist Groups was set up in Catalonia. In the meantime, Miguel Jiminez and J. Lloch were named to head the National Committee of Anarchist Groups. They assumed responsibility for reorganizing the groups on a national scale. Miguel Jiminez would be a pivotal figure in the creation of the F.A.I.

The experience at Vera de Vidasoa and the maximalism attributed to the anarchist groups led to increased criticism by the moderate anarchosyndicalist sectors. However, this criticism overlooked the fact that the maximalism usually sprang from particular situations, and that the groups conducted these activities on their own, outside strictly union matters: "We offer our ideas, form our groups, prepare meetings, organize conferences and debates, edit anarchist publications, and spread the seeds of anarchism to the four winds outside the unions, with complete independence."

In addition to the activities of the members of anarchist groups in the unions, there were the activities of anarchists and anarchosyndicalists

who did not belong to a group. All of these activities by the majority of the C.N.T. members reflected its spirit and principles. Peiro opposed these positions frequently during this period, and Santillan attacked him for it. Elorza attributes the manifesto of the Catalan Regional Committee, which appeared in the first issue of *Solidaridad Proletaria*, to Peiro. The manifesto concludes with the following: "It [the C.N.T.] is an organization of economic class struggle; it does not require the acceptance of specific ideas; it respects all ideas..." Elorza underscores the text, it should be emphasized, but for reasons opposite to Peiro's. The manifesto declares its goal to be the transformation of bourgeois society into libertarian communist society. This shows that the C.N.T. was not only an organization of economic class struggle, and that it had a specific ideology adopted by the sovereign congresses of the organization. The quoted section ends: "It respects all ideas." This is absolutely untrue, because it did not accept the ideas of the company unions or the yellow Catholic unions or parliamentary state socialism or Bolshevik communism. Evidently, these are serious corrections for those who attacked the so-called mistakes of the radicals. A little later, the regional committee, confirming my analysis, gave its "clear and firm reply to the bolsheviks boring from within" in the same organ, *Solidaridad Proletaria*.

Another line of attack by this group is "their opposition to the attempt at reorganization and against the abuse of the underground organizations." An appeal was published in the latter part of January 1925, signed by Peiro, Pestana, Jose Gardenas, Adrian Arno, and others, which states: "Step aside and allow those to pass who can reconstruct the crumbling [unions]. We are going to reorganize the unions calmly and carefully." A childish attitude, since the unions were dissolved by government decree and there was no alternative if they did not want to be transformed into appendages of authority.

Later, Pestana defended his theory that the C.N.T. was an open continent, rather than a body with a specific role as it should be, in his article "The Anarchist Groups and the Unions." "To begin with, the union is only an instrument for economic demands, subordinated to the class struggle and lacking a specific ideology. Its goal is that of a class—economic, materialistic—avoiding moral and collective ethical questions of sect or party, or group." Elorza deduces from this that it is a mistake to characterize a union as anarchist.

But this union neutrality was denied when it came to attacking the communists and the other movements mentioned above. Now we see the Pestana strategy clearly: drain the C.N.T. of its ethical, transforming

character, limit it to economic demands, and leave the task of ethical content to a particular party. Elorza points out, accurately, that Pestana showed how he was already proceeding gradually toward the Syndicalist Party. However, Pestana took advantage of the limited resources of the organization to further his plans and disqualified himself with his manoeuvres, which were against the spirit of the C.N.T.

Peiro's position did not contain as many hidden meanings and intentions as did Pestana's, but he was full of contradictions during that extraordinary period. Every one of his articles can be analyzed and inconsistencies demonstrated. For example, in his article "The Anarchists and the Unions," he states: "We repeat, what the unions and the C.N.T. need is not the belligerent ethic inspired by anarchism, but the moral, spiritual, and intellectual influence of the anarchists"—surprising rhetoric which rejects the ethic inspired by anarchism and substitutes the direct influence of the men who advocate it (in the C.N.T. and the unions). This direct influence is anarchosyndicalism.

He stated previously: "All ideas and the freedom to advocate them must be respected in the C.N.T. and the unions." Again, rhetoric, since Peiro and Pestana opposed the agents of the Third International with all their strength when they tried to gain control of the C.N.T.

Although I have pointed out that Peiro and Pestana could not be put in the same bag (as demonstrated later by both men), there is no doubt that Santillan's sarcasm about their changing positions applies to both of them. It must be noted, nonetheless, that under the circumstances, these theoretical tactical conflicts involved an insignificant minority of union members, since the organization could not express itself. However, the F.A.I. appeared on the scene in response to the carefully masked evolution of certain people and the continuing tenacious though futile struggle of the communists. The intervention of *La Protesta* writers in Buenos Aires also contributed with their analytical and clarifying work. The activity in Buenos Aires declined considerably in July 1936, as we shall see.

### Arango and Santillan and *La Protesta*

Elorza has written a great deal, with surprising viewpoints, on this period. On page 151 of the work cited above, he attributes the following concept to Eusebio C. Carbo at the congress of the International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.) in Amsterdam: "...a constantly clearer understanding of our conceptions and goals within the labour movement but not actual control of the economic organizations by anarchist groups."

These were the ideas advocated at that time in *Pensiero y Volonta* (Thought and Will) by the celebrated theoreticians Fabbri and Malatesta, clearly illustrating that anarchists do not always agree among themselves and do not act as a single body. Elorza cites a communication of a group of seventy-four anarchist prisoners in the Modelo prison in Barcelona, which was published in *Solidaridad Proletaria* and then in *La Protesta*, March 29, 1926, which states the problem in classic fashion: "We are ready to continue to spread the anarchist ideal in the labour movement so that the working masses will seek their emancipation by direct action in their unions." The practical importance of this principle, according to Elorza, is that it negates all ideas of independence between the anarchist and union organizations. However, the statement does not mention an anarchist organization, because a majority of the signatories did not belong to groups in the Federation of Anarchist Groups.

Elorza's purpose in organizing the very rich material which he has brought together is to highlight the conflicts between anarchism and syndicalism, concepts that did not exist in a chemically pure form in the C.N.T. I have emphasized all along that the C.N.T. was not neutral ideologically, nor could there be a rational distinction between the work done and the men or groups of men who did the work.

The confused situation in that period is reflected in an article by Arango and Santillan in the April 5, 1925, issue of *La Protesta*, quoted by Elorza:

In *Solidaridad Proletaria*, that flexible organ that is trying to transform the C.N.T. into a mongrel entity open to all political changes and ready to accept all economic possibilities in its platform—including governmental solutions—they have a school for neutral unionism. Preachers like Pestana, Carbo, and Peiro, anarchists who have forgotten the most elementary rules of anarchism, are emphasizing the benefits of change and transformation by their frequent change of position.

They also emphasized that a simple newspaper, publishing the personal opinions of a few militants, was trying to replace resolutions adopted by C.N.T. congresses with their personal opinions representing only themselves. The criticism against the three militants in Spain by the *La Protesta* writers was fully justified in the case of Pestana, who was nursing his idea of political syndicalism, but not against Peiro and Carbo. They were anarchists in the mainstream of the movement, although they were not members of any anarchist group. Peiro wrote the following,



for example, in an article entitled "Sense of Independence" in *Accion Social Obrera*, September 25, 1925:

We want the unions to be influenced by the anarchists, syndicalism to have a clear goal, the economic conception of the anarchist communists, but the anarchists should not conduct themselves like commanders from organizations outside the unions, imposing themselves on the unions as though the unions owed their existence to the anarchists. They should bring their revolutionary values and effectiveness to the unions.

Peiro went on, in answer to a journalist who said that union members should not act with their heads or their hearts in the union: "Anarchists join unions without checking their minds and psyches outside the door. Anarchists feel and think like anarchists in their union life, as in all aspects of life. It is absurd to say that anarchists should not do everything possible to encourage and foster the development of the unions so that they can fulfill their role of transforming society." He concluded: "We want the unions and the proletarian masses to become more anarchist through voluntary action while maintaining the independence of the collective personality of the unions." In actuality, the C.N.T. had evolved in an anarchist spirit—anarchosyndicalism—before there was a National Federation of Anarchist Groups and, later, and F.A.I. Arango and Santillan were demanding a clear dominant influence of anarchism in the labour movement at this time. But, as we shall see in the final part of this work, Santillan was not free of contradictions.

The men connected with *Solidaridad Proletaria* took advantage of their opportunity, and this was resented by the seventy-four prisoners in Modelo prison and by Jose Alberola, who wrote in *La Protesta*: "After the military dictatorship falls, the reorganization of the unions will require vigorous social education of the masses to unmask the petty leaders and gangs of bosses who made a picnic of their union leadership and pretense of redemption." The regional committee suspended publication of *Solidaridad Proletaria*, perhaps because the unusual circumstances had made possible the situation denounced by Alberola. Pestana then transferred his activities to the libertarian organs in the northwest, Galicia, which continued unhurt by the bitter winds of the dictatorship.

Elorza says: "A few weeks later, Pestana, faced with the danger of a split by the anarchist tendency, put out the word that the syndicalists would maintain a 'moral union' in the Confederation." However, the editors of *La Protesta*, especially Santillan and Arango, carried on the polemics on different fronts at the same time: against the Spanish "syndicalists," the Portuguese General Confederation of Labour (C.G.T.),

against two anarchist publications, *La Revista Internacional* and *Tiempos Nuevos*, published by exiles in France, and the review *Pensiero y Volonta*, edited by Luigi Fabbri and Enrico Malatesta. All this permitted Elorza to call attention to the wide front covered by "anarchist intransigence."

I must make a clear distinction at this point to avoid the hidden dangers in the technique of amalgamations. Actually, the occasional polemics between *La Protesta* and anarchist publications in exile and the well-known militants associated with *Pensiero y Volonta* are, in all instances, discussions between anarchists, which Elorza conveniently forgets. The differences between *La Protesta* and *La Revista Internacional* and *Tiempos Nuevos* are disagreements among Spanish anarchists about problems in the unions and the labour movement that were common to all of them. The polemic carried on by Santillan and Arango with Malatesta and Fabbri and with the French in *Le Libertaire* reflects differences arising from the differing situations in which each group found itself in 1925.

Let us not forget that the Italian anarchists were underground or in exile at that time, due to Mussolini's rise to power. The Italian Syndicalist Union, affiliated with the I.W.M.A. anarchosyndicalist central organization, had been destroyed. Here, as in France, the nationalist-imperialist process that had begun in the 1870's led to the progressive degradation of the labour movement and its integration into the national politics of the government.

In France, the original C.G.T. was mortally wounded by the war of 1914-18. Its character became steadily more reformist, starging in 1920, and the Bolshevik charisma produced a split and the creation of the C.G.T.U. By 1926, with the fusion of the C.G.T. and the C.G.T.U., the anarchist presence in the unions was practically nil and the anarchists had developed a tendency toward isolation and anti-organization. A strong reaction against this found expression in "The Platform for the Organization of a General Union of Anarchists," which was announced in Paris on June 20, 1926, by the Dielo Truda group, composed of Russian exiles, including Makhno, creator of the famous Makhno Movement, and Archinov, principal theoretician of the Platform. Archinov called for a centralized international organization of anarchists with a single philosophy and platform. However, the proposal expressed a clear suspicion of the organized labour movement, which is understandable since the French and Italian anarchists focused on the problems of syndicalism and the labour movement from the viewpoint of those who, for various reasons, had lost direct contact with the working masses. This was not the situation with the Spanish anarchists, and it explains

the dialectical confrontation of Arango and Santillan with anarchists from the Latin countries.

Let us not forget the chronology of events: Santillan's orientation in 1925 is reflected in passages quoted above. However, he also went through profound changes, from Bakuninist anarchism in 1922 to democratic collaboration in July 1936 (after the start of the Spanish Civil War). When he faced this situation, the relation of forces led him to defend collaboration with the democracy which was very far from the Bakuninist positions of total revolution. Santillan's thinking was always anarchist, but with changes or evolution, as we shall see. Elorza selects certain of Santillan's writings in *La Protesta* from 1922 and 1923 which are notable from the theoretical and documentary points of view. In his work "Human Interests or Class Interests," Santillan maintains a position above that of class, holding that anarchism is a philosophy of man oriented toward man in general: "If Marxism wishes to be the servant of proletarian success, the supporter of working-class demands, our position must be emphasized without compromise: for integral liberty and for justice and well-being for all." Elorza quotes from another of Santillan's articles, "Channels for the Revolution," which begins: "Let us examine our revolutionary position. Does the river create the bed on which it flows or does the riverbed create the river?" Santillan supports the first alternative and states, further on:

Bakunin always made it clear that the mission of the anti-authoritarians in a revolution is to be provokers; they must not impose socialism or any other value on the masses but should stimulate them to reach their conclusions naturally by an active process of the collective mind. This is why we reject constructive programmes to which many distinguished comrades bind themselves. This is why we do not want syndicalism or anarchist communism when it is presented as both freedom of experimentation and as a completed system. We do not want to tie the future to systems whose effectiveness we cannot foretell. We do not wish to deprive the forces released by the revolution of their full and free development. We do not want to dig the riverbed, but rather to enlarge and stimulate the river to determine its own course.

When syndicalism, including anarchosyndicalism, wants to lay out the riverbed, Santillan continues, we cannot do less than fight it, we must fight such liberty-killing proposals. Santillan finishes by stating that we must stimulate and support the revolution and not channel and direct it, if we want to be consistent with our libertarian understanding of life. We must not yield in any way to authoritarian fetishes, but advance toward the future without fear of the unforeseen or the need to correct our calculations.

Santillan's revolutionary vision while he was living in Berlin was based on confidence in the creative capacity and spontaneity of the masses, supported and stimulated by anarchism. His viewpoint was supported by the fact that almost all the great revolutions were libertarian in their early phases, although they were diverted later because they lacked certain solidly established central ideas and ideals.

A step forward in Santillan's criticism of "trade union apolitical neutrality," before 1925 which was supported by Alexander Schapiro, justified and defended the historical necessity of anarchosyndicalism. Santillan saw clear evidence of anarcho-Bolshevism in the unions, due to the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Russia and their influence worldwide. The ideology of anarchosyndicalism thus became intermixed with a hodgepodge of pseudo-revolutionary Marxism. Santillan points out in this article that the dictatorship of the proletariat became equivalent to the dictatorship of the unions or of labour because "any limitation of the creative spontaneity of the revolution is an authoritarian confiscation of the fruit of the revolution and of freedom." He adds that re-establishment of controls would require an executive apparatus and a judiciary, or the restoration of the old state of things.

Santillan goes on to say that anarchosyndicalism starts with false premises because anarchism does not have a programme outlining the shape of future society, maintaining that the revolution must be made by the masses with the means and capabilities at their disposal. If anarchists were to lose their confidence in the creative capacity of the revolutionary masses, according to Santillan, they would deny what has been a beautiful position of anarchism *vis-à-vis* the political groups of all colours and uniforms. Each one of these points needs clarification and further treatment, Santillan concluded.

These clarifications were made and, in fact, continue to be made even today, but I will continue with my analysis of Santillan's writings against the ideology of trade-union neutrality. Up to this point, Santillan had attacked every attempt to project the future anarchist society. But we must not forget that even Bakunin, as we saw at the beginning of this work, distinguished between a specific anarchist organization and the labour movement. The great Russian theoretician criticized Fanelli for not observing the distinction. In a way, he projected the future society when he spoke of the free federation of free groups of workers and peasants as the model of social reconstruction for the future.

It must be borne in mind that in 1922-23, Santillan was living in Germany, where anarchosyndicalism and anarchism were on the outside, secluded from the great mass of workers, who were dominated by the

Social Democrats. This explains, as in the case of Italy and France, the ideological radicalization of those who lived in such isolation. However, in 1925 Santillan began to make a significant change as he faced the situation in Spain. His position against Pestana and Peiro and other anarchists can be understood on the basis of his viewpoint in 1922-23. His position on anarchosyndicalism changed, and can be seen in his reply to an article by Malatesta in *El Productor* of Barcelona in January 1926.

Santillan declares that he supports a revolutionary, or anarchist, trade-union force in an article in *La Protesta*, February 15, 1926, entitled "The Pure Labour Movement." Santillan expresses the hope that Malatesta and Luigi Fabbri will support the new I.W.M.A., started in 1922 with their moral prestige and revolutionary theory, as the successor of the old International based on modern unions rather than the old workers' societies. Santillan reproaches Malatesta and Fabbri even more because of their attitude when the anarchosyndicalist Union Sindicale Italiana was destroyed by fascism. The lack of interest in the union problem shown by Malatesta and the Italian anarchists meant that when the time came to restore the unions its failure to rise again would not be helpful to anarchism.

Santillan also argued that Malatesta's and Fabbri's ideas about class unity and "other humbug" would be used as weapons against the movement in Latin American countries and Spain, and by the reformist unions in the French C.G.T. tradition.

Malatesta was defending a metaphysical concept of the labour movement in advocating its unity in the abstract, according to Santillan: "His idea is the pure labour movement with no particular social tendency whose goal is only the unions." Santillan summarizes: if such an ideal labour movement, open to all tendencies, were possible, if history could show that it ever existed, then the question would be worth discussing, "including the possibility of putting into practice the tactic recommended by the beloved veteran of modern social battles." But he concludes that "a pure movement did not exist, does not exist, and can never exist. The reality is that the labour movement is split into many tendencies, from fascist to anarchist. We can be content to be passive spectators of social struggles, or we can be a proletarian force capable of speaking our piece. There is no other way out." Santillan states, finally, in one of these passages:

What to do? Malatesta counsels us to respect class unity. We reject this illusion and appeal to Malatesta to help us establish a revolutionary, that is to say anarchist, union force in every country. With such labour strength

we will be able to resist the invasion of the labour movement by political currents and tendencies that are opposed to revolution. Without such labour strength we will be waiting for the moon over Valencia, waiting passively for history to turn in our direction.

This, then, is a sketch of the transition of Santillan's thinking: from anarchism as an undefined ideological force or current, stimulator but not director of revolution, to a clear role for anarchism in creating the unions. Santillan speaks of "the thesis of anarchism in the labour movement (or the application of anarchism to the labour movement)" in the *La Protesta* issue of July 6, 1925, in an article entitled "A Central Problem of Anarchism: The Labour Movement." Santillan had called this "anarchosyndicalism" when he was in Germany, and that is what it was called in Spain.

Like it or not, Santillan saw three tendencies opposed to his thesis of anarchism in the labour movement, or anarchosyndicalism: "The anarchist communists who make no distinction between reformist and libertarian unions (Malatesta-Fabbri), the 'pure and simple' trade unionists versus the anarchists in their organized groups (Pestana and company), and the individualists." (He does not consider opponents in the enemy camp.) The supporters of an organized political anarchism as a political party, separate from the labour movement, also opposed anarchosyndicalism (Proponents of "The Platform"). Santillan's later evolution will outline clearly his ideal about economic and social projections and plans. These projections and proposals for anarchism at the time of the revolution were not incompatible with the creative spontaneity of the revolution. They were meant to help consolidate and, why not say it, direct the revolutionary process. Santillan's evolution became very well defined with the establishment of the Second Republic.

### **New Theoretical Debates. Attack by Maurin and Oscar Perez Solis**

While this theoretical activity was going on—criticism, revisionism, affirmation, and so on—the founding of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) was gradually approaching. The National Federation of Anarchist Groups continued to function, though with limitations and extraordinary difficulties, its militants having to flee to France more often than they liked. In France, the secretariat of the Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups carried on, first in Paris, then moving to Marseilles. The Federation of Groups in Catalonia had to change their headquarters a number of

times. Buenacasa began publishing *El Productor* (The Worker) in Blanes in October 1925; it was then moved to Barcelona in January 1926. *El Productor* shared the viewpoint of *La Protesta*. Buenacasa, Magrina, Jimenez, Llopi, and many others from the Federation of Groups, worked on and supported the paper.

In the meantime, Pestana, for whom things were not going too well in Catalonia, directed his attention to other regions, declaring the need for redistribution of weight and influence among all the regions. He called for a reorganization of the C.N.T. on a national scale in order to encourage a more harmonious development of the C.N.T. in Asturias and Galicia, the so-called northwest. The regional committee of Galicia, with headquarters in Santiago, published *Solidaridad Obrera* as its organ. The Asturian region carried on with little legal difficulty, with headquarters in Gijon. An understanding was reached among the regions on the basis of which a national plenum of regions was held and a provisional National Committee was appointed, to be named by the Asturias regional committee. Avelino Gonzalez Mallada was named Secretary of the National Committee.

Theoretical polemics continued during this period, as was always the case during periods of organizational inactivity. We have already discussed Peiro's and Pestana's positions and the opinions of Arango and Santillan. We now return to the Bolsheviks, Maurin and Oscar Perez Solis, who were ceaseless in their efforts to save the C.N.T. from its organizational morass with their erudite and prolific theoretical statements.

Eleuterio Quintanilla, an outstanding anarchist and anarchosyndicalist militant, had published a series of articles in *Noroeste* (Northwest) in January 1926, entitled "The Crisis of the Spanish Proletariat." He also published works in *La Revista Blanca* (A well-known anarchist periodical) at about the same time. Quintanilla took up the problems discussed by Peiro, perhaps with greater calm and coherence. The central idea was the balance between syndicalism and anarchism and the federalist structure of the Confederation.

Maurin's reponse dealt with the collapse of the C.N.T. (due only to the persecution suffered earlier). He pointed to the complete inactivity of the C.N.T. and asked what had happened to the "colossus with feet of clay." Utilizing a Hamlet-like analogy, he called the C.N.T. a phantom and derided those who said that "when the circumstances change, the C.N.T. will rise again, strong and victorious." So, in spite of Maurin's catastrophic predictions, the C.N.T. did rise again and presented itself to the public at the congress at the Madrid Conservatory

in 1931, just as Maurin had indicated sarcastically. Maurin's reply is a large work, in five installments, which is scholarly but insolent. It is a mixture of petulance and spite, of half-truths and lies, of responsibility and frivolous irresponsibility. The catastrophe in the C.N.T. was not the result of the exceptional circumstances that muzzled and forced the C.N.T. to go underground, in Maurin's opinion, but the result of the anarchist leadership in the unions.

For Maurin, anarchism and federalism are the offspring of the petty bourgeoisie, and Spanish anarchism is an ideology of impoverished and ignorant peasants. In addition, anarchists do not believe in the class struggle; spiritual idealism is their motivating force. As enemies of materialism, they cannot understand the laws of economic development. From this flow their deviations and inconsistencies, the maze in which they carry on their hopeless debates. It is not a question of correcting the errors of so-called anarchism, as Quintanilla affirmed, but of bringing the organization to a new stage, Marxism-Leninism, which is the only way to help the working class, especially the C.N.T., out of the confusing labyrinth into which the anarchists had brought them. Actually, it would have been necessary to write a book to answer Maurin's fine articles. However, actual experience provided the answer to all his arguments.

Let us take a look at the synthetic line of argument of Oscar Perez Solis, the old socialist who split off from the Socialist Party in 1921 to help form the Communist Party of Spain. A good Marxist theoretician, according to Elorza, although dialectical materialism was no obstacle for Father Gafo, a Catholic propagandist, who was converted to the Spanish church at that time.

Perez Solis was explicit in his thinking: "We state categorically that the unions must march together with the parties on political issues because the parties understand the interests of the working masses more clearly and offer better solutions to their problems..." This passage is their reply to a pamphlet by Peiro, "Course of the National Confederation of Labour (C.N.T.)." This is followed by an equally explicit passage by Perez Solis: "The Union is vital for the workers; however, the political party is equally so. It is the select minority who are more aware, more capable, more active, and they must give more spirit and form to the great, grey, amorphous majority." Perez Solis repeats Maurin's arguments in essence and opposes anarchist communism as nebulous

because it does not distinguish between the proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie.... This transparent contradiction will be overcome under the direction of the leading minority, the revolutionary workers' party, through



the class struggle. These chosen minorities from the great mass of workers, these groups in the vanguard of the proletariat, are the political parties of the working class ... And they have the task of giving the movement its "ideological orientation."

Like Maurin, Perez Solis opposes the traditional federalism of the C.N.T., which he characterizes as petty bourgeois, and he supports centralism. This intensified emphasis on leadership cost Solis his candidacy for communist leadership to Father Gafio because, in spite of his science, he ignored the role of theology, the foundation of the entire idea of political government. Elorza apparently shares these criticisms of anarchism in the C.N.T. and anarchism in general. He also accepts Pestana's criteria, which soon evolved as political syndicalism. Elorza has gathered a creditable collection of writings in his work, but these do not offer a real understanding of the essential meaning of the movement. For example:

- 1) The anarchists never denied the class struggle, since they recognized economic and political exploitation from the beginning. Did not the Spanish section of the First International carry out the class struggle as soon as it was organized, and was not this tradition carried on afterward by the C.N.T.? What they rejected in part was historical materialism and the dialectic form of reasoning, at least in its dogmatic form. They also rejected the inevitability of economic development because human beings make the decisions, act, and suffer the consequences. If there is a charismatic leadership group with the Marxist point of view capable of creating complete class-consciousness, and directing all revolutionary activity toward a transformation of society, they would have to have men able to initiate economic processes, and to stop or modify them, at will. According to the laws of historical development, not understood by the anarchists, according to Maurin, the first stages of industrial concentration would lead to control by finance and banking, a new economic feudalism, according to Proudhon, which is exemplified today by multinational corporations and economic imperialism. These processes are unavoidable in the Marxist economic viewpoint, and we can only wait for the total fulfillment of these developments. If this is so, what can activities accomplish?
- 2) *Anarchism and federalism have a petty bourgeois origin.* This is blatant sophistry. Neither the petty nor the wealthy bourgeoisie have ever been federalists. They are centralists and nationalists, and they render homage to the principle of authority inherited from feudalism. Anarchism and federalism were always opposed to authority. Marxism cannot claim this position. The writings of Maurin, Perez Solis, and other Marxists of that period will reveal their commitment to centralism and authority. Their writings speak of the function of leaders and the charisma of a

vanguard. This is precisely the political philosophy passed on to authoritarian socialism by the bourgeoisie, both rich and petty, who, in turn, took it from feudalism, which, in its turn, took it from the theocratic monarchies. This is the path of Marxist philosophy of which Maurin speaks. Let us end this brief theoretical discussion. The bourgeois centralizers, great and small, supported nationalism, and then adopted imperialism body and soul, which was the culmination of nationalism. Federalism was opposed to the increased authority that the nationalist bourgeoisie were trying to transform into support for imperialism in 1875. The false threads of the capitalist and financial bourgeoisie were pushing the people into a bloody labyrinth of warlike confrontations. On the other hand, the charismatic and all-knowing vanguards that Oscar Perez told us about, which were destined to lead "the great, grey, amorphous majority" to the stateless and classless society, as well as Maurin's Marxist-Leninist infallible network, were intended to take us very far from anarchist federalism, very far from the principles of the (communist) Manifesto of 1847, precisely to the formidable labyrinth of the totalitarian society dominated by Stalinism. In spite of these general conclusions, which are supported by history, Perez Solis and Maurin still pointed to all the inconsistencies, tensions, and contradictions of anarchosyndicalism and anarchism of that period, with no doubts whatever in their minds.

### Organizational Activity up to the Establishment of the F.A.I.

Along with the periodical *Solidaridad Obrera* from Gijón, *Prometheus* also appeared in Madrid from time to time, but was specifically anarchist and did not last long. *El Productor* continued to be an effective anarchist voice, which debated intensely with a new periodical (*Vida Sindical*), whose writers included Peiro, Pestana, Adrian Arno, and Camilo Pinon. The two organs debated sharply, with *Vida Sindical* insisting on the need to have legal status which did not depend on the unions but on the authorities. During this entire period, the difficult problem of "unions without honour or honour without unions" was debated, and there was no solution. As we shall see, Juan Peiro, who now, along with twenty-one other militants, supported legalization of the C.N.T. in a manifesto in *Vida Sindical*, was to adopt the position of "honour without unions" in 1929, in favour of tripartite committees. Among the fundamental points in this manifesto, which was not circulated outside the anarchosyndicalist movement, are: Respect and fulfillment of the resolutions adopted at the Comedia Theatre in Madrid and the later assembly in Saragossa; and Work on the new structures that will be more suitable for the organizations in view of the experience of recent years. These structures were approved by the congress at the Madrid

Conservatory in 1931, the famous nationwide industrial federations.\* The resolution failed because the approach was not in harmony with the structure and philosophy of the confederation. Police activity in anticipation of conspiratorial actions became more intense throughout the country around April 1926, with the arrest of militant workers. Here again, the authorities settled the problem of going legal or illegal by treating the supporters of both viewpoints equally. *Vida Sindical* and *El Productor* were both suspended, and Buenacasa and other militants were held in jail for two months.

A first attempt to organize the Syndicalist Party by C. N. T. dissidents took place in Seville in January 1926. Almost immediately thereafter, though unrelated, came St. John's Night, a failed attempt against the dictatorship. For better or worse, some anarchosyndicalist elements participated in the conspiratorial activities more or less directly. The St. John's Night plot was headed by Francisco Aguilera, General Valeriano Weiler, politicians Miguel Villanueva, Aniceto Alcalá Zamora, Melquiades Álvarez, and Count Romanones, and some members of the C.N.T. who promised to call a general strike in conjunction with a military proclamation. Some of the military plotters withdrew at the last minute, causing the scheme to fail. Some of the military were arrested and sentenced. At Gijón, seat of the C.N.T. National Committee, a number of militants were arrested, thanks to seizure of correspondence, among them Quintanilla, Francisco Guerrero, and Baldomero Fanjul.

In August 1926, Domingo Masachas, acting strictly on his own, attacked Primo de Rivera with a jackknife. The attempt at assassination failed.

The so-called plot of Vallecas Bridge was mostly a creation of the police themselves. Santillan says that C.N.T. militants in Asturias and the Basque country made contact with C.N.T. and anarchist refugees in France to prepare an attack to bring down the dictatorship. The intervention of two policemen from Madrid, Dovall and Fenoll, who followed the activities of the anarchosyndicalists in Asturias closely, resulted in the arrest of an obscure individual recently arrived from America, Ramon Hernandez Vera, who was hardly known to militants in Asturias. When tortured, he unwittingly signed a statement written by the police that resulted in a wave of arrests in Asturias and Madrid. The principal accusation was a planned attempt on the life of Primo de Rivera. Joaquin Aznar and Manuel Gomez were arrested in Madrid,

\* Industrial unions, over and above the local and regional federations of local unions.—*transl. note*

and the police "found" bombs in their homes that the accused had never seen. This gloomy trial lasted for four years and resulted in a number of victims being thrown into jail.

Another interesting aspect of that period, taking into account the present problems of the Spanish labour movement in the post-Franco period, was the campaign for a Union Unity Congress orchestrated by the communists in 1926. *La Antorcha* (The Torch), a communist journal published in Madrid, was the standard-bearer of this idea "useful to gain a foothold in some libertarian union circles," Elorza tells us. He adds that the campaign also sought to form Union Unity groups in the U.G.T and autonomous unions. The initiative was taken by the Local Federation of Workers' Societies in San Sebastian and was directed to all organizations of the U.G.T., the C.N.T., and all autonomous (un-affiliated) unions that accepted the class struggle, excluding church-controlled unions, company unions, and the so-called free (company-sponsored) unions. All of the invited unions refused to support the idea, including the Confederation of Free Unions, which declared themselves offended by their exclusion from the invitation. Elorza follows up with a curious note, that Perez Solis, who attacked anarchosyndicalism, was "very respectful" toward the free unions in an article in the July 2 issue of *La Antorcha*. He regards this terrorist arm of the employer-government offensive against the C.N.T. as strictly a workers' trade union.

In the meantime, the St. John's Night plot and the Vallecas conspiracy had ominous consequences, and the persecution of worker militants intensified again.

Other milestones on the road to the creation of the F.A.I. were the congress at Marseilles in the latter part of 1926, called by the National Federation of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups in France, which would be considered as another region of the National Federation of Anarchist Groups, although independent; the congress of the Portuguese Anarchist Union, held in Lisbon early in 1927; and, finally, the holding of a regional plenum by the Federation of Anarchist Groups of Catalonia, on March 20, 1927, only three months before the conference at Valencia when the F.A.I. was established. We will take a separate look at each of these meetings and the circumstances under which they were held.

The Marseilles congress of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups was attended by more than seventy groups from the Marseilles area, according to the French authorities: the Federations of Anarchist Groups of Catalonia and of Valencia; the Prisoners' Aid Committee of Pamplona, affiliated with the C.N.T. regional committee of Catalonia; and the National

Committee of the C.N.T. In addition, there were representatives of the I.W.M.A., with which the C.N.T. was affiliated, the Portuguese Anarchist Union, and the International Grouping of Anarchists. The affiliation of C.N.T. and union organizations demonstrates the relationship which would be the pattern for the future relationship between anarchism and anarchosyndicalism.

According to reports by J.R. Magrina in *Tiempos Nuevos* and E. Labrador in *La Protesta*, the congress dealt with specific problems of anarchism in exile on the one hand, and the position of the anarchists in relation to the C.N.T. in Spain on the other. The Marseilles congress reversed the position taken at the Lyons congress the year before and opposed collaboration with political elements. The congress came out in favour of an anarchist organization, which, according to Elorza, meant a national organization of anarchist groups to exercise influence over the C.N.T. I do not have the text and therefore cannot respond to his interpretation. An obscure passage at the end of the congress states that the secretariat of the National Federation of Groups would return to Barcelona to work on the preparation of a constitutional congress. According to my information, these preparations were made by the Regional Federation of Groups of Catalonia.

Government repression was great in Portugal as well, and the problems facing anarchism and anarchosyndicalism were very similar to those faced in Spain. In 1926, there was a General Confederation of Labour (C.G.T.), Syndicalist Youth, and the Portuguese Anarchist Union, the latter created at the Conference of Alenquer, a meeting of twelve groups in eight cities and towns early in 1923. The Liaison Committee had no executive functions; it served as a coordinator between the groups and was elected annually. Its programme declared, according to Elorza, "that the U.A.P. (Portuguese Anarchist Union) intended to work within the syndicalist movement in opposition to the attempts of the communists and the 'pure and simple' unionists on behalf of unity or neutrality of the labour movement."

It must be remembered that the Portuguese labour movement had been organized following the unforeseen visit of Tomas G. Morago, Anselmo Lorenzo, and Francisco Mora in 1871. Before returning to Spain, they had organized the Portuguese section of the International and a section of the Alliance of Social Democracy, the libertarian organizations of that period. In 1926, the Spanish and Portuguese organizations maintained a very close relationship. If the Marseilles congress pointed to the organization of the F.A.I., the agenda of the first congress of the U.A.P., in early July 1926, saw the possibility of establishing

an organizing and coordinating committee similar to that proposed in Marseilles.

The regional plenum of the Federation of Anarchist Groups of Catalonia, which took place on March 20, 1927, was the immediate predecessor of the organizing conference at Valencia.<sup>1</sup>

The idea of a peninsula-wide association was put forward by a number of people such as Buenacasa and Magrina, and from various places, among them Marseilles, Paris, Barcelona, and Seville. The proposal for a peninsular organization arose because comrades from Portugal attended our meetings, although we recognized that work across the frontier would be very difficult. (Letter from Miguel Jimenez to J. Peiratz, given to the author)

Jimenez was one of the founders of the F.A.I. and secretary of the National Federation of Anarchist Groups, which called the Valencia conference three months later.

The agenda included nine topics.

- 1) What are the most important problems facing anarchism in the opinion of the comrades? All problems encountered in daily living are important, among them solidarity, education, and propaganda, faith in the ideal, faith in its realization through the social revolution, faith in ourselves.
- 2) In view of the present dictatorships in Spain and Portugal, can militant anarchism carry out an international campaign, at least in the Iberian Peninsula? It is understood that we must work among the people.
- 3) In view of the competition of other sectors, can the anarchist minority hope to have enough strength and influence to be the determining force in guiding the revolution? It was decided to develop an intense campaign of propaganda and agitation to inform the people of our position and our goals. At the moment of revolution, libertarian agitators will be able to inspire the people toward anarchist conceptions.

<sup>1</sup> The following delegations attended the regional plenum in March 1927: Manresa-Berga, formed by the groups Luz, Temis, El Revlejo Libertario, Ni amo ni Dios, Ni Patria ni Rey, La Eterna Llama, El Fulminante, El Vencedor, and the cultural groups of Poigreig and Navas from the region of Alto and Bajo Priorato; Acracia from the district of Valles; from Terrasa, Esperanza y Libertad and Renacimiento; Rubi and Sabadel; Vendrel; the Local Federation of Barcelona with Los Iguales, El Productor, Verdad, Gran Bohemia, and others in the process of being organized. The Committee of Anarchist Relations in Spain also attended, as well as a delegate from the Catalonia regional C.N.T. committee. All these organizations had developed in the underground. (Extract from the report of the Plenum of the Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups in Catalonia, published in *Tiempos Nuevos*, Paris, No. 18, June 16, 1927.)

- 4) Does our movement have the capacity for serious, constructive work on an anti-authoritarian and federalist basis after the revolution? After long discussion, it was agreed that they did have the necessary ability and that they had to study the problems of the post-revolutionary stage further to make sure that no new obstacles block the people from organizing their lives.
- 5) Should anarchists interested in naturalism, esperanto, etc., form groups with people who have different ideas about society, or should they form groups of vegetarians, naturalists, etc., affiliated with the anarchist movement? It was agreed that anarchists should join these organizations if they so desire, whether or not they are affiliated with the anarchist movement, but that they should try to attract as many individuals and groups as possible to the anarchist movement.
- 6) Would it be beneficial for the specific anarchist organization to establish a formal tie with the unions? Should the groups which are united by sharing ideas join in a federal structure with the unions which are based upon their craft and skill in their work? After a long debate, it was agreed that the Regional Committee (of Groups) would invite the regional committee of the C.N.T. of Catalonia to together hold a plenum of both organizations to discuss this proposal, which had been presented by the El Productor group. It was agreed that the two organizations could complement each other, the unions and the ideological groups, and that they should be joined in a federal structure, each maintaining its autonomy, with joint representation of the groups and their federations and the unions and their federations at all levels.
- 7) What activities are more appropriate for the unions and what activities can be better carried out by the groups? The plenum agreed that the struggle, and anarchist propaganda in general, is the same for the groups and the unions. It was agreed that the unions can work more effectively among the employed, fighting against management and against all authority, using anarchist propaganda to clarify questions that arise and to inspire all their activities; the ideological groups will work among the students, with the feminists, etc., on anti-militarism, pro-revolution work, and, in general, conversion to anarchist ideals.
- 8) What kind of structure should the groups have? What do we think of the structure of the unions? We believe that the structure of the groups is good. Any proposed changes or reforms in the unions should be presented directly within the unions.
- 9) In view of the close relationship between the Portuguese Union and the Spanish Federation of Groups, should we proceed with the creation of the Iberian Federation of Anarchist Groups? The plenum agreed that an Iberian Anarchist Union or Federation should be established, including the Portuguese Federation, the Spanish Federation, and the Spanish-language groups in France. The meeting ended with the reading and

approval of the questionnaire presented by the National Federation of Anarchist Groups in Spain.<sup>2</sup>

The meeting went on to consider a number of more specific questions, such as a regional bulletin which would not necessarily be the organ of the Catalan groups only, but of all the regions.

The delegates gave their vote of confidence to the National Committee of the Federation as the Provisional Committee. The Manresa-Berga delegation proposed that the national, regional, and local Prisoners' Aid Committees be represented in the National Federation of Anarchist Groups of Spain and in the C.N.T. The plenum closed with a unanimous vote that they would all work for the growth of the movement.

Elorza points to the "traditional ambiguity of anarchist statements and manifestos" without noting any progress from 1925. We do not know what the idea of "progress" means for Elorza. At that time, the anarchists were calling for social revolution, equivalent, though distinctly different from, the call for seizure of power by the communists or the introduction of socialism by the socialists. Elorza recognizes that they had moved forward with the aim of establishing an organic bond between the ideological groups and the unions.

The El Productor group, which presented the proposal to the plenum, did not in reality create the bond between the two movements. This had developed earlier. Let us remember that in the difficult times of terrorism, the youthful anarchist groups—the members of which included such men as Durruti, Jover, Sanz, the Ascaso brothers, and Garcia Oliver—acted together with union defense groups, or as union defense groups themselves. From that time, March 1927, until after the Valencia conference, when the F.A.I. was organized, the bond between the two movements was practically an established fact. Miguel Jimenez tells us:

For the majority, there was a desire to strengthen the relationship between the unions and the groups, as proposed by the El Productor group from Barcelona. The relationship had started in Barcelona before the Valencia conference. After the conference it became stronger. The relationship, or lack of it, was affected by developments and the general atmosphere. I remember that the secretary of the regional committee of the C.N.T. in Catalonia, who was certainly a moderate, showed great support for working together, and he used to meet the comrades from the groups almost every

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Plenum of the Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups in Catalonia.



day when he would leave his shop after work. (Letter to Jose Peirats, given to the author)

## From the National Plenum in March to the Valencia Conference

I shall touch on two points during this period: the relationship between Angel Pestana and Juan Peiro and the practical and theoretical problem of the Platform.

The split between Pestana and Peiro would have little importance for us if it were only a matter of personal differences. But this episode is important because of the issues involved. Two antagonistic conceptions collided through these two men: political syndicalism (Pestana's idea) versus anarchosyndicalism and, by implication, anarchism.

At this time, March 1927, there were frequent attempts to reactivate the C.N.T. and anarchism, especially on the part of the exiles in France. The anarchists and anarchosyndicalists in France joined the Revolutionary Syndicalist General Confederation of Labour (C.G.T.S.R.) as "members of the C.N.T. in unions abroad." No one could say that the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists had forgotten the organization which they had, for the most part, created and inspired in Spain.

A manifesto was published in the March 31 issue (no. 83) of *Tiempos Nuevos* in which many militants in exile, including Emilio Mora, Diego Parra, Carbo, Liberto Callejas, and S. Cortes, declared their unconditional support of the C.N.T., for which they had fought in Spain. If they could organize a small C.N.T. group wherever a number of Spaniards were located, they would make a positive contribution to the situation in France and, in addition, would be a powerful stimulus to the comrades in Spain. This would also offer the possibility, when the present situation in Spain was terminated, for these nuclei to proceed with the immediate rebuilding of "the formidable organization of Spanish anarchism, which had been destroyed by the repression" (Elorza).

However, it continued to be very difficult to reorganize the C.N.T. in Spain. The greatest obstacle was the code of Corporative Laws presented in November 1926 by the Minister of the Directorate, Eduardo Aunos. The Decree established the bases for the National Corporative Organization, inspired by Italian fascism and Catholic social doctrine at that time, and created local and regional tripartite committees of workers, management, and government to arbitrate conflicts between capital and labour. The Decree then projected mixed commissions that would bring together the tripartite commissions of similar and related trades. It also

projected mixed provincial commissions to create similar bodies in areas where none existed, in the name of solidarity. A corporation was set up for each trade. It acted as the arbitrator for conflicts in the committees, and also regulated and arranged the collective labour contracts. A commission of representatives of the Councils was the summit of the pyramid, the supreme tripartite tribunal, the body of final appeal. This commission was also the counsel and advisor to the Ministry of Labour. The prologue of the Decree declared that "the work to restore order" had a high priority for the government and that "public tranquillity" was a first step. (Elorza got this information from Praxedes Zancada's *Spanish Corporate Right*.)

The Decree of November 1926, which Largo Caballero reinstated in the first government of the Republic after 1931, was like a dash of cold water to those who, in good faith, had supported the idea of legal status. They now saw that the price of legalization was negation of the very essence of the C.N.T., embodied in a maximum of direct action and total rejection of neutralization or integration by any power or authority.

It was clear to many anarchosyndicalists and anarchist militants that it was impossible "to adapt themselves to the course offered without mortgaging the fundamental principles of the C.N.T." Peiro did not hesitate to state his point of view clearly in responding to an article entitled "Dormidos y Comodones" (Asleep and Comfortable), signed by "Cardenio," a pseudonym for a prominent member of the organization, who was a prisoner at the Modelo jail in Madrid. "Cardenio" lashed out at those who were resigned to passivity as the C.N.T. slept.

Peiro responded in *Acción Social Obrera* on May 28, 1927, with an article entitled "Neither Sleeping nor Comfortable." He rejected the imputation that he was comfortable when a comrade was in jail. But Peiro pointed to the difficulties to be encountered if the C.N.T. tried to work in the open. The Spanish political situation did not deny right of association to anarchosyndicalists; however, right of association was subject to arbitration by the tripartite committees. They could not exist without that control: "A union is not a blueprint of legality; it cannot exist without falling into reformism. And it is no easier to try to be a positive and dynamic union outside the law."

The dilemma, according to Peiro, was that the masses wanted to organize themselves. If they were not organized by the anarchosyndicalists, they would accept any type of reformism, even the "shrewd socialists" or the "yellows" of the "free" unions. The only available alternative was reformism. He concluded: "Reformism or no organization, at least

in Barcelona... What to do? I would remain without reformism and without organization" (Peiro, May 28, 1927).

In a later article, Peiro expressed his nostalgia for a strong organization, one that would be able to resist government pressure and the corporate imposition of the tripartite committees. But how could such an organization succeed? There was very little moral unity between the anarchists and the revolutionary syndicalists. "We anarchists have not escaped the universal crisis that has disturbed and upset everyone," Peiro stated. "All ideological sectors have had the same experience: unable to fight the enemy, they have turned to fight their friends, their brothers in the struggle, and their ideals" (*Acción Social Obrera*, July 9, 1927). Later still, Peiro returned to the question that concerned him: after pointing out the manoeuvres of the "free" (company) union organization, which was trying to reach an understanding with the other labour organizations and, indirectly, recognition from them, Peiro declared that this must be avoided at all costs. "I point this out so that our friend 'Cardenio' will see that the union cannot be legal without falling into reformism or losing its dignity." (*Acción Social Obrera*, July 23, 1927)

The time had come for Pestana to reveal his "possibilist" tendencies. In Pestana's opinion, according to Peiro, the Law of Association at that time did not permit reorganization of the C.N.T. unions as they had been in September 1923. He rejected the underground type of organization, stating that the important thing was for the unions to know what type of structure they should adopt and whether they should accept the legislation governing labour organizations. Pestana supported this course, stating: "The conclusion is definite. To reorganize the unions we must make concessions to the conditions imposed on us. They will vary in intensity in accordance with the tolerance of the authorities in each locality. This is the way we must go." (*Acción Social Obrera*, May 21, 1927)

Two years later, in his polemic on doctrine with Pestana, Peiro recalled some facts from that period:

During the second half of 1927, at a meeting of militants in Barcelona—which I attended, although I do not know why—Pestana declared that the tripartiate committees were in harmony with the principles of the C.N.T. When I expressed great shock at his assertion, Pestana resorted to some confusing magical incantations at which he was very capable.

However, Pestana revealed himself enough to put those of us on guard who knew that the C.N.T. is *contenido* and not *continente*.\*

Anarchists and anarchosyndicalists knew that reformism was gestating within the organization. This, together with government pressure and the resulting disorganization and demoralization of the unions, and the never-ending manoeuvres of the tiny communist organization, gradually led to the historic birth of the F.A.I. in July 1927.

In order to understand the place of Spanish anarchism in its international context, its special character in the very difficult circumstances in which it was trying to carry on, I shall discuss briefly the question of *The Platform*, which was being debated passionately among anarchist groups all over the world, with the possible exception of the Spaniards. *The Platform*, believed to be edited by Peter Archinov, was a summing up of discussions among a number of Russian anarchist exiles in Paris over several years after the Bolshevik seizure of power. This study was published in a bilingual Russian and French edition in Paris in 1926. The French translates as *Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists*.<sup>3</sup>

Cerrito states that presentation of *The Platform* project was preceded by a number of explanatory articles by Archinov, Makhno (the celebrated revolutionary guerrilla who was persecuted by Trotsky), and other members of the group. These articles also attacked the idea of a "mixed" organization, incorporating the different schools of anarchism, which was advocated by other Russian anarchist groups, whose leading spokesman was Voline, and by French groups, which included the brilliant theoretician Sebastian Faure.

*The Platform*, as we shall see in greater detail later, was a proposal to create a centralized, uniform anarchist party, conceived under the immediate influence of the Russian Revolution and the extremely efficient Bolshevik Party. The Russian anarchists, who were still in shock from their experience at the hands of the Bolsheviks, invited a general discussion of *The Platform*. Its publication caused some surprise and some rather confused discussion. Early in 1927, a Russian group opposed to *The Platform*, which included Voline, a Russian émigré close to the anarchosyndicalists of his country, published their first response in French and Russian. At the same time, the editors of the French periodical

\* Set in its ideology, not open to all comers.—*transl. note*

<sup>3</sup> Gino Cerrito, who published an Italian edition in 1973, states that the original French edition had a question-and-answer supplement in which the editors of the *Dielo Truda* group answered a series of questions in connection with *The Platform*. The editorial group included Archinov, Makhno, Volesky, Linsky, and I. Mett.

*Anarchie* sent a questionnaire regarding *The Platform* to comrades in several countries. Many militants responded, including Sebastian Faure, Max Nettlau, J. Grave, and Voline, which resulted in a clarification of the debate. Errico Malatesta joined the debate in October 1927, with a long article in *Le Reveil* in Geneva. At the same time, Camillo Berneri and Luigi Fabbri attacked *The Platform* in the Italian publication *Il Martello* (The Hammer), published in New York, and in *La Protesta*, in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There were the expected responses from the editorial group of *The Platform*, who replied to Malatesta and the other militants through Makhno and Archinov.

The rejected proposal helped for a time to stimulate a theoretical and critical examination of anarchist positions. However, general interest in the subject declined in the face of the threat of German Nazism and the increasingly authoritarian Stalin regime, with its one party, its forced unity, and its ideological and tactical discipline. Malatesta's opposition to the proposal also helped to reduce interest in it. Finally, according to Cerrito, Archinov's pro-Bolshevik declarations and his return to the U.S.S.R. finished off *The Platform*. Before going into an analysis of *The Platform*, I will say that the proposal was similar to Pestana's and to The Thirty's (Los Treintistas) document, inspired by Pestana. Both *The Platform* and The Thirty's Manifesto were dressed in orthodox ideology but were rich in inferences. Archinov and Pestana later showed what they meant with their theoretical pronouncements by their later conduct; Archinov with his practically complete conversion to Bolshevism; and Pestana with his political syndicalism. Their philosophy and theorizing bore no relationship to their actions.

#### Analysis of *The Platform*<sup>4</sup>

*The Platform* (*Platform of the General Union of Anarchists*) has an introduction; a "general section" comprising eight points; a "constructive section"; and an "organizational section." The introduction, signed by the *Dielo Truda* group, offers a general statement about *The Platform*. The first passage points to the significant fact that the anarchist movement is weak and is regarded in the history of social struggles not as an important force but as a marginal force, an episode, in spite of the undeniably positive character of anarchist ideas, in spite of the clarity

<sup>4</sup> Based on the Italian version of the text provided by G. Cerrito.

and integrity of anarchist positions during the social revolution, and in spite of anarchists' great heroism and many sacrifices.

This flagrant contradiction between the positive character of its ideas and the miserable condition of the libertarian movement can be explained, according to the authors of *The Platform*, by a number of factors, the most important of which is the lack of organizational principles and methods.

In some countries, they say, the libertarian movement's ideology and actions are contradictory, and the organizations have no vision of the future. They tend to suddenly disappear, leaving no trace of their activities.

The document's introduction characterizes anarchism's plight as "general chronic disorganization" which has gone on for decades and which has its roots in an erroneous interpretation of the principle of individualism and rejection of any kind of collective responsibility.

Anarchism, according to *The Platform*, is not a beautiful fantasy, nor an abstract philosophical principle, but a social movement of the working classes. It must therefore unite its forces into a permanent organization in order to deal realistically with the working-class struggle. The Platformists invoke the support of theoreticians, like Peter Kropotkin and Michael Bakunin, who were never opposed to the idea of a general organization of anarchists. They point to Bakunin's attitude during the First International, which brings us to the fundamental point of *The Platform's* argument.

During the Russian Revolution in 1917, anarchism's lack of organization pushed many anarchists into the ranks of the Bolsheviks. Many militants remained passive, which neutralized their talents and capabilities. On this subject, *The Platform* spells out the basic idea of their proposal: "We needed an organization that would have brought together a majority of the people in the movement, that would have established a general strategy for the entire movement. That was the time to use a collective method of organization."

*The Platform* rejects as inept in theory and practice the idea of an organization based on a "synthesis" of the various schools of anarchism. Such an organization would only be "a type of mechanical union of individuals who see the problems of the anarchist movement each in his own way, unable to face reality."

A majority of anarchist militants internationally supported the idea of a synthesis of the various schools. They replied to *The Platform* proposal through Voline, through Sebastian Faure, an outstanding French theoretician and marvellous orator, and through Fabbri, Malatesta,

Berner, and many others. These libertarians supported the type of organization described by *The Platform*: local groups that would accept coordination as the extent of organizational links between them. They rejected ideological and tactical unity so that their considerable energies were frustrated in the name of defending the autonomy of the groups.

This is still the case to a certain degree for the anarchist movement in France and Italy, where there are several anarchist organizations and currents. The F.A.I. is a sort of "synthesis" organization, comprising many groups, currents, and individuals, and is trying to become a coordinating organization. The Italian F.A.I. took a step in this direction in 1971, at its Tenth Congress, when it established a "pact of association" until the next congress, thereby agreeing for the first time to a certain "collective responsibility."

The anarchist movement is important in France and Italy, but their principal problem is that, in spite of their vigorous propaganda activity, they have only a limited relationship with the unions. I referred previously to the reasons that the international anarchist movement has found itself in this situation, and the difficulty of regaining influence in the labour movement, which is now controlled by authoritarian socialist tendencies. These tendencies were favoured by national imperialism, which started in Europe in 1875, whereby great centralized, hierarchical, mass organizations were preferred to federalist ideas which had so far been supported by the labour movement. The rise of new objective conditions in Europe since 1945, with the decline of national imperialist pressure, should favour the reappearance of revolutionary syndicalist tendencies and reintroduction of anarchism in the labour movement.

The Platformists' purpose was to react to anarchist defeat in the revolution of 1917. They wanted anarchist organizations to gain a degree of efficiency, and, indeed, the Italians are trying to do just that with the Italian Anarchist Federation, especially among the youth groups, who may be oriented toward Marxism and especially toward working in the labour movement. Italian anarchism is moving in the direction of "collective responsibility" at the national level. *The Platform* affirms that anarchosyndicalism does not solve anarchism's organizational problems, since it is concerned solely with penetration of the unions, and that little can be done in the labour movement unless an anarchist organization is created first.

Their viewpoint becomes clearer and more controversial in the next section. The fundamental goal of the General Union of Anarchists, declares *The Platform*, must be the preparation of the workers and peasants for the social revolution. They speak of the need for a certain

anarchist education that works in two directions: one, selection and grouping of revolutionary and peasant forces on the basis of anarchist theory (specific anarchist communist organization); and two, organization of revolutionary workers and peasants on the economic basis of production and consumption.

They later affirm that “the leading position of anarchist ideology simply means anarchist theoretical orientation of developments,” that their principal aim is to help the masses move toward social revolution. However, they then state: “This theoretical moving force can be expressed by a collective group, especially created by the masses. The organized anarchist elements are this collective group (or directing minority).” This concept of *The Platform* is under constant attack: the anarchists reserve for themselves the role of “directing vanguard,” similar to what the Bolshevik Party did in Russia. *The Platform* contains a pitiless analysis of Bolshevik action in Russia, but it is itself, in some ways, also influenced by Lenin’s efficiency.

*The Platform* does not scorn anarchosyndicalism, but it claims that anarchosyndicalism can work only as part of “the rigidly organized collective of the General Union of Anarchists,” which would have three organizational principles:

- 1) Theoretical unity for all individuals and organizations belonging to the General Union. All activities of the Union must be in perfect accord with its ideological principles. (It is understandable that the anarchists rejected this type of theoretical monolith, which is inconsistent with anarchism and anarchosyndicalism.)
- 2) Tactical unity or collective method of action: “A common tactical line has decisive importance for the organization and the entire movement” (to avoid the multiplicity and, at times, contradictory character of different actions).
- 3) Collective responsibility. “Revolutionary social and political life are profoundly collective by their very nature. Revolutionary social activity cannot be based on the isolated responsibility of the individual militant.” (I agree. Although the individual is the foundation for everything, he can function only in a collective social environment.)

The following passage is dangerously ambiguous: “The executive organ of the general anarchist movement—The Anarchist Union—opposes irresponsible individualism and emphasizes the principle of collective responsibility”—meaning that the union would be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of every one of its members, and that each member would be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of the entire union. (Malatesta particularly attacked this concept.



He asked if *The Platform* proposal was intended to reconcile the free action of individuals with the need for cooperation that would satisfy the conscience and initiative of the members of the anarchist organizations. Malatesta responded in the negative.)

*The Platform* is also ambiguous in other parts of the organization section. Luigi Fabbri recognized the creation of an efficient anarchist organization as a positive goal, but attacked the idea of a class project as well as the underlying tendency for leadership of the General Union of Anarchists and its executive committee. *The Platform* document ends with these words: "Only in this way will the General Union be able to carry out its ideological and historical mission in the social revolution of the workers and be the organized vanguard in the march to emancipation" (G. Cerrito, pp. 291-92). The fact is, says Fabbri, that *The Platform* speaks of a "leading situation" or a "leading function" for the anarchists in the labour movement that leads to a next step: the anarchists must build up a sort of caste of leaders within the labour movement similar to the social democratic parties in Western Europe and America and to the Bolshevik Party in Russia. This would be a more or less hidden dictatorship over the proletariat, not anarchist or even libertarian in tendency. A contradiction in terms. Fabbri acknowledges that *The Platform* specifies that "the leadership exercised is limited to the influence of ideas," but "...*The Platform's* proposal is confusing: what must be feared is that the leadership in spirit will become a leadership in deed, an anti-anarchist division between the minority of leaders and the majority of masses. The masses would have a perfect right to distrust the leaders in spite of protests by those who are trying to lead them almost as a military command headquarters" (G. Cerrito, p. 323). (The Spanish version was translated directly from the Italian, with the text of *The Platform* as the base.)

In conclusion, I must point out that the issues raised in *The Platform* made hardly any impression on anarchism in Spain. A similar situation had developed previously, when Spain was not affected by developments that helped give European anarchism its present outlook and condition. Because of its isolation and its Balkanization, the country favoured maintaining anarchism in its original character. Spain's problems were very different from those under debate by anarchist groups elsewhere on the continent. Anarchosyndicalism was discussed frequently during the debate on *The Platform*; however, the participants in these discussions—Latinians like Fabbri, Faure, and Malatesta—never mentioned Spanish anarchosyndicalism, only that of Germany, Russia, and Latin America, especially Argentina. This may seem surprising at first glance, but is

understandable if one bears in mind that Spanish anarchism differed from that of other European countries. The problem in Spain was not that of achieving efficiency as defined by *The Platform*, which would enable it to compete with the efficiency of the Bolshevik parties: the Bolshevik influence, communist in Spain, hardly existed at that time in spite of the Russian Revolution. Nor was Spanish anarchism involved in vain, sterile theorizing from a position of isolation outside the labour movement as it was elsewhere in Europe. It was not concerned with refining the purity and essence of doctrine because, from the time the International first came to Spain, anarchism sacrificed purely personal whims in favour of a great collective work in the very heart of the labour movement.

To sum up, Spanish anarchism was not concerned with a strong mixture of currents embracing different schools of philosophy, nor with how to gain influence in the labour movement. Spanish anarchism was concerned with how to retain and increase the influence that it had had since the International first arrived in Spain. *The Platform* therefore hardly touched Spanish anarchism and, as we shall see, hardly affected its activities. J. Manuel Molina, secretary at the time of the Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups in France, wrote to me about the question on December 31, 1975:

The platform of Archinov and other Russian anarchists had very little influence on the movement in exile or within the country. Very few defenders. You know that we had become very radical and we viewed any modification or revision with reservation. *The Platform* was an attempt to renew, to give greater character and capacity to the international anarchist movement in light of the Russian Revolution, particularly in the Ukraine. Today, after our own experience, it seems to me that their effort was not fully appreciated.

## Chapter Four

### THE IBERIAN ANARCHIST FEDERATION

This long, though necessary, introduction brings us to the birth of the F.A.I. in July 1927.

The need for a meeting that would establish an effective National Committee was clear. The various groups and regional organizations with whom we consulted felt it would be better to have a conference at which the problems as well as suggestions could be presented. Among these was a suggestion (I do not remember who proposed it) to give the movement, which had until then been national, a peninsular character. That is how Spain and Portugal were united. (J. Llop, personal recollections sent by J. Peirats to the author)

After pointing out that the interior had a relationship with the anarchist exiles in France, Llop continued:

The agenda was discussed at a conference in Catalonia [March 27, mentioned above]. The regional committees had sent in suggestions for the conference agenda. The National Committee had drawn up the suggested agenda and, as usual, sent it to the regions. Each region had held a meeting of its various groups and had arrived at agreements that their delegates presented to the conference. This was the procedure for our organization.

The presence of the Portuguese at the conference, and the idea of a peninsula-wide organization, Miguel Jimenez tells us, "was accepted by the Portuguese comrades after explanations and declarations." There was a great deal of correspondence with fictitious names, addresses, and businesses.

The National Liaison Secretariat of the National Federation of Anarchist Groups went to the capital of Turia, where the Valencia conference was to be held. Vasquez Piedra of the National Secretariat remained in Barcelona to handle correspondence and answer questions. He was assisted by comrades of the Local Federation of Groups. It was agreed by everyone to designate the meeting as a conference in view of the state of the organization and to have a broader, more open atmosphere. The organization was excellent in Catalonia at that time. It enjoyed a lot of enthusiasm in the Levante, Madrid, Seville, etc.... [which] had federations with a good number of groups. (Statement by Miguel Jimenez)

The Secretary of the National Liaison Committee, Miguel Jimenez, opened the conference on July 25, 1927, and presented a detailed report on the situation, which was accepted unanimously. An extract of the conference follows.<sup>1</sup>

The representative of the Regional Federation of A.G. of the Seine (Paris) and the Provisional Secretary of the Anarchist International arrived late, and the Local Federation of A.G. of Malaga telegraphed that they did not have the funds to send a delegate and gave their credential to the anarchist group of Marseilles, "Creators of the Future." The following groups and organizations joined the conference in spirit but could not afford to send delegates: the National Federation of Spanish-Language A.G. in France (the Secretariat); the Local Federation of A.G. in Saragossa; "A Batalha" and the Portuguese General Confederation of Labour; the International Working Men's Association (I.W.M.A.), with headquarters in Berlin; the Anarchist Communist Union and "Le Libertaire" in Paris; the International Anti-Militarist Bureau (Holland, the Regional Federation of A.G. in the Eastern Pyrenees, Aude, and Ariege; the Local Federation of A.G. in San Juan de Luz; the A.G. "Budding Flowers" in Toulouse; the Prisoners' Aid Committee and A.G.'s of Vizcaya; the journal *Cultura*

<sup>1</sup> The following delegations were in attendance: the National Federation of Anarchist Groups (Liaison Secretariat); Federation of Anarchist Groups (A.G.) of Levante; Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups (A.G.) of Andalusia and Local Federation of A.G. of Granada; Regional Federation of Catalonia; Regional Federation of A.G. of Castellan, with residence in Burriana; Provincial Federation of A.G. in Alicante, with residence in Elda; Local Federation of A.G. in Valencia; "Rebel Youth," "Culture and Action," "Light and Life," "The Torch," "The Restless," "The Archer," all members of the Local Federation; "Creators of the Idea"; unaffiliated, a few individuals; the Portuguese Anarchist Union; the Catalonia Confederation of Labour; and the Levante Confederation of Labour. The Catalonia Federation of A.G. sent a delegation directly from their last regional plenum, and the comrades from the "Sun and Life" group were also in attendance.

*Proletaria* (Proletarian Culture) of Barcelona; and comrades M.B. of Catalonia, G.L. of Toulouse, S.P. of Seville, R.O. of La Linea, P.A. of Las Baleares, and A.M., companion from Catalonia.

## First Part

### *First Session*

The provisional National Committee opened the conference with a greeting to the delegates. Tribute was paid to the Portuguese and Austrian comrades who died for liberty, to Sacco and Vanzetti, and to others condemned to prison throughout the world, and to the delegations who had come to the conference.

The credentials of the delegates and the lists of imprisoned comrades were read. The roll of delegates was read twice. The National Committee presented a report on the work that had been accomplished and on the present state of the organization. The delegates spoke and the National Committee responded.

The report of the National Committee was approved with a vote of confidence moved by Catalonia. The members of the National Committee rejoined the Catalonia delegation after completion of their report. The conference then continued without a National Committee, which gave the conference a greater sense of freedom. A report on the "Sun and Life" group was read and approved. It suggested that propaganda and communication be conducted through picnics and excursions in the country.

### *Second Session*

Officials for the session were designated by the Local Federation of Valencia. The announcements of all organizations represented at the conference, and their affiliates, were read.

Item 1: The important problems of anarchism and characteristics and development of the movement. Two delegates from Valencia presented the report. A proposal to limit discussion to items three and six was rejected, considering all problems to be important and wanting all groups not only to study and debate but also to conduct education, propaganda, and agitation; write and distribute leaflets and journals; open a school; maintain a library and a club for social, cultural, and educational activities, and so on.

- a) Concerning the composition and activities of groups. A proposal from Madrid was approved that each group was free to carry on whatever activities they wished while aiming for unity in action and propaganda through the Federation.
- b) There exist various single-issue movements, such as vegetarian, esperantist, etc. Should such groups be part of the anarchist movement? It was agreed to accept such groups, recognizing that those who had such special interests are above all anarchists.

### *Third Session*

#### Item 2: Cooperatives.

- a) Position on the cooperative movement.
- b) Should an organization of consumer cooperatives, cooperative workshops, or agricultural colonies be accepted in an organization of anarchist groups as part of the movement? It is agreed not to oppose attempts at cooperative organization that are good, autonomous, not isolated, and not dominated by other movements.

#### Item 3: The labour movement.

- a) Attitude toward the C.N.T. and the U.G.T. It is agreed to work with the C.N.T. because they reject all relations with a reform organization. The question is referred to item 6.
- b) Should the unions that are dedicated to anarchism be associated with the organization of groups, with each maintaining their autonomy and their federations and general councils in the anarchist movement? It is understood that working-class unity is not possible. The labour movement is divided and, to that extent, frustrated, and therefore we must work for anarchist unity. The labour organization must work not only for day-to-day improvements but also for full emancipation, anarchism. The labour organization should turn to anarchism as it did in the past, before the Spanish Regional Federation (The First International) was dissolved, and the anarchist organization of groups should be established alongside it, with the two organizations working together for the anarchist movement. It is resolved to work for this. The groups and their federations and the National Committee shall extend an invitation to the unions and the National Committee of the C.N.T. to hold joint plenums and local, district, and regional meetings. It is further proposed that the labour organization and the organization of groups be united in the anarchist movement without losing their own character. They shall form general federations that are the expression of the full anarchist movement with its general councils composed of representatives of the unions and the groups. The general councils will name Commissions of Education, Propaganda, Agitation, and other areas of equal concern to both organizations.

### **Second Part**

#### Item 4: Prisoners and persecuted.

- a) Should all Prisoners' Aid Committees be formed jointly by the unions and the groups, or should each form its own Prisoners' Aid Committees? It is agreed to work for joint Prisoners' Aid Committees of both organizations with local autonomy and administration to each committee.
- b) Creation of a National Prisoners' Aid Committee. It is agreed to invite the C.N.T. to join in organizing such a national committee.

Item 5: Propaganda and culture.

- a) Extensive, positive means.
- b) Creation of a national publication as an organ of our movement.
- c) Creation of a theoretical review.
- d) Creation of an editorial group to develop our propaganda. These projects are to be considered as part of a whole and to be developed when possible.
- e) Should cultural commissions be formed by the unions together with the groups, or only by the latter? Such commissions are not regarded as absolute. It is left to the future general councils to decide what Commissions they wish to have.

Item 6: The dictatorship.

- a) What should we anarchists do to initiate an international campaign against the dictatorship [of Primo de Rivera], or at least a campaign in the Iberian Peninsula? It is agreed to develop an intense propaganda campaign that will result in a popular movement fired with the libertarian spirit.
- b) Confronted by other groups and organizations, what should the anarchist minority do to work for the revolution? The conference ratified the agreement reached by the Congress of Marseilles (May 1926) not to engage in any agreement or understanding with political elements but only with the C.N.T. in Spain. It is agreed to support every challenge (*pronunciamiento*) that develops, aiming to divorce it from political action and to guide popular action toward destroying all power and organizing life on a free basis. The proposal of Elda is approved to prepare a clear, energetic pamphlet that will advise the worker what to do in a revolutionary situation.
- c) Does our movement have the capacity for constructive work on anti-authoritarian and federalist foundations? We believe that we do and that we can develop the organizations that will give our movement the greatest credibility and the ability to win over popular support.
- d) Should action committees be formed by the unions and the groups or by the latter only? It is agreed that we should follow the first alternative as in Catalonia. The second course should be followed only if open organization is not permitted. However, when a general council can be organized, commissions of culture, statistics, and so on, should be established by it.

Item 7: Concerning the Iberian Federation.

- a) In view of the existing relationship between the Portuguese Anarchist Union and the National Federation of Spanish Anarchist Groups, should an Iberian Union or Federation be established? It is agreed that the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) be organized, composed of the Portuguese Anarchist Union, the National Federation of Spanish Anarchist Groups, and the Federation of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups in France. It is also agreed that a new National Committee not be named but that one of the three affiliated organizations assume the representation

of the F.A.I. on a temporary basis. The Peninsular Committee would be moved periodically from one place to another, between Portugal, France, and Spain, and the National Committee of the Portuguese Anarchist Union would act as the Peninsular Committee at this time, with the backing and information of the National Committees of France and Spain.

#### Item 8: The Internationals.

- a) What is our opinion of the projected "Platform of Anarchist Organization"? This proposal of the Russian anarchists has not yet been translated. Since we do not have precise knowledge of the proposal, the question is tabled to the national meeting with an assurance to Madrid that the translation will be made.
- b) Our position with regard to the anti-authoritarian internationals B.I.A. and A.I. Universal (Universal Anarchist International). The conference supports both, although it does not know the latter. Should it try to achieve a union of both internationals? It is agreed to try through a world conference.

#### Third Part

- 1) The chairman of the previous session will continue to serve.
- 2) Residence of the new National Committee. By unanimous vote, the existing committee in Barcelona is requested to continue. The comrades refuse, saying others should volunteer. The National Committee should not remain permanently in one place, and the crisis and repression have left them with only a few active members at this time. The local organization must take it easy for a time. After several locations are rejected, Seville accepts the nomination after Barcelona promises to undertake it again after the reorganization is completed. The committee promises to transfer all records and documents to the National Committee in Seville, together with the minutes of this conference.
- 3) Powers, means, and activities of the Committee. The delegations are urged to make their organizations understand that without their voluntary and steady financial support, the National Committee will not be able to carry on its work.
- 4) General questions. The conference approves a proposal by Catalonia that a bulletin be published to report on the work of our anarchist movement.

The session ends with a tribute to the prisoners and the persecuted and to the revolutionary world. The Secretariat.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Published by José Peirats in *Ruta*, Barcelona, No. 40, July 22, 1937.



## The Valencia Conference

There is no doubt that Item 3, concerning the labour movement, was the basic theme of the conference, especially section (b), which supported conversion of the unions into an anarchist labour movement. Actually, the conference took place at a time when the C.N.T. was practically nonexistent, but the meeting believed in the ability of the anarchists to start the unions again, literally like the old Spanish Regional Federation. This infusion of anarchism into the unions, at all levels, without forgetting cooperating organizations like the Prisoners' Aid Committees, was nothing but anarchosyndicalism. The anarchists at the conference knew that the unions were one thing and the groups another, and drew a clear line between the two. The same men who tried to vote unanimously as members of groups were willing to accept majority vote on union decisions when necessary. The groups organized themselves at the conference so as to unify the viewpoints of the anarchists who also belonged to unions, cooperatives, and so on. Generally speaking, the activities of the groups were concentrated on the unions, since they were best organized to work in the unions and strengthen the anarchist influence, and Spanish anarchism expressed its interests and sense of responsibility in the unions and the labour movement. It should also be noted that the unceasing desire for unanimity meant that the anarchists were willing to sacrifice personal preference in favour of the collective interest, and unanimity was usually achieved only after considerable sacrifice. This reflects the differences between the organizational focus and even philosophy of Spanish anarchism and that of other countries who are better equipped in theory but who wrap themselves in complexities and thus render themselves ineffective. Thus, what stands out most clearly in Item 3, paragraph (b) is the desire of Spanish anarchism to achieve unity without giving up individual or group autonomy. The paramount concern is collective responsibility. This is further evidence for the fact that Spanish anarchism, for reasons stated previously, did not see itself as divorced from the essentials of its traditions and kept its organizational links with the labour movement.

The Valencia conference was conducted in an unusually fine spirit. "There was a great spirit of understanding among the comrades in the first and second sessions. There was nothing of what we experienced at our meetings later; the spirit of that meeting does us honour," said José Llop.

We have already looked at the way in which agreements were reached in the new F.A.I. Its structure could not have been more functional or

simpler: groups had their classic structure and were the base of the federalist organization. The groups in a given locality or district formed a local or district federation. The local or district federation, in turn, joined the regional committee. The regional committees, in turn, formed the Peninsular Committee, which was a sort of liaison committee lacking the power to make decisions. This belonged to the organizational base.

One of the major problems for the organizers of the conference was how to bring the Portuguese delegation into Spain. Jimenez tells us that they crossed through Cristina Island in Huelva province.

The Andalusian comrades worked very well, and the representatives from Seville did not relax for a moment on the trip to and from the conference. Suffice it to say, in addition, that the Valencia comrades, who gave the impression of being militarized, pardon the expression, did not let them stray from view for an instant. The Portuguese delegation was led by a very intelligent Portuguese comrade named, I believe, Quental or something like that. He was a writer.

The first secretary of the National Federation of Anarchist Groups stated that the Valencia federation of groups knew certain comrades from the unions who wanted to attend the conference, and they invited them. (Among them was Domingo Torres, an outstanding militant who served as Mayor of Valencia during the Civil War.) They participated in the debates enthusiastically.

The first session was held on July 25 in the house of a member. There seems to be some confusion as to the location of the second session, held on July 26, at which the constitution was adopted. Jimenez stated: "The first meeting was held in a kind of tower or large house. On the 25th [a lapse of memory on Jimenez' part], the meeting was held on the beach. It seems to me the place was called El Cabanal. If I am not mistaken, it is a suburb or a small town near Valencia." Tomas Cano Ruiz called the location Malvarrosa in his book *Confederación*, and Peirats called the beach Cabanal in *The Anarchists in the Spanish Political Crisis*. Neither comrade attended the conference. In any event, there is no doubt that the second meeting was held at the beach. It is also certain that while the meeting was going on, "the Civil Guard came on the scene on foot and horseback. The Valencia comrades had prepared themselves for this. They were on the beach with their families preparing food for a picnic. After a while, the Civil Guards departed and the plenum continued..." (Jimenez)

The story of the Portuguese delegation deserves special mention. The delegation included Quental, a writer and contributor to the Portuguese anarchist publication *Batalha*, and another Portuguese militant who had lived in Barcelona during the time of Martinez Anido and spoke Spanish well. Quental's participation was highly appreciated, according to Jimenez. "He spoke slowly, using Spanish words here and there, doing what he could to make himself understood. He also asked his Portuguese comrade to translate for him."

The Catalan region added to the confusion by proposing that the Portuguese comrades form the first secretariat of the F.A.I. They emphasized the need for a peninsular organization and felt that electing the Portuguese as the first secretariat would ensure that the Portuguese anarchist organization was not subordinate to the Spanish. The present Catalan members of the liaison committee who were stepping down would remain fully at the disposal of the new peninsular secretariat for as long as needed.

"Everyone turned toward the Portuguese in silence," says Jimenez. "The Portuguese comrades, their eyes wet with tears, were unable to speak." Then they declared that they understood how much they were respected and they reciprocated these feelings. They concluded with the observation that the secretariat ought to be located where there were the most regions. Seville finally accepted responsibility for the Peninsular Committee of the newly created F.A.I., with the understanding that Catalonia would live up to its promise to assist the new committee.

The minutes of the meeting were written up by militants from Valencia and sent to the former secretary in Barcelona. He made a summary of the records, made copies of them, and sent them to the members of the first Peninsular Committee in Seville.

As a safety precaution, the delegates were identified only by their initials, as in the times of the International. Nevertheless, the police developed suspicions about the conference and arrested some members of the "Sun and Life" group, organizers of the Eclectic Centre of Clot in Barcelona. This group was one of the main organizers of the conference, carrying on an intense correspondence with an assumed person, Juan Muntaner, at the Centre.

A final note: those in attendance. It is logical that the host region would have the largest number of representatives, fifteen. Marcet and Vidalet represented the Catalan Region of Groups, and Llop and Jimenez came from Catalonia but actually represented the liaison commission of the Federation of Anarchist Groups. Other outstanding comrades from other regions were: Tello, Espana, Gallego Crespo, Progresso

Fernandez, Rodriguez, Noja Ruiz, Cabello, Gonzalez, Joaguin Ferrer, Fandino, Pedro Arnico, and Pedro Falomir from Madrid.

The F.A.I. Peninsular Committee remained in Seville a short time and then returned to Catalonia. The members of the new committee were Germinal de Souza, Ruiz, and Jimenez. Some of the outstanding members of the new F.A.I., in addition to those already named, were, according to T. Cano Ruiz, Sune, Rosquillas, Jose Alberola, M. Buenacasa, Penicorada, Blas, Royo, Sesé, Dominguez, Gilabert, Teofilo, Navarro, Berlanga, Quintanilla, Mauro Bajatierra, and Melchor Rodriguez.

### Response to the F.A.I.—*Los Solidarios*

The creation of the F.A.I. coincided with government suspension of *El Despertar Maritimo*, edited in Vigo by José Villaverde, and *Acción Social Obrera*, which had been published in Gerona for ten years. (This organ reappeared in July 1928.) During this time, the scattered groups of the C.N.T. held a national plenum in Madrid in January 1928. They created union squads on the model of the French Revolutionary Syndicalist C.G.T., as a step toward reorganizing the unions. The C.N.T. also accepted the proposal of the F.A.I. at their plenum to strengthen the bonds between the two organizations in Revolutionary Action Committees and Prisoners' Aid Committees.

The creation of the "Solidarity" group by Pestana and others was in the direction of the famous Moral Union and the Union of Militants, whose sponsors had also included Pestana. Pestana wrote a series of articles in *Acción Social* in December 1928 entitled "Concerning the Moral Union," which, according to Elorza, proposed "converting the idea of general reconciliation into a grouping of tendencies to reconstruct the Confederation within the legal system [of the dictatorship] and compensating for this with an increased influence of anarchism." There would be a "general conciliation" for tactical reasons, but anarchism would be represented in the group.

The Solidarity group went through two phases. There was a rather curious situation in the first: the nucleus of the group comprised, among others, Angel Pestana, Peiro, Juan Lopez, Birlan, Alfarache, Pedro Foix, and Hermoso Plaja. Elorza lists additional people: Pedro Manzon, Mascarell, Antonio Rodriguez, Porquet, Villaverde, Sana, and Serafin Castello. However, at the express request of this nucleus to include members of all tendencies, Germinal Souza, Patricio Navaro, and Miguel Jimenez from Barcelona joined the group, as did Manuel Buenacasa, who lived in Blanes. Jimenez states that Buenacasa was invited to join

in spite of the ideological distance between him and the founders of the group, just as there existed between Peiro and Pestana. For example, the F.A.I. knew the internal composition of the Solidarity group, and they participated as representatives of the Federation of Groups. It was a curious situation, because the heterogeneous composition of the group would not make for strong bonds between them, but rather an early fight to the death.

The bond that held the group together, however, disappeared in the second phase, Jimenez tells us. The differences between Pestana and Peiro increased, as well as those between Pestana and the F.A.I. members in the group. We know that Peiro and Pestana, who made use of the national representation of a practically disorganized underground C.N.T. up to the proclamation of the Second Republic, began to disagree strongly in 1927 over the issue of the government-controlled tripartite committees (government-labour-management). When Pestana's position in favour of political syndicalism became clear, the differences between these outstanding militants drove them and their supporters apart. The history of this period is full of paradoxes. As we shall soon see, these men reached agreement again in another situation. The group broke up without ever becoming part of the Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups of Catalonia.

Two instances of the new polemic between Pestana, Peiro, and Magrina occurred immediately after the resignation of the National Committee headed by Juan Peiro in May 1929. The break-up of the so-called political alliances, the total lack of understanding of the young radicals of the Revolutionary Action Committee, and ever-present government pressure were some of the reasons for the resignation of the National Committee. It was succeeded by a committee that included Progreso Alfarache and Manuel Sirvent, with Pestana as secretary.

It was after this reorganization that a new dialectical confrontation took place between Pestana and Peiro. In an article entitled "First Objective," Pestana dwelt on the reorganization of the C.N.T. on the basis of what was possible—"possibilism." Peiro replied in the same journal with "The Duty of the Virgins." Another confrontation developed on the basis of a long series of articles by Pestana, "Let Us See Where We Are" (June 1928 to November 1929), to which Peiro replied by referring to Pestana's conception of the C.N.T. as a blank slate on which activists could write their particular programmes, an anticipation of political syndicalism, and a syndicalist party. The unity of the Solidarity group was thus destroyed.

## Fall of the Dictatorship

General Primo de Rivera gave up his power on January 28, 1930. He was succeeded by another general, Damaso Berenguer, in a transitory regime which was to become known as the "Moderate Dictatorship." Before and after Primo de Rivera, anarchists, anarchosyndicalists, and possibilists engaged in conspiratorial plots, first against the dictatorship, then against the royal dynasty. They made contact with various political opposition forces and were later criticized for doing so by the rank and file and by other sectors of the movement because they did not get guarantees for the right to hold open meetings. Among the various plots were support of the rebellion of Sanchez Guerra in January 1929 and the Manifesto of Republican Intelligence, signed by well-known Catalan personalities including the anarchosyndicalists Juan Peiro, Jose Viadu, and Pedro Foix. The criticism aroused within the anarchosyndicalist sector, however, caused Peiro and Foix to withdraw their signatures from the document. Angel Pestana gained official recognition for the C.N.T. in an interview with General Mola.

The reader will have concluded that it is impossible to deal with the history of anarchism or of the F.A.I. without referring constantly to its creation, the C.N.T. Until this time, the F.A.I. had experienced the same ups and downs as had the C.N.T. They recognized the general situation of the anarchosyndicalist labour movement toward the end of 1929.

Juan Manuel ("Juanel") Molina took charge of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee as secretary early in 1930. He had recently returned to Spain from Brussels with his comrade, Dolores, also an outstanding militant. Molina had been expelled from France, where he had been secretary of the Federation of Spanish-Language Groups. Molina took over as secretary of the Peninsular Committee from Jose Elizalde, who had fallen under suspicion that, according to Molina himself, could not be proven. The other members of the committee were Merino, an Aragon militant, Portela from Barcelona, Luzbel Ruiz, and the Andalusian Portuguese Ricardo Pena.

Molina found the F.A.I. in a bad state, which he described in a letter to the author dated June 28, 1975:

When I arrived in Barcelona from exile in the early weeks of 1930, the F.A.I. was not very much, as you who are working on its history can verify. It did not have a typewriter or anything else when I was named secretary

of the Peninsular Committee. The old typewriter of the Federation of Spanish-Language Anarchist Groups, now practically dissolved, and a modern duplicating machine that I bought, were the instruments with which we started the F.A.I. on its way.

With the fall of Primo de Rivera, reorganizing of the C. N. T. started once again. The period of transition of Damaso Berenguer witnessed a tremendous wave of strikes and collective bargaining activities. In spite of pessimistic forecasts by some critics in the movement—among them, curiously, Pestana, once more secretary of the National Committee after a series of arrests and withdrawal from the committee, and especially the doomsayers, the Marxist-Communists, the C.N.T rose again with unexpected vigour.

This upward surge also marked the beginning of action on the part of the F.A.I, and along with the mysteries with which the bourgeoisie have always enveloped the revolutionary activities of the working class, contributed to the myth surrounding the organization. Word of the activities of the “mysterious” anarchist organization began to appear in the reactionary and liberal daily press, from *El Debate* to *El Sol* and *La Tierra*. Juan Manuel Molina tells us that there were so many revolutionary activities attributed to the militants of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. that

The Public Prosecutor of the Republic, I believe his name was Galo Ponte, declared the F.A.I. outside the law in such an exaggerated manner that he added to its reputation and increased its importance. During those years a month did not pass without our issuing a manifesto to the country, many of which were reproduced in the press.

This attitude was similar to that of the authorities at the time of the International which led Sagasta to describe it as “a philosophical utopia of crime.” Says Santillan: “After 1927 the active anarchist groups joined together in the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.), an identity that could not be achieved on a purely local basis. It soon became a legend and the target of every accusation and abuse.”

The anti-dynasty conspiracies, which were greatly strengthened during the latter part of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, plus the loss of face by the monarchy due to the growing economic crisis, led finally to the fall of the monarchy after the municipal elections in April 1931. The Republic was proclaimed April 14. The Revolutionary Committee formed by opposition political notables went on to form the first provisional government.

## The Confederal (C.N.T.) Congress at the Madrid Conservatory

The C.N.T. congress followed the telephone strike supported by the C.N.T. in Madrid and Barcelona. The Spanish National Telephone Company was financed with North American capital. The new Republican government supported the company, which had gained a very favourable contract from the dictatorship. The anarchosindicalists lost the strike, which had been opposed by the General Union of Workers (U.G.T.—socialist)—an indication of what they were to face during the Second Republic.

The regular Third Congress of the C.N.T. was held against a backdrop of challenges by the new regime to the worker and peasant masses, and against government pressure as great as that of the dictatorship before them. One month earlier, May 7, Largo Caballero, the socialist minister of labour, had promulgated the Law of Mixed Juries (labour and employer representatives with a government representative to break tie votes), which had been inspired by the tripartite committees set up under the dictatorship. These measures destroyed the right to strike and forced arbitration between capital and labour. The C.N.T. immediately understood this as government-backed socialist policy intended to neutralize and possibly destroy the C.N.T. in favour of their own labour organization, the U.G.T. The meeting was held under these disturbing auspices, but we will limit the discussion to the actions connected with this work.

The congress opened June 16, 1931, and was the first open meeting for the C.N.T. since 1919. The members of the National Committee that opened the congress were Angel Pestana, Secretary-General, Francisco Arin, Progreso Alfarache, Manuel Rivas, Rafael, Baldo, Manuel Germian, and Ramon Artoneda.

Santillan states: "A new generation was at the congress, together with veterans of the black period of a decade earlier, and they faced new, grave problems apart from those of the great mass of new members. The hundreds of youthful and veteran militants brought a tremendous enthusiasm to the congress." Santillan lists several hundred delegates in his history of the congress; an analysis of their ideological positions reveals that the great majority of the regional and union delegates were anarchists or anarchosindicalists.

The F.A.I. held a secret meeting in Madrid concurrent with the C.N.T. congress, as they had at every congress, because, according to Molina, the F.A.I. delegates were also union members and came to the congress with resolutions from their unions.



I attended the Conservatory congress as secretary of the Peninsular Committee. Although I did not participate in the congress personally, other delegates, such as Jose Alberola, Progreso Fernandez, and Garcia Oliver, presented F.A.I. viewpoints, which were shared by an immense majority of the delegates. (Molina letter to the author, June 28, 1975)

However, it must be emphasized that the delegates, whether or not they were members of the F.A.I., were presenting resolutions adopted by their unions at open membership meetings. Actions taken at the congress had to be reported back to their unions at open meetings, and given the degree of union education among the members, it was impossible for delegates to support personal, nonrepresentative positions.

The congress can be judged as moderate in outlook. Peiro's proposal regarding industrial federations with precise plans of organization was accepted unanimously. The resolutions committee presented a resolution "concerning the constituent Assembly (Cortes)" in the realm of political action that was somewhat ambiguous and vacillating, although its final conclusion was radicalized after debate: "Concerning the Constitution," the resolution declared, "we are in open warfare with the state. It is our sacred mission to educate the people so that they will see that they must join us and help gain total emancipation through social revolution."

The combination C.N.T.-F.A.I. was used at the congress without any problems. The temper of the congress was reflected by a mass meeting at the Fuencarral Theatre in Madrid, organized by J.M. Molina and Luzbel Ruiz of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee. The meeting was perhaps the most imposing ever held in Madrid. To quote Molina:

We went up and down the main streets of the capital in two cars with large banners, distributing leaflets and broadcasting our invitation to the meeting. Not everyone could be crammed into the hall. Eight orators, representing various countries, addressed the meeting, including Rocker, Santillan, and others whom I do not remember, but who were reported in *La Tierra* at that time. The F.A.I., with its spirit of action, evoked admiration, sympathy, and the support of the masses.

The 1931 congress, in sum, was an impressive reaffirmation of an-archosindicalism. Grave problems, however, did come to the surface after the movement's many years of underground existence, problems which were only increased by the generation gap. A footnote by Santillan will help us understand more clearly the beginning of *treintismoanarguismo* (anarchism of the thirty militants). Santillan tells us that the massive influx of members into the unions in 1931 was similar to what had occurred in the period 1918-1920, although responsible forces were

now much more numerous, and it was only a question of time until cool heads would prevail among the new members. Santillan tells of impatient young militants, who charged the moderates with compromise. The attitude of the government, though, worked against the restraint of the moderates.

Their only understanding of organized workers was that painted by distorted histories. They did not know how to regard the demands of the workers, who had been suppressed until the triumph of the republic, to which the masses of the disinherited had also contributed. The masses now felt that their demands could not be postponed. (Santillan)

However, one part of the Republican government, Spanish socialism, was not ignorant about the labour movement. There was a conspiracy aimed at holding back anarchosyndicalism and anarchism with measures like the Law of October 20, the so-called Defense of the Republic. But they did not resolve the most acute problems raised by the workers.

In the short period between June 1931, when the congress was held, and August, when the *Treintismo* (Manifesto of the Thirty) appeared, social conflict had increased tremendously. There were serious struggles in Catalonia, Asturias, and, above all, backward Andalusia. The struggle in Andalusia reached a peak with application of the Law of Flight, when four detainees were shot down by government forces, supposedly when they tried to escape.

### Reappearance of *Los Solidarios*

An important question for our study is the reappearance of the Solidarity group. After travelling around the world for seven years, some of the Solidarity militants returned to Spain with the proclamation of the Republic, and I shall be referring to them during the course of this work. Durruti, Francisco Ascaso, Sanz, and Juan Garcia Oliver, recently released after many years in prison during the dictatorship, resumed their activities. As early as the latter half of April, Durruti, speaking in the name of the C.N.T., offered an anarchosyndicalist vision of what could be expected after the inauguration of the Second Republic:

The Republic does not interest us. However, we accept it as a point of departure in a process of social democratization, on the condition that the Republic guarantee that the principles of liberty and social justice are not empty words. If the Republic refuses to take into consideration the aspirations of the working class, then the little interest that the workers have in the

Republic will be reduced to nothing, because it will offer no hope for what our class looked for on April 14.... As anarchists, we declare that our activities have not been and never will be at the service of any political party or any state. The anarchists and syndicalists of the C.N.T., together with all revolutionaries, have the mission to compel the men in the government, under pressure from the street, to fulfill their mandate. (*Solidaridad Obrera*, April 30, 1931, quoted by Abel Paz in his book *Durruti: The People Armed*)

I believe that this position actually reflects their entire programme. Who were the Solidarity group? We have already seen them in action when the National Federation of Anarchist Groups was organized and when they worked with the C.N.T. defense groups. During the period of terror the *Solidarios* were a good example of the fusing of anarchism and syndicalism in militant action. They never denied their anarchist character, but always felt that their strength lay in the unions. Actually, they did not belong to the F.A.I. at that time; as a group they acted not only outside the F.A.I. but at times as its head and always in perfect harmony with the C.N.T.<sup>3</sup>

Abel Paz tells us that *Solidarios* had very good contact with the people: "Ascaso was sure of himself and was a good speaker. Garcia Oliver was a good orator on his way to becoming a great one." And here is a picture of Durruti drawn by a witness of those days:

He used short phrases that sounded like whiplashes. He established a rapport with the public when he started that lasted until he was finished. The orator and his audience formed a single body. His energetic voice and his powerful physique enabled him to destroy his enemies. Yet he was a modest person. He went up to the platform when he was scheduled to speak and came down

<sup>3</sup> In a letter to the author from Mexico, dated June 27, 1974, Juan Garcia Oliver stated, with a certain presumptuousness, that he did not know anything about the F.A.I.: "I was never a militant or a member of its committees. While I was in prison they inveigled Ascaso and Durruti to affiliate our group—which did not exist—with the F.A.I. to give them bureaucratic satisfaction, and they called the group *Nosotros* [We]." This is highly confusing, because Juan Manuel Molina states that he was secretary of the Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. until 1935, except for the year 1932, when he was in jail, and that Juan Garcia Oliver acted as secretary of the F.A.I. at that time. Peirats confirms that the *Solidarios* group, later called *Nosotros*, did not identify itself with the F.A.I., and relates the following incident: at a meeting at Tibidabo, Ascaso, Garcia Oliver, and Aurelio Fernandez showed their disdain for representatives of the local F.A.I. Federation of Groups: "They are they, and we are poor devils. The F.A.I. local at that time did not have more than a dozen groups of young men of unquestionably good faith. Not leaders of masses." (Letter from J. Peirats to the author, dated September 2, 1975)

as soon as he was finished. He mixed with the people and talked with the workers as though he had always known them.

The *Solidarios*, especially Ascaso and Durruti, who were busy with the reorganization of unions, were given responsibility by the C.N.T. regional committee of Catalonia for receiving the delegations of the international anarchist movement who had come to Barcelona to attend the May 1 demonstration and study the political thrust of the new regime. The German Anarchist Federation sent Augustin Souchy, according to Abel Paz; the Russian anarchists, Voline and Ida Mett; the Italians, Camillo Berneri; the Swedish anarchists, Rudiger; the French Anarchist Union, Louis Lecoin and Odeon. Ascaso and Durruti were clearly the men for this mission, since their long years in exile had put them in touch with the nucleus in almost every country, above all with the French.

The demonstration on Friday, May 1, 1931, started at the esplanade in front of the Palacio de Bellas Artes, proceeded as a compact mass up to the Arch of Triumph, and spread into neighbouring streets. Revolutionary posters were raised after a number of short talks. The demonstration moved ahead through the main streets of Barcelona, led by the Union Committee—Santiago Bilbao, Francisco Ascaso, Durruti, and Garcia Oliver—and poured into the Plaza de Catalunya. The authorities tried to stop the demonstration, but Ascaso disarmed the police commander, while Durruti seized a red and black banner and shouted "Make way for the F.A.I.!" The masses could not be held back. They flowed onto the Plaza. The demonstration was not without bloodshed, however.

I have described this incident at length because it will be often repeated: the birth of the F.A.I. myth. Durruti launched the cry, "Make way for the F.A.I.!" although he, Ascaso, and Garcia Oliver were, above all, C.N.T. militants, and their *Solidarios* group did not belong to the F.A.I. at that time.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> In his previously quoted letter of September 2, 1975, Peirats states that there were "thousands of *Faistas*" who hardly belonged to any organized groups and barely had enough money to pay for a C.N.T. membership card. Nevertheless, from the right and from the left, they all shouted, "Long live the F.A.I.!"

## Radicalization of Anarchosyndicalism

The setting for the radicalization of anarchosyndicalism was a Spain that had come out of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship degraded and impure to gain certain theoretical liberties under the Republic, which resulted in social tensions leading to apocalyptic incidents.

The three most important elements were, in my opinion: first, the worldwide economic crisis of 1929, which, as usual, hit Spain later; second, the complex problem of relations between the generations; and third, a partial closing down of industry, resulting from the economic crisis, which led to a serious increase of both urban and rural unemployment. Other factors were the massive flight of capital, employer lockouts—not always for economic reasons, misery among the working classes, and powerful social agitation. Add to this the conduct of the Spanish right wing, the agrarian, industrial, and financial oligarchy, who remained absolutely immobile in their determination to hold on to their traditional privileges, who were unable to resolve the pressing problems of the country. The public authorities did not hesitate to use the hard, and at times provocative, hand of repression.

## Anarchism and *Treintismo*

The reader will appreciate that I chose not to entitle this chapter, as others might have, "Faismo-Treintismo" (The F.A.I. Manifesto Versus the Manifesto of the Thirty), which would be useful but not entirely satisfactory. The F.A.I. was not the only force on their side of the conflict; there were also the Urales family, with their influential publications, and the *Solidarios* and other groups that were active and influential in the C.N.T. but that did not belong to the F.A.I. at that time. They all supported the maximalist current in militant anarchism and revolutionary theory then and in the years ahead.

The anarchist definition of the conflict is not entirely correct. Balcells, author of *Crisis Economica y Agitacion Social en Catalunya*, states that the Thirty were able to oppose the F.A.I. with good sense, realism, and more democratic, orderly administration of the unions. They did not offer a truly different option than that proposed by the F.A.I., however; they were still anarchosyndicalists but with a less doctrinaire, violent thrust. The F.A.I. put the accent on anarchism in the C.N.T., the *Treintistas* on syndicalism. They were all anarchosyndicalists, apolitical, anti-communist, and anti-socialist. For the mass of dues-payers, they did not represent two alternatives, but rather a shading of tactics.

This is the approximate truth, although the idea of political syndicalism was stirring in Pestana's head, and, to the extent that it existed on the fringes of *Treintismo*, it could no longer be regarded as anarchosyndicalism.

This is the background for the conflict between generations. The twenty- to twenty-two-year-olds who sustained the C.N.T. with guns in hand during the bloody years, 1918 to 1922, were unlike the reflective, experienced militants of whom Santillan speaks. These exceptionally courageous men generated a great movement within the C.N.T. and anarchosyndicalism; when we refer to such groups as the *Solidarios*, therefore, we are referring to anarchism and anarchosyndicalism.<sup>5</sup>

It should not be forgotten that these men were active almost exclusively in the defense groups of the C.N.T., rather than in the specific anarchist groups. There is not much validity to the so-called generation gap since there were radicals and moderates among both the young militants and the older generation. Not a few of the *Treintistas*, beginning with Pestana, had supported the proposal that the C.N.T. work within the limitations imposed by the dictatorship. However, it should be noted in their favour that they did not flee but remained in the country, withstanding the enormous difficulties of that period. They got used to making compromises and talking with other political groups. They also became accustomed to using the movement's journals and periodicals to express their opinions with no challenge from other points of view. They developed their own individual programmes, which were spread among the unorganized masses "in the name of the organization." The appearance of the *Treintismo* barely two months after the Madrid congress of 1931, which had spoken for all, was the final example of this type of action.

<sup>5</sup> Marcos Alcon points out that the historical importance of the *Solidarios* has been exaggerated. He notes that the *Solidarios* did not have the opportunity to develop since Durruti, Ascaso, Vivancos, and Jover were in Europe and Latin America throughout the dictatorship, and Garcia Oliver and the others were in prison. When the Republic was proclaimed, Alcon states, Aurelio Fernandez was in Oviedo without contact with the group; Sanz, Jover, and Vivancos were not involved in subversive activities but were working and were active in their respective unions: Jover in woodworking, Vivancos in transport. Ascaso, Durruti, and Garcia Oliver, when they returned, never attended meetings of the F.A.I. except for special purposes; they met among themselves since they all worked in the textile industry. They participated in major actions, but only as one group among many carrying out a programme determined by the organization. I was a friend of theirs, and participated with them in major C.N.T. and F.A.I. activities in those years.

The manifesto opens with a clarifying analysis of the social and economic conditions facing the new regime. It denounces the flight of capital, the depreciation of the currency, speculation, lockouts, the paralysis of public credit, the decline of demand in commerce, the lack of agricultural export, and the decrease in manufacturing, which resulted in full employment for only thirty percent of the working class. To quote a passage from the manifesto:

The impoverishment of the country is an accepted fact. In spite of all the misfortunes that the people suffer, the government moves softly, excessively concerned with legal niceties. They show no sign of energy, except when it comes to machine-gunning the people. In the name of the Republic, they use the full apparatus of repression of the state to shed the blood of workers every day. It is no longer a question of this town or that; the guns go off everywhere, wiping out young, vital lives.

The document goes on to say that the government has done nothing, and will do nothing in the economic sphere: "The great landed estates, the enemies of the Spanish peasants, have not been expropriated; the profits of the speculators at the public trough have not been reduced by one cent; no monopoly has been broken up; not one parcel of community farmland has been taken away from those who exploit and profit from the anger, sorrow, and misery of the people." And further: "For denouncing the leniency toward exploitation of the workers," the manifesto emphasizes, "...The people are imprisoned, persecuted, and threatened with extermination."

With such a radical criticism of a society whose only alternative is social revolution, the manifesto offers a revolutionary strategy based on dynamic action of the masses. It denounces attacks by audacious groups. Santillan speaks of this issue as follows:

There were enthusiastic, courageous nuclei, who imagined that they could accelerate the process of social change by putting their personal sacrifice into the balance; a little revolutionary Blanquism\* mixed with youthful euphoria. But there were also men in the C.N.T. with long histories of struggle, who could not sit quietly by and watch an enthusiastic minority compromise the entire organization with precipitated adventures. (Diego Abad de Santillan, *Contribución a la Historia del Movimiento Obrero Español*, 1971 edition)

\* Auguste Blanqui, one of a number of revolutionary leaders in France during the revolution of 1848, advocated authoritarian communism with a dictatorial state. He organized groups for violent actions and a *coup d'état* but never gained sufficient popular support. —*transl. note*

Did revolutionary Blanquism exist within the C.N.T. and within anarchism? Such a tendency did exist within anarchosyndicalism, and was supported by the C.N.T. majority in reaction to systematic repression by the Minister of the Interior, Miguel Mauro. After the telephone strike, agitation had broken out in Pasajes, Asturias, and especially in Andalusia, where it had led to a general strike. Mauro ordered that the disorder be stopped at any cost. The Civil Guard seized the headquarters of the local federation of the C.N.T. in Seville by frontal assault, resulting in the death of twenty workers. Mauro proclaimed to the Cortes:

It is my duty to tell the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. that since they do not accept the laws governing labour, since they ignore the tripartite committees, the mixed juries, and, above all, the authority of the government, the laws of association and meeting do not apply to them, and there are no guarantees to protect them.

Labour responded with a general strike in Saragossa, Granada, and Santander. The governor of Barcelona, Anguerra de Sojo, in turn, ordered an attack on the headquarters of the C.N.T. Construction Workers' Union under the pretext that the F.A.I. was holding a secret meeting there. After several hours of intense fighting, the workers inside headquarters surrendered to the army but not to the forces of public order.

The plight of the peasants was beyond description, especially in Andalusia and Estremadura. The large landowners ignored the law, with Mauro's blessing, according to Abel Paz, and left their lands uncultivated and barren. They told the hungry peasants, "You don't want the Republic? Eat the Republic."

The C.N.T. and the anarchists supported the strikes and the seizure of land, while the socialists used the U.G.T to support government policy. The conditions were being created for a radicalization of the more revolutionary sectors. The *Treintismo* was issued only four days before the attack on the Construction Workers' Union in Barcelona, and its effectiveness was negated by new conflicts. The F.A.I. militant Garcia Oliver was able to proclaim, early in October, that the signatories to the manifesto had been overwhelmed by events. However, the manifesto did help delineate the various interpretations of the situation, all of which were within the anarchosyndicalist viewpoint, and within the general agreements adopted at the recent congress in Madrid. The *Treintismo* anticipated maximalism, which was implicit in the situation but had not yet come into the open.



The F.A.I. opposed the manifesto without discussing its pros and cons.... How untimely. Because, just as the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were gaining positions in Spain in a general offensive, their unity was broken, together with a loss of confidence that helped arm their enemies. (Letter to the author, June 25, 1975)

A collective manifesto, two months after the congress, only serves to reveal the desire of some men to be above the entire organization, an ambition that developed during the years of the dictatorship when the rank and file was practically silent. Actually, the signatories to the manifesto broke the "associative pact" and went out shooting in the street. On the other hand, Pestana's attitude was most irresponsible, since he had just been elected secretary of the National Committee. A secretary who provokes a split in the organization: this would definitely justify the anger of the membership.

The political sectors of the bourgeoisie moved quickly to take advantage of the split. They applauded the "moderates" (who, paradoxically, started their statement with a recognition of the need for social revolution) and denounced the "radicals" (who also called for revolution, only more impatiently). The situation of 1922, when the "political declaration" had been thought to presage a change of tactics by the C.N.T., was now repeated. It is not clear that the manifesto advocated the policy of class collaboration supported by the Minister of Labour, Largo Caballero, as Abel Paz states. However, it is certain that, directly or indirectly, the manifesto helped unleash an offensive by the powers that be against the more radical sector of the C.N.T.—the majority at that time—and against the F.A.I.

"The bourgeois press," Paz tells us, "especially the press of Catalonia, published the manifesto in its entirety, stressing its constructive character and taking advantage of the opportunity to characterize Garcia Oliver, Durruti, and Ascaso as bandits and scoundrels." Miguel Badia, soon to be head of the police forces of the *Generalitat* (Catalan Parliament) and worthy successor of Arlegui and Martinez Anido as persecutor of anarchosindicalism, was the first to call anarchosindicalists "bandits with union cards."

Suddenly, Paz adds, the F.A.I. became a subject of interest, not only to politicians, but to the average worker and even to housewives. Little by little, the legend grew.

Federica Montseny makes the *Treintismo* a public issue in an article in *El Luchador* (The Fighter) on September 18 of that year. Montseny declares that the manifesto was a signal for violent repression of important F.A.I. members and the start of an internal crisis within the C.N.T.

These were the results within the organization, as they affected us. We are not speaking of their effect on the authorities, on the bourgeoisie, and general public opinion. They watched and applauded the struggle that was starting in the C.N.T. between the right and the left, between those who wanted to make the C.N.T. an appendage of the *Generalitat* and the left Republicans of Catalonia, and those who represented the libertarian spirit in the Confederation. They were not the F.A.I., politicians, or trade-union office-holders; they were the "true Confederation," those who spoke at the Madrid congress, the voice of the delegates of all the districts, all the cities and towns, all the unions.

This vibrant article is the voice of an autonomous anarchist not affiliated with the F.A.I., although it identifies with the F.A.I. and defends it as a part of the C.N.T. Montseny represented the opinion of anarchosyndicalism nationwide. The above quotation foretells the vitriolic nature of the ensuing polemic between the two groups. The struggle was violent and passionate, like the struggles of the previous century between collectivism, communism, and individualism.

The manifesto itself, if read today, would not justify the tremendous effect that it had at that time. The anarchosyndicalists, however, interpreted it in a variety of ways. The promoters, Pestana and Lopez, were distrusted because of their earlier advocacy of an ambiguous "possibilism"—trying to function within the limitations and conditions of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship.

It is curious to note the name of Juan Peiro affixed to the manifesto. Peiro had become associated with Pestana by accident, after their earlier serious disagreements. Marcos Alcon, a C.N.T. and F.A.I. militant—although he was active in the F.A.I. only occasionally "when his C.N.T. responsibilities permitted"—and a secretary of the National Industrial Federation of Glass Workers of Spain, explains how Peiro became involved with the manifesto: "On the day the Manifesto of the Thirty was issued, I was on my way to work in Mataro" when he met Peiro:

Friend Peiro was a symbol for the Spanish glass workers. We had the greatest respect for each other. When we reached the factory where he worked, I asked him: "Why did you sign it?" His reply was clear: "That son of Satan [Pestana] took me for a ride." Peiro could be fooled very easily. He trusted everyone. After the doubletalker left, he came to understand the deception, and then he exploded in anger. (Letter to the author)

Marcos Alcon was the prototype anarchist who regarded himself as C.N.T. activist more than as member of the F.A.I., as Peirats found in his many interviews. As anarchists, they felt themselves in agreement

with, or even members of, the F.A.I. without actually belonging to it. This is one explanation for the myth about the F.A.I. in its positive as well as its negative sense.

The internal situation of the C.N.T. deteriorated further with uprisings at mines in Suria, Sallent, and Figols on January 20-23, 1932, in connection with a general strike. The insurrection was attributed to F.A.I. influence but it could just as well have originated with the radical sectors of anarchosyndicalism in the C.N.T. I refer to the *Nosotros* group, previously known as *Los Solidarios*.<sup>6</sup>

I have noted that the *Solidarios* group, later known as *Nosotros*, was never active in the F.A.I., preferring to participate in the conspiratorial activities of the C.N.T. together with other defense groups. In Peirats' opinion, the *Solidarios-Nosotros* group always acted independently, sometimes as a sort of super-F.A.I. Juan Garcia Oliver, a member of the group, as we will remember, showed some contempt for the F.A.I., claiming that he never was a member of its committees, a point that remains unclear.

The miners of the valley of Cardona (Barcelona) organized a meeting addressed by Perez Combina, Arturo Parera, and Buenaventura Durruti, which drew hundreds of men from all parts of the valley of Figols, Suria, and Sallent. Durruti called for revolution. There was no hope for the workers, he said, in the reforms of the bourgeoisie or the Social Democrats, who were being discredited more and more with each passing day.

Soon after this meeting, on January 19, 1932, an insurrection broke out in the valley, the miners proclaiming libertarian communism. Azana gave "fifteen minutes" to crush the movement. It lasted five days, with repercussions felt in Barcelona, Valencia, and Andalusia. The Barcelona police reacted brutally, in the style of former police chief Martinez Anido. Hundreds of militants were arrested, including the Ascaso brothers and Durruti, who were put aboard the ship *Buenos Aires* and deported.<sup>7</sup>

Abel Paz believes that a later insurrection, on February 14 in Tarrasa, was initiated by anarchist groups in the area, who declared a general strike to protest the deportation. A wave of strikes in solidarity spread throughout Spain. The Tarrasa anarchists occupied the city hall, where

<sup>6</sup> It seems that this decision was taken at a local plenum of F.A.I. groups in Barcelona. *Los Solidarios* met another group with the same name.

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that the organizational activities of the *Nosotros*, especially those of the Ascaso brothers and Durruti, were centred around the Textile Workers' Union in Barcelona. This confirms the predominant character of the group.

they raised the black and red banner and withdrew only when police reinforcements arrived from Sabadell and elsewhere. Paz believes, in spite of the defeats, that the insurrections indicated that the proletariat, or at least part of it, aspired to libertarian communism as its main goal. He quotes Salvadore de Madariaga, who supports the libertarians in his book *Spain*, denying that the movement was utopian or composed of illiterates, as some critics have claimed. Madariaga states that the libertarians were just as literate as their accusers, and, furthermore, were far more creative than their opponents. They had their own values and lived accordingly, which a good many scholars confined to the refuge of their libraries could well envy.

The crisis between the C.N.T. radicals and moderates exploded when the regional plenum in Sabadell, held at the end of April 1932 (with 200 delegates representing 250,000 members), expelled the local federations of Gerona and Lerida, which were under the control of the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc, communist dissidents.<sup>8</sup>

### The Myth of the F.A.I.

Three factions comprised the C.N.T. internal conflict: a moderate anarchosyndicalist faction with a revisionist wing that withdrew from the C.N.T. and reaffiliated at Saragossa in 1936; a radical majority anarchosyndicalist faction; and the third faction, the F.A.I. Considering that F.A.I. members were very few and that these same people were active in the unions, it is truly difficult to distinguish between the second and third factions. To observers, in fact, the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were one and the same. Thus, many anarchosyndicalists who did not belong to the F.A.I. contributed to the myth of an omnipresent,

<sup>8</sup> The local federation of Tarragona and some unions in Sabadell split off and raised anti-F.A.I. banners. The local federations of Badalona, Valls, and Calella also withdrew from the C.N.T., as well as some unions in Mataro, Igualada, and Manresa. The split also affected Valencia and Huelva. Balcels estimates that the unions that split off in Catalonia represented 26,000 workers and influenced about 35,000, which increased the ranks of the *Treintistas*. In March, the majority group, after consulting with all the regions, forced Pestana and the National Committee to resign because they had tried to impose their personal leadership over the organization. Manuel Rivas of the *Nosotros* group was appointed in his place. Juan Peiro was forced to resign as director of *Solidaridad Obrera* and was replaced by Felipe Alaiz who, according to Santillan, was upset by the developments and withdrew to his glassworkers' cooperative at Mataro. Pestana was expelled from

all-controlling F.A.I. It came to be a symbol for the radical anarcho-syndicalist sections in the C.N.T. in their fight against internal opponents, real or imagined.

As a minority organization, the F.A.I. could not possibly have had the kind of control attributed to it. Balcells points out that twenty-two delegates attended the Peninsular plenum in Madrid in late October 1933, representing 569 groups, with 4,839 members, and they received letters of affiliation from 632 groups, with 5,334 members: a total of 10,173 members—almost the same count as in 1931 and 1932, when the split took place. If we take into account that the C.N.T. membership represented at the Madrid congress in 1931 was more than half a million, this means that there were fifty C.N.T. members for each member of an F.A.I. group. The F.A.I. was strongly federalist, with its groups at the base freely associated. It could not dominate an organization like the C.N.T., which had fifty times as many members and was also opposed to hierarchy and centralism. We know that F.A.I. militants were also C.N.T. militants, and frequently they were loyal first to the C.N.T. Their influence was limited to the base of the organization through participation in the plenums of militants or union meetings.

In general, according to Santillan, F.A.I. members did not take union office—except during the fight with the *Treintistas*, when they held as many positions as they could, although they did everything possible to name militants whom they trusted. Any militant, however, would have voted the same way, whether or not he belonged to the F.A.I. Balcells explains: “After October 1931, the F.A.I. succeeded in identifying with the majority in the C.N.T., although its members were only a small minority in the large membership of the C.N.T.” Balcells was able to study the internal records of the movement and does not repeat the cheap vulgarities of other writers.

the Metal Workers' union in Barcelona in December 1932. After March 1932, the opposition unions organized the Libertarian Syndicalist Federation, which maintained a precarious equilibrium among the various tendencies, and published the periodical *Sindicalismo*. In 1933-34, it tried to establish a workers' alliance with the U.G.T. and the Workers' and Peasants' Bloc. The federation's apolitical character was reaffirmed at its regional assembly in January 1934. Pestana's move toward political syndicalism started at this point. After a series of personal consultations, he presented the statutes of the Syndicalist Party in March 1934, for which he was strongly attacked by Peiro. Most of the opposition unions rejoined the C.N.T. at the 1936 Saragossa congress. It now had 69,621 members, a considerable increase from the time of the split. A relatively small number moved toward the dissident communists and the U.G.T.

According to Jose Peirats, the F.A.I. never dominated the C.N.T., but the two established a special relationship in the work of the prisoners' aid committees, the defense committees, and the revolutionary committees. In time, the dual name C.N.T.-F.A.I. came to mean a single body for the libertarian movement and the public at large. "Without the C.N.T., the F.A.I. would not have represented much." (Letter from Juan Manuel Molina, June 28, 1975)

The myth of the F.A.I. as conqueror and ruler of the C.N.T. was created basically by the *Treintistas*. Some who, like Pestana, had used and abused their personal prerogatives in the C.N.T. accused the F.A.I. of meddling in the organization. To some extent, this was a repetition of earlier days, when the communists were accusing the anarchists of responsibility for all the ills befalling the C.N.T., especially during the dictatorship. The argument was used effectively enough, especially by the "possibilists" among the moderates, to be picked up by the bourgeoisie and used to attack the radical majority in the C.N.T.

The conflict soon took on a venomous character. Between 1931 and 1933, the *Treintistas* were accused of being traitors, and they answered with epithets that were, in turn, used by the bourgeoisie. The F.A.I. used *Tierra y Libertad*, Barcelona, 1930, and *El Luchador* of the same period to carry on their campaign against the *Treintistas*, at times going the limit and calling them traitors. "Personally, when I took charge of *Tierra y Libertad* in 1933," Santillan states, "I stopped the aggressive campaign against the so-called Thirty; I neither supported nor opposed the anger of our young people; and through Manuel Villar *Solidaridad Obrera* stopped publishing attacks against individuals." Jose Peirats, whose judgment seems to me to be always clear, had the opportunity to review the collected periodicals of the famous French anarchist Aristedes Lapeyre and make a dispassionate evaluation of those events at a distance of more than forty years. Says Peirats:

The echoes of that lamentable split can give us a false picture of reality. There was so much heat in the dispute that many of us who disagreed with the manifesto could not see the barrels of oil that the F.A.I. was spreading, greatly harming our ideas. We were never on the side of the suspicious Thirty, but neither did we support the fanaticism that the F.A.I. had raised as their banner.

## The F.A.I. and the Cycle of Insurrections

The insurrections started in 1932 for complex reasons.

The triumph of the *revolutionary wing* made a growing opposition inevitable between the republican government and the C.N.T. The first indication, after a series of confrontations such as a general strike in Barcelona in September or armed conflicts between the Civil Guard and the peasants, was the uprising of Alto Llobregat on January 18, 1932. The climate was ripe for insurrection. The desire for maximum goals (maximalism) was in the air. The attempt by the F.A.I. groups was greeted by Federica Montseny as the first act of the libertarian revolution, germinated in Spain's fields. Her commentary reflected perfectly the attitude that would predominate among the members of the Confederation for the next two years. (Elorza)

"They will die," said Montseny, "perhaps many of us will die... What does it matter! The cruel will fall, perhaps many of us will fall! What does it matter! When the earth and the spirit of man are sterile, human blood, human beings will fertilize the land and make it fruitful." ("Miserable and Heroic Peoples of Spain," *El Luchador*, February 12, 1932, quoted by Elorza.) Montseny's apocalyptic description reflects well the tension of the times.

Between 1932 and 1934, Elorza tells us, the Spanish anarchists tried to destroy the existing social order through a series of increasingly violent strikes and insurrections, which were at first spontaneous, later coordinated. Confederal publications such as *Solidaridad Obrera* and *C.N.T.* in Madrid gave a picture of latent insurrection. It was at this point that Elorza established the relationship between the C.N.T. and anarchism.

These events were precipitated by passage of the Law of Professional Associations of Employers and Workers, on April 8, 1932, which strengthened the Law of Mixed Arbitration Boards passed in May 1931, as dictated by the Socialist leader and head of the U.G.T., Largo Caballero. These laws were weighted against the C.N.T. Then, in August 1932, General Sanjurjo tried to rise against the Republic, only to be crushed by the C.N.T. in Seville. Paradoxically, in spite of the state of war between the Republican government and the C.N.T., the C.N.T. was the first to come to its defense, as it would again in July 1936.

Other factors must also be taken into consideration. Unemployment was such that groups of workers, particularly those in the construction trades, supported by their unions, would force employers to take on

additional workers. This tactic met with varying results: sometimes the employer yielded to the pressure; at other times, especially during the two "black" years (1934-1935), the workers were arrested and thrown into jail. Some were prosecuted under the Vagrants and Thieves law, which had been passed by the Republican-Socialist alliance. Some workers merely begged on the street on behalf of the unemployed.

Returning to the outbreak of January 1933, Elorza states in his *Anarchist Utopia*: "Among the preparations, denunciations, and reports in the confederal dailies, there were outraged denunciations of the forces of public order and furious criticism of the Socialist Party, all with a common theme: the imminence of the revolution." Said David Antona in an article in the Madrid *C.N.T.* on January 7, 1933, entitled "The Peasants and the C.N.T." under the pseudonym "Red Word": "Nothing will be saved. Our struggle in the country and in the cities will finish the bourgeoisie as a class. The purifying fire will cleanse the thousand-year-old carrion that sits on the towns and villages and stupefies them. The crisis of world capitalism is only one more reason for revolutionary optimism."

The events of that period look different from a distance. Santillan writes:

Those who suffered from the government's inaction saw things much differently. The passions aroused by the great demonstrations and the large number of potential fighters help explain their faith in an act of force; and the desperate rebellion of the Andalusian peasants can be understood because of the oppressive conditions and the indescribable poverty in which they lived.... If those who protested against the decisions of the impatient because of the high cost in blood and lives had good reason to do so, they also share responsibility for providing an illusion to the undecided and the fearful by their personal example. We cannot ignore this perspective.

The outbreak of January 8 was to occur in conjunction with a general strike of railroad workers called by the C. N. T. The feverish preparations and strong propaganda hit Barcelona and Catalonia. The revolution was being telephoned in advance to the authorities, according to Peirats. Then the railroad workers called off their strike and the National Committee of the C.N.T. suspended its attempt at revolution. Preparations were quite advanced, however, and the F.A.I. sponsored the movement, starting in Catalonia. The regional committee of the C.N.T. in Andalusia assumed responsibility for the movement.

In May 1936 an F.A.I. delegate offered the following explanation of these events: "We never planned this movement. We supported a



movement planned by the C.N.T. And then we saw the organ of the Confederation withdraw approval... We do not protest. We understand that workers' organizations can fall into contradiction when they become involved in the revolutionary process. And contradiction is not betrayal" (records of the C.N.T. congress, Saragossa, May 1936). The F.A.I. had proposed two essential steps to revolution: 1) creation of five or six guerrilla forces throughout the nation in cities and towns, to provide consistency and articulation of goals; and 2) an increase in union dues to support material preparations.

The central force for this revolutionary attempt was the *Nosotros* group, according to Juan Manuel Molina and Abad de Santillan. It would be more appropriate, however, to credit the anarchist sector of the C.N.T., which identified itself with the F.A.I. at times and sometimes acted as a sort of super-F.A.I. Peirats tells us that he represented the local federation of the F.A.I. in Barcelona at that time, and that Molina served as secretary of the Peninsular Committee: "When I tell you that there was another F.A.I. above the organization we represented officially, I am referring to Ascaso, Durruti, and, especially, Garcia Oliver, the real Robespierre of the Revolution" (letter from Peirats to the author). In any event, the F.A.I. assumed responsibility for an action planned and then denounced by the C.N.T. because

It was not possible to stop and go into reverse. A steady pressure to move forward came from all parts of our movement. Anything that did not reflect the revolutionary enthusiasm that had been set in motion was regarded with suspicion. You must understand what it would mean to try to call everything off when we learned that the railway workers were not going to strike.... The C.N.T. did not plan January? The F.A.I. planned it? The movement was organized by the C.N.T. The defense squads belonged to the C.N.T. They received their orders from the C.N.T. (Records of the C.N.T. Saragossa congress, May 1936)

The records are revealing about the nature of C.N.T.-F.A.I. relations. And it should be borne in mind that the secretary of the National Committee of the C.N.T. at that time, Manuel Rivas, was also a member of the F.A.I.

The January movement was thrown off guard in Barcelona by the arrest of the revolutionary committee, Garcia Oliver, Gregorio Jover, and Antonio Ortiz, while they were travelling through the workers' neighbourhoods in a friendly taxicab. Santillan says they were taken to police headquarters and locked in cells in the basement of the building because the police knew the building would explode at any moment.

The explosion did take place, but did not cause serious damage. Garcia Oliver was left for dead in his cell after being brutally tortured. The repression was very cruel in Barcelona, Levante, and especially Andalusia, with the brutal murder of unarmed men and children in the peasant village of Casas Viejas. The Republican government saw the ghost of the Black Hand rising again in Andalusia, no different from the one seen by Juan de la Cierva in the nineteenth century. The government believed that if they did not stop the social upheaval in Casas Viejas, which was led by a group of very poor peasants, it would spread in a matter of hours throughout all of Andalusia, resulting in libertarian communism.

## National Plenum of Regions

A national plenum of F.A.I. regions was held in Madrid from October 28 to 31, 1933. The following is taken from the minutes of the plenum:

The meeting opened at 4 p.m. The credentials of the delegations were reviewed. The following representatives were present: Peninsular Committee, two delegates; Catalan Region, two delegates, two hundred and six groups, a thousand four hundred members; the Centre, four delegates, thirty groups, two hundred and twenty-six members; Baleares, one delegate, ten groups, one hundred members; Aragon, Rioja and Navarre, two delegates, ninety-nine groups, six hundred members; Galicia, one delegate, sixteen groups, one hundred and fifty members; Andalusia, one delegate, one hundred and nineteen groups, a thousand and fifteen members; Portugal, one delegate, forty groups, one thousand members; Spanish-Language Anarchist Federation in France, one delegate, twenty-seven groups, two hundred and fifty members; Committee of Portuguese Exiles, Madrid, three delegates; anarchist weekly *Tierra y Libertad*, one delegate; National Defense Committee, one delegate; "Nature" Group of Pontevedra, one delegate; the Region of Asturias, Leon, and Palencia associates itself with twenty-two groups and one hundred and ninety-eight members and sends resolutions adopted by the group from Felguera and the Local Federation of Leon. There were no representatives from the regions of Levante, the north, and Canarias. Total, twenty-one delegates, 569 groups, and 4,839 members. (Minutes of the National Plenum of F.A.I. Regions, edited by the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee in Barcelona, November, 1933)

### Agenda

1. Report of the Peninsular Committee
2. Written reports from the regions:
  - a) resources on which region can rely;
  - b) general situation of the movement in each region.

3. Relationship of the F.A.I. and the C.N.T. :
  - a) the struggle between the different tendencies;
  - b) the Prisoners' Aid Committees;
  - c) Confederal (C.N.T.) Defense Committees.
4. Relationship of the libertarian youth and the F.A.I.
5. The F.A.I. and the current social situation:
  - a) how shall we act to assure the triumph of the revolution and guide it so it does not run the risk of falling into authoritarian ways;
  - b) interpretation and practice of libertarian communism in the city and the country.
- 6) Publications:
  - a) do we need a monthly internal bulletin;
  - b) need to publish *El Soldado del Pueblo* (Soldier of the People) monthly and ways to assure its economic support;
  - c) need to strengthen and increase our publications.
7. Situation of the Portuguese Anarchist Federation and its relationship within the F.A.I.
8. General questions.

### *The Plenum*

The Peninsular Committee opened the plenum with an explanation of why the meeting was called.

The officials for the session were named; the Centre served as chairman, Aragon as recording secretary.

The Centre asked if two comrades from Navalmoral de la Mata could attend for information purposes only, since they were in Madrid to participate in the C.N.T. plenum as representatives of the Centre. The delegations agreed that they should not attend this plenum because it would set a bad precedent.

The Peninsular Committee read the report that it had sent to, all the regions, and amplified it verbally.

### **Report of the Peninsular Committee to the Regional Federations**

Comrades: Almost all the members of the Peninsular Committee were arrested as a result of the revolutionary movement January 8, because they carried out their obligations as the circumstances and developments required. The secretary was among those arrested and, as a result, our regular activities were paralyzed for some time.

By agreement with the Federation of Anarchist Groups in Catalonia, we were immediately named the current Peninsular Committee.

We note that the executive responsibility for that movement belonged to the Defense Committees with the direct participation of the F.A.I. in the preparation of the January 8 movement. We note also that the movement broke down and the full responsibility, with all its consequences, fell on the C.N.T. One of our first determinations was that the committee should do everything possible to support the movement and help the C.N.T. We did this in the belief that it reflected the general opinion of the anarchists and we supported revolutionary action as always.

We have strengthened relations with the regional committees by all means available to us, carrying on normal correspondence, except for interruptions beyond the control of the committee.

We were in contact with the Union and Defense Committees during the two national strike movements to be able to oppose, without delay, any turnabouts that might be attempted. We also kept our Federations up to date on our activities, as can be confirmed by our correspondence, circulars, and manifestos.

We have always believed that the F.A.I. should be coherent, responsible, and well organized, without resorting to legalistic or authoritarian procedures. We distributed a communication to the Federations asking for precise information, and we will present the report to the plenum. We must not lose sight of the fact that the F.A.I. was, until now, a hope, and we must channel this sympathy and this popular hope. With reference to our last Peninsular Anarchist Conference, in June 1931, we understand that we are expected to prepare a plan, a programme, or a synthesis of our anarchist aspirations, relating our goals to the imperatives of this period. We will then present these clearly defined, realizable aims to the public.

The Peninsular Committee was given the responsibility of publishing *El Soldado del Pueblo*. As you know, we published it as often as funds permitted. Our movement in general continues to grow. A Federation has been set up in Baleares. Another Federation is being formed along the northern coast from Asturias to San Sebastian. Our paper has a circulation almost equal to the two dailies of the C.N.T. together. Our review has a circulation of seventeen thousand. Our organization is carrying on a variety of anarchist activities. We are establishing an archive of the movement, which was totally neglected until now.

In conclusion, comrades, we hope that the F.A.I. will come out of this plenum stronger and more vigorous than ever and that it will continue to be the guide of the proletariat and the Iberian revolution.

(Signed) For the Iberian Anarchist Federation, the Peninsular Committee.

The Report was approved after questions and discussion, and the regional committees gave their reports.

The relationship of the F.A.I. to the C.N.T. was the third item on the agenda. All the representatives agreed that they should influence the C.N.T. from within in an anarchist sense. Militants should participate in the meetings of their unions and places of work and in the groups to which they belong. The comrades in the F.A.I. groups should influence their unions.

Regarding the conflict between tendencies in the C.N.T., Aragon expressed the opinion that we should not waste too much time on the question. The Centre expressed the opinion that meetings should be given a libertarian orientation. If any union that had withdrawn from the C.N.T. requests reaffiliation, it should be evaluated in the light of those mainly responsible for the withdrawal. The proposal was adopted.

The meeting agreed, after a brief discussion, to continue the same structure on the Prisoners' Aid Committees, with representation by the C.N.T. and the F.A.I.

The meeting also agreed to continue with the same structure of representation on the C.N.T. Defense Committees.

## Second Session

The second session of the plenum opened at 10:45 p.m.

The Centre presided; recording secretary, Spanish-Language Anarchist Federation in France.

The delegation of the Anarchist Federation of the Portuguese Region was registered.

### *The F.A.I. and the Libertarian Youth*

The Centre reported, with reference to item 4 of the agenda, that their region adopted a resolution that the Libertarian Youth should be present when this question is discussed.

Aragon and Catalonia are of the same opinion, since their regions adopted similar resolutions.

The chair was instructed to invite representation of the Peninsular Committee of the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth to be present when this question was discussed.

### *The F.A.I. and the Present Situation*

The fifth item on the agenda, one of the most important subjects of the plenum, was placed on the table for discussion. Catalonia stated that its position was in agreement with the Peninsular Committee. Because of this agreement, it proceeded to read the following pronouncement, which had been approved by the regional committee of Catalonia:

#### *Statement of the Fifth Item of the Agenda*

**Pre-Revolution.** Revolutionary tensions are increasing in the Peninsula.

The political parties of Spain are discredited and in full disarray. The constant action of militant anarchism has resulted in the separation of the masses from these parties and their moving toward our revolutionary organizations.

As a result of this failure of political and democratic institutions, the struggle between fascism and the social revolution is entering the decisive stage.

This requires us to accelerate and participate in the revolution as its prime movers.

We understand that we must weaken the cement that holds the capitalist economy together and to hold back its development until it is in ruins.

We also understand that revolutionary action has the highest priority, and we can help give it its best guidance with our nationwide written and oral propaganda, providing the slogans and orientation that will guide the people in a coherent path, without confusion or diversions.

**Revolution:** Ours is a social revolution, by all and for all. This means that it must be in response to the spontaneous desires of the people stimulated by the propaganda and agitation of the anarchists. History shows us that as these popular movements grow they achieve concrete progress.

We anarchists must bear this in mind: while we prepare our effective material, organize our groups, and plant the seeds of our ideals we must know how to interpret and then build on the psychological state of mind of the popular masses so that the movements can be transformed into a purely libertarian movement or its equivalent, a true social revolution.

We can accomplish this by being in the vanguard of all these movements and influencing the workers with our classic demands to destroy all political power, abolish private property, mutual aid, and free agreement.

**Exceptional circumstances:** Today, more than ever, the world is on top of a volcano, because capitalism is suffering a loss of equilibrium in the economic, as well as the political, sphere; unexpected social crises arise around us such as the repression of workers, widespread unemployment, the threat of fascism, capitalist war, etc. The plenum therefore declares:

The anarchist groups of the F. A. I. will dedicate their greatest efforts to work for the destruction of capitalism, and it will oppose every fascist attack by any political party with permanent revolution. The groups will carry on the fight against national and international fascism in the insane desire of the parties to respond to capitalism's crises. Every possible reactionary move must be countered by us with social revolution.

After the reading of the report from Catalonia, a debate took place that underscored the strategy of the F.A.I. to be a wearing down of the capitalist system, beginning with sabotage of the economy. It also called for a campaign to abstain from voting in the upcoming elections in November. Catalonia stated: "We cannot be silent at this time. We must call for a maximum abstention as a matter of principle. In the event of a triumph of reaction, we must call for our revolution the day after the election." Aragon criticized the confederal daily in Madrid, *C.N.T.*, for its vacillating policy. The Peninsular Committee declared, during the course of the debate, "abstention from voting will not be an accident but a question of principle. If the campaign succeeds, the F. A. I. will have to launch the battle."

The Anarchist Federation of the Portuguese region, whose representatives had arrived at the plenum in time for the second session, declared that the revolution in Portugal would follow the same course as that in Spain. After a full discussion, the report of the Catalan region was accepted unanimously.

The plenum then approved the preparation of a questionnaire as the basis for a correct definition of libertarian communism. The questionnaire would cover the following points:

At this revolutionary time in the peninsula (Spain and Portugal), we anarchists must present the constructive aspect of our anarchist ideas to the people clearly and concretely.

The peninsular plenum of the F.A.I. therefore names a commission of four of the most competent comrades in the Iberian anarchist movement.

They will update the constructive aspects of anarchist theory to make it applicable to modern times and their study will cover the following subjects:

- 1) contradictions and harmful effects of the capitalist system;
- 2) basic principles of anarchist ideas;
- 3) significance of libertarian communism:
  - a) how production, distribution, and consumption will be carried on, planned to the last detail;
  - b) its development in the city and the country in accord with the characteristics of each community (city, town, or village);
- 4) how can the normal development of a libertarian society be assured, without the introduction of authoritarian practices:
  - a) internal and external defense of the revolution,
  - b) international relations.

The study prepared by the commission will be submitted in a referendum to all the groups in the peninsula and, after amendments and changes have been made, it will be printed and distributed widely in all the cities and towns in Iberia so that they will know and understand us and will be able to discuss the possibilities of achieving our goals.

The comrades named for this task were E. Carbo, Isaac Puente, Noja Ruiz, and Jose Maria Martinez.

The sixth item on the agenda, "F.A.I. Publications," was then taken up. Publication of a monthly bulletin was approved. They agreed to support *El Soldado del Pueblo* (Soldier of the People), anti-militarist organ of the F.A.I., with voluntary monthly contributions raised by the circulation of subscription lists by the regional committees. Catalonia submitted the proposal. It was also agreed that each regional committee should conduct active propaganda in the barracks, publishing anti-militarist flyers, all with the same name, *El Soldado del Pueblo*.

The *Tierra y Libertad* (Land and Liberty) delegation then presented a report on the development of the anarchist press.

A question was raised regarding the situation of *El Libertario*, an anarchist periodical in Madrid. It had ceased publication for economic and other reasons. *Tierra y Libertad* expressed the opinion that "the editors did not know how to interpret the sentiments of its readers."

The plenum went on record that an anarchist periodical was needed in Madrid. After full discussion, it was agreed that a new specific organ be published in Madrid and that it be called *F.A.I.*

The question of a new location for the Peninsular Committee was the next item on the agenda. After learning that the National Committee of the C.N.T. was to be located in Saragossa, it was agreed that the Peninsular Committee would also be located there.



The National Defense Committee presented its report at the start of the fifth session and raised a question: "Can the F.A.I. be a force at the service of the union organization?"

The Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. stated that the F.A.I. cannot be subordinate to the decisions of the C.N.T. It declared that it must be equal in arriving at decisions in the Defense Committees. It declared that it was opposed to giving executive powers to the committees, which must follow the decisions of the National Committee of the C.N.T. and the Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. Any decision for any type of revolutionary action must be made by the three organizations.

Aragon pointed out that the personality of the F.A.I. was reduced in the Defense Committee and that C.N.T. actions harmful to the F.A.I. should be corrected. The plenum finally agreed, at the request of Catalonia, that the delegates who attend the National C.N.T. Plenum of Regions request an amendment of the resolutions concerning the structure of the Defense Committees.

The F.A.I. plenum ended at three o'clock in the morning on October 31, 1933. The meeting reaffirmed the distinct personalities of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. However, it cannot be denied that the militants of the F.A.I. were also the militants in the C.N.T., and that the former were the soldiers at the service of the latter, their most devoted and reliable defender.

### *The Movement of December 1933*

We cannot discuss in detail the unhappy story that binds the January and December 1933 movements, which are important milestones in the C.N.T. and F.A.I. cycle of insurrections. Of particular importance, however, is the general strike called by the C.N.T. on May 7, 1933. I quote an article which appeared in *La Tierra* the following day:

Whether or not the government and the leaders of the dishonest and disloyal unions recognize it, the C.N.T. has given Spain an indication of its great power. It should be enough to compel the authorities to initiate a change of policy and look for the roots of the social unease that Spain is experiencing...

But the authorities continued to be obsessed with the idea of forcing the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. to yield.

Repressive action became more acute against the workers and peasants who would not resign themselves to waiting passively. The Civil Guards, the

Assault Guards, the Security Forces, the courts, all had full authority and were directed to move against the dissidents. There were several thousand trade-union prisoners. It was not surprising, therefore, that when general elections were called for November 1933 the decision to abstain from voting was unanimous." (Santillan)

The new rightist government started repressive actions. A national plenum, held after the election, resolved to support a revolutionary movement if such a movement was started by any of the regions. No region started an action, however, so another plenum was called to name a national Revolutionary Committee with the authority to decide the time and place of an outbreak. The members of this body were Buenaventura Durruti, Isaac Puente, Cipriano Mera, who was also a member of the F.A.I. in Madrid, and some comrades from the Aragon region, including Joaquin Ascaso. December was therefore a continuation of January. Although the revolutionary action was carried out under the joint banner of C.N.T.-F.A.I., it was a C.N.T. responsibility. The Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. designated Eusebio Carbo as a member of the Revolutionary Committee of Saragossa, but he refused without offering a convincing reason. Molina (who had just rejoined the peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. after a year in jail and having taken charge of *Tierra y Libertad* because its editor, Manuel Medina Gonzalez, had just been arrested) stated that

Isaac Puente was named to the Revolutionary Committee of Saragossa. I wrote to him in the name of the Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. In spite of his obligations as a doctor, he gave up everything and with nothing more than my letter he joined the committee in Saragossa. A wonderful example of responsibility, which resulted in his assassination at the start of the war. (Santillan)

The Revolutionary Committee was supported almost unanimously in all regions in December 1933. According to a report to the Saragossa congress of May 1936 by the delegate from the Saragossa Construction Workers' Union and a member of the C.N.T. National Committee:

December was a continuation of January 1933. Both events demonstrated that the workers wanted a transformation of society. December took place because it was expected to lead to the triumph of the Spanish revolution. Perhaps the apathy was due to the fact that everyone thought the moment was ripe for the outbreak of the revolution. (Minutes of the C.N.T. Saragossa congress, May 1936)

To sum up, the movement had an impact in almost all corners of Spain: in Catalonia, Rioja, Asturias, and especially in Aragon, Rioja, and Navarre. Many towns were controlled by the peasants, and their economic structure was transformed according to the ideas of libertarian communism. Stated the Minister of War on December 13, after spending three days and nights on the telephone: "The movement was hard and intense. It made me stop and reflect. It is hard to understand the number of destructive elements which had been brought together, the number of men mobilized without the assistance or collaboration of certain sectors organized for violence." (Santillan)

As might be expected, the members of the Revolutionary Committee were among the hundreds arrested, and they were mistreated ferociously. Isaac Puente, a theoretician on libertarian communism, remembers those days, during which rain, sleet, and snow added to their difficulties: "The suffering people who were subdued by hereditary fear and a conformist education, were also carried away by the revolutionary enthusiasm of the 'Leaders' who spoke with faith and eagerness of their goal to transform society." Unfortunately, their support was not great enough, and no progress could be made after the first day. Galo Diez, who represented the fishing industry of Pasajes in San Sebastian at the 1936 Saragossa congress, attacked the Blanquism of the revolutionary attempts of January and December from the viewpoint of the *Treintistas*: "We must not forget that the proletariat had lived through seven years of dictatorship. They had to experience their illusions about parliamentary democracy before joining the ranks of the revolution." (Records of the Saragossa congress, May 1936)

Garcia Oliver of the *Nosotros* group and the Textile Workers' Union of Barcelona delegate to Saragossa, saw the cycle of insurrections from the viewpoint of radical anarchosyndicalism. For him, the events of January and December 1933 had cleared away much of the brush obstructing the road.

The first of these movements completely pulverized the Left after the crime of Casas Viejas. It drew the masses, and socialism itself, toward revolution. It cleared everything away. It stripped away political illusions. It is true that we failed in both attempts. But the two defeats showed for the first time that the C.N.T. could undertake ambitious national struggles. Until then the C.N.T. was primarily engaged in union struggles against employers and was not known outside Spain. But now we are known in all countries; we represent the hope of the world for a libertarian communist society. We have become a symbol for the working class. (Records of the Saragossa congress, May 1936)

## Revolutionary Strategy and Theory

Speculation about strategy abounded during this period of insurrections, as did theories about the goal of libertarian communism. First, I shall review the question of revolutionary strategy.

Revolutionary strategy was of particular interest to the radical wing of anarchosyndicalism, which was taken for F.A.I.ism in some but not all cases. In fact, the C.N.T. as a whole had become so radicalized that the ties between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were much stronger, although each retained its separate autonomy.

The *Nosotros* group is representative of this element of the movement, although there were many similar groups. I single out the *Nosotros* because of the outstanding characteristics of some of their members and their influence among the masses.

Three strong personalities stood out among the *Nosotros*, different but complementary. They were Garcia Oliver, Buenaventura Durruti, and Francisco Ascaso, and according to Abel Paz, Durruti's biographer, they maintained the cohesion and equilibrium of the group. Paz tells us that "the three of them had learned two of Bakunin's basic concepts: absolute confidence in the creative capacities of the working class and the need for a revolutionary organization."

Francisco Ascaso, who was killed in the attack on the Atarazanas barracks in Barcelona in July 1936, was regarded in general as a man of action, but he was also a very good strategist. In an article aimed at "theoreticians," he states that although the Spanish libertarian movement lacked the brilliant theoreticians of other countries, they led in richness of perception and social intuition. Ascaso never accepted the idea that intellectual progress follows from the accumulation of a great number of theoretical formulations or philosophical conceptions not based on actual experience. "The most beautiful theories have no value if they are not rooted in the experience of living and do not offer innovations and improvements to it. This is what we are working for and this is why we expect so much from our movement." Ascaso goes on to say that he does not suggest that intellectual mediocrity is an advantage; quite the contrary. He says that in the beginning, anarchism was the ideal of only a few intellectual spirits, but that the time for theorizing has passed, and that physical energy for the task ahead is as important, if not more so, as cerebral energy. Ascaso concludes:

We must increase as much as possible our understanding of our actions, but not with dry, dull dogma which can destroy the great constructive work of our comrades in the unending struggle between the rulers and the oppressed.

Our people are forging ahead. Our steady progress will overcome. Don't stop, even to study the most beautiful theories. (*La Voz Confederal*—The Confederal Voice (C.N.T.)—one of only two underground organs at that time, with *F.A.I.*, quoted by Abel Paz)

Ascaso interprets the Proudhonian concept that thought is born in action and must return to action or become sterile. To sum up, this militant conception of revolution was supported by the *Nosotros* group and influenced the cycle of C.N.T. insurrections.

Durruti also had a clairvoyant talent for strategy. While in prison following the failure of January 1933, says Paz, Durruti wrote his only known article, declaring that the current situation was pre-revolutionary, that the bourgeoisie must not be permitted to dominate and strengthen the State, and that the State must be prevented from absorbing the unions.

The revolutionary attempt of January 8 should be seen from this perspective. We never thought that the revolution would be a seizure of power by a minority that would impose its will on the people. Our revolutionary conscience opposes such a tactic. We want a revolution made by and for the people. No revolution is possible without this condition. Otherwise, it would be only a seizure of the state, a *coup d'état*. We who come from the factory, the mine, and the farm, want a revolution that changes society. We want nothing to do with Blanquism or Trotskyism. We understand that we must always be prepared for the revolution. No one knows when it will break out.

The January action was defended by the unions, but was criticized by the C.N.T. bourgeoisie and moderates, who were trying to provoke a split between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. But the symbiosis had functioned in both favourable and unfavourable conditions. As Garcia Oliver stated at the Saragossa congress, even resolutions adopted by a majority in the C.N.T., not by consensus, were accepted as valid by both organizations.

Ascaso touched on some of these questions in March 1933 in an article titled "Union Independence?" He said that they were trying to eliminate the libertarian communist idea in the C.N.T., under the pretext of union independence, and make it a neutral, amorphous organization, and that the fable of an F.A.I. dictatorship over the C.N.T. was invented for this purpose. Ascaso added, "Not one militant intervenes in union questions as a representative of the F.A.I. I work, I am exploited, I pay my dues to the workers' union. When I participate in union meetings, I do so as one who is exploited, with the rights granted

to me by my union card, as to all other militants, whether or not they belong to the F.A.I.” (*Solidaridad Obrera*, March 19, 1933)

However, there was no unanimity in the *Nosotros* group for the first time at the C.N.T. regional plenum of Catalonia. In view of the circumstances at the time, all but Durruti and Ascaso believed that any armed insurrection would be crushed. The C.N.T. was exhausted, they said. Garcia Oliver made the point that a paramilitary organization was needed to organize such a movement. Durruti argued that the situation was better than it had been the previous January—that if the socialists were defeated in the November election, this could enlarge the popular base for a revolutionary attempt, whereas the January movement was exclusively anarchosyndicalist. Since there seemed to be no alternative course available, the Catalan regional plenum and the C.N.T. national plenum adopted this position. In the opinion of Abel Paz, it was one of the rashest decisions ever taken by the C.N.T.

The F.A.I. held a mass meeting on November 16, 1933, when the election campaign was over, at the Palace of Decorative Arts in Barcelona. The French militant Sebastien Faure, Vicente Perez Combina, Durruti, and Ascaso addressed the meeting, which was concluded by Durruti as follows:

Workers, our troubles are coming. The F.A.I. advises the workers of the C.N.T. to be prepared for any eventuality. You control the factories and the places of work. Remain with them. Do not abandon them. Let the councils of workers and technicians start to operate the factories. They will be the basic organizations of the new social and libertarian economy. The anarchists will fulfill their duty, as always, by being the first in combat. The occupation of the factories in Italy should be a lesson for us. The occupations must move ahead because every insurrection must be on the offensive. A defensive posture means the failure of every insurrection. The occupation of the factories without coordination with forces outside is doomed to failure in isolation. The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. Long live the social revolution. (*Solidaridad Obrera*, November 17, 1933, quoted by Abel Paz)

It is known that the no-vote, abstentionist campaign of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. resulted in the victory of the Spanish right wing, and repressive action against the socialists and republicans (the “two black years”). Constitutional guarantees were suspended practically all the

time. Rodolfo Llopis wrote at that time (*October 34*, page 33, Madrid, 1935, quoted by Abel Paz):

The government granted amnesty to the enemies of the Republic. The royalist generals were restored to their positions of command, and priests obtained their pensions. Relations with the Vatican were restored, religious orders were authorized to resume teaching, all the social laws of the Republic were annulled, Republican and socialist municipalities were deprived of funds and turned over to the enemies of the regime. Workers' organizations were persecuted constantly, their headquarters closed. At the same time, fascist groups organized and armed themselves under the benevolent eye of the authorities.

It was not without a certain bitter complacency that the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists now listened to the socialist lamentations. The Law of Public Order, the Law of Defense of the Republic, and the Law Against Vagrants and Thieves were applied with equal vigour against both movements. The repressive legal instruments created during the republican-socialist regime were now turned against them. That was when Largo Caballero began to speak a revolutionary language and to speak of a workers' alliance.

The anarchosyndicalists and the F. A. I. believed that the abstention from voting helped clarify positions on the right as well as on the left, which Durruti thought could only help the working class, since the socialist leaders gave up power only when they were driven out by the people. Durruti did not reject the idea of the workers' alliance, but amended it as follows:

No political party, however socialist it may be, can belong to the workers' alliance. It must be built at the base, in the shops where the workers carry on their struggle. Their representative organizations must be workers' committees acting in the shops, the factories, the mines, and the municipalities. We must reject a pact at the national level, between national committees, in favour of an alliance forged at the base by the workers themselves. Then, and only then, will the revolutionary initiative be aroused and developed. (Letter from Durruti to Liberto Calleja, quoted by Abel Paz)

The C.N.T. held two national plenums in 1934, in February and in June. They made concrete proposals to the U.G.T. at the first, but the U.G.T. did not respond.

I refer briefly here to the October revolution, in which the F.A.I. and the C.N.T. played a curious role. They fully supported the movement in Asturias, but supported it only sporadically in the rest of Spain. The

situation was especially difficult in Catalonia. The Workers' Alliance, supported by the unions in the C.N.T. opposition, the U.G.T., and the communist groups, declared a general strike. Luis Companys, president of the Catalan Parliament, proclaimed the Catalan State within the Spanish Federal Republic on October 5. But at the same time, militants of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were arrested, among them Durruti. *Solidaridad Obrera* was censored. The Catalan libertarians understood that the Catalan nationalists had two objectives in mind: to oppose the central government and to destroy the C.N.T. Jose Dencas, Counsellor of Defense, issued a strict order: "Watch out for the F.A.I."

Juan Manuel Molina, secretary of the Peninsular Committee at that time, underscored the paradoxical situation in which the anarchosyndicalists and F.A.I. members found themselves. Luis Companys broadcast a message on October 5 to all "citizens regardless of ideology." However, many anarchosyndicalist militants were held by his deputy, Dencas, in the underground cells of police headquarters. When the attempt in Catalonia failed, it started on a much more serious basis in Asturias. Molina stated that although the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. had no part in the strike, committees of both organizations remained in permanent session. Their passive role was maintained at these sessions, he said, but not without committing one of the most serious and incomprehensible errors in the history of the C.N.T. Certain organizations in the C.N.T. agreed to return to work.

A spokesman for the organization approved the action. A meeting was then held a few days later, at Las Planas, and the action of the regional committee was condemned. The committee, with Ascaso at its head, was forced to resign. This was one of those rare occasions when Ascaso committed a grave error. (Letter from J.M. Molina to Juan Ferrer, sent to the author).

This historic period ran to the end of 1935 under the governments of Lerroux, Samper, and Lerroux again. At that time, Abel Paz tells us, the worker was the anvil to be struck, but he resisted with patience and determination: "The unions were patiently rebuilt, assistance to prisoners and the persecuted was organized, aid was given to homes where hunger and misery had taken over. Government terrorism was denounced to the world in small underground publications."

The Barcelona group Nervio (Nerves) was appointed Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. in 1935. This group had been formed in 1933 when Santillan arrived in Spain and included, in addition to Santillan, Pedro Herrera, Ildefonso Gonzalez, Germinal de Souza, and Fidel Miro, among others. Santillan was named secretary of the Peninsular Committee.



The group gave new character to *Tierra y Libertad*, which soon came to support the questions of doctrine in *Tiempos Nuevos*. *Tierra y Libertad* also undertook large-scale editing of books and pamphlets.

The peninsular organization, which was located in Catalonia, had a delegate in the local federation of groups, and another in the regional committee. In this way it was able to have accurate information about the organization generally. A journalist, Jacinto Toriño, worked for *Tierra y Libertad* at that time, but he was not trusted completely. Santillan states that he helped persuade Juan Manuel Molina to undertake the administration of *Tierra y Libertad*, and thanks to him there was a steady increase in circulation, improved accounts, and an increase in editorial activity. (Letter from Santillan to the author)

The theoreticians of libertarian communism and socialism lined up with Santillan, like-minded F.A.I. members, and independent anarchists. In addition, there were the militants of the *Nosotros* group, who were the strategists of the revolution. The time had come to reflect on the events of October 1934 and to draw the appropriate lessons. From his prison cell in Valencia, Durruti made a serious analysis of the situation and responded to those who did not share his views: "We must not waste our gunpowder. We must build a solid revolutionary organization and save our combat weapons. Our militant groups, who are still free, must not expose themselves or weaken the movement by organizing useless strikes." Durruti was released from prison just as a local plenum of anarchist groups was taking place in Barcelona. Again, he insisted that the comrades must not provoke useless conflicts, that fascism was in the atmosphere throughout Europe and the anarchists would need all their strength. If at such a critical moment, asked Durruti, all the militants were in prison and their arms stores were empty could they fight an enemy who was well armed and supported by the State? A defeat under such conditions could not be compared to the experiences of January and December 1933. The future of the revolution is at issue, said Durruti, and it is better to hold back as much as possible for the final test instead of rising to secondary challenges. (José Peirats, who attended the local plenum, in a report to Abel Paz)

Abel Paz insists that Durruti was not misled by his revolutionary instinct because there were two conspiracies ready to explode. The plenum was held in November 1935, by which time preparations for the military uprising seven months later had already taken shape. At the same time, opposition politicians "were preparing to strangle the workers' revolution with the instrument of the Popular Front." It was clear that revolutionary radicalism had cooled for Durruti and his *Nosotros*

comrades and others who represented the peak of the F.A.I. and anarchosyndicalism. Although they had not given up the idea of revolution, they were now more realistic in their thinking.

The parliamentary election of February 1936 offers another indication of the thinking of these militants. At their plenum that month, the C.N.T. proposed the establishment of a workers' alliance with the U.G.T. on a revolutionary basis and ratified their standard position of abstaining from voting. There was a difference this time, however, in their call for abstention: they left the decision to vote or to abstain to the conscience of each member. This created an atmosphere of uncertainty and indecision. Some supported radical abstention as in the past, believing that a victory for Gil Robles would force the socialists to become more radical and accelerate the revolutionary process. Others believed that abstention would make a revolutionary alliance impossible and that the chance for a successful revolution would be lost.

The initiative to shade the anarchosyndicalist and anarchist position on the question of voting arose in the Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. According to Santillan, "They were still able to act with the greatest secrecy and could undertake the most dangerous offensives. For tactical reasons they did not say that we must vote but neither did they call for a boycott of the elections; and their most popular papers, *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Tierra y Libertad*, maintained this ambivalent position."

The regional committee of Catalonia called a meeting of militants responsible for propaganda in the region—militants of the F.A.I., the C.N.T., and independent anarchists: Buenaventura Durruti, Francisco Ascaso, Federica Montseny, Arturo Parera, Manuel Villar, Francisco Isgleas, and Abad de Santillan. Their task was to develop a line of propaganda to be used in public meetings and demonstrations. Durruti and Ascaso again offered a subtle variation of the anarchist position, which was also a programme of revolutionary action. Durruti stated:

The left bloc declares that if the right wins, they will proceed to launch the revolution; the right replies that if the left wins, they will start a civil war. We therefore find ourselves on the eve of revolution or civil war. We must explain this clearly to the workers and make them understand that the vote will not solve anything. The worker who casts a vote and then stays home is a counter-revolutionary. And the same is true for the worker who does not vote. This question can only be resolved in the street with arms in hand.

Oliver added: "The Marxists in the U.G.T. and the anarchists in the C.N.T. —both organizations are united in the struggle against capital."

A manifesto of the National Committee of the C.N.T. issued in Saragossa on February 14, 1936, warned that the rightists were "preparing a military uprising."

Morocco is the focal point and centre of the plot. The insurrection depends on the results of the election. Their plan will be put into action if the left wins the election. We who do not uphold the Republic but who oppose fascism tirelessly will put all of our resources, our strength, into the fight to defeat the executioners of the Spanish proletariat. ... Until parliament resumes the threat hangs over us—militants in every locality should remain in frequent contact with their regular organizations and should keep in contact with their confederal committees who will inform them of all developments and undertake coordinated activity.

The manifesto concluded: "Once more, eyes alert, comrades! It is better to act with courage, even if mistaken, than to be negligent!"

There is no doubt that the anarchist and anarchosyndicalist groups influenced the C.N.T. This was not based on any type of administrative power, according to Abel Paz, but on daily contact with the working masses. Paz offers the legendary *Nosotros* as an example. None of the members of this group, with the exception of Francisco Ascaso, held positions on C.N.T. committees. They limited their activities to specific tasks such as working with revolutionary committees or on propaganda. In general, these groups always carried on their activities at the base. Durruti stated:

No anarchist on the union committees, only at the base. In a conflict with the employer the militant may be compelled to make a compromise in order to reach an agreement. Such activities and contacts can push a militant toward becoming a bureaucrat. We do not want to run this risk. Working from the base we are able to watch out for the various dangers that can affect an organization like ours. No militant should remain on a committee longer than for the task for which he was appointed. No permanent appointments, no indispensable leaders. (Liberto Callejas recalls to Abel Paz)

There were strong disagreements among the anarchists from time to time. Durruti and Ascaso disagreed on the subject of the revolution at the 1936 Saragossa congress; it was not a question of theory, but rather of strategy. Garcia Oliver supported the idea of a paramilitary organization as the only way to stand up to counter-revolutionary attacks, which

gave him the label of anarcho-bolshevik and caused problems for him in the F.A.I. He was called upon to respond to these charges at times and always denied them. (Juan Garcia Oliver, letter to the author dated June 27, 1974)

Durruti, on the other hand, could not support such a position. He agreed that Garcia Oliver's position on the military was probably sounder than his own in favour of guerrillas, but he maintained that a paramilitary approach would impose its authority over the masses in the name of efficiency and thus would destroy the revolution, as the bolsheviks had strangled the Russian revolution. This particular debate was conducted in the Textile Workers' Union where both were active, the union members supporting Garcia Oliver.

### The Problem of Libertarian Communism

The national plenum of the F.A.I., held in October 1933, agreed to draw up a report on libertarian communism, to be done by comrades named at the plenum subject to approval by referendum of F.A.I. regional groups. The report was never written.<sup>9</sup> The atmosphere warned of grave and foreboding developments, and men of action concerned themselves more with revolutionary strategy than with the goals for which they were fighting. A period of widespread persecution, especially after the defeat of the revolution in Asturias, disrupted the F.A.I. and the C. N. T. to a large extent. Once more, they were forced into a period of conspiracy and struggle, which was reflected in the regional plenum of the F.A.I. in February 1936, with strategy having priority over

<sup>9</sup> The report was to cover the following points: 1) the contradictions and dismal effects of the capitalist system; 2) the principles on which anarchist ideas are based; 3) the significance of libertarian communism: a) how production, distribution, and consumption will be carried out to the smallest details, b) its urban and rural development according to the characteristics of each town; 4) how can the normal development of the libertarian society be assured without falling into authoritarian practices: a) internal and external defense of the revolution, b) international relations. The report was to be submitted to all the groups in the peninsula. After sufficient opportunity for amendments and a vote of approval, it was to be printed and distributed widely to every community in Iberia so that the goals became known, understood, and discussed. (Plenum of the F. A. I. delegations of Aragon, the Centre, Andalusia, and the Peninsular Committee, Madrid, October 29, 1933, reported in *Tierra y Libertad*, June 13, 1934.)

theory. This did not prevent a very lively debate on theoretical problems, however, which continued up to the outbreak of the Civil War.

The theoreticians on libertarian communism were divided, especially during the time of the republic, into supporters and opponents, with no room for intermediate positions.

It is not possible to make clearcut classifications, placing radical anarchists in the anti-programme group and moderates with supporters of the organization programme, because there were anarchist positions in favour of and opposed to programmes, and positions in between. Certain sectors close to individualist anarchism defined libertarian communism fundamentally from an anti-programme point of view. This was the attitude at first of the *Revista Blanca* group—Federico Urales, Federica Montseny, Germinal Esgleas, and Diego Abad de Santillan. During the dictatorship, Santillan had favoured a spontaneous anarchism “which dug the channels of the revolution.” During the latter half of 1931, he affirmed his faith in libertarian communism supported by a profound historic sense of the Spanish people, that Spain had a superior revolutionary base, the rural village, “an almost biological expression of the free commune.” Since the greater part of the Spanish population lived in small communities, reorganization of Spanish society on a libertarian basis was the obvious way to go. “Their integration with the revolution would follow automatically the destruction of state centralism from which the municipalities gain nothing but burdens... the destruction of statism would mean their liberation.”

Federica Montseny reflects Stirner’s thinking, ethics, and inspiration in her definition of anarchism in *La Revista Blanca*, No. 194, August 1931: “Anarchism is an ideal without boundaries. It cannot be enclosed within the confines of a programme.” She addresses mankind: “You are free. As a human being no one has a right to put a hand on you. You are your own lord and master. Join freely with your equals to do those things that you cannot accomplish alone; organize your life freely and reject gods and masters, domination and privilege, which are created and maintained by the more powerful.”

In a 1933 pamphlet, Federico Urales develops an idea he had advocated for a number of years—strengthening the autonomy of the individual and the municipality in order to guarantee the freedom of both. Urales says that man is freer the less he needs other people, and that the same is true for municipalities. “Federations and pacts between municipalities and regions are useful for common needs, but municipalities and individuals are better off if they can take care of their own needs, and even be in a position to help others.” Such economic autonomy he sees

as consistent with technical progress to the point that it would soon replace all human physical labour. Urales defends the need to simplify life and to oppose new types of power, such as syndicalism and anarchosyndicalism, at the centre of a revolution.

Power does not disappear in syndicalism; the functionary who leads, distributes, administers, does not disappear in the unions. Instead of power coming from an election or by seizure, like political power, this power comes from an Industrial Committee, or the Executive Committee of all Industries. The principal cause of all slavery does not disappear. (Federico Urales, *Syndicalism, Anarcho-syndicalism and Anarchism*)

Urales seems to be confusing political or economic authority with technical authority or competence, which is limited and specialized and does not affect the entire community or enterprise. He emphasizes these principles in another pamphlet around the same time: "Anarchist communism says to the people, 'Regard those who tell you that you need leaders, administrators as your enemies and the enemies of the revolution.'" Urales considers proclamation of the free municipality as a solid guarantee of liberty. He dismisses bureaucrats and theoreticians from his ideal society, and assigns administrative functions to those without jobs.

Among the many manifestations of anarchism without a programme at that time are the writings of Gonzalo Vidal, Juan Gallego Crespo and Germinal Esgleas. Esgleas wrote in *La Revista Blanca* in July 1934: "The anarchist ideal cannot be limited... To reduce anarchism to a more or less synthetic, schematic programme is to reduce it to mere phrases, an absolutely negative work." (A few years later, Esgleas wrote a pamphlet, *Revolutionary Syndicalism*, in which he moves toward "constructive" anarchism.)

There is a series of intermediate positions between anarchism with and without a programme. Outstanding among these are the libertarian communist conception of Isaac Puente and the organ of the F.A.I., *Tierra y Libertad*, in 1932 and 1933. They spoke of creativity and spontaneity, of simplifying life in the coming revolution.

We are going to simplify it, suppressing and eliminating useless social elements and factors that today complicate and make normal development more difficult. The towns that have proclaimed libertarian communism have given us the standard: equality of rights and duties, equitable distribution of wealth, the right to enjoy the fruits of one's labour; the duty to contribute to the community and permit distribution to all; everything regulated and

administered by control and statistical commissions, without arbitrary authority, substituting government of men by the administration of things. (*Tierra y Libertad*, No. 137, October 13, 1933)

*Solidaridad Obrera*, the C.N.T. organ edited by anarchists, supported a constructive thesis of libertarian communism during that period—that libertarian communism must be explained; it is not enough to speak of justice; one must discuss how to achieve it. One writer, "Bilbilis," suggests special meetings for profound study of the structures of libertarian communism (*Solidaridad Obrera*, February 12, 1932). Isaac Puente\* responds (February 21) with five observations on the need for a clear idea of what libertarian communism must be. Puente points out: "The objective of the revolution is to share the social wealth and the fruit of production while reducing authority to a minimum and moving closer to individual liberty." Although much more structured than Urales', Puente's conception of libertarian communism offers ample field for spontaneity. The theoretician of libertarian communism refuses to outline a complete plan for the future, not because of inability but because he thinks that actual practice would be superior to theory. Here we find echoes of Proudhon, the French socialist, who affirms that the idea comes from action and must return to action or become sterile.

The theme is developed further in a 1932 pamphlet by Isaac Puente entitled *Libertarian Communism: Its Possibilities for Realization in Spain*. Puente, given his training as a doctor, applies biological criteria to society derived from science: the normal functioning of the whole body is possible only if its parts are functioning well. Puente establishes a series of substantial differences between the political organization of capitalism and the economic organization of libertarian communism. "Hierarchy and power are concentrated at the summit in the political regime," he states, "and disappear at the base. In the economic regime, sovereignty lies at the base and diminishes as it rises to the top." There is, in effect, a complete subversion of values. Traditional power becomes the administration of things. This concept of administration would extend to the free commune, where the people live, as the general centre where citizens come together. The municipality "is the assembly of workers in a small locality, a town or village, with sovereignty over all matters in that locality... The economy is based on agreement among

\* Isaac Puente, one of the most famous Spanish theoreticians of libertarian communism and a doctor in the town of Maestu, was shot in the nationalist zone a few days after the military uprising—*transl. note*

the various localities in the region.” He accepts the idea of a union to coordinate production locally and a national industrial federation to effect coordination nationally, but the basic organizational nucleus is the municipality, with no structure above it except what may be needed to perform functions beyond the capacity of the local community. Puente spells this out: “The congress is the only body to interpret the national will and exercise the sovereignty conferred upon it temporarily or by the vote of the delegates.”

This model would serve as a definition of libertarian communism by the C.N.T. congress of 1936. However, the municipality would not be basically an economic entity, but a total body where all economic productive activities would come together, as well as general human and political relations, comprising all aspects of society.

Puente defined his conception of libertarian communism further in a later pamphlet. The local federation of unions would be the new commune. These would be united at the regional and national level with regional and national confederations. The national federations of industry in the confederation would coordinate economic activity at the national level without the need for a supreme executive organ. (Isaac Puente, *Goal of the C.N.T. : Libertarian Communism*, published by *Tierra y Libertad*, Barcelona, 1936)

### *The Constructionists*

I must mention at this point the “Plan for Reorganization of the National Confederation of Labour” presented by Juan Peiro to the Madrid congress of June 1931. In addition to being an instrument of struggle within capitalist society, this plan offered an alternative structure of society, another form of libertarian communism. The central point of the proposed structure was the single union in the community and the national industrial federation. Now we can turn to consideration of this subject at the I.W.M.A. congress being held in Madrid at the same time.

The structure of the future society was also under discussion there. Pierre Besnard, a French revolutionary syndicalist, presented a plan for the future society. This led to a debate with Santillan, who supported the anti-programme thesis at that time. Besnard’s approach agreed in essence with Peiro’s thinking. Besnard and Santillan carried on their debate in the pages of *Solidaridad Obrera* in July and August 1931, with Besnard supporting a planned approach and Santillan anarchism without a programme. Besnard soon published *The Workers’ Union and*



*the Social Revolution* in Spain. His influence was considerable throughout the country. He defined the main points of his programme as follows:

From my point of view it is not a question of converting the unions into dictatorial organs, even during the revolutionary process.

The unions would have responsibility for organizing production. This would be the foundation of a social order of communism organized in accord with federal principles and federations—the first step toward free communism. The members would work together in distribution and interchange. Finally, in agreement with the corresponding political organizations, they would administer and govern the general community.

I do not believe we can plan further and we cannot give the union a larger role without doing harm to the individual, the basic unit of society.

Here are the two fundamental fields of human life, the productive, economic, and the general relationship of human beings, the political. They are clearly defined and complementary. We have, in the first of the two areas, the worker or producer, the local federation of unions (industry), the regional federation of unions (industry), the international association of unions (industry); and, in the second area, the individual: the commune, the regional federation of communes, the international confederation of communes. In other words, Besnard tells us, the producer would be at the base of the entire system. He would discuss, deliberate, act, and, above all, control.

I must voice my disagreement with Elorza, in his book *The Anarchist Utopia Under the Second Spanish Republic*, published in 1973. Libertarian communism is in no way similar to Marx and Engels' dictatorship of the proletariat, because the State does not disappear in the period of transition.

#### *Gaston Leval and Diego Abad de Santillan*

Pedro R. Piller, universally known as Gaston Leval, affirms in his book *Economic Problems of the Spanish Social Revolution* that "Society will be a vast organism regulated by technical offices appointed by federated, responsible organizations at their general congresses."

Work is the bond between people, according to Leval. His book deals with economic problems almost exclusively. The idea is developed that labour includes all types of human activity—everything comes down to administration of things with free regulation of labour. However, Leval was against the new society being a more highly developed union (syndicalist) organization because this would be dangerous for liberty.

He believed that syndicalism was only a child of industry, not a panacea for everything, and that total syndicalism would result in the C. N. T. becoming like the present communist State. The union in a free society is useful for industry, says Leval, but not for agriculture, nor for commerce and exchange, which require a community and a cooperative, respectively. The base of economic activity is the community, for its industrial and agricultural functions. The agricultural groups would then form national agricultural and cattle-raising federations, and the industrial groups would form national industrial federations. Both branches would have general councils of relations which would be technical only and responsible to national congresses, at which the communities would also be represented.

Gaston Leval published an interesting small work later entitled *Practice of Libertarian Socialism*, in Geneva in 1939. The traditional State disappears and its administrative functions, as well as capitalist economic activities, are assumed by a self-governing society following a radical formula of self-management of all administration. Leval offers an interesting new thought in this small volume of eighty-two pages: that the union as a basic productive unit is replaced by a productive centre and a national federation of productive centres.

Santillan, to whom we referred extensively in dealing with the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, was an ideological radical at the start of his militant life. In 1932, while still in Argentina, he moved toward so-called constructive anarchism, with his pamphlets *The Bankruptcy of the Capitalist Economic and Political System* and *The Bankruptcy of Capitalism*. Santillan's approach was close to Besnard's ideas. He gave up the idea of anarchism without a programme and outlined a proposal for an economic organization that offers administration of things as a substitute for government over people.

Santillan offers a criticism of the capitalist system in these works and declares that there are only two alternatives: State capitalism, the Bolshevik solution, or true socialization of wealth under self-management, which is anarchism. Santillan sketches two types of federation in his *Bankruptcy of Capitalism*—economic and political. He places a national council of the socialized economy at the top of his economic structure, which is guided by specialized technical organizations.

Santillan published two articles in *Tierra y Libertad* in April 1934 titled "The Economic Organization of the Revolution," which served as the core of a book of the same title published in Barcelona in March 1936. In this work he summarizes his earlier books, articles, and propaganda pieces. The author condemns economic separatism and supports

the idea of federal organization of the economy, beginning with factory councils or local trade or industrial unions and moving up to local and regional councils, assisted by technical and statistical data, and up to the national or federal economic council. The local council, coordinator of local organizations, would replace municipalities and elected bodies.

According to Santillan, the federal economic council would replace the State. There would be no political power, only an economic and administrative regulator. "It receives its directives from below, it must make adjustments according to regional and national congresses; it serves as a channel for relationships and nothing more..." Since decisions would be based on figures and statistics, compulsion by any organization would be counter-productive and impossible. Such a coordinating body would guarantee a free society of producers and consumers, would coordinate the plans developed by all the organizations and would respect the relative autonomy of all the federated bodies.

Santillan comes close to Besnard in his thinking, except that the latter saw the commune, federated nationally and internationally, as having a political function for general human relations, whereas Santillan, in *The Economic Organization of the Revolution*, is close to Gaston Leval, who, in turn, took some of Santillan's formulations in his work, *Practice of Libertarian Socialism*.

### **National Plenum of F.A.I. Regions, January-February 1936**

The national F.A.I. plenum of regions took place in Madrid January 31-February 1, 1936, during a period of tension and serious concern for the working class and the country.

The F.A.I. had not had a national meeting since 1933, when a commission had been named to spell out the F.A.I. concept of libertarian communism. The commission was not able to meet because of developments that followed in quick succession during the next few years and the work that had to be done. It is interesting to note that as a result, the F.A.I. never defined its goals as an organization, although its militants participated in the debates in their unions and inspired some of the reports presented to the C.N.T. congress in May 1936.

The plenum opened under the chairmanship of the Asturias delegation with the representative of the liaison committee of the Centre acting as recording secretary. The following delegations were present: Regional Federation of Anarchist Groups (A.G.) of Catalonia; Regional Federation of A.G.s of Andalusia and Estremadura; Regional Federation of A.G.s of Aragon, Rioja, and Navarra; Regional Federation of A.G.s of Levante;

Regional Federation of A.G.s of the Centre; Regional Federation of A.G.s of Asturias, Leon, and Palencia; F.A.I. Peninsular Committee; Federation of Portuguese Anarchists in Exile; Tierra y Libertad; Regional Liaison Committee of the Centre; National Prisoners' Aid Committee; Peninsular Committee of Libertarian Youth; Federation of Spanish-Language A.G.s in Marseilles (who delegated their representation to the Peninsular Committee). The following sent their support of the plenum by mail: Regional Federation of A.G.s of the North; Federation of Spanish-Language A.G.s of the United States; Liaison Committee of Spanish-Language A.G.s of France; and the National Defense Committee. The announced delegation from the Region of the Balearic Islands did not arrive. No word was received from the Regions of Galicia and the Canary Islands.

### **Report of the Peninsular Committee**

The report began with a statement that government repression during the last two years had forced a constant change of the Peninsular Committee. The committee presenting this report had been constituted only a short time previously. The Committee stated that a full report of activities since the 1933 plenum would require consultations in prison and with refugees from persecution. The Peninsular Committee had worked hard to call this plenum and tried to end the disagreements among the groups in Madrid which had led to a split. Fortunately, the committee reported that the problem was resolved in a spirit of tolerance, with no group excluded from the F.A.I. because of its disagreements or its sense of autonomy. The report concluded that such incidents must stop so that more attention can be given to the problems of the anarchist movement.

### **Levante Region**

The region reported the following: Province of Levante Local Federation, seven groups; District Federation of Torrente, nine groups; Carlet District, three groups; one group in each of the following towns and villages: Jativa, Beniarjo, Tabernes de Valldigna, Gandia, Alcira, Carcagente, and Almoines. Province of Alicante: Alicante Local, four groups; Alcoy Local, four groups; Elche Local, three groups; Denia Local, three groups. One group in each of the following localities: Banarez, Ondara, Torrevieja, Villena, Petrel, Nucia, and San Vicente. Castellon Province: District of Castellon, twelve groups; District of Palencia, five groups; Vinaroz, one group. Murcia Province: District of Murcia, two groups, one group in each of the following localities: Jumilla, Cieza, Bienajan, Mazarron, Puerto de Mazarron, and Cartagena. Albacete Province: one group in Caudete. Total: eighty-seven groups in six localities, six districts, and twenty-two single groups.

## Catalonia Region

Province of Barcelona: Barcelona Local, twenty-seven groups; Bajo Besos District, five groups; Panades District, three groups; Valles Districts, thirteen groups; Igualada Local, two groups; Litoral District, eighteen groups; Bajo Llobregat District, fourteen groups; Alto Llobregat, eighteen groups. Gerona Province: District of San Feliu de Guisols, ten groups; District of Salt, two groups; District of Ter y Freser, twenty groups. Lerida Province: Lerida District, twenty groups; Segria District, six groups; Segarra-Igarriga, six groups. Tarragona Province: Tortosa District, thirty groups; Reus District, seven groups; Valls y Montblanc District, eight groups; Alto y Bajo Priorato District, fourteen groups. Total for Catalonia, two hundred and twenty-five groups.

## Asturias, Leon and Valencia Region

An oral report on the situation of the movement after October (1934). Before October, the group in Felguera had thirty comrades. Now there are only seven. The rest are either in jail or refugees outside the country. Relations with the regional committee are being renewed and we are confident that we will have a stronger organization in Asturias than before the revolution.

## Andalusia and Estremadura Region

Twenty-nine groups were represented directly at the Plenum held January 19-21, and sixteen were registered indirectly. Twenty-six groups did not register. There are seventy-one groups in Andalusia and Estremadura as of the time of the Plenum. The regional committee has received applications for affiliation from several more since the plenum.

Our region is the special victim of the systematic use of all repressive measures of the reaction. Our regional organization cannot therefore present a report. After a period of intense agitation, as well as negligence and apathy on the part of some militants, we can report a new period of activity following the important actions taken at our plenum. We expect renewed vigour on the part of our organization throughout Andalusia, Estremadura, and North Africa. Our regional committee had one hundred and nineteen groups at the time of the 1933 plenum. We have lost a considerable number since then. The wave of repression after the October 1934 movement resulted in the dissolution of groups. In addition, certain issues divided some of the militants. Our movement should be supported more by the comrades who want total independence for the F.A.I.

## Aragon, Rioja, and Navarra Region

The regional committee is completely neglected by the majority of the militants because they are absorbed in the larger activities of the C.N.T. Nevertheless, the entire region is overwhelmingly F.A.I., even though many towns and villages do not have specific groups.

The region has eleven districts and fifty-five groups. In Huesca Province, there are the districts of Huesca, Almudevar, Albalate de Cinca, and Monzon; in Saragossa province, the districts of Saragossa, Calatayud, Epila, and Cinco Villas; in Teruel province, the districts of Valderrobles and Alcorisa; in Logrono province, Logrono district; in Navarre province, the districts of Sanguesa, Zuera, and Lanaja. The movement may not be coordinated, but its actual effectiveness is much greater than can be measured by our organizational relations.

### **Regional Committee of Catalonia**

The Catalan regional committee presented a moral report. They spoke of the difficulties due to the cruel repression and the internal disagreements that hampered the work of the organization and propaganda. With these difficulties partially resolved, we expect that the future will be better, providing the organization is supported by all anarchists, which has not been the case so far.

### **Regional Committee of the Centre**

Although the present regional committee has not been functioning long, we feel good about the atmosphere in the region. In spite of the fact that both Castiles have been dominated by both the socialists and the reactionaries, our ideas are taking root and we will soon have an organization that can face the problems in our region. We have groups in the following regions: Caceres province; Jarandilla de la Cera; Plasencia; and Navalmoral de la Mata. Ciudad Real: Puertollano, Almaden, Manzanares, Almagro, Membrilla, and Real de Calatrava. Valladolid: in the capital. Cuenca: in the capital. Burgos: in the capital, Castrillo de la Bega and Aranda de Duero. Zamora: in the capital and in Villalpando. Salamanca: in the capital and in Bejar. Madrid: twelve groups in the capital. Soria: in the capital. Toledo: two groups in Talavera (although all members are under arrest, we are maintaining relations with them). Total: forty-five groups in twenty-five localities. The splits that we have had in the Centre were due in part to the disagreements among the groups in Madrid. This has now been overcome and we expect to have a large movement.

Andalusia and Levante ask for a clarification of the reasons for the disagreements, and the delegation from the Centre explains how it started and how it ended.<sup>10</sup>

#### F.A.P.E. (Anarchist Federation of Portugal)

Our difficulties are the same in many ways as all of the F.A.I. groups. This has not stopped us from doing everything possible to continue and even increase the possibilities of struggle against reaction in Iberia, particularly in the area that offers the greatest oppression to our movement, Portugal: the expulsion of many comrades after December 8, 1933, and the irregular, underground existence of those who remain has hampered our activities. The repression of the October movement resulted in new expulsions from Portugal. The Portuguese Federation entered a new phase in March 1935. It established relations with nuclei of comrades in Spain, France, Brazil, Argentina, the United States, French Africa, Portuguese Africa, and Morocco. We are publishing our journal, *Rebellion*, although not regularly because we do not have sufficient funds. The paper is distributed inside Portugal, as well as in the Azores, Africa, and Oceania.

<sup>10</sup> The problem of the F.A.I. region in the Centre arose in the Local Federation of Groups in Madrid over the question of the Alliance, which was strongly supported after the Asturias insurrection in October 1934. The question of violent action and the course to follow also divided the local groups. At that time, there were three anarchist publications in Madrid: *El Libertario*, *Campo Libre*, and *La Protesta*. The last appeared irregularly and published only nine issues. The first two supported an alliance with the socialists and the U.G.T., and with other groups, for revolutionary action. *La Protesta* opposed collaboration with authoritarians, alleging that the U.G.T had expelled the anarchists from its ranks in 1929. This led to the creation of the Whole Truth Club (Ateneo de Divulgacion) on San Marcos Street in Madrid and then to the organization of autonomous unions because the government did not permit the C.N.T. to exist legally.

The first anarchist groups in Madrid were organized in the favourable atmosphere following the 1919 congress of the C.N.T. at La Comedia. Some Madrid anarchists, among them Mauro Bajatiera, Moises Lopez, Teruel, Miranda, Sainz, Antonio Moreno, and a group of young people, created the Union Club on Pizarro Street. This group was a centre for the development and spread of libertarian ideas and they worked very effectively. The club was closed down in 1920, and Moises Lopez, J. Ortega, and Mauro Bajatierra were arrested. Later, the Local Federation of Groups, as part of the F.A.I., functioned under the dictatorship and during the Second Republic.

The following groups, among others, formed the local federation in the early period: Armonia, Prometeo, Libertos, Liberion, Iguales. Later, some student groups joined the Federation, as well as the Los Intransigentes Group.

At the time of the National Plenum of F.A.I. Regional Committees, the Local Federation of Madrid had twelve groups, smaller than in previous years. The statistics were given to the author by Antonio Moreno Toledano.

We ask the plenum to help us materially, as well as morally, so that we might be able to publish and distribute our organ in Portugal so long as the dictatorship prohibits the publication of our press inside the country.

### Regional Federation of the North

The Regional Federation of the North has the following affiliates: the District Federation of Santander with four groups in the capital, two in Santona, and one in Laredo. The district of Torrelavega has three groups in the area and one in Cabezon de la Sal. The district of Vizcaya is silenced at this time. They maintained a relationship with Baracaldo only. One of the reasons for the poor condition of the F.A.I. was the fact that almost all the comrades were active in the defense groups of the C.N.T. The District of San Sebastian had only one group. In summary, the regional committee of the North had thirteen groups in four districts.

The second session of the plenum dealt with the question "Coordination of the F.A.I.'s Resources." The Peninsular Committee declared this question significant because it tried to give the organization more attention than it has had until now, pointing out its complete independence, stating its own objectives—in a word, creating a steadily growing organization. According to the reports of the regional committees, we can at least expect to double our membership.

The delegates then discussed the positions of the various regions. The representative of Andalusia and Estremadura stated that the membership of the F.A.I. should be only convinced anarchists. Aragon, Rioja, and Navarra declared, among other points, that the groups should not relax their involvement in preparations for revolution, leaving this to the defense groups of the C.N.T. They should concentrate solely on ideological propaganda. "Those who speak frequently in the name of the F.A.I. should at least be members of the F.A.I."

Catalonia raised the question of personal attacks. When someone attacks another comrade, he must be required to present proof of his statement to the organization immediately. The Centre supported this, and added that comrades must be carefully selected for membership in the F.A.I.

A committee was then named, the representatives of Catalonia and Andalusia, to prepare a report incorporating the various points raised by the delegates. The report follows:

The Plenum of Regional Committees understands that the groups have the responsibility for local propaganda aimed at enrolling new members for the creation of anarchist groups.

At the same time they should try to organize new groups in neighbouring areas where there are no groups. These groups should accept the principles of the F.A.I. and respect and support the resolutions of the organization.

Considering that personal attacks and criticisms cause conflicts among the members of the groups and nullify the effectiveness of our efforts we call for an end to such acts. Comrades who are attacked should call upon the accuser to retract his charges or be called before the organization to prove



the truth of his accusations. If no proof is forthcoming the accuser shall be expelled from our organization and the movement shall be so informed.

Finally, we believe that the time has come to issue a fraternal call to all our comrades who are not yet members of an F.A.I. group to join us and strengthen our movement.

The plenum then took up the question of dues. The discussion was based on proposals by Aragon and the Centre that the Peninsular Committee issue a weekly dues stamp of 0.25 centimos which would be distributed by the Peninsular Committee, the regional committee, the local committee, the defense and publications committees. Representatives of Aragon, Levante and Catalonia were appointed to the committee to prepare the report on this question. They also agreed that all committees present a report to the groups every three months so that they are informed of administrative progress and needs.

Aragon asked if *Tierra y Libertad* is the official organ of the F.A.I. or of the Catalan regional committee. The latter, as well as the editors of the paper, declared that although the weekly belonged to Catalonia it has not been denied to the other regions or to the control of the Peninsular Committee. After a full discussion the following proposal by Aragon was approved.

That *Tierra y Libertad* be the official organ of the F.A.I. and that the Peninsular Committee be responsible for the doctrinal orientation of *Tierra y Libertad*, *Tiempos Nuevos* and its publications (of books and pamphlets) and that it be responsible for their administration.

They also agreed:

That the groups take at least one subscription.

That the local and district committees assume responsibility for the packets of publications and support the administration of the weekly, the review, and the additional publications.

That the weekly be increased to eight pages and, if possible, the current price be maintained.

That all the good wishes of the delegations be taken into consideration in seeking to enhance the field of action of our press.

The plenum also discussed the problem of our underground press published wherever necessary. Levante stated that the appearance and content of F.A.I. ought to be improved.

The tensions of the period and the anarchist premonition that an explosion was close at hand that could lead to civil war were evident at the plenum and were reflected in the following subject on the agenda:

### The Fascist Danger

Suggestions were read from the Spanish-language groups of France, from Marseilles, from the North, and from the United States.

Regional Committee of the Centre: rigorous control must be established in the shops and factories to prevent the growth of fascism. We must watch out for *agents provocateurs* who want to create nuclei at the workplace to provoke constant conflicts. The fascist groups must be destroyed from below by sabotage, by violence. The bourgeoisie supports these elements, and we

must reach agreements with anti-fascist revolutionary workers in the shops and factories to eliminate fascists from the workplaces.

Aragon regional committee: the problem is not superficial. The F.A.I. must make a special effort to provide a practical solution. We must influence the workers in a libertarian spirit so that they are ready to fight fascism and its manifestations.

Asturias regional committee: we must tell the workers how to destroy fascism as anarchists. At the same time, we must explain the goals that we seek and what libertarian communism is.

Andalusia regional committee: we must mobilize our maximum strength and study the best ways to destroy the capitalist state. The forces that accept this proposal commit themselves to respect the structure of the new regime that the people adopt the day after the revolution.

Levante regional committee: advocated an intensification of organization and the spirit of combatting fascism locally. No group has spoken about an alliance in their region.

Catalonia regional committee: presented the resolutions adopted by the Plenum of Groups in Catalonia. The F.A.I. should orient the labour world, especially the workers' organizations, so that the tactics that are used and the revolutionary goals have a libertarian spirit.

A committee was named including Catalonia, the Centre, Levante, and the Peninsular Committee. It prepared the following statement which was approved by the plenum:

### **Confronting Reaction**

"Considering the extreme gravity of the present situation in Spain, because of its economic difficulties and internal politics and the international situation, which enables us to learn from the experience of others;

"Considering the size of the revolutionary proletariat in Spain, which gives it a greater responsibility than other countries in the event of a possible revolution;

"That fascism, embodied in the totalitarian state, is a state of reaction, and their violence in the streets and their cruel blows and attacks are an aspect of a vast complex of liberty-destroying ideas and goals that seek the suppression of every right of criticism and free thought, of human dignity and aims to capture the infant from the hour of its birth;

"That fascist reaction is the direct result of the bankruptcy of the capitalist economic system and it can only be resisted effectively by the suppression of capitalism and the establishment of a system that would make the monstrous contradictions of economic privilege and monopoly impossible;

"That historical experience throughout the world has demonstrated the impotence and deception of so-called democracy, with its supposed political equality, combined with the greatest economic inequality, to modify the essence of the existing order;

"The Regional Federations of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) declare their position as follows:

"a) They deplore that workers' organizations" that followed a frankly revolutionary and proletarian course in October 1934 should now align themselves with bourgeois democratic parties to seek a solution that cannot be achieved.

"b) They propose a total break by the proletariat with democratic state illusions, and their concentration on workers' and peasants' solutions, namely, the possession of the social and natural wealth of the country by the producers themselves.

"c) They maintain that an effective opposition to all forms of reaction can be found only in the world of labour, the world of production.

"They affirm that the producers can reach agreement on the following bases:

"1. Exclusion of members of fascist organizations from the workplace by the joint action of the anti-capitalist union organizations.

"2. Resort to insurrection for the conquest of the social wealth usurped by the privileged minorities, and its administration by the workers themselves.

"3. Introduction of a regime of life, of work, and of consumption that fulfills the common needs of the people and does not accept any form of exploitation and domination of humans by humans.

"4. The defense of the new regime cannot be entrusted to professional armies or police corps. It must be in the hands of all the workers without losing their relationship to their workplace.

"5. Respect and tolerance for different proletarian and revolutionary social approaches and guarantees of freedom to experiment.

"6. The fight against fascism, an international phenomenon, must be fought internationally by workers and revolutionary organizations, excluding all nationalistic ideas and sentiments."

## Revolutionary Preparedness

Catalonia: a reading of the report of the Local Federation of Anarchist Groups at Barcelona. They stated that Catalonia has been thinking constantly about "the coordination of the forces of revolutionary defense."

Aragon: the groups will help the defense committees morally but they cannot help much in financial terms because of their lack of resources.

Andalusia: the plenum approved the report of the Barcelona local federation in toto and added that the committees on liaison and propaganda should direct their work also to the barracks.

Asturias: maximum support should be given to the defense committees.

Levante: the defense committees must be named by the local and district committees. The regional and national defense committees must be limited to liaison functions.

The plenum agreed that the report of the Barcelona local federation be submitted to the groups with the addition by Andalusia and Estremadura.

## Report of the Local Federation of Anarchist Groups of Barcelona

We are living in a period of tremendous revolutionary possibilities. Capitalism and the State are unable to provide equitable solutions to the crushing economic, social, and moral problems of our times because their foundations do not permit it. More than fifteen years of constant attempts by the leaders of economic life and many experiments with different types of state, including the dictatorship of the proletariat, have not produced the slightest measure of equilibrium acceptable to the masses. It has only brought general discomfort and the threat of a new war with countless victims.

In the universal breakdown of ideas, parties, and systems there remains only the revolutionary proletariat with their programme of reorganization based on work, economic and social equality, and solidarity. Spain is called by its history, by the size of its workers' movement for emancipation, and by its definitely proletarian and revolutionary orientation, to fulfill its high destiny of starting the march to the future. We call upon all the forces of progress and freedom to study the way to unleash the definitive battle against the old capitalist morality and its economic and political structure.

The social revolution will not be an audacious blow like a Jacobian seizure of the state. It will follow from a civil war, the duration of which cannot be foreseen. If a seizure of the government requires great technical and insurrectional preparation in modern times, a civil war requires an even greater combat apparatus that cannot be improvised in the heat of enthusiasm only, but must be organized and provisioned as much as possible in advance.

The Spanish libertarian and revolutionary movement has plenty of people, but it lacks preparation and supplies with which to sustain a battle against strong enemies. If we want our cause to triumph, the noble cause of humanity and justice, we must accelerate our preparations and be ready for the struggle for the historic mission entrusted to us. We are the final defense of the idea and the movement for the freedom of the world. We must learn from the past how to prepare ourselves for the revolution, and stop guessing and experimenting to prepare ourselves for the final battle.

We propose the following structure of the local committee to prepare for the revolution:

### Membership of the Committee to Prepare for the Revolution (Preparedness Committee)

The members of the Local Preparedness Committee will be named by the local committees of the C.N.T. and Anarchist Federations. They will be members of the organizations or persons responsible to the organizations. The committee will have four members and each will have a specific task. Two will be members of the C.N.T. and two will come from the Local Federation of Anarchist Groups.

Each member will organize a commission to help carry out his specific responsibilities as quickly as possible. The members of the commissions must be approved by the other members of the committees.

They will look for the men or groups within our organizations who have demonstrated that they are most able to carry out the functions given to them.

Each section will work as one, without checking with each other. Their work will be coordinated by the four members of the Preparedness Committee.

### **Responsibilities of the Preparedness Committee**

The Revolutionary Preparedness Committee must study the means to conduct the fighting, the tactics to be used, how to call the insurrectional forces of the organizations into action. Just as the defense committees organized shock groups for action until now, the new committees must study the realities of modern fighting and increase the fighting capacity of the combatants, provide armaments, supplies, transport, and reliable communications for those in battle.

Since it is not possible to obtain the necessary armaments in advance, the Preparedness Committee must study ways to transform strategic peacetime industries, chemical factories, metalworking establishments, etc., into providers of war materials for the revolution. The committee must study the best, most effective locations for bases of operation and concentration: they should get advice on the provision, use and effectiveness of electricity, chemical and biological instruments—in a word, to provide for the material and moral effectiveness of the revolutionary forces. The committee must know that the battle cannot be won only with courage and supreme heroism, but with intelligence and the understanding that the most modern technical methods of fighting must be used.

The Preparedness Committee has four interrelated tasks:

- a) **Transport and Communication:** means of transportation, seizure of vehicles, train personnel, fast armour for vehicles, organization of communication with new revolutionary instruments, installation of broadcasting equipment, wireless telephones, etc.
- b) **Technical Preparation:** investigation, application, testing combat weapons, explosives, electricity, chemicals, bacteriology, firearms, battle strategy.
- c) **Industrial Organization:** study of industries, raw materials, technical resources, etc., that must be used for the manufacture of war material; transformation to war industries; provide food and supplies for the civil population in zones of revolutionary operation and support of the combatants.
- d) **Organization of the Insurrectionary Forces:** organization of the forces of the insurrection, their geographic distribution, by neighbourhoods in the city and according to individual abilities, in such a way as to be able to act from the first moment with full combat groups; instruction in handling combat elements; training in the most specialized tasks; health care and emergency surgery, etc.

## **Relations of the Preparedness Committees**

The Preparedness Committees will join together regionally, constituting regional committees. Their purpose will be solely to maintain relations, statistics of their forces, and the resources of each region. The regional committees will be named by the respective committees of the Confederation and the F.A.I. The Preparedness Committees will send periodic reports to the regional committees.

The local Preparedness Committees will hold special plenums for an exchange of reports on their activities and initiatives for mutual aid, etc., and to study ways to improve the functioning of the revolutionary organization.

There will also be national meetings of regional delegates to gain information on the state of preparations in all parts of the country and to help the committees of the F.A.I. and the C.N.T. to ascertain the actual state of preparations.

## **The Revolutionary Initiative**

The Preparedness Committee has responsibility for the work of preparation only. The revolutionary initiative must come at all times from the Confederation and the specific organization. They will fix the time and assume the direction of the movement, through either specialized comrades in the Preparedness Committee or others who will have charge of the complete revolutionary machinery organized for the insurrection. The essential fact, in any case, is that the revolutionary forces are at all times under the control of the organizations that assume responsibility for the initiative.

## **Financing**

The anarchist groups will contribute regularly, together with the confederal unions, to provide funds to the Preparedness Committee, since their ability to function would be extremely limited without it. A general obligatory contribution will not be set, but each group will do what they can to fulfill this commitment as much as possible.

## **Formation of Fighting Cadres**

Insurrectional groups will be formed in the cities on the basis of neighbourhoods. The size of the group is not fixed, and affinity groups that want to maintain their cohesion can join an insurrectional cadre. However, they must accept the control of the Preparedness Committee in this area.

The third session considered the following questions: attitude toward a possible war; and position in an electoral campaign.

**In the Event of War.** This question, like the previous one, was a reflection of the national and international situation with the growing tide of axis totalitarian countries and the general atmosphere of conflict in the world. The possibility of war faced the workers. The F.A.I. analyzed the tremendous

possibilities at its plenum. The resolutions, which we reproduce at length, follow the traditional anti-war position of the anarchists. Here is the record:

### In the Event of War

Catalonia presided. The Centre acted as secretary.

A report was presented by the Peninsular Committee for consideration by the plenum. It was prepared by De Ligt, and it outlines what should be done individually and collectively against war, in times of peace and of war. Andalusia: proposes that the plan be published in the press for greater distribution.

Centre: supports the De Ligt plan but proposes, in addition, the preparation of a national plan of sabotage in the event of war.

Asturias: resume editing *Soldado del Pueblo*. If war breaks out our organizations should propose a general strike to the U.G.T.; if the U.G.T. does not agree, we should proceed to carefully planned systematic acts of sabotage.

Andalusia: supports the plan and proposes that the F.A.I. control everything relating to war so that, in case of mobilization, everything possible be done to obstruct it. Propaganda must be intensified. They ask that a committee be appointed to spell out what must be done.

Catalonia: the conclusions of a manifesto of the Local Federation of Barcelona is read which states:

- 1) Absolutely boycott of the manufacture of armaments and transport of men and materials for countries at war.
- 2) Refuse to be drafted regardless of who orders it.
- 3) Persuade the soldiers to turn their arms against their commanders and officers.
- 4) In case of armed intervention the revolutionary minority must sabotage the entire military organization of the country even if the masses do not support them. This would be the most effective struggle against the massacre. This is the positive work that the anarchists must do.

These measures are approved, with the addition by the Centre that a national plan of sabotage be studied for the appropriate time.

They also approved publication of *Soldado del Pueblo*.

Aragon: proposes the formation of anti-militarist committees and explains its proposed functions.

Andalusia: the anti-militarist committees must promote refusal of military service. This should not be confused with the efforts of defense committees who approach the soldier in the barracks for revolutionary purposes.

Levante: agrees with the viewpoints of Andalusia and Estremadura and points out the errors from not working in this way. Control of the soldiers should be in the hands of the defense committees.

Catalonia agrees.

The following proposals are approved:

"1. That the De Ligt plan be distributed to the groups for publication.

"2. The plenum regards the early publication of *Soldado del Pueblo* as necessary. The groups will be asked to send contributions to the Peninsular Committee and give as much financial support as possible so as not to delay its publication.

The Peninsular Committee will do everything possible to improve the content of the paper along anti-militarist and revolutionary lines.

"3. The anti-militarist committees, as commissions of the liaison committees, have responsibility for anti-militarist propaganda only.

"4. The local federations and unions shall inform the defense committees of sympathizers in the barracks and leave relations with them to said committees."

### On the Electoral Campaign

"In view of the serious situation that we face and the imminence of the elections, the Plenum of Regional Committees affirms its revolutionary position in order to counterbalance the confusion created by the politicians of all colours.

"We maintain our anti-parliamentary and anti-electoral position. World events confirm our forecasts and demonstrate eloquently that every democracy will fail. Only the direct intervention of the workers into the problems created by capitalism can oppose reaction effectively.

"The F.A.I. therefore has nothing to change in its policy of complete abstention in a direct or indirect collaboration with state politics."

The final resolutions of the third session dealt with support for the regional organization in Asturias, which had not recovered from the disaster in 1934. The delegate from Asturias suggested that it would be good if several comrades could be sent to Asturias to help in any way possible with propaganda and organization, calling upon the other regions for material assistance as needed.

Another question on the table: a national anarchist congress.

The regions agreed in general that such a congress should be held. Asturias suggested that it be held, if possible, in conjunction with that of the C.N.T. Andalusia disagreed, saying that the two organizations should not hold their congresses at the same time. They stated that the F.A.I. should maintain complete independence from the C.N.T. It was finally agreed that the groups would be notified as to the place and date of the congress.

Various questions: Andalusia proposed that they complete action on the resolution adopted in 1933 concerning a study of libertarian communism and that such a report be prepared by Santillan, among others. Levante proposed that a leaflet be written outlining the principles, tactics, and goals of the F.A.I. and the costs to be paid by all the groups, to be distributed free of charge. Some questions were raised against the 1933 project and against the idea of a programme. Aragon favoured the idea that anarchism should spell out the course it proposed after the revolution. Catalonia agreed that the report on libertarian communism should be completed but not in a rigid, restricted sense. It should be a broad study prepared with a great deal of dedication and work. A suggestion by Aragon was finally approved that the report be submitted to a referendum by the regions and that the Peninsular Committee be helped in its search for the most capable comrades for this task.



It was agreed to help Portugal and that the Peninsular Committee should give a regular sum to the Anarchist Federation of Portugal in Exile (F.A.P.E.) in addition to voluntary contributions.

Andalusia proposed that libertarian texts be translated into Arabic for the dissemination of our ideas in North Africa. An appeal will be published for this project in our press.

#### Fourth Session

Levante explains what happened in Iran that resulted in violent repression against our comrades. It was agreed to refer the matter to the National Prisoners Aid Committee and to organize campaigns in the national press. Levante also proposed that the director of *Tierra y Libertad* be elected by the region, but this was rejected. The same region then proposed holding an anarchist meeting in Madrid to protest the bad treatment of political prisoners in Alcala de Henares. The Centre accepted the proposal as its own. It was agreed that the regions inform the Peninsular Committee if they can cover the expenses, and the meeting would be held immediately.

Libertarian Youth: the Peninsular Committee reported that there were tensions and conflicts on some issues between groups of the F.A.I. and the Libertarian Youth in several localities. The Peninsular Committee of the Libertarian Youth asked that the situation be straightened out before the young people became demoralized. The Peninsular Committee asked how the forces of the Youth and the F.A.I. could be coordinated. The spokesman for the Libertarian Youth asked that relations between provinces, districts and localities be set up similar to the relations between the two Peninsular Committees, and autonomy for both organizations. Reference to the Peninsular Committee of the Libertarian Youth was awkward at this time because the regional committee of the young people in Catalonia wanted to join the F.A.I. After a long debate, the report of the Libertarian Youth Peninsular Committee was received and it was agreed to submit the question of relations between the F.A.I. and the Libertarian Youth to the regions for study.

The Centre suggested that the record of the national plenum be published as a pamphlet. The plenum adjourned after a unanimous tribute to political prisoners.

#### Brief Comments on the F.A.I. National Plenum

Some points should be clarified. First, antagonism was brought out between groups in some of the regions, such as the Centre and Andalusia. The specific organization (specifically anarchist) was not without its splits. It acted as one only on certain issues. Its independence from the C.N.T. should also be underscored. The plenum dealt only with problems facing the F.A.I. The regions of Aragon, Rioja and Navarre, and the

North stated that (anarchist) comrades preferred to work in the C.N.T. or in C.N.T. groups.

The number of members that the F.A.I. had in February 1936 is also worth noting. At a time when the C.N.T. had about a million members, the F.A.I. had 496 groups in all of Spain, excluding the Portuguese, who were scattered and whose numbers could not be estimated. If one estimates ten members per group, which was high in many instances, the F.A.I. had fewer than 5,000 members in February 1936. This means that the C.N.T. had 120 members to one for the F.A.I. The F.A.I. was not in a position to fight for control of the C.N.T., as Peirats points out in correspondence, especially in view of Alcon's observation that many members of the F. A. I. had a prior loyalty to the C.N.T.

An impressive aspect of the F.A.I. national plenum were the sections dealing with "Fascist Danger" and "In the Event of War." Nothing like these reports, especially on the first question, brought out the climate of revolutionary preoccupation at that time and the clear perception by F.A.I. and C.N.T. members of the imminence of great events in the history of the country. That the reports anticipated the military uprising is truly amazing, and even more so the detailed plan to confront it. The study of the subject presented by the Local Federation of Anarchist Groups of Barcelona is a unique piece of work. The situation is studied most carefully; nothing is left to improvisation, which characterized the attempts of 1931 and 1933—leaving no doubt that previous experiences were taken into account. Everything was foreseen in future revolutionary struggles, from analysis of the history of the situation to revolutionary preparation. The Preparedness Committee listed the following areas in its projection of revolutionary action: transportation and communication; technical preparation; industrial organization; and the formation of fighting cadres. Each one of these aspects is carefully developed.

The same precision and detailed examination is observed in the study of the possible outbreak of war. Here also, the Local Federation of Anarchist Groups of Barcelona showed great maturity and competence in its examination of the problems. Some of the report's predictions on aspects of the revolutionary struggle would come true on July 19, 1936, with fighting in the streets of Barcelona, where the uprising was crushed. Members of the Nervio group most likely developed these detailed studies, and they were part of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee in July 1936. We will return to these detailed, implacable analyses in the numerous documents and reports prepared by the F.A.I. during the

Civil War, especially as developments became unfavourable for republican arms.

The position "On the Elections" also merits a comment. The F.A.I. reaffirmed its traditional anti-parliamentary and anti-electoral position in its resolution at the F.A.I. national plenum. However, its campaign was very different from that of 1933 and there was practically no abstention from voting. Referring to the coincidence that C.N.T. and F.A.I. militants would take no risks with an anti-electoral strategy, Santillan himself told us that "the initiative for this change came from the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee, which was in a secure underground situation and could have called for the riskiest offensive action."

For tactical reasons they neither called upon people to vote, nor called for a boycott of the ballot box. The papers with the widest circulation, *Solidaridad Obrera* and *Tierra y Libertad*, maintained this attitude. However, let us not lose sight of the fact that this change of strategy, however justified it may have been, was going to prepare the climate gradually for even greater changes in the July 1936 days when the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. found themselves at a crossroads never before seen in the history of both organizations.

### The F.A.I. and the Saragossa Congress

After the triumph of the Popular Front in February 1936, Manuel Azana formed a homogeneous government of co-religionists of his party and friends. In April of that year Alcala Zamora stepped down as president of the Republic and was replaced by Azana. Casares Quiroga formed the government on May 13. At a time when the whole world was aware of the preparations for the military uprising he made jokes about the supposed action by the military. There was an atmosphere of civil war. Lieutenant Castillo of the Assault Guard was assassinated by rightists, which was answered by the assassination of Calvo Sotelo by members of the Assault Guard—all this during the month of July. The F.A.I. and the C.N.T. had one clear idea during this time: the country was on the edge of revolution or counter-revolution. The analyses made later by dilettantes as to what should or should not have been done, as to the suicidal maximalism of the working class and their organizations, were no more than rhetorical statements.

There was maximalism in the picture,\* but there were historical reasons for this—primarily the primitive, uncontrollable character of the Spanish rightists. The war and the revolution might be lost for the working class, but they could be won back. The war and traditional forms of life might be won by the other band, but they could be lost. The rightists were also gambling everything dangerously on a bet.

The F.A.I. did not hold a national meeting until the Civil War, only some regional plenums. When the C.N.T. held its congress in Saragossa in May 1936, the last to be held in Spain,\*\* the F.A.I. did not hold a parallel meeting.

The problem of the *Treintismo* had been cleared up with Pestana's defection. In 1934 Pestana had created the Syndicalist Party with a parliamentary orientation—all the dialectic ability and astuteness of this outstanding confederal militant resulted only in the creation of yet one more political party. This turn of events morally disarmed the opposition unions that had followed Pestana to the creation of the Libertarian Syndicalist Federation, and they returned to the C.N.T. at the Saragossa congress. So much confusion, such vitriolic fighting, such energy, only to return finally to the family. The various tendencies tried to justify their position at the congress, and the meeting had its moments of tension. Arguments were repeated that had been heard before, such as the influence of the F.A.I. over the C.N.T. The opposition unions were represented by Juan Lopez and Manuel Martorell. Referring to the attitude of the opposition unions, Lopez stated:

The other current believed that conditions were favourable for the transformation of society, and they worked accordingly. We were not anti-revolutionary; we did not oppose the ideology of the C.N.T. We said only that we did not believe that our strength and our preparations were sufficient at that time to undertake a revolution. The youth lived through seven years of dictatorship without any cultural or libertarian education of any kind. Time was needed to prepare them. However, if developments forced us to move ahead during this period we would never have refused to go out on the street to fulfill our duty.

\* Maximum goals as contrasted with step-by-step reforms.—*transl. note*

\*\* Until after Franco's death.—*transl. note*

Manuel Martorell reverted to the presence of the F.A.I. in the life of the C.N.T., like almost all opposition spokesmen:

It is undeniable that there is an opposition to our interpretation of C.N.T. doctrine. This difference exists as to the role of the unions during revolutionary action and in constructive action after the revolution. The opposition unions state that the C.N.T. must be independent of all influences outside its ranks. The C.N.T. must resolve its problems internally, in its own structure. Our position is that there cannot be other currents in the C.N.T....

Chemical Products of Valencia affirmed that the opposition unions had raised the issue of divisionism. He added: "As to the allegation about the F.A.I., remember that the opposition created the Libertarian Syndicalist Federation, which is the F.A.I. of the opposition, and that they recognized in a manifesto that the Revolutionary Syndicalist Federation, the socialists, the anarchists, etc., had the right to lead the revolution." (From the minutes of the Saragossa congress)

In a long and historic talk, Juan Garcia Oliver, who attended the congress as a delegate of the Textile Manufacturing Union, touched on each of the points in dispute (minutes of the Saragossa congress, 5th session).

Yesterday we affirmed that revolution can be made and we pointed out the reasons our victory is possible, the victory of libertarian communism. We also declare today that, as in 1931, the revolution can be made. However, at that time the C.N.T. was the only force. At that time the conditions for revolution were better than at any time since. Now there are a strong state, disciplined forces, an arrogant bourgeoisie, etc. Although the revolution is possible, and we believe that it is, circumstances are not the same today as in 1931... The revolution is divided today among a number of forces, and we must study the possibility of joint action with the U.G.T. at this very congress...

Oliver then touched upon the supposed influence of the F.A.I.:

Another question is the allegation about the bond between the F.A.I. and the C.N.T. —hardly a reason for splitting. Other C.N.T. unions share the opinion of the opposition unions on this question, but they did not withdraw from the organization. The union I represent is proposing a new structure for the Prisoners Aid Committees. The C.N.T. was not subordinate to the F.A.I., just the contrary. The anarchist groups have served as the fighting force of the C.N.T. But interfere, meddle in the internal operations of the unions? Never. Can this be an issue to fight over when we are considering

an alliance with the socialists who represent an entirely different way of thinking? This is a problem of interpretation of majorities and minorities.

The F.A.I. was the fighting force of the C.N.T. in its battles, and this will be confirmed in the latter part of this book. Oliver charged the minority with the goal of splitting the C.N.T. later in his talk:

We used all means possible to win the fight between the opposition and the C.N.T. But only as individuals. We were beaten as a group. When we wanted to get editors of our choice for *Solidaridad Obrera* we hardly got any votes. But we did not call for a split. We continued to fight hard. And we went to the 1931 congress. We were defeated there also but we were not routed; we had some strength. We were at the Cabanas Street plenum, and this time we won. Four days later the Manifesto of "Los Treinta" appeared.

Comrades, minorities always win if they are right. All of us have learned this. Let everyone fight to win over the majority the way we fought. If they have no energy, if they do not advocate their viewpoint with passion, they will not win even if they are in the right. Fight to win but the resolutions adopted at the meetings of the organization should be respected by everyone. Such respect should be the norm. All in the Confederation.

## Chapter Five

### THE CIVIL WAR

#### The C.N.T.-F.A.I. Connection

The last part of the history of the F.A.I. is less known. To outline the life of the F.A.I. during the Civil War, I shall refer to various books, documents of that period, and information provided by participants. As I stated at the beginning of this work, it is my aim here to provide a general understanding of the F.A.I.; later studies will no doubt contain more accurate and detailed information based on the large collection of C.N.T.-F.A.I. documents in the archives in Amsterdam.\* However, the documents available at this time will confirm the general lines of this history.

The mythical, singular binomial C.N.T.-F.A.I. achieved full confirmation with the start of the Civil War. Actually, the triumph over the Alzamiento Barracks in Barcelona, under the leadership of the anarchists and the anarchosyndicalists, helped forge a mythical, united image of the two basic organizations of the libertarian movement.

The week of July 13-19, 1936, was a time of almost insufferable tension for revolutionary organizations throughout Spain. The planned military uprising was a secret to no one except, it seems, the Republican government. During those seven days the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were on the alert throughout the country. The labour unions and the anarchist groups had mobilized practically all their militants. Relations between the authorities and the revolutionary organizations were closer at that time, or at least were better known, in Barcelona, than anywhere else. In Madrid, the head of the government, Casares Quiroga, responded jokingly to the news of the military uprising in Africa on July 17, saying, "I am going to bed." Luis Companys in Barcelona, on the other hand, discreetly sent a message to the C.N.T. to ask what would be their attitude in the event of a right-wing uprising. The C.N.T. responded

\* This book was published in Spanish in 1977. The archives were returned to the C.N.T. in Spain in 1982.—*transl. note*

that they would be at their posts ready for combat but that the workers needed arms. The government argued that they did not have surplus disposable stock but that they would try to equip "conscientious militants" if fighting started.

On July 16, the C.N.T. held a regional assembly in Catalonia, and decided on a plan of action. They asked for arms again from the Generalitat, the Catalan regional government, and were again refused. "Although we requested only one thousand rifles," Santillan said, "we did not receive a single one." This confirmed the impression that the republican governments feared the people more than they did the military. The police of the Generalitat attacked the patrols that the C.N.T.-F.A.I. had put into the streets and proceeded to arrest them. This was only forty-eight hours before these organizations would be the virtual masters of the streets of Catalonia. On July 17, the censor prohibited the insertion of an F.A.I. manifesto in *Solidaridad Obrera* giving instructions to the workers. That afternoon, the regional committee issued the manifesto in a leaflet and distributed it in the streets of Barcelona and throughout the region. The manifesto said that the anarchist groups and the Libertarian Youth should join the defense committees of the C.N.T. and form a common front, in line with Oliver's statement at the Saragossa congress.

Knowing that it would be difficult for the authorities to arm the workers, the militants of the Transport Workers' Union under the leadership of Juan Vague attacked two ships, the *Margues de Comillas* and the *Magallanes*, from which they seized 200 rifles and distributed them among militants in the union.

On July 18, *Solidaridad Obrera* was censored because it reported the rising of the troops in Morocco. On the other hand, infiltration of the barracks in Catalonia and Madrid by the C.N.T. informed them that the uprising would take place that night or the following night. The regional committee of Catalonia called three concurrent meetings, which brought out thousands of workers. At 11:30 on the night of July 18, the C.N.T. notified the Generalitat that it was going to requisition arms and vehicles, which were needed for contact between the defense committees in the districts. Cars with C.N.T.-F.A.I. initials were seen moving through the streets of Barcelona in all directions for several hours. At midnight, Durruti, a member of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. commission, interrupted Companys' vouching for the loyalty of the Assault Guards, whom the anarchosyndicalists wanted to disarm. Durruti declared:

This is not the time to talk. We must act. We refuse to become victims of fascism because of the obstinacy of a politician. The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. will assume the direction of the struggle from now on.



The C.N.T. defense committee was located in the workers' district of Pueblo Nuevo. There, two trucks were at the disposal of their mobile military staff. One of them carried the anarchist group, *Nosotros*, including Durruti, Ascaso, Garcia Oliver, Gregorio Jover, and Aurelio Fernandez. As soon as the defense committee received word that the infantry regiment at Pedralves Barracks and the cavalry in Montesa were beginning to stir, the two C.N.T.-F.A.I. trucks, their red and black banners waving in the wind, began to move. The workers' patrols stationed along the way understood that the hour of revolution had come when they saw the trucks pass. One of the two mobile command groups was stationed at the Ramblas and the Arco Plaza, a strategic location. Another command post was located at the Construction Union, now in the Gambo building. This was to become the "Casa C.N.T.-F.A.I." within twenty-four hours.

We will not go into the popular epic of the fighting in Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia, and so on. The reader can find the story of these days in other histories. I will, however, describe briefly the situation of the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists in Madrid and Valencia. In the capital, the C.N.T., which did not belong to the Popular Front, requested arms and was refused. They then decided to act on their own. A meeting was called for July 18, at which militants of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. and the Libertarian Youth participated, as well as the defense committees of the districts and some of the neighbouring towns. They decided to form a local defense committee, drew up a plan, and created workers' patrols of five members. Each member of the patrol had a pistol or a grenade. The people were uneasy. They demanded arms and control of the barracks. News was reaching the capital about the uprising. The unarmed workers in Seville, Cadiz, and Grenada were decimated. The Governor of Saragossa promised to give arms to the people but shot them down, including many confederal (C.N.T.) militants. In Madrid, the first arms were distributed on the nights of July 18 and 19, thanks to the initiative of some of the military who despaired at the folly of a government that still believed it was in control of the situation. The C.N.T. and F.A.I. workers got the first arms by seizing them from a truck passing through a traffic circle on Cuatro Caminos.

Casares Quiroga resigned on the morning of the 19th and, after three hours of Martinez Barrios at the helm, Azana turned to Giral to form a government. Many confederal and anarchist prisoners were back on the street in a few hours, among them David Antona and Cipriano Mera, but hundreds of social (political) prisoners were still in jail. Antona, who was secretary of the C.N.T. National Committee, sent

an ultimatum to Giral: "If our comrades are not released within three hours the C.N.T. will liberate them by its own means." The prison doors were opened following this threat. On Monday morning the people of Madrid attacked the barracks of Campamento and La Montana.

Meanwhile, in Valencia, the civil governor was deposed by the Popular Front parties and groups, together with the C.N.T., and an executive committee was created which rejected a delegate from the central government. Twelve days later the C.N.T.-F.A.I. initiated a people's assault on the barracks, which had been in a state of tense expectation, and they moved to the republican side.

The Civil War started in the republican zone with the highest expectations, and there are any number of descriptions of this event. The following passage from Federica Montseny speaks of Barcelona:

The day came to an end gloriously in the glow of fires, in the revolutionary intoxication of a day of popular triumph. The horns of cars speeding through the streets of Barcelona, filled with workers with guns in hand, sounded a marvellous symphony: "F.A.I., F.A.I., C.N.T., C.N.T." The letters C.N.T. and F.A.I. were inscribed on all the walls, every building, on all doors and entrances of houses and cars, on everything. The red and black banner waving in the wind was a fantastic triumph, a marvellous picture that we contemplated with enchanted soul, with shining eyes, asking ourselves if we were awake.

This was the scene practically everywhere in the republican zone, but above all in Barcelona and Catalonia, where the correlation of forces was overwhelmingly anarchist and anarcho-sindicalist.

For a period of a week or ten days, effective power was in the street. "There were no parties, no organizations, even when they went around under the red and black banner of the victors. There was only a people in the streets." (Santillan)

But the people turned the combined name C.N.T.-F.A.I. into a myth. For a long time they were regarded as merely two aspects of one indissoluble reality. After the triumph over the military, C.N.T.-F.A.I. became the united symbol of the revolution. Casa Gambo was now Casa C.N.T.-F.A.I.; a news bulletin was started and was called the *C.N.T.-F.A.I. Bulletin*. This identification of the two organizations with each other led to a dissolution of their differences. We must keep in mind, however, that for a time the F.A.I. was almost completely absorbed by the C.N.T. Anarchism and anarchosindicalism now gravitated completely around the dynamic, energetic C.N.T., in Catalonia and in the rest of republican Spain. This force flowed from an organization that had one and a half million members, that contributed thousands of

fighters and hundreds of thousands of workers and peasants, who were an essential part of the economic support of the war and the new revolutionary socialized economy.

The new situation developed most spectacularly in Catalonia. The correlation of forces was favourable to the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., who were in control of the region, and it was translated immediately into the creation of revolutionary organizations. The first of these was the Central Committee of Anti-fascist Militias.

### Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias

Who created this organization that completely polarized the life of the region until September, acting as a revolutionary government? Answer: the C.N.T.

On the afternoon of July 20, 1936, the military uprising just defeated, the local C.N.T. Federation of Barcelona held a plenary assembly of unions. The meeting had hardly begun when an urgent message was received from Luis Companys, president of the Generalitat, inviting the victors of the hour to meet with him. This was how the very famous interview took place. Companys made statements never before heard or printed, recognizing the dominant role of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. in the uprising and in the revolution. He placed himself at the disposal of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. for whatever they wished of him. The immediate future of Catalonia was decided at the local plenary of July 20. The C.N.T., which had more members than all other political and labour organizations in the region, faced a serious problem of correlation of forces and a very complex situation unforeseen at the Saragossa congress two months earlier.

Their dilemma was whether to choose an integral libertarian revolution toward the goals of May—libertarian communism—or to consider the situation as not limited to Catalonia but nationwide, with areas where anarchosindicalism was weaker than in Catalonia. This situation forced them to bear in mind the need to collaborate with other groups. According to Cesar M. Lorenzo, the C.N.T. could not transfer its direct responsibilities to others to govern, to individuals who would likely manipulate the C.N.T. and would probably be unable to carry the struggle to victory. (Cesar Lorenzo, *Spanish Anarchists and Power*, French edition)

A proclamation of libertarian communism would mean a break with the small parties that had contributed to the struggle and would inhibit their freedom of expression. It would hurt small property owners, small farmers, and merchants, possibly pushing them into a united opposition

against the C.N.T. An implacable dictatorship against part of the population would not only go against their own principles but would also mean committing suicide morally. In addition, there were the serious risk that they would not be followed by the rest of Spain, the problem of international conditions, the terrible risk of foreign intervention, relations with other countries, and so on. All of these problems affected the C.N.T. and the libertarian movement in Barcelona. An attitude of caution was defended by Diego Abad de Santillan, who participated in the plenum as a militant of the C.N.T. without forgetting that he was also a member of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee. Santillan, one of the key men in the new position at the time of the February 1936 elections, was now the champion of democratic collaboration. Juan Garcia Oliver opposed this position. Advocating "all or nothing," he urged the immediate introduction of libertarian communism.<sup>1</sup>

In summary, the local Barcelona plenum agreed "unanimously not to speak of libertarian communism until we have regained that part of Spain now in the hands of the fascists," according to Mariano R. Vasquez, reporting for the C.N.T. National Committee to the International Working Men's Association congress in December 1937. Mariano R. Vasquez was secretary of the regional confederation of Catalonia at the time of the plenum and later secretary of the C.N.T. National Committee. The plenum agreed not to carry out its totalitarian goals since this would risk imposing a dictatorship, forcing out all the guards and militants of the other parties who had worked on July 19 and 20 for triumph over the rebel forces, a dictatorship which would be choked from the outside if imposed internally. The plenum therefore decided, by a vote of all delegates except the district federation of Bajo Llobregat, to collaborate with all other parties and groups and form the Anti-Fascist Militias Committee.

<sup>1</sup> The position supported by Juan Garcia Oliver has been described as "anarchist dictatorship" or "totalitarian solution of the anarchists." Actually, though, Oliver was advocating application of the goals of the Saragossa congress in Barcelona and Catalonia at a time in history when, in his opinion, libertarian communism was a real possibility. How else could libertarian communism be brought about? It would always signify dissolution of the old parties dedicated to the idea of power, or at least make it impossible for them to pursue their politics aimed at seizure of power. There will always be pockets of opposition to new experiences and therefore resistance to joining "the spontaneity of the unanimous popular masses." In addition, the masses would have complete freedom of expression in the unions and in the economic organizations of the revolution as well as in their political organizations in the districts and communities.

This decision was supported on July 21 by a regional plenum of local and district federations called by the regional committee of Catalonia. The decision regarding the Central Anti-Fascist Militias Committee was presented to Luis Companys. The committee did not seek to terminate the Generalitat, but to make it subordinate to the committee. Companys manoeuvred during the transition for the support of the other parties to maintain the government of the Generalitat, but the decisive attitude of the C.N.T. delegates made all the groups, including the Generalitat, accept the proposal of the Confederation. It could not have been more generous. The new power gave the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., which was practically nonexistent in Catalonia, equal representation of three delegates each. The F.A.I. had two delegates on the committee, one each for the P.S.U.C. (Stalinist) and the P.O.U.M. (Trotskyists); there were three for Esquerra (Companys' party), one for the Rabassaires' Union (peasant trade union), and one for Accion Catalana (conservative nationalist). Garcia Oliver declared one year later:

The U.G.T. and the Socialist Party, minorities in Catalonia, were given equal representation with the triumphant C.N.T. and the anarchists; the sacrifice was made in the hope of leading the dictatorial parties to work together loyally and not be upset by suicidal competition.<sup>2</sup>

The F.A.I. had two delegates to this organization, Aurelio Fernandez and Diego Abad de Santillan; the latter was responsible for the militia, the former for security. Later, the central committee established many local committees, on which the F.A.I. was also represented in varying numbers. The central committee tended to concern itself with military matters exclusively, since new specialized organizations took charge of civil activities. The central supply committee was one such organization, with representatives from unions and parties—Valerio Mas, Facundo Roda, and Jose Juan Domenech from the C.N.T. and Juan Manuel Molina and Villar from the F.A.I. The New Unified School Council

<sup>2</sup> Santillan later defined the Central Anti-Fascist Militias Committee as follows: "The Militias Committee was everything, took care of everything—the transformation of peacetime industries to war industries, propaganda, relations with the Madrid government, help to all the battlefields, relations with Morocco, cultivation of available land, public health, guarding the coastline and the border and a thousand other different questions... The Militias Committee was a War Ministry in a time of war, an Interior Ministry and a [Foreign] Relations Ministry at the same time, inspiring similar organizations in the economic and cultural fields. There was no more legitimate expression of the power of the people."

was another organization. The Investigation Commission, headed by the F.A.I.'s Aurelio Fernandez, coordinated the control patrols, which had 700 men (325 from the C.N.T., 145 from the U.G.T., 45 from the P.O.U.M., and 185 from the Esquerra). Finally, in the field of judicial power, revolutionary tribunals were established. These were decentralized and derived their authority from the central committee.

Perhaps the most notable of all the new organizations was the Economic Council, established on August 11, 1936, also composed of representatives of all the parties and organizations. The Economic Council, which was created at the suggestion of the C.N.T., was at the centre of all economic questions in Catalonia. The C.N.T. representatives were Eusebio C. Carbo, Rofes, and Juan P. Fabregas; the F.A.I. was represented by Antonio Garcia Birlan and Diego Abad de Santillan, who now withdrew from his military responsibilities.

During this time, a series of outrageous acts was committed by uncontrollable elements, on which the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. stated their position. On July 30, the F.A.I. issued a frighteningly clear warning:

We declare coldly, with terrible calm and with full intention to act, that if the irresponsible people who are spreading terror throughout Barcelona do not stop, we will shoot every individual who is proven to have acted against the rights of people. Every individual so charged by the C.N.T. or the F.A.I. will be tried before a commission composed of elements of the anti-fascist front.

And then:

And Barcelona knows, and Spain and the entire world know, that the men of the F.A.I. never fail to carry out their promises.

On July 26, the Peninsular Committee broadcast its first radio message to the people of Barcelona. They were asked to multiply their efforts for the speedy takeover of Saragossa and the quick and victorious termination of the armed struggle.

In the meantime, the socializing process of the economy had begun. Jose Peirats tells us: "The revolutionary constructive impulse had risen from the people and from the C.N.T. unions and their militants." He added that the movement of requisitions, seizure of property, and collectivization was an accomplished fact confronting the committees, which were preoccupied with the turbulent revolutionary developments.

The unions gave orders to return to work on July 26. On August 1, the control of the factories and plants by the unions that were socializing the economy was in full progress. A plenum of local and district F.A.I. groups was held August 2, when a C.N.T. plenum also declared that the anarchists should remain in the anti-fascist committees to ensure an energetic, radical struggle without the politicians conspiring and making the people double victims. The F.A.I. also emphasized the need to stimulate the work of economic reconstruction, "which must go on from collectivization to socialization of the land, the mines and industry..."

Suddenly the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. faced the mobilization decree of the central government. The central militias committee worked out a formula that the mobilized youth report to the barracks but that they place themselves under orders of the militias committees established under the central committee. To reaffirm their position on this question, the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. held their first meeting at the Olympia, in Barcelona, since the start of the uprising on August 10. Mariano R. Vasquez spoke for the Regional Confederation of Catalonia, F. Isgleas and Oliver for the C. N. T., and Federica Montseny for the F.A.I. "We," declared Vasquez, "the C.N.T. and the F.A.I., cannot allow the people to be disarmed under any pretext. It is better that the arms be in the hands of the workers than the bourgeoisie..." The C.N.T.-F.A.I. symphony performed with no disharmony. At this moment the two organizations were seen as one and the same.

We see now that most of the time the F.A.I. followed the C.N.T. like a shadow. The government of the Generalitat acted as a shield for the organs created by the revolution. It provided a front to the outside world and to the central government, covering for revolutionary creations and sanctioning the accomplishments with *ex post facto* decrees. However, the Generalitat was being restored gradually. The conditions for the restoration of the Catalan government were to be found in the break-up of power by the different groups; in the serious international conditions, with the Rome-Berlin axis on the rise and Western democracies very distrustful of the revolution; with the U.S.S.R. reticent and cautious. In addition, Madrid's clear hostility toward the revolutionary authorities resulted in curtailment of financial assistance and military supplies. The revolutionary euphoria of the first days, however, concealed these realities.

## C.N.T.-F.A.I. and Government Collaboration

On the other hand, the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. clearly understood the significance of the circumstances in which they found themselves. What was not clear in the early days was that C.N.T.-F.A.I. representatives were acting like government officials when carrying out their executive functions in the militias committee and its complementary bodies. We have already noted that the rank-and-file militants in the unions had begun their revolutionary work. I cannot sketch out in this work the economic aspects of the Spanish Revolution, and advise the reader to consult specialized works. However, I wish to offer a part of the synthesis written by Burnett Bolloten:

The machinery and automobile factories, mines and cement factories, textile and paper industries, perfume and crystal bottle plants, food processing plants and breweries, and a multitude of other businesses were controlled or taken over by workers' committees. Both measures amounted to the same thing in actual practice. Movie theatres and legitimate theatres, publications and print shops, stores and hotels, restaurants and bars were also taken over or controlled, as were commercial and professional associations and thousands of properties of the upper classes.

This is an excellent description of the anarchosindicalists in commerce and services. The unions collectivized most of the fish and egg business, established a control committee for the slaughterhouses, and eliminated middlemen. They collectivized the central fruit and vegetable market, doing away with dealers and commission merchants but permitting them to join the collective as paid workers. The dairy industry was collectivized, and the C.N.T. Food Workers' Union closed down more than forty pasteurization plants as unhygienic; they decided to pasteurize the milk in nine plants, closed down the retail stores, and established more than 150 distribution centres.

Another surprising achievement was the creation of a health workers' union, a true experiment in socialized medicine. They provided medical assistance and opened hospitals and clinics.

In a second phase, the workers' unions undertook a massive reorganization of industry. The C. N. T. , and in some instances the U. G. T. , closed down more than seventy foundries in Catalonia and concentrated workers and tools in only twenty-four foundries. In Barcelona, the Woodworkers' Union closed down hundreds of small shops and concentrated production in larger factories. In the tanning industry, the number of factories was cut from seventy to forty, while in the glass



industry the number of factories and warehouses was reduced from 100 to thirty. The 905 barber shops and beauty salons in Barcelona were reduced to 212 larger units. The dispossessed owners received the same rights, and had to meet the same obligations, as the former employees.

In general, plants with more than 100 workers were collectivized or socialized. Plants with fifty to 100 employees could be converted if three-quarters of the workers so requested. Plants whose owners had fled, or who were declared to be fascists by the popular tribunals, were collectivized. Businesses operating at a loss were also collectivized. Businesses with fewer than fifty employees were placed under workers' control by the employees of the firm.

Regarding internal organization, the collectivized enterprise was run by a committee of five to fifteen members, depending on its size. The committee was elected by all the workers at an open meeting for a term of two years, with one-half elected each year. The committee named the manager.

In agriculture, the wave of collectivization was truly enormous: 500 collectives were organized in Aragon, more than 900 in the Levante, and 300 in the Centre region. Regional federations of collectives were established to coordinate agricultural production interchanges and the distribution of their products.<sup>3</sup> But the correlation of forces and the general problems of the war were causing serious concern in the higher ranks of the committees who now had powers they had never possessed before.

At the end of August 1936 the Generalitat invited the C.N.T., through Companys, to join the Catalan government formally. This invitation was repeated, in contacts that the president of the Generalitat maintained with Mariano Vasquez, Secretary of the Catalan Region at the time. The uneasiness arising from the problems connected with the war and relationships between the parties and organizations prompted the calling of a meeting, which was actually a plenum of the three branches of the libertarian movement, the C. N. T., the F. A. I., and the Libertarian Youth. The meeting, held in Barcelona at the end of August, was the first plenum of the three organizations in Catalonia, although such meetings had been held in the Centre and in other regions. The Peninsular Committee of the F. A. I. attended. The Libertarian Movement

<sup>3</sup> See Gaston Leval, *Collectives in the Spanish Revolution*; Sam Dolgoff, *The Anarchist Collectives*; Augustin Souchy Bauer, *With the Peasants of Aragon*, translated by Abe Bluestein; Burnett Bolloten, *The Spanish Revolution—The Left and the Struggle for Power*.

did not send many representatives because of the difficulty in consulting the base of the organizations. It returned to the question of whether to take power or to seek collaboration. Garcia Oliver returned to his position of taking power, and he was supported by his old comrades in *Los Solidarios* and *Nosotros*. Cesar M. Lorenzo quotes Ricardo Sanz's opinion on this question:

The situation generally did not progress favourably. It deteriorated while we were collaborating, making concessions constantly, and acting tactfully and responsibly. The enemies of the new order have nothing to lose, and they have increased their audacious blows and more or less veiled attacks against the revolutionary vanguard. They confuse our tolerance and sense of responsibility with cowardice. The *Nosotros* group considers that we must take full power regardless of the consequences.

There would be bitter reflections among other militants as well, alas too late. One of these militants was Abad de Santillan, one of the greatest advocates of democratic collaboration:

The militias committee guaranteed the supremacy of the people in arms, guaranteed the supremacy of Catalonia, guaranteed the resurrection of the Spanish rhythm and the Spanish soul; but they told us, and kept on repeating it, that so long as we continued to put our trust in the power of the people, no arms would come to Catalonia, nor would foreign currency be given to us to enable us to buy arms abroad, nor would they give us raw materials for industry. We felt that to lose the war was to lose everything, to return to the same miserable, impoverished condition as during the reign of Ferdinand VII. We were also sure that our impetus could not disappear entirely in the militarized forces and the economy projected by the central government. We set aside the militias committee to incorporate ourselves into the government of the Generalitat, in the Defense Council, and in other vital departments of the autonomous government.

The plenum of the libertarian movement decided to participate in the government of the Generalitat. The decisions were supported by the F.A.I. and were binding on all participants. They put a condition on their participation, namely that the governing body be called a council rather than government, and Companys accepted this without difficulty. Companys offered the F.A.I. representation on the council of the Generalitat; however, everyone felt that this ideological element of the movement should not participate as the F.A.I. in a governmental body, but that members could do so on a personal basis. In this way, the essence of a small part of the libertarian movement was preserved while the main part of the movement, the C.N.T., was trampled down.

At that time, the militants still believed that the evils of political collaboration were temporary. In any event, one F.A.I. member, Antonio Garcia Birlan, went on to represent the C.N.T. in the Department of Health, and after that Santillan himself went on to sit on the Economic Council of the Generalitat in place of Fabregas. Other members of the F.A.I. held high positions on the Generalitat Council, like Aurelio Fernandez, practically Chief of Police in the Security Department, and Garcia Oliver, practically head of the Defense Department of the council behind Colonel Diaz Sandino.

We have seen how naturally the C.N.T.-F.A.I. tie functioned from the first day of the struggle: like Oliver at the Saragossa congress, we can affirm that the F.A.I., absorbed in the heart of the struggle and its unconditional support of anarchosyndicalism, forgot about itself to an extent. The C.N.T.-F.A.I. tie substituted for organizational activities that the F.A.I. should have carried on during the first period of the Civil War. Until well into September 1936 the F.A.I. gave no sign of life as a peninsular organization, although it acted intensely with the C.N.T. in all regions. The following undated circular was issued at the end of September:

Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.). Peninsular Committee Circular No. 1.

To the Regions and Groups:

Esteemed Comrades, Greetings:

Much time has elapsed since this committee sent out its last circular to the organization. During this period many things have happened of the greatest importance for our movement and for the proletarian revolution in general.

We believe that you understand the reasons for this failure to communicate. The many urgent tasks that had to be taken care of forced us to set aside the work of the organization. Now, somewhat calmed down in carrying on the work of the revolution efficiently, we are reorganizing the Peninsular Committee completely, looking to make it function normally.

We must give you reports as quickly as possible, with all possible information. We must not forget that our reports must be summaries of what the regions send us. We recommend that all of you report your activities and the activities of other parts of our movement in your zones so that we can fulfill our function of a liaison committee.

This committee has tried to unite our specific organization with the confederal movement so that we would constitute a single front to support our ideals at the highest level. The feverish activities of the first moments of the struggle, and the no less intense activities that followed in the war and economic reconstruction, were shared fully with the confederal organization. Our combined initials became one name.

We tried to create organizations that would meet the needs of the moment. Commissions were created to handle oral and written propaganda, within our country and abroad. Unfortunately, our propaganda did not reach all corners of Spain as we would have liked.

We tried constantly to gain acceptance of our point of view in the confederal organization. We introduced important resolutions calling for changes of conduct which would make our proposals and ideas acceptable to them. And we shared responsibilities in the new organizations created by the needs of the revolution with anti-fascist groups that did not share our ideas. The details and scope of these activities are so complex and so large that they cannot be explained in the limited space of a circular.

We will report to you in detail later, but in the meantime the general lines of what is going on have been reported in our press and in other publications.

We have called for international solidarity. This call has been heard by our brothers in all countries, and they are helping the Spanish movement to the best of their ability. We have received money from some places. Comrades have come from other places to shed their blood in our cause.

We asked that this help be given to us more efficiently. We asked that financial contributions be sent to locations that were not exposed to harmful currency fluctuations. We asked comrades who were rushing to Spain to remain at home where they could help us more, since we had more than enough men volunteering for the front. In a word, we were trying to guide our comrades abroad to the best of our ability.

The fight against fascism continues its bloody course. Our primary interest was and continues to be to win it. We must understand that our ability to win depends upon how well our forces are organized and how much cohesion we can achieve. The more we organize our armed forces the more effective they will be. We must build upon the favourable response of the people to the heroism of our militants and increase our field of action. The influence of the F.A.I. must reach into all corners. We need many prepared groups for this. The example of the regions that are structuring their organizations should be followed, so that the great halo surrounding our movement is translated into an increase in our membership. Our ranks must understand the situation clearly so that we can replace our fallen comrades in the fight against the fascist assassin.

The problems that we must deal with are so great that we prefer to limit ourselves to this point for today. We will deal with other problems in future circulars that require urgent solutions. We will not tire you further for the moment.

Fraternally yours and always for anarchy. The Peninsular Committee.

On October 25, the Peninsular Committee published Circular No. 3, as follows:

Iberian Anarchist Federation. Peninsular Committee. Barcelona. Circular No. 3.

To all Regional Committees, Local Federations and Groups:

**Moments of intervention.** Because of the critical circumstances that we face, the fascist uprising and the struggle to crush it, because we could not realize our goals and ideals quickly and completely, because we were forced to accept collaboration with other sectors to win the war, because we had to maintain relations and collaborate with antagonistic political parties as long as the war continued, and because the people demanded it, we supported intervention in official bodies that we previously tried to change, giving them the revolutionary impulse that our participation demands.

We have explained this intervention more completely and in greater detail at other times; for the moment we declare only that the need to act as we did must be accepted in order to understand the following arguments.

**Termination of the present political function in the Union.** The popular organizations that we had to satisfy, that we helped to create, and that we participated in as an integral part of the antifascist block, had to absorb functions that we always entrusted to the unions. The machinery of the unions must be maintained, its beneficial functions preserved, even though it will not have the political mission previously assigned to it.

In the countryside the many activities in agriculture cannot be given to different unions at the same time. With each trying to do the same thing, they will only hamper each other's efforts. Nor can we turn to a single sector only, because, not representing everyone, it can be only partially effective. We can only turn to a single organization that embraces all of the community interests, develops and defends them. This organization can be an exclusively professional union or a municipality through special commissions. The important thing is that it does not break up into factions, which would be anti-economic and suicidal.

In the city and industrial centres, good economic progress requires that the industry be run by a single union which will fulfill its professional function apart from ideology. Its only goal will be the smooth operation of the industry or branch of the industry that it represents. If we introduce discord in the economic field and split our forces we will have a chaotic situation.

Looking ahead to what can happen, we must foresee the disappearance of the union as such in many situations, and the fusion of our fighting organization with similar organizations of other tendencies.

**Our urgent and decisive mission.** If we do not want our ideas regarding the new society to be destroyed, if we want to exercise our influence on the progress of collectivizations, we must have an organization that represents our ideas in a magnificent body of doctrine which we have maintained and enriched with so much determination.

The unions, converted into mixed organizations from a political point of view, can only perform their professional function. There must, therefore, be a prime mover with a great deal of energy to move toward humanity's goals of renewal and emancipation. This prime mover can only be our specific organization.

The F.A.I.'s popularity has risen to unexpected heights, and it must increase its membership to reflect its great popularity.

We must increase our membership immediately. Our membership drive must start now. This accelerated enrolment of new members can result in the admission of members not judged carefully enough in advance. We can use procedures to help evaluate candidates after they have joined us. We can refrain from reporting all of our activities until we get to know the new members better.

**We must change the present forms of our organization.** Our organization was composed of small affinity groups which worked very well in the heroic periods of the underground. But those who did not participate then do not see much value in these groups and their influence is diminished in the eyes of the new people.

Our movement is now in a new era. Our activities are increased considerably and our base must therefore be larger. We must mobilize a large number of militants to unleash their organizing capacities if we are to achieve the transformation we have sought for so long. We must seek out the comrades who have been unknown to us and draw them in to work with the more active comrades. The unions, our beloved C.N.T., can be an inexhaustible source of militants for our anarchist movement.

Let us go on with enthusiasm and determination to harvest the fruit that we have earned with our work in the revolutionary movement.

With nothing more for the moment, we remain yours and for anarchism.  
For the Peninsular Committee. The Secretary. Barcelona, October 25, 1936.

The general lines of the important reform that came to a head in July 1937 were foretold in the October 1936 Circular No. 3. The F.A.I. was to be converted into a mass organization, the "prime mover of fabulous energies" that was to make the unions more mixed. However, the F.A.I. circular was more critical about the readiness of the C.N.T. to join the government. The organization did join Largo Caballero's government on November 5, 1936, after a period of preparation. This was foreseen from the beginning. The Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. could not and did not ignore it because they had participated in it.

The attitude of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. in Catalonia and their method of solving the problem of political collaboration set the course for intervention by the C.N.T. in the central government. The pragmatic arguments regarding the circumstances of the war were the same in Catalonia as on the national level.

Largo Caballero followed Giral as head of the republican government on October 5, 1936. When the C.N.T. agreed to join the council of the Generalitat in September 1936 Caballero understood that the C.N.T.'s attitude toward the central power had been formulated. Caballero made a first proposal to the C.N.T. for participation in his government, and then he waited. This first offer of a ministry without portfolio was

accepted in principle by the National Committee of the C.N.T. The provisional head of the organization was now David Antona since the head, Horacio M. Prieto, who had been elected at the Saragossa congress, was cut off in the Basque country where he had gone on a mission for the organization.

A national plenum of the C.N.T. on September 3 rejected the provisional decision of its National Committee which had designated Antonio Moreno, a militant of the Centre region, as a possible minister without portfolio. They proposed a national government based on the two union federations, the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., headed by Largo Caballero. In Catalonia, the libertarian movement had already decided to participate in the government of the Generalitat but was still keeping this secret. Prieto was back by this time; he was in charge of the C.N.T. national committee, and exerted a decisive influence in favour of participation in the central government. Prieto criticized the decision of the national plenum at a meeting with some militants in Valencia and openly supported participation by the National Committee but with a number of ministers. The Levante region supported his arguments at a national plenum of Regions in Madrid on September 15. The C.N.T. did not reject political participation as such this time, but the manner in which they should participate.

A commission representing the different tendencies was appointed: Juan Lopez of the Levante, Federica Montseny of Catalonia, and Aurelio Fernandez of Asturias. Their report called for the creation of a National Defense Council with five delegates from the C.N.T., five from the U.G.T., and four republicans, presided over by Largo Caballero, with Manuel Azana as president of the Republic. Prieto called two more national plenums before a definite decision was taken, one on September 28 and the second on October 18. The decision to participate was adopted in principle, and Prieto was designated to work out the arrangements. He suggested to the National Committee the names of Juan Lopez and Juan Peiro—two former *treintista* reformists—and Federica Montseny and Juan Garcia Oliver, radical members of the movement, as F.A.I. militants. Garcia Oliver adamantly refused the proposal at first but finally accepted unwillingly because he believed that his place was in Catalonia. It was also difficult to persuade Federica Montseny, but she was advised to accept by her father, Urales, a leading anarchist thinker and writer.

The F.A.I. was also participating at this time in some of the municipal councils in Catalonia. In Asturias they participated in forming an overall governmental body, such as the Council of Asturias and Leon, with

Onofre Garcia Tirador and Ramon Alvarez. A Council of Aragon was formed around October 15, at Fraga, with a number of anarchists and members of the F.A.I. The council was actually a type of revolutionary government, among whose first members were Miguel Jimenez, a founder of the F.A.I., and Jose Alberola, Joaquin Ascaso, and Miguel Chueca, well-known anarchists. In the Levante two members of the C.N.T., Juan Lopez and Juan Ripoll, as well as Evangelista Campos of the F.A.I., helped organize and were members of the popular executive committee.

The F.A.I. was represented on the executive committees and People's Tribunals in many small and large communities in the region. The truth is that the F.A.I. was present in the People's Tribunals almost everywhere in republican Spain. The F.A.I. was also represented in the provincial councils of the region, the former provincial representative bodies. When the republican government came to Valencia after the Nationalists had reached the outskirts of Madrid, the executive committees ceased to exist. New municipal councils took their place, and the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were represented on these. Anarchosyndicalist and anarchist participation in municipal bodies was to be found in practically all of republican Spain. Some F.A.I. and Libertarian Youth groups in Valencia that supported the newspaper *Nosotros* were strongly opposed to the libertarian reformism and government collaboration.

The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. participated in local governing bodies in provinces in Andalusia and Estremadura in the republican zone. In Madrid, especially after the delegate defense council was replaced by a municipal council in April 1937, they participated with an F.A.I. representative.

### **Facing International Anarchism and Anarchosyndicalism: Difficult Justifications**

C.N.T. participation in the Generalitat government of Catalonia and in the Central Government, with the implicit agreement of the great majority of F.A.I. groups, greatly disturbed anarchist circles internationally because of the rejection of principles by their Spanish namesakes. We have already pointed out some of the reasons they used to justify such an abandonment of principles. Prieto was the principal supporter of C.N.T. participation in government. He later urged that the F.A.I. become a political party. Prieto presented the following view



of the situation during the summer and autumn of 1936 in the course of his intense public activity:

The libertarians were not prepared psychologically or materially to impose their rule in the republican zone, much less to win the war against fascism. If, in spite of all expectations, they triumphed over both the fascists and the other anti-fascists, the foreign powers would strangle the revolution with an economic blockade and armed intervention. On the other hand, the republican government not only was leading the loyalists to disaster by their unseeing policies and military inadequacy, but they were using their forces to fight the proletariat, their militias, and their revolutionary work. It was therefore necessary to incorporate the conquests of socialization into an advanced democratic state, to centralize military operations, and to neutralize the pressure of the great powers. Finally, the participation of libertarians in all local and regional political bodies, its transformation, in effect, to political participation since the first days of the Civil War, and the desire of the masses to see a real anti-fascist unity must result in sharing the highest responsibilities in the country.

We have here a first attempt at what we now call the Spanish libertarian movement's "difficult justifications" for its failure to act according to its principles. This reasoning led to a series of difficult explanations, which we will discuss later.

The National Committee of the C.N.T. tried to defend its participation in the government at the congress of the I.W.M.A. in Paris in December 1936.

The F.A.I. repeated these arguments in a report to the International Libertarian Movement:

We cannot destroy the government because as soon as we brought down the governments in Madrid and Barcelona, the entire world would recognize Burgos [Capital of Franco's Fascist government]. Why not? An anarchist Spain without a government, without juridical responsibility, nonexistent from the viewpoint of international rights, a revolutionary Spain that threatened all the established interests of capitalism, of the small and big bourgeoisie, of reaction and the democracies; all the European powers would oppose it.

It should be pointed out that the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists did not ask their Spanish co-religionists to destroy the governments, only not to join them. The report of the F.A.I. described as a "first step" the decision of the libertarian movement of Catalonia to participate in the Council of the Generalitat. It was written by a commission composed

of delegates from Guixols, Hospitalet de Llobregat, the C.N.T. regional committee, and the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee. The statement declared:

This was the first step. If the organization had decided not to do so, the new government would have been set up without the C.N.T. and the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (P.S.U.C.-Stalinist, belonging to the Third International) would have more positions; in effect, they were taking advantage of the expected assistance from Russia and were plotting military initiatives that we had to oppose for ideological reasons and which we still have not overcome. Under such circumstances, we could not oppose the government, because such an opposition and conflict would only weaken it. We would have been in an inferior position if we had remained outside the government. We were masters of the street, most of the arms were in our hands. But could we use the weapons criminally and start a fratricidal battle in the streets that would have endangered the outcome of the struggle at the front? As to the possibility of our assuming sole political, military, economic, and diplomatic responsibility, this was an absurd dream whose consequences would have been fatal for everyone who joined in such an adventure.

The C. N. T. and the F. A. I. were in agreement at this stage of the Civil War in their defense of collaboration. They even thought that anarchist and anarchosyndicalist participation in the government tended to modify the nature of the government as if the latter were accepting the premises of the anarchists rather than the reverse. The following article in the libertarian paper *Solidaridad Obrera* of November 1936, one of many published at the time, stated that the C.N.T. had always been anti-state and an enemy of all forms of government.

...circumstances, always stronger than human will, although influenced by it, have changed the character of the government and the Spanish state. The government has stopped being an oppressive force against the working class in its regulation of the organs of the state. The state no longer serves to separate society into classes. With the participation of the C.N.T., the state and government no longer oppress the people... Our comrades bring the collective will and the majority of the working masses to the government through their large meetings in general assemblies. Historical necessity weighs heavily on everything. The C.N.T. agrees to serve the country as a historical necessity because we want to win the war as quickly as possible and save the revolution...

We have here an exaggerated optimism, according to Jose Peirats, in his monumental work (*The C.N.T. in the Spanish Revolution*, three volumes in Spanish), an optimism that was never and could never be fulfilled. The libertarian militants accepted the developments with a

sense of fatalism. The libertarians were prepared neither morally nor materially to impose their point of view on the republican zone, as Horacio Prieto stated, but not for his reasons. They had not studied an alternative to revolution and the immediate establishment of libertarian communism, as was proclaimed at the C.N.T. congress at Saragossa. The F.A.I. had also failed to study possible complications. The reports that were studied before the actual revolution are extraordinarily elaborate and try to anticipate eventualities. However, the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists saw themselves as the only force capable of making a revolution. When the Civil War came, they were petrified and unable to react. Only Orobon Fernandez foresaw, in 1935, a revolutionary alliance with communists and socialists, assuming that everyone's goal was a stateless and classless society. But even this strategy did not have any significance because the actions of the others were not anticipated, especially the Communist Party and its fight for power by any means.

In addition to the prevailing sense of fatalism and the particular nature of the situation, we must not close our eyes to a clear fact: the exercise of power by a large number of militants at all levels of collaboration, ranging from ministers, sub-secretaries, and military chiefs to delegates in municipal councils, had to have a devastating psychological effect on men who had always refused to give any quarter. This is part of human nature. Some comrades were unconsciously going through mental changes and adapting themselves to pure opportunism. Little by little, even the ministers who belonged to the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. began to find the revolutionary work at the base excessive and inconvenient. We will go into this matter in more depth later.

The C.N.T. and the F.A.I., together and separately, were strongly criticized by international anarchism and anarchosyndicalism. One of the strongest and clearest arguments was, without doubt, that of Sebastian Faure, the well-known French anarchist theoretician who knew and admired the Spanish libertarian movement. Faure spoke the language of the Spanish anarchists, and he began by recognizing the great difficulties and complex problems that they faced. "I do not stand before you as a judge. I feel a great horror in any court. My nature and my experience with human beings incline me toward indulgence and, in the words of Madame de Stael, I say: 'To understand something completely is to pardon it fully.'" Faure continued: "This is what I wanted to say above, when I wrote that our friends accepted the functions, the positions, the responsibilities, and little by little they found themselves tied up

and forced inexorably to act like others who take ministerial positions and become one of the many essential gears of the state.” And further:

There are those who object that I, following this line of reasoning, am considering only the principles, and many times the principles are contradicted by the course of events, the facts, by what is usually called reality. Love and respect of principles are characterized as a cult when they must be set aside temporarily and returned to as quickly as possible when the new realities make it possible. I understand this objection, and here is my reply:

First: if reality contradicts our principles, they must be false and we must hurry to abandon them. We must have the loyalty to admit their fallacy publicly and we must have the courage to oppose them with all the ardour and energy with which we supported them previously. And we must immediately look for principles that are more solid, more just, and infallible.

If, on the other hand, the principles on which our ideology and tactics are based are to be upheld, whatever the facts may be, then they are as valid today as they were yesterday, and we must be faithful to them. To draw away from the line of action based upon our principles—even under exceptional circumstances and for a short time—is to commit an error and incur unwise dangers. To persist in this error means to commit a mistake that will lead gradually to the provisional abandonment of our principles and, with concession following concession, their complete abandonment. Again it is the gears, the fatal pendant that can take us far away.

After pointing out that, in the second place, the experience of the comrades in Catalonia only demonstrated the validity of their principles, Faure stated that, in the third place,

...the thought and customs that the federal organizations of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. had implanted and prepared the working masses to live by had been seriously hurt by the introduction of their outstanding representatives into the centralized government councils.

The action to be taken, the struggle for freedom, the decisions to be made and to be carried out, and even the responsibility for declarations, were logically and automatically diverted. The impulse no longer came from the base but from the top; direction of the movement did not start with the masses but with the leaders.

Faure then declared, in his long analytical work, that the Spanish experiment must put the movement on guard against the danger of concessions and alliances, even under difficult conditions and for limited periods of time.

To say that all concessions weaken those who make them and strengthen those who receive them is indisputable. Every agreement, however temporary,

between anarchists and a political party which is anti-anarchist in theory and practice is a deceit, and the anarchists are always the victims. This has been proven by experience, by history, and by simple reason. The loyalty and sincerity of the anarchists are always caught up by the perfidy and tricks of their authoritarian partners in a joint venture, however provisional and temporary.

This is not a question of role models in the sense that authoritarianism is treacherous and anti-authoritarianism angelic. This is a statement of fact, a summary of historical experience, as we shall soon see. The experience of anarchism and anarchosindicalism in the Spanish Civil War will make its mark in ways that could not be foreseen by advocates of "efficiency" at the top of the libertarian movement, among whom we include Horacio M. Prieto. Prieto's practicality, his seemingly infallible prescriptions for what the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. should do, did not take into account the implacable triangular struggle going on in republican Spain between the fascist rebels, the revolution, and the counter-revolution, a struggle of all against all in which the goals of each were not related or limited by the facts.

### Theory and Practice To May 1937

The Spanish Civil War faced a series of international circumstances as soon as it started. The first of these was the rise of the Axis totalitarian powers and the Western democracies' fear of starting a war for which they were unprepared. The strategy of the Axis in the Spanish war was immediately clear: the Nazis, who had prepared their aircraft for worldwide action, did not find it inconvenient to have Mussolini's Italy play the starring role in a Mediterranean strategy aimed at occupying the Balearic Islands. Their immediate goal was to set up a government on the Islands friendly to Italy, preparatory to moving on to Madrid. Germany favoured Mussolini's plan because it would keep him away from the Western powers. They had already offended Il Duce with the approval of economic sanctions by the League of Nations when Italy invaded Abyssinia. Hitler wanted to distract Italy from Germany's primary interest at that time: the annexation of Austria. This was a difficult situation, because Italy harboured similar intentions for what remained of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the meantime, the Mussolini adventure was an outlet for the aggressive mood of Italian fascism. The two Axis powers proceeded to provide nationalist Spain with war materiel within a few weeks.

In the camp of the democratic powers, France, governed by the Popular Front headed by Léon Blum, was a potential ally. However, the French radicals, who were part of the government, were opposed. They argued that if there had been no reaction to Germany's invasion of Alsace-Lorraine there was no reason to provoke a war in support of republican Spain. In spite of this, Blum agreed to a sale of war materiel to the latter. However, Prime Minister Baldwin of Britain warned Blum that such an act would provoke the Axis powers and paralyze his good intentions. The Non-Intervention Committee, created in August 1936, permitted the powers most directly involved in the Spanish situation to play their lamentable game: France, England, Germany, the Soviet Union, and Portugal. The Committee quieted everybody's conscience, permitting open intervention by Italy, Germany, and Portugal, and the most cautious and limited assistance by Russia and France, even to the extent of closing the Spanish-French frontier at times. The Soviet Union played the card of supporting republican resistance, but not to the point of aggravating Nazi Germany. They were trying to reach a pact with Germany at that time, which finally materialized in 1939. If we take into account that later, on September 29, at Munich, France and England signed a pact that sanctioned the annexation by Germany of the Sudetenland region of Czechoslovakia, it had to be understood that republican Spain was practically abandoned to its fate at the hands of totalitarian domination and that it had to crush the military uprising by its own resources. Few people were able to see what was going to happen to republican and revolutionary Spain. Durruti was one of those. He spoke to the men in his column from the City Hall balcony at Bujaraloz before the fruitless attack on Saragossa:

Our victory depends on how quickly we act. The sooner we attack, the greater our chances for victory. The possibility of victory has been with us so far, but we must conquer Saragossa immediately. If we allow the powers, Italy and Germany, to intervene in our war, it will be difficult to conquer the fascists because they have more war materiel than we have.

Shortly before, Durruti had given another example of his intuitive understanding of the Spanish problem in an interview with the Canadian journalist Pierre van Paasen: "No government in the world can give assistance to a proletarian revolution; the rivalry between the imperialists might result in support for our cause... But I do not expect such aid, not even from our own government."

The entire history of the period confirms these opinions, from the fear of the Western democracies to the passivity of the republican

government and its policy of stabilizing the revolutionary fronts by the decisive expedient of withholding arms. To stabilize the war was to lose it. To start the expensive creation of a new army instead of mobilizing the revolutionary energies of the people was to lose it also.

Returning to a previous question, another very serious problem of the Spanish Revolution was the tripartite struggle unleashed by the Civil War between the nationalists, the republican government, and the revolution, with each fighting against the other two. The techniques of deception were brought into play to confuse the true situation in Spain. The republican leadership tried to dominate the revolution and made extraordinary efforts to deny its existence. The struggle for the democratic and bourgeois republic was the goal proclaimed by the republican governments and the Communist Party of Spain. But in reality, according to Bolloten, this great camouflage could cover up neither the evidence of the revolution nor the implacable struggle for power by the Communist Party.

This work cannot cover in depth the increasing influence of the Communist Party, which was directly associated with the growth of the Spanish counter-revolution. The fact is that Moscow's support was conditional on the influence and prestige accorded the party by the republican governments and the prominence given to the Soviet ambassador in Spain and his company of counsellors, advisors, and members of the police apparatus.

It must be remembered that the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (P.S.U.C.)—the Catalan arm of the Communist Party—whose birth (on July 19, 1936, in Barcelona) and development were respected by the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists in their policy of democratic collaboration, struck a first blow in a surprise attack against them in Barcelona in the early days of May 1937.

Great tension followed the fighting. The crisis started May 3, with a surprise attack on the Telephone Building by the Assault Guards of the Public Order Commission of the Generalitat. This company was taken over by the C.N.T. and the U.G.T under the collectivization decree that was in force, and a representative of the Generalitat government participated in the management committee. The situation of the Telephone Company was entirely legal. In what is without doubt the most astonishing chapter in the history of the Civil War, how could a department of the government which controlled the police forces strike such a blow without the prior knowledge of the Generalitat government? How could the armed forces and police act without orders from the Counsellor of Internal Security, Artemio Aiguade, backed by the Chief of Police,

Rodriguez Salas, both communists?<sup>4</sup> It is incredible that an attempt to alter the status of the telephone system, as well as all the other collectives protected by the Collectivization Decree, would be made by a minority section of the government with a surprise armed attack. The C.N.T. had the post of Counsellor of Defense in the Generalitat. However, it has been proven historically that the attack that started the conflict on May 3 could not have been unleashed without the implicit or explicit knowledge of Companys, who was secretly looking for his hour of comeback in spite of his proclamations of July 1936. The conduct of the anarchists and anarchosyndicalists in the governments of the Generalitat and Largo Caballero demonstrated that they were not seeking the conquest of power, only loyal participation in the collective war effort. Preserving anti-fascist unity by any means was the first responsibility. The groups and parties reached the conclusion that the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. would not react to blackmail. Companys was asked if he was not afraid of the anarchists' reaction if such and such an event occurred. George Orwell stated that Companys denied laughing at such a possibility.

The C.N.T., F.A.I., P.O.U.M., and Libertarian Youth rank and file took to the streets to fight immediately, but the top committees of the libertarian organizations succeeded in stopping the action. Even the C.N.T. ministers in the central government went to Barcelona to bring a halt to the fighting. What was not mentioned at the time was the fact that the Defense Council, which was under C.N.T. control, remained neutral. All of this demonstrates the confusion that had reigned within the C.N.T. and F.A.I. committees, which had decided to participate in the government, partly to prevent counter-revolutionary measures by the authorities. In order to preserve anti-fascist unity, which some of the committees spoke of as something sacrosanct, and to avoid losing the war, the C.N.T. and F.A.I. militants abandoned the streets, deceived. The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. had lost the initiative. This development had enormous implications: the autonomists, led by Companys, lost control of the region. The central power seized control

<sup>4</sup> In a similar episode, the same Aiguade, as Counsellor of Public Order, had issued a decree on March 4, dissolving the Control Patrols and ordering their enrolment in the Public Order forces, under the Counsellor's control. This action would disarm the revolution and was taken unilaterally without officially informing the government or the four C.N.T. representatives. The violent reaction of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. militants against this measure and against their own representatives in the government caused the decree to be withdrawn. It resulted in the crisis of April 26 and a revamping of the Generalitat.



of all positions of command and did not relax its hold until the struggle was over. The suspicious neutrality of the Esquerra (the liberal nationalist party headed by Companys) in this conflict was fatal for the autonomy of the Catalan government. A paradox now became apparent. The autonomous government of Catalonia was linked to the existence of a strong federalist movement like the anarchists or the C.N.T. in Catalonia. On the other hand, the predominance of Stalinism prepared the objective conditions for the ruin of the autonomous regions. The neutralization of Catalan autonomy contributed to the disintegration that preceded the catastrophic collapse of resistance before the nationalist advance at the end of 1938.

The P.S.U.C. was able to upset the political equilibrium in Catalonia in its own favour, supported by a union of all the counter-revolutionary forces it was able to mobilize. The goal of unity, however, was lost. Although precarious at times, the attempt at unity had lyrical moments, like the meetings of the central executive of the Communist Party and the National Committee of the C.N.T. early in 1937, and the effort to clear up the friction between members at the base in both organizations. Unity remained a theme for propaganda and getting new members, but the truth is that the basis for agreement in support of the Republic was declining irreversibly, and conditions for a victorious outcome were deteriorating.

### **Theory and Practice After May 1937**

The immediate consequences of the May events were as follows: destruction of the P.O.U.M. and the subsequent assassination of Andres Nin by the Stalinists; fall of the Largo Caballero government; departure of the C.N.T. from the central government in solidarity with Caballero; loss of autonomy by the Generalitat of Catalonia; rise of the Negrin government; loss of influence of anarchism and general repression in Catalonia; and corresponding increase of communist influence everywhere, in the organs of power and control of command positions in the army. We will not deal with individual episodes here, such as the repression of the libertarian movement that followed in Catalonia. We have already seen that the responsible committees limited themselves to waiting out the temporary situation without assuming a defensive posture. They therefore were unable to resist the repression later. The C.N.T. demanded the dismissal of Ayguade, but Companys would not hear of it. Later, when the government of the Generalitat was being reorganized, the C.N.T. would not agree to a change in the make-up of representation.

Companys added another minister from his own party, and when the president allowed the C.N.T. to withdraw from the Catalan government, he remained practically in the hands of the P.S.U.C.

The C.N.T. and the anarchist militants felt greatly deceived after the events of May, but they followed the calls for peace by the C.N.T. and F.A.I. committees. There was one group, nonetheless, which refused to compromise. The Friends of Durruti refused to lay down their arms and called upon the Catalan proletariat to continue fighting until the communist and Catalan parties were defeated. When they saw that the militants were following the appeals of the committees, however, they laid down their arms. In the following weeks they edited a publication, *El Amigo del Pueblo* (Friend of the People) and conducted a lively propaganda campaign. On May 8, the Friends of Durruti, characterized as anarcho-bolsheviks by Cesar M. Lorenzo, distributed a manifesto that stated:

We knew beforehand that the responsible committees of the C.N.T. could only place obstacles in the path of the proletariat. We are the Friends of Durruti, and we have enough authority to remove the individuals who have betrayed the working class because of lack of ability or cowardice. At a time when we no longer faced enemies in front of us we returned the power to Companys, public order to the reactionary government of Valencia, and the Commissariat of Defense to General Pozas. The betrayal is immense.

*A Manifesto of Communist Union* was distributed in Barcelona at the beginning of June 1937, signed by the Friends of Durruti, P.O.U.M., and some groups of Libertarian Youth, which strongly attacked leading C.N.T. and F.A.I. militants:

Since July 19, the anarchist leaders have given in a number of times to the demands of the bourgeoisie and in the name of anti-fascist unity openly betrayed the working class. Anti-fascist unity was nothing but submission to the bourgeoisie; it led to military victories for Franco and triumph of the counter-revolution in the rear. To conquer Franco we had to overcome Companys and Caballero. To conquer fascism we had to smash the bourgeoisie and their Stalinist and socialist allies. The capitalist state had to be destroyed completely and be replaced by workers' power based in committees of the working class. Apolitical anarchism has failed... To overcome the bloc of the bourgeoisie and their allies, Stalinists, socialists, and the leaders of the C.N.T., the workers must break openly with traitors of every type. Their vanguard, the revolutionary militants—Friends of Durruti, P.O.U.M., and Libertarian Youth—must regroup themselves to develop the programme of the proletarian revolution.

This violent proclamation clearly reveals the viewpoint of P.O.U.M. at the time. They had succeeded in pulling in the radical elements organized in the Friends of Durruti. A more moderate P.O.U.M. manifesto, edited by Andres Nin, appeared on May 12: P.O.U.M. denounced the Stalinist provocation and justified its struggle alongside the revolutionary workers; the result of this struggle must be the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government and a deepening of the revolution. The libertarian response to the Stalinists' action was declared to be obviously incoherent; although they had tremendous strength, the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. could not avoid being forced out of the political scene and, even more serious, they could not avoid the repression unleashed against them... in Catalonia! If Nin and his followers had won power, they would probably have followed the example of the Stalinists. The opinion of an activist of the first rank at the time is interesting. Diego Abad de Santillan, Counsellor of the Economy in the Generalitat until April 26 and a leading member of the F.A.I., explains the attitude of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. during the May events. Santillan was somewhat away from the action at the time, but his presence in the headquarters of the Generalitat was important to achieving a halt to the shooting: "We were on the telephone two whole days and nights in the Generalitat until a new government was formed and the shooting stopped."

Santillan recounted that when a squad of young men started to make threats, he telephoned the coastal batteries, which were controlled by libertarians, and told them to call the Generalitat every ten minutes. If there was no answer at any time, they could act, namely, open fire on the Generalitat Palace. "This was the answer to Companys' threats against us. We explained that the coastal batteries were aimed at the Generalitat and that only one volley would destroy the building and everyone in the building would suffer the same fate."

This is a magnificent example of what the global strategy of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. could have been for the Civil War and the revolutionary period. But the leaders of the organizations lacked the decisiveness to firmly carry out such a strategy. A ceasefire was achieved and a new Generalitat government created. In the meantime, the central government assumed public order in Catalonia and decreed that control of the militia in Aragon be taken over as well.

At that moment, said Santillan, "we had the sudden sense of the complete loss of Catalan autonomy and, as a result, the loss of the war." There was still time to oppose this turn of events and to keep things under better control, Santillan continued. Juan Manuel Molina, former secretary of the F.A.I. and at that time subsecretary of the Council of

Defense, resisted the leaders of the Confederal militia, who wanted to intervene in the fighting. Molina was able to hold back a motorized column that had been put together on the Huesca front to go to Barcelona.

There was enough war materiel available to dissuade, with force if necessary, future attempts at blackmail and provocation. The entire republican zone could be an immense Generalitat under the coastal guns, reduced to rubble, if everyone, not only the anarchists, did not respect the rules. May 1937 was to be the time of decision for the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. : either everyone abides by the rules of the game or accept responsibility for the collapse with all its consequences. In the end, history would be the judge. Said Santillan:

We were in a position to return to Valencia and reject the nomination of General Pozas and his officers, and we were able to stop the columns of Assault Guards and frontier guards who were coming with Colonel Torres. But our movement leaders lacked confidence; we did not have a nucleus of men who could take hold and maintain a position in an emergency. And we advised Juan Manuel Molina that he give General Pozas the position of Captain General and command of our militia.

Referring to the crisis that provoked the fall of Caballero and withdrawal of the C.N.T. from the central government with the formation of the new Negrin-Prieto government, Santillan continued:

However disgusted with the conduct of those comrades who were acting as leaders, we could not simply fold our arms and do nothing. We met for a first exchange of impressions with the secretary of the C.N.T., Mariano R. Vasquez, and with Garcia Oliver. The course to follow would depend on these first impressions. We expressed our judgment on the May events; they had been provoked from abroad and our people were unhappily compelled to fight; but once in the street we made the mistake of stopping the fighting without having resolved any of the problems. We recognized our mistake and we believed there was still time to recover our positions. It was impossible to reach an agreement. They replied that we had done the right thing to stop the fighting and that there was nothing to do except to await developments and adapt ourselves to them as well as we could.

The developments that followed were the police and judicial repression against the P.O.U.M. and the anarchist militants. Dirty assassinations were committed. We personally saw mutilated corpses of sixteen members of the Libertarian Youth of San Andres and other neighbourhoods brought to the Sardanola cemetery at night by ambulance. The marks of torture and mutilation were very clear. And there was no reaction to these evil

deeds. It was also clear that Santillan had helped shape the course that led to this tragic situation, and he came to deplore it.

In spite of these offenses, the C.N.T. maintained a dignified front, and the National Committee explained to the organization that they had presented three points in a meeting with Azana, president of the Republic:

1. The C.N.T. is not responsible for the situation. It considers that the issue raised is not important compared to the problems of the war and the anti-fascist front. It denies responsibility for what may follow from the recent events.
2. It will not collaborate in any government without comrade Francisco Largo Caballero as prime minister and minister of war.
3. The government must have labour representatives as its base, as well as the collaboration of the anti-fascist sectors.

The National Committee also responded negatively to Negrin when he asked for their collaboration. They stated that the C.N.T. had not provoked the crisis and that they approved of Largo Caballero's policies. They attacked the duplicity of the political parties.

This attitude was approved by the F.A.I. militants. However, soon after their public declaration of support for Largo Caballero they informed Prieto that they were with him. When he, in turn, failed in spite of confederal support, "they joined Negrin and remained with him until after the defeat."

But we are now concerned with the logical consequences of the collaborationist and governmental policy at all costs. It had created a spirit of "inertia and resignation," in the words of Cesar M. Lorenzo, due to the serious international situation that prevented the anarchists from sweeping away republican legality. Now, Lorenzo concluded, the positions that they had been yielding

amounted to an actual defeat since the C.N.T. had chosen the status quo without using its strength. They did not wish to take power, only to rescue a situation which continued to develop unfavourably for them. They entered into negotiations with their enemies, stating their conditions, using developments intelligently and with clear objectives. (C.M. Lorenzo)

However, in addition to the resignation and inertia, the movement's representatives had undergone a change in their thinking. Their state of mind in time influenced the structure of the organization, which had been penetrated by authoritarian practices that had never before had a place in the movement. This was Sebastian Faure's fatal penchant.

The C.N.T. and the F.A.I. survived by adapting themselves to developments. But they lost their true character; their identity. They were unable to avoid supporting the counter-revolution, and thus they lost everything, as we shall soon see.

Was political collaboration at all costs the way to lead anarcho-syndicalism out of the labyrinth of the Civil War and the revolutionary experience? Did not anarchism and the C.N.T. have other options? Some militants believed that if Franco was not victorious before the summer of 1937, C.N.T.'s participation in government would be largely responsible.

The plot was woven with the C.N.T. in the government, and in spite of its collaboration. But sincerely, what would have happened if the C.N.T. had not participated in the government? Very likely a super civil war would have drained anti-fascism and opened the way to military victory for Franco... (Horacio M. Prieto, *Spanish Anarchism in the Political Struggle*)

Anarchism would have been accused of historical responsibility for such a development. Prieto's closed logic seems to suggest that the war would have lasted one year instead of the three dramatic years that it did last—only to be defeated. But the truth is that collaboration prevented the anarcho-syndicalists from using all their resources. It led them to believe that political collaboration would be a shield against all dangers.

In any event, the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. were indestructible. They comprised a third of the armed forces, most of organized labour, and the base of economic production and exchange in the republican zone. Any attempt to attack them would have resulted in an immediate collapse of the republican zone. Attacks on the C.N.T. and anarchism, however daring, could not go beyond certain limits.

There were cards the anarcho-syndicalists could have played, even outside the sphere of government, but they had to avoid losing the creative abilities of the July days, to increase their popular influence, to play intelligent politics of revolutionary alliances. Peirats characterized this problem very well, pointing out that the collaborationist policy of the C.N.T. resulted in indecision and confusion and created an atmosphere alien to the C.N.T.

The most tragic thing for the C.N.T. was the confused situation in which they could not play the political game, yet did not want to leave it alone. As a result, they could not make decisions quickly and were almost always late. The constant appeal to anti-fascist loyalty, to sacrifice and tolerance, were the hallmarks of their political impotence.

Fast action, Peirats stated, followed by a change of front toward the opposition, would have made the C.N.T. a feared and respected organization. "The international scene, the disastrous course of the war, the government's freedom from responsibility, and a return to their own tactical and strategic type of campaign could only have favoured anarchosyndicalism's positions." To remain in enemy terrain was to be always at the mercy of their attacks. This descent into contradiction did not save the C.N.T. from the crossfire of debate. Peirats concluded: "This included criticism from the opposition within the confederation, represented by certain groups and publications, and by the collectives, the unions, and the municipalities, as well as attacks from all the opposing parties." The unions at the base, which had carried out the revolutionary work, fought tooth and nail to preserve the revolution, and, in the final analysis, to save the historic reputation of the C.N.T. for the future. No one had done as much as the C.N.T. in a war in which so many groups had acted in the most sordid manner.

As for Prieto's argument that the C.N.T.'s absence from the government would have led to a super civil war and opened the way for Franco, with the libertarian movement held responsible for the disasters: the C.N.T.-F.A.I. and the other anti-fascist groups found themselves pitted against the communists and the Negrin supporters in March 1939 at the end of the Civil War. Collaboration with Negrin and his supporters had become impossible; blind collaboration after the disaster would only be seen as unconditional submission to the party at the top in their struggle for total power. It was a decision that the movement had delayed taking and that it took slowly. As for acting in the name of history, this was not even considered.

### **Councils on Political Affairs and the Peninsular Plenum of the F. A. I. Change of Structure**

The C.N.T.'s opposition to Negrin commenced with its publication, on May 21, 1937, of a full report on the crisis which brought him to power. The F.A.I. also published an extensive manifesto on May 21, stating that the May events must be seen as a manoeuvre of the political parties and the petty bourgeoisie. According to Jose Peirats, starting May 27, the C.N.T.'s former ministers gave public explanations (at a series of conferences) on the difficulties they encountered in fulfilling their missions.

A national plenum of C.N.T. regions was held on May 23. The Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. participated and intervened in the

report on defense of revolutionary conquests. They also introduced the idea of a libertarian movement composed of the C.N.T., the F.A.I., and the Libertarian Youth. This plenum approved the position of non-collaboration with the Negrin government, however at a later national plenum on June 3, a political programme was presented that declared all else as entirely subordinate to the needs of the war. The programme was an indirect call to Negrin, with whom they had refused to collaborate two weeks earlier, for a single command and strict discipline; creation of a National Council of War Industries, formed by the two national union federations and representatives of the government; a single police force and a Council of Public Order, composed of republicans, Marxists, and libertarians, with the power and authority to arbitrate outbreaks of conflict; creation of an Economic Council, with equal representation from unions and the government, including commissions for foreign trade, municipal administration of housing and land, and legalization of industrial collectives established by the unions or the state; and creation of an inspection service of working conditions composed of U.G.T. and C.N.T. representatives. They also asked for a revision of all legislation prior to 1936 and the establishment of a National Council of Education. This information comes from Cesar M. Lorenzo.

On June 14 a joint regional plenum of union and F.A.I. groups was held in Barcelona. The most important question on the agenda was: "What attitude should we adopt in the present political and social situation?" The plenum agreed to participate in the Generalitat with the same ratio of representatives as in the previous government. Even if they did not actually participate, it was reasoned, they could still collaborate on specific issues, such as putting an end to repression against the collectives and against militants. The committee named to study the situation decided on a propaganda campaign throughout Catalonia, culminating in a great regional demonstration in Barcelona to demand mobilization of the rear and that the president of the Generalitat redistribute his ministers.

The meeting then made a momentous decision: "To lend greater expediency and flexibility to the confederal organization in resolving all political problems, an advisory body will be set up within the regional committee; this Advisory Council on Political Affairs will comprise the following members, named by the organizations represented: C.N.T., two; F.A.I., one; Libertarian Youth, one; peasants, one." This information comes from Jose Peirats.

This Advisory Council on Political Affairs would have the authority to enlist all the technical help necessary. Its mission would be to report



on all the political problems confronting the confederal organization, and even to intervene in government. Signatories of the report: "for the Construction, Lumber, and Decoration Union, C. Flores; for the Local Federation of Quixols, Francisco Isgleas; for the Local Federation of Hospitalet, Manuel Collado; for the Regional Peasants' Committee, Juan Arans; for the Regional Committee of the F.A.I., Severino Campos; for the Teachers and Liberal Professions Union, Juan P. Fabregas" (Peirats).

The Advisory Council for Political Affairs deserves special commentary because of the importance it was to have in the libertarian movement. Again, I am indebted to Horacio M. Prieto, whose opinions on this subject are invaluable. Prieto believed that the political counsellors failed in their mission.

We know the experience of the political counsellors during the Civil War: they needed absolute power to make decisions on urgent matters, but they did not command the necessary respect; there was no disciplined platform; they worked with a movement lacking political education; unacknowledged dictatorial power to adopt resolutions but complete disorder when trying to put the resolutions into effect in the movement.

In 1966 Prieto added: "They were a type of Marxist anti-Marxist politburo whose control and decisions did not liberate the unions, although the union committees accepted the apparatus and the decisions in a normal manner." Prieto believed that inorganic phantoms dominated the organic bodies and would soon "be preparing the elections, naming candidates, drawing up programmes that would shape the minds and the conduct of the unions." He missed the efficiency and discipline "of a brain trust that did no work, was untouchable and incorruptible, and was obeyed with religious veneration." Things never reached this point in the libertarian movement during the war. It cannot be denied, however, that Sebastian Faure's predictions were being fulfilled, and that the circumstances encouraged a change in the thinking of the people involved, and transformations in the structures of both the C.N.T. and the F.A.I.

We now turn to the peninsular plenum of the F.A.I., held in Valencia July 4-7, 1937. This national plenum marked the tenth anniversary of the F.A.I.'s founding. We must bear in mind that the basis of the F.A.I. was the affinity group of five or ten members. The groups were federated locally or by district, and then in regional federations. Finally, all the regional federations, including the Portuguese, constituted the F.A.I., represented by the Peninsular Committee. A

general count of organized groups at the February 1937 plenum tallied 5000 F.A.I. members; the figure could be 7000 if we add groups not counted at the plenum for various reasons. Peirats tells us, however, that the F.A.I. had 30,000 members before the July 16, 1936, movement.

The July 1937 plenum brought about an essential modification in the F.A.I. structure. Circular No. 3, dated October 25, 1936, had announced a proposal to alter the traditional structure of the organization so that it could adapt to the new situation. The most important of these reports is reproduced here in its entirety because it not only reflects the change in organizational structure, but also points to other changes of greater scope, which we will analyze later.

General considerations: grave and serious deficiencies were pointed out by all regions of the F.A.I., making it impossible to take care of the practical problems arising from the present economic and social transformation. The groups that formed the initial cells were fine in the periods of underground activity and fulfilled a historic mission. At this time they are not suitable for activity out in the open, where everybody can recognize us and can recognize our creative and responsible spirit.

Our present organizational form does not have the flexibility to carry out our resolutions and decisions needed in each situation. Our own comrades are not familiar with our resources, and this could be a serious danger for the organization and the revolution.

The F.A.I. represents the best chance for the success of the revolution. It must limit itself to the absolute necessities of the hour, focusing on the basic problems that must be handled.

Without setting aside the needs of the revolution itself, without lowering our goals, we must understand that the circumstances we face are greater than our individual will or the collective will of the anarchists. We must face these problems of libertarian reconstruction as they arise and resolve them with the help of heterogeneous elements in society as a valuable contribution to revolutionary transformation.

We must excel in actions that require strength, energy, and perseverance in battle, fortified with the ethical and philosophical values of our ideals so that we have nothing less than social revolution in Spain—the only social revolution since the early days in Russia in 1917, which, as revolutionists and anarchists, we cannot sacrifice.

The F.A.I. would not be able to fulfill its mission if the war were lost. We must maintain the principle of the revolution with firmness in order to win the war. Victory in the war must be a triumph of the spirit, the ideas and the realizations of anarchism. It must be more than a duty. It must be a goal not only of anarchism and the confederal workers' movement but of the entire working class. The producers of the world will follow our example. They will apply our forms of living together to the psychological, political, and social conditions of labour everywhere.

We can be more effective in action and in our revolutionary methods by affirming our libertarian principles clearly. If our organization does not face up to developments with all the force of our libertarian ideals, we will be at a disadvantage when confronting violent situations in which bourgeois and dictatorial parties will be fighting to displace anarchism and restore Spain to its pre-July 19 situation.

This is vital and urgent for the F.A.I.

To restructure our movement and use the tactics that will bring us victory in the war and in the revolution, we must be coherent, disciplined, and courageous in action, subordinating ourselves individually and collectively to our ultimate goal. The F.A.I. must have a programme that embraces all aspects of political and social life and shows us how to act at all times and in all circumstances.

If we want the masses to support the transformation that we propose, we must present solutions that can be understood by the general public and be identified with their intimate desire for economic emancipation and political liberation.

The revolution must be oriented and directed. And this orientation and direction must be in the hands of the workers and the organizations that truly represent them.

The F.A.I. has its hands on the powerful levers of revolution.

The intelligent and honest use of all the social energies, organic or inorganic, to be found in society, must be the main concern of the F.A.I. Many nuclei that move about without firm ideas can be brought into the orbit of the F.A.I. Individuals and factions can add their energies to ours, and the F.A.I., uncompromising in its devotion to the revolution, can harmonize these actions into a single channel.

All groups that do not seek to impose the particular hegemony of a sector or party can work alongside the F.A.I. or parallel with it.

All absolutisms are bad. They become tyrannies and dictatorships in politics. The Iberian people cannot fall into the old error of feeding and supporting them.

Liberty, coordination, and revolution must be the new theme of brotherhood for all who want a social transformation for the benefit of the people and not for the advantage of a party or faction.

The F.A.I.'s results will depend on its actions. The F.A.I. assures its effectiveness and the future of the Spanish proletariat in the following declarations.

**Foundation.** Considering that the natural tendencies of the individual and the demands of social life lead humanity toward a free society, without classes or interests to obstruct its development, the Iberian Anarchist Federation declares:

That its principal objective is the achievement of this goal. All of its actions and its affiliates will aim for the transformation of social relationships and the full development of the individual and the collective to guarantee their economic, political, and social emancipation.

**Declaration on the Current Situation.** It is imperative that anarchism as an institution be known in public in Spain as providing an orientation

to all the workers in their revolutionary relationships. The F.A.I. agrees that the needs of the war are of maximum importance. However, it will support the revolution in all popular organizations.

**Anarchist Interpretation of the Spanish Revolution.** The F.A.I. states that Spain is in a period of profound transformation in its economic life. Feudal ownership of the land that has survived since time immemorial is being transformed rapidly into collective ownership, destroying with it the prime historic bulwark of Spanish capitalism. The workers have developed the new institutions with their creative instinct, their revolutionary intuition cultivated by anarchism and libertarian education over many years. On the other hand, the great industrial enterprises have also taken on a collectivist character, resulting in a fundamental change in the national economy. The relationships of the anarchists have been changed by the new collective interests. We, who until yesterday fought without respite against injustice and tyranny, find ourselves on the side of institutions newly created during the revolution as an expression of the deepest desire of the masses. We propose the obliteration of what remains of the bourgeoisie, and we will support and strengthen the organizations that work toward this goal. In the meantime, we believe that all anarchists should serve in as many public institutions as possible to help them move toward the transformation. This is a break with our past opposition to such participation.

The F.A.I.'s immediate mission will be to help the unions organize production on a large scale and to exercise strict control over the means of production.

**Political Vision of the F.A.I.'s Revolutionary Position.** Just as the F.A.I. is concerned with the fundamental transformation of the economy, it also feels that it must assert the principle of federalism in the political area, consistent with the history and geography of Iberia. It wants the return of the peninsula to its specific base. It proposes to integrate its political development on the basis of its special natural characteristics: federation, allowing each geographic region autonomous development without compromising development of the whole. Like the district and the town, the natural cells of the peninsula will be synthesized with their different languages and customs.

**The F.A.I. at Home and Abroad.** As we proceed to reorganize, the F.A.I. reaffirms that it will fight to destroy caste prejudice and violence, which seeks the subjugation of one people by another. We express our respect and exaltation for all the moral values in our libertarian traditions and for the artistic, cultural, and scientific riches in the Iberian peninsula. This is not to be confused with accepting any kind of nationalistic speculation.

**Norms of Living Together.** Without prejudicing its right to influence in Spain, the F.A.I. declares that our revolution cannot be the expression of any totalitarian creed. It must reflect all popular elements that influence political and social life. As anarchists, we oppose totalitarian government. We believe that the spirit of our people will flow from the joint action of all elements which agree to create a society without class privileges, in which the institutions of work, administration, and living together will be the

means by which Spain develops the federal channels to satisfy the different regions.

**Standards for Membership in the F.A.I.** Every manual and intellectual worker can belong to the F.A.I., providing he accepts the general principles outlined above, is ready to work toward their realization, and respects the resolutions adopted at regular meetings. Every member of the F.A.I. will be required to carry out missions delegated by his committees, having been approved by assemblies and congresses.

**Concerning Affinity Groups.** The affinity group was for more than fifty years the most efficient organ for propaganda, communications, and anarchist work. The affinity group has no official role in the new F.A.I. organization.

The plenum understands that affinity groups must be respected, but they cannot participate as in the past in view of the new forms of organization adopted by the F.A.I.

**Organization of the F.A.I.** The F.A.I. will be organized as follows:

- a) local groups in places of low population density and according to the organization's degree of development;
- b) neighbourhood and district groups in large urban centres;
- c) local federations of neighbourhood groups;
- d) depending on the local group in the neighbourhood, the district or the local federation, there will be a membership commission as described below;
- e) regional federations, composed of local groups or federations in an area;
- f) federations of provinces, corresponding to political boundaries organized for purely political reasons with all the groups and federations in each province;
- g) regional federations formed by all the neighbourhood and local groups in the area of the region;
- h) Iberian Anarchist Federation, to which all the regional federations of the Iberian peninsula belong.

**Admission to the F.A.I.** Every candidate who requests admission to the F.A.I. will send his application, endorsed by two members, to the local neighbourhood or district group. A file will be opened for each person. The general assembly of the local federation will decide if the application is to proceed.

**Full admission:** members can be accepted with all their rights:

- a) militants who belonged to the F.A.I. before;
- b) militants who were active in unions, cultural groups, and so on, associated with anarchism before January 1, 1936.

**Conditional admission:** those who do not meet the above qualifications but whose report is favourable cannot be given positions of responsibility or representation until six months after admittance as a member.

If the conduct and personal circumstances of an applicant are of interest to the F.A.I. in the opinion of a number of older militants, a new file will be opened which will include the reasons these comrades support the application. It will then be submitted for examination and approval to the local federation, if in a rural area. Large local groups, as in city neighbourhoods, will be

governed by committees named at their general assemblies, in which members will have the right to speak but only full members will have the right to vote.

Committees of local federations will be named at assemblies from all the neighbourhoods, and resolutions will be applicable to all members equally.

Area, provincial, regional, and peninsular committees will be named at congresses or plenums. An agenda drawn up with the participation of all the groups will be sent to them in advance.

**Official positions.** Committees of the local or neighbourhood groups or the local federation will have a general secretary, a vice-secretary, a treasurer, an accountant, and as many members as the circumstances require, with the prior approval of the general assembly. Each person will perform the functions of his position. The membership committee will be in touch with the committee, but it will report directly to the general assembly which appointed it. The committee will name as many special technical committees as it deems necessary at their first meeting.

Officers will be elected semi-annually as the assemblies determine, taking into account the work done by the general assemblies.

F.A.I. delegates in public office must report to the committees on their mission and their actions. They must maintain close contact with the committees and follow their guidance at all times.

Every F.A.I. member named for any public office can be removed from the position whenever the appropriate body of the organization so determines, and the committees will be required to submit reports on their actions to the membership.

Ultimate F.A.I. power will reside in its general assemblies in the case of local groups, and in plenums and congresses of area, provincial, regional, and peninsular federations.

Between congresses, the Peninsular Committee will have the authority to guide the general activities of the organization and must report to the plenums.

The area, provincial, regional, and peninsular committees will be named by corresponding congresses. They will name the secretary, the treasurer, and the accountant directly. The remaining positions will be filled as needed.

The neighbourhood or district groups will be served by the local federation.

**Auxiliary Organizations.** Groups will be created in production centres and other suitable locations for purposes of growth and propaganda. All of these groups will be in close contact with their respective commissions and will carry out the general programme then in effect. All F.A.I. members are expected to join these groups and support the programme at their respective locations.

**Additional.** In view of the common ideology and close bonds that unite it with the C.N.T. and the Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth, the F.A.I. will strengthen its relations with these organizations, maintain delegations with them, and stimulate joint action for the entire great anarchist family.

Valencia, July 7, 1937.

For the report: the regional delegations of the Centre, Levante, Catalonia, Aragon, Andalusia.

Note: the regions of Estremadura, the North, and Asturias did not attend the plenum because of the war.

There are many ambiguous passages throughout the text—the standards for admission to the F.A.I., for example. It is no longer necessary to be an anarchist, only to accept the report, with its mixture of ideas and doctrine. The F.A.I. is now eager to transform itself into an organization of the masses. The new collective interest has modified the relationship of the anarchists to their surroundings, according to the sections on Foundation, Declaration on the Current Situation, and Anarchist Interpretation of the Spanish Revolution. There appears now an opinion regarding the historical conception of the State, concluding that anarchists must abandon their opposition to the State and participate in as many public institutions as possible in order to strengthen and transform them. This idea is reinforced in a later passage dealing with F.A.I. delegates in public office: they are obliged to report their activities to the committees, maintain contact with them, and follow their guidance to the letter. All these public offices can be terminated when the F.A.I. so determines. Between congresses, the Peninsular Committee will have the authority to guide the general work of the organization, and will be answerable to the plenum. This gives a large mandate, increased authority, to the Peninsular Committee—equivalent to being directors of the organization.

All this had to come to grips with the ambiguity in the theoretical foundation of the F.A.I. and in the political philosophy of anarchism regarding the State and authority. The section Standards for Living Together states that anarchists are enemies of dictatorship, both of caste and party, and therefore of all forms of totalitarian government; this leaves unanswered the question of political, liberal, democratic, and bourgeois government.

The Peninsular Committee presented these ideas to a number of public meetings in Madrid, Cartagena, Castellon, and other cities, with Angel Rodriguez, Salvador Cano Carrillo, Claro Sendon, Miguel Gonzalez Inestal, and Federica Montseny as speakers. On July 27, the Peninsular Committee issued the following manifesto:

Workers of Spain: The F.A.I. has fought for your emancipation at all times, has been in the vanguard of the struggle for your revolution, for the conquest of effective liberty for the working class in the war against fascism and the international bourgeoisie. The F.A.I. now opens its doors to you.

Every revolutionary who fights for liberty, against exploitation and calumny, against every attempt at repression and dictatorship, has his place of honour. The F.A.I. decided to increase its ranks at its last historic plenum in Valencia to make our embattled federation the instrument of the libertarian revolutionary proletariat. The F.A.I. will not be just another political party; it does not renounce its goals or its methods. It stands before the reality of Spain that is giving birth to the new world and sheds the generous blood of its best sons who want to achieve a way of living together in a libertarian spirit and calls upon all true revolutionaries to go forward together.

Our F.A.I. wants the victory of the people, of the proletariat, not of a party. It wants the revolution with and for the proletariat. It invites those who are with the Spanish revolution, the revolution of liberty, to join our ranks. Together, in a powerful iron bloc, we will go on to victory. Together with the F.A.I. we will crush reaction!

For our proletarian Spain!

However, when the resolutions were submitted to a referendum of the regional plenums of groups, they were supported in some regions and encountered strong opposition in others, especially in Catalonia. Gilabert offered the following version of what happened in an important article at the time:

A regional plenum of groups in Catalonia was also held in Barcelona on August 5, 6, and 7. The restructuring of the F.A.I., which had been approved in Valencia, was discussed: the majority at the plenum accepted the new structure, but a considerable minority was opposed. The disagreements were so great that some of the opposition groups threatened to walk out. In view of the gravity of the problem, which threatened anarchist unity, a committee was appointed to look for a formula of reconciliation that would bring together the different points of view. The committee drafted a report that was approved by all the groups of Catalonia at the plenum. It stated: "After considering very carefully the arguments raised in support of the different opinions by various delegates and considering further the absolute need for cordiality within the anarchist family, we declare: the majority support the decision of the peninsular plenum. However, in recognition of the strong opposition to such an action, to the point of threatening a split, the groups are free to reject the restructuring of the organization and to continue as they have until now, recognizing that the vote of each group at organizational meetings will have the weight of the number of members the group represents. The resolution called upon the Peninsular Committee to call a peninsular congress as quickly as possible because only such a congress has the sovereign right to change the structure and ideology of the organization. (Gilabert, *Solidaridad Obrera*, October 12, 1937)

Another important innovation arising from the new structure was the vote by simple majority. Jose Peirats says that upon his arrival from



Argentina Santillan was one of those who fought hardest to introduce the majority vote.

On August 14, there was yet another plenum, the Local Federation of Groups of Barcelona. The problem was studied again, also with considerable opposition. A number of delegates, among them Jose Peirats, walked out shouting "Long live anarchy!" From that point on, the author of the three-volume *C.N.T. in the Spanish Revolution* (Spanish only) ceased to be active in the F.A.I.

It was not unusual that people not at all involved with the F.A.I., although active in the C.N.T., would participate in an F.A.I. plenum. Horacio M. Prieto, for example, whom I have frequently quoted, did not fail to follow the newest turns of the F.A.I. to their ultimate implications. He pointed to the need for a political party as the instrument of collaboration inaugurated by the C.N.T. and the libertarian movement. The delegates, however, after listening to the "circumstantialist" arguments, refused to follow Prieto to his logical conclusion. It was not the first time that he had raised the idea of a political party:

We presented the need to organize a political party at the service of the movement at a meeting of militants belonging to the higher committees (C.N.T. National Committee, Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I., C.N.T. Regional Committee of Catalonia, C.N.T. Local Federation of Barcelona, and the Peninsular Committee of the Federation of Libertarian Youth), held during the latter half of 1937. The time had not yet come, however, to discuss the idea publicly.

Very serious developments had taken place in connection with the Civil War. In the first place, and this was regarded to be of minor significance, the F.A.I. was declared to be an illegal organization by Justice Minister Irugo, and was prohibited from serving on the Tribunals of Justice throughout the entire zone, where they had been represented until then. At the same time, Andres Nin was taken away and assassinated by Stalin's agents in Spain.

On August 11, 1937, the central government dissolved the Council of Aragon by decree and discharged its president and councillors. The decree was signed by Indalecio Prieto, who now named the crypto-communist Ignacio Mantecon as Governor of Aragon. He also appointed Lister, the well-known communist chief of the 11th Division, as army executor of the decision. The farm collectives were attacked militarily, and their land and equipment were given back to the former expropriated owners or to others who asked for the property. More than 600 C.N.T. militants were arrested. Even destroyed were the collectives established

by mutual agreement among small landowners who limited their collective to their own property. The 27th Division (P.S.U.C.) and the 31st Division (Catalan Separatists) followed the example of the 11th Division in their respective spheres of influence (Jose Peirats, *The Anarchists in the Spanish Political Crisis*—Spanish only). Great defamation campaigns were then conducted against the revolutionary wave of collectivization in Aragon, Catalonia, Levante, and the Centre by those who were destroying the kulaks at the same time in Soviet Russia.

Since this was in a sense a repetition of the May 1937 events in Barcelona, we must repeat the question we asked at that time: what were the 25th, 26th, and 28th Divisions and the 153rd Mixed Brigade, all anarchist units on the Aragon front, doing while all this was happening? And the answer is: The higher committees of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. had advised them not to abandon the fronts. The committees appeared to be obsessed with preserving unity that had developed in connection with the popular front programme. The attitude of the confederal organizations was what it had been during the May events in Barcelona.

The truth is that the Aragon collectives were part of the economy of subsistence in the republican zone and were practically indestructible. Those who tried to destroy them were compelled to let them function again, and the collectives continued until the end. However, the triangular struggle continued: the anarchists, the P.O.U.M.ists, and the left socialists were now neutralized and had passed to the opposition. The brain of the Aragon operation, Indalecio Prieto, a right-wing socialist who in exile never stopped lamenting the communist executioners in Spain, was the next victim, since the right-wing socialists were also removed from power. As the basis of power was steadily reduced, the ability of anti-fascists to resist was being eaten away.

### **Late and Incomplete Reaction of the F.A.I. Military Defeat and Collapse of the Republic**

The nationalist offensive, which was started on March 9, 1938, ended with Franco's troops at the Catalan border and on the Mediterranean beach at Vinaroz. This left republican Spain divided in two, with Catalonia isolated from the rest of the zone.

The nationalists completely conquered Aragon, the area of the libertarian communist experiment. They could not conquer the people, however, who fled from the nationalist forces, creating a gigantic refugee problem in Catalonia. The massive exodus amounted to a referendum in favour of the anarchist collectives.

By this time, the Negrin government was settled in Barcelona, and the Generalitat was on its last legs. A little earlier, Companys, who had opened the door to Catalonia for the central power with his unclear conduct during the May events, tried in vain to hold on to the war industries in Catalonia that had been created by the workers' unions. A swarm of bureaucrats descended on the unions and asphyxiated them under the pretext of centralizing production. The Russian advisors used the opportunity to brazenly proselytize in the factories. The workers, discouraged by the strict control that precluded any initiative on their part, did not increase production. They relaxed and waited fatalistically for providence to come from the state, which helped paralyze the resources and the capacity to resist of the frustrated Catalan people. The irresponsible proselytizing and the fight for power by military and political commanders did the rest.

The sombre developments produced a series of events: on March 18, 1938, the C.N.T.-U.G.T union pact was signed and a liaison committee established between the two organizations. At the end of March, the Libertarian Youth sent a second battalion of volunteers to the front, and the union centrals of Catalonia, the F.A.I. and the Estat Catala (conservative nationalists) joined the Popular Front. On April 2, the executive committee of the libertarian movement was established in Barcelona. On April 6, 1938, the C.N.T. entered the Negrin government. Let us examine briefly the more important of these events.

The C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact and its provisions were regarded as the way for the C.N.T. to join the Negrin government. Cesar M. Lorenzo regards the pact and the C.N.T.'s entrance into government as a double triumph of the C.N.T. over the socialists

who had thereby suffered a double defeat and satisfied all the demands of the libertarians who, for once, knew how to use the circumstances (the military situation, political-economic developments, evolution of public opinion) and demonstrated flexibility, tactics, diplomatic subtlety, and political sense.

This is an astonishing statement considering that the content of the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact still makes anarchosyndicalists blush. Peirats describes the text as "centralist congestion." The truth is that it is difficult to recognize anything of the pre-Civil War confederal spirit in the text. "The state is the master of everything, of the army, industry, the municipalities, the economy, and the nationalized land, and the peasants are simple tenants. Add to that the imposition of high interest charges by the state through the banks and nationalized credit."

Finally, said Peirats, "the control committees will be elected democratically by the workers, but the government will set the powers of the controllers by law. The controllers will thus be controlled by the state."

The socialist Araquistain greeted the C.N.T.-U.G.T pact with pleasure because it revealed a C.N.T. that had become Marxist—much closer to Marx than to Bakunin. The diplomatic subtlety appreciated by Cesar Lorenzo was developed at the cost of converting the C.N.T. to Marxism, at least in the text of the agreement. It was coherent in preparing the bases for a future libertarian party that Horacio supported openly.

The executive committee of the libertarian movement was established at a joint meeting of militants from the C.N.T., the F.A.I., and the Libertarian Youth. The chief architect of this plan was Garcia Oliver, who pleaded for increased discipline in the army, in the factories, and in the unions. The executive committee would direct everything: the press, the confederal troops, the economy. Garcia Oliver's proposals were approved unanimously by the delegates, and a committee drafted a resolution giving birth to the executive committee of the libertarian movement in Catalonia.

Fidel Miro, former secretary of the Libertarian Youth and president of the Anti-Fascist Youth Alliance, was named secretary. Other members were Francisco Isgleas, Germinal Esgleas, and Xena.

This committee, composed of ten members, had drastic powers—the right to expel individuals, committees, and organizations. It had jurisdiction at the front as well as in the rear. It proposed to stimulate militarization, intensify production at all costs, and facilitate C.N.T.'s entrance into the central government, the Generalitat, and into all state apparatuses. The committee would act as advisor to military and political commissions.

The new executive committee, which had the approval of the C.N.T., the F.A.I., and the Libertarian Youth of the region, soon showed their methods of operation, ordering Tomas Moro, Orille, Magro Capell, and other militants to appear before them on March 20 for having committed various infractions in their respective fields of activity. This executive committee, said Peirats, introduced practices without precedent in the entire history of libertarian organizations.

The National Committee of the C.N.T. was not ready to tolerate such abandonment of all libertarian principles, Cesar M. Lorenzo tells us paradoxically. When Francisco Isgleas, a member of the F.A.I., reported to the National Committee of the C.N.T. on the agreement to set up the executive committee, Horacio Prieto pointed out that the

regional committee or the C.N.T. and the National Committee were not about to accept an executive body that did not have the backing of any congress. Lorenzo believes that interest in imposing an executive committee on the libertarian movement decreased rapidly from that time.

Such practices, though highly irregular, have a certain logic, considering the circumstances. There had already been serious infractions of principles. Denunciation by the C.N.T. National Committee of such violations was no more irregular than the actions of the organization itself, which were a series of infractions of principle.

### **Disagreement Between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I.**

Let us say, by way of introducing the subject of disagreement between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I.—or rather between the National Committee and the Peninsular Committee of the two organizations—that their differences came to the surface when the C.N.T. joined the Negrin government. The entrance of the confederal representative could not have been more unusual, since it was Negrin who chose one of the three candidates presented by the C.N.T.—Horacio M. Prieto, Garcia Oliver, and Segundo Blanco. Negrin chose the latter, who flattered the head of the government. The first serious disagreement that arose in the libertarian movement was over the arbitrary manner in which the representative was chosen. The F.A.I. opposed the C.N.T. National Committee's submissiveness before the powers of the State. Another point of disagreement was the Negrin government's announcement, on May 1, 1938, of its thirteen-point programme, which was expected to be received favourably abroad. The Peninsular Committee showed its opposition to the thirteen points in a flyer published May 3; it considered the programme a return to the regime in existence on July 19.

Another event, of lesser importance but nonetheless significant, points up new differences between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. On April 15, 1938, the Negrin government published a decree creating the General Electricity Commissariat. Indalecio Prieto offered the position of Commissar of this department to Juan Peiro, who, with the approval of the C.N.T. National Committee, accepted the appointment. Unfortunately, the government, in an effort to neutralize and destroy revolutionary creations, dissolved the Unified Electrical Services of Catalonia at the same time. The new Commissar was compelled to appoint state controllers

in each company, which then automatically assumed its previous personality—anonymous shareholder society, and to dissolve the Company Councils and Workers' Control Committees.

By approving Peiro's appointment, the C.N.T. National Committee gave its blessing to the government's action. However, the unions at the base of the C.N.T. protested vigorously against this counter-revolutionary step. These developments inspired a circular from the F.A.I. regional committee of Catalonia supporting the position of the Peninsular Committee in their Circular No. 17. This offended the C.N.T. National Committee, which called a meeting on May 11 to make uniform the viewpoints of the three libertarian organizations and to avoid confrontation among militants and committees.

The meeting was attended by Germinal de Souza, Pedro Herrera, Manuel Escorza, and Jacobo Prince for the F.A.I.; Lorenzo Inigo, Serafin Aliaga, and Jose Cabanas for the Libertarian Youth; and Mariano R. ("Marianet") Vasquez, Galo Diez, Laborda, Gallego Crespo, Manuel Lopez, Juan Arnalda, Delio Alvarez, Francisco Isgleas, and Avelino Entrialgo for the C.N.T. The meeting was stormy. The minutes of the meeting were challenged by the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee because they did not reflect what was discussed. According to the minutes, the meeting approved a resolution for the unity of the libertarian movement by which the three national committees would refrain from circulating bulletins or articles attacking the other two.

The F.A.I. outlined the points that it made at the national meeting of the libertarian movement, as follows:

...We do not accept control over our attitudes and positions. Only our own organization can decide whether a position taken by the Peninsular Committee is acceptable. As to reports or bulletins, we will not submit them for approval by committees outside the Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.) any more than we want to control the reports and bulletins of other organizations.

It is clear that the C.N.T. was trying to standardize the libertarian movement in support of their wartime policy of collaboration. It is interesting to note that anarchists and anarchosyndicalists were scattered throughout in the delegations of all three organizations.

On May 12, the Popular Front approved a statement in support of the government's thirteen points. Under the pretext of not yet having the position of the Peninsular Committee, the F.A.I. representative did not want to sign the statement. On May 23, the Peninsular Committee

consulted its regional committees, asking them to reply by telegram along the following lines:

To ask us to approve this declaration when the government did not consult us before it was drawn up and made public is asking too much. We feel that a greater sacrifice is asked of us than we can make. *It is enough that we do not make a public protest against it.*

Peirats tells us that the F.A.I. regional committee of Catalonia answered through the executive committee of the Catalan libertarian movement. The response consisted of four points, which supported the government's thirteen points. However, point three noted that it was difficult to propagandize the thirteen points affirmatively because there was "no proportional and democratic distribution of the political power of the state." Point four emphasizes this: "The thirteen points are not propaganda material for the Popular Front since it did not organize *the proportional and democratic distribution of the political power of the state in advance.*" The document was signed by J. Zena for the F.A.I. regional committee of Catalonia and by Fidel Miro, secretary of the executive committee.

Peirats observes immediately following the meeting that what interested the executive committee was not the counter-revolutionary content of the thirteen points, but the perspective of a "proportional and democratic distribution of the political power of the state."

The F.A.I. regional committee later ratified the position of the executive committee of the libertarian movement. The F.A.I. regional committee of Asturias, located in Barcelona after the loss of their region, voted the same way. On the other hand, the F.A.I. in Aragon and the Centre aligned themselves with the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee.

On May 17, the political committee of the C.N.T. National Committee, described previously, held a meeting, as suggested by the Catalan executive committee. The F.A.I. Peninsular Committee agreed the morning previous to the meeting, with the replies of the regional committees in their hands, that if all the delegations attending the meeting felt that the F.A.I. should sign the Popular Front statement, they would do so, although declaring solemnly that the "anarchist organization did not renounce its viewpoint in any respect."

This attitude forecast an immediate capitulation to the pressure. The following attended the meeting of the political committee of the C.N.T. National Committee: Germinal Esgleas, Francisco Esgleas, and Garcia Oliver for the Catalan Executive Committee; Luque, Horacio Prieto, and Mariano R. Vasquez for the C.N.T.; Jose Cabanas and Serafin

Aliaga for the Libertarian Youth; and Germinal de Souza and Jacobo Prince for the F.A.I. Here is how the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee explained how the meeting went in a bulletin dated May 27:

We were at the meeting, and we saw that all delegations agreed that the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee should not refuse to sign the Popular Front statement supporting the thirteen points.

For our part, we repeated our opinion regarding the government statement. We denied that disagreement by the F.A.I. would compromise the movement. We thought it would add prestige to the movement by demonstrating that the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. are two distinct organizations and that at any given time they can present different opinions publicly on a given question.

In the end, the F.A.I. signed the Popular Front statement released to the press May 19.

The principal reason the F.A.I. was always with the C.N.T. is that the F.A.I. members had previously been among the leaders of the C.N.T. During the early part of the Civil War, the F.A.I. followed the C.N.T. like a shadow, and not a few F.A.I. members helped push the C.N.T. toward political collaboration. Now, however, as the Civil War went on and the prospects became steadily darker, bitter disagreements started to come to the surface, especially among the C.N.T. and F.A.I. representatives. The C.N.T. National Committee, tied to Negrinism to the end, spoke frankly in their circular of May 10, 1938, of defeatists who used opportunities such as the thirteen points "to speak of revolutionary losses, of sinking, of betrayals and liquidations." The position of the C.N.T. National Committee, which had sacrificed everything for victory in the war, had suffered so many defeats, not only military but political and revolutionary, so many concessions, and so many humiliations, that others asked if there was anything more to sacrifice, and whether the sacrifice was worth the pain.

Another important event to take place in Catalonia was a plenum of regional delegations by the executive committee of the Catalan libertarian movement. All delegates were told to come fully authorized to act, which shows how the first concessions by the libertarian movement led inevitably to more concessions. Peirats commented on the implications of this: "In other words, the delegates were asked from above to dispense with consulting the members of the unions in advance, according to tradition."

A full report was presented to the meetings, but the press published a not very explicit summary on June 25; the story indicated that the three branches of the libertarian movement had accepted the new plan



of organization, and that the local and district liaison committees simplified the organization's machinery, saved energy, and established perfectly coordinated unity. In effect, the normal procedures of libertarian organizations did not simplify organizational machinery. Federal consultation was required at every level to ensure that the will at the base was expressed clearly and unequivocally in the C.N.T., in the F.A.I., and in the Libertarian Youth. But the concentration of power at the top meant greater efficiency and fighting ability, and the fearful authoritarian deviations, fostered by a long war.

The C.N.T.-U.G.T pact represented a weakening of the C.N.T. for the sake of more collaboration with government. In the latter half of August 1938 the government issued decrees on the seizure of war industries, militarization of the ports, and reform of the commissariat. The representatives of the Basque and Catalan governments resigned, charging that regional autonomy was being attacked. The U.G.T hurried, on August 18, to approve government intervention which had been anticipated in the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact. The C.N.T. remained silent, caught in its compromises, but the confederation's unions at the base did not hide their displeasure. The F.A.I. published a document containing two points outlining their reaction:

The Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I., exponent of an idea and a movement with deep historic roots in Spain, an organization that assumes no responsibility for government and has shown until now that it knows how to sacrifice everything that can be sacrificed, looks at the situation and declares:

- 1) The decrees approved by the Council of Ministers on August 11 are an attack on the rights and freedoms of the Spanish people;
- 2) It calls upon all parties and organizations who place the general interest above their particular ambitions to repudiate these decrees.

*Solidaridad Obrera* itself, on August 10, showed the relationship between the militarization of the ports and the unbridled proselytizing and bribery that led to passage of the decree.

## Predicaments for the F.A.I.

While the battle of the Ebro was unfolding, with some success for the republican forces at the beginning, the F.A.I. was facing an uncomfortable situation. Beginning in August 1938, a series of articles by Horacio M. Prieto appeared in the review *Timon* (Helm).<sup>5</sup> Prieto followed a line of argument he had already expressed the year before at a meeting of militants, that anarchism is merely a distant aspiration, a code of ethics, a philosophy. Certain libertarian goals may be realized, he said, but there will be a long period of transition when opportunism will be necessary, and anarchists must have the flexibility to participate in government at the highest level including Parliament, with the aim of taking power. It is necessary, said Prieto, to practise politics on a permanent rather than a temporary basis. He proclaimed that revolutionary apoliticism is dead. "We had to fight capitalism and the state previously, and we were therefore *implacably apolitical*; now it is our duty to guide and make the state moral. We must therefore be *implacably political*."

Prieto's optimism led him to believe that he was creating revolutionary science almost seventy years after the London conference, when Marx first spoke of the workers' party and the political struggle for the bourgeois state. But Prieto's utopianism, which he believed to be implacable realism, made him speculate about a new state that was not capitalist and barely a state. He was writing, however, when the Negrin government had been infiltrated by the Spanish Communist Party and was wearing the more classical garments of the totalitarian state. Prieto was assuming collaborationist politics to the end, and he and Mariano R. Vasquez defended this position to the C.N.T. National Committee. He stated that if the F.A.I. did not intervene politically, it was redundant and that things should be left to the C.N.T.; the F.A.I. must become a political party in order to defend the libertarian movement.

Prieto did not remain middle of the road. He began by expressing the opinion that the F.A.I. should cease to be Iberian and become only Spanish. He felt that the libertarians should intervene in political action at the end of the war and participate in the elections. He pointed out that the C.N.T. would cease to be a union movement if it intervened in political action, and that as the ideological organization the F.A.I.

<sup>5</sup> This theoretical review had been started by Santillan in Barcelona in 1937, when he no longer held an official position either within or outside the libertarian movement.

should convert itself into a political party. Union organization and action should be left to the C.N.T., and political action to the F.A.I.

Santillan replied drily in *Timon*, according to Lorenzo:

We have nothing to correct in the magnificent body of doctrine that we hold high as our banner or in the tactics we have always advocated. We are happy to say at this time that if our point of view had even the smallest iota in common with Prieto we would regard ourselves as outside the course of the C.N.T. and the F.A.I.

The differences that gradually deepened between certain elements within the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. on how to conduct the war became apparent first in the general agreement with Negrin, and then in disagreement when the Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I. presented an important document to the government of the republic on August 20, 1938. The title of the document was "Critical observations on how the war is being conducted and basic ideas on how to continue more successfully." The document was also sent to former war ministers, to military leaders, and to parties and other organizations. Among the key people who received it and commented favourably were Largo Caballero, Indalecio Prieto, General Rojo, Chief of Staff, Luis Araquistain, Colonel Dias Sandino, Colonel Emilio de la Beraza, Colonel Emilio Torres, and General Jose Asensio.

The document, which was written with unusual severity, began by recognizing the losses suffered in the war, then presented some of the reasons for these losses. Section (a) pointed to the most pernicious of them all, proselytizing, and charged a "certain party" with using flattery and corruption, such as issuing membership cards to new members dated back to 1933. Strengthened by these new members who were ready to obey a foreign power, said the document, the corrupt elements took over the information sections of the military chiefs of staff. They conducted campaigns to discredit anyone who did not fulfill their wishes. Section (b) denounced the commissariat of the army for its proselytizing. Section (c) declared that the republican air force was in the hands of the Russians, that the military advisors made certain the communist units were better equipped than the others. The authors offered concrete technical data. Section (d) exposed the conspiracy against non-communist commanders. Section (e) pointed to the parasitic agencies of public order, such as the well-armed police, which had spread throughout the rear. The persecutions by the Military Investigation Service (S.I.M.) were denounced in the strongest of terms.

The document suggested imaginative actions in various theatres of operation as a way of diverting the questions raised about the war: infiltrating the enemy rear and sending in guerrillas to disorganize enemy military action. The F.A.I. had prepared various plans for guerrilla action in the nationalist rear, such as had already been carried out on the Aragon front with penetration of groups into Saragossa and the rest of the zone. It proposed intelligence work in Morocco, in Ifni, and in the Spanish Sahara to cause disorder in the nationalist rear, suggesting that agents be introduced into various Moroccan cities such as Uazzan, Fez, and Taxda, in the north of Morocco, and Agadir and San Luis de Senegal. The agents would instigate the entire country to rebel against the fascist strongholds. At the same time, recognizing that they did not have the armaments to launch decisive blows at the fronts, the authors pointed to the possibility of successful actions in theatres of operation such as Pozoblanco, where the enemy had no reserves. "The mining valley of Penarroya is located in this valley. It is very important in many ways. If we have it we can threaten Cordoba, which is nearby, and cut off communications with Estremadura."

The F.A.I. made a similar charge at another plenum of regions in September 1938. The Peninsular Committee presented a "Report on the direction of the war and corrections that experience obliges us to make," again bitterly denouncing proselytism, terror, and persecution within the army. The report provided minute details and firm facts. The F.A.I. accused the C.N.T. National Committee of blindly surrendering to collaborationist fatalism, which meant silencing all criticism and abdicating their revolutionary personality. In not a few cases, it charged, the C.N.T. had reached the point of supporting the persecutors against the persecuted.

By the end of summer 1938, said Santillan, the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee had begun to make fraternal overtures to the C.N.T. National Committee along the following lines: "Since we had left political action to the confederal organization, it is time to make a turn so that we can recover our personality to act as a brake in case of a collapse of the revolution in Spain." But the effort was in vain, Santillan added.

In almost fifteen days of discussion and fatigue, the policy of the Government of Victory was barely touched on in a few paragraphs of resolutions adopted in boredom. Some minor concessions on the role of the government did not bring any change of conduct. Those who represented the great Spanish union movement had succeeded in keeping it yoked to the triumphal chariot of Doctor Negrin until well after the defeat.

The disagreements that I have been describing broke out violently at the national plenum of the libertarian movement, held in Barcelona October 16-30, 1938. This meeting was in large part the result of Horacio M. Prieto's articles in *Timon* during August, according to his son, Cesar M. Lorenzo. Peirats offers a more balanced version. It was a plenum of the three branches of the libertarian movement—C.N.T., F.A.I., and Libertarian Youth (F.I.J.L.)—and had the following agenda: 1) examination of the actions taken and the line followed by the libertarian movement since July 19, 1936; 2) political action taken due to extraordinary circumstances of the war ("circumstantialism") and the position outlined as the North Star for guidance in connection with internal relations, political action, federalism, and international relations as they affect military and economic situations; 3) form of coordinating the three organizations and the course to be followed; 4) assistance for the Libertarian Youth; 5) coordination and structure of the defense sections; and 6) the auxiliary organizations of the libertarian movement. The meeting was attended by the regional committees of the C.N.T., the F.A.I., and the F.I.J.L. for Catalonia, Levante, Centre, and Andalusia, as well as representatives without an organized base because their areas were occupied by the nationalists.<sup>6</sup>

Delegates agreed that resolutions be adopted unanimously or be sent back to the base for further consideration. The delegate of the Catalan F.A.I. regional committee then made a detailed presentation of the disagreements within the libertarian movement which had polarized the C.N.T. National Committee and the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee. Horacio M. Prieto, representing the C.N.T. North regional committee, followed, and, speaking eloquently, presented a position of "plain reformism bordering on Marxism." He disparaged Kropotkin's ideas, declaring that "truly decisive action can come only from the organs of power." Prieto emphasized that the movement's errors were due to its innocence and lack of firm plans.

<sup>6</sup> Peirats, who offers extensive information on this meeting, cites three sources of information: summaries in *Solidaridad Obrero* after October 17, which are not very satisfactory because they were prepared only for the daily press; a summary of notes in a record entitled "Resolutions of the Libertarian Movement"; and a rough draft of a report prepared by a member of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee. In Peirats' opinion, the rough draft is the best of the three sources because it shows the internal disagreement in the movement in all its roughness. I again point out that the C.N.T.-F.A.I. archives in Amsterdam will give future historians access to unedited documents of inestimable value.

The dialectical battle that then took place found the C.N.T. National Committee and the C.N.T. regional committees of the North, Asturias, and Levante on one side and the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee and the Catalan regional committees of the C.N.T., the F.A.I., and the Libertarian Youth on the other. The remaining delegations vacillated between the two positions.

Prieto's report made a great impression in the plenum, according to Jose Peirats. The delegates heard from the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee, after which the tension was high and the convictions of many were weakened momentarily. This uncertainty was overcome, fortunately, by immediate responses from Esgleas of the Catalan regional committee, the Andalusia C.N.T., the Levante F.A.I., and the Catalonia F.A.I., who strongly defended the tactics.

The confrontation between the C.N.T. National Committee and the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee did not take long in coming. Following Prieto's aggressive talk, Mariano R. Vasquez, secretary of the C.N.T. National Committee, showed himself to be far from the positions he held as secretary of the Barcelona construction union. Political collaboration had been devastating for Vasquez. His talk at the plenum of the libertarian movement follows:

We must throw away our literary and philosophical baggage if we are to gain the leadership. We hold few positions of leadership in the army because our comrades refused to accept militarization at the beginning. The F.A.I. Peninsular Committee does not hold a quartermaster command because it cherishes its dignity more, to its disadvantage. The collectives would have done better had they accepted official supervision, which has invested eight million pesetas in credit, a sum that would have been considerably higher if our comrades had decided to take advantage of it.

Vasquez defended the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact against the "non-aggression" agreement proposed by Largo Caballero, arguing that the collapse of the eastern front was delayed by the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact and by entrance into the government and the National Popular Front. He defended the Negrin government's confrontation with the Communist Party and its military successes. He referred to the opposition of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee to the Popular Front, which he characterized as an arm of the republicans, and defended nationalization and municipal control of expropriated properties.

Vasquez declared that there were two alternative courses: that of the F.A.I., which was against participating in the government, and that of the C.N.T., which did not want to be in the opposition. He said

that there were more than half a dozen loyal professional commanders. He criticized the document presented to the government "that can only be regarded as a joke or a crime of high treason." The movement's internal division, which was known to its enemies, he declared, put it in a clear position of inferiority. "Why are we concerned with dignity, if we are defeated?" he asked, and spoke of the liquidationists Indalecio Prieto (a right-wing socialist) and Jose Giral (a republican), affirming that Negrin raised the question courageously at a Council of Ministers. Vasquez said that President Azana of Republican Spain, a republican himself, manoeuvred with the C.N.T. in a similar fashion. He praised Negrin's policy of resistance and said that the people could not accept liquidation, comparing the arguments of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee with those of Indalecio Prieto and Azana. He said that nobody could take Negrin's place, and, finally, that the movement must form a bloc, absolutely independent and with its own political personality.

This position was supported in general by the three branches of the libertarian movement in the Centre region (Madrid, Castille), but was strongly rejected by the Catalan C.N.T. regional committee as harmful. The delegation defended the workers' patrols and said that the National Committee had helped create a false picture of Catalonia in the other regions. Since this work is a history of the F.A.I., I shall record here the response to Vasquez's talk of the two F.A.I. delegates at the plenums, Germinal de Souza and Pedro Herrera.

Germinal de Souza rose to discuss the report of the National Committee. He understood that the regional delegations wished to discuss it, although some, like the Centre, had already done so on the basis of the one-sided report presented by the National Committee to the plenum of the Centre regional committee. De Souza explained that the problem arose not from differences between the two committees, the National and the Peninsular, but from two interpretations of the situation. He defended the tactics of the guerrillas and recalled that not long before the National Committee had asked that the matter be brought to the Superior War Council.

De Souza brought up the contradiction between Vasquez's statements and the report that the Defense Section had submitted to the delegates, which dealt with communist preponderance in the army. He showed that if the F.A.I. did not yet have the sub-Commissariat it was because it did not accept Negrin's choice of an F.A.I. representative and felt that the dignity of the organization must be preserved. He disagreed with the view that the proposal submitted to the National Popular Front could help the republicans and defend Parliament, claiming that

its opposition to Parliament was too well known for that. He referred to the military document presented to the government, which had been characterized as trivial by the National Committee, and pointed out that various political and military personalities did not share this opinion, especially the comrades at the front who supported the document completely. De Souza declared that the communists also called it "defeatist and bordering on high treason," noting the similar viewpoints of the National Committee and the communists. The strong reaction of the Communist Party to the document, he declared, was proof of its accuracy.

As to the liquidationists Giral and Prieto, De Souza expressed his astonishment that in spite of what was said by Negrin and repeated here by Vasquez, the former was still a member of the government and the latter was supported and encouraged daily by Negrin's official press. The resistance policy of the communists could not be trusted, he charged; they were as liquidationist as the others, and their traditional conduct and their lack of loyalty must not be forgotten. He said that Giral and Prieto were not the only advocates of liquidation, but that Negrin and the others were also compromised. De Souza defended the series of circulars and reports issued by the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee to their militants as representing the responsibility of the organization to its base.

Pedro Herrera said that the movement must separate themselves from those who belittle its principles. He who has no ideas ought not to be at the head of our movement, and the movement must constantly examine itself; it cannot place itself above events. "Doctrinal baggage" and "literary heritage" cannot be a reason for disregarding the anarchists who still value them, said Herrera; that is why they are what they are. If someone belittles the anarchist doctrines because they are not lavish and wasteful, he said, let them step aside. The anarchists cannot take the blame for what happened in Aragon, or for the fact that the government seized the collectivized industries. The tendency to justify everything and hold themselves to blame is evil, continued Herrera, and makes them appear weak and cowardly.

Those who still have confidence in the movement cannot be pessimists, according to Herrera, nor can they attribute every setback to their own lack of ability. They are optimists because they have confidence in what they believe. The present weaknesses must be overcome; those who do not believe in the movement because of ignorance or treachery must be removed from its leadership.

He continued: movement adherents must speak the truth among themselves; deceiving the militants is a betrayal; those who call themselves



anarchists must act responsibly. Nor can they justify their errors by ignoring them; if mistakes have been made, the movement can only make a public record of them to ensure that they are not repeated. As to movement participation in power, too much credit cannot be given to the U.G.T., which did very little in pressing for revolutionary goals—and it must not be forgotten that a socialist represented it.

As for the military defeats, said Herrera, their written reports noted many of the reasons for these defeats. He said they cannot be held responsible for them because they were not involved in any of them, as the C.N.T. National Committee itself has shown.

They support the C.N.T.-U.G.T. pact, he continued, but with guarantees for the revolution which at present are not included. They do not recognize the value of having delayed the fall of the eastern front; the comrades who held the enemy back with such courage deserved more consideration. The F.A.I. offered pertinent observations which could make the pact effective, he said, but no one gave them any consideration.

Herrera said that their entrance into the Popular Front also solved nothing. It was suggested by the communists. Their entrance into the government could not be considered a success, since they were in the position of begging for power. This is not the way to achieve power, he held—either one takes power because one has the strength, or one shares it as a matter of convenience.

The militants are active, intelligent, and have plenty of opportunity to carry on their work, continued Herrera; they cannot and must not be advised to descend to the levels of duplicity, hypocrisy, compulsion, and deceit. These are the skills of the communists, similar to those used by the Society of Jesus, the Jesuits; ethics are not a luxury for the movement, but are indispensable, distinguishing it from the other sectors.

The movement proposed a policy of resistance, and it must not be forgotten that it was they who proposed it and supported it more consistently than anyone else. It does not have to trust those who continually issue loud proclamations. Negrin has adopted it as a base of support in the government because he knows that the movement supports it sincerely.

Negrin was not among those who worked hard. This is proven by the many military defeats that have brought about the present situation; the map of Spain shows this very clearly. Negrin cannot deserve the movement's confidence. On more than one occasion, Herrera said, the F.A.I. reported its uneasiness to the movement, but was not given any

answers, not even when the C.N.T., as a member of the government, should have known it.

Anarchist ideas do not seek the impossible, said Herrera. On the contrary, they facilitate a clear examination of the questions raised and their resolution. The immense strength within the organization must not be forgotten, nor that its participation in the government is only due to the extraordinary circumstances of the war. Neither must the true revolutionary objectives be forgotten for a single moment. The libertarian movement must come back to its roots. It is united on this. As a committee of an anarchist organization, they know where their mission takes them, continued Herrera. They have a responsibility to their militants, and do not give them orders.

Finally, the Catalan F.A.I. regional committee denounced the reports on the plenum given to the press. The Libertarian Youth of Catalonia, the most radical group present, the only one opposed to the "circumstantial" politics and defender of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. classical tactics, rejected the Marxist thesis supported by some delegates, like the representative of the C.N.T. North, that one must work within the state in order to destroy it. "That is like the theory that we must put our sisters and our wives in brothels in order to abolish prostitution."

The theoretician of permanent political collaboration and participation in the state, Horacio M. Prieto, responded immediately. He attacked Bakunin and his secret organizations, affirming that he was not Angel Pestana\* and announcing that if he was not accepted as an anarchist, he would withdraw from the C.N.T.

In the eighth and ninth sessions of the plenum, various delegations, especially the Catalan F.A.I. regional committee, defended the executive committee of Catalonia. In the tenth session, Federica Montseny declared that Negrin ran an absolutist dictatorship and accused him of being a liquidationist. She was against the policy of naming comrades for official positions subject to approval by Negrin, which she felt lowered the dignity of the organization.

The second point on the agenda was discussed in the thirteenth session, namely "circumstantial" political action. The F.A.I. once again led the attack and, in turn, was Horacio Prieto's special target of attack. Prieto attacked the F.A.I. vehemently and returned to the arguments

\* A former C.N.T. leader who left the organization to establish the Syndicalist Party, which would seek representation in the Cortes, the Parliament of the Republic.—*transl. note*

he had presented in *Timon* the previous August. He attacked the theoreticians of anarchism and challenged their principles. He accused the F.A.I. of Jesuitism and stated that he could not understand how a man could be a minister with the C.N.T. and, at the same time, an opponent of political action with the F.A.I.

In reality, we understood that all this was not pure superstition, fear of what they will say, fear of discarding the past, of discarding the rigorous scholasticism of the old anarchists, who placed the stamp of analytical infallibility on themselves, with their criticism of protest and nonconformism.

This is hard but just criticism insofar as it referred to the ambiguous attitude of the F.A.I., which left its flank open to attack by the partisans of political collaboration. It must be recognized that they were more logical: a principle had been established; it must be allowed to develop to its final implications. On the other side, Sebastian Faure made a very clear defense of the principles, and his irrefutable reasoning has already been discussed. Prieto finally decided:

The F.A.I. is a dead weight on the movement, an obstacle; it must disappear or become a political party. Either assume the historic mission seen for it, we say, or it should be removed from the scene on the altars of circumstantialism.

The delegates did not dare follow Prieto with this point of view, says his son, Cesar M. Lorenzo. The majority believed that political collaboration was unavoidable, but only because of the exceptional circumstances. The meeting believed that permanent collaboration would reduce anarchism to dust. The plenum of the libertarian movement expressed the opinion that the C.N.T. represent the movement politically, but that the F.A.I. might have this mission at another time. In this way, the door would remain open for the political change-over of the F.A.I., according to Lorenzo.

Several statements were drawn up, the last one dealing with defence sections composed of one delegate from each branch of the libertarian movement, with the suggestion that the C.N.T. delegate be the secretary because the C.N.T. was represented in the government. The function of the secretary—who had considerable power—was to control all the militants in the libertarian movement, including those in the army, to propose candidates for promotion, and to resolve problems in the military organization as they affected the movement.

The report cited by Peirats on the conflict at the October 1938 plenum ends with a paragraph describing the splits that had developed in the libertarian movement:

The C.N.T. National Committee raised the question of their incompatibility with the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee as the plenum was coming to a close. The latter expressed surprise, declaring that they felt no incompatibility with any organization. However, conscious of their responsibility, they submitted their resignations immediately.

The fraternal, harmonious bond of the C.N.T.-F.A.I. during the first year of the Civil War had come to an end. The state of the war and the worsening internal atmosphere in the libertarian movement, with authoritarian elements taking over more and more, had ended the relationship. The F.A.I. had sacrificed its own principles without hesitation in the name of greater effectiveness in political collaboration for the C.N.T. The situation was now irreversible.

The situation continued to be catastrophic for the republican zone as 1938 drew to a close, in spite of the C.N.T.'s collaboration, which, according to Peirats, tied its National Committee to the chariot of the President of the Council. Their ministers made them out to be champions of extravagance, he went on to say, and were involved in great administrative and financial scandals. The people were exhausted and hungry and morally disinterested in the war. Only a fundamental political change, based on Negrin's replacement, would have revived their support. The President of the Republic, Manuel Azana, believing that the Negrin government lacked an adequate constitutional base because the political groups had become too small, tried to depose Negrin, according to Louis Araquistain. Negrin responded sharply: "You cannot destroy me, and if you try I will resist at the head of a mass movement and the army who are with me." This was not exactly true, but it revealed Negrin's dictatorial bent.

A committee of the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee—Abad de Santillan, Federica Montseny, and Antonio Garcia Birlan—visited the President of the Republic and found him surprisingly loquacious and expansive. Further, Azana was in complete agreement with what they said.

We informed Azana of what we knew about the front, about the dissatisfaction among the officers, the disorder and incompetence, the morale of the people in the rear. We felt obliged to declare that the next enemy offensive would not be contained, and the war would be practically over, if there were not an immediate change of government, of procedures, of objectives. (Santillan)

But Azana was a prisoner of the Cortes, whose members were divorced from reality and paid by the state, and supported Negrin, according to Lorenzo. Besides, Azana felt he himself was a prisoner of Negrin, in his Pedralbes Palace, because of his great fear of the anarchists, perhaps because of what had happened at Casas Viejas.\*

This episode, however, did not further harm relations between the C.N.T. National Committee and the F.A.I. Peninsular Committee. It must be understood that it was not a question of disagreement between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. as organizations, but rather between committees and bodies of the two organizations, because the men involved pursued their own ideas on how to handle their problems.

### Fall of Catalonia. The F.A.I. and the Libertarian Movement in the Centre-South Zone

Negrin called a meeting of the Popular Front parties and organizations on December 7, 1938. Mariano R. Vasquez and Horacio Prieto attended for the C.N.T., and Diego Abad de Santillan and Pedro Herrera for the F.A.I. Herrera prepared one of his reports for the F.A.I. Negrin presented a triumphant picture to a humble audience of the current political and military situation as being very serious for the enemy, with mounting discontent in the rear. In addition, he had lost credit internationally and was now in serious economic difficulties which forced him to prepare a great offensive that would bring him military success and help restore his credit. Negrin said that this was foreseen and that some land would be lost but no vital centre. He made an appeal for anti-fascist unity.

The C.N.T. again asked to be admitted to the government of Catalonia on December 17, with an editorial in *Solidaridad Obrera*, but no one listened.

The nationalist offensive on the border of Catalonia began on December 23, 1938, the main thrust of which occurred at two positions, Tremp and Seros, near the Ebro River. The Tremp sector was guarded by the Eleventh Army Corps and Seros by the Twelfth Army Corps. The unit that resisted the main fascist attack against the Eleventh Corps was the 26th Division, the anarchist unit. It resisted well, although it did yield

\* A small village in Andalusia where an elderly anarchist, his family, and some of his neighbours were brutally murdered by Civil Guards when Azana headed the government—*transl. note*

some territory. The 56th Division, carabineers or frontier guards (armed by Negrin with the most modern weapons), disintegrated during the artillery shelling.<sup>7</sup> This unit was greatly defamed by propaganda. It retired in perfect order before the general nationalist offensive, moving along the Segre River. A resistance at the Sierra de Cadi was proposed, but this project was not approved by the high command or the confederal committees. The disaster was beyond remedy, according to Peirats. The army of the Ebro—"the military pride and treasure of the Communist Party"—was destroyed. The enemy penetrated deeply through this opening toward the heart of Catalonia: Tarragona, Cervera, Igualada, and Manresa, toward Barcelona, which fell on January 26, 1939. Negrin installed the government at Figueras and continued to make demagogic speeches of victory to come. On February 6, without so much as a by-your-leave to his Chief of Staff, General Rojo, the President of the Council of Republican Spain crossed the frontier at Figueras. On February 10, the last division of the organized republican army, the 26th Division, crossed the frontier at Puigcerda and went into exile. Paradoxically, the former Durruti column crossed the border in correct formation and with all its military equipment.

The three organizations of the libertarian movement, the C.N.T., the F.A.I., and the F.I.J.L., set up a General Council of the libertarian movement in Paris on February 25. They tried to unify the work that had to be done in exile, their main concern being the comrades in the Centre-South zone, who were encircled in the interior with the sea at their back.

Military political life in the Centre-South zone, which had been separated from Catalonia, went on harmoniously before the fall of Barcelona and the end of the war in Catalonia. A national sub-committee of the C.N.T. and peninsular sub-committees of the F.A.I. and the F.I.J.L.

<sup>7</sup> Political collaboration left serious complications within the libertarian movement at the end of the Civil War. In the name of circumstantialism, and in spite of the disastrous end to the war, a state of war against Franco continued and collaboration with the republican governments in exile continued to be justified. This resulted in a serious split in 1945. In Spain, the C.N.T. was re-established underground in 1939. It gave uncertain support to the theory of circumstantialism, which had no meaning in the new situation; it suggested a change in the content and tactics of the organization, however. The C.N.T. was obsessed with political collaboration during those years, and since it lacked solid reasons for such a course the only solution appeared to be a break-up of the organization. One of the final repercussions of this political collaboration was an attempt to propose a pact with Franco's unions—*cinco puntista* (five points)—by a number of men in 1967.

had been established. Negrin's decree mobilizing every fifth man created problems in the libertarian movement, and especially in the F.A.I., which opposed the measure, believing it would dismantle all the revolutionary organizations while leaving untouched the numerous perfectly armed forces of public order swarming all over the rear.

The F.A.I. defended this position at a national plenum of the libertarian movement in Valencia January 20-23. The confederal delegates felt that they had to accept the government decree. The F.A.I. peninsular sub-committee proposed the establishment of a national liaison committee for the libertarian movement of the Centre-South zone on January 23. This was accepted by the other two branches of the movement, and it was also agreed that a national defence secretary be established and that a manifesto be published to explain the position of the movement in these delicate moments. The movement tried to prevent demoralization after the fall of Barcelona and in light of the activities of the Fifth Column. They also anticipated the arrival of the Negrin government in the Centre-South zone. They felt the need of a defence council to prevent a surrender which would turn them over tied hand and foot. A revolutionary tribunal would be created, a committee of public safety, or simply a Counter Cheka to keep an eye on the Communist Party because there were two rearguard battalions at Valencia manned by brigades from the front, operating under orders from the Communist Party.

The first meeting to establish the national sub-committee of the libertarian movement was held on January 30. A letter was sent to General Miaja, chief of the zone and provisionally responsible for all political power there, emphasizing the need for his decisions to be supported by all political and union organizations in the Centre-South zone. Miaja responded favourably.

All the activities and meetings may look like so much piecing together and tearing apart in vain. There was, however, a renewal of vital activities by the libertarian movement, and especially by the F.A.I., as the lack of governmental pressure permitted an increase in popular initiative, all the more so as the situation became desperate.

On February 6, the F.A.I. peninsular sub-committee, which was extraordinarily well informed, as usual, announced the arrival of Negrin and Alvarez del Vayo in the Centre-South zone. The F.A.I. adopted a resolution raising the question of Negrin's authority. Negrin had not come with authorization of the President, though he wanted to establish a small council of Marxists and libertarians (C.N.T. and F.A.I. and

Marxists, socialists, and communists), whose approval would be required before any action was taken.

The plenum of the regional committees of the libertarian movement, held in Valencia February 10 and 11, expressed the same disagreements as raised at the famous plenum in Barcelona the previous October. They noted that Miaja had refused to share power with anyone, including Negrin, if he was not accompanied by the President of the Republic or the Cortes. It was clear that the inertia of the other political and union organizations in the zone made it impossible to impose any limitations on Miaja's total power.

The libertarian movement arranged a meeting with Negrin on February 11, after a number of fruitless efforts and after sending the president "another letter because the first one was too hard." After this indulgent detail, Negrin received the libertarian delegation. He demanded, however, that the F.A.I. delegate, Grunfeld, leave because he was a foreigner, even though he was the national secretary of the F.A.I. Grunfeld stated that he was there as a representative of a Spanish organization, but he was still compelled to leave the meeting after a brief exchange. Cipriano Mera (Commander of the XIV Army of the Centre) later criticized the organization for this at a meeting on February 16 of the national liaison committee of the libertarian movement in Madrid. Called before this body for supposed infractions of organizational discipline, the former construction union militant reproached them all for the great weakness the organizations had exhibited in the face of power.

This, plus Segundo Blanco's ambiguous attitude—he was an admirer of Negrin rather than a C.N.T. representative in the government—helped create the same tension between the C.N.T. and the F.A.I. in the Centre-South zone as had been the case previously in Catalonia. A meeting of the liaison committee of the libertarian movement took place on February 25, at which time the F.A.I. charged that Negrin had deceived the C.N.T. minister, who had in turn deceived the movement. It stated that there was no possibility of reaching an honourable peace with Negrin as spokesman, that this was possible only with the formation of a government or defence council. The issue was merely the survival of the people, the army, and the anti-fascist organizations trapped in the Centre-South zone, with no further scrambling for power.

On February 26, the Peninsular Committee of the F.A.I.—no longer a sub-committee—accused the C.N.T. National Committee of ambiguity. On March 1, the latter asked that it be empowered to act for the entire libertarian movement in order to have greater mobility. The Peninsular



Committee of the Libertarian Youth, F.I.J.L., finally took a clear position on the disagreements. They declared, among other things, that

It would not matter to us if the C.N.T. took charge of everything if their actions were not so full of uncertainty and mistakes, and if they knew how to be on top of situations as they arise. Their attitude does not surprise us, since we have been observing their reservations toward us.

The Peninsular Committee expressed the belief that the C.N.T. National Committee was working without the authorization of its own organization, and they were therefore opposed to it. They also charged the C.N.T. National Committee with incompetence. The meeting continued on March 3. The F.A.I. had once again assumed the initiative, and the C.N.T. continued to be stupefied by the sorcery that power and authority exercised over them.<sup>8</sup> The F.A.I. proposed that the steps previously outlined by the libertarian movement be implemented immediately, namely a general staff of the Centre, a superior war council, reorganization of the Commissariat, change of command, and replacement of Jesus Hernandez, the communist leader. The meeting approved the appointment of General Casado as Chief of Staff of the Army of the Centre and General Matallana as Commander of the Army of the Centre, the post left vacant by Casado's promotion. It was also suggested that Avelino Gonzalez Entrialgo be appointed commissioner of the Cartagena naval base.

The immediate events, three weeks before the end of the war, are well known and it is therefore not necessary to repeat them here in detail.<sup>9</sup> On March 4, the defence council was established. It deposed Negrin and restored power to the streets. Negrin remained only with the Communist Party. All the other political and union groups remained with the other side. On close examination, one can see that the Civil War was a triangular struggle for power between three elements: the nationalists, the revolution, and the counter-revolution. The propaganda accounts fail to record the joint action, the reciprocal and contradictory

<sup>8</sup> However, as Cesar M. Lorenzo stated, it was the C.N.T. regional committee of the Centre that made the decision to depose Negrin, and especially the regional defence committee of the Centre, Valosalgado and Garcia Pradas. This body had real power and was feared and respected by everyone in the republican zone.

<sup>9</sup> There are many books in Spanish that deal with this phase of the war. In English, there exist the following: *Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution*, by José Peirats; *The Spanish Labyrinth*, by Gerald Brenan; and *The Revolution and the Civil War in Spain*, by Pierre Broué and Emile Témime.

relations among all the groups. There existed a balance among them that could not be apparent except in the final results. The final three weeks of the war in the Centre-South zone were delusionary. There was a superhuman effort to restore the activity and initiative of the libertarian movement and the F.A.I. Their thinking was clear, their decisions impressive. But it all merely helped them to a destiny of exile, prisons, and concentration camps.

### The F.A.I. Today

After the Civil War, the Spanish libertarian movement went underground or into exile and emigration. This went for the F.A.I. as well. However, the F.A.I. did not disappear entirely; it reappeared in Spain in 1945 to fight openly against the collaborationist position of the C.N.T. in Spain, which had sent ministers to the Llopiés and Giral governments in exile. A Peninsular Committee was captured and arrested in Madrid in 1947. The specific organization also reappeared in exile in France after the defeat of the Germans and after the C.N.T. Paris congress in 1945.

The F.A.I. apparently re-emerged in Spain, but it is hard to estimate its strength or significance. It is also difficult to evaluate the role of anarchism in the country today in its many aspects: student movement, anti-association anarchist groups, neighbourhood anarchist groups, collectives, counter-culture groups, various self-management experiments, and so on. These many aspects of present-day Spanish anarchism, revived by young people, were stimulated and in a sense paralyzed by the vigorous reappearance of the C.N.T. in 1975, at a time when the libertarian movement was again given up for dead. It is clear that the will to organize a new Spanish anarchism is the basis for this resurgence. This comes from the autonomous groups and from the tenacity of the old militants—decimated and persecuted, reduced to their own limited resources, but not conquered.

The collectives, the neighbourhoods, even some of the students seem to be unanimous: the C.N.T. first. The anarchist young people, with their own pleasant characteristics acquired in their struggle and with their groups developed along lines different from the C.N.T. structure of organization, have followed the classical course of Spanish anarchism to again support a workers' movement as a class organization—which cannot yet be anarchist, but rather anarchosindicalist. This is an important difference to bear in mind. In 1976 Spain, anarchism as a separate body and anti-association—no; anarchism, with the exception of some hesitant

elements, has said yes once more to the C.N.T. This is how anarcho-syndicalism has begun a new period of its history in Spain.

Let us assume, then, that the F.A.I. is unknown today. It may rise again under special circumstances, as strong as it was when it was born in 1927. Or it may not reappear, and anarchism may change to other forms and denominations. A number of observations must be made. Once again, as in 1927, the defence and safeguard of the C.N.T. and anarchist values may require the establishment of a vigorous F.A.I. The values of anarchism as such must be safeguarded and strengthened. The name of the organization is secondary.

If we assume that anarchism is what concerns anarchists, it is appropriate to ask: why the F.A.I. again if the libertarian movement itself, its various manifestations such as neighbourhood federations, collectives, student factions, and the C.N.T. together represent all possible forms of dynamic anarchism that serve basic human activities? On the other hand, regardless of the respect we feel for the spirit of sacrifice and abnegation of many men in the specific organization, there is one fact about which we cannot be silent. The F.A.I. was hurt by its political collaboration during the Civil War. This was not only in flagrant contradiction with its principles but with its very reason for being. Its support of the C.N.T. reinforced statism and political thinking, hurting the philosophy of direct action—in other words, denying its very being.

The political collaboration of the C.N.T., its participation in the republican state, is the major problem of historical analysis of that period. We have seen all the arguments justifying and supporting the C.N.T.'s position. What is noteworthy today is that there has not been a clear conclusion that this was an error. We have defined classical anarchism, anti-statism, and anti-parliamentarism. However, we have not been able to get out of the maze of justifications for the participation in government on the part of the C.N.T. and anarchism. In other words, the exceptional circumstances of that period are still regarded as a justification. However, if instead of condemning that experience, the movement continues to look for excuses for it, the same course will be repeated in the future should we be put at the same breaking point as in 1936. The exceptional circumstances will again put the C.N.T. and anarchism on their knees before the state. The relative internal consistency of anarchism is good under normal circumstances but not in exceptional situations. This would mean a revision of anarchist tactics and therefore of anarchism itself. And to change anarchism to a philosophy of "possibilism," to be satisfied with doing only what is possible, is to

change it to Marxism, social democracy, whatever you want. But this would mean destroying the roots of anarchism.

We must be logical, nonetheless. If we agree to relaunch the C.N.T. as we've known it in history, without reservations, even with its collaborationist contradictions during the Civil War, counting on the maximum aspirations of the Spanish proletariat, then we cannot completely eliminate the F.A.I. The destiny of this organization will depend on the needs of Spanish anarchism.

The C.N.T. contradictions of 1936-39, as well as those of the F.A.I., may have been due to a lack of effective libertarian experience, a superficial understanding of anarchist ideas, and personal and group psychology. When the moment of truth arrived, the force of circumstances was greater than loyalty to roots.

Strengthening these roots and supporting their development is what we should be doing. This can happen only with constant activity, based on the particular situation in which we find ourselves. For anarchism today, reality is to be found in a diversity of activity we have outlined previously; anarchist living can adapt itself to a multiplicity of forms, beginning with the revolutionary demands of anarchosyndicalism and concluding with the libertarian presence in urban neighbourhoods, in universities, in teaching, with new alternatives offered by the C.N.T. teachers for these times. The libertarian presence in neighbourhoods must learn how to introduce practical activities leading to self-management. The citizen living in a particular neighbourhood tries to understand the problems of that neighbourhood and what to do about them. This is the first step toward achieving a community that is controlled by the citizens who live there, rather than by leaders. This is democracy raised to its highest level. This is government of the people by the people.

Is anarchism a philosophy condemned never to be realized? The experience with economic and political self-management in large areas of republican Spain disproves such a fear. Recent history shows the dynamic capacity of anarchism to translate its philosophy into new values in society as a whole. As objective conditions become more favourable in Europe and with the steady erosion of nationalism and imperialism, old forgotten anarchist conceptions have come to the fore, such as regionalism, federalism, municipalism, regional and local development, and so on. The modern idea of self-management embraces these objective elements combined with the idea of socialism, which lends depth to the other concepts.

Anarchists and libertarians have tended to become withdrawn because of the indiscriminate use and abuse of the term "self-management." They forget that self-management means self-government, and self-government in turn means a society that rules itself in all its subdivisions, or anarchism. What, then, do we have to fear? The great popularity that the term "self-management" enjoys today should make us happy because it demonstrates not only that anarchism is achievable, but that it can constantly transmit its values to society at large. Anarchism, more than any other socialism, will be part of the future with its conception of self-management.

It does not matter that some groups include self-management in their programmes, even though they do not believe in it. The term has an internal dynamic that cannot be betrayed. Those who cannot explain the idea of self-management satisfactorily, or develop it to its ultimate ends, will be trapped in their contradictions. One way or another, they will work objectively for anarchism, or, to put it in broader terms, for libertarian and anarchist socialism.

Libertarian activity should be intensified until it becomes second nature to the individual and social human being. It should not remain isolated in the realm of pure theory, because then it can be uprooted under exceptional circumstances. Civil wars cannot be repeated frequently during people's lives, nor can situations like those of 1936-39. Libertarian ideology must grow strong and fortify its roots so that they are flexible but resistant. The challenge to libertarians, to anarchists, is to make them capable of resisting, of withstanding the exceptional circumstances of any crisis in history.



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## THE AUTHOR

An account of Juan Gómez Casas' life cannot be separated from the history of the Spanish libertarian movement. As a child, he was greatly influenced by the thinking of his father, with whom he used to go to union meetings. Casas was just fifteen years old when the uprising started on July 18, 1936, and in the succeeding years he participated in the re-organization of the movement underground.

He was arrested in 1947 after returning from a congress of the C.N.T. in exile and was subsequently sentenced to thirty years by a military tribunal for belonging to an illegal organization.

Prison has been Casas' only university: already versed in French when he was incarcerated, in the fifteen years he served in jail he was able to learn English, German, and Russian. A prolific writer, he began the first of his many books, *Guentos Carcelarios*, in the Burgos prison. He has also published numerous articles and pamphlets and has translated several books into Spanish, including Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

Casas has served as secretary of the C.N.T. National Committee twice in the post-Franco era — in 1976 and 1985. He continues to be active in the C.N.T. and in the libertarian movement to this day.